cross currents in culture

# variant

number 41 spring 2011 free

# Neo-liberal governmentality is not Keynesian

*Economic Importance of the Arts in Glasgow*

## PROPORTIONAL MULTIPLIER ANALYSIS: A GENERAL MODEL

**Using the proportional multiplier method a general model for income generation, for example, can be defined as:**

$$Y_r = Q\, Y_n \left[ \frac{1}{1 - L\left(\sum_{i=1}^{I} X_i\, Z_i\, Y_i\right)} \right].$$

where:

$Y_r$ = total income generation in region r.

Q = the money introduced into the economy through the purchase of goods and services. $Y_n$ = the regional income generation coefficient (direct plus indirect) for the type of business in which the money introduced is spent.

L = the average propensity to consume.

$X_i$ = the proportion of local resident spending accounted for by the $i^{th}$ type of business.

$Z_i$ = the proportion of local resident spending in the $i^{th}$ type of business which is spent in the local area.

$Y_i$ = the income generation coefficient (direct plus indirect) of the $i^{th}$ type of business.

This general model of income creation, therefore, consists of three main parts:

(a) Q which is the amount of money introduced initially into the economy.

(b) Yn which is the income generation coefficient for the type of business in which the injection of money occurs. This factor allows for the removal of leakages through, for example, the purchasing of goods and services and taxation and the inclusion of the additional income resulting from inter-business transactions. The value taken by Yn measures income (direct + indirect) as a proportion of the initial injection.

(c) the remainder of the equation which represents a modified form of the traditional Keynesian multiplier of 1/1-c, where c equals the marginal propensity to consume.

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# letters

MUTE

## *Mute's* 100% cut by ACE

We are very sad to announce that, on Wednesday, *Mute Publishing* found itself in the category of 'losers' as these emerged from Arts Council England's (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation decisions. The magazine had presented to ACE a programme that combined a web and print magazine, books and events, community self-publishing, education, and digital strategy support and advocacy work, but faltered in the second stage of the assessment process, where its financially precarious position and 'weak' governance structure – as well as the perception other organisations were better placed to deliver to ACE's strategic goals – proved fatal, resulting in a 100% cut to core funding.

We regard the process of being placed in competition with other arts organisations as poisonous and distracting: while we will privately question the sizeable uplifts granted to large, established organisations (which, in the greater scheme of things, need further funding about as urgently as Paris Hilton needs another handbag), in the end we recognise it as a familiar part of the divide-and-rule principle that has long marked the operations of support agencies like ACE, where a chronic reliance on the parent body for the basic apparatus of organisational reproduction nurtures fear among the 'dependents' – slowly but surely stripping them of all sense they can do anything for themselves, let alone together... The spectacle of slavish gratitude for the spoils of public funds, in which even organisations cut or killed felt compelled to reiterate the basic tenets of ACE's funding paradigm (excellence, innovation, global leadership and creativity), were truly depressing in this regard – not one voice standing out for offering a different vision or lexicon of practice.

For us, the relevant story is elsewhere, as it has always been, and is effectively being obscured by a smoke-screen of rhetoric: it is said that 'adventurous and risk-taking programming is being rewarded', and a 'resilient' arts portfolio composed. Although we concertedly participated in the process, adapting our organisation's operational model to that demanded by ACE's 'Achieving Great Art for Everyone' agenda (within which we happily chose to deliver to the Excellence and Innovation Aims), the relevant story lies in the devastation being wrought upon the social in general. Here, in the name of prudent economic management, Government's disinvestment in art and education (two fields with which *Mute* interfaces most intimately) appears as a symptom of a larger programme of creative destruction, launched in the name of an aggressively kickstarted, entrepreneurial Britain that we all know is doomed to fail, but not without wrecking the lives of millions.

To be a 'winner' in the arts variant of this competition (and that means those who, as The Guardian dubbed it, 'won big'; not the hundreds kept on on a shoestring), several kinds of compliance are required. Firstly, a near religious belief in the power of art to 'deliver' personal transformation. Second, a normative and by now entirely standardised model of art-organisational development, where success is measured via the ability to diversify funding sources (via trading activities, rights management, sponsorship, philanthropy and a variety of non-public sources), have 'reach and impact' (loose catch-alls combining audiences, media reception, influence), and offer 'engagement' – all of which, it is reiterated, can only be achieved by bodies in possession of larger executive boards, which have represented on them 'experts' from the realms of Finance, Legal, Development and Artistic Vision, and who watch Income and Expenditure lines like hawks, assuring they mitigate risk, execute their mission and stay on a number of targets, as these encompass financial, audience and strategic partnership projections. As *Mute* – and many others, such as the Scottish based *Variant* magazine (another 'loser' of late) – has attempted to discuss in a series of articles stretching back decades, the backdoor this structure has offered to an entirely corporatised version of art, wherein genuine diversity and antagonism is replaced by superficially different versions of doing the same thing (and many platforms for critical discussion gradually desist from analysing culture as a whole to discussing the ins, outs, rights and wrongs of particular art forms), is one of the great untold stories of mainstream contemporary culture.

As a critical platform seeking to understand culture in the round – i.e. in the many and various ways it exemplifies, illuminates and engages with larger processes (be they, to put it cheesily, part of the 'macro' dimension of global economics, or the 'micro' level of subjectivity) – we have attempted to shore up our core editorial work with a range of others that could help subsidise this. *OpenMute*, our consultancy and tools agency, through which we also facilitate the publishing activity of many other independent producers, has been the most visible result. But the free-content economy of the web, which felt like a natural home for our discussions, eventually became Mute's nemesis, as sales and subscriptions decreased at the same speed our web readership grew, and a growing international community of readers slowly and unwittingly dealt our 'business model' a death-blow.

We must now figure out what to do about this, as all of us who've worked on the magazine for so long have no intention of stopping our work because of a funding decision. Many different working models can and are already being imagined. Others in the many small to medium sized digitally-led organisations which have been cut will be trying to figure out their futures similarly, as will, it seems, many comparable small organisations whose governing remits aren't deemed essential in the current round. We are particularly perplexed by the blow dealt to diversity-led organisations, who engage with questions we imagine will increase rather than decrease in urgency in 'Austerity Britain'.

We will attempt to continue the discussion in a number of places. One, on our website, Metamute.org, which publishes weekly and where we will open space for responses to ACE's funding decisions, on *Mute Publishing* as well as other organisations, as well as the Googlegroup, acedigitaluncut and media arts discussion list CRUMB, where many are hoping to marshall a more specific discussion about the apparent disinvestment in the still badly understood area of digital practice. ACE's decisions reflect a presumption digital has been 'dealt with' by conceiving of it as integrated in routine organisational development processes, rather than demanding to be explored as a highly self-reflexive area of work with a long and rich history linking into video, performance, independent publishing, installation art, software development, literature and more. Given the consolidation, surveillance and privatisation happening in the digital realm as we speak, now seems exactly the wrong time to be making such a move. The fact that ACE (and partner organisations like the BBC) are seeking to align themselves with digital innovation and broadcasting at exactly the same time just demonstrates further ignorance and shortsightedness.

Yours sincerely, Pauline van Mourik Broekman, Director and co-founder of *Mute*

**metamute.org**

Artlink

## Taking another tack

I've worked with *Artlink* in the area of learning disability and the arts for the past 25 years, and been personally involved for way longer than that. In that time I've watched education turn somersaults, healthcare pass the buck and social services run round in circles, stood by as new ways of working and new terminologies became fashionable and just as suddenly fell outdated and smirked as new and similar approaches couched in different vocabulary took its place. Throughout that time I have had the honour to be around the most amazing activists, people who have fought for the rights of people with learning disabilities, people who have really made things happen.

I've seen it all before but perhaps not quite like this; services hacked to pieces, greater stress placed on families as their support systems are eroded, families with homes under threat as a result of changes to housing benefit, benefits axed with little understanding or care of impact. We appear to be going backwards to a time when you were 'bloody lucky' to get anything at all.

Rather than continue to be negative or merely plead exceptionalism, I want to take a slightly different tack. Don't get me wrong, I don't want to occupy myself with unimportant matters and neglect priorities during crisis. I want to heighten expectations; raise the bar. In times like these it is so necessary we up the ante.

*Artlink* have recently published a magazine called *Utopia*. An upbeat look at what should be. In it we look at a series of ideas for objects and ways of working which would benefit people with profound learning disabilities. We promote alternative ways of understanding what is being said to us, taking time to look at the detail, to understand the individual, deciphering what is being said through the twitch of an arm, flicker of an eyelid, tilt of a head.

It is vital that we continue to find ways to understand the distinctive needs of people who are often excluded from society, as in doing so we respect their right to be included. It is only by focusing on the detail of the individual's needs, and working to remove the barriers they face, that people with profound and multiple learning disabilities will be given the respect they deserve.

*Utopia* proposes that we put our heads together, concentrate, cross disciplines, use our imagination, think creatively, to find ways to ensure that people with high support needs remain valued. Ultimately, respecting differences and valuing people for who they are.

For more information or if you would like to join in the discussion then please write to: alison@artlinkedinburgh.co.uk

*Utopia* is available at selected sites throughout Scotland.

Alison Stirling, *Artlink*, Edinburgh

**www.artlinkedinburgh.co.uk**

# Investing, Advocating, Promoting... strategically

## Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive of Creative Scotland, interviewed by Daniel Jewesbury[1]

**DJ:** *I suppose the most obvious question is, how is Creative Scotland different from the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, its predecessor organisations?*

**AD:** Well, in a number of ways. Firstly, we've taken on the combined responsibilities for TV, the arts and creative industries, also the responsibility for stimulating cultural export; secondly, we are very committed to not just being a funding body. We are a funding body, or *investment* agency as we call it, but we are much more of a promotional body and much more of an advocate for the cultural sector that can give something money. We are not about just monitoring what happens to that money, we are about getting behind the cultural organisation, getting behind the artist and trying to shine the spotlight on him and to package things together in a way that tells a story of what's happening in the cultural sector in Scotland.

I use the analogy, we're not just a cash machine in Edinburgh that dishes out grants but we will dish out a lot of grants but, whilst we are a supporting organisation, the support doesn't stop, we have to move on and find how we can help promote them. It kind of manifests itself in a couple of examples already.

One is our artist residencies programme. I mean, when I arrived, everywhere I went in Scotland I found an artist in residence. You go to the Isle of Skye and there is a visual artist, writer, musician in residence, doing fantastic work, hidden away, nobody else would know that this is happening because their work is not shared more widely and they would be working in isolation from other artists in residency in Stirling and so on. So I came back from visiting the artists in residence that we had, at the time we had 57, and we put extra resources.

For the first year we are trying to get 200 artist residencies or awards that we can pull together in a single programme called Creative Futures, which has maybe forty or fifty partners that are running those residencies. The difference is that they will all be branded together as Creative Scotland Residence Programme. There will be 200 artists, we will bring them together through social networks; we will bring them together physically… there is a want to… and we will promote and advocate the work that is going on so that the work is not hidden. For those that want to be… away and hidden, that's fine but many people responded very positively to the idea that they are part of a bigger community.

Another example is that there is the festivals guide that we produced. It's a similar story of going round in Scotland, and everywhere I went there's another festival and nobody had an overview, nobody had a picture of what was happening 52 weeks a year in Scotland. We've just gone into a very simple partnership with *The List*[2] who came to us, actually, with an idea of a different sort of festivals guide for Edinburgh, but we said it would be great if you'd do one for the whole of Scotland. They produced this guide to festivals, 280 of them, across Scotland and it's now linked on our website that you can search all what, ifs and where. So it puts individual festivals that might have been hidden away, like Pittenweem or smaller festivals into a bigger context of festivals in general…

**DJ:** *So it's a question of creating a national strategy for cultural activity then?*

**AD:** Yes it is.. well,...I hesitate to use the word *selling*. To a certain extent it is about presenting the total picture back to Scotland and back to visitors. I mean we're not a tourism agency but with that festivals guide, if we can produce the content of it with *The List*, then tourism agencies as well as others can onwards promote it. But let's take the visual arts. It's actually terrific: in Glasgow International or in Edinburgh in festival time because you've got a guide to know what is happening that month and there is the kind of evidence that shows that people literally follow that and you know, they move, they take their information and move from one thing to the other, but for the rest of the year, the chances of someone finding a gallery as a visitor are pretty slim actually. So, yes, how do we as a national organisation help things locally. Now, in some ways that should be an Edinburgh job to promote galleries in Edinburgh but we can take the overview for Scotland and work to find new mechanisms of promoting visual arts, promoting public art, promoting whatever it is, film, film locations… We've got to try and tell a story because it's not been told in the past quite as positively as it should be so we're underplaying our strengths, that is the feeling. So that is the second bit of difference.

> ...we're not just a cash machine in Edinburgh that dishes out grants...

The third difference is really the kind of creative industries and the economic side. You know, we still will invest in straight cultural, individual artist's projects on artists' terms. It's absolutely pivotal for what we do. In fact, we will put more money into that. But we've got a remit, if not of money – not of new money – to support the creative industries and to co-ordinate that and to encourage the likes of Learning and Skills Agencies, Enterprise Agencies, to put their money behind creative industries, whether that'd be the games industry, design, fashion, potentially festivals and to piece together the economic story about the cultural sector.

> We've got to try and tell a story because it's not been told in the past quite as positively as it should be

Sometimes economics and business language doesn't go down well with artists but actually if it's the way that we will get more investment, more resources into the cultural sector then it's a really important role for us to play. So things like getting engaged for the first time in digital media, okay – the Arts Council has funded and Scottish Screen has funded individual projects but actually putting pilot projects together in this partnership we've had with Channel 4 and Scottish Enterprise that enable some kind of bigger scale developments happening like Central Station, the likes of ISO apps, (the developers behind Central Station, but who have also worked for BBC iPlayer, Glasgow School of Art etc.) development of ripped photo art, 4IP, and trying to mainstream that as actually a valid part of what we do. So moving into some of those new territories.

**DJ:** *Is there a danger then that the definition of creativity becomes, it becomes very difficult to pin down, it becomes very broad and sometimes almost comes to almost include everything?*

**AD:** Creativity does often include a wide range of things. Would we fund a food festival? Yes, possibly, if it had a creative… cultural element to it. Would we fund a restaurant? No! There are kind of borders and boundaries to everything we / you do, but looking in the visual arts. Visual arts for years has been breaking down barriers. It has driven a wedge between art form barriers of the past and there is far more collaboration going on across visual arts and other media.

Even in craft, if you look at the work of the Dovecot and innovative work that they do with craft and arts. Visual arts has been at the forefront of breaking through the art form silos. We are getting rid of all the art form silos here, which I suppose is the next big difference. There will be no art form budgets and we will have generic budgets that are more strategic, much more planned and on a larger scale and able to punch the weight.

**DJ:** *But with criteria in terms of assessing quality of application, assessing the effectiveness of funding – the criteria still needs to respond to the art forms.*

**AD:** Why?

**DJ:** *So ... there is a uniform set of criteria that will be used?*

**AD:** We'll try and get a common set of criteria. We're still working on that actually but there will be a much *simpler*, common set of criteria that is around quality of production, track record, delivery, in some instances it is leverage of other resources… commitment to accessing audiences or reaching audiences… it is not rocket science, it's always been there. But we will have our craft-specific criteria or theatre-specific criteria.

**DJ:** *I suppose some organisations have... audience, box office and they can measure their participation in certain ways. For other organisations it is quite different in how organisations reach their audience. So there have to be different ways of evaluating...*

**AD:** There are different criteria for different programmes but we'll have common criteria across the art forms that is what I'm saying. I mean film is slightly different. With film… we will still have a discrete film programme. For various reasons we've got criteria – especially Lottery-specific – we have to fulfill. That will have a set of specific criteria. Everything else: festivals and events, quality of production, talent, access to education, quality of development – all those will be across art form, anything will be put forward.

**DJ:** *I would like to ask about the arms-length principle and where that sits within Creative Scotland as an organisation that has the power to commission the work directly? Is there a danger in using those powers that Creative Scotland almost becomes a rival to the organisations that it funds?*

**AD:** No. I mean, primarily artists and creative practitioners are at the heart of our thinking. We might strategically commission a service to be delivered or a… some geographic delivery in the cultural sector but we wouldn't say… we want this piece of art for Dumfries and Galloway as a Gateway sculpture. We are not directly commissioning individual works or individual

productions. What we *will* do is take a more strategic look at the sort of whole cultural ecology. So we've had a programme called Flexible Funding, funding a lot of galleries and a lot of theatre companies, an awful lot of theatre companies. Flexible Funding, by its very nature was very competitive, 139 organisations bid and there ended up being 60 grants for 2-year programmes of work and everything being supported is really high quality because it was the kind of cream of the crop and fantastic proposals.

The trouble is we haven't decided how much of one thing we wanted and how much of another thing we wanted so we could have ended up funding 60 theatre companies just because they were the best applications. We could actually, technically, fund 60 theatre companies in Glasgow just because they were the best applications. We're going to get rid of that programme, it takes… We are very committed to what we are supporting but we are going to get rid of it in two years time.

But gradually, what we are going to be doing is take a strategic look at different sectors. So we will take a look at visual arts and say, actually… there's the national galleries, there's our Foundation Organisations that we fund, The Fruitmarket Gallery, various centres, what are the gaps on the map? What are the organisations, not just on the geographical map but the visual arts maps? [DJ: Map of provision?] Do we need an organisation that is actually delivering on curatorial training or international export of the visual arts or supporting artist careers as well as putting things on the walls in galleries? We would define four or five franchises that we'd then advertise and invite proposals to come forward. Instead of then supporting maybe individual organisations we'd hope we'd might get collaborations.

So we might get CCA in Glasgow plus the International Festival and someone else coming forward to deliver a package of work or a programme of work. As we define those strategic commissions, we would have an eye to the geography of Scotland because there is fantastic work – that we're very proud of because they are our strengths – in Glasgow and Edinburgh but there are huge tracts in Scotland where there isn't quite the opportunity or there isn't the production base that there needs to be. So, you get the drift? We describe it in our corporate planning in terms of theatre but you can describe anything really.

**DJ:** *So it's going to be very much a question of identifying those gaps in provision and commission organisations to deliver in those areas? [AD: Yes]. In terms of the identification of those gaps, that is then the strategic role of CS?*

> There will however be the things that we want to achieve, that is about the kind of creative identity of culture in Scotland.

**AD:** Yes. We would do that *with* the sector. We would do these reviews with the theatre sector, the music sector and the visual arts sector, including national companies, things like RSAMD if you talk about music, college of arts if you're talking about Visual Arts. So there will be a much broader conversation about where the gaps are. Let me show you this: This was a theatre show that I went to see at the Fringe, Plan B (the Highland-based dance and theatre performance company). Basically, instead of the programme having the CVs of the actors they had this *organigram*, they have the artwork, they have footballers, art and

something… what this is, is basically four people's careers. This is actually our job. This is CS's role: to get people onto the career track of working in the visual arts or theatre or film in Scotland. To find the talent, the hopes, the places where you really add value if you get them an exhibition at the Print Studio in Glasgow and you're a printmaker. They've got a thing on at the moment, four one-week exhibitions of members' and student printmaking. They have *added* something to the CV of those artists and present an opportunity to present their work in a way that they couldn't have in the past. They are an important platform or station in this thing.

> We are getting rid of all the art form silos… There will be no art form budgets…we will have generic budgets that are more strategic, much more planned and on a larger scale

So I am kind of using this as an almost conceptual way of describing our role. We need to find ways of supporting them get onto this track, of identifying the platforms and then say: you've got that really great platform over there at the Fruitmarket, what else could it do? What more could that organisation do to meet our objectives which are investing in talent, investing in the cultural economy, investing in quality production, investing in access?

**DJ:** *So is it about giving organisations new targets within their existing funds? Is it about redefining their targets?*

**AD:** It is about *inviting* them… we're going through a review of our Foundation Organisations at the moment. We're pretty happy about what's there and we've talked about building our strong foundations which was a very good message to put across when we were bidding for our money from the government and we've *meant* it because they are strong foundations. Once you've got foundations, you want to ask: what else can you build on top of them? Could you make them even stronger? Are there things that they could do that are outside their buildings? Fruitmarket Gallery has done some great education projects with *Air Iomlaid (On Exchange)*, a visual arts project linking school children in Skye and Edinburgh. They had internships and trainee curators. Could they kind of do more in terms of trainee curators? At the moment they are operating with a grant and they do their x number of exhibitions a year and education programme. Actually, if you gave them a bit more resources, what else could they do?

We are not doing directioning and saying we want to give you targets. We are entering into a series of conversations which say 'What more could you do in delivering our objectives in Scotland?' And some of that could be artistically, some of that might be geographically, filling some of those gaps. There isn't a strong enough small scale visual arts touring network. Could we find one of the visual arts organisations to take that role on?

**DJ:** *There is a certain way in which you want to take on decisions-making in which you bring the different art forms, different sectors in helping you make decisions where the blockages may be in… in the career paths and how this could be developed?*

**AD:** What I kind of understand is that there aren't these… stations, these places… if you look at printmaking, that is fine. There are – if you look at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Dundee – fantastic facilities. The sculpture workshops are great in Glasgow and Edinburgh. If you look at certain other forms, there are limitations as to the resource base or the places where people can go and take their work on to a next stage. So it is about us having that conversation with the sector about where there are gaps. Also about where there are strengths, I use theatre for an example. We have a real strength in children's theatre in Scotland and you want to build on that strength. Likewise there is a strength in GI as a festival but it is only scratching the surface of what it can really do if it were given more resources to make things happen.

**DJ:** *I want to talk a bit more about these various approaches to resourcing. You said at the start that Creative Scotland is much more than a funding body and that that is what differentiates it from its predecessor organisations. The literature talks about grants, loans and then, there is also in some of the documents, talk about corporate investments, venture capital and so on unlocking commercial investment. I imagine that when loans are talked about these are non-commercial loans, the recuperation of an investment at declining terms of profit. But is there, I am wondering, if there is a distinction that is clear, a definition about that kind of loan and commercial investment?*

**AD:** I think it is fair to say that at the moment we are not even at first base in terms of those new forms of finance in terms of loans. We do… effectively you're doing loans when you're investing in films, you just don't expect to get much of it back. There is a recoupment clause in the contract, so with the Last King of Scotland we got a cheque back of $60,000 but we are interested in… Are there ways in which different types of finance can be made to help artists to deliver what they want to achieve? To kind of capitalise things? There are bits of really interesting work in the US, and I never like to use the US as an example for the arts because funding-wise it's terrible, but it actually has done some really interesting things with artists, artists-space and loans, money, housing and studios. I think there are kinds of loans that we can learn from them. So we want to explore that territory.

It is easy for us to invest in an agency like WASPS and that has been true for a certain kind of investment, where the British Arts Council, quite visionary, put £3million on the table for five arts projects in five places. It was terribly flexible as to how the money was spent. Ultimately, it was about an asset base for WASPS that enables them to operate very sustainably as an organisation to offer cheaper and better quality accommodation for artists and creative people. Can you actually do that for individuals, for individual artists? Could you create an artist mortgage? Could you create some way of supporting people that isn't just about a grant? We're starting to explore that territory.

**DJ:** *There are a couple of things in terms of how Creative Scotland is acting. Is it acting to administrate funds that are borrowed commercially? Is it…*

**AD:** Not at the moment. Our income is primarily at the moment Scottish Government, Lottery and some trusts and foundations. It is not inconceivable in the future that we might *stimulate* private investment into creative industries, into sort of the more commercial end I suppose more likely in the creative industries. But the only areas we have *really* got into, this is actually quite an interesting example, is Own Art.

I was chairman of the board of Own Art when it was set up. Own Art is just a very clever scheme but all it does is pay the interest on the purchase of an artwork by a member of the public. It uses relatively little money and the benefit goes to the commercial gallery in terms of its sale, in terms of the artist [who] gets the money upfront, and the member of the public gets the benefit because they're buying a work and spreading the cost over 10 or 12 months.

Now, you can take that principle and use it on other things..In England they have already used it to allow the public to buy musical instruments. Take the same principle and use it to buy artist equipment, and if an artist is having to hire equipment on a regular basis, why can't we do a loan on the buy and a repayment plan. Then we are able to recycle the money but essentially we do some deal with the bank where the bank manager does the process for us. So we want to explore that territory.

**DJ:** *But that is not in the intention of replacing...*

**AD:** No, no that is as well as. There are other interesting sources of cultural financing that are starting to emerge. There is the whole area of *crowdsourcing*, kind of online choices about which projects to fund and online giving to seize the public appetite to put money into things. To a certain extent Central Station have done it with their small grants that they are doing online, not in raising the money but in allocating choices. That, again, is territory we will explore because if we just use our resources in straight grants we are not getting the most out of them. To tell a story of when I worked in Northern Arts. We funded a residency in Grizedale, in the forest there, and it was a craft agency and it was £20,000 per year. It was hugely popular, we would have 70 artists a year apply for it. It was a six months residency, fantastic, you got an exhibition, produce some work, left the work behind. There would be 59 artists that we totally hacked off because they didn't get in and there was one that got it. It was a great residency, it had good profile and looked good on the CV. We used the same £20,000 when the residency programme finished and put it into a public art agency in Cumbria, partnered up with some money from Sustrans[3] and from the local authority. Within a year it had generated £1 million worth of artist commissions. Which was the best way to use the £20,000? The answer is there is no right answer but both have a kind of validity and if part of our role is to expand the cultural economy then we have to look at mechanisms to do that sort of leverage.

**DJ:** *I suppose there is one danger of if the agency itself becomes involved in quite a lot of that, of the agency becoming exposed to quite a lot of liability for interest to commercial banks, presumably at commercial rates.*

**AD:** Yes, I mean we would set up partnerships that would limit the risk to ourselves and limit the risks to our partners, but also: we could be prepared to take those risks. You don't really get creativity unless you take risks. So we've got to be prepared – not to gamble but to trust the cultural sector a bit more.

**DJ:** *Maybe then, slightly linked to this...*

**AD:** Can I tell you another angle, because sometimes it can give you a better sense of our thinking. There is an artist in Newcastle who came to us for a grant for £3,000 for a studio, he's 26. We gave him a grant for £3,000 for a studio and he came back and says 'Actually, I found a building. I can put 12 studios in here but I'd need £30,000. If I get £30,000 off you I could get £90,000 off the city.' We backed him. He was 26 years old, he had never owned a building in his life. He made great furniture, he was a great cabinet maker and he now is running something like 70 artist workspaces in Newcastle. He's got three buildings.

We've got to be able to spot the talent like that, that is able to do that, and with social entrepreneurs. I met a guy from Glasgow on Monday, you know they've got the studio down by the railway arches and they are gradually taking a lease on some of those railway arches. Very little of public money has gone into it but he's just an entrepreneur… [pauses] … social.

**DJ:** *You mentioned the recoupment through film, e.g., of loans. ...there is an argument that says that for some film funding, for non-commercial cultural films, sometimes that the model of funding for film funding for UK Film Councils, Northern Ireland Screen, Scottish Screen, that because it applied an industrial model to the whole area it was sometimes difficult for a cultural film to be made because it couldn't recoup that money, and so it was already ineligible. First of all, do you think this is an issue? But also, that there is no desire in part of Creative Scotland to move people who have been funded through grants into a kind of recoupable structure? In other words, there is not going to be any imperative on people to be trying to marketise something which isn't already?*

> We are very committed to what we are supporting but we are going to get rid of [Flexible Funding] in two years time.

**AD:** There will always be a range. I mean there are very few films that seriously recoup money other than to their primary major investors. We are small-scale investors, with £300,000 in a £5millions budget. So our share back could never be great, but it is right: if we do have a success and the British Film Council is having a huge success with *The King's Speech*, we get our share back in. We can then re-invest it, perhaps back into the same company.

We're quite interested in investing in companies and if they are successful, the equity is re-invested in them rather than us because we can't budget, you can't realistically budget to say we are supporting twelve films next year and we will get a £1million income off them. That would be unrealistic. What you *can* do is to set up a programme where Ecosse Films or Sigma Films (who've recently released *You Instead*, recently premiered at Glasgow Film Festival and in the US at SxSW, and who have just signed a new distribution deal with Icon Films) if they are successful part of the deal is that we continue to get the credits but that we re-invest the profits back into the next project. I think that is a great incentive.

> We would define four or five franchises that we'd then advertise and invite proposals to come forward.

**DJ:** *Is there not any pressure from Creative Scotland or perhaps from the Scottish Government to expand that model out to other areas in other words: the non-commercial forms, whoever it is, performance arts, the free cultural publishers. Is there no pressure to marketise them?*

**AD:** If you ask if there is any Government pressure on – no. The Government is interested in Creative Scotland playing a role in co-ordinating the development of the creative industries and helping Scotland's overall ambitions to be a sustainable and successful country. But there is no pressure that says we've got to apply all our resources into that commercial activity. In fact we're not! At our *heart* we are a charitable organisation that is about access, opportunity and taking cultural activity to the Scottish population and hopefully exporting a bit, reaching the people of Scotland. Our primary stakeholder is the Scottish population.

**DJ:** *I suppose the reason for some of the uncertainty around these areas is because of the breadth of the remit. It covers from the most commercially exploitable, as parts of the creative industries, as we're calling them, software development and so on, to...*

**AD:** I can maybe show you the building blocks budget. It can show you how *little* the creative industries is in the context of our own…. You know, we're not… we've got a co-ordination role but we're not in a primary investment role. Architecture is classed within the creative industries but we'd not be leading on investing in architecture in a big way. Commercial publishing is part of it, we may engage with publishing as a cultural product but we are not going to be involved in commercial publishing. What we do have a role to do is to ensure that there are the mechanisms there to support people developing in those sectors and industries. We will often devolve our responsibilities.

That's one of the general things where we're different. We are not going to be trying to do everything from *here*. If we've got an agency we can devolve *money* to, to manage on our behalf, we will. If they are better placed to take decisions than we are, either because of a specialism or because of critical mass of what they are doing.

Let me just show you this – every block is £1 million – this is the budget as is going into our corporate plan so that everyone can see so that it is very transparent. So £18 million is Foundation Organisations, £8 millions is Flexibly Funded Organisations more or less, a little bit out of there, a little bit out of Lottery. We've got about £1.7 million of cross-cutting agencies, things like Federation of Scottish Theatre, VAGA (Visual Arts and Galleries Association) and different agencies, our overheads to run the organisation. £3 million of our Treasury funding that we have chosen to invest in Talent. That is the primary thing that we're investing in from our Treasury funding. There is no creative industries in there. Down here there is money that we've got for particular purposes from the Government. £10 million to use for a particular music initiative, £0.66 million for Cash Back for Communities, £2 million for Edinburgh Festival's Expo Fund and then £1.25 million Innovation Fund – so that is the Creative Industries, at £1.25 million it seems relatively small in the scheme of the budget. What we are developing up here, and this is still to be agreed and I can't give you the figures, we're developing a Lottery programme in bigger blocks. I can't give you the figure, but there will be a £3 million block for film, TV production. There will be a block for festivals and events, there will be some investment in the cultural economy work but that will be sustainability and environmental sustainability in the cultural sector.

Again, there is not a big chunk of money that says creative industries, loans. The vast majority of what we are doing is grant investment.

**DJ:** *We wanted to ask you something about what has been called 'single-purpose government', the idea of all government agencies face in the same direction and drive for the same purpose. [...] but, there can be productive tensions and that is surely where democratic space is. There might be useful social tensions where one department, one area, fights for what it believes to be important for its area.*

**AD:** I mean what I am setting out, you know, I've got my outcomes in front of me, it's in the plan, but: do we want to create a more successful country? Yes! With opportunities for people to engage in the arts? Yes. Do we want to achieve sustainable economic growth? Yes. These are all part of the Government's mission. There will however be the things that we want to achieve, that is about the kind of creative identity of culture in Scotland. Often actually arts and culture sets the agenda for Government to take up – I genuinely believe that the whole kind of climate change, environmental thing had… cultural organisations were there first. They were there doing stuff, Cape Farewell[4], cultural projects, artists that were looking at this *years* ago. So it is quite important to use culture to create debate around issues.We're doing some really interesting work.

We've been doing some interesting work about inspiring communities in prison. It has been a mix of National Galleries, Scottish Opera, Glasgow Citizens Theatre – really quite intensive work in five prisons but really pushing the boundaries of the question that if people really did have that kind of opportunity to engage with something cultural and creative, would it have an impact on

their reoffending rates when they come out or their behaviour whilst their are in. That isn't in the book of our purpose for us to do that, yes, we want a safer country and all that, but that is us working with Motherwell College and a whole set of cultural organisations.

I think an organisation like Creative Scotland will always be looking at where those cultural strengths are because the cultural strengths… we don't have the cultural strengths in children's theatre because it was in the book of our priorities but we have those strengths there because we had the artists there who created really brilliant work for kids.

**DJ:** *...we can put the question this way: in the last three years something has come up quite dramatically since the start of the crash and the recession – not only is there a potential conflict between business and public interest but that there can be a conflict if Government policy tries to fold business interest and public interest into the same thing; if it's always presumed that we are all pursuing the same goal, then it's the public benefit that comes second.*

*Yes, you can point to ways in which cultural actors in society are leading the way in all kinds of things, different areas of discussion and debates. But within society at the moment, within the UK at the moment we are all experiencing massive social cuts, public cuts and cuts that are to the detriment of the public benefit mainly because of the conflict between public interest and business interest. You've got both within your remit [...]*

**AD:** Yes but I mean we are hardly a bank. We're not there to overtly shore financial purposes. We're there to serve a public and that is where our focus is. So I don't think that there is any chance of us being *diverted* by having an economic purpose in there. For me, you know, growing the cultural economy is about creating jobs, employment and opportunities for artists and it's about creating more work that reaches more people. If we start moving into territory that is about cultural export, taking artists to Venice, showcase Scotland at the festivals, eh… sorry, showcase Scotland at the Celtic Connections festival, then it's actually about creating more work and promoting the artists that we have got in Scotland. I don't see that as any conflict with that core role of delivering public benefit. The other big story for us is of course, we haven't had cuts. The Government in Scotland has chosen to prioritise investing in Creative Scotland and we're fortunate that we will see some Lottery income coming back after the Olympics and we are obviously planning a growth budget.

**DJ:** *Yes. I suppose the things is, artists are the vanguard of casualised labour. An artist does about 10 different jobs in order to do their one job. If anything, that situation is worse. The situation of the artist has become more and more precarious. I am not just talking about Scotland but generally. The evidence is there if you look at average earnings of artists, if you look at lifetime earnings of artists, career opportunities and so on and what artists actually make, what percentage of their income comes through practising their art. Is Creative Scotland then about improving that situation and addressing that situation?*

**AD:** Yes, we actually… I did a talk at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic College, saying, as long as the average visual artist's salary is still under £5k per year we cannot be criticised for investing directly in individuals and doing residencies and doing artists' showcases that give artists bottles to take to the party and a chance to develop things on their own terms, but ultimately the change to that earning capacity is not just about us giving grants it is about growing the economy as well, our festivals being more successful, the private sector commissioning art, it is about getting different partners to recognise the value of the cultural sector.

I did a lot of work in public art in the Northeast of England and it almost became a movement. There wasn't a building put up without a major commissions programme and I am not talking about three little stained windows in a front door. I am talking Paolozzi outside and some really significant programmes. That was just about creating an environment in which it was seen as commercially sensible to invest in artists when you're developing property. I don't think that happened to the same extent in Scotland but I think there are ways that you can stimulate that sort of thing to happen.

**DJ:** *Still, it always depends on there being sensible partners in the commercial sector. You are talking about it being common sense but at the same time in these kinds of regeneration developments there should be a consideration of the broader ecology in terms of arts and culture but until now...*

**AD:** I knew we got it in the Northeast when a fire station approached us for a commissioning programme for the new fire station and they wanted digital video art rather than anything structural. You know, you can create that sort of movement and sense of… and this work with the prisons is really interesting. The research has just gone and you can see if we… we *will* do some further developments with this and you can see, suddenly the penny drops that investing in artists' work in prisons has a cost benefit that is huge.

You know, it costs a £1,000 a week to keep a person in prison. If we were investing in cultural projects in prisons, we could reduce their bill. But that is a movement and so it's about creating that sense that art can change things.

**DJ:** *The Act gives you a duty to protect diversity, access and participation. Is there, arising out of that, a diversity of cultural and political expression? Is there a duty, as far as you see it, to protect that kind of breadth of expression?*

**AD:** I don't think that that is what that particular phrase of the Act means which was about population access. In fact, we have actually used a similar phraseology around our production base and getting the diversity of cultural production and cultural ideas because we don't just want 10 theatre companies doing the same show at the Tron. We want a variety and diversity of work, and the same in the visual arts. We've got to ensure that…

Visual arts is my background, I was heavily involved in the Year of Visual Arts in 1996 and lots of public art programmes and other stuff, and one of the things I've done over the years is to go to lots of art colleges and lots of degree shows. You go into a lot of art colleges and there is a homogeneity about them. It's almost the artists are kind of soaking up the genre of the key pieces. [...]

What is quite interesting, I went around the art colleges in Scotland and I didn't get that feel. You got a feel that there was that kind of diversity in there, particularly GSA and Duncan of Jordanstone and actually, Gray's as well, where there seemed more freedom of expression of student work, more difference, actually a broader cross section of programmes running. I think that is quite healthy. So I think we're helped in trying to achieve that by what is coming out of the education sector.

**DJ:** *There are threats to the future of arts and humanities in HE and in terms of the foundations of this knowledge economy, creative economy and so on, that is a very real threat in terms of even being there as viable sectors for you to be supporting in the future. You talk about promoting, advocating, encouraging and supporting access, so: is there a role for Creative Scotland in getting involved in promoting, advocating, supporting, and protecting the arts at that level, at HE level?*

**AD:** Yes. There is actually a conference in Glasgow on Monday on HE and Creative Industries and we are contributing to a report that has been produced about the role of the university sector in Scotland for supporting creative industries. Again, Scotland is in a slightly better role than in England, just as it is in culture so in HE and the value that has been attached to culture in the curriculum and the *pride* almost raised in places like GSA and the track record in places like Dundee. Yeah, we would want to lobby. As someone said to me the other day: what is Creative Scotland's position on the closure of libraries? Well, the position is that we don't want them to close. We're not going to stand there with placards saying 'Don't close the library', but literature is important to our...

**DJ:** *So, what's the language?*

**AD:** Likewise with colleges, we would not want there to be a wholesale closure of cultural programmes in colleges but we're not going to stand there with a placard but we are going to work strategically with universities and colleges to say how can we advocate the strengths of what you do? How can we tell a collective picture of Scotland as a place to learn. I think it's a huge strength. If you add together GSA, RSAMD, Abertay, Aberdeen. That collective picture of *this* is a place to learn, the roles that festivals can play as platforms for new work, not just the Edinburgh festivals but 280 festivals across Scotland, there is a real strength there. So we would get behind that.

We would also get behind things like developing more incubator space, more artist workspace, which we do with WASPS but equally universities are very well placed to work in that territory and we want to do that collectively across Scotland.

> I think there are kinds of loans that we can learn from. So we want to explore that territory. ... Could you create an artist mortgage? Could you create some way of supporting people that isn't just about a grant?

Protecting HE is pretty important but in the end of the day we're not going to be the agency that changes UK government policy. What we *can* do is to convince our colleagues in Scotland and Scottish Government that they have got a real success story on their hands when they have 20 people applying for every one place at GSA, this is not something that is going out of fashion.

**DJ:** *Okay. I'll better let you get on...*

**Andrew Dixon kindly offered to follow up on Daniel's conversation by taking some additional questions from *Variant* via email:**

#### Flexible Funding

**V:** *You have said that although Creative Scotland is very committed to supporting the organisations it has funded in this way, Creative Scotland will get rid of Flexible Funding in two years time. As you say, this was a very competitive scheme with 139 organisations bidding against each other this year and less than half receiving funding for their programmes.*

*From what you say we can only see a large scale plan for the future which fails to provide secure space for small organisations. Indeed, it would appear that you intend larger organisations to fill the 'gaps' that will be created by getting rid of swaths of activity currently conducted by Flexible Funded organisations. Moreover, in your description of the future there doesn't seem to be anything between big organisations and individuals except for your mention of 'franchises'. Could you please elaborate on your ideas in this respect?*

**AD:** Our plans for strategic commissioning are not intended to 'get rid' of swathes of activity, but are instead about getting the right expertise to deliver work. The cultural ecology in Scotland is complex and we want to ensure that our investment is directed at the areas where it will make most impact. This could include, for example, smaller organisations collaborating on bigger projects, rather than investing in solely in bigger organisations.

Before we move to the commissioning model, there will be a rolling programme of reviews, with the sectors involved playing a key role, to inform our needs for different sectors. The process for commissioning will be introduced in stages with selected delivery partners replacing FXOs as each franchise becomes operational. This would start in 2011 with reviews of performing arts, visual arts and crafts. It will be followed in 2012 with reviews of film, digital media and festivals. In 2013 we will review literature agencies, publishing and equalities.

Each review will inform the shape and nature of the franchises to be offered through strategic commissioning. Our expectation is that many organisations will look for partners to bid for franchises, so collaboration will be stimulated,

as will innovation. Sustainability and resilience will be fundamental to the survival of creative organisations

**Cuts**

**V:** *You said that "the big story for us is of course, we haven't had cuts." However, the consultant Ann Bonnar doesn't tell the same story. As she points out, savings were made in the first place by abolishing the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen and forming Creative Scotland in their stead. She has said, "the overall cut to the culture budget is 10%, which is higher than the 6.9% John Swinney cited as the standard cut applied to non ring-fenced services. So it's the next installments which will shape the story".[5] Bonnar also points out that the Scottish Local Authorities, which you are keen to work in partnership with, "are facing the same challenges as in England with large cuts to absorb and neither a statutory responsibility for the arts nor an agreement to support culture".[6] So the issue here seems to be complicated by compound cuts and stand still budgets in real terms, now and beyond the forthcoming election.*

**AD:** For clarity, Creative Scotland's 2011-2012 budget has been maintained at £35.5 million, the same figure as 2010-2011. By reducing our overheads and streamlining our services, we have saved resources and reinvested almost £1 m of savings back into the creative sector. Creative Scotland recognises the challenges local authorities face during the coming year, however, we have been in close discussions with a range of authorities that recognise the contribution that culture makes to the lives of their communities and are looking to maintain the value of their investment in culture and creativity. Our corporate plan, *Investing in our Creative Future*, includes a £1million programme to invest in the contribution that 'places' across the country make to a creative Scotland.

**V:** *In arguing for the formation of Creative Scotland different Culture Ministers, Labour and Nationalist alike, assured the public that they were committed to the arms length principle. Going by what you say, these assurances have been misleading. The idea of the public service which you speak of seems virtually indistinguishable from developing the political notion of Scotland PLC under the auspices of Creative Scotland. So to what extent do you think your future budget is dependent on the organisation being a function of what, in contemporary civil service language, is called "single purpose government"?*

**AD:** Creative Scotland is a non-departmental public body and as such is part of the wider delivery landscape of Scottish public services which includes local and regional government. Promotion of, and advocating for, Scotland's talented creative sector benefits both the sector itself and contributes to the rich creative life of Scotland's communities. This role is enshrined in the legislation that established Creative Scotland and it continues to operate within the arms' length principle.

**The Social Agenda**

**V:** *The 2006 Scottish government commissioned study, 'Quality of Life and Well-Being; Measuring the Benefits of Culture and Sport'[7], shows how weak the evidence base is which underpins idealistic connections between the arts and the solving of social ills. However, the volume of research done in this area has not moderated the political appetite for making such claims.*

*You have talked about "doing some interesting work about inspiring communities in prison". Some readers will be surprised to see you describing people who have been incarcerated as "communities" in quite such rose tinted terms. Of course the arts have long been offered to prisoners as one aspect of their generally humane treatment in accordance with human rights. What is new is an emphasis on the impact of the arts on reducing crime. But what if the arts have little or no impact on reducing re-offending rates? After all, the much stronger correlation is between crime and inequality. So are you perhaps guilty of overplaying instrumental benefits in line with contemporary neoliberal governments that normally play down the stronger correlation and play up what are in fact tokenistic policies?*

**AD:** The *Inspiring Change* project, led by Motherwell College, has completed an early stage evaluation which is, as I said, interesting. Given the short lifespan of the project, the evaluation makes no claim to reducing re-offending, however, it does cite impacts on inmates' learning and on their relationships with their families. Ultimately, ex-offenders will be released into communities everywhere in Scotland – initiatives such as *Inspiring Change*, or the *Cashback for Communities* projects are about improving the lives of neighbourhoods and communities through the provision of cultural and creative activities.

**Unesco**

**V:** *The Scottish Arts Council was not set up to be an instrumental force in the market in the way you describe Creative Scotland. The interventions the new organisation has made to promote what you've called "home grown culture" are already controversial. It seems important to remember that these interventions are sanctioned by the Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions which came into force in 2007. As Minister of Culture and Constitutional Affairs Mike Russell saw no difficulty in reconciling the anti-free market meaning of the Unesco treaty with his vision for Creative Scotland as an entrepreneurial organisation. Yet the interventions you make as an economic development agency concerned with our 'cultural ecology' are also distortions of the market. Given the complaints of small independent television producers about Creative Scotland's patronage of STV at the indies' expense[8], for instance, how is Creative Scotland going to deal with the underlying business issues of cultural protectionism? How is Creative Scotland going to avoid becoming a bastion of publicly funded cultural nationalism?*

**AD:** Creative Scotland has been thoroughly transparent in its aim to boost independent television production generated in Scotland and also that we would use a range of tools to build sustainable businesses. The good news is that this will offer excellent opportunities ahead for independent writers, directors and other talent to produce work that inspires audiences nationally and internationally.

**Life in a Promotional Culture**

**V:** *Our experience of working in the cultural sector is rather at odds with the benign picture you painted in conversation. What we find is that the 'economic agenda' you talk about is inextricably bound up with a now widespread promotional attitude to culture. You've said that Creative Scotland is to operate "generic budgets that are more strategic, much more planned and on a larger scale and able to punch the weight." We welcome pluralism and greater scope, but your language here also points to the new business ethos which we find threatening. In practice it is the same promotional ethos that we see overriding local democracy and accountability, for example when Variant was effectively censored by Culture Sport Glasgow for, among other things, allegedly showing Glasgow in a bad light. Or even more worryingly, when the Aberdeen City Council bowed to commercial lobbying and supported Ian Wood's costly and, by the Council's own findings, unpopular plans to build over Union Street Gardens. In that case it was Peacock Arts who found themselves at the centre of a storm created by different values in commerce and culture.[9]*

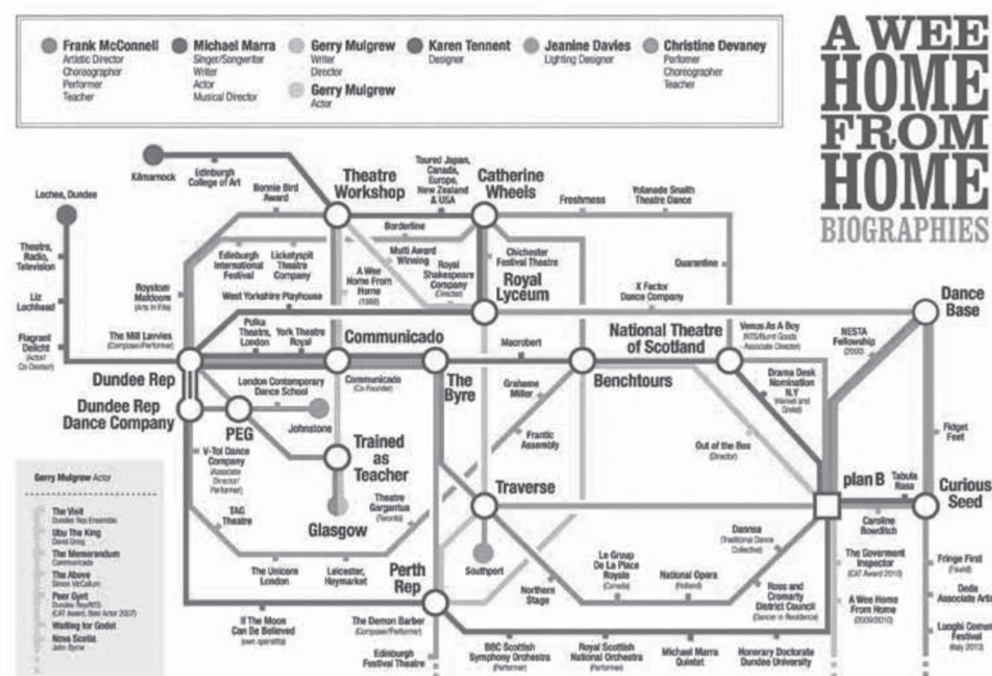
*There are many other examples which we could give of the problematic relationship between commerce and culture, and no doubt you will be aware of the weight of cultural philosophy which argues that commercial exchange values are forever at odds with the very complex use values which underpin artistic quality and general cultural wellbeing. Yet, from its founding statements, it has been clear that Creative Scotland's mission is to try and reconcile these contradictory movements. We are not going to resolve the arguments on these pages, but it should be no surprise to anyone that where you see public money "adding value" to culture in Scotland others may regard the dynamic very differently and see public money being diverted, in too many instances, to the cause of inflating exchange values and private profits, and ultimately extracting value through an ever increasing range of methods. From that perspective, the inflated public spending on such things as corporate logos, public relations and consultancy fees are all examples of an entrepreneurial culture inured to the plundering of the public sector. What are your thoughts on this situation?*

**AD:** We have recently published *Investing in Our Creative Future*, Creative Scotland's first plan, which sets out our ambition to see Scotland recognised as one of the world's most creative nations and as a place of choice to live, learn and work as an artist. Our five objectives – investing in talent, quality production, audiences and access, place and the cultural economy – aim to increase the recognition, profile and influence of Scotland's talented creative practitioners and to increase the audiences that value their work. We will use a range of strategic investment programmes to achieve this: these are now published, alongside our plan;

www.creativescotland.com/about/our-plans/corporate-plan

**Notes**

1. March 2nd 2011.
2. [Eds.] "The List, an entertainment and lifestyle guide for Glasgow and Edinburgh, is reducing its frequency. From 2nd March the magazine will move from a fortnightly frequency to monthly." CISION, Media Updates - UK - 10th February 2011 http://uk.cision.com/Resources/media-updates/Media-Updates---UK---10-February-2011/
3. A primarily publicly funded charity, including: Big Lottery Fund, the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, local and central government (including the devolved governments in Wales and Scotland and government departments in Northern Ireland), Non-Departmental Public Bodies, and the European Union.
4. http://www.capefarewell.com/art/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/art-and-climate-change.html
5. http://annebonnar.wordpress.com/2010/11/17/the-impact-of-scotlands-budget-for-culture-wont-be-felt-until-the-next-instalments/
6. http://annebonnar.wordpress.com/2010/12/21/how-statistics-about-arts-cuts-are-used-creatively-to-make-political-points/
7. http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/13110743/0
8. http://www.heraldscotland.com:80/news/home-news/tv-indies-slam-creative-scotland-s-stv-cash-1.1090123
9. http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/save-the-new-contemporary-art-centre-in-union-terrace-gardens.html http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/north_east/8682430.stm http://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/Article.aspx/1752022




Plan B Company, performer biographies, taken from the programme for *A Wee home from home*, 2010, reproduced in 'Investing In Scotland's Creative Future', Creative Scotland Corporate Plan 2011–2014

ESCALATE

## Marching for Whose Alternative?

Escalate, April 2011

We are not storming heaven, but being marched precariously close to the precipice. The Trade Union Congress is not our tool for emancipation – and neither can it be. Why are we being so skilfully pacified by 'our' institutions? We should see clearly how Brendan Barber, Ed Miliband and friends have steered us so neatly toward the cliff-edge. We might crash onto the rocks below, and in the waters that roil about them the TUC, transfixed, might capture a glimpse of its own continued social relevance. Such a shattering fall will surely tear us from our fond illusions. We would hope, however, that we can awake of our own accord. It is time to throw aside the TUC's terrifying rattle of 'jobs, growth and justice'. It is a rattle which never belonged to us in the first place, nor is it something we actually seek.

What happened on March 26? The official answer is clear: hundreds of thousands of 'people from all walks of life' marched for an 'alternative'. Who in fact were they, and what are their interests? And what material recourse do they have against their managed impoverishment? Among all the cloddish asininities emblazoned in grim edible pinks across a million A6 flyers, not once does the TUC mention *class*. Its current agenda is one of banal inclusivity. It assumes the necessity of this programme (though of course it makes no public argument for it) on the grounds that it must build the largest possible coalition against state-led austerity. The official slogan is "All Together For Public Services".

The public relations exercise conducted by the TUC and its institutional supporters has been intended to convince us that opposition to the cuts does not entail opposition to the groups who benefit from their implementation. Such opposition is difficult and antagonistic. The TUC urges us to forget it.

The media divides us as 'trade unionists' and 'anarchists'. Some enthusiasts on the left have declared that the 'political' task we now face is the active unification of these groups, as if by the passion of our demand for unity we might solder together the broken halves of a mass opposition. But there are not 'two halves': the fractions opposed to 'the cuts' are more various than that; and they are divided not only by the *form* of their politics, but also by their *content*. 'Unification' will be useless so long as it involves the subordination of all political fractions to the 'middle classes'. At bottom, the pre-eminence of middle-class 'values' is the pre-eminence of bourgeois property rights.

### 1. 'The Demonstrators'

As is well known and lamented, trade union membership has declined in the last three decades. It was at 51% in 1975. At the end of 2006 union membership was 28.4%. Trade unionism hasn't declined only because the private sector now makes up a larger proportion of the British economy, rather this diminution of membership is common to all sectors. Union culture in the UK is moribund. During the University and College Union strike, workers picketing the doors of university buildings found that their first task was to explain to students what a strike *is*. Repeatedly those students warmly declared their support as they crossed the lines to buy a Caesar salad or use the wireless internet. Even some of the members of the union seemed puzzled to hear that they ought not to be crossing pickets.

Knowing that the lives of its membership will be mutilated by fiscal tightening, the TUC organises in the knowledge of its own social marginality. The bland pastel colours and sugar-paper lettering of its promotional materials are the livid and desperate register of the organisation's social insignificance. The abstract entities to which its slogans appeal ("everyone", "all of us") are a tacit acknowledgement of the real diminution of trade union membership. All those soothing images and grandly empty pronouns are a kind of self-denial: the more the TUC strains to come across as a division of Mothercare, the more plainly it gives voice to the dissipation of traditional bases of working-class power.

The TUC no doubt believes that it must reach out to the middle-classes if it is to direct a strong anti-austerity campaign. But since it isn't willing to state this expressly, it instead tries to prove that the effects of austerity are 'universal'. It therefore (like the Labour party before it) avers to the monumentally pernicious equation of a (partly fictitious) middle-class with the populace as a whole. Class is suppressed in favour of a specious universalism. Under the sign of the unification of trade unionists and the 'middle classes', the TUC subscribes to a thoroughly *bourgeois* hatred of social disruption. The 'alternative' – even at the level of rhetoric – becomes *comfortable* passivity.

Just like its propaganda, the TUC's announced political programme of 'universal' benefit by Keynesian deficit spending is calculated to suppress basic social antagonisms. It does so by synthesising for its audience a vision of 'jobs, growth and justice' where 'we' all benefit – whether 'we' happen to be workers or the capitalists who exploit them. And yet not only does this image of universal harmony through state stimulated growth spirit away the basic antagonism between capital and labour, it also presents the promise of a state-*administered* recovery. All the masses need do is come out on the streets and mindlessly drool the slogans, and our benevolent fathers in the state and the union bureaucracies will do the rest. The TUC's propaganda is infantilising; but in this respect it is the mirror image of its political programme, which is paternalist. Both are fetters on the development of an autonomous working-class struggle against capital – one which is for itself, not merely a charade.

For anti-cuts groups, effective politics will be won by refusing to agitate for a void called 'everyone'. That void will ultimately always be substantiated as a middle-class impassioned only by the slumber of stable exploitation and routinised debasement. Where for working-class activists there is the potential for an intensification and victory in an ongoing social war, the bourgeoisie raises its flag to civil stability. The TUC salutes; the extortion of profit continues unchecked.

### 2. 'The Anarchists'

Among those designated 'anarchists' by the bourgeois media (or 'autonomists' by the Leninist left), we can identify three broad groups. There are middle-class students and recent graduates (many unemployed), from various institutional backgrounds, recently mobilised by the 2010 student demonstrations. This category might be further subdivided to include middle-class students at elite Higher Education institutions, working-class students at 'post-1992 ex-polytechnics, liberal activist graduates, anarchist organisers, Trotskyist students, and so on. Second, there are school students, again of multifarious class positions, political dispositions and educations; finally there are committed, ideological anarchists, of various persuasions, all or none of whom may be school and university students, and separately employed, wageless, unionised, or otherwise. This is just to say that the categories are complex, imbricated, and in no sense discrete. For this reason, no one should expect all of these groups to assent to a common programme, and least of all that set out by the TUC.

Yet those engaging in black bloc tactics are no more the vital core of the movement than the small entrepreneurs whom the Labour party and the TUC so incompetently seduce. Thus the separation of the TUC's march from the more radical direct action reproduced the separation of production and consumption in the economy at large. The black bloc runs up Oxford Street smashing windows screaming "pay your taxes". It thereby expresses the contradictions of a life lived solely in the ghostly realm of consumption. Anarchism became the negation of shopping. Meanwhile, production plodded towards Hyde Park – and was duly placated by the confirmation from senior politicians that its passivity would be rewarded.

### 3. Direct Action

Direct action cannot always prefigure harmony. While we would like to have an activism which creates a positive politics *directly*, more often than not we find ourselves defensively engaged. Even when the palaces of consumerism are temporarily transformed into crèches and health centres (as in the manner of UK Uncut), the ultimate intention is not to force a permanent change of the space. It is to halt the smooth destruction of the welfare state, of pay and working conditions. In other words, direct action can (and often should) be a *means* – not an *end*. To expand: the direct action undertaken by anti-cuts groups is of a different character to their modes of self-organisation. When we organise in those groups we try to prefigure the world we want to see in our forms of co-operation – we have consensus-based meetings, we adopt specific vocabulary, we work to avoid accidental subordination of participants. Our direct action, however, is of a different sort: we don't want to live in a world of smashed glass and burning barricades, but these are necessary means for political advance. The trashing of Soho is our 'transitional demand', not our utopic end-goal.

This is the source of a strategic problem which has to be addressed and made relevant to those engaged in the anti-austerity struggle of which we are 'all', it would seem, a part. The problem is this: for too long we have been losing, perhaps to the extent that we have forgotten what it would mean to win.

It wasn't difficult to sense this on March 26th. Certainly the property destruction was on the whole politically well-targeted: we will never mourn for shattered glass in The Ritz. What is nevertheless clear is that the scale of what faces us will not be overcome by 100 or 100,000 well-intentioned individuals, or by forever pretending that our ultimate objective is a 'just' and well-functioning taxation policy. Inspired heroes cannot save us; 'jobs, growth and justice' by the abolition of tax loopholes is fatuous. Capital's supremacy will not be dented by the symbolism of giant-puppets, or the *fetishization* of other struggles'

sites of resistance, whether Petrograd or Tahrir Square.

We talk not only of overcoming austerity, but of overcoming capital altogether. Capital is social and exists on a mass scale: our resistance must be likewise. Our strategies must be for total generalization. This is in no way an argument against radical action: it is an attempt to open a discussion about the exact form it is to take, and to understand the extent to which is can be taken. This means reconfiguring our categories of peace and disruption, and being prepared not to mourn the welfare state, but to physically resist the attempts made to privatise it.

#### 4. Media and Liberalism

Mainstream media or web-based social media, the message is almost always the same: damn the violent, praise the peaceful. In the bourgeois press, blame takes on a domino effect: the reactionaries say that the TUC are a minority; then the TUC say the activists are a minority; then the liberal non-violent protesters say that the black bloc are a minority. Some in the black bloc condemn throwing paint at McDonalds while children were inside. Are these lines in the sand, or tiresomely voluble attempts at self-exculpation from a collective failure?

Meanwhile, everyone from Ed Miliband to UK Uncut name drops the Civil Rights movement as a bastion of perfect protest – despite the history of these movements being a history of armed struggle, in which hundreds of bombings took place in and around government officers, corporations and campuses. The sit-down tactics which supposedly won the fight are raised on a wave of foam to a decorative plinth. The memory of Martin Luther King is sanitised. Malcolm X is politely ignored. The suffragettes and anti-Apartheid struggles are also mentioned as great victories: but all these three movements have an eerie commonality: they all ended in registering the vote for women and black citizens, while underlying structural inequality perdured. Hypnotised by the mantras of New Labour politicians, who would even recall that the anti-Apartheid and Civil Rights movements were about *black* resistance? Or that the Suffragettes fought for *women*? As the movement stands, the tactics of both the TUC and the more militant protesters are less egalitarian, radical, disruptive or violent than any of the historical movements praised.

In the days after a protest, the arguments are worn thin; there is a constant back and forth over definitions of property, violence, thuggery, intimidation and tactics. The story-line is static. But what really lies thin on the ground is strategy. This is because the liberal discourse is not concerned with strategies for change but with spectacles of increase. A hundred thousand mooning op-eds pass for a political culture. True strategies for change are uninterested in contributing to the range of intellectual consumer goods vended from a rack. We all know the correct strategies of resistance: the disruption of the economy either by attack or withdrawal. But these strategies are unsurprisingly not endorsed by the bourgeois media, which, as it smears its blood and soil over its news and comment pages, does more than any other social institution to promote the kind of authoritarian personality upon which *fascism* has historically relied.

Opening the Sunday papers, "ordinary people" were informed that their moment to be heard had been usurped. Whose fault was this? It was due to the actions of a 'tiny fraction' of violent protesters. A small group of individuals, many of them already facing charges, are singled out and declared to be culpable for the continued suppression of the exploited majority. Thus spake liberalism, with all the reciprocity of the master baker kneading his dough into the tray.

The TUC, meanwhile, colluded in this narrative, not only blaming the 'violent minority' but lamenting the loss of media attention on the demonstration. As if it weren't enough that those who wished to march were to do so under such meaningless slogans, and that they were obliged to accept the platitudes thrown down at them by politicians so far removed from the twin horrors of wage labour and capitalist unemployment, the greatest insult was yet to come: the TUC's admission that 500,000 trade unionists on the streets was merely a media spectacle. On their command, workers perform some perverse waggledance to the buzzing B-flats of a vuvuzela, and genuflect before the queen bee, Brendan Barber. When protest is so instrumentalised, marching becomes servitude.

#### 5. Political Freedom, Rights and Liberalism

The TUC, the media and our political rulers are the retailers of particular conceptions of what political resistance and freedom *are*. The TUC knows it cannot upset too many consumers of the bourgeois media; and the bourgeois media knows exactly how far this march can and should go before it crosses the line of appropriateness for justified grievances. Protest is permitted so long as does not precipitate change. We are allowed our 'right to protest' only to the extent that it doesn't infringe those other, more pressing civil rights: first of which is the right of capital to accumulate.

A snapshot is in order. The rights of people in central London not to have their day disturbed; the rights of shops in Oxford Street to remain open every minute of the yearly 364 day trading cycle, according to the interests of their shareholders; the rights of consumers to continue consuming unhindered; the rights of motorists not to be discomfited on their journey through town; the rights of businesses to keep their glass fronts pristinely intact; and the rights of everyone looking on from the street or their armchair not to be too unnerved or disturbed by what they see. 'Of course we recognise their right to protest, but…'. The qualification is a catechism. Protest must be limited so that other and more important rights might be preserved.

We are unnerved and disturbed by 364 day trading cycles, perpetual shopping, streams of traffic that go nowhere, and the brightly lit shop façades that line every street. Those smashing the windows know that the social basis is at bottom two things: exploitation in perpetuity, and the construction of the homo consumer whose 'demand' does so much to fuel it.

And yet this is the world of truly inalienable rights – here dissenters must be kindly accommodated, but the desire to change that social basis is legally proscribed. The demarcated route from Embankment to Hyde Park can be interpreted as a tantrum zone, where we all safely cry and scream ourselves to exhaustion. If our anguish and sorrow expresses itself too clearly, if we totter away from the designated route – we are all contained. The police know we will calm down; but they wrongly assume we will accept that mummy and daddy may have been right all along.

Increasingly, those in anti-cuts groups are viewing political protest and resistance as a matter of freedom, not rights. Our freedom to protest through the streets cannot be curtailed, and will not be bartered away in meetings at Congress House between the Metropolitan Police and a TUC stewarding operation. We won't seek permission to protest in the ways we wish to. The rights that curtail our freedom of protest are exactly those we wish to abolish, because they are the natural accompaniment and support to the institutions we protest against.

Others have recently, and encouragingly, demonstrated their consciousness of inherent political freedom. At Town Halls across the country the mark of the institutionalised liberal philosophy that the TUC exhibits has been on show. Councillors, when passing cuts budgets, have set out small seating areas, limited questions, and allotted time for people to appear before them and petition their mercy. Many residents however have recognised this fraudulent view of their freedom and have refused to play along, in the same way that the black bloc did not play along on March 26th.

When, at town halls, people have found their way blocked by nervous-looking officials, or more frequently by the police, there has not been talk of local people's 'rights': there has been action. Doors are banged and council chambers occupied. Whether storming council chambers is effective as a tactic is not the salient point. What is important is that people come collectively to define their entitlements, in direct refutation of the dissuasive invocation of economic rights. On Saturday thousands of people, who deliberately broke away from the agreed route of the march, became conscious of their own freedom and did exactly the same.

#### 6. Criminality

When the inestimable Commander Bob Broadhurst says of the black bloc and other hoards of malefactors that he "*wouldn't* call them *protesters*… [because they]… are engaging in *criminal* activities for their own ends" he provides for us a summary definition. Politics is articulated as action that occurs within the parameters defined by a state's system of jurisprudence. According to Bob Broadhurst and his functional equivalents and media outlets, criminals may only act 'for their own ends,' because otherwise we might be forced to accept that criminality is often enough a political reflex to social conditions of extraordinary depravity.

The reality is that direct action has always been criminal. When in the 1960s radical historians re-evaluated the Luddite movement, they had to overturn an enormous weight of reactionary historical dogma. According to that dogma, the Luddites were not 'doing politics'; they were acting in defence of their next meal. Because in capitalist societies politics is done by very well fed men who obey the laws that have always redounded to their current accounts, the idea that actions performed either illegally or out of desperate need are *political* is imperiously refuted.

Dominant classes will continue to dismiss as 'crime' the occupation of their buildings, the expropriation of their goods, and the disruption of the productive relations from which they benefit, and from which dominated classes suffer, until such time as they are overthrown by those who 'engage in criminal activities for their own ends.' Then the tables turn and the criminals become romantic rebels, fit to be reverently invoked in the speeches of Ed Miliband. The actions of the black bloc aren't so different from the criminal acts of the Algerian teenagers who rioted in the Paris *banlieues* in 2005; but that's because both groups understand that, in the face of capitalist institutions designed to legitimate near universal impoverishment, crime is the only means of redress.

Many of the political acts in which the militant protesters have engaged are simply the renaming of everyday, petty crimes. Tagging becomes political sloganeering, trespass becomes an occupation, vandalism becomes economic disruption. This is why the right-wing press so *easily* brands them as acts of hooligans, yobs and vandals. But we should have no need to legitimise our actions within the state-approved categories of politics or disorder.

Crime so defined will not on its own bring an end to the wage relation, but it is already political, because wherever it is performed, it opens our eyes to the institutional lineaments of capitalism. Close those eyes and the dream of 'jobs, growth and justice' continues. If we are forced to choose between associating ourselves with hooligans or politics then, so long as Ed Milliband represents politics, we should firmly choose hooliganism.

#### 7. Policing

As the glass was cracked on Oxford Street, the state stepped in, in a blaze of violent glory, ready to save our national pride, our royal grocers and (our hearts swell with gratitude) our Olympic Clock. With tactics devised in the heat of colonial oppression, the police coerce, bruise, break, lie, taunt and corner. When they cannot, they coax, wheedle and arrest.

But of the 200 odd who were arrested, almost three-quarters were taken for an occupation where no windows were broken, and where little stock was stolen. Why? The strategy of the police is determined principally by the interests of capital. The protesters at Fortnum and Masons required heavy treatment because the economic damage done to that shop was greater than a smashed window (even if it took 100 people instead of one or two). The mass arrest shows that it is not the protest tactic of violence or non-violence that matters to capital, but the contours of economic damage.

The idea that businesses lose out significantly

from a day of lost trade only confirms what we already suspect about the structures of capitalist production: that these glossy shop-fronts do no more than force-feed passers-by with commodities the demand for which is itself manufactured. It is not only the high-end outlets such as Fortnum and Mason that we can do without (the rich can, of course, drive up the road to Harrods to buy their bread.) The fear of proprietors and managers unfortunate enough to be 'in' retail is an unusual one: that if we restrict the sales of their trinkets they are left with a surplus. For the capitalist, a surplus is equivalent to a loss. But what does the consumer (whose sovereignty we are expected to respect) gain through the purchase of that surplus? For all of the complaints against black bloc, no-one has moaned about not being able to buy a phone that Saturday.

The TUC march, meanwhile, did no economic damage — rather, it perhaps contributed to London's economy, with an influx of revellers and day-trippers flooding through the city's supermarkets and bistros. The March for the Alternative was a carnival like any other, ready to be wrung for profit.

#### 8. Where Next?

The 26th fades from view. In its place there looms the Royal Wedding: a new extravaganza for imbeciles, prepped for journalistic cathexis. Those journalists tremble with pleasure at the prospect of 'anarchists' crashing the vows. For militants who detest the creation of wretched, saleable spectacle, dates like this are irrelevant: the task is unification. But for most militants this just means that the grassroots mobilisation continues. *Pace* the bourgeois media, black bloc did not drop out of the sky and straight through the windows of Topshop; nor did labour militancy end in 1985.

Effective political action against the cuts (rather than against their decorative reduction) is and will be criminal, because at the global level the economic administrators have made their decisions, and will brook no dissent from career-minded state politicians elected on populist platforms. Within the structural constraints of transnational capital, there is no good alternative. Reduction of the structural deficit should be 'spread over a number of years', writes Larry Eliot in his TUC-endorsed pamphlet. This is surely not the political aim of those engaged in struggle against the government. If the anti-cuts movement becomes a supplication before state and union bureaucracies, then its progress will be like extracting communism from a stone.

For those consciously involved in the anti-cuts struggle, rejecting the greyscale 'vision' of the socially concerned bourgeoisie means participating in grassroots organisation and arguing for militant and illegal direct action (though, given the extremely repressive nature of current trade union law, illegality will not equal militancy). This means arguing for strategic blockading, occupations, shut-downs, and tactical destruction of private property. That base-organising trade unionists and local 'service users' are not yet 'ready to hear' all this is an order dressed up as a psychological insight, grunted by patronizing bureaucrats from the pinnacle of their stepladders. The tacit paternalism of their claim is the natural complement to the TUC's argument that the 'correct' and Keynesian alternative to the cuts shall be administered by experts from above, and like that claim, it is fatal for an active and effective class politics. A better society will only be durably achieved by the creation of a mass class acting for itself, ready to commit to mass direct action, no longer confined to high-street stores on Saturday afternoons but spreading like a fire throughout workplaces and across national borders.

*Alternatively*, we, 'all of us', can capitulate to the charade of opposition conducted by the Labour Party and the TUC, as they plot to oust the 'Con-Dems' as chief executors of capitalist decline.

Escalate is a collective of writers and activists from around the University of London. Brought together through protest, we come from a variety of political backgrounds but write and edit our work collectively. Anonymity frees us from reputation-seeking and ideological dead weight. We have no wish to contain or regulate the diversity of the movement. We are not its 'voice'. Our writing focuses on the current political situation: insofar as it learns from the past, it refuses nostalgia. We aim to provide analysis and critique that can inform the movement both practically and politically.

**escalatecollective.net**

# ...The Hindrance of Assembly
# Notes for a Tralfamadorian 'book'

## Robert (Bobby) Doohihan

### The Responsibility of Acknowledgement: a Disclaimer

The author of this essay is Ian Brotherhood, but he has chosen to adopt an alter-ego called Robert Doohihan (Bobby for short). Ian's first given 'Christian' name is Robert but he has never used it. Ian's father is also called Ian and his first given 'Christian' name is also Robert, but he was called Ian by his siblings and parents to distinguish him from his own father, who was also called Robert.

To be clear – the relevant Registers show that Ian Brotherhood, his father and grandfather were all Christened 'Robert', but only Ian's grandfather used the name, and no-one ever called him 'Robert' – he was referred to by friends and family alike as 'Bobby'.

Bobby Brotherhood may have been an attractive name in the early 20th Century, but by the sixties it sounded like a cabaret act, and by the nineties it was replete with potentially obscene inferences. Ian (this one) once worked in an office where he manned phones and had to spell/explain his name many times daily – he heard dozens of variations on his name, the most offensive of which was 'Dean Rubberglove'.

The experiences of 'Bobby' which follow are, for the most part, mirrored via the memory of Ian Brotherhood. However, Ian cannot comfortably set down the following as 'autobiography' – the stated intention of this project was to write 'a critical essay'. The subject of the essay was to have been another essay called 'The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism', by Jonathan Lethem, published in Harper's, February 2007. After submitting his proposal, Ian realised that the essay he proposed to criticise was not conventional, and should not therefore, in the interests of fair-play, be conventionally criticised.

While pondering how best to tackle the proposed essay, 'Bobby' became a virtual assistant similar to the animated paper-clip which offers presumptuous advice on some computer software – he worked hard, helping Ian resurrect memories, sifting the real from imagined while aiming to nail associations between seemingly disparate images and reflections.

Ian Brotherhood is a cantankerous middle-aged unemployed father of two with no respect for pedants, sophists, and language-mangling panhandlers. Bobby (Robert) Doohihan is/was, a fairer, saner, more humane and optimistic incarnation of the same man.

So Ian asked Bobby to write this, and supervised him throughout. It is the outline of a Tramalfadorian 'book'. If you haven't encountered Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*[1] then you will not be familiar with Tralfamadore, its occupants, or their concept of 'book'. This quote may, therefore, be useful before proceeding:

"There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right: each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message – describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time." (p.64)

### The Criticism of Motivation: a Russian Doll

Bobby reads Lethem's 'The Ecstasy of Influence' and doesn't know what to make of it. It's been described as 'a brilliant stunt, a high-concept attention-grabber'[2] but is it an essay?

The more Bobby wonders about plagiarism, influences, jokes, disguises, *trompe l'oeil*, trickery, magic, coincidence and synchronicity, the less he understands what 'The Ecstasy of Influence' is really about. Is it satire? A manifesto? A joke? Bobby tries to evaluate what he's learned from reading it. There's a lot of information, well presented, easily assimilable and entertaining, but the more Bobby tries to discern the subject of the piece, the more he finds himself thinking about Lethem – why did he do it? What was the point? Any teacher goes into a class knowing what the aim of the lesson is. What was the aim of Lethem's essay?

Bobby digs out some of the essays he remembers – the ones which affected him, taught him something.

Jonathan Swift's 'A Modest Proposal'[3] was all about the starving Irish eating their own children to help ease the dire poverty which was embarrassing their English cousins. That was hard-core satire. Pretty clear aim, point to make. Not easy to read, and less easy to laugh at, but Swift was in his sixties, the success of *Gulliver's Travels*

was already behind him – he had strong feelings on the subject, knew how he wanted to present them, then did it. Not everyone's cup of tea, but an effective piece, still much-discussed and quoted.

Orwell's essays? So many good ones to choose from, but Bobby picks one he hasn't read for a long time – 'Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool'[4]. Bobby's familiar with a lot of Orwell's essays and journalism, but can't recall ever feeling uneasy about Orwell's possible influences and motivations. (Maybe it's because the Lethem piece is preoccupying him – he's wary, hoping not to be tricked or tripped-up.) Then it clicks – Bobby is conscious of the presence of Orwell, can almost see him writing the piece, imagine the physical background, the undealt-with correspondence lying on the desk, the well-thumbed Shakespeare and Tolstoy volumes stacked behind the ashtray. Bobby finds himself querying Orwell's use of specific phrases, wondering to what extent Orwell is plagiarising himself, attributing his own thoughts and feelings to Tolstoy, Lear and/or Shakespeare. And Bobby then sees himself frowning at Orwell's essay, perhaps in the same way that Orwell frowned at Tolstoy, who had surely frowned disparagingly at Shakespeare's Lear before turning the dark gaze to The Bard himself.

So much frowning.

It strikes Bobby that if he invited Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Jonathan Lethem, Orwell and King Lear around for a few glasses of Lambrini and a quiet smoke, they'd probably get on famously. But that cannot be. They would learn so much more about each other from just being together than they'd ever glean from studying one another's work. And perhaps that's why Bobby believes that writers should be anonymous – all of them. All writing should be encouraged and published and read, but the identity of the author should only ever be divulged (voluntarily) in the event of legal objections to offensive/damaging statements being committed to print.

As he compares 'The Ecstasy of Influence' with other essays, Bobby senses a burgeoning annoyance with Lethem. It seems that the piece is not about plagiarism, intellectual property, the dubious concept of 'the commons' etc – it is about how clever Jonathan Lethem is, and while that may be something worth noting, it doesn't, in Bobby's estimation, merit eight-thousand words of proof. Bobby knows he's read something which describes essays like Lethem's. It takes a long time to find it. It appeared near the beginning of Herman Hesse's Nobel-Prize winning *The Glass Bead Game*[5]:

"They reported on, or rather 'chatted' about, a thousand-and-one items of knowledge. It would seem, moreover, that the cleverer among the writers of them poked fun at their own work. Ziegenhalss, at any rate, contends that many such pieces are so incomprehensible that they can only be viewed as self-persiflage on the part of the authors. Quite possibly these manufactured articles do indeed contain a quantity of irony and self-mockery which cannot be understood until the key is found again. The producers of these trivia were in some cases attached to the staff of the newspapers; in other cases they were free-lance scriveners. Frequently they enjoyed the high-sounding title of 'writer', but a great many of them seem to have belonged to the scholar class. Quite a few were celebrated university professors."

## The Perception of Perspective: a Revelation

Nov 17th 2009 – Bobby watches the second of a three-part BBC arts programme called 'The Art of Eternity', presented by an art critic named Andrew Graham-Dixon. The hour-long programme is called 'The Glory of Byzantium'.

Graham-Dixon goes to Greece to meet an icon-painter called Giorgios Kordas who is working on frescoes for a new Orthodox church in Beirut.

AGD explains that there are approximately 2,000 iconographers in Greece, the majority based in Athens, and 80% of their work is commissioned by the Greek Orthodox Church.

As Giorgios works on a portrait, GD asks him questions. The artist explains that icons are alive, that they have rhythm. AGD looks puzzled:

AGD: 'I'm not sure what you mean.'

*Kordas quickly sketches a house – the backside up, front side down. He then sketches a figure using the same method, projecting the visible rear outlines of the torso unnaturally close to the surface. As he is drawing, he uses his limited English to try and emphasise that he's creating rhythm, looking for a balance between 'the dynamics'. AGD becomes animated, as if he's starting to realise something:*

AGD: In a sense the image is drawing out a cone...

GK: Exactly

AGD: ...into the world...I almost enter the space...the space of the image comes out.

GK: Pictorial space is in front of the icon and the spectator enters the pictorial space and the spectator becomes part of the icon.

AGD: Now that's massively different from the Italian Renaissance type...

GK: It's the opposite.

AGD: ...of pictorial space.

GK: It's the opposite. Exactly the opposite.

AGD: So, in the Renaissance, the painting is a window and I want to go through there...

GK: Yes, yes...

AGD: Whereas the Byzantine and what, so to speak, what is the, what is the point?

GK: What's the point? Why?

AGD: Why?

GK: That's a good question. Why. Because in Byzantine tradition, ehm, which is very influenced by Orthodox theology, knowledge is participation. If you want to know God you have to participate in God so, ahm, if we want to know this iconic reality, we have to have a kind of participation in this reality. That's why, when we paint the church, we have to create this kind of communion between the icons and spectators.

*VOICE-OVER: Listening to Giorgios, I really did feel that the penny had finally dropped. It's not that this art doesn't have perspective – it's that it uses perspective in a different way. I'd responded to Byzantine art instinctively, but while I'd been walking around and looking at it, I hadn't quite realised the extent to which it had been choreographing my movement, making me stand in a particular space within the cone shaped by its lines of force emerging from the images. I realised I had literally, as well as emotionally, been moved by this art.*

For Bobby, this documented moment, where an expert reaches a new level of understanding, is what the 'essay' is all about. It's clear from the reaction of Graham-Dixon that the epiphany is not staged. By listening to the artist, the critic has learned, then communicated that fresh understanding to the viewer. Bobby believes that this programme may be one of the most important things he's ever seen on television – if it was up to him, the insight gained by Graham-Dixon would be on the national news.

Icon painters never sign their work. They copy what has been done before, and it is considered offensive not to make those copies as faithful as the artist's skill allows.

## The Tyranny of Exclusion: a Memory

Summer 1973: For a week every summer Bobby stays with cousins on the other side of the city, which, to a ten year old, might as well be the other side of the planet. It's an exciting part of the school holidays, and they enjoy many adventures, most of which involve running away from real or imagined predatory gangs of older youths.

The cousins meet Bobby at the bus-stop for the start of their week – D is six months older than Bobby, but still 10. A is a year younger. As they walk back to the cousins' house, they meet two of D's classmates. They started to talk, and Bobby doesn't understand anything they're saying. Then they start talking about Bobby, and laughing. Bobby asks A what they're saying, but he doesn't know.

'Hegee's meggy ceggouseggin.'
'Wheggat's heggis neggame?'
'Beggobeggy.'
'Beggobeggy?'
'Eggaye. Beggobeggy Deggooheggiheggan.'

They're using 'eggy' language – inserting 'egg' before every sounded vowel. After some minutes of tormenting Bobby they explain what they're doing, and how useful it is for keeping conversations secret. All have been banned from using the code at home because their parents can't understand it. Bobby tries to do it, but can't. He struggles for three years to master eggy language, and by the time he has a handle on it he knows no-one who still uses it.

The significance of eggy language, for Bobby, has always been those three or four minutes of embarrassment and frustration, when he was excluded, made 'other' by a simple linguistic trick.

Many languages have their own version of 'eggy', most commonly used by youths in rebellious mode. In April 2002, BBC World Service reported that police in Parisian 'banlieus' were concerned that the argot used by disaffected youth was alienating them from agencies capable of 'helping' them – the linguistic trick seemed more sophisticated than 'eggy' language: the pattern involved swapping syllables and dropping whatever vowel remained e.g. 'voiture' became 'tourvoi', and the 'oi' was dropped, producing 'tourve', a neologism. To the uninitiated, the youths were speaking gibberish, but the latter achieved the exclusion they sought. For them, the code brought a freedom which could not be regulated, impinged-upon.

Lacanian philosopher Slavok Zizek[6]:

"Believing there is a code to be cracked is of course much the same as believing in the existence of some Big Other: in every case what is wanted is an agent who will give structure to our chaotic social lives."

## The Value of Coprolites: an Analogy

Bobby thinks he's found a useful analogy.

A coprolite is fossilised dung. Examination of these objects reveals the diet of the creature from which the material was ejected.

Close examination of texts can reveal the cultural diet of the author.

No creature can alter the composition of its excrement retrospectively, but authors can doctor evidence of their consumption by editing what they produce: an academic essay may be treated so that it appears to be a work of spontaneous creativity, or vice versa: a heartfelt rant may be disguised as objective analysis; a bold mission statement may become a innocuous series of non-sequiturs; an unremarkable prose passage may be judiciously re-presented in the form of free verse; personal liability for deeply held memories/opinions/desires may be shifted by using 'objective correlative'; potentially libelous material may be rendered safely publishable by the application of formal disclaimers and careful avoidance of legally pertinent 'facts'; responsibility for text can be effectively jettisoned by use of pseudonym, etc.

The coprophobic Jonathan Swift produced a corpus of work which literary dung-beetles have been swarming over for more than three hundred years.

In Glasgow in 1990, while the city was officially the European Cultural Capital, police arrested a man[7] for defacing properties in the city centre, especially around the Trongate area. The man was dressed as Al Jolson in full 'blackface' costume. He was arrested on the basis that he had been found loitering in a darkened area where the words 'Al Jolson' had been spray-painted across walls and pavements. No windows or vehicles had been targeted. He refused to give his real name and denied any wrongdoing. The desk sergeant briefly left the man alone while fetching a form – when he returned, someone had sprayed 'Al Jolson' across the surface of the desk. Despite being found to possess a large can of black aerosol spray-paint, the man denied any responsibility. The Al Jolson graffiti-spraying busker has now moved on, perhaps passed away – we will never know if he was also the person who, at the height of Glasgow's 1990 celebrations, sprayed hundreds of dog turds in the city centre with gold paint. To this day, there are many Glaswegians who remember that more clearly than any of the hundreds of cultural 'events' which were held.

Bobby starts to compile a list of essays, trying to describe what form of excrement they might resemble. He classifies Orwell's 'Politics and the English Language'[8] as a healthy, well-formed stool; Norman Mailer's *Cannibals and Christians*[9] as a

bourbon-scented heap which has been placed as a territorial marker; Hunter S Thomson's *The Great Shark Hunt*[10] is a roughage-free well-aimed blast of diarrhoea etc. Bobby's aim in compiling the list is to describe Lethem's 'Ecstasy of Influence' as a plastic joke-shop turd, but he abandons the exercise as ill-judged.

## The Fragility of Nostalgia: an Echo

Glasgow, April 1970: Bobby's house is sunny and busy, full of relatives. The smell of beer and tobacco is thick. It's Grand National day. Dad allows a collection of small change, and the newspaper is passed around, everyone taking turns to close their eyes and prick the list of runners with a needle. Bobby gets *Red Rum*.

The children get fed-up waiting for the race to start, go outside to play – when they return, Bobby is handed a tobacco tin containing almost one pound and fifty new pence.

The following year, Bobby pins *Red Rum* again. He doesn't know much about horses or gambling, but he knows there's no way the same horse will win again – he demands another chance with the needle but is denied. He starts crying and goes outside to sulk. When he returns he is handed a tobacco tin containing one pound and sixty-three new pence.

*Red Rum* remains the only horse ever to win consecutive Grand Nationals.

Tokyo, Japan, August 1991: Bobby is pished. Hammered. Blootered. Pie-eyed. It's half-three in the morning and he doesn't have work the next day, so he's started on his third bottle of *Black Label* since the holiday week-end started, and is wallowing in homesickness. The television, muted, provides visual company, while the tape-deck is playing U2's latest album, *Achtung Baby*.

Onscreen, the Japanese equivalent of BBC2 has been showing back-to-back wildlife documentaries for the past two hours but is now playing a studio discussion – three academic-looking chaps, denim-clad and with varying arrangements of facial hair, are grouped facing a normal television which starts showing the last highlights of football action from the Celtic versus Rangers 1980 Scottish Cup Final.

Bobby was at that game, knows what happens when the final whistle blows. He crawls closer to the screen, catching brief glimpses of the national stadium's upper perimeter, hoping to pinpoint exactly where he was with his friends when they witnessed the riot which made headlines worldwide and led directly to the banning of alcohol inside all Scottish football stadia. No chance. He knows he was there, but the footage concentrates on the violence, the drunken fans charging towards each other, the entrance of the mounted police with truncheons, the volleys of urine-filled bottles colliding above the centre-line, the panicked commentary, the smashed faces. For no more than three or four minutes, Bobby slips back a decade, to that sunny day – when the studio discussion resumes, the learned guests taking turns to provide their analysis of the tribal beastliness just witnessed, Bobby tops up his glass and drinks to the memory of the friends he was with that day. There are no tears now because he doesn't feel homesick any more.

## The Illusion of Familiarity: a Horror-Story

Glasgow, Christmas morning, 1969: Bobby is six and a half years old. With his two younger sisters he sits amidst piles of crumpled wrapping paper as tiny coloured lights twinkle.

Bobby Senior is present. A rare event. The father is a chef who works split-shifts in one of city's largest Italian restaurants – he leaves for work two hours before the children are awake, and doesn't get home until midnight. The only time the children see him is on Sunday afternoons (he plays football with the restaurant team in the morning).

Bobby Snr has gathered the children together to face him. He crouches, holding a wrapped gift, and asks them to guess what it is. They don't know, but grow more excited as he tugs at the ribbon. The children want to help, but their father urges restraint, makes them wait as the small oblong is stripped of the holly-patterned paper.

The box shows a picture of a man. So far as Bobby and his sisters are concerned, it is their father. The picture shows the man's face in close-up – beside it he is holding a hand-sized keyboard, a small electronic instrument called a 'Stylophone'. The man is Rolf Harris. He sports thick black-rimmed spectacles, a neatly trimmed goatee-style beard, and has dark bushy hair. His smile is warm, if a little exaggerated, eyes widened and magnified behind the lenses, his smile broad, teeth slightly askew but strong and presentable.

Bobby and his sisters look at the box, which their father is now holding close to his face. He is smiling in a new and unusual way, head awkwardly angled – they have not noticed before that his front teeth are slightly askew.

Rolf Harris has a very popular Saturday afternoon television show in which he sings and paints and dances, sometimes simultaneously. The children never miss it. He also plays strange instruments, and he doesn't sound like Dad when he talks. But Dad's never ever been in the house when Rolf Harris is on the telly. Dad and Mum find it amusing, as do passers-by when they're out walking – 'Hey Rolf! Play us your didgeridoo!'. This further convinces the children that their father is the same man who has been Number One on *Top of the Pops* for the past month with a song called 'Two Little Boys'.

To remove any final doubts, as Mum looks on, Dad slips the cover from the box, removes the instrument and uses a small pencil to elicit a throbbing, quivering rendition of the popular tune. Mum and Dad sing, hoping the children will join in.

Instead, starting with Bobby Jnr, they all start to cry.

Summer 2009, Glasgow city-centre: Bobby is sitting outside a trendy brasserie-style pub with a friend he hasn't seen for 17 years. The friend is Kenny, who now lives and works in Sardinia. They worked together in Tokyo, Japan, in the early nineties.

Over their first pint they discuss the fate of old friends, especially the fellow Glaswegians they knew from those years. Kenny produces his Blueberry gadget and summons a file of photographs from their shared years abroad. The first batch shows a happy group in a trendy Japanese brasserie-style Mexican themed pub.

'Check the state of Guy,' says Kenny.

Bobby, having forgotten his specs, raises the screen closer to check the image of their mutual friend, who, in 1992, sported the thick mane of carefully groomed lionesque hair which happened to be en vogue.

'Jesus. I'd forgotten how bad that was. Rest of us aren't much better though eh?' replies Bobby.

The friends chuckle. Bobby sits back, passes the Blueberry back to Kenny, and as he does so, raises his face. Behind Kenny's right shoulder, advancing from left to right as Bobby sees him, is Guy.

'There's Guy there,' says Bobby.

Kenny, thinking Bobby is referring to the photograph, checks it again and laughs aloud.

'Aye, that's our Guy eh?'

Bobby taps Kenny on his left knee, then raises the same hand to point to where Guy is now moving away past Kenny's right shoulder.

'No man, there. There's Guy there.'

Kenny turns, sees the carefully gathered pony-tail, the familiar sloping gait, and calls out 'Guy!'

Guy turns.

'Get over here for a pint!' Kenny shouts.

Within ten minutes, with fresh pints in front of them, they establish that the photograph on the Blueberry was taken on the last occasion the three of them had been together in a pub.

Bobby believes in synchronicity, but he doesn't often get a chance to prove it. His favourite example is an anagram, and he uses it sparingly, never forgetting who he's shown it to. He doesn't know who discovered it, or how, but he's convinced that it is the equivalent of Toto tugging at the curtain to reveal the heel of the left shoe of the 'real' Wizard of Oz.

Here it is:

'A novel by a Scottish Writer'

is an anagram of

'Ivanhoe by Sir Walter Scott'.

Every time Bobby tells that to anyone, he repeats it often enough for them to get it, writing it out and scoring off the letters if proof is demanded, before looking the person straight in the eye and saying, without smiling – 'What are the chances of that happening? Eh?' And every time he's done it, so far, the person shakes the head, widens the eyes, says nothing, and smiles.

## The Whatever of Thingamabob: a Whatchamacallit

April 18th 2010: Bobby has gathered together the snippets, memories and associations he'd like to present in his essay, but time is running out and he hasn't even started.

The desk is a mess. So much he wanted to get in there, but it'll never happen. There's *Billy Budd, Sailor & Other Stories*[11] by Herman Melville, found in a local charity shop three days ago. The first story in the collection is called 'Bartleby'. Bobby has never read the story but is sure he saw a movie of the same name. He goes online to check – sure enough, it was made in 1970 and starred Paul Scofield. (And would you adam-and-eve it?…Bartleby was a scrivener, a 'copier'.) There's Daphne du Maurier's *Don't Look Now & Other Stories*[12] and Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat*[13] – both stories were written in 1970 (1970, again??) but Bobby cannot believe that both women independently created stories with so many common features – did they know each other? Who started first? Did they both come across the basic idea in the work of some lesser writer? Maybe pure coincidence. Maybe. There's a printed copy of a MailOnline feature[14] from March revealing that 'the man who wrote the infamous 'dodgy dossier' for Tony Blair about Saddam Hussein's weapons is now a £100,000-a-year adviser working at the nerve centre of Barack Obama's military and foreign policy establishment.' Huh? Wasn't that dossier as cut and dried an example of plagiarism as it's possible to find? Whatever happened to the student whose work was nicked? Was he compensated? Did he ever receive the Phd he'd written the essay for? Given that the essay was identified thanks to the frequent grammatical errors, typos and spelling mistakes, did al-Marashi look on the bright side and view Alistair Campbell's ordering construction of the dossier as a free proofreading job? There's a copy of Kei Miller's *There Is an Anger That Moves*[15] – he left it in *The Ivory* pub in Glasgow after doing a reading there on April 6th. Ian Brotherhood will return it to Kei (his tutor) on Tuesday, after handing in the printed copies of this piece.

There's another print-out of an essay by Slavoj Zizek called 'The Desert of the Real'[16] – Bobby wanted to use the opening sentence:

'The ultimate American paranoiac fantasy is that of an individual living in a small idyllic Californian city, a consumerist paradise, who suddenly starts to suspect that the world he lives in is a fake, a spectacle staged to convince him that he lives in a real world, while all people around him are effectively actors and extras in a gigantic show.'

There's Andrew Keanie's essay about Coleridge[17], where Norman Fruman's 1971 'Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel' is re-examined – Keanie neatly summarises Fruman's book thus:

'The central thesis of *The Damaged Archangel* is simple; Coleridge was an unusually dishonest writer who nevertheless persuaded people that the originality, rigour and significance of his works were beyond question:…'

There's a Wikipedia article about Stewart Home – a British artist, writer, pamphleteer, cult movie maker and real honest-to-God, hand-on-heart unashamed plagiarist.

None of it, some of it, or all of it may find a place in the final piece.

But first things first – he needs a title.

Defenders of Lethem's 'Ecstasy of Influence' claim that the revelatory sub-title ('a Plagiarism') exonerates him from accusations of real plagiarism. Bobby thinks this is pure cant – it's plagiarism or it isn't, and Lethem's essay isn't plagiarism – It's collage.

Bobby is anxious that his own piece be free of trickery. Yes, he's constructed it with care, but there must be no codes, no hidden drawers, nudging or winking, no irony, satire or private jokes, but this 'naming' business becomes a problem. Lethem's 'joke' hinges on the title, on the absolution provided by the confessional subtitle.

Even with the use of his original title-making tool[18] Bobby is aware that he is producing words drawn from a list of his own making.

So he goes to the *Book of Changes - the I Ching*[19]. The random tossing of coins will determine at least one hexagram, but he'll repeat the process until a hexagram with 'moving lines' is shown, thereby allowing a second hexagram to be formed. The relevant chapter headings in the *I Ching* will supply the title of Bobby's essay. (Most *I Ching* chapters are headed by one-word abstract nouns: consideration, restoration, fear, dedication etc.)

And this is where the bond of trust between writer and reader is most keenly tested. Can the reader have faith that Bobby completed the process honestly? That he didn't just leaf through the I Ching looking for a combination of headings which might provide something snappy, witty, profound?

Bobby wonders if it will 'work'. This thing he's spent so much time on looks piecemeal, but he believes that he's tried to find some truth, that it may be discernible when the pieces are viewed as a whole by fresh eyes. It never was his intention to construct a personal attack against Jonathan Lethem. He doesn't know the man and doesn't care enough about him. But the hours spent pondering 'The Ecstasy of Influence' have forced him into new ways of thinking about the issues involved, and he is thankful for that. He *has* been influenced by Lethem's essay.

3.30pm, Sunday April 17th 2010: Bobby has just had a quick coffee and caught up with the news – in Krakow, the Polish president and his wife are about to be interred in an alabaster mausoleum constructed over the past few days. (They died in a plane crash along with 95 of Poland's VIPs.) Hundreds of thousands of travellers are stranded across Europe because the ash cloud blown from the erupting volcano in Iceland has grounded all flights for the past five days. In Ayrshire, the weather is fine, with a light breeze pushing bright cumulus South-East.

Bobby shakes the three coins in cupped hands and lets them drop onto the A4 lined pad which bears the handwritten question: essay title?

Two heads and a tail…

Same again…

Three heads…

Three tails…

Two tails and a head

Two heads and a tail.

Good. There are moving lines, so he can construct a second hexagram.

The hexagrams are 39 and 45, therefore, the title of Bobby's essay will be…

**Notes**

1. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr, *Slaughterhouse-Five* or *The Children's Crusade*,

   *A Duty-dance with Death*
   *A Fourth-generation German-American*
   *now living in easy circumstances*
   *on Cape Cod*
   *(and smoking too much),*
   *who, as an American infantry scout*
   *hors de combat,*
   *as a prisoner of war,*
   *witnessed the fire-bombing*
   *of Dresden, Germany,*
   *"The Florence of the Elbe,"*
   *a long time ago,*
   *and survived to tell the tale.*
   *This is a novel*
   *somewhat in the telegraphic schizophrenic*
   *manner of tales*
   *of the planet Tralfamadore,*
   *where the flying saucers*
   *come from.*
   *Peace.*
2. Bob Thompson, 'Writing Under The Influence', *Washington Post*, May 16th 2007.
3. Jonathan Swift, 'A Modest Proposal', 1729 – unable to trace original publication, but it was published anonymously.
4. George Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*, Penguin Books Ltd, 1957. 'Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool' was originally published by *Polemic* magazine (no. 7) in March 1947.
5. Herman Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game*, original German edition 1943 by Fretz & Wasmuth, Zurich, first English translation published in UK by Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc, 1970.
6. Slavoj Zizek, 'The Desert of the Real', September 2001, available via multiple online sources.
7. The man (name untraceable) was a well-known busker in Glasgow city centre in the '80s and early '90s. His spray-painted Al Jolson 'tags' have given him international cult status amongst graffiti artists. Almost a quarter-century after he was at his most active, one of his 'menshies' can still be viewed – it is near Bell Street in Glasgow – an image and location details have been archived at duncancumming.com
8. George Orwell, *ibid.*
9. Norman Mailer, *Cannibals and Christians*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1967.
10. Hunter S. Thompson, *The Great Shark Hunt (Gonzo Papers, Vol 1)*, Summit Books (Simon & Schuster), New York 1979.
11. Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor & Other Stories*, Penguin English Library 1967.
12. Daphne du Maurier, *Don't Look Now and Other Stories*, Victor Gollancz, 1971.
13. Muriel Spark, *The Driver's Seat*, Macmillan & Co, 1970.
14. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1256042/Dodgy-dossier-aide-100k-boss-White-House-lobbying-firm.html
15. Kei Miller, *There Is an Anger that Moves*, Carcanet Press Ltd, Manchester, 2007.
16. Slavoj Zizek, *ibid.*
17. Andrew Keanie (University of Ulster), 'Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel', Oxford University Press 2006.
18. 'Bobby Doohihan's Essay Title Machine:' Any of the following may be paired within 'The *of*' template to provide essay titles.

    tyranny texture essence flavour integrity
    manipulation anxiety ecstasy stealth pornography
    undergrowth failure mystery influence terrorism
    memory decency morality fury globalization
    monopoly discourse poverty wealth obscenity
    death victory fate surface relativity misery
    fear theft justification exclusion confusion
    chaos reality plagiarism guilt legalization
    code illustration constraint health reflexivity
    irreducibility suspension control duty

    e.g.

    'The Flavour of Fury' – retro-noir detective novels.

    'The Stealth of Wealth' – a critique of Capitalism.

    'The Wealth of Stealth' – a celebration of Due Caution.

    'The Tyranny of Fate' – solace for those who feel doomed.

    'The Fate of Tyranny' – Hitler, Hussein, Ceaucescu, etc.

    'The Influence of Undergrowth' – examines problems preoccupying greenkeepers.

    'The Undergrowth of Influence' – the psychology of subversive teachers/potential terrorists in mainstream education.

    etc, etc…

    (Bobby recommends that the table be printed in a large font size, concealed between sheets of newspaper, and a pin used to prick holes until two words are definitely pierced in one of their characters – with fifty words in the table, there are 2,352 possible permutations.)
19. Cheng Yi, *I Ching, The Tao of Organisation* (translated by Thomas Cleary) Shambhala Publications Inc, Boston USA, 1988; Richard Wilhelm/Cary F Baynes, *I Ching or book of changes*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1951; Judy Fox/Karen Hughes/John Tampion, *An Illuminated I Ching*, Neville Spearman Ltd, UK 1982

# Glasgow Life or Death

Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt

In summer 2008, *Variant* published an analysis of Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG), based on an examination of its key personnel and the consequences for the city's culture their ethos implies.[1] This research pointed to the subordination of Glasgow's culture and leisure services to business interests, particularly tourism and regeneration, which was perceived to have a detrimental impact on those working in the arts and on the long-term welfare of the city's culture and leisure facilities. It built on concerns, already expressed in *Variant*, that having a private company running the city's culture and leisure services may prove disastrous as democratic accountability was lost and speculative funding sources failed to materialise. Against a backdrop of public sector cuts and deep-seated discontent among CSG's workforce, it seems appropriate to assess whether this has proven to be the case.

The only problem is that CSG seems to have disappeared. The "internal outward facing collective brand"[2] is now known as Glasgow Life and the parent company has been seeking to rename itself Culture and Sport Enterprises. Examining the factors that motivated such a swift re-branding, a mere two years into the life of the twin-headed company, one finds references in CSG material to a lack of coherence across marketing activities affecting its economic performance.[3] Bad press – which including the questioning of CSG's corporate model of governance mentioned above – may also have helped to prompt the name change.

Since the re-branding process began, in early 2009, the company has increasingly sought to distance itself from negative publicity, notably that in reaction to the exhibition and events collectively titled 'sh(OUT): Contemporary Art and Human Rights'. This took place between April and November 2009 at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA), one of CSG's flagship venues, as part of its Social Justice Programme. A summer-long furore erupted, centred on the outreach project 'Made in God's Image', which included artwork by gay part-time minister, Jane Clarke, containing a blank bible into which visitors who had felt excluded from the good book could inscribe themselves. A campaign, spearheaded by the religious group, Christian Watch, protested vociferously against this gesture (or, rather, against the messages) and, in December 2009, a related website called CSG Watch[4] was launched, to protest against what was presented as a misuse of taxpayers' money. While the flagrantly homophobic group claimed that Culture and Sport Glasgow had anti-religious intent, the campaign elicited an article, written from the perspective of CSG Chief Executive, Bridget McConnell, in *The Times*.[5] Under the heading 'It's as if they want me executed, says culture chief enduring hate campaign', McConnell is proffered as the victim of a witch-hunt, verging on violence, while the article claims misrepresentation and expresses concerns about the damage done to her professional reputation.

Other problematic media coverage that may have informed CSG's change of corporate identity includes various damning critiques of the practice of setting up arm's length external organisations (ALEOs). At a board meeting on 31st March 2010, its chair, Bailie Elizabeth Cameron, sought to reassure those assembled that "none of the references in the press related to CSG and that the company, being a charity, was very different to some of the organisations referred to".[6] While the charitable status of one of the two companies making up CSG is said to act as a safeguard against directors taking the high remuneration found at some other council ALEOs,[7] a service agreement between Glasgow City Council and City Property signed two days before the CSG board meeting makes no such distinction, in that ALEOs are defined as "any arm's length external organisation in which the council has an ownership share, including […] Culture and Sport Glasgow".[8]

For those engaged in promoting the city's image, such as CSG, this critical coverage was quickly followed by yet more negative attention in the national media ensuing from the downfall of the leader of Glasgow City Council, Steven Purcell. Before his public disgrace, Labour's young rising star had been responsible for the creation of several council-derived ALEOs and served as a board member of CSG from its inception.[9] In the minutes of a CSG board meeting held on 25th November 2009, acknowledgment was made that Purcell had been withdrawn from office (according to a clause in CSG's articles of association which allows Glasgow City Council to remove any of its representatives from the company's board), in September 2009, almost six months before Purcell's fall from grace became public on 2nd March 2010.[10] Personal scandal aside, Purcell was eventually reported to have been heading a local authority caught up in a web of "cronyism" and an "elaborate system of political patronage".[11]

At the same November board meeting, a rebranding presentation was given by Lynne McPhee, CSG Marketing and Communications Manager, and Simon Farrell, Managing Director of Tayburn, on the new makeover being proposed by Tayburn. At this point, the long-standing CSG board member and newly reappointed chair of its audit committee, Sir Angus Grossart, "declared an interest in this item as Noble Grossart Ltd were shareholders in Tayburn".[12] This issue will be returned to later; for now, it is interesting to consider the re-branding process in more detail.

## Re: Branding

In February 2009, a brief was issued with the aim of appointing a procurement company to source two agencies – one to carry out a total re-evaluation of the CSG brand architecture and the other to overhaul its website. The branding tender signalled a desire to move away from the hastily configured in-house brand – which had allowed the "customer facing brands" (Glasgow Museums, The Glasgow Club, etc,) to take priority – towards an over-arching corporate identity.[13] Three procurement agencies pitched for the role of appointing two agencies: the Edinburgh-based Observatory and two companies from London – Agency Assessments International and creativebrief. But something seemingly odd happened when CSG put out the tender. According to CSG's information manager, the initial tender was issued on Tuesday 17th February 2009, with a return date of the following Monday (23rd February).[14] However, Observatory had already submitted its proposal on 4th February, with the covering email referring to a conversation having taken place between CSG Marketing and Communications Manager, Lynne McPhee, and Observatory Partner, Andy Crummey on 2nd February, over two weeks before the official tender was issued.[15] On 2nd March, a representative from creativebrief sent an email enquiring whether their proposal had been successful and was told that a response would be forthcoming in the next few days, once an important sponsorship issue had been attended to. By 12th March creativebrief had still not received notification of any decision, and again emailed, to be told by McPhee that she would be back in the office the following day and hoped to get the matter finalised then and be in touch soon afterwards. However, by 12th March, Observatory had already been appointed[16] and was in full flow with discussions around the schedule for the branding tender. By the morning of 23rd March, creativebrief had still not been informed of the decision. This uneven treatment of the various procurement companies conceivably skewed the whole rebranding process from the outset. According to the Procurement Manual and

### Notes

1. Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, 'The New Bohemia', *Variant*, summer 2008, pp. 5-8 http://www.variant.org.uk/pdfs/issue32/Variant32RGN.pdf
2. See note 5(3) in Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG27 January 2010.
3. See, for example, note 5(1) in Ibid.
4. http://www.csgwatch.com/ was set up, on 24 November 2009, by David Crowter on behalf of Christian Watch, citing an address in Warwickshire.
5. Melanie Reid, 'It's as if they want me executed, says culture chief enduring hate campaign', *The Times*, 22 January 2010 http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/scotland/article6997613.ece (accessed 13 November 2010).
6. See note 1(a) in Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG31st March 2010.
7. This assertion was made by Bridget McConnell following her lecture entitled 'Culture and Sport: A Matter of Life and Death?' at Robert Owen School, New Lanark, 14th May 2010 and confirmed by a Glasgow Life spokesperson on 15 December 2010: 'All members of our Board sign up to our Code of Conduct and none receive financial renumeration [sic] for their work'. Page 24 of CSG Ltd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010, held at Companies House states that "No remuneration or expenses were paid to directors in their capacity as directors. However, one of the directors [Bridget McConnell] was employed by the company and received total remuneration in their capacity as an employee" of £132,413 from 1st April 2009 (precise figure released under the Freedom of Information Act, 10th June 2010).
8. Undated Service Agreement between Glasgow City Council and City Property effective from 29th March 2010, held by Glasgow City Council legal department and viewed under the terms of the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1985 which permits local authority accounts and related contracts to be inspected during a 15-day period every year.
9. Steven Purcell's name, address and signature appear on the Certificate of Incorporation for CSGlodged at Companies House on 22nd December 2006. According to page 1 of CSG Ltd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010, held at Companies House, Purcell resigned as a director of CSG on 10th September 2010. For a lyrical account of Purcell's departure, see Clayton Z. Cross on The Absolute Limit, 5th April 2010 http://theabsolutelimit.com/?p=377
10. See note 3(1)(b) Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG 25th November 2009.
11. Neil Gray and Leigh French, 'The empire in miniature', *Scottish Left Review*, issue 58, June 2010
12. See note 6 Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG, 25th November 2009.
13. CSG Branding Tender – February 2009 released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act on 10th June 2010.
14. Letter from Pamela Tulloch to the author, dated 27th August 2010, in response to a request for clarification of information released under the Freedom of Information Act.
15. The email from Andy Crummey to Lynne McPhee, dated 4th February 2009, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act, reads 'Here are the proposals as discussed on Monday' [2nd February].
16. An email from Lynne McPhee, dated 12th March, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act on 10th June 2010, discusses a meeting with a representative from The Observatory, who "have been appointed by us to run the Brand and Digital Tenders". A letter to the author from Pamela Tulloch, dated 27th August 2010, describes how the scoring of procurement agencies was undertaken by McPhee and the Head of Performance and Service Quality.
17. The Observatory, *Search and Selection Process for a Brand Planning Agency to work with Glasgow Culture and Sport*, 4th February 2009, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.
18. The consideration list included 999 Design, Clayton Graham, Elmwood (appointed by G2014 to develop a brand strategy for the Commonwealth Games), Freight, Good Creative, Leithal Thinking, Merle, Navy Blue, One O'Clock Gun, Radley Yeldar, Red Spider and Tayburn. With a cited turnover of £3.5m, Tayburn was one of the smaller agencies on this list; Clayton Graham was later withdrawn from the process. The Observatory, *CSG Brand Strategy Agency Search and Selection: Consideration List to Chemistry List*, 25th March 2009, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.
19. The seven with which chemistry meetings were conducted were Tayburn, Leithal Thinking, Elmwood, Good Creative, Clayton Graham, Merle and Red Spider. Ibid.

Rules Relating to Contracts for Glasgow Life, any contracts worth between £5,000 and £20,000 require quotations from a minimum of three suppliers, which begs questions about whether the two London-based agencies were simply making up the numbers. Based on the submitted briefs, Observatory does not stand out for its excellence, referring to "Glasgow Culture and Sport" (as opposed to Culture and Sport Glasgow) in its opening sentence.[17] Yet, this agency was personally contacted by McPhee, which makes its subsequent methodology worthy of scrutiny.

Following the appointment, Observatory approached Scottish-based branding agencies, drawing up a consideration list of twelve,[18] of which seven[19] were recommended to take part in "chemistry meetings" in Edinburgh and Glasgow on 31st March and 3rd April, 2009. The first of these meetings was with Edinburgh-based agency, Tayburn, which set the benchmark for the other agencies. While creativebrief claims "true objectivity" by abstaining from chemistry meetings in order to "demonstrate that we cannot influence the client's final decision on who wins the business", Tayburn was not only represented at the meetings but also expressed opinions on them.[20] On 1st April, before the Glasgow agencies had been seen, Observatory enthused by email to CSG: "very impressed with Tayburn, very disappointed with Elmwood!"[21] Further meetings followed, during which four short-listed agencies[22] were asked to make final pitches. A scoring matrix was drawn up and the branding evaluated by CSG's Director of Corporate and Community Planning Services (Susan Deighan), Head of Marketing (Lynne McPhee), Marketing Manager and Director of Commercial Development and Fundraising (Anthony McReavy), together with the Head of Marketing from Glasgow City Council.[23] During this process, Tayburn secured just one point more than its closest competitor, Red Spider. When a shortlist was drawn up for the next phase of the branding, such a narrow margin was flagged up as cause for concern, as it was felt that there was "no clear gap to differentiate".[24] Yet no such concerns were raised at this earlier stage and Tayburn was duly appointed in late May 2009.[25] Thus, a hand-picked procurement company steered CSG to appoint a branding agency, with which Bridget McConnell had already worked, on the branding strategy for Glasgow's Commonwealth Games bid[26] – and in which one of its board members, Sir Angus Grossart, had a financial interest.

Following a series of meetings with CSG senior management and staff, Tayburn produced a strategy update in late July 2009. In this, the Edinburgh-based agency acknowledged the two sides of Glasgow; the cosmopolitan city it aspires to be, contrasting with its status as "one of Europe's sickest cities with high unemployment, high drug use, low life expectancy and some of the most deprived areas in Scotland. It is a city without hope".[27]

## WHO

*Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health*, a World Health Organization (WHO) report, published in August 2008, argued: "The development of a society, rich or poor, can be judged by the quality of its population's health, how fairly health is distributed across the social spectrum, and the degree of protection provided from disadvantage as a result of ill-health".[28] Based on the findings of a WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health set up in 2005, the report cites inequality as a major determinant of health. This idea has been expanded upon by UK academics, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, in their book *The Spirit Level*,[29] in which they argue that unequal distribution of wealth, rather than poverty *per se*, is the major determinant of life expectancy.[30]

As might be expected, Glasgow is mentioned in the WHO report, appearing twice in a table of male life expectancy, showing that a man living in Lenzie can expect to reach the age of 82 while his counterpart in Calton has the average life expectancy of just 54.[31]

Picking up on the WHO report and a 2007 map of Britain's millionaires, which listed Glasgow in seventh place (five places ahead of Edinburgh), journalist, Julien Brygo, met with some of the beneficiaries of the city's inequality. Interviewing a handful of wealthy Rotarians, Brygo found that "The clichés of the Victorian era – that the rich are beautiful, wise and generous, the poor lazy and alcoholic – persist".[32] Ironically, just a few months before, Bridget McConnell had stated that "Glasgow was one of the first cities in Britain where business leaders accepted [the philanthropist, Robert] Owen's premise that poverty wasn't simply due to the moral failing of individuals, but a result of low wages, unemployment, poor housing, lack of amenities and education".[33] However, after talking to the business leaders of Glasgow, Brygo found that the issue of:

> "The gap in life expectancy has been removed from politics and the public domain [in Glasgow], and geographical segregation ensures the wealthy remain sealed off from the poor. That social apartheid is allowed to exist without comment illustrates how class struggle has been redefined in traditional, almost reassuring, terms over the last 30 years. Just as in the 19th century, the wretched poor live alongside the philanthropic rich."[34]

We shall return to these conflicting perspectives of the city; for now, let us consider the purpose Tayburn ascribed to CSG – that of making "vibrant Glasgow more vibrant" and also giving "deprived Glasgow hope; access to learning, taking part in activities and a gateway to the vibrant side of the city".[35]

## Get the most out of Glasgow

In order to facilitate this dual role, Tayburn proposed "testing a range of branding architectures with a cross-section of customers (and stakeholders) to establish the optimum relationship between the various levels of brand".[36] This it duly did, with three options being given – an endorsed relationship (like the BBC) "where the product brand is the hero as far as customers are concerned"; a "Sky type of approach where category brands are given more prominence" (Sky Sports, Sky News, etc); and "a new customer brand – the creation of an overarching new brand (ie, not CSG)".[37] At a breakout session following a Tayburn presentation on 14th August 2009, option one was rejected as not being radical enough; option two "was received quite favourably [...] The group liked this option, although it did not drop 'Culture and Sport Glasgow' as a name"; the final option, of creating an entirely new brand, was also greeted favourably, although "All preferred 'Glasgow' (with the message 'Get the most out of Glasgow') as opposed to 'Glasgow Life'".[38]

By January 2010, Tayburn asserted that, although this name had taken a bit of coming to terms with, "the majority of respondents (80%-85%) saw the change to Glasgow Life as positive".[39] In the same document, Tayburn dismissed those who did not like the name as "older, more conservative people and certainly from a staff perspective those who had been in the organisation for a long time".[40] Quite which organisation this refers to is ambiguous as Culture and Sport Glasgow was then just over two years old and its name would be unlikely to have secured such abiding loyalty. At a board meeting on 27th January 2010, Lynne McPhee hailed "the results and observations of tests in respect of the new branding 'Glasgow Life', which showed an 80%-85% favourable outcome".[41]

By late October 2010, the tendering process was repeated as phase two of the re-branding began, procured internally this time.[42] A shortlist of six[43] was drawn up which included Tayburn. Given that the "creative route" had already been defined by Tayburn, this left little scope for agencies to engage creatively with the brief, causing one of those short-listed to withdraw.[44] This time, the branding proposals were evaluated by Deighan, McPhee and McReavy without a representative from Glasgow City Council.[45] Not surprisingly, Tayburn emerged the most appropriate agency to develop the branding it had already defined.[46]

Contradictory though it may seem, the primacy given to the city in the name Glasgow Life

20 creativebrief response to Culture and Sport Glasgow, Marketing Procurement Brief, emailed to CSG on 25 February 2009, released under the Freedom of Information Act.

21 Email from Observatory to CSG, 1st April 2009 released under the Freedom of Information Act.

22 Good Creative, Red Spider, Tayburn, Merle.

23 Letter to the author from Pamela Tulloch, 27th August 2010.

24 CSG email, dated 21st October 2009, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

25 However, a letter of agreement was not signed between the two parties until 25th November 2009 (Tayburn) and 21st December 2009 (CSG), the delay being caused around a technicality relating to the level of professional indemnity insurance possessed by Tayburn (£2m instead of the requisite £5m). Information released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

26 According to the list of McConnell's directorships, available at Companies House, she was appointed as a director of Glasgow 2014 Ltd on 25 April 2008. For details of Tayburn's strategy, see http://www.tayburn.co.uk/case_study_gallery/glasgow.php

27 See page 1 of Tayburn, *CSG Brand Strategy Update*, drafted on 27th July 2009, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

28 WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health* (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 2008), available at http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703_eng.pdf. Also see accompanying media release at http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2008/pr29/en/index.html

29 Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone* (London: Penguin, 2010).

30 For evidence of attempts by right-wing think-tanks to discredit Wilkinson and Pickett's research, see Editorial, 'The Spirit Level: Spooking the right', *The Guardian*, 26 July 2010, at http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/26/the-spirit-level-society-criticism?intcmp=239

31 See Table 2.1 in WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, op cit., p. 32.

32 Julien Brygo, 'Glasgow's Two Nations', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 2010. See http://mondediplo.com/2010/09/13glasgow

33 Bridget McConnell, 'Culture and Sport: A Matter of Life and Death?', op cit.

34 Julien Brygo, 'Glasgow's Two Nations', op cit.

35 Tayburn, *CSG Brand Strategy Update*, op cit., p. 1.

36 Ibid, p. 3.

37 Loc cit.

38 Notes on breakout session following brand presentation on 14 August 2009 supplied by email to Tayburn on 18th August 2009 released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act on 10th June 2010.

39 Tayburn, *CSGStrategy Overview (Phase 2)*, January 2010, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

40 Loc cit.

41 See note 5(4) in Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Culture and Sport Glasgow, 27 January 2010.

42 Letter to the author from Pamela Tulloch, 20th June 2010.

43 Tayburn, Graven Images, 999, Redhouse Lane, Elmwood and Freight according to information released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

44 Email of 3rd November 2009 from Graven Images to CSG released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

45 Letter to author from Pamela Tulloch, 27th August 2010.

46 Branding Tender Phase 2, Contract Reference GCC001781CL released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act. Tayburn was advised of this decision on 10th November 2009

47 Email from Tayburn to CSG immediately following the initial presentation of the brand strategy (scheduled for 3rd July 2009), released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

48 See note 7(1)(c)(iii) Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG31st March 2010.

49 Report prepared for the meeting of Glasgow City Council Executive Committee on 1st April 2010, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act. Email correspondence between Susan Deighan and Annemarie O'Donnell in the legal department of GCC reflects a desire on the part of the council for Glasgow to be maintained in the parent company. O'Donnell writes about the possibility of establishing a subsidiary body called "Culture and Sport Enterprises with the parent Glasgow Culture and Sport Enterprises reflecting its principle [sic] business". Having discussed this with Bridget McConnell, Deighan asked O'Donnell to withdraw the paper pending further discussion with the CSG board.

actually suggests a move away from core activities centred on Glasgow. After the first presentation of the initial brand strategy to CSG management, Tayburn emphasised that "the unifying proposition needs amending to include the creating of 'beacon' type activities and apply to people in general rather than the people of Glasgow".[47] This de-prioritisation of the people of Glasgow is reflected in a note at a March 2010 board meeting, which outlines "the need for new innovative ways of working ranging from the provision of services outwith Glasgow"[48] and the stated desire for the parent company to become Culture and Sport Enterprises, whereby "A more generic name will help facilitate trading across the city and a wider geographic area".[49] Evidently, the re-branding consolidates a more entrepreneurial attitude towards culture, and facilitates the potential for this market-led cultural governance to be rolled out across other cities and regions, from 'Edinburgh Life' to 'Fife Life'.[50]

Besides strategic considerations, the implications for public relations of the re-branding exercise are problematic for CSG in view of Glasgow's world-beating inequality. On this point, Tayburn anticipated that this would not be a popular move in a recession, pre-empting that "due to the current climate and imminent cutbacks there will be negativity towards the new brand, (Why are we needlessly spending money when staff hours are being reduced and facilities closed?)".[51] According to the CSG Information Manager, the agency fees and expenses related to the re-branding cost £53,000.[52] It is unclear exactly where this figure comes from, since Tayburn phase one cost £22,655[53] and phase two cost £34,109,[54] which totals nearly £57,000. This figure does not include the procurement of Tayburn by Observatory, during meetings taking place over two months, for which the agency was contracted to be paid £10,500[55]; nor does it include the costs of reprinting stationery, merchandise and signage.

## Sir Angus

Let us return to the afore-mentioned link between Tayburn and CSG board member, Angus Grossart. According to information at Companies House, all but one of the 20,000 shares in Tayburn Ltd[56] (worth almost £600,000)[57] are owned by Tayburn Holdings Ltd and it is in this parent company that Noble Grossart Investments Ltd has a significant interest.[58] Tayburn Holdings is entitled to take in excess of £400,000 from Tayburn Ltd in management charges each year, accounting for a sizeable proportion of the latter company's payments, totalling £900,000, to creditors. It is also noteworthy that, by the end of March 2009, Tayburn Ltd owed the holding company £146,632, suggesting that cash was not flowing as it should.[59] But, perhaps most significantly, the declared profits of Tayburn Ltd almost halved between 2008 and 2009 from £61,689 to £32,584.[60] All of which means that the fees in excess of £56,000 charged to CSG by Tayburn stood to significantly boost profits for the following financial year, enabling it to clear some of the management fees owed to the holding company in order for the shareholders (including Noble Grossart) to be paid a dividend. Added to this, the contract with CSG would raise the profile of Tayburn and boost its viability as a going concern at a time when few re-branding contracts were forthcoming. Factors such as these are indirectly reflected in the accounts of Noble Grossart Investments Ltd, which saw profits increase from £3.8m to £5.2m over the past financial year, with the value of its investments growing from £17m to £23m and its shareholders' interest increasing from £52m to £57m over the same period.[61] Be that as it may, the conflict of interest between Noble Grossart and Tayburn that Sir Angus declared at the CSG board meeting is not mentioned in the related party transactions of the CSG accounts, which raises questions about transparency and accountability. Judging by the interests Grossart does record in this section – as Chairman of the *Scottish Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* – this factor is unlikely to be reported in sections of the press.[62] And, while a spokesperson from Glasgow Life insists that 'the tendering exercise for the rebrand of Culture and Sport Glasgow was detailed, transparent and open. The Board were not involved in the appointment of, nor approval for, the contract, which was delegated under authority',[63] no legislative mechanisms exist to prevent board members from profiting from the company's activities.

It is only when we reach the ultimate parent company, Noble Grossart Holdings Ltd, that the extent of Angus Grossart's investment is revealed. In the annual return for that company to the end of March 2010, Grossart is cited as owning 35% of shares, with his daughter holding a 17% stake. Another interesting fact that comes to light in scrutinising this return is that Ewan Brown, erstwhile chair of the transition board of Creative Scotland – who joined Noble Grossart in 1969 – still owns a 5.6% share of the company, with his wife owning 1.5% and both having "discretionary trusts" bearing their names to which shares are allocated.[64] Despite the implication by the Scottish Government that his directorship in the group was relinquished in December 2003 in favour of non-executive status,[65] Ewan Brown is also cited as the only other director of the holding company, alongside Sir Angus, and as the first of five directors at Noble Grossart Ltd.[66] On the subject of personnel, it is interesting to note that the finance director, Roger Brown, who serves as the only co-director (with Sir Angus) of Noble Grossart Investments,[67] is also cited as the first of four directors of Tayburn Holdings,[68] giving him control over how the re-branding company is run.

In the annual accounts for the holding company in the year ended 31st January 2010, Angus Grossart draws attention to the £10.1m profit that the company made, which allowed the directors to take a dividend of £4.5m between them, alongside a salary for their highest paid director of £531,000.[69] This adds to Sir Angus's already considerable wealth, estimated at £120m in the 2009 *Sunday Times* Rich List, which, despite dropping £30m, will no doubt see him courted for his philanthropy for some time to come.[70]

## Viability & Liability

The financial management of CSG (as it is still known for accounting purposes) has been a source of concern since the twin companies were formed. A summer 2007 article in *Variant*, based on information from Unison, outlined the rationale for devolving council services to private trusts on the basis of presumed savings in tax and rates. Already at that time, it was suggested that

50 See Kenneth Roy, 'As the axe falls on Scotland, our cultural tsars are working for Moscow', *Scottish Review*, 17th November 2010, at: http://www.scottishreview.net/KRoy47.shtml

51 Branding Roll-out sent by email on 8th March 2010 released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act on 10th June 2010.

52 A letter to the author from Pamela Tulloch, 27th August 2010 states: "The rebranding exercise costed [sic] £53,000. This included all agency fees and expenses".

53 According to information released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act, a fee of £19,700 payable in four instalments + VAT (calculated here at the 15% rate in effect from 1st December 2008 to 31st December 2009) was included in the Minute of Agreement between CSG and Tayburn. An email from Tayburn to CSG shows that phase one was concluded on 8th October 2009.

54 According to page 24 of Tayburn's Branding – phase 2 document, dated 5th November 2009, which details a fee of £29,660 plus VAT (£4,449) to give a final figure of £34,109.

55 An invoice, dated 31st March 2009, accounts for £9,500 of this and one dated 22nd June 2009 covers £350.95 in expenses.

56 According to the Annual Return of Tayburn Ltd for the period ending 14th June 2010 held at Companies House.

57 Tayburn Limited Abbreviated Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2009 cite shareholders funds (including called up share capital and profit and loss account) having a value of £599,512.

58 According to the Annual Return of Tayburn Holdings Ltd for the period ending 26th September 2009, held at Companies House, Noble Grossart Investments Ltd holds 21,367 of 179,899 ordinary shares (11.8%) and 97,315 of 119,932 ordinary A shares (81%), totalling a 40% share in the company, both types of share valued at £1 each, with A shares having priority over ordinary shares (see page 4 of Tayburn Holdings Limited Unaudited Abbreviated Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2009, held at Companies House).

59 This, in turn, accounts for a significant proportion of the debtors cited by Tayburn Holdings at £177,800 and of its annual turnover of £434,292.

60 These figures are taken from the Unaudited Abbreviated Accounts for Tayburn Holdings Ltd for the Year Ended 31st March 2009, op cit.

61 See Noble Grossart Investments Ltd Report and Accounts 31st January 2010 available at Companies House.

62 See page 38 of CSG Ltd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010, held at Companies House. This conflicts with other information available at Companies House which suggests that Grossart resigned from his directorship of the *Daily Record/Sunday Mail* on 10th May 1007.

63 In correspondence with the author, 15 December 2010.

64 See Annual Return for Noble Grossart Holdings Ltd, dated 30th March 2010, held at Companies House.

the democratic accountability lost through this process was unlikely to be compensated for by improvements to services. More than three years ago, it was possible to say that: “Findings show that many such trusts suffer funding problems as council support is phased out, while private donations either fail to materialise or do not consistently deliver the funding required to maintain services”.[71] With this in mind, it is useful to measure the performance of CSG against these indicators.

Taking the first point – the loss of democratic accountability – one might ask how the desire for a company to present its best possible face to the public might be grounded in decisions taken at board level. While the minutes of quarterly board meetings held by the ALEO’s charitable arm are posted online, there is no such obligation to explicate decisions undertaken by the trading arm. Added to this, the charitable arm of CSG has initiated a practice of organising meetings of the directors away from recording by minute-takers. At the March 2010 meeting, the board requested that the Chief Executive “arrange a Board ‘Away Day’ to discuss in detail the way forward for the company”,[72] whereby “the Company’s future strategic plan would be discussed at the Director’s Away Day proposed by the Chief Executive”.[73] At the next quarterly meeting, the board again requested an Away Day “to discuss in detail the way forward for the Company”.[74] This was scheduled to take place after a board meeting on 2nd September. However, a request for minutes or details of ‘Away Days’ elicited the response: “On inspecting our records […] it would appear that CSG does not hold the information which you have requested. Neither does anyone else hold it on our behalf”.[75] Yet, the company continues to assert that ‘Glasgow Life fully complies with FOI legislation and is subject to scrutiny by Glasgow City Council’.[76]

On the issue of the financial viability of ALEOs, concern has been growing over the council’s willingness to maintain support for them. In autumn 2009, as momentum gained in the public sector for using the global financial crisis as an excuse for cuts, CSG was informed that the service fee payable by Glasgow City Council was to be reduced by an initial £1.7m a year,[77] likely to increase over the next three years.[78] Representing 2.3% of the service fee payable to CSG,[79] this was apparently due to the council’s budget planning process, for which there is provision in the Service Agreement signed by the two parties.[80] This state of affairs was reported to the CSG board at the September 2009 meeting and, rather than concentrating on ways to plug this already substantial shortfall, a need for further savings was outlined due to rising utility costs and pension contributions and reduced income forecasts with the end of a highly commercial Dr Who exhibition.[81] By the time of the next board meeting, in November 2009, this revision of spending had translated into “a strategy for reducing Culture and Sport Glasgow’s expenditure by £3.4m for 2010/11”,[82] thus doubling the cut to be imposed by the loss of council funding. It is worth mentioning that, during the September 2010 board meeting, an even bleaker prognosis was given, which took into account the likelihood that the Scottish Government would also decide to “protect key service areas which would inevitably mean much larger cuts for the organisation”.[83] As its operations no longer fall under the auspices of the public sector, CSG will have no protection when government outlines its key services.

Turning to a consideration of where CSG decided the axe would fall, we find that Bridget McConnell delivered a budget and service planning report to the Board at its January 2010 meeting,[84] detailing the following cuts:
Venues Review £1.196m
Review of Events £160,000
Review of Storage Requirements £80,000
Utilities Efficiencies £200,000
Review of Staff Terms and Conditions £1.614m
Income Generation £150,000

## Review of Venues

Bearing in mind the concerns articulated above – that funding under the ALEO model would be inadequate to maintain services – we find that CSG undertook a review of the venues it manages on behalf of the people of Glasgow. This led to recommendations to close 11 recreation and community centres, of which top priority was given to the Bellrock facility in Calton,[85] where, it will be remembered, men have among the lowest life expectancy in the world according to the WHO. The results of this review were presented to the CSG board,[86] which includes four male independent directors, among them Lord Macfarlane, who has already exceeded the expectations of longevity common to the richest parts of the city. According to the minutes of this and subsequent board meetings, no objections were raised to the proposed abolition of community facilities in some of the poorest parts of the city. It should be added that this lack of dissent extended to the carefully selected councillors appointed to the CSG board, while bailies Gordon Matheson and Alan Stewart were notable by their absence at the meeting.[87] However, the closures needed to be ratified by the full council, which halted the closure of facilities and venues operated by CSG.[88] Thus, a democratically elected group of officials was able to reject the recommendations of an essentially private body. But, despite an assurance that ‘there are no plans for *further* closures in the next financial year 2011/12’[89] the issue has not disappeared from the agenda – notes from a quarterly governance meeting between the council and CSG to have taken place on 30 June 2010 indicate ‘the need for clarity in relation to processes around the closure of properties’.[90]

It is worth mentioning that keeping Bellrock Community Centre open – including wages, running costs and a substantial one-off programme of investment – was estimated by CSG to cost £358,588;[91] the staging of Glasgow International, a visual arts festival designed to attract tourists to the city that takes place for two weeks every two years, costs £384,000.[92] At the same time as the closure of Bellrock was proposed, adjustments in opening hours were being countenanced for sports facilities and museums across the city, but with the tourist-friendly Kelvingrove, Burrell collection and GoMA being explicitly immune from this process.[93] These actions combine to indicate that tourism remains a central priority for CSG, something evidently in conflict with sustaining local community provision.

As Glasgow City Council has a controlling interest in CSG, the company is treated as a subsidiary within the council’s accounts. In a note to Glasgow City Council’s Group Disclosure of Accounts, the following entry appears for Culture and Sport Glasgow: “After accounting for FRS 17 ‘Retirement Benefits’, the net liability of the company was £58.106m at 31 March 2010 compared to £9.575m at 31 March 2009. The loss on ordinary activities before taxation at 31 March 2010 was £1.399m compared to a profit of £1.638m at 31 March 2009”.[94] Put another way, at the end of the 2009 financial year, CSG owed £9.6m; one year later, it owed £58.1m – a staggering jump of £48.5m. In the financial year ending in March 2009, it made a profit of £1.6m; one year later, it had made a loss (before tax) of £1.4m, a gulf of £3m. As is the tendency of such documents, the Annual Review 2009-10 dwelt on the positive, preferring to represent income and expenditure as segments of a whole, rather than a year-on-year comparison. And, while the figures given are for 2009-10, the subheadings point to them being for the previous financial year – a horrendous mistake and failure of managerial oversight, one hopes.[95] In order to understand this picture more fully, we need to examine the accounts for CSG.

Studying documents held at Companies House, the picture of net pension liabilities outlined above is easily confirmed, and it is immediately obvious that a deficit of £48.5m has been run up in the past financial year.[96] At the end of the 2008 financial year, this stood at a mere £2.4m, which seems to suggest an exponential pattern of growth in the pension deficit. A spokesperson from the company explains that ‘Changes to reporting of pensions under FRS17 provide a snapshot of any actuarial deficit or surplus, as determined under the reporting structure on a specified date’.[97] While it is true that FRS 17 compels a view of the overall picture in relation to public sector pensions, these accounting standards have been effective for accounts beginning on or after 6 April

65 See the press release from 3 November 2008, entitled ‘Chair Appointed to Creative Scotland’, on the Scottish Government website which states that ‘Mr Brown joined Noble Grossart in 1969 and was an executive director of that company until December 2003. He is a non-executive director of Noble Grossart’: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/11/03111331

66 See annual returns for the respective companies. According to the list of Ewan Brown’s directorships held at Companies House, it would seem that it is only Noble Grossart Investments Ltd from which Brown resigned as director (on 19 December 2003).

67 See Annual Return for Noble Grossart Investments Ltd, dated 30th March 2010, held at Companies House.

68 See Annual Return for Tayburn Holdings Ltd, dated 8th October 2009, held at Companies House.

69 See Noble Grossart Holdings Ltd Report and Accounts 31st January 2010, held at Companies House.

70 See Sunday Times 26th April 2009 http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/specials/rich_list/rich_list_2009/article6163833.ece

71 ‘O Rose, thou art sick! Outsourcing Glasgow’s Cultural and Leisure Services’, *Variant*, issue 29, summer 2007, page 30.

72 See note 7(1)(c)(iii)(C) in Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG31st March 2010.

73 Ibid, note 8(1)(c)(i).

74 See note 8(1)(f)(C)(ii) in Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG23rd June 2010.

75 Letter sent by Joe Larkin, CSG Assistant Business Support Manager on 15th October 2010, seen by the author.

76 A spokesperson from Glasgow Life in correspondence with the author, 15 December 2010.

77 See Report by the Chief Executive on Budget and Service Planning, note 9(2)(a) of a Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Culture and Sport Glasgow, 2nd September 2009 and Budget Plan 2010/11, Report to Board Meeting of 31st March 2010 by Interim Director of Finance, point 6.

78 This is stated in a letter from the Director of Strategic Planning and Corporate Services (Susan Deighan), dated 22nd September 2009, released under the Freedom of Information Act and seen by the author.

79 In the unaudited version of Glasgow City Council’s accounts to 31st March 2010, inspected under the provision of the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1985, the service fee payable to CSG by GCC is given as £72.765m. In the Report and Group Financial Statements for CSGLtd, it is given as £76.149m. According to the unaudited GCC accounts, an additional £10.1m was invoiced by CSG to various council departments during the past financial year, while venues operated and managed by CSG on behalf of the council receive direct subsidy from the council verging on £50m.

80 Email correspondence with the Corporate and Property Law Section of Glasgow City Council under the terms of the Local Authorities Act.

81 See note 9(2)(b) of a Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Culture and Sport Glasgow, 2nd September 2009. According to the Glasgow Life Annual Review 2009-10, the Dr. Who exhibition attracted over 140,000 visitors, generating final tickets sales of £719,970 (page 30) while the Glasgow Boys attracted more than 123,000 visitors (page 6), which simple mathematics would suggest generated in the region of £632,545. Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Culture and Sport Glasgow 2nd September 2010, note 8(4) also mentions high visitor numbers with an impact on retail sales.

82 See note 10(5) of a Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Culture and Sport Glasgow, 25th November 2009.

83 See note 8(3)(b) of a Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Culture and Sport Glasgow, 2nd September 2009.

84 Budget and Service Planning Report by Chief Executive to Board Meeting of 27th January 2010.

85 Page 4 of CSG Private and Confidential Venues Review released under the Freedom of Information Act and seen by the author.

86 See point 2 of Budget and Service Planning Report by Chief Executive to Board Meeting of 27th January 2010.

87 Ibid, apologies (p. 1).

88 See notes 3 (7)(g)(iv) and (F)(dd) Minutes of Glasgow City Council 28th January 2010.

89 From a Glasgow Life spokesperson in correspondence with the author, 15 December 2010, italics added.

90 Avril Lewis (Glasgow Life Business Support Manager) cited in note 1 from the Quarterly Governance Meeting Note of Meeting 30 June 2010, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

91 Figure taken from page 4 of CSG Private and Confidential Venues Review, op cit. The investment accounts for £307,330 of this, making running costs just £78,258 thereafter, just 20% of the Glasgow International budget.

92 Figure taken from page 31 of CSGLtd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010, held at Companies House.

93 CSG Private and Confidential Venues Review, op cit., p. 5.

94 Glasgow City Council Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st March 2010 (Pre-Audit Inspection Copy),

2007,[98] which corresponds with CSG's first fiscal year, thus failing to explain the sudden increase in the deficit.

According to the notes to the accounts, "CSG participates in the Local Government Pension Scheme, which is administered by Strathclyde Pension Fund".[99] In general, the fund has been performing well, increasing from £9.5bn to £10bn over the past financial year, in line with its targets.[100] The fund accountant was asked how it was possible for CSG to run up such a huge deficit in the space of a year but at the time of writing no comment had been received. Luckily, Bridget McConnell's pension will be unaffected by this as sums of £21,016 and £22,785 have been earmarked for her retirement.[101] The directors of CSG are now seeking to generate a surplus of £500,000 in 2010-11 to go some way towards making up the reserves needed to protect the pension fund.[102] This money has to come from somewhere, which no doubt means that further cuts and commercial realignments will be proposed.

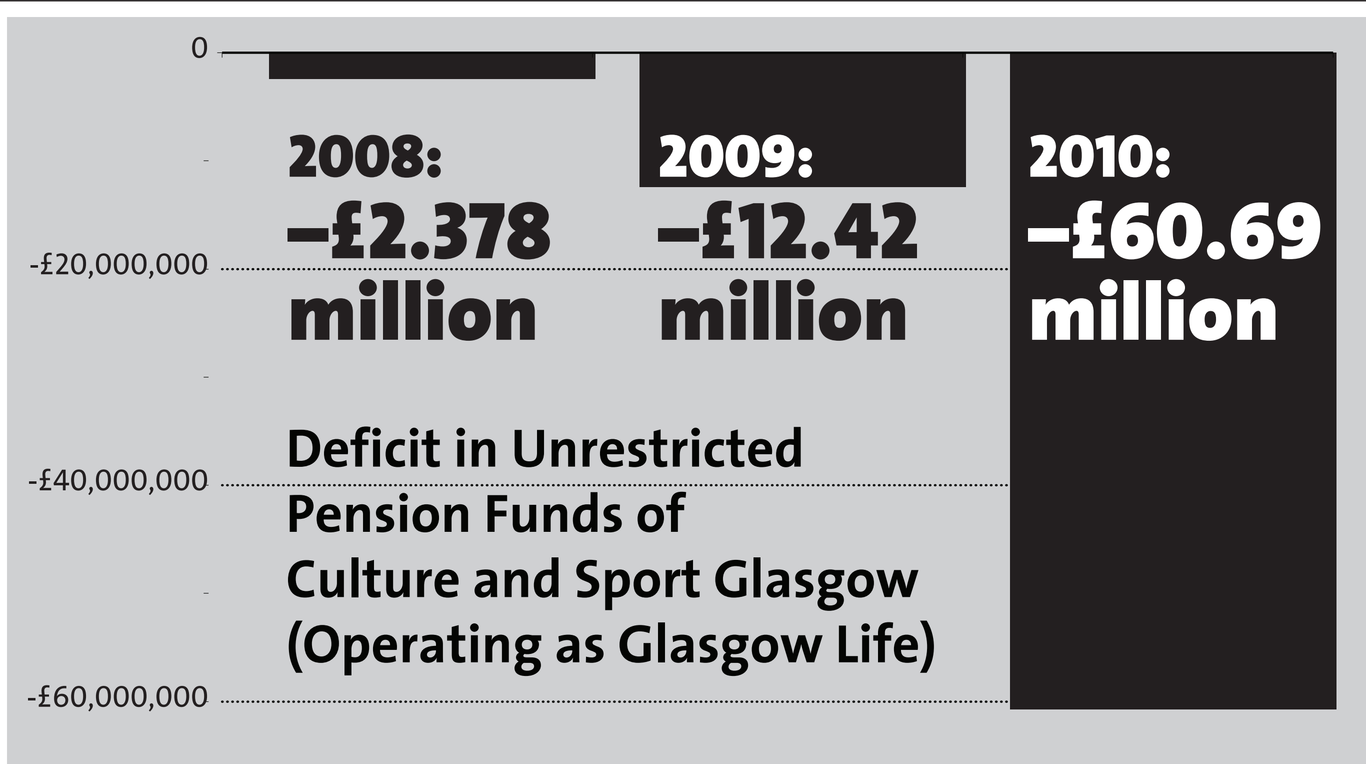
Sticking with the accounts, the CSG loss before tax of £1.399m reported by Glasgow City Council on the basis of CSG's unaudited accounts is harder to verify. In the final accounts audited for the company by KPMG (the same Big Four auditor as used by Noble Grossart),[103] the profit of £1.638m is there for all to see, but the loss is declared as £62,000,[104] which, when subtracted from last year's profit margin, is exactly equal to the £1.7m of cuts the company projected it needed to make. Nowhere is the discrepancy of £1.337m, between the unaudited (GCC) and audited (CSG) accounts, explained.

Delving a little deeper into the notes to the accounts, some interesting facts spring out. Expenditure on Finance, Procurement and Business Support was up this year, as was that for Marketing and Media,[105] the two budgets accounting for an increase of more than £1m, hardly surprising in light of the re-branding. And, if one was an auditor paid £28,000[106] to check the accounts, one might wish to examine how it is that the company's fixed assets have been augmented by 11% this year[107] while depreciation has jumped by 149% compared to the previous year.[108] One might wonder whether a company with a remit for benefiting the public sector was trying to strengthen its balance sheet or, at the very least, question why it persisted in buying equipment and vehicles that suffered the same high rate of obsolescence as private sector companies.[109]

Let us conclude this section with a consideration of the external funding that was expected to flow into such new structures as soon as the shackles of local authority control had been thrown off. The service fee paid to CSG by Glasgow City Council under the devolved arrangement only accounts for nine months' worth of funding[110] and the rest must be raised from external sources in order for the full complement of services to be provided. If the company fails to attract this external funding, the facilities it operates and the people using them will suffer. As one might expect, given the current economic conditions, the net return on unspecified investments is down by more than £500,000.[111] Grant income has also taken a serious battering, dropping from £7.1m last year to £3.1m this year, contributing to a decrease in the overall voluntary income into the group of £3.2m.[112] This dire financial position may well lead the company into unsavoury collaborations with the private sector, as already evinced by the sponsorship of the Riverside Museum by BAE Systems, Britain's favourite arms dealer.[113]

The picture outlined above makes the phrase "many such trusts suffer funding problems as council support is phased out, while private donations either fail to materialise or do not consistently deliver the funding required to maintain services" less a gloomy forewarning and more a statement of fact. Equally prophetic is the 2007 assertion that, "In Scotland, while many of these trusts initially performed satisfactorily, they appear to have come up against a similar set of problems: stagnation of core funding with savings and extra funding being slow to materialise; pension liabilities; as well as dealing with the costs of audit, internal and external regulation and reporting structures".[114]

We needn't worry, though, because an audit committee has been set up, chaired by Angus Grossart with up to four additional members, which, amongst other duties, aims:




To formulate policies and plans for the strategic management of the Company's financial resources, both revenue and capital.

To supervise, monitor and review the implementation of budget and service plans in the context of the Company's key objectives and priorities.

To assist the Board in approving the use of additional resources, reserves and balances, and changes to the Company's budget and service plan.

To supervise, monitor and review the strategic development of the Company's Information and Communications Technologies.

To manage and supervise the arrangements for the proper administration of the Company's financial affairs.

To be responsible for oversight of pension arrangements.[115]

It remains to be seen whether an audit committee can really save CSG from its perilous financial state, which, besides the users of its facilities in Glasgow, impacts worst on those who work for the company.

## Revised Terms and Conditions

Two contracts govern the relationship between Glasgow City Council and CSG (which, against its wishes, the double-headed company is still known).[116] Both of these detail a clear commitment to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) in regard to Assigned Employees being transferred from the local authority to the service provider. Under TUPE, employers have strict obligations following a transfer: they must take over all employment contracts (to prevent the cherry-picking of staff), and assume all rights and obligations under those contracts; they must honour any collective agreements made on behalf of employees; they must not dismiss employees for any reason connected with the transfer unless agreed by an employment tribunal; they must not unilaterally worsen the terms and conditions of employment of any transferred employee; and they must consult representatives of the employees. In turn, employees can expect their conditions to continue exactly as before and, if they find that there has been a fundamental worsening in their terms and conditions of employment as a result of the transfer, have the right to terminate their contract and claim unfair dismissal before an employment tribunal, on the grounds that actions of the employer have forced them to resign.[117] In addition to staff previously employed by Glasgow City Council who were transferred to Culture and Sport Glasgow, the Transitional Services Agreement states that all new employees should be given the same terms:

"Following a Service Transfer, CSG shall ensure that the terms and conditions of employment offered to any new employees employed or engaged by the New Supplier in connection with the provision or the procurement of the provision of services equivalent or similar to

p. 86, which were open to inspection under the Local Authorities Act from 26th July to 13th August 2010.

95 Glasgow Life Annual Review 2009-10, op cit., page 38.

96 See Group Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating a group income and expenditure account) on page 17 of CSGLtd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010.

97 In correspondence with the author, 15 December 2010.

98 See http://www.frc.org.uk/asb/technical/standards/pub0206.html

99 Ibid, note 20, p. 35.

100 Conversation with a representative of Strathclyde Pension Fund, 24th November 2010.

101 CSGLtd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010, op cit, p. 24.

102 Ibid, p. 12.

103 See page 11 of Noble Grossart Ltd Report and Accounts 31st January 2010, held at Companies House

104 CSGLtd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010, op cit, p. 17.

105 Ibid, p. 23.

106 KPMG LLP has been paid this amount annually since CSG came into being. See Ibid, p. 23 and page 33 of CSGLtd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2009, held at Companies House.

107 Increasing from £2.36 to £2.63m, see CSGLtd Report and Group Financial Statements 31st March 2010, op cit., p. 18.

108 See page 22 of Ibid, which shows depreciation to have increased from £231,000 to £576,000.

109 According to note 1 of the accounts (Ibid, p. 21), CSG plant and equipment is only expected to last three to five years and motor vehicles four years.

110 See Ibid, p. 12.

111 According to page 17 of Ibid, investments fell from £523,000 at the end of March 2009 to £19,000 at the end of March 2010. This includes interest receivable and the net return on pension assets (which stands at zero at the end of March 2010).

112 Ibid, p. 25. This was explained by a Glasgow Life spokesperson on the basis that 'This is primarily restricted funding where external organisations provide us with funding to support a specific project or activity. This income is accounted for on a cash basis when received and held on our Balance Sheet until it is spent. Funding may be for a project which lasts for a few weeks or for several years. The cash flow of spend can also vary considerably with spend sometimes being up-front and sometimes not until the project is complete. This means that the income flow can be very variable and will not flow steadily into the accounts. With regard to generating additional external income. Despite the recession we are increasing the amount of income we generate beyond the service fee from Glasgow City Council. In the year in question, despite the fluctuations in restricted funding, our overall external funding increased by £975,000.' In correspondence with the author, 15 December 2010.

113 See note on BAE Systems at: http://www.powerbase.info/index.php?title=BAE_Systems

114 'O Rose, thou art sick! op cit., p. 30.

115 See Appendix 1: Terms of Reference Audit Committee Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG23rd June 2010.

116 A Transitional Services Agreement (document GLAS795090 V19), dated 30th March 2007, and a Services Agreement (GLAS800682 v19).

117 Originally implemented in 1981, TUPE was widened in scope in 2006. See *Employment Rights on the Transfer of an Undertaking*, HM Government Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, June 2009 http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file20761.pdf

118 Transitional Services Agreement, clause 12.7 (page 15)

the Services, or any part of the Services, shall be no less favourable overall than the terms and conditions of employment applying to the comparable Assigned Employees."[118]

Nonetheless, at CSG's March 2010 board meeting, it was advised that "staff had been balloted by their respective Trade Unions for strike action and action short of strike following the announcement of a pay freeze and the introduction of revised terms and conditions relating to changes to public holidays/annual leave and over time working".[119] Prior to this, the January Budget and Service Planning document had alluded to consultations having taken place with unions since September 2009 around a Review of Staff Terms and Conditions valued at £1.614m as part of the £3.4m projected saving outlined above. This review proposed:

• Reducing the number of public holidays from 12.5 to 6.5 days.

• Confining overtime payments to plain time and only permitting overtime to be worked when absolutely necessary.

• Exploring the reduction of staff working at 37 hours per week to 35 hours per week.[120]

While the third proposal was not considered vital to achieving savings, Bridget McConnell expressed, in no uncertain terms, that she intended to proceed with the first two changes to conditions of service. During the January board meeting, she outlined her intentions for the meeting that would be taking place between CSG directors and trade unions two days later, advising "that we intend to proceed with the implementation of the changes to public holidays, overtime, and the revision of opening hours".[121] Rather than negotiating with the unions, McConnell asserted that these changes would be achieved by diktat, giving employees 12 weeks' notice of the plans, and, while the agreement of roughly 100 affected by these changes would be sought, if it was not forthcoming, they would be written to individually, their contracts terminated and re-engagement offered on revised terms and conditions.[122]

Despite public assurances that jobs had not been lost,[123] McConnell oversaw the measures she had threatened, which led to a rare combined action on the part of four different unions.[124] When it became clear that no agreement could be reached between CSG management and the unions, ACAS[125] was brought in to arbitrate[126] in a process led by Frank Blair, who is seen as a pivotal figure in shaping the Northern Ireland peace agreement. According to a union spokesperson, McConnell has not once appeared at these discussions and CSG representatives have been thrown by Blair's objectivity. CSG has consistently refused to release any details on the discussions pertaining to the review of staff terms and conditions under the Freedom of Information Act,[127] a decision which is being investigated by the Scottish Information Commissioner at the time of writing. Pay has been frozen and posts are left unfilled, with temporary workers being brought in to bridge any gaps, thus bypassing TUPE guidelines on new employees. Morale among the workforce is at an all-time low, and there are widespread rumours that culture and leisure will be taken back under the umbrella of the council. It would seem that this rumour is predicated on more than just hope, given that the agreement between Glasgow City Council and CSG includes the provision for termination by either party "with immediate effect if the other Party fails to observe or perform any of its material obligations",[128] or if "the other Party ceases to carry on its activities, becomes unable to pay its debts when they fall due, becomes insolvent or apparently insolvent",[129] or "In the event of either Party committing any breach or series of breaches in respect of its obligations".[130]

## Social Apartheid

In May 2010, Bridget McConnell delivered the Robert Owen Memorial Lecture entitled 'Culture and Sport: A Matter of Life and Death?'.[131] In this presentation to a small, exclusive audience in New Lanark World Heritage Village, McConnell elaborated on her vision of culture and sport as a tool of economic regeneration in a divided city. In the process, she attempted to characterise the instrumental value of culture as something inseparable from its intrinsic value, and frequently paraphrased the ideas she articulated in her thesis for Doctor of Education at the University of Stirling in March 2009. In this doctoral study, she sought to demonstrate that social inclusion is an historic concept and that private intervention in the arts in Glasgow has a precedent dating back to the 19th century.[132] Drawing on her insight into government, McConnell comments not only on the inevitability of an instrumental approach to culture but also on the value of culture as a tool for good.[133]

At New Lanark in May 2010, McConnell continued to invoke the merits of cultural participation. Acknowledging the link between physical activity and physical and mental health, she argued that:

"Just as the evidence of psychological impacts of sport and physical activity are becoming more widely known, recent desk research undertaken in CSG has revealed a plethora of amazing research articles from medical journals – not just from arts workers trying to justify their funding bids but from medical researchers – demonstrating the life-enhancing and life-lengthening impacts from participation in cultural activities and the arts including participation less intensive than art therapy."[134]

In order to substantiate her argument about the instrumental value of culture, McConnell cited a Finnish study which "showed that general participation in cultural, social and religious activities improved the [sic] longevity in men to such a degree that the public health services were recommended not to focus solely on specific risk factors like smoking, but on wider cultural participation".[135] That the CSG Chief Executive was fully cognisant of arguments pertaining to the purported health benefits of participation in culture and leisure while recommending the closure of Bellrock Community Centre in Calton, with its appalling life expectancy, suggests a major mismatch between the rhetoric and policy.

In trumpeting the benefits of cultural participation, McConnell repeatedly referred to the reinvention of Glasgow as a "major cultural tourist destination" and, as we have seen, CSG considers itself integral to this rebranding. The problem with cultural tourism is that it contributes to the social apartheid that Julien Brygo witnessed in Glasgow, as parts of the city become no-go areas for the class that remains uncatered for by municipal museums and galleries. During Glasgow's stint as Capital of Culture in 1990, Euan Sutherland, an artist based in the city, made a body of work under the title *Cultural Façade*, exposing the complicity of instrumentalised culture in denying this reality. Twenty years on, the façade has become an edifice of inequality, albeit one that is easily ignored by high-earning visitors to the city.

At one point during her New Lanark talk, McConnell mentioned that "In a city of extremes, Glasgow has lots of new money, but also some of the worst poverty and ill health in western Europe – it is a moral, economic and human imperative that our cultural policies reach out to those who are excluded, inspiring a new generation to create, innovate and succeed".[136] But nowhere in CSG's vision is it explained how marginalised citizens are able to pass through what Tayburn identified as the "gateway to the vibrant side of the city". Furthermore, in abstracting the causality of poverty and ill health, McConnell spectacularly avoids addressing the connection between the unequal distribution of wealth and curtailed life spans in her organisation's main area of operation. Then again, if Bridget McConnell were to acknowledge that inequality was the major contributor to ill health and premature death in Glasgow, she might be forced to confront how she herself is implicated in this process, as the head of an organisation that sustains inequality by bolstering an increasingly specious cultural façade.

With special thanks to all those who helped, directly and indirectly, with this research (December 2010). An unedited version of this research is available at: http://www.shiftyparadigms.org/images/Glasgow_Life_or_Death.pdf

inspected under Local Authority Accounts Regulations (1985).

119 See note 7(1)(c)(i) Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG31st March 2010.

120 Culture and Sport Glasgow, Budget and Service Planning 2010/11, item 6.

121 Budget and Service Planning Report by Chief Executive to Board Meeting of 27th January 2010, point 6.

122 Ibid.

123 This assertion was made by Bridget McConnell following her lecture entitled 'Culture and Sport: A Matter of Life and Death?', op cit..

124 BECTU, GMB, Unison and Unite.

125 Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

126 This is confirmed in note 8(2) of Minute of a Meeting of the Board of Directors of CSG2 September 2010, which states: "With regard to HR issues (a) that four members of the Directorate had attended a day long conciliation meeting at ACAS which had been spent agreeing a process to move forward and resulting in a schedule of 6/7 meetings; and (b) that the aim was to ensure that the entire process was concluded by 31 October 2010."

127 On 6th August 2010, the author requested that "the minutes of meetings to have taken place between Culture and Sport Glasgow/Glasgow Life employees/board members and Trade Union representatives since the start of 2010, and copies of other correspondence (letters, emails, telephone calls) exchanged" be released under the Freedom of Information Act, specifically in relation to the review of staff terms and conditions. This request was refused on the basis of Section 30 (b)(ii) of the Act – Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs, which was upheld in an internal review by Susan Deighan (initiated on 15th September and concluded on 8th October). The final word on this from a Glasgow Life spokesperson is 'We continue to meet with the Joint Trade Unions as part of regular meetings to discuss not only disputes, but all matters pertaining to staff pay and conditions' in correspondence with the author, 15 December 2010.

128 Transitional Services Agreement, clause 10.1.1.

129 Ibid, clause 10.1.5.

130 Ibid, clause 10.3.

131 Bridget McConnell delivered the Robert Owen Memorial Lecture entitled 'Culture and Sport: A Matter of Life and Death?' at Robert Owen School, New Lanark, 14th May 2010, released to the author under the Freedom of Information Act.

132 Bridget McConnell, 'Which Cultural Policy? Whose Cultural Policy? Players and Practices in a Scottish Context' Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education, Institute of Education, University of Stirling, March 2009, pp. 5-6.

133 Ibid, p. 14.

134 Bridget McConnell, 'Culture and Sport: A Matter of Life and Death?' op cit., slide 6.

135 Ibid, slide 9.

136 Ibid.

# Academic Capture

## Kasim Agpak

***'Embedded Experts', Commercialisation, Militarisation and Securitisation of the UK Academy***
Desmond Fernandes
Apec Press, Stockholm, 2011

The attack on academic freedom, at several levels, has not yet brought about an adequate defense of the public interest in the autonomy of university research. However, by bringing together numerous accounts of the unfolding battles which are taking place, Desmond Fernandes provides a powerful account of the way the commercialisation, militarisation and securitisation of the UK academy has developed into a state discourse, not only in the UK but also internationally. 'Embedded experts' play a key role in facilitating such discourse and its impact is an issue in need of more critical research, because, with a few distinguished exceptions[1], it is often untouched or ignored by academics. Maybe Foucault's idea of power can help us to understand the way in which 'power relations' function and creates its own regime of truth:

"Truth is not outside of power or lacking in power … Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanism and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."[2]

It is in this sense, of how academies are used and have become institutions whose key purposes have been to serve an illiberal political and economic system, that Fernandes' study explores a range of concerns. He disturbingly details the way in which "the academy has been used by US governing elites, the military industrial complex and other corporations to push through a number of questionable 'securitisation' agendas both 'at home' – in the name of 'homeland security', for instance – and 'abroad', under the cover of the 'fraudulent' War on Terror [recently renamed the Long/Permanent War]". He draws attention to Maximilian Forte's finding that what "we are dealing with" at the present time in the US are "universities, or units within them, making themselves into willing servants of the national security state, actively seeking contracts for terror research, selling their expertise to make war against those who resist unprovoked aggression and occupation by the US state".[3] Apart from overt means, "the state itself", indeed, can and does "seek out research ... in even more innocuous and surreptitious ways" (Forte).[4] So, one could argue here that the role of academia and academics has been extended in the sense that they are not the only ones that supply knowledge and information, but also a set of discourses which serve to frame and explicate the conflicts and troubles that we witness around us. The current emphasis of many universities is on how to earn contracts from states or corporations and to profit from them.

The 'relations' between the London School of Economics (LSE) and the Libyan government that have recently been revealed outline the extent of these types of relationships, as Fernandes shows. Citing a number of sources, he highlights the manner in which,

"the [LSE] has asked Lord Woolf, the former Lord Chief Justice, to [now] carry out an inquiry into the circumstances in which Saif Gaddafi [the son of the Libyan leader] was awarded a doctorate in 2008, only to make a £1.5m donation to the university the following year. The inquiry followed the resignation of the LSE's director, Howard Davies, after revelations that, as well as the £1.5m donation from the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation (GICDF), the LSE had also benefited from a £2.2m contract with Libya to train its civil servants. Robert Halfon, the Tory MP for Harlow, called for the LSE's entire governing council to resign … Among the people who will feature in the inquiry is Professor David Held, the co-director of the Centre for the Study of Global Governance[5] and one of Saif Gaddafi's mentors. He had argued in favour of the grant for his centre being accepted and was appointed a trustee of GICDF in June 2009, but was forced to quit several months later by the LSE's council over concerns of a potential conflict of interests. He denies any impropriety. But questions about Professor Held were raised over claims that he pressured an admissions tutor to accept the niece of former Clinton aide Sydney Blumenthal on a master's course ... as it would be a wonderful opportunity 'to continue to deepen LSE's trans-Atlantic ties.'"[6]

Ungoed-Thomas and Kerbaj are quoted as clarifying that, "the chairman of the LSE's ruling council – which approved the Gadaffi donation – is Peter Sutherland, who was then non-executive chairman of BP. He had visited Libya with Blair in May 2007, when the oil company signed a £450 million exploration deal … The LSE now faces renewed scrutiny over its fundraising. One of its largest donors is Victor Dahdaleh, a London-based metals magnate who is also president of the advisory board of the LSE's global governance centre. Dahdaleh … has given at least £1.1 million to the university. But he is embroiled in a US-investigation over allegations that he channeled bribes to officials in Bahrain."[7]

Citing a range of sources, Fernandes draws our attention to the following:

• A Nobel prize-winning British scientist has resigned from the charity run by Muammar Gaddafi's son that gave a £1.5m donation to the London School of Economics, and disclosed that the funding was awarded without the approval of board members. The elite British university has been in turmoil over the donation, which led to the resignation of its director, Sir Howard Davies, and the launch of an independent inquiry into its links with Libya. Sir Richard Roberts, who was on the board of the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation, said the funding was given to the LSE without 'any form of transparency or approval.'"[8]

• Revelations about the London School of Economics' Libyan connections have highlighted the pressure that universities are under to accept money from businessmen and foreign governments, leading many commentators to give their recommendations about the length of spoon required for supping with the devil. But there is a wider point here that needs exploring: the fetishising in contemporary British universities of 'external funding'. This category embraces not only the kinds of deal at issue in the LSE case, but all forms of income that are 'external' to the institutions' own recurrent budget.

All academics in British universities will immediately recognise that nothing they do as scholars and teachers wins anywhere near as much commendation and support from their university's 'senior management team' as the securing of some kind of external funding. Such funding may range from a project grant from a research council or charity to the sponsorship of a post or studentship by a local business, and then on to the murkier regions of whole courses and centers being paid for by some overseas government or large corporation.[9]

Criteria, then, is not so much having good grades and being a successful student. Rather, as long as one has money to donate and there is someone to write a PhD thesis, this is pretty much what matters for this all-pervasive culture of university management. This is clearly visible in the case of the LSE and the way Saif Gaddafi's application is dealt with. Fernandes, quoting Collini, also illustrates the ways in which academics are forced into the role of generating income for the university, whereby generating or finding money becomes part of a conditional job description:

"At first sight, it may seem absurd to bracket all these disparate types of [external] funding together. The first and second kinds are not only innocent of any taint of corruption: they are the bread-and-butter of most working scientists and an increasing number of scholars in the humanities and social sciences as well. But that is precisely what is so insidious and why the LSE case raises systemic rather than merely local questions. Let me illustrate in two ways.

First, it is now axiomatic in British universities that a piece of research that was financed by any of these forms of external funding is ipso facto superior to one that is financed indirectly out of the university's recurrent income. Such external funding is, in principle, supposed to cover the 'extra' costs of doing a piece of research, but this means that, in practice, academics are now under instructions to incur more expense.

If a book or paper could be written either during the research time that universities still, just about, make available or during a period in which the scholar or scientist in question receives external funding for the notionally additional costs, academics are now obliged by their universities to opt for the latter. Indeed, being able to raise such outside money, from whatever source, is now being written into job advertisements as a requirement of the post. Second, the internal accounting procedures of universities reward twice over those departments and research units that succeed in attracting such outside income. They are rewarded not just by having the grant or donation to dispose of, but their allocation from central university funds will often be in proportion to success in attracting money from elsewhere.

So, if you are the head of a department and you want to try to ensure that your university continues to support teaching and research in that discipline, you are strongly advised to find some kind of outside deal, such as a 'partnership' with institutions in another country keen to have a guaranteed number of student places made available, or a 'contract' with some commercial company that is keen to have some of their research done for them, cheaply, by academics.

If you succeed in generating such income, your internal university funding will in turn be assured and your university managers will smile upon your individual and collective efforts to expand your activities, gain promotion, and so on. Now, obviously these structural conditions within British universities do not entail all money from 'outside' being in any way tainted, and they do not absolve institutions from exercising due diligence in scrutinising all arrangements very carefully. That, of course, is where the tricky questions about the origin of the money and the degree of outside control over it and so on come in. But these conditions certainly make it more likely that those within universities will be overwhelmingly eager to court any form of outside funding and be willing to take risks about the legitimacy or cleanness of any source."[10]

Therefore, what one has here is a business-like run university and academics employed on the basis of competing with each other to generate money for the university. While highlighting the ways some universities are run and have become commercialised, Fernandes also touches upon another important aspect of the relationship between corporations, universities and states in relation to 'militarisation' and 'securitisation'. For example, he draws our attention to Andrew Simms' findings that:

"Britain is home to the headquarters of BP and Shell, two of the world's three largest fossil fuel companies. These companies, along with many others in the industry, have succeeded in 'capturing' the allegiance of some of Britain's leading universities, through sponsoring new buildings, equipment, professorships and research posts. Many universities, meanwhile, operating in a climate of ever-tighter public funding,

are only too eager to please big business. In return for corporate sponsorship and contracts, universities are encouraging oil companies to steer the research agenda, tailoring courses to meet corporate personnel demands and awarding high profile positions to oil executives. In May 2001, for example, BP established the BP Institute at Cambridge University with a £25 million endowment. The Institute's full-time director is one of the company's senior managers.

For its part, the government is encouraging the link between academic research and corporate profit …The publicly funded Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council [also now] determines academic grants through a peer review college containing 12 oil or gas executives and just two renewable energy members … This capture of the academic agenda by the oil industry aided and abetted by public research bodies is not only undermining the competitiveness of non-fossil fuels, it also runs counter to the government's policy on renewable energy and calls into question the role of universities as impartial centres of critical, intellectual enquiry and guarantors of the public good."[11]

"The orientation of universities towards the needs of the state and capital" are not a new phenomenon, as Stavrianakis observes in Fernandes' study, nor are critiques of the move away from the public interest. But the growing commercialisation of research is part of a wider process of the neoliberalisation of academia that signals a step-change. Universities are becoming increasingly business led in their internal organisation and behaviour, one effect of which is to make them directly functional for capitalism.

"Universities have played an important task in modern industrial society, selecting personnel for particular social roles, integrating young people into the capitalist system, and legitimising a stratified social system; the neoliberalisation of academia requires that they do this and also function in the immediate interests of capital. Direct industrial funding of research is both a cause and symptom of the wider processes of 'marketisation, commodification, rationalisation, managerialism, flexibilisation, … casualisation and proletarianisation of academics' currently underway in British academia and elsewhere, and associated with falling levels of state funding."[12]

In this context, Fernandes provides a useful and precise chronology of the ways in which universities have become factories that produce information and knowledge about certain areas to assist not only states but also big corporations and businesses. This is done in light of particular aims and discourses. As Phillipson has observed, as cited in Fernandes' study, in the post-war period:

"American English-language dominance in Europe was unthinkable before 1945. Creating a global empire was given concrete form in academia through funding by US corporate world 'philanthropic' foundations. They invested heavily and strategically in research and higher education in Europe from 1919, and worldwide after 1945. This has decisively influenced the way research paradigms and university training in the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, political science etc.), language pedagogy (applied linguistics, TESOL) and such applied natural sciences as medicine are understood and organised. The significance of English for US empire (eagerly abetted by the British – Phillipson 1992 – like in military affairs) can be traced throughout the 20th century."[13]

Moreover, particular perspectives and sets of aims led by academics underpin historical and contemporary Imperialisms:

"Four Arrows also writes about 'a long overdue scholarly challenge to the educational and ideological hegemony that constitutes what might be thought of as a "fourth wave of killing the Indigenous."' The first wave was the genocidal physical attacks by European invaders, 'based in greed and rationalized by Christian fundamentalism'; the second one by 'politicians, courts, lawyers, the military and corporations … intended to control Indigenous land, water, language, culture, identity, and sovereignty. Academics have led the third wave of the attack with "scholarly" publications that erroneously attack the philosophies, worldviews, and histories of Indigenous peoples' (Jacobs/Four Arrows 2006, cited by Skutnabb-Kangas 2010, reproduced in Fernandes)."[14]

Fernandes, indeed, notices the way in which geography has been 'used' as a discipline. He cites the findings of Nick Spedding:

"By the end of the nineteenth century, France, Germany, Great Britain and the USA were firmly established as powerful, modern nation-states. The fact that Geography was established as a major academic force in all four countries was not a coincidence. I think we can identify three separate – but inter-related – themes which gave Geography the chance to make important contributions to the practice of imperialism, and so help to establish its academic prominence. These are:

How to 'do' Empire?

How to justify Empire?

How to picture Empire?

Theme 1) involves the idea that detailed and orderly knowledge of foreign parts was essential for the efficient management/exploitation* (* delete as you wish) of overseas places: Geography as the practical science of Empire. This was what the novelist Joseph Conrad meant by 'Geography Triumphant': by late Victorian times the process of global exploration was largely complete, ... so Geography switched its purpose to further the development of the West's expanding empires."[15]

'Empire', Spedding clarifies:

"was often a nasty business: the idea requires inequality to be cultivated if it is to work! Here, Geography was able to make its second contribution (theme 2); if it held the key to the practice of Empire, it was able to support this also with a theory of Empire. The paradigm of environmental determinism – with a (supposedly) respectable intellectual heritage traceable to Darwin amongst others – provided 'natural' laws which justified imperial aggression and exploitation."[16]

Halford Mackinder's imperial vision of geography, which paved the way for the establishment of geography as a distinct academic discipline in the UK, according to David Livingstone (who Fernandes cites):

"was specifically designed 'to attract minds of an amplitude fitting them to be rulers of men'. The teaching of geography was thus itself an imperial task and the encouragement of what Mackinder called 'thinking geographically' part of a strategy to secure the 'maintenance and progress of our Empire.'"[17]

Fernandes draws our attention to the manner and ways in which such founding academic and intellectual relationships have been influential in terms of foreign policy making and decisions, with Mackinder's theories running through both Nazi strategy and US strategic policy of the Cold War. Through Fernandes' work, a contemporary picture of this influence becomes clearer in the evolution of the university business model: corporations finance a particular department – for example, new departments established, purposefully built to meet the demands of corporations[18]. This is often presented as a way of generating income for universities and for some academics. Successive UK governments since Thatcher have promoted precisely this kind of corporate-linked 'research', through which a revolving-door of corporate interests can leverage strategic influence over organisational change; seeking to affect transformation at the level of both institutional practice and state policy.

One of the most important aspects of these types of 'relationships' is the way in which the concept of 'terrorism' has come to be defined and then used in political contexts and discourses. After the events of 9/11 (but even before, during the Reagan-Thatcher era), one can observe the phenomena of 'terrorology' departments and academic 'terrorism experts' emerging to dispense their alleged 'impartial', 'independent' and 'in-depth' knowledge, both as expert witnesses in the media and at the behest of state prosecutions. Consequently, "the West has produced an industry of institutes and experts who formulate and channel analysis and information on terrorism in accordance with Western demands. We have also seen how this industry is closely linked to Western governments, intelligence agencies, and corporate/conservative foundations and funders. It functions as a closed system, in which government officials and accredited and well-funded experts attend one another's conferences, cite one another's conferences, cite one another as authorities and reinforce their mutual status as experts" (Herman and O'Sullivan, 1989: 229-230).[19]

Furthermore, Fernandes clearly shows (citing numerous examples) the ways in which 'embedded institutions' and 'embedded experts' – well integrated into state and corporate ideological management processes – have played key and highly controversial roles in promoting and legitimating repressive proscription regimes we now live under. The findings of Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC) are highlighted:

"Many of these experts are able to conceal their partisan roles behind the façade and legitimacy of academic status. As policy analysts and commentators, they lend credence to scares about terrorist threats ... They reinforce US neoconservative propaganda … Such exaggerations create a climate of fear, whereby the public mind links the terrorist 'Other' with vulnerable and oppressed communities resident in Britain, who then appear to threaten the very fabric of civil society. Moreover, any radical resistance within Britain is portrayed as a contagion."[20]

Because the definition of 'terrorism' is left in the hands of the 'embedded academics' in the field of securitisation, states are able to pass any amount of legislation and policies in the name of 'security'. Accordingly, even non-violent protests and civil-disobedience can be portrayed and interpreted by academic institutions, which have a substantial influence on state and security forces' reasoning, as aspects of 'terrorist' activity. Johnny Burnett and Dave Whyte's findings (cited in Fernandes' study) highlight the manner in which non-violent protest by diasporic – for example, Kurdish – communities are often questionably transformed into 'terrorist activity':

"It is possible to find non-violent activities and protests against state violence recorded in the [RAND-St Andrews] database as 'terrorism'. Thus, for example, we find rather bizarrely two Kurdish protests involving unarmed demonstrators [from refugee/diasporic communities] included in the Chronology [of International Terrorist Incidents]. An occupation of the German consulate in Athens in protest of the killing of a Kurdish youth in police custody, and secondly a protest outside the Turkish National Airline office in Athens ... The RAND-St Andrews Chronology of International Terrorist Incidents [a database of international 'terrorist' incidents, developed by Bruce Hoffman whilst at University of St. Andrews, and later maintained by students at the university] demonstrates clearly that the terrorism that the nexus is interested in is highly selective. The Chronology is driven by a highly inconsistent conception of the categories of political violence that are worthy of analysis. As such it mirrors the conceptual flaws in the application of definitions of terrorism that has been the norm in Western terrorology."[21]

This form of 'securitisation' and 'militarisation' of academies is simultaneously taking place internationally, not least in oppressive countries to cover and justify their anti-democratic and genocidal policies. The Turkish state has precisely grounded its legitimacy on the basis of the denial of 'others' where stepping out of state ideology for academics has meant imprisonment, exile and even being killed.[22] As elsewhere, the events of 9/11 have been cynically used by the Turkish state to more easily justify imposing its ideological warfare and ongoing genocidal policies and practices against Kurds[23], with a number of 'academics' producing papers and appearing in the media arguing that the 'terrorism' of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) is the only problem facing 'democratic' Turkey, a key US-UK NATO 'ally' in the 'War on Terror/Long War'.

David Miller, professor of sociology at Strathclyde University, who with colleagues is compiling a Spinwatch database of 'terrorologists', has "shown how what has been called an 'invisible college' of experts operates as a nexus of interests connecting academia with military, intelligence and government agencies, with the security industry and the media."[24] In this 'expert nexus', some are acting covertly with intelligence and other agencies; others working on highly secretive projects for corporations and governments,

where public information about the nature of the funding and research 'relationships' that have been forged remains restricted due to 'commercial confidentiality' or 'national security' reasons/ agendas.

Fernandes demonstrates clearly the validity of Herman and Peterson's (2001) conclusions that "the role of power intellectuals [of this 'terrorologist' kind] fits nicely into the propaganda model, where the threat of independent experts as sources conflicting with official and corporate perspectives is shown to be alleviated by pushing forward dependent and friendly experts ... who preempt space that otherwise might be taken by genuinely independent analysts, i.e., public intellectuals. Nurturing and giving credentials to these power intellectuals, who will serve as front-line fighters against the public interest, is a main function of corporate think-tanks."[25]

An example of the manner in which alternative perspectives have been sidelined in the 'Turkish' Kurdish context is worth providing here. RAND employees, as Fernandes reveals, have provided 'expert opinion' and assessments to states prosecuting people in PKK-linked 'terrorism' trials in the UK: "The reports they have submitted to courts concerning the nature of the 'PKK threat' have again presented very selective – and hardly balanced – interpretations that fail to present vitally significant alternative interpretations. In one such case, RAND employee Kevin O'Brien, in presenting a British court with background information to the circumstances and conditions for the proscription of the PKK, failed to importantly note that there are contested legal and political interpretations concerning the very nature of 'proscription' of the PKK as a 'terrorist' organisation that need to at least be reflected upon by those sitting in judgement … Important arguments and perspectives that contested and directly challenged many of the psyops laden perspectives of the US-UK-Turkish governments and NATO and their 'embedded experts' concerning the 'Kurdish threat in Turkey' were simply never acknowledged or even presented by him for reflection: There is a right, in international law", for example, "to resist genocide by armed means",[26] and the PKK has repeatedly described its actions as being defensive against a genocidal Turkish state.[27]

Certainly, in the Turkish context, as Fernandes demonstrates, "many 'expert'/academic 'terrorologists' have sought to promote and bolster the UK government's 'PKK = terrorist', 'Turkey = War on Terror democratic NATO ally' stance, which is used to not only militarily but also diplomatically buttress the Turkish state's genocidal actions even as it is used to criminalise and target many Kurdish asylum seekers and sections of the Kurdish refugee/ diasporic 'Turkish' community in the UK". By relying on the recommendations and findings of embedded academics, "it has become easier for government policy makers to casually disregard critical perspectives from even its 'leftist' UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group that has expressed caution at the simplistic interpretations that are being made about the 'terrorist PKK'. According to the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group's own report based upon its 1993 visit (and as cited by Fernandes):

"The question of Turkish Kurdistan [i.e. the Kurdish south-east] ... in Britain and elsewhere ... is often presented as one of a reasonably democratic Government seeking to cope with an intractable problem of terrorism. We believe that the reality is one of military [state] terrorists aiming to extinguish the identity of a people, and we were much alarmed by the parallel drawn with the Armenian holocaust of 1915-1916. The PKK, like some Armenians during the First World War, took to arms because they could see no prospect of gaining their legitimate political objectives by peaceful means."

Fernandes' study disturbingly details the numerous ways in which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, NATO, the Ministry of Defence, intelligence agencies, private military companies alongside other corporate groups and arms manufacturers operate and increasingly determine, shape and influence 'research' agendas within the UK academy – under the banner and guise of promoting 'anti/counter-terrorism', 'anti-radicalisation', 'humanitarian intervention', 'the War on Terror', 'the Long War', 'innovation' and 'Homeland Security', etc. Yet, as he concludes, "it is important to appreciate that they fail to operate, in any meaningful sense, in any publicly accountable or ethically acceptable manner. Yet, these 'issues' and 'ethical concerns' (including issues of 'how' and for what ulterior 'purpose' these research results, sponsored projects and agendas will be used directly and/or indirectly by them) often appear to be dismissed or ignored by UK university research and funding councils (such as ESRC) and university managers and departmental heads, anxious to attract funding from the above".

Citing a number of reports, studies and articles, and providing numerous case studies, Fernandes also details the ways in which students and academic staff undertaking critical research have been targeted in the wake of commercialisation, securitisation and militarisation trends within the UK academy. The cases of Hicham Yezza and Rizwaan Sabir highlight key concerns:

• In May 2008 Hicham Yezza, an IT technician at the University of Nottingham, was arrested, together with student Rizwaan Sabir, in a well-publicised anti-terrorist swoop. They had downloaded al-Qaida material from the US Department of Defense website as part of Sabir's academic work on terrorism. Disgracefully, they were reported to the police by Nottingham University. The abandonment by British universities of any idea of academic independence is one of the unsung tragedies of our recent history ...

In the panic to be seen as helpful to the government, Nottingham University turned in these two Muslims, presumably on the basis that if you were planning to commit terrorist offences, then openly studying terrorism at university would be a good cover ... The ludicrous nature of the arrests quickly became apparent even to Nottinghamshire Police, and after an unpleasant six days in cells and the permanent shredding of their reputations, the men were released. Disgracefully, there has been no public apology from Nottingham University. Just as with the face saving alleged 'discovery' of child porn on the computer of the innocent 'terrorist suspect' the police shot in Leyton, lo and behold, Nottinghamshire Police discovered that Yezza was a criminal after all. He was an illegal immigrant! Yezza has now been jailed for nine months ... As he was working and studying at Nottingham University under his own name, the deception is not apparent ... It is very hard to believe the judge was not motivated by the original slur of terrorism. This must go down as yet another striking example of Islamophobia in this country.[28]

• Nottingham University Students and Staff Express Serious Concerns about Recent Use of Terrorism Act on Campus and Demand Academic Freedom, 21 May 2008: Following six days in police custody under the Terrorism Act [by] two well-known and popular members of the University of Nottingham ... students and staff wish to express grave concerns about the operation on a number of grounds:

1. Academic freedom: ...The criminalisation of this kind of research is an extremely worrying sign for academic freedom, suggesting sharp limits to what may be researched at university.

2. Racism and Islamophobia: One of the officers who was involved in interviewing academic staff openly stated that: 'This would never have happened if the student had been white'. It seems that the over-zealous nature of the operation, causing great injury and distress to the students, their family, and friends, was spurred on by the ethnicity and religious background of the students involved. Police behaviour during the operation, including the targeting of ethnic minorities for questioning, also suggested institutional racism. When the arrest is put within the wider context of heightened 'security' measures, police harassment of Muslims, and widespread curtailments to civil liberties, a sinister picture of the political climate created by recent terrorism legislation emerges.

3. Use of Terrorism Act to target political activists: During questioning, the police regularly attempted to collate information about student activism and peaceful campaigning. They asked numerous questions about the student peace magazine Ceasefire, and other political student activities. The overt police presence on campus, combined with increased and intimidating police presence at peaceful demonstrations, has created a climate of fear amongst some students. Many saw the operation as a message from the police that they are likely to arrest those who have been engaged in peaceful political activities. There is widespread concern in the community that the police are criminalising peaceful activists using terrorism legislation, such as the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005.

4. Behaviour of the university: Many of the university's statements during this time have concerned and angered students and academics. Amidst the great amount of rhetoric that the university put out during this period, supporting the police and assuming guilt of its own students, it also spoke of stopping groups or individuals who 'unsettle the harmony of the campus.' This appeared to be a direct reference to recent, peaceful student activism and protest, suggesting that the university is willing to clamp down on political protest using the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005. One politics lecturer suggested that the university had called the police onto campus with the ultimate aim of creating a 'depoliticised' body of students and academics. Throughout this period, the university has continually ignored the fear caused by police presence and investigation into legitimate political activities, the concern of staff and students about the criminalisation of research, the racist and Islamophobic nature of the police action, and the worrying indication that the university provided intelligence on its own members, possibly racially profiling its staff and students.

Academics and students from across the University of Nottingham, and members of the public from the wider community, are calling for:

a. The guaranteed right to academic freedom.

b. An end to the criminalisation of political research.

c. An end to police and university racism and Islamophobia and the full assertion of civil rights and liberties on campus.[29]

• *Lee Jones 27 June, 2008:* Sir Colin Campbell's claim that the arrests of the 'Nottingham Two' is not a matter of academic freedom (Letters, 19 June 2008) is not acceptable. Campbell essentially admits the charges laid at his door by three of his own academics – that Nottingham's 'risk assessment' mentality led to two innocent people being wrongfully arrested and detained without anyone bothering to ask the tutors of the student concerned whether the possession of an Al Qaeda training manual (freely available online and in many bookstores) was legitimate for someone studying terrorism. His tutors are, in fact, of the opinion that it was entirely legitimate, but according to a police notice issued to Rizwaan Sabir on his release on 20 May, 'The University authorities have now made clear that possession of this material is not required for the purpose of your course of study nor do they consider it legitimate for you to possess it for research purposes' ... The police note threatened the possibility of 'arrest and further detention' if Mr Sabir looked at such material again. If it stands, can one imagine a clearer blow against the academic freedom of Mr Sabir, his fellow students, and anyone who wishes to conduct research on controversial subjects free from harassment and intimidation? [...] Remarks by Lord Carlile, the government's reviewer of terrorism legislation, that he would seek to restrict the online availability of terror-related material, raise the spectre of further limitations on academic freedom.[30]

Fernandes' research draws its strength from much academic testimony, which attests to the complexity of resistance within an embattled academic space, and for the need to continue to struggle for academic freedom against the intensification of corporate knowledge management. Fernandes gives ample evidence of the latter. He also provides an historical account of the roles played by academic sectors and academics, and the relationships that have existed with states, military sectors and large corporations, uncovering how academic research continues to be used and manipulated to justify hegemonic discourses.

**Notes**

1 For example, David Miller, professor of sociology at Strathclyde University, who with colleagues is compiling a Spinwatch database of "terrorologists": http://www.powerbase.info/index.php/Terrorexpertise Also, Johnny Burnett and Dave Whyte (Reader in sociology at the University of Liverpool) as academics forming part of the Consortium for Research on Terrorology and Political Violence (CRTPV): http://www.publicinterest.ac.uk/working-groups/40-consortium-for-research-on-terrorology-and-political-violence-crtpv

2 Foucault, M. (1980). Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977. Ed. C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, p. 131.

3 Forte, M. (2010) 'Information Traffickers of the Imperial

State: American Anthropologists and Other Academics', Zero Anthropology, 19 March (Accessed at: http://zeroanthropology.net/2010/03/19/information-traffickers-of-the-imperial-state-american-anthropologists-and-other-academics/).

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5 "The centre focuses on five areas of global public policy; the creation and enforcement of rules in international trade, the fight against global infectious diseases, the elimination of exploitive child labor, and the promotion of basic human rights", see: http://www.globalgovernancewatch.org/ngo_watch/key/centre-for-the-study-of-global-governance

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11 Simms, A. (2003) Degrees of Capture: Universities, the Oil Industry and Climate Change. New Economics Foundation and Corporate Watch, p 4, 5.

12 Stavrianakis, A. (2006) 'Call to Arms: The University as a Site of Militarised Capitalism and a Site of Struggle', Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 35 (1), p. 145, 146.

13 Phillipson, R. (2010) 'Additive university multilingualism in English-dominant empire: the language policy challenges', Handelshøjskolen i København/Luxembourg, 4-6 February, Copenhagen Business School, p. 26 (Accessed at: http://multilingualuniversities.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/Phillipson.pdf).

14 Skutnabb-Kangas, T. 'Crimes against humanity in education, and applied linguistics – corporate globalisation or geopolitical knowledge glocalisation?' Plenary at the British Association for Applied Linguistics, 9-11 September, Aberdeen, Scotland (Accessed at:

http://www.toveskutnabbkangas.org/pdf/Tove_Skutnabb_Kangas_Crimes_against_humanity_in_education_and_applied_linguistics_corporate_globalisation_or_geopolitical_knowledge_glocalisation.pdf).

15 Spedding, N. (undated) 'Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen: GG3012, Lecture 2, Victorian Geography: from cosmography to modern science?' (Accessed at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~geo337/gg3012/vicgeog.htm). Of course, there have always been geographers who have actively or indirectly opposed and contested these trends.

16 Spedding, N. (undated) 'Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen: GG3012, Lecture 2, Victorian Geography: from cosmography to modern science?' (Accessed at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/~geo337/gg3012/vicgeog.htm).

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18 See e.g. 'The Rise and Rise of the Corporate University: the emerging corporate learning agenda', Christopher Prince and Graham Beaver, Nottingham Business School. (Accessed at: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/bmaf/documents/publications/IJME/Vol1no2/Prince_Corporate_learning_agemda.pdf)

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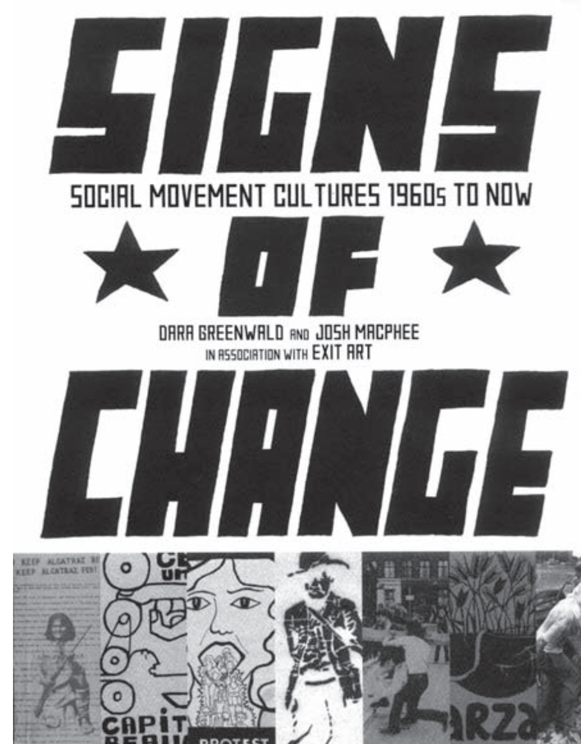
# Comic & Zine Reviews

## Mark Pawson

I first went to an exhibition at the independent cultural centre/gallery Exit Art in New York in the early 1990s when they were located on Broadway in Soho, and each time I've visited New York since I've made a point of checking out their exhibitions and always been rewarded. In November 2008 I went along to their current location on 10th Ave, at 36th St. on the west side of Manhattan in Hells Kitchen, just above Chelsea, to see the *Signs Of Change: Social Movement Cultures 1960s To Now* exhibition. It was an enormous show of original posters, leaflets, flyers, photographic documentation, banners, stickers and other ephemera created by self-organised activist and protest groups from around the world, curated by Dara Greenwald and the indefatigable Josh McPhee. The exhibition was hung from waist level to high up on the walls and completely filled the Exit Art warehouse-sized space with over 1,000 items. It took me a couple of hours to get around and look at everything. I was vaguely aware of other groups of visitors coming and going whilst I was there, and noticing that I'd been there so long one of the Exit Art directors thoughtfully came over to have a chat.




For me, *Signs Of Change* was a perfect exhibition, with exhibits encompassing events I'd been directly involved in, with flyers for Critical Mass bike rides. Events I knew quite a lot about: Paris '68 posters, Reclaim The Streets and the M11 road protests. Protest groups I'd heard of but knew little more about: AIM, the American Indian Movement; Autonomia Femminista, demanding wages for housework in 1970s Italy. And also plenty of issues I'd never heard about, including Japanese Farmers' ongoing protests against Narita Airport, and a 1980 uprising in Gwangju, South Korea. It was obvious from the scope of the show what a massive undertaking researching and collecting the exhibits must have been; most items were extremely ephemeral, would only have been in circulation for a short period of time and were likely to be discarded or destroyed soon afterwards. An exhibition like this really deserved a catalogue but none was available, so as best I could I scooped up a handful of flyers and information leaflets instead.

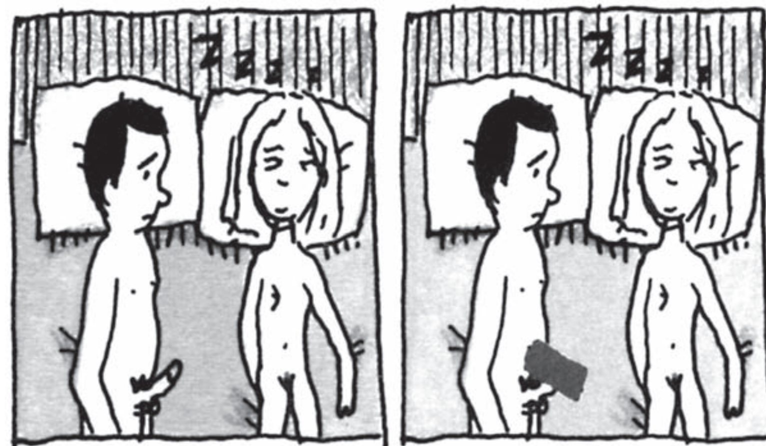
I was happily surprised two years on to see a **Signs Of Change: Social Movement Cultures 1960s To Now** catalogue, published in Autumn 2010, put together by the curators Greenwald and McPhee. The book manages to cram in images of over 350 of the exhibits. Organised into thematic sections - Struggle for the Land, Agitate! Educate! Organize!, Forward to People's Power, Freedom and Independence Now, Let It All Hang Out, Reclaim The Commons and Globalization From Below - the book includes materials documenting 55 social movements from 25 countries, together with essays and lists of the films and videos shown at Exit Art. If you didn't see the exhibition in New York or one of the three other US cities it toured to during 2009 and 2010, and if you're not too busy flyposting, making placards or shopping for a new black hoodie, you should pick up a copy of **Signs Of Change: Social Movement Cultures 1960s To Now** as soon as possible.

And if anyone from Exit Art is reading, here's my personal wish list of Exit Art exhibitions I've seen that really deserve accompanying publications: *Counterculture: Alternative Information from the Underground Press* (1996), a wonderful exhibition which was similar in size, scope and installation methods to *Signs Of Change*; *Alternative Histories: A History of Alternative Art Spaces in New York City since the 1960's* (2010). Thank you.

David Heatley's original **Deadpan** comic was reviewed in this column a couple of years ago, so when a compilation of his work, **My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down**, was published in the UK by Jonathan Cape I didn't rush out and buy a copy, smugly knowing that I had much of his work in the original format. When I did finally pick up a copy of this handsome, beautifully produced collection, I was shocked to discover that even though there's an 'Adults Only!' warning on the cover many of the comic strips have been censored. In the 16 page 'Sex History' story, illustrated in a loosely-drawn style, almost all the teeny-tiny genitalia have been blocked from view with several hundred small square panels! Using my special censor's ruler I can inform you that a drawing of a penis measuring 4.5 x 1 mm has been hidden from view - which only serves to draw more attention to it. In an 'Adults Only!' publication which you'd have to be trying really hard to find erotic or arousing, this is both silly and pointless. Examine the two panels reproduced here, slightly enlarged and decide which you prefer. Oh I forgot to mention that this censor hasn't been using the usual black felt tip pen, but has been making deletions with a day-glo pink highlighter pen, using hot pink ink to hide miniscule tumescent genitals. Do we now have a new type of knowing ironic censorship? Shiny happy censors having fun?

There's also a French language version of **My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down** which I'd like to believe is uncensored, if only to perpetuate a stereotypical view from repressed Britain of a sexually liberated France. But I can't tell if this is the case just from closely examining the online images at amazon.fr and unfortunately the *Variant* research budget doesn't stretch to buying a copy.

Self-censorship has always been an issue in



autobiographical comics, with artists having to strike a delicate balance between washing their dirty laundry in public and having family and friends who will still talk to them. Usually this happens at the editing stage, before publication and David Heatley does this himself a couple of times in panels showing his wife.

Isabel Greenberg takes this process a stage further in **The Summer Of Boundless Optimism**, the most recent of her visual diary, which covers her leaving art college, looking for a job and moving to fashionable East London. In my copy, three half pages have been chopped out after the booklet has been printed; it's post-publication editing. Instead of faffing about crossing things out with black felt tip pens, Isabel has grabbed a sharp knife and made neat excisions on selected pages. It's impossible to tell what's been removed: Embarrasing behaviour? Shameful drunkeness? Compromising positions? Fashion mistakes? Shoplifting a lasagne sandwich from Tescos? We can only speculate. Whilst I feel slightly swizzed by the loss of pages, I'm fascinated by the continuing, physical editing process. Will copies of **The Summer Of Boundless Optimism** with even more sections removed become rare and collectable, is there a price premium for the authors indecision?

**Car Boot Sale** by Richard Hogg, screenprinted in black with sparingly used spot colours, is a carefully observed, precisely drawn visit to his ideal car boot sale; a fantasy very slightly removed from the grubby reality of most. We meet the stallholders early on a Sunday morning as they neatly set out their goods and tend their stalls. The book takes us on a walk round the car boot sale, meeting familiar-seeming characters: Mr Old

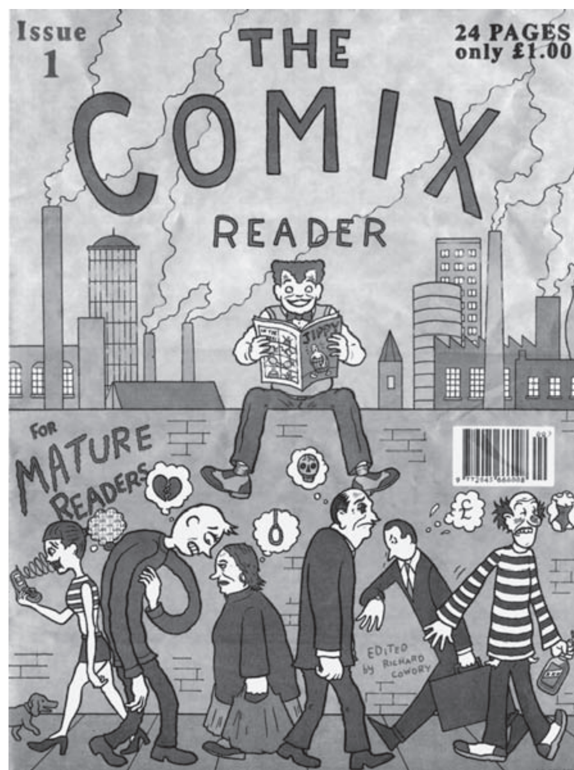
Woodworking Tools, The Book Man, Mrs Retro Homewares, Mysterious African Artefacts Lady, and the Star Wars Action Figures Afficionado. Curiously, there aren't any tables full of envelopes and paper purloined from the office stationery cupboard, or stalls selling cheapo lighters and bottles of bargain bleach. We leave the car boot sale just after midday as the stallholders are wrapping unsold ornamental plates in newspaper and folding up their wallpaper paste tables. This is an exemplary artists book, examining a familiar but uncelebrated feature of life in the UK, delightfully presented and with a clear purpose. I'd be overjoyed to find a copy of **Car Boot Sale** at a car boot sale, but sad that someone had discarded it.

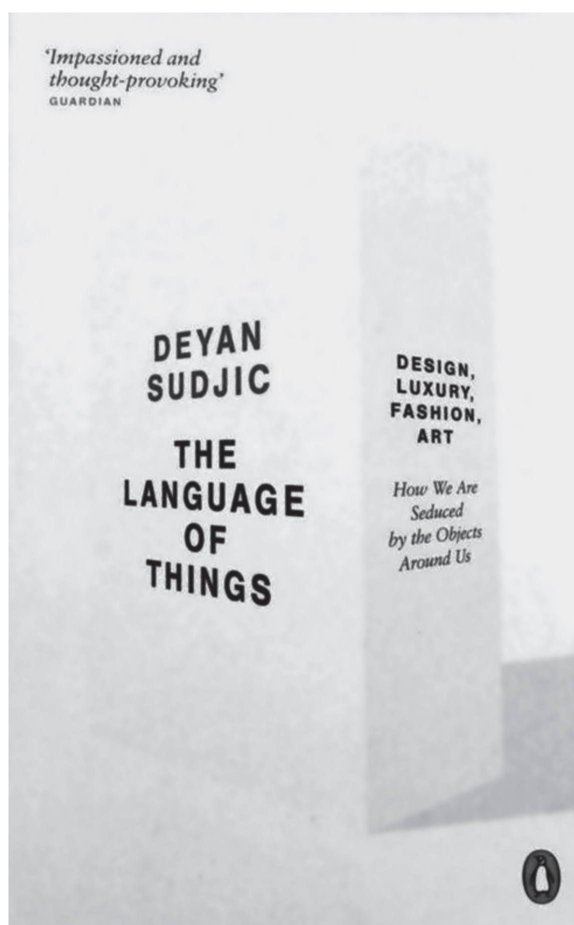
Back in 1996 when *Variant* relaunched in its newspaper format it was difficult to find printers with the specialist printing presses able to print onto continuous rolls of newsprint who would take on what they probably saw as a small fiddly job. Things have changed a lot over the intervening 15 years and now due to advances in digital print technology, together with the ease and minimal cost of transferring digital files, it's easier than ever before to get your own publication made in a newspaper form. There's currently a whole new wave of artists, designers and publishers taking advantage of this accessible format with large pages and affordable full colour printing.

The **Comix Reader** edited by Richard Cowdry was inspired by his visit to an exhibition of 1960s underground comix at the ICA in London and aims to echo some of the energy, excitement and joyous freedom of expression present in those early underground comix. The 24 page **Comix Reader** has contributions from 22 artists, who get an entire page to themselves, and I assume that the important editorial and financial issues were decided at the group's monthly pub meetings in central London. The quality of the work included is pretty good and **Comix Reader** only costs £1. They printed an ambitious 9,000 copies with production costs and distribution duties shared between all participants, and just as important as making a great publication they've provided an inspiring model of a democratic method of publishing. **Comix Reader** issue 2 is due out very soon.

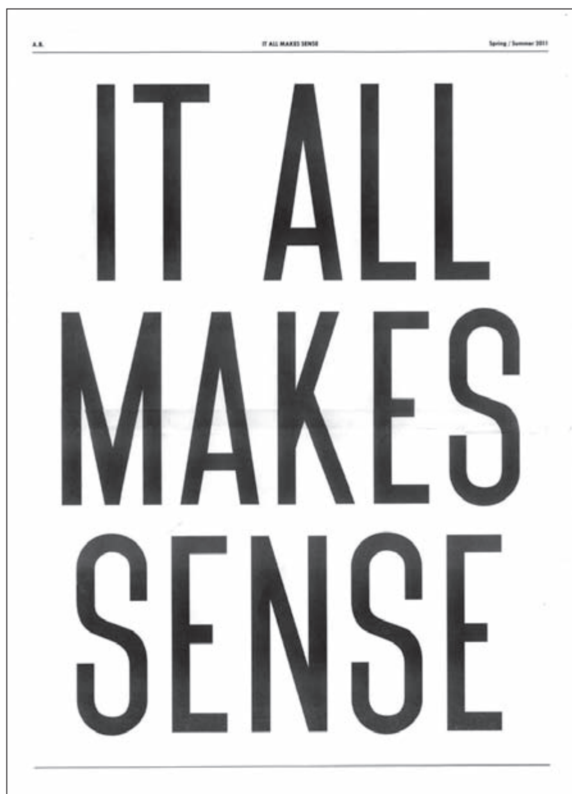
Illustrator Andy Smith's 12 page newspaper **May Fade In Direct Sunlight** showcases a dozen of his silkscreened poster designs, which is quite a generous gesture seeing as the original prints were priced at £30-40 each. The trompe l'oeil cover is a wry comment on the broadsheet newspaper format.

Designer Anthony Burrill fills each page of **It All Makes Sense** with a single large image. It has a blog feel to it; mixing commercial artwork, sketchbook pages, favourite books and records, childhood snapshots and his print and poster designs. Accompanied by brief explanations of each page's contents, **It All Makes Sense**.




Penguin Books don't normally come within the scope of this column, but tidying up the bookshelves recently I placed two recent Penguin Books on design, Bruno Munari's **Design As Art** and Deyan Sudjic's **The Language Of Things**, next to each other and was puzzled as to why two books bought at the same time and both read once were in widely different condition. The Bruno Munari book had a small tear on the front cover, knocks, bent corners, a discoloured spine and the edges of the pages were fanning out, in contrast the Deyan Sudjic book which was in near-mint condition and could have easily been placed back in a bookshop without anyone noticing. Both books are exactly the the same size and have the same number of pages, but upon closer inspection and much page stroking differences became apparent, **Design As Art** is slightly thicker and feels like it's printed on coarser paper. **The Language Of Things** benefits from the addition of a matt laminated finish to the cover, making it structurally stronger and more resilient. Of the two it's Bruno Munari's **Design As Art** which I'll hold on to and re-read, so it's puzzling and infuriating that the publishers should choose to reprint this title, which first appeared as a Pelican Book in 1971, and deem it worthy of being labelled a Modern Classic, yet use materials which will probably make it look 40 years old in a year's time.



**Contacts**

**Signs Of Change**
www.exitart.org
www.akuk.com

**My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down**
www.davidheatley.com

**The Summer Of Boundless Optimism**
www.isabelnecessary.com

**Car Boot Sale**
www.ho99.com
www.nobrow.net

**Newspapers**
www.thecomixreader.com
www.asmithillustration.com
www.anthonyburrill.com
www.newspaperclub.com

**Penguins**
www.penguin.com

# In, against and beyond labour

Gordon Asher, Leigh French, Neil Gray in an exchange with John Holloway

This exchange with John Holloway follows on from our engagement with his most recent work, *Crack Capitalism* (2010)[1]. Holloway's work has become well known in and beyond activist circles since *Change the World Without Taking Power* (2002)[2] was published and widely read. This intentional popularisation has, arguably, tended to obscure Holloway's previous work while drawing strength from it. We want to acknowledge here his part in what we consider to be some of the more constructive theoretical debates within and around Marxism in the last thirty years. First with the Conference of Socialist Economists, and the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, an associated working group that produced *In and Against the State*[3] which discussed the critical role of socialists who are opposed to the state but operate within it and against it. Holloway was also a key figure in the 'open' Marxist school which deployed a sophisticated critique of fetishism to challenge, among other things, the 'closed' analysis of overly-deterministic readings of capital and society they saw associated with structuralist and regulationist approaches within Marxism[4].

While Holloway's recent work draws strongly on his interests in the Zapitistas and other movements and struggles in the Global South, where he is presently based[5], it should also be noted that he was, for some time, based in Edinburgh and wrote regularly for *Common Sense: Journal of the Edinburgh Conference of Socialist Economists*[6], between 1987 and 1999. The journal broadly presented a forum for the development of 'open' and autonomous Marxist critical theory with contributors including such key figures as Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Sergio Bologna, Antonio Negri, Ed Emery and George Caffentzis among many significant others. The recent republication online of these texts is noteworthy not only for its use value for the development of critical autonomous and 'open' Marxist theory, but for the fact that it has taken until now for the journal to be republished. The ideas presented in *Common Sense* deserve a wide readership, particularly at a time when left liberalism in the UK, as Holloway challenges below, seems determined to "lock us firmly into capital and close down all alternatives" through regressive campaigns such as 'Right to Work' or the recent 'March for the Alternative'.

We would like to thank John Holloway for this opportunity for dialogue and for the speed and grace with which he responded to these questions – themselves the result of a rushed exchange between three over-worked, under-paid cultural producers. While we share an affinity of politics this is not consensual or homogenous; the questions below were posed in a constructive, dialogical manner, not intended as a clarification of a 'correct' position, rather as a contribution to an open discussion we feel is both necessary and overdue.

**Variant:** How does the notion of 'cracks' take us beyond other metaphors such as Henri Lefebvre's 'moments' which he suggested were those instances where fleeting sensations at moments of radical rupture (e.g. the Commune of 1871, May '68) were revelatory of the total possibilities in everyday life? The Situationists later argued that Lefebvre's conception of 'moments' was superseded by their tactic of creating 'situations'[7]. For Debord for instance, the 'moment' was limited both by passivity and by temporality, whereas the 'constructed situation' was defined both as interventionist and spatio-temporal: "A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organisation of a unitary ambience and game of events"[8]. How does the concept of 'cracks' fare in relation to these concepts, and can it be seen in the same lineage?

**John Holloway:** *I think the different notions push in the same direction, but I wasn't thinking of those authors in particular when I started talking about cracks. For me it is important that the cracks are not just moments of radical rupture such as '68 and not just conscious interventions, but also and above all rooted in everyday experience. Radical rupture is inherent in everyday existence. At one point in the book I explain this in terms of the distinction between doing or concrete labour as both the constant basis of and subversion of abstract or alienated labour, on the one hand, and the autonomist notion of self-valorisation on the other, which I think points to exceptional situations. We are ordinary people, we are all in some way anti-capitalist revolutionaries, and if we don't start from the powerful presence of communism in everyday life, then the project of communism cannot go very far.*

**V:** Your notions of the 'scream' and of the 'crack' are centred on the necessity to resist, "to stop making capitalism" (and the relations on which it depends) and to think and act differently. However, I worry that these metaphors over-emphasise resistance (negation), and non-prioritised anti-capitalist 'doing' (a flattening of our non-/anti-capitalist activity). Do we not also need visions, strategies and orientation that speak to the beyond – the alternative worlds we believe are possible, necessary and under construction? How do we connect and prioritise our 'doing'? in order to build not only alternative relations, but also institutions, organisations and movements?

**JH:** *Yes, certainly we need alternative visions and practices, but the problem is not so much to create them as to recognise them and build upon them. They are there already. They are movements not just beyond, but against-and-beyond. Their drive comes from a scream, a negation, a refusal and I think it is important to emphasise this simply as a means of resisting the forces that constantly pull us back into conformity. Over all our projects we should raise a flag saying "Capitalism is a catastrophe for humanity" and we should keep it constantly in view.*

*You ask "How do we connect our doing in order to build not only alternative relations, but also institutions, organisations and movements?" An important question difficult to answer. I think of this in terms of the confluence of the cracks, of these spaces or moments of refusal-and-creation. How do we bring the cracks together or, better, is there any way in which we can stimulate them to come together? I don't think it helps to think in terms of institutions or organisations – organisation yes, but not organisations. Simply on practical grounds – I don't think that they work, I don't think that the rebellions of life come together through institutions. Institution-building is often a waste of time or worse. Think of the World Social Forum, one of the great institutions to emerge from the alter-globalisation movement – I'm not against it at all, but that's not the way that a real confluence of rebellions will take place. Better to think of resonances rather than institutions.*

**V:** I also worry that these metaphors over-focus on capitalism, to the exclusion of the other integrated oppressions that we face (based on gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity and other aspects of our identities, contexts and relations). Do we need to expand the metaphor, or perhaps more accurately its scope, and consider 'cracks' not just in capitalism but in all the integrated systems of oppression, repression and exploitation which we oppose and wish to move beyond? How do we envision and explore the tensions, connecting our struggles and movements in doing so in a complementary holistic manner?

**JH:** *By capitalism I understand the way in which our activities interrelate with one another. This is the focus because it is our activities (our doings) and their interrelation that create all the oppressions and this is what we can change. If you want to attribute what you call the "other integrated oppressions" to something other than the way in which we act-and-interrelate, then I don't understand how we could change them. How do we struggle to change the dynamic of how we act-and-interrelate? In a million different ways.*

**V:** How do cracks cope with the inevitable range of disciplinary government and corporate reactions – hard to soft power – from co-option and recuperation to oppression and to outright repression and force? For instance, you use the example of a mother skiving off work to spend time with her child as a moment of a 'crack' in capital. Yet in a low-wage economy this would negatively impact on the money she can bring into the house to pay for food, electricity, etc. This is why she works. Moreover with contractual obligations increasingly absent in the UK workforce, the threat of the sack now hangs over many workers. While it is easy to appreciate the resistance and negation of capital behind absenteeism and sabotage, etc, we shouldn't neglect the coercive power of capital in continuing to make us work – as seen in recent reports which show the many billion pounds UK business 'earns' from unpaid workers who feel obliged to stay on after work hours.[9] How do you address this issue? And beyond issues of recuperation and co-option, how do we deal with outright resistance and repression – with attempts to close/shut/destroy the 'cracks', including through violence, if that is seen as necessary by state/capital?

**JH:** *Look around. Free Hetherington[10], for example. A lovely crack – how does it deal with disciplinary reactions?*

*The answer, in other words, is best seen by looking around and seeing how all these misfitting activities, these cracks, dignities, deal with the problems of repression and co-option, and you'll find a wide variety of responses. Logically, of course, these cracks should not exist, but they do, and when they are suppressed, they reappear in the same place or somewhere else. The danger on the left very often is that we anticipate our own defeat and do capital's work for it.*

*Having said that, I don't think it's enough to sing the praises of the cracks. A big section of the book is devoted to discussing precisely the difficulties you point out. I don't think there is any simple answer, but I do think that there is a fundamental change taking place in the way that we are thinking about the possibilities and meaning of revolution. This change I present in terms of the crisis of abstract labour, or the revolt of doing against labour.*

**V:** Why 'cracks' as a metaphor? The metaphor seems to suggest something solid which needs to be cracked, yet your previous work – drawing on Marx's conceptual use of fetishisation – has consistently shown that 'things' themselves are really only social relations between people which are fetishised in the form of things (commodities)[11]. You've used this position to critique the state-form, political economy, and structuralist and regulationist accounts of capital that tend to consolidate it by fixing and describing it an 'object' of study (as with 'post-fordism' for instance)[12]. But doesn't the use of cracks as

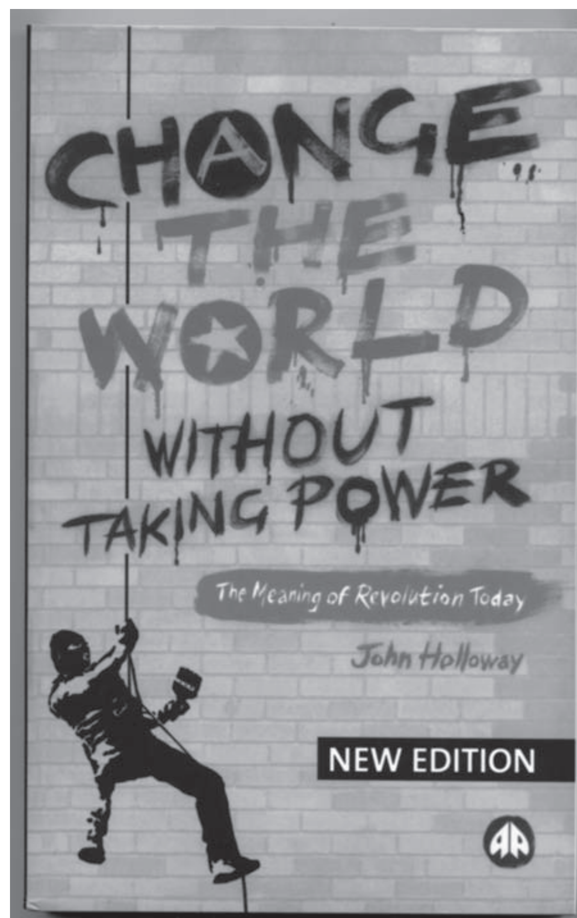
a metaphor suggest an 'object' that must be cracked? And doesn't this then risk once again reifying capital as a 'thing'? And thus, that cracks also become things and as such, at least in part, as *Aufheben*[13] suggest, theories of fetishism can themselves become fetishistic.

**JH:** *I see what you mean, but the point about cracks is that it is a revolt against things, against a world of things, a thing-ified world. That is why we want to lash out and break, to crack this world open. Of course we realise at some point that it is not a physical breaking that we are talking about, it is rather a reversal in the flow of social determination. What we crack is the flow of determination from above, from capital-money-abstract-labour, and try to force a determination from below, from what we consider socially necessary or desirable. But the metaphor of crack remains important for me, firstly because of that impulse to break and secondly because cracks are dynamic, constantly on the move, spreading, multiplying, perhaps being plastered over, reappearing.*

**V:** Your metaphor of 'cracks' perhaps optimistically affirms other points of opposition to be located within capitalist society. Alongside what we understand as your deliberate project of popularisation, these points of rupture are not (solely) those of traditional Marxism, rather you stress the mundanity of antagonisms, from having a walk in the park to family and our personal social relations ('love'). Seemingly there is no longer anything that is specific to the antagonistic struggle in capitalist society. We would agree that forms of resistance have to change, not only according to the redeployments of capital, but also according to grassroots consciousness. And we take it you accept any such acts, if indeed they have any associated agency, are 'vulnerable to the cunning of capitalist reason'. So on what grounds are these other points of opposition located, and how can they be actualised in the face of the continuous 'novelties' of capitalism? Addressing agency, practice and strategy seems essential.

**JH:** *The first point is to recognise is that anti-capitalism (or communism, if you like) is deeply ingrained in our everyday lives. Unless we can see that, then communism necessarily becomes an elitist project. In the same way as capital penetrates every aspect of our lives, so our struggles against it, our pushes against-and-beyond it, exist everywhere. Revolutionary thought has to start from there, from an appreciation of and critical engagement with these everyday cracks. The cracks actualise themselves constantly in the face of the 'novelties' of capitalism: theoretical reflection runs behind, trying to understand, to participate, perhaps to propose lines of extension forward. The notion of "strategy" implies that there is someone who can or should control the flow of rebellion, and I suspect that it can't be done and that in most cases it does more to stifle rebellion than to promote it. Look at the history of revolutionary parties. The same with agency. I don't think it helps to define agents: capital and anti-capitalist rebellion are social relations that cannot be tied to agents, they flow.*

**V:** On your popular approach to broaden the definition of political action beyond the classical Marxist points of antagonism, on what grounds are these other points of opposition to be located? You have set out to bring the multiplicity of conflicts together to establish an over-arching relation between them, previously emphasising the role of 'totality' for a 'theory against society'; "the real subsumption of labour under capital as a process which is not restricted to the factory but has come to encompass the whole of society". This is set against a critique of the mystifying separation off of the struggle over exploitation into an 'economic' sphere which stresses the permanence of structures over human subjects and their disorganisation and reorganisation of social relations; "the left currents that put the activity and seizure of power by a political party in place of the self-emancipation of the working class". Yet, is it de-mystifying enough? Do we not need to explain the specific historic and contemporary character of 'labour'? Otherwise, is the danger, as has previously been asked, that, "the subject




of struggle becomes a mere anthropological category".

I want to make use of an extended quote by Wildcat here, as they present a sharp interrogation of your work in this regard: "The question immediately arises of why we produce our own world in this deranged manner. To say that this negation 'takes place through the subjection of human activity to the market' does not explain it, but merely indicates the form. And this form must be explained from the specific content, the specific historic character of labour. You avoid this problem by making subjectivity, which creates over and against itself an alienated objectivity, into an ever thinner, more abstract and unhistorical residue: 'humanity (dignity repressed and in struggle) against neoliberalism (the current, savagely destructive phase of capitalism)'. The subject of struggle becomes an anthropological category: 'the indestructable (or maybe just the not yet destroyed) NO that makes us human'. In other texts you have characterised this residue, referring to Hegel, as the 'sheer unrest of life'. Here there is no longer anything that is specific to the antagonistic struggle in capitalist society. … The problem you (and we) started from was a different one: you wanted to criticise the left currents that put the activity and seizure of power by a political party in place of the self-emancipation of the working class. But in attempting to oppose the objectivist, definitional and classificatory concept of class, you throw the baby out with the bathwater. If we reduce the concept of class to a general human contradiction present in every person between alienation and non-alienation, between creativity and its subordination to the market, between humanity and the negation of humanity, then the class concept loses all meaning. It then only has the value of a moral characterisation which we can apply to all possible movements, without saying anything at all about them, their character and their importance for the worldwide revolutionary process. The antagonism is accordingly timeless in your work: it exists all the time, sometimes weaker, sometimes stronger – there is no end in sight. 'Revolution is simply the constant, uncompromising struggle for that which cannot be achieved under capitalism: dignity, control over our own lives.' Revolutionary theory must work out how a concrete perspective of emancipation and liberation is contained in struggles in spite of their fragmentation, and bring this perspective into them. Showing that there is a general human content in all these single struggles does not create this bond, but runs away from the real political problems to a philosophical level."[14]

**JH:** *For the answer let me just take a little bit of your question: "Yet, is it de-mystifying enough? Do we not need to explain the specific historic and contemporary character of 'labour'?" To that the answer is that clearly it is not demystifying enough, the only real demystification is revolution. But the central argument in the book is precisely that we have to start from the specific historic and contemporary character of 'labour' and that the only way to understand this is in terms of the dual character of labour as concrete and abstract labour, as a crisis of abstract labour. The central theoretical thrust is to split open the unitary character of labour that has dominated left thinking until recently. If we can do that, we may not have the answers, but we open a whole new way of asking the questions.*

**V:** In a recent talk in Glasgow you were clear that the fight against capital is actually the fight against 'abstract labour'. I've been taken by this emphasis on 'abstract labour' (labour which takes place under the alienating conditions of wage-labour under capitalism), and 'concrete labour' (or 'doing', as you prefer which is characterised as free productive human activity). This recognition of the two-fold character of labour[15] gets us back to a position whereby a critique of political economy can be developed, and where we can challenge the traditional image of the labour movement as primarily a movement of abstract labour within capitalism. In this context, what do you make of the UK Right to Work campaign or the TUC 'March for the Alternative: Jobs, Growth, Justice'? How is your emphasis on the two-fold character of labour critically useful with regard to these movements?

**JH:** *The campaign for the right to work is a good illustration of the struggle of abstract labour. It might conceivably lead to an improvement of living standards if it were successful (which seems unlikely in the present context), but it also locks us firmly into capitalism and closes down all alternatives. A crisis is a moment of contraction of capital, a moment when it withdraws to some extent from our lives. To call for the right to work is in effect to say "come back, capital, please exploit us again!" That locks us into the dynamic of death that the existence of capital implies. But of course the problem is what else can we do? The only alternative I can see is to develop other ways of living that are not immediately capitalist, that push against and beyond capitalism. We have to think of what Raúl Zibechi calls "a political economy of resistance", which I take to include everything from occupied factories to alternative schools or clinics or free software movements, alternative radio stations, community gardens, the embryonic development of a gift economy.*

*This can be seen in terms of the issue of precarity. In a capitalism in which precarious labour has become the norm, do we call for full stable employment or do we struggle for a life based on meaningful activity, an activity that we consider necessary or enjoyable? Precarity and unemployment are the crisis of abstract labour: how do we deepen that crisis and release the potential of our creative power? That is the challenge, and that is what an awful lot of people are already trying to do, in many different ways.*

**V:** Criticisms of classical Marxists have been of the formalising of work as 'all-constitutive', which leads to all riches and all social appearances being the product of work – "if 'work' is defined simply as human activity, statements about the centrality of work become tautological, because by definition all practice has already been declared to be work", and "to lead everything back to work easily comes close to the glorification of work by the workers' parties" – whereas there are any amount of activities that people would not recognise and therefore not describe as 'work' – of which Wildcat posited free artistic activities, games or struggles within society, categories about which I have some reservation. In response and in development of your position, you now seem to have categorised everything 'else' as resistance – non-capitalist by default appears anti-capitalist – whereas Wildcat insisted "there must be an investigation of the change in form and the transformations in the process of production." Clearly this would require more than the work of any one individual. This is one reason I concur with the collective approach Wildcat advocate, that of an empirically oriented sociology, alongside the requirement to look beyond what already exists. In your recent

writing is there a refusal in your methodology to make analytical distinctions between agency and structure, and if so might it have resulted in a lop-sided bias towards agency?

**JH:** *I agree of course with your criticism of the unitary concept of "work" – this seems to me fundamental. On the question of alternatives, I don't see anything as simply "non-capitalist". Our lives are a constant misfitting, a constant attempt to develop social relations that do not fit into the logic of capital: the assault of capital on our lives constitutes such activities as anti-capitalist, as a "waste of time" or anti-social. So I think we cannot draw a clear line between the non-capitalist and the anti-capitalist – what is important is the lines of continuity and potential.*

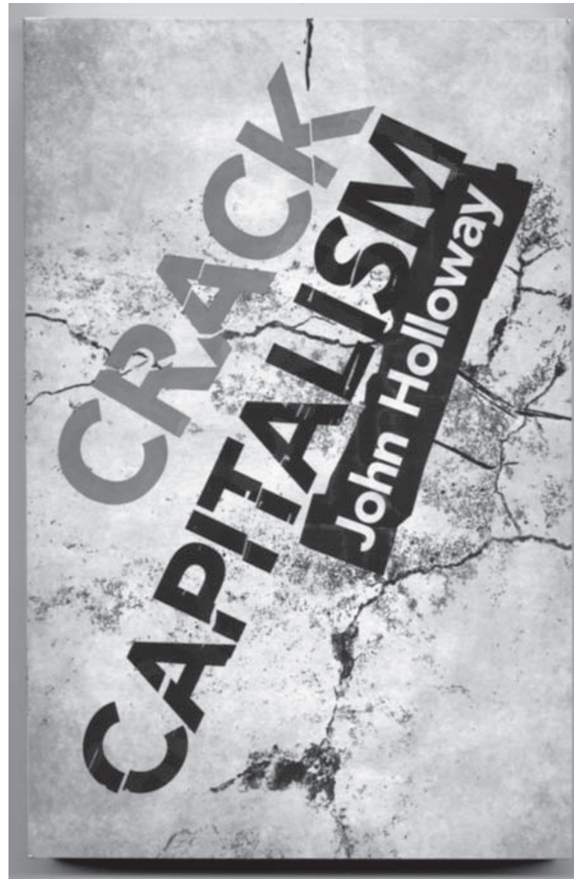
*On the last point of your question, I do not understand Marxism as a sociology but as an anti-sociology, as a critique of sociology (and all other forms of thought). It is a critique of structure, an attempt to understand that which appears as independent of human action as being the product of such action. Hence the critique of money or the state, for example. The attempt to change the world depends on understanding how we make the world, so it makes no sense to talk of a lop-sided bias towards agency.*

**V:** While I agree that antagonism is inscribed in social relations, do you recognise a potential danger that your process of 'totalising' could result in a similar effect of abstraction? "The different conflicts within society are today generally juxtaposed without any relation being established between them. The result is an image of a multiplicity of conflicts, in which the 'totality' of capitalist society and hence a revolutionary goal no longer appear." (Wildcat) I would ask for a negativity geared towards locating and actualising points of 'rupture' within capitalist society. Whereas your metaphor of 'cracks' at times seems extra-worldly in its insistence on being able to subtract itself from capitalist social relations, while seemingly also inevitably antagonistic to them. Could this be interpreted as a retreat from the forms of agency that formerly provided resistance to capital – however subsumed today – without the evolution of more emancipatory alternatives?

**JH:** *If you mean by "retreat from the forms of agency that formerly provided resistance to capital" a retreat from the working class, then the answer is clearly no. But I do not understand working class as a form of agency, but as a pole of an antagonistic relation. What I am trying to do is to understand the movement of the capital/anti-capital antagonism (the movement of the working class, if you like, as long as we understand working class as both anti-class and anti-work), the changing forms of anti-capitalist struggle.*

*An important change is taking place in the way that people fight against capital, a change that is often connected with the concept of autonomy. More and more struggles are oriented not towards taking control of the system in order to change it but towards breaking the dynamic of the system by uncoupling ourselves from it. The book is an attempt to explore the force and the difficulties of this approach and to argue above all that it is bringing about a change in the whole (anti-)grammar of anti-capitalism which has great emancipatory potential.*

**V:** You speak of 'the student movement' as a contemporary site of hopeful resistance. I agree there is something potentially powerful happening here, though I hope it is more accurate and inclusive to speak of the education movement. However, from within, I am most aware that one of the most significant problems we face is the exceedingly heterogeneous nature of the movement. It is not anti-capitalist, though sections of it are. Rather, it covers a wide spectrum of beliefs and orientations from those that are happy to return to where we were before the proposed cuts, to those who envision the creation of a very different notion of both education and society. We need to ensure the expansion of this movement across educational sectors, to link it with a broader movement addressing the issues across public services, as we have begun to see happening, most recently in London. We then need




to take this further, to move from resistance, from the 'in and against', to the 'beyond' – to proactive proposition and evolution of alternatives ways of living, thinking, relating and acting in the world that imagine and create a very different education, other public services and broader society. As an educator, working in the state sector yourself, I'd be most interested to hear your views on this. What roles do you see for mainstream education (and educators and students within it) in informing and evolving our struggles? Where are state-centred education and educators situated in the metaphor of cracks? What of the roles for alternative pedagogies and educational spaces and opportunities?

**JH:** *I agree completely with what you say about the education struggle. If we are in the state sector of education, as students or teachers, we are in a situation of in-against-and-beyond: we are within the system, struggle against it and try to push beyond. There is one central question that we must pose over and over again, no matter where we are in the education system: How can we stop the rush of humanity towards self-annihilation? That is really the only scientific question that remains for us. And a sub-division of the question has to be: how do we get rid of the social system that generates this suicidal dynamic? This is the question that we must explore in all our teaching and studying. It is a question that can be posed anywhere, as relevant to a physics degree as to a degree in psychology or politics or literature.*

*I think we have to struggle from where we are, in the public education system, but we should also recognise that serious discussion and education are increasingly moving beyond the formal education system, that there is less and less room for thought in the university system.*

**V:** As with education, with media (which plays another significant pedagogical role in society), it appears to me we need to both exert influence through engagement with, and pressure on, the mainstream, and to build and evolve alternatives – radical/critical media. What do you see as the roles for such alternative, critical/analytical media in our struggles for transformation? Do the movements of the left pay sufficient attention to the creation, support and evolution of media capable of contributing to the critical dialogues and engagement necessary for evolving conscientisation?

**JH:** *I agree that this is very important, and that it is being increasingly recognised on the left. The mainstream is becoming more and more suffocating and increasingly it is the alternative media that provide the only space for critical thought.*

**V:** Picking up on your recent dialogue with Hilary Wainwright you appear to suggest that "democracy is not the main issue"[16]. While I would agree that a focus on representative democracy is part of the problem rather than part of the solution (indeed such systems are not actually democratic), is a notion of participatory democracy not central to the kind of transformation, oriented to 'social justice' (conceived of as short-hand for economic, political, kinship, ecological, social justice) that we seek? How do we relate, organise, campaign, connect and act in and on the world successfully if not through building authentic and genuine, bottom up democratic practices? Does relating in such a manner not speak in fact to the very values we espouse and objectives that we seek to attain? Do we not need our own forms of politics to succeed, and to recognise what such success might look like?

**JH:** *Yes, I agree with all this, certainly we need, and create all the time, genuine democratic practices. But the problem with just emphasising democracy is that the question of the systemic constraints imposed by capital disappears. Democracy does not take us very far unless we get rid of capitalism as a form of social organisation. Democracy obviously implies the abolition of money, since social self-determination is incompatible with the existence of money as the social nexus, but perhaps most people don't understand it that way. So we have to be explicit and say in one breath "yes we want genuine democracy and that means the abolition of money-capital-state-abstract-labour".*

**V:** In a reply to Hilary Wainwright discussing your conception of the state and our situatedness within and engagements with it, you say, "I distinguish between a situational contact with the state, where we try to go beyond the state because we are already in it, as employees or recipients of grants or benefits, and a sought contact with the state, where we try to enter it (as elected representatives say) and turn it in our direction." If I can take, as examples, yourself (as an academic) and myself (as a student) both situated within the academic wing of the state (and one, where an aspect of its purpose is as a disciplinary, hegemonic tool of the state and of capital) we can, and should, choose to think and act in, against and beyond the academy, mainstream education and the broader systems and relations of which they are an essential part. However, I cannot see a distinction between us doing so, as already situated there (having previously chosen to enter it), and someone else choosing to enter or engage with the state with a similar intention? We are all inevitably within, and in engagement with, the state in a myriad of ways across and throughout our lives and with varying degrees of choice according to our contexts (from paying rent or a mortgage, to driving a car or walking the streets to using public services). I agree that we need to move, and orient ourselves, in, against and beyond the state, but it seems to me that this may well involve entering the state or into certain engagements with it – a decision for each to make according to their contexts and orientation?

**JH:** *Yes, I think that's right. Nevertheless, especially given the weight of state-centred thought on the left, it is important to point out that the state is not a neutral terrain, that it is an interwoven set of practices that exclude self-determination and channel activity towards compatibility with the reproduction of capital. In certain situations it may make sense to choose to engage on that terrain, to choose to move in-against-and-beyond the state, but it is certainly not a neutral institution or something to be defended without more.*

**V:** In your discussion with Hillary Wainwright, you question her emphasis on reclaiming the state. For you, Wainwright's discussion fails to suggest that another world might be possible, "a world without government grants and bureaucrats, without money and profit, without capital". You argue that Wainwright's celebration of those moments of democratisation at the state level attain a limited level of subjectivity but this might be so "if such advances in democratisation were seen as part of a movement in-against-and-beyond capitalism, in which the issue of rupture remained central". The difficulty is that as you say, those seeking immediate gains, tend to be 'sucked into' the old routines of statecraft, yet as campaigns over public/social housing, or the NHS, or welfare are where people are at, it seems necessary to enter political struggle at that level where a mass of

people are directly affected. How to combine struggles for immediate gains with those that would take us 'beyond' capitalism? The minimal and the maximal? How to think both at once?

**JH:** *Yes, this is difficult. My feeling is that, simply in practical terms, defence does not work very well. Of course we want to defend the NHS and public education, but if that is not combined with criticism, with a pushing-beyond, a pushing towards what we would really like to see in health care and education, then the defence rings hollow.*

**V:** I'm intrigued by how you would situate the example of contemporary Venezuela within your critique of the state. It seems to me that it poses a most thought provoking challenge to those of us who wish to reject and move beyond the state. It seems from my limited knowledge to be an interesting example of state power (through pressure from social movements) acting to empower anti-capitalist movements and struggles, and to build parallel, alternative institutions and relations that could potentially speak to the beyond. From your position in, and knowledge of, Latin America where is the Venezuelan state situated within your wider critique?

**JH:** *I do discuss Venezuela explicitly in the book. I agree that it is a very interesting example. I think that in some parts of the state at least, there is a genuine drive to dissolve the state and promote communal self-organisation. I just think that this is very difficult to achieve from within a state structure.*

**V:** I'd like to pick up on Michael Albert's (and others') concept of class, constituted by contemporary divisions of labour, in the context of a need to recognise and supersede (move beyond) class relations. Do you find useful, to a transformative engagement with class struggle, the concept of 'the co-ordinator class'? (The "coordinator class is … composed of managers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other people whose roles in economic life give them substantial control over their own conditions of work and over the conditions of work of those below.") This seems to me an important insight and a class conception/position which we must recognise and engage with if we wish to achieve a genuinely classless society, and avoid the replacement of one particular form of class domination with another (that of the co-ordinator class). Albert[17] contends that this is best achieved by the formulation of vision and strategy that works towards a world in which socially valuable labour (doing) is (at least transitionally) centred on balanced job complexes, and remuneration for effort and sacrifice. Would you agree? Where would the concept of the co-ordinator class fit, if at all, within your own analysis, critique and vision?

**JH:** *No, I don't find that very helpful. I feel that rather than design a new society, we have to push outwards from the struggles that are already taking place. We have to move out from the rage and creativity expressed in current struggles rather than design models of what a future society might look like.*

*Very many thanks for putting so much energy and care into the formulation of this interview.*

**Notes**

1 *Crack Capitalism*, John Holloway (Pluto, 2010)

2 *Change the World Without Taking Power,* John Holloway (Pluto, 2002)

3 Pamphlet available online: http://libcom.org/library/against-state-1979

4 For *Aufheben* magazine's analysis of the debate between theorists associated with the Open Marxism school and structuralist-regulationist approaches influenced by Althusser and Poulantazas, see: 'Review: the State Debate and Post Fordism and Social form', http://libcom.org/library/state-debate-review-aufheben-2
These hugely important debates can be found in concentrated form in: Bonefeld, W. and Holloway, J. (eds), *Post-Fordism and Social Form: A Marxist Debate on the Post-Fordist State*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1992.

5 In the Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico.

6 Available online as PDFs at: http://commonsensejournal.org.uk/

7 See David Harvey's afterword, in, Lefebvre, H., *The Production of Space*, 1991, Blackwell, p.430.

8 Knabb, K. (ed), *Situationist International Anthology, Bureaus of Public Secrets*, 1981, p.45. Also available online at: http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/7

9 'More people working unpaid overtime than ever before', TUC, 22 February 2011, http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-19200-f0.cfm

10 The Free Hetherington, the occupation of the old Hetherington Research club, University of Glasgow: http://freehetherington.wordpress.com

11 See for instance, Crisis, Fetishism, Class Composition', in, Bonefeld, W. et al (eds) *Open Marxism: Volume II Theory and Practice*, Pluto Press, 1992.

12 Pamphlet available online: http://libcom.org/library/against-state-1979

13 Review - 'Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today', John Holloway (Pluto Press, London 2002), *Aufheben* 11, 2003 http://www.reocities.com/aufheben2/auf_11_holloway.html

14 Open Letter to John Holloway, *Wildcat-Zirkular* No. 39 - September 1997 - pp. (german edition) 31-44 http://libcom.org/library/Wildcat-john-holloway

15 The argument is expressed in condensed form for *Antipode* magazine, 2011, as 'Cracks and the Crisis of Abstract Labour': http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00781.x/pdf

16 Wainwright, H. & Holloway, J. (2011) *Red Pepper,* March 2011, 'Crack capitalism or reclaim the state?' http://www.redpepper.org.uk/crack-capitalism-or-reclaim-the-state/

17 Albert, M., *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*, 2004, Verso books

# Re-Thinking Creative Economy as Radical Social Enterprise

Angela McRobbie

We will soon begin to see the 'creative industry' phenomenon as something specifically linked with the Blair and post-Blair years, starting 1997 and in effect lasting for just more than a decade. Such a positioning allows us both to focus on its character and function and to acknowledge that the politics of arts and culture for the present government will be something very different. Let me begin with an overview of the 'creative decade' where my own focus is inevitably England for the reason that I live in London, and I will also connect with Europe because much of my research work on this topic is carried out in Italy and Germany. Let me also begin with a brief assessment of the New Labour project of promoting the new creative economy. The rise of the talent-led economy can be traced back to the influence of people like Charles Leadbeater and his book *Living on Thin Air,* which carried a blurb by Tony Blair himself. The book provided various ideas and recommendations for encouraging creativity as a source for growth, employment and personal reward. Along with the various Mapping Documents published by the Department of Culture Media and Sport, this shift of direction was in effect multi-functional. Championing figures like Alexander McQueen, Leadbeater was (and is) an advocate for what we might call a 'cultural neo-liberalism'. Here, the remaining social democratic provision in the form of arts education and training is transformed through a new rhetoric to become a space for producing young people who are to be 'entrepreneurs of the self' just as Foucault predicted in his mid-1970s lectures. This is 'soft' cultural neo-liberalism because it rests on a kind of widely admired, or desirable, human attribute, i.e. creativity, which Leadbeater in the spirit of egalitarianism generously attributes to everybody! It is a matter of tapping into the self, and somehow uncovering a unique talent, a set of capacities which can be nurtured and then exploited as the basis for a creative career. When I say this is multi-functional let me summarise its purposes. These are:

a) The extension of this capacity of creativity across the whole population has the air of justice, equality, fairness and democracy, especially when it is linked as it is with terms like 'access' and 'equality of opportunity' to the arts and culture so that they are no longer the preserves of the elite. Thus this agenda can be seen to embody aspects of the traditional Labour or left criticism of the high arts for being hierarchical and unavailable for ordinary working class people. So, the translation of Leadbeater's ideas into policy in the form of Creative Partnerships, or in Cultural Leadership programmes, or in the simple expansion of places on fashion design and similar courses at levels from GCSE or Btec to BA, MA and PhD, has to be seen as simultaneously old and New Labour, and for these reasons generally seen as a good thing! Who could disagree? For these reasons it quickly became a hallmark of the New Labour regime, forward-looking, oriented to young people, and fashionable, even glamorous.

b) But this kind of creative programme is also a way of laying the groundwork for the transformation of work, first for the few, then possibly for the many. As I have argued at length elsewhere there are various transformative activities embodied in this promotion of creativity. For a start, the emphasis on 'pleasure in work', the idea of finding yourself in creative practice, is very seductive indeed. It appeals to all of our own narcissistic and private desires, that somehow under the right conditions we will plug into a core of talent that will relieve us of the burden of wage labour, a tedious job or unrewarding work. May a thousand novels be written! If only we can all be JK Rowling or Franz Ferdinand! But such a call can be a profoundly effective form of new disciplinarity, a technology of the self as Jacques Donzelot argued. We are increasingly required to 'be creative'. We are expected to tap into our own inner resources and to find a way of using our talents. Indeed not to do so will increasingly be seen as a source of chastisement or even penalty. New subtle forms of cultural capital begin to appear; a creative elite who are able to take advantage of the support on offer from what was New Labour, and the others, who for whatever reasons resist this call, become instead reliant on a normal job and who are then in some ways social if not economic failures because on the party circuit of 'network of sociality' they do not have an interesting creative job to talk about. What I mean is that in recent years there is a requirement to have a working identity which is interesting, even fascinating. For young people this becomes part of their own self-identity, their value in the social world. I am referring largely to those young people who are being trained in the arts and cultural and humanities fields. Many of them in the past would have gravitated to jobs which were socially valuable, if unexceptional, but the 'dividing practices' which accompany the intense processes of individualisation mean that in work, the person is called upon to be unique, and as a result this means pursuing jobs which appear to be more attractive, even if they have no rights and require long hours. One of my students who gained excellent grades throughout her degree told me that she intended turning the job she had done during her under-graduate degree into a full-time job. She had been working as a party manager for an events company which brought together young single people regularly, not for dating, but for socialising and interesting conversation. My student was an ice-breaker. When I said that surely this was a shallow kind of job to pursue, and that she might think about doing something more socially valuable like working with disadvantaged youths, or take a post-graduate course in Community Work, she said "maybe on the longer term but not for now". But there is an irony here. The creatives themselves come to rely on a second job which is in effect a real job, even though it may be on a project or on a casual contract. Many of the creatives find themselves earning the bulk of their income from the second job which if they are lucky is a part time public sector job, maybe even in a Job Centre. But on a paid by the hour basis or on a short term contract they do not receive the protections and securities of conventional 'employment'. My research shows that such a strata of young people would be better off opting for the profession of the second job, and retraining to gain entitlements and status and promotion as, say, a qualified 'youth worker' or librarian, rather than someone teaching kids on ASBOs photography on a pay by the hour basis. But this would in many ways mark a moment of personal failure to live up to the dream of the talent-led economy, where the myth of personal creativity is so dominant and everything else second or third best. I will return to this 'choice' and new social divide in the second part of this paper.

c) This tilt to creativity is of course positive in that it does indeed expand the opportunities for many young people in fields of great interest, e.g. visual arts, media, design, popular music, performance studies, etc. And, in addition, there has long been a tradition of radicalism and critical thinking as well as politicisation in the arts and in culture in general. But given that this is now so expanded, and not just for the tiny few who start up bands or set up on their own as a fashion designer, which in the past was a quite unique and unusual thing to do, the emphasis on individual success and self-employment usually omits or discounts an accompanying vocabulary which we might consider as the usual or conventional vocabulary of the

Carrotworkers' Collective are a London-based group of current or ex-interns, mainly from the creative and cultural sectors who regularly meet to think together around the conditions of free labour in contemporary societies. carrotworkers.wordpress.com

*Precarity: A Participatory People's Tribunal*, London, March 20th 2011
The Carrot Workers and The Precarious Workers Brigade
www.precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com
Photos by Martin Lesanto-Smith

workplace. There is no space here for trade unions, for collectivity and solidarity, for joint decision-making, for rights and entitlements, for workplace democracy, for maternity leave or paternity leave or sickness benefits. As a result the creative sector finds itself full of young people who are burnt out, exhausted, unable to consider having children, and often self-exploiting on the basis of the 'pleasure in work ' factor. In short, the cultural and creative sector has grown to the extent that it now becomes not just a normal occupational sector but in certain cities and geographic locations dominant. Hence the absence of workplace protections becomes all the more significant. We could call this a Los Angeles-isation effect but in fact, as we know from regular labour activities in the US film and TV sector, there is still extensive trade union membership in the film and TV industries. My main point here is that the dominant vocabulary for undertaking creative work under the auspices of UK neo-liberalism and its extension into EU vocabularies is one which shuns 'old' ideas such as protection and entitlement, and favours instead self reliance, ambition, competition and 'talent'. The push was really to move the burden of workplace protection and security away from the 'employers' and onto the shoulders of the individual freelance person. A cultural agenda for encouraging new forms of work was at the same time a symbolic gesture to employers indicating a commitment to lowering their costs of labour. And as I have argued on many occasions, so intense and relentless is the pace in this field there is not just high rates of anxiety, depression and other 'pathologies of precariousness' but there is also a decrease in political awareness through sheer lack of time. Despite the Facebook era, the reality of getting organised is too time-consuming and financially it carries few possibilities of a new contract or project. Hence the network activity is geared towards being sociable and pleasing and endlessly self promoting in order to keep all opportunities open. Overall this has meant de-politicisation and a lack of attention to barriers to access on the basis of gender (and maternity) and race and ethnicity.

d) Even more significant is the way in which the thin-spread of creative work functions to disguise the normalisation of under-employment. Highly qualified but under-employed people under the age of 40 have become a common topic of discussion in Italy, Germany and France. This has given rise to all kinds of mini-job schemes and work-insertion programmes. Under-employment in the West is an inevitable outcome of post-Fordism, new technology and globalisation, and the outsourcing of labour to cheaper-to-produce countries. What creative work does is provide a frenzy of activity, projects and excitement which distracts attention away from the downtime between projects. In addition, creative projects disrupt the normal means of measuring and rewarding working time, since so many new projects, embarked on during downtime, are unpaid, they are done 'on spec'. The relation between paid and unpaid work is constantly jumbled and opaque. It is too time consuming and possibly unproductive to spend this time applying for Jobseeker's Allowance for a period of just a month or so, more productive to look for more work, which is exactly the point. Creative work functions both to ease the pain of under-employment and to ensure the decline of the unemployment society. I would suggest that the new creative economy has become the distinctively British way of dealing with structural and seemingly irreversible changes to the work-society.

My second argument concerns the present. On the one hand there will, for sure, be a significant decrease in resources across the world of arts and culture, including education and training. We will soon look back at the 1997-2007 decade as one where the state mobilises substantial resources to support a neo-liberalisation effect in the creative sector. I have already argued that this attempt to neo-liberalise was, however, limited and constrained, if not opposed by elements within the residual social democratic forces embedded across the public sector. We have all struggled over the years to subvert or 're-territorialise' these strategies so as to somehow adapt them at the point of implementation. We can see how vocabularies of entrepreneurship came to be flagged up, but somehow often put to different more critical usage. This has permitted at least contestation and critique to flourish, even within the de-politicisation effect I just referred to. By engaging with issues such as obvious sexism in a de-regulated and informal working environment, academics and researchers have been able to show the consequences of the freelance culture and there have also been initiatives within the sector itself such as groups like the *Carrot Workers Collective* and *Making a Living*. (See also Zoe Romano's work with Italian fashion designers.) But more questions arise as the present government starves the universities and art schools of funds and forces through massive fee rises. It is hard to assess what this will mean for all of the courses which have supported the rise of the new creative economy in the UK and for the students themselves. It is also likely that a new discussion will arise about how to theorise the position of the universities struggling to survive by themselves entrepreneurialising. We will need a new vocabulary to understand the proximity, the immanence of all of us caught up in this culture-machine. We cannot walk away from these issues. We teach students to develop a critical understanding, how does that tally with also encouraging self-reliance and entrepreneurship? How in turn will this freelance world respond to shrinking possibilities? The present situation is one which will see that the public sector of arts and culture profoundly diminished. The jobs which I also mentioned earlier, the youth workers and community workers and social workers who are well qualified and who have professional pathways for their careers will also be reduced in number, substantially. Neither defeatism nor old fashioned militancy will suffice in circumstances such as these. I would like to propose a renewal of radical social enterprise and co-operatives. Such self-organised collectives would also be a way of providing comparable working structures across diverse occupations such as social workers/community workers and artists. Already many artists and creative people are working in communities and on social projects. (The European Social Fund has supported all sorts of media-literacy and street education programmes which in turn have drawn on the expertise of artists, designers, musicians etc.) In addition, the politics of local democracy might well also be resurrected through such activities. This would involve various lessons from history, in fact close attention to the experiments by women's groups and by radical publishers, theatre workshops and other forms of de-centralised and autonomous work organisations. The lessons from the 1970s have quite a lot to offer in this respect. The Italian Marxists and neo-Marxists who are currently attractive to young intellectuals in the creative sector, i.e. Negri, Virno and Berardi, now and again refer to famous initiatives such as the Milan Women's Bookstore. But in fact there were thousands of other equally luminous radical initiatives which were also sustainable in Germany; hundreds of child care centres called Kinderladen. And in Northern Europe also there were play centres and art centres for children. In the UK, photography workshops were run on a shoestring, especially for those excluded from more mainstream training, or for minorities such as young black people, and young gay and lesbian people. Such initiatives, after all, emerged out of activisim and radical feminism and in the beginning such work was often unpaid, or semi-paid. I am not proposing we go back in time, but that we develop a stronger critique of the limits of self-reliance and its obvious psycho-pathologies in the creative and social sectors. I'd like to suggest that we consider Sennett's ideas of craft as an alternative, and with this further consideration of his notion of what I would paraphrase as a 'good day's work well done'. I am interested to see what scope there might be for a creative ethos of social care and compassion. To sum up, we need to be wary of the term 'social enterprise' as it is bandied about by the present government. It is too bland and ridden with clichés about 'making a difference' or 'putting something back'. But if structural under-employment is here to stay, and if we have in the UK over countless generations trained intelligent and energetic young people in the fields of arts and culture, it does not take such a huge step of imagination to see how the downtime could become a space for developing radical strategies for social-co-operation, for better care of children and young people, for better provision of care and attention to disadvantaged populations, including the elderly for renewing civic society and for urban and environmental improvement. This would not be about volunteering but about a new injection of hope in the not-for-profit sector.

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# 'A very complicated version of freedom'

## Conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries

David Hesmondhalgh, Sarah Baker

### 1. Introduction

A number of studies of artistic labour, based primarily on survey data, have generated clear findings. This research suggests that artists tend to hold multiple jobs; there is a predominance of self-employed or freelance workers; work is irregular, contracts are shorter-term, and there is little job protection; career prospects are uncertain; earnings are very unequal; artists are younger than other workers; and the workforce appears to be growing (see Towse, 1992; Menger, 2006 for valuable summaries of a range of studies). 'Artistic' here means the subsidised arts sector, but these features would seem also to apply very much to artistic (and informational) labour in the cultural and creative industries, especially given changes in these industries over the last twenty years that have seen increasing casualisation and short-term contract working. If that is so, then policies that argue for the radical expansion of these industries under present conditions, as 'creative industries policies' do, without attention to the conditions of creative labour, risk generating labour markets marked by irregular, insecure and unprotected work. This means that as well as the intrinsic importance of studying the quality of working life in these growing industries, there is also a policy reason to do so.

However, there has been a somewhat surprising lack of qualitative studies of working conditions in the cultural industries (as opposed to the working conditions of more narrowly defined artistic workers – see Shaw, 2004) and of the experiences of cultural workers. While there is a rich tradition of research on the political-economic dynamics and organisational structures of these industries (e.g., Miège, 1989; DiMaggio, 1977; see Golding and Murdock, 2005, and Hesmondhalgh, 2005 for summaries), surprisingly few analysts have addressed questions of labour specifically (the major exception is Ryan, 1992). In recent years, sociologically informed writers have begun to fill this gap. For example, using diary data, Paterson (2001) compared career patterns amongst three age cohorts of workers in the television industry, and noted the profound uncertainty that had entered the lives of television workers with the technological and organisational changes of the 1990s. Also studying television, and concentrating on the freelance workers who form the majority of the labour force, Ursell (2000) analysed the way that these workers had in effect to organize their own labour markets. Blair (2001) showed how entry into the UK film industry was highly dependent on social networks (cf. the earlier work of Faulkner and Anderson, 1987, on Hollywood) and that work there was intensive, demanding and highly interdependent.

Ursell's research was significant because it paid attention to the particularly high levels of personal investment in cultural labour – something that had increasingly been noted by sociologists of work concentrating on other fields (such as Kunda, 1991), building on groundbreaking studies of 'consent' (such as Burawoy, 1979). Ursell acknowledged that processes such as union derecognition and considerable reductions in labour costs and earnings provided plenty of evidence to support a Marxist reading, focused on exploitation and property. But she also noted 'an intensification of the self-commodification processes by which each individual seeks to improve his/her chances of attracting gainful employment' (Ursell, 2000:807). This element of 'apparent voluntarism' needed to be acknowledged, she asserted, and Ursell turned to Foucauldian theory (such as Knights and Willmott, 1989) 'not to dispense with [labour process theory] concerns' but 'to approach them more substantially' (2000:809).

Angela McRobbie (2002:517) followed by offering 'a preliminary and thus provisional account' of how notions of creativity, talent and work are being redefined in those burgeoning micro-businesses of the cultural sector associated with young people, including fashion and design, but also entertainment industries such as clubbing, recording and magazine journalism. She echoed Ursell in pointing to the 'utopian thread' involved in the 'attempt to make-over the world of work into something closer to a life of enthusiasm and enjoyment' (McRobbie, 2002:523), but also in focusing on how this leads to a situation where, when things go wrong, young people entering these creative worlds of work can feel they only have themselves to blame. In this respect, McRobbie usefully broadened the study of cultural work to include a wider set of conditions and experiences, including the way in which aspirations to and expectations of autonomy could lead to disappointment and disillusion.

Such questions of quality of life and dynamics of 'self-exploitation' have also been investigated by writers such as Andrew Ross (2003) and Ros Gill (2002) in relation to culture-related industries such as IT. Writing about work in the IT sector (a form of work sometimes unhelpfully blurred with artistic labour in the notion of creative industries), Ross observed how, in the eyes of a new generation of business analysts in the 1980s, Silicon Valley 'appeared to promote a humane workplace not as a grudging concession to demoralized employees but as a valued asset to production' (Ross, 2003:9). 'New economy' firms, he argued, aimed to provide work cultures that 'embraced openness, cooperation and self-management' (Ross, 2003:9). But this, showed Ross, was closely linked to long working hours and a serious erosion of the line between work and leisure. Whilst the dot.com working environments offered 'oodles of autonomy along with warm collegiality' (Ross, 2003:17) they also enlisted 'employees' freest thoughts and impulses in the service of salaried time' (Ross, 2003:19).

These are only some of the contributions to studies of cultural work in recent years from sociology and related areas such as cultural studies. There is no space to offer a survey of this research here (and in any case Banks, 2007, has provided a comprehensive overview). Instead, we aim to build on that strand of research which seeks to explore the experiences of workers in cultural and media industries. We do so across a number of dimensions that have emerged in the sociology of work more broadly, and in these qualitative studies of cultural work more specifically. These dimensions are here grouped into the following three categories: pay, working hours and unions; insecurity and uncertainty; socialising, networking and isolation.

Our research goes beyond the existing studies discussed above in a number of ways. First of all, we conducted interviews across three very different cultural industries. The three industries were selected because they represent examples of each of three different 'logics' of cultural production, identified by Miège in his influential 1989 account of different 'logics' or models of production in cultural industries (Miège, 1989):

- Music as an example of the publishing model or logic (based on offsetting risk by producing a catalogue of repertoire, whereby inevitable failures are balanced out by occasional hits or successes – used in books, music, and film).
- Television as an example of the flow model or logic (based on a continuous flow of product, and the gaining of audience loyalty, as in radio, television and new media).
- Magazines as an example of the written press model or logic (the regular and loyal consumption of a series of commodities, in newspapers and magazines).

A testing of Miège's classification was *not* our main aim. Rather, using these categories seemed the most effective way to draw upon existing classifications of the cultural industries to ensure a spread of examples of cultural work, including different working conditions. Second, recognising the integral importance of genre to cultural production, and therefore to cultural labour, we also interviewed workers in a range of genres within each industry: rock/pop, jazz and hip hop/electronic dance music in the recording industry, music magazines, men's magazines and the building/construction trade press in magazine journalism, and arts/history documentary, drama serials and 'factual entertainment' in television. A total of 63 interviews were conducted in England in 2006 and 2007, with between six and ten interviews undertaken for each of the genres under consideration. Interviewees ranged across the following characteristics: corporate and independent sectors; freelance and salaried staff; established creative personnel who have made their names in the industry, aspiring newcomers, and older practitioners; London-based workers and those in other locations in England; creative managers, marketers and creative personnel. We also conducted ethnographic fieldwork in a London-based independent television production company, which we report separately (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008) but refer to briefly here. Thirdly, our aim was to analyse more closely the emotional responses of cultural workers to their working conditions, insofar as these could be ascertained from fieldwork interviews. By 'emotional responses' we mean states of mind such as pleasure, enjoyment and anxiety. We focus on these experiences and emotional responses in order to register with greater clarity the effects of the working conditions of the cultural industries on cultural workers. This includes some of the pleasurable and autonomous aspects of cultural work, as well as its downsides. As is appropriate

for qualitative research interviews, we emphasise subjective experience over generalisability, while paying close attention to the range of people we were speaking to, and the kinds of motivations they might have in presenting their views to us. We take seriously our interviewees' accounts but do not necessarily take what they told us at face value.

## 2. Pay, working hours and unions

We begin with what is widely considered to be the most crucial way in which workers think of their work: how much work they do, and how much they get paid for it. Striking here was the use of language which expressed anxiety about the sheer numbers of young people competing for work. One factual producer spoke of 'an army' of graduates from media and journalism courses (Interview 21) who, as a researcher at the BBC explained, 'can't expect to graduate and magically fall into a TV job because everyone knows how competitive the industry is' (Interview 35). A documentary production manager told us that 'hordes and hordes of kids ... will do anything' to get a position (Interview 43). And in our ethnographic research at a London-based independent television production company during the first half of 2007 workers expressed concern about their 'replaceability' – recognising, from their own experiences of job searching 'between' contracts, the sheer volume of young freelancers competing for the same pool of positions (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008).

### 2.1. Pay

This massive 'reservoir' (Miège, 1989:83) of labour means that wages are depressed, and in many cases workers – especially young people – are willing to work for free. In her study of the UK television industry Ursell (2000:814) writes of the number of university students on work experience who 'gift' several weeks of free labour to production companies in the hope that 'their gift will bring career returns in the future'. When many of these students graduate from their course, says Ursell (2000:814-815), they 'persist in working for nothing or expenses only, or cash-in-hand, or very low pay' and this then results in 'extremely low pay at the entry point to the industry'. Willis and Dex (2003:124) concur, saying that the labour supply is bursting with 'graduates willing to work for free or for very low wages to get a foothold in the industry'. One junior writer for a men's magazine, for example, told us that 'on the fashion desk loads of them are working for free, up to a year and stuff, and people do work experience as writers for six months or so and they write for nothing' (Interview 12). In television the willingness to carry out unpaid or low-paid labour results, as one production manager of documentary films claimed, in 'abuses' of junior workers in companies producing reality and factual television: 'They don't get paid properly, but it's supply and demand ... they kind of churn people out and spit them out' leaving the young workers 'battered and bruised' (Interview 43). Two metaphors conveying worker experience get mixed here, both disturbing in their implications. 'Churning out' workers invokes a sense of dehumanisation, 'spitting them out' suggests an animalistic gobbling up of workers, before they are rejected as inadequate for consumption. This chimes with Ursell's (2000:816) description of the television industry as a 'vampire, ingesting youngsters at low prices from a large pool ... working newcomers and established hands remorselessly, and discarding the older and less accommodating at will'.

Some managers were keen to emphasise that their companies made a point of doing things differently. For example, one Head of Production in the documentary sector told us:

> 'I know some companies keep them on because they think experience is a good thing and don't necessarily pay them. But we find if they are actually doing a job and they are contributing so much to a production and that we couldn't do without them, then I think we should pay them, and we do. ... And we always pay expenses for work experience.' (Interview 40)

Note here, however, that these more reasonable conditions seem somewhat qualified. Only if the young people on placement are contributing so much that 'we couldn't do without them' will they actually get paid more than just expenses.

That so many workers, including graduates, are willing to sacrifice pay for a foot in the door has repercussions for those already working in cultural industries. As Ursula Huws (2006 – 2007:10) explains, when workers are 'putting in extra time, accepting lower pay or poorer conditions' they are 'either directly or indirectly ... constructing new bars for their own cages, or those of others'. The result, for one music writer (Interview 4) we spoke to, is that publishing houses have a sense that 'everybody wants to work for them' and, in the case of one particular company, become 'incredibly rude' and 'arrogant' towards their writers, treating them 'like plankton' (dehumanisation again). This engenders an uncomfortable feeling in workers that they are dispensable: 'there is pretty much always somebody to replace you and do your job', as one freelance music writer put it (Interview 41). And this in turn leads to greater pressure, and considerable self-consciousness about how workers might be perceived:

> 'I try not to refuse work whenever I can, because then people think you might be being a bit too – not full of yourself – but something like that ... because if they need somebody to do that, then there's no reason for them to go elsewhere.' (Interview 41, music writer)

### 2.2. Working hours

According to Mark Banks (2007:36), being a flexible worker in the cultural industries:

> 'essentially means that one must do whatever is required to support commercial interests. It increasingly requires working longer or unsocial hours, taking on-board additional responsibilities, relocating according to company demands and certainly committing oneself to the commercial imperatives of the firm over and above non-work commitments.'

...there is a strong tendency towards self-exploitation in the cultural industries. ...But why do so many young people want to work in these industries, in spite of the low rates of pay and long working hours...

This was very much confirmed in our research. One documentary camera operator explained how, in television, contracted working hours have extended, though without an increase in pay:

> 'On commercials you used to have an eight-hour day, that was your basic working day, and then after eight hours you'd be on overtime. Most commercials you did ten hours minimum anyway so you'd work two hours overtime and then production companies and budgets got tighter and they started saying your basic day is going to be ten hours. The same thing has happened in documentaries. We never had an eight-hour day; it was always a ten-hour day ... But now people are trying to be sneaky and saying your basic day is twelve hours, but instead of saying you are going to be paid for an extra two hours, you get the same pay for working twelve hours that you did for working ten hours, which effectively means that you take a pay cut.' (Interview 33)

However, as noted in Section 1, one of the problems for cultural workers is that they are often, at least on the face of it, 'free' to decide whether to take on such long hours. This has its pleasurable aspects. A manager in the music industry outlines the kind of working week that results:

> 'I tend to work six days and it tends to be mid morning to late evening. But the evening stuff is stuff that I tend to enjoy, seeing bands and artists and putting on gigs. I do a radio show as well; I forgot that. I do a monthly radio show on the local music scene. It's really varied, which is lovely. I don't have a routine at all.' (Interview 19)

'Pleasure in work' (Donzelot, 1991; Nixon and Crewe, 2004), then, is closely linked to self-exploitation. For example, a reviews editor of a music magazine stated:

> 'I'm one of those people who really love being busy but then I risk taking on far too much ... and people presume you're going to do it and then you realise you've got no time to do it. I went to my boss and said, ... 'I'm going to have a breakdown one of these days because I'm working ridiculous hours and working on weekends and doing all this crazy stuff'. I enjoy it, admittedly, but when it starts affecting you, that's really bad.' (Interview 30)

Interviewees also told us of the physical dangers of working long hours, especially in television. One factual producer (Interview 27) spoke of a friend who after working extended hours on a regional shoot then had to drive back to London, exhausted, and ended up having a car accident. A cameraman told us: 'Crews do crash on the road sometimes because they get overworked and flogged and they drive off the road or they crash and even get killed occasionally, and that's because there's a lot of pressure' (Interview 29). Whether this is really the case or not, this worker can be understood as externalising his own fears about the pressure put upon him. Even as an established cameraman who tries to pace himself, say no and 'be sensible' he still finds there are 'times when you are downing Red Bulls or taking Pro Plus and things like that and you are shaking and you have to work the most ridiculous hours and you're in a terrible state, which you shouldn't really be in' (Interview 29).

Our evidence suggests that there is a strong tendency towards self-exploitation in the cultural industries. This may be a feature of a great deal of modern professional work. But why do so many young people want to work in these industries, in spite of the low rates of pay and long working hours that many of our interviewees reported, and which are confirmed in the survey data mentioned at the beginning of this article? Menger (1999:554) usefully distinguishes three different explanations for this phenomenon. The first is the labour of love explanation (Freidson, 1990) – artists, or symbol creators, have a strong sense of a 'calling', of potential fulfilment, and they are prepared to take the risk of failure. A second set of explanations emphasises that artists might be risk-lovers, or like lottery players, simply haven't considered properly how likely it is that they will fail (though success and failure isn't quite as arbitrary as in a lottery). A third explanation is that artistic work brings nonmonetary, psychological rewards, associated with autonomy, community, the possibility of self-actualisation, and potentially high degrees of recognition, even celebrity. McRobbie explores the political implications of such views of work, when she writes about the way that the ideal of self-expressive work is mediated by new rhetorics of mobility and success (McRobbie, 2002:101). This has implications, we would claim, for the degree to which cultural workers turn to unions for support.

### 2.3. Unions

What role can unions play in countering the problems of pay and working hours discussed above? As an official of the main UK broadcasting union (BECTU - the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph & Theatre Union) put it, 'freelances arguably have more need of union support than do permanently employed workers' (in Saundry et al., 2007:182). Though this may be the case, the uncertain nature of freelance work and worries about where the next short- term contract will come from means unions are not on the radar of many cultural workers. This was borne out in the interviews with music industry workers, none of whom spoke about the role of unions in the organisation, conditions or experience of their work.

With regard to the television industry, Saundry et al. state that, 'inexperienced workers, desperate for employment and keen to build their reputation, are unlikely to insist on [union] rates' (2007:182). In our research, a junior factual cameraman who had been on sequential, rolling short-term contracts with a regional factual company found his position frustrating because 'although I'm kind of treated as staff ... I'm just not paid like staff' (Interview 25). He works on a daily rate which does not specify the length of the day and although he knows BECTU sets out different wage brackets relating to hours worked he says he finds

it 'difficult to go up to a production manager and say "I want that amount of money"'. His concern is that by asking for the BECTU rate 'you quickly price yourself out of the market' and the company would find themselves a new camera operator who would not charge the BECTU rate for the 90-h week. He believes that it would not be for another 20 years of working in the industry as a cameraman that his 'self-worth' would have risen to the extent that he will have the confidence to negotiate his pay with production managers. No wonder then that one young documentary producer (Interview 24) remarked 'if there's one place that should be unionised it's the TV industry. The exploitation is pretty severe'. Yet it was recently estimated that only one-third of UK television freelances are members of the broadcasting union BECTU (Carlyon, 2006:22).

Similar stories come from the magazine industry which, like the audio-visual industries, was once heavily unionised. In a discussion of the impact of union derecognition in magazine publishing companies Gall (1997:157 – 158) posits there is a distinct correlation between derecognition and increasing incidence of 'lower starting rates, longer working weeks, the removal of overtime pay and various allowances, and reduction in holiday pay and redundancy pay'. Those most affected have been 'newly recruited full-time permanent staff, freelances and casuals ... because their terms are far easier to vary and worsen because of their relatively greater insecurity' (Gall, 1997:158). One key issue for freelance writers is their rate of pay per word. The NUJ (National Union of Journalists) promotes minimum rates but some of the freelances we spoke to were not aware what these were:

'There's a NUJ rate, but I can't remember what it is. It's a minimum rate and it's really miniscule. It's something like 240 pounds for 1,000 words. Not much. Unless it's 340 pounds? These are the sorts of things I should know as a freelancer but I don't.' (Interview 32, writer men's magazines)

In many ways the rate is a moot point because this writer foresees a similar problem to that faced by the junior cameraman: asking for the union rate could jeopardise getting future work by associating him with 'trouble'. Here again the problem of self-consciousness in an industry where individuals have to sell their reputation is apparent (see Section 2.1 above):

'The problem is that say I'd had a dispute with *The Guardian* [who had recently only paid him one third of what he thinks the minimum rate is], it could be that I would get the union in, they'll be embarrassed, they'll pay me an extra 50 pounds for the money they should have paid, and then *The Guardian* would just never use me again – "he's a trouble making bastard". So, it's not worth my while for 50 pounds.' (Interview 32)

This is a view supported by another freelance writer for men's magazines who has never been a member of a union. Whilst unions may, as he says, 'look after your interests if you are being underpaid or stuff like that', in his experience 'editors just don't want to be bothered with that sort of stuff. They just say okay, fine, we'll pay you more, and then you never get any more work from them because it's just a freelance gig' (Interview 28).

A senior music writer (Interview 36) described how one way to overcome being underpaid is by forming a freelance collective. He talked extensively about the time he, along with other freelance music writers, lobbied a large publishing house where the union wasn't recognised in order to improve pay conditions. This 'was almost unique in the British media. A bunch of freelancers get together in a house where the union is not recognised and negotiating pay agreements for freelancers when there's no negotiation for staff' (Interview 36). But even this optimistic organiser notes that although the agreement regarding rates-per-word is currently in place it is at the whim of the company and 'can be cracked, and when we get a nasty manager it will all end' (Interview 36).

For the most part though, freelancers negotiate rates individually and as Dex et al. note, while on the one hand established workers have a strong position from which to negotiate their worth, on the other newcomers are 'weak players' chasing jobs on 'unviable terms' (Dex et al., 2000:285). The established freelancers we interviewed seemed more able and willing to negotiate rates. Note for example the assertive use of the first person in this quotation from one senior factual/documentary editor who told us:

'If people haggle about what they pay you, and people do, they say "I am this company and I want this, this and this", I just say well, "I am me and ... I charge what I charge for what I do".... So I am quite straight in saying I am worth what I do.' (Interview 14)

However, for those still in the early stages of a freelance career, their negotiating stance was more likely to be dramatised in terms of a portrayal of the self as desperately needy:

'The higher up you get the easier it gets because you've got more contacts, you've got people who regularly ask for you and the higher they get they generally get to pick their programme.... But early on in your career you are thinking 'anything – now' because I've got to pay rent.' (Interview 31, factual assistant producer)

And it is not just rent that has to be paid. For as Ekinsmyth (2002:239) reminds us 'freelances are responsible for their own development and training, pensions and social security; and home-working freelances are additionally responsible for their capital equipment, their accommodation, lighting and heating'.

Cultural workers seem torn over the precariousness of their work – bemoaning the mental and emotional states produced, but also resigned to insecurity, and prepared to speak of it as necessary and even desirable.

## 3. Insecurity and uncertainty

According to Murdock (2003:31) moves in the cultural industries 'toward outsourcing production, relying more on freelance labour, and assembling teams on a project-by-project basis, have combined to make careers in the cultural industries less secure and predictable'.

Researchers have noted how in television, for example, changes in regulation and developments in technology have 'increased uncertainty' for television workers since the 1980s and that these workers 'find uncertainty a problem; they dislike it and it causes stress for the majority' (Dex et al., 2000:283). Much of this uncertainty centres on concerns about gaps in employment. Given the short-term nature of most contracts, new work is constantly being sought. Job seeking is relentless, even during times of employment, 'in order to sustain sufficient employment and to maintain career progress' (Paterson, 2001:497). For Neff et al. (2005:319), the cultural industries are 'built upon workers being motivated by the promise of one Big Job being right around the corner' and also their 'willingness to take the periodic risk of being out of work along with the continual risk of investing in their careers'.

In this section, we concentrate on the mental and emotional states produced by the uncertainty facing many cultural workers, across all three of the industries we studied. Many spoke of nervousness, anxiety and even panic as a regular part of their working lives. One junior cameraman told us of his worries about extended gaps of unemployment between contracts and said that whilst he enjoys being freelance it 'is really insecure because you know it [a big gap in employment] could happen at any point and it's quite a nervous thing to be' (Interview 25). He says, 'I don't know when this contract ends in November whether I'm going to get another one. I just keep thinking if I work hard then it will happen again and I'll get something else'. Established cameramen face the same uncertainty: 'not all of us are working all the time. For example, I didn't work for the first 3 months of this year, or I had very little work. But then again, the second half of the year was very busy' (Interview 33).

Freelancers in magazines reported spending a lot of time 'chasing up things that you should be paid for' and approaching people for work meaning 'you are constantly living sort of on the edge' (Interview 32, writer men's magazines). One music writer described how a sudden change in the amount of work coming in, precipitated by a drop in regular work for a single title, has resulted in some months without work, sending him to 'that dark place where I panic – "I'm never going to work again and it's impossible to earn a living and I should go and get a [proper] job really" – working at a bank or something' (Interview 46). Despite having been a freelance writer for almost ten years this respondent reports: 'I've never got used to the fact that I don't have work ... I don't think you get used to not earning a wage'. Or take this senior freelance music journalist who describes a fall off in the amount of work that had recently come his way:

'In a sense I haven't got significant work at the moment, it's quite weird. "Superb" [as an editor had described his last major feature article] leads to no commissions in the last month. No substantial leads I mean. I've had loads of bits and pieces, but what you like is to have one big feature you're working on and then the bits and pieces.' (Interview 36)

'One of the worries', he says, 'is always that ... I'm not going to work again'. Few workers we interviewed, even those with salaried staff positions, seemed immune from such feelings of insecurity.

However some magazine writers set these worries about money and employment against the relative freedom that freelancing provided them. As one men's magazine writer says 'on the flipside I can go and have a round of golf on a Monday morning and I couldn't do that if I was five days a week with a regular income' and 'I know a lot of people who are really unhappy in their nine to five work' (Interview 32). Another freelance men's magazine writer emphasised the downsides of stability: 'I don't have any pension, I don't have many holidays, but then it's kind of okay though because I've got a great job. I would like to obviously have some more time off and to spend some more time with my children, but I think it's infinitely better than spending 12 months a year on a job that I hated' (Interview 28).

One music journalist described his working conditions as involving freedom, but 'a very complicated version of freedom' (Interview 4). While this writer worked freelance, the same is true of other cultural workers, including salaried employees, who in general may have more autonomy than workers in other industries, but whose autonomy comes at a cost. As Banks (2007:55) puts it, 'to be (or appear to be) in control of one's destiny is what encourages workers to endorse the systems put in place to expedite flexible production'. Drawing on the work of Knights and McCabe (2003:1588) who posit that 'Employees welcome a sense of self-organization; for when individuals organize their (our) own work it becomes more meaningful', Banks argues that the offer of autonomy 'is sufficiently powerful to override any misgivings, constraints or disadvantages that might emerge in the everyday reproduction of this highly competitive and uncertain domain' (2007:55).

Cultural workers seem torn over the precariousness of their work – bemoaning the mental and emotional states produced, but also resigned to insecurity, and prepared to speak of it as necessary and even desirable. How do they cope? Some spread the risk by working in multiple sites to supplement income. One producer of arts programmes described how reductions in the commissioning of arts programmes have made it necessary for her to take on freelance work as a production manager for factual and children's television companies despite having her own arts-based production company (Interview 53). In the music industry, a jazz drummer outlined a familiar situation for musicians, whereby, because it is hard to get regular work, he had to take on teaching to supplement his income:

'The reality is you're not earning your living from gigs ... I can think off the top of my head of one person who doesn't teach on the circuit, in Oxford. But of course he takes every single gig going. I suppose on the more

positive side of my relationship between doing other types of work in music, was always that sense of I didn't really want to be doing every rubbish gig, and [without the teaching] I'd be forced to do that.' (Interview 63)

Another jazz musician told us that 'if you don't mind a bit of risk in your life you do a certain kind of job and if you like a very stable regular life you do another kind of job' (Interview 10). But the 'risk' she refers to is not always sustainable. In television, for example, a factual producer reported that 'quite a few people have left because they found it … just too uncertain' (Interview 21). And as another producer suggested 'with telly it's never a job for life, so you have always got to be thinking about what else you might do' (Interview 52).

## 4. Socialising, networking and isolation

In this next section, we explore the ambivalence of the sociality of cultural production. Workers discussed in detail the rituals of socialising with their colleagues but questions were raised as to the blurring of boundaries between socialising for pleasure and networking for work. Also, even with the emphasis on regular socialising and networking in these industries, a number of workers reported feeling isolated from both colleagues and their profession.

### 4.1. Socialising and networking

In all the industries we studied, there was a strong sense that the contacts which eventually lead to contracts rely on sociability. For example, in many companies there was a ritual of going to the pub on a Friday night after work or, in the magazine industry, to 'celebrate' going to press. Nixon and Crewe (2004:137-139) describe a culture of hedonism in magazine publishing and the advertising industry noting that 'it was drinking with colleagues after work in the local pub on Friday nights, as well as frequently in the week, that formed a more regular social ritual for both sets of media practitioners'. This was confirmed in our research. A reviews editor for a music magazine reports that:

'after we go to press we go out for a pint and to me and to the art director that's really important … because the last week is all stress and panic and adrenaline going, you just really want to go and have a pint or two, a glass of wine, two glasses of wine, go home on the bus.' (Interview 30)

And such social events often bring people together from different parts of the same company, such as creative and marketing personnel: 'If you are based with the editorial team and they are going to the pub on a Friday night, you are naturally going to go with them because you are part of a team' (Interview 47, men's magazine marketer).

For those who are less inclined to such forms of sociability, however, this emphasis on post-work bonding can be difficult. Many workers described themselves as 'not a socialiser' (Interview 59, drama producer) and while recognising the importance of networking and socialising with industry colleagues prefer not to engage in the pub culture. But not identifying as a 'pub person' can be a problem as this camera operator explained:

'You see, I'm not a pub man, and I think there are lots of cameramen or lots of crew who are pub people, and I've never been into that pub culture. So the problem I have is that even when you are out on location, as soon as you finish everybody wants to go to the pub and get drunk, and I've never been into that so that's probably put me as a bit of an outsider in that sense.' (Interview 33)

He describes his lack of interest in the drinking culture of production crews as a 'downfall' and says 'maybe I'd get a lot more work if I was a pub person'. And as a black worker, the pub as a primary site of socialising is perhaps doubly problematic given both the highly racialised nature of these spaces and of an industry which is, as this interviewee says, 'dominated by white males' (Interview 33).

The music industry is, as one might expect from the close links of its products with pleasurable sociality, particularly prone to such a mingling of work and hedonistic leisure. For some in the music industry, including music journalists, socialising is a compulsory element of a job which still has a focus on collective experience, such as live gigs, launches and so on. One artist manager felt there was simply no choice about whether to go out:

'Probably two or three nights a week we are out at gigs, wherever that might be. … Normally if you've got an act that's on tour you will see a gig in London and we always try and encourage everyone to go and see them somewhere else in the country as well… . So you are out a lot and yes, it is very sociable.' (Interview 49)

The consequences of not participating in such a culture are varied. Another artist manager described to us how not being a 'pub person' contributes to a marginalised position:

'The network is very, very important, but I think personally there are better ways to maintain and build a network than going out and getting pissed at gigs, and I've never really been part of that scene. As a result, I'm very much excluded from a big area of the business, but that's a choice I've made about how I wanted to be and how I wanted to work.' (Interview 63)

By making that choice this manager feels he is excluded from certain powerful cliques that have developed around the scene and not belonging to these means 'you don't get a look in': 'So if I were to take a new band to a label, I wouldn't really know where to begin at this point because I'm not really part of any of those scenes' (Interview 63). But on the other hand he feels that he is not limited by this exclusion 'because ultimately if they are interested they are going to find you'. There were also questions of work-life balance to be taken into account: 'I'd rather be at home with my wife and kids than out getting drunk with a bunch of people I didn't particularly like, chasing a deal that I didn't believe was right for the band' (Interview 63).

> …we see the blurring of pleasure and obligation, freedom and constraint. The blurring of networking and socialising means it becomes very difficult to maintain a boundary around working life.

Even in less 'glamorous' occupations such as trade magazine journalism, the expectation to socialise was strong. A junior reporter (Interview 44) described the visits to the pub as 'an extension of work hours really' and said that often 'talk can revolve around work' which can be frustrating on days where 'you want to switch off' but, she says, 'it's actually genuinely fun as well'. Here again we see the blurring of pleasure and obligation, freedom and constraint. The blurring of networking and socialising means it becomes very difficult to maintain a boundary around working life. One series producer in the factual programming genre said that although he would like to keep his work and 'private life' separate, 'the nature of telly normally encourages you actually to bleed your work into your personal life, because that's how you build up contacts, how you get jobs…' (Interview 52).

As one music reviews editor (Interview 30) put it, networking is 'important for the freelance part of the job'. But although it tends to happen outside of work hours it isn't necessarily pleasurable because 'lots of people are never off so you can't relax and socialise with them'. 'Never off': all hours become work hours. This also points to anxieties about the authenticity of friendships in this world of work. As a men's magazine writer puts it: 'I tend to socialise with my editors in London once every two or three weeks, and I pretend that it's me being pally with them, but it's not really, it's me just maintaining relationships' (Interview 28). This kind of 'schmoozing' (Interview 41, music writer), might not be enjoyable but is regarded as important because part of networking socially is letting people 'know who you are without making it too blatantly obvious that you want them to help you out … I do sometimes go for drinks with people, but I'm guessing that is pretty much the definition of networking. That is how a lot of people do get work and do get new jobs and things like that.' (Interview 41)

In the magazine industry, says this writer, networking is implicit and covert. 'People just being friendly with each other, just having a drink and being casual' is networking masquerading as socialising:

'you are basically being friendly under the guise of networking … it's like an unspoken thing where people are being friendly and being friends and you all invite each other out to things. At the end of it you are kind of saying 'do you want to do this?' or something.' (Interview 41)

We are describing working worlds which in many respects seem to conform to Andreas Wittel's depiction of a new 'network sociality' on the basis of his observations of new media workers in London, characterised by many of the features of individualization in modern societies, such as high degrees of mobility and increasing 'choice' about relationships; but also, as Wittel points out, intense but fleeting contact between people, and an assimilation of work and play (though we are not sure that this will become 'the paradigmatic social form of late capitalism', as Wittel (2001:71) speculates). Moreover, we found evidence of many relationships that went beyond ephemerality. The difficult conditions under which creative work is carried out can also lead to friendships that can enable workers to cope with the insecurity and precariousness of creative work. Take this documentary producer's description of the friendship he has developed with a fellow producer:

'We're very close friends and we don't get together to talk about work anymore, we usually talk about wine. He's a great wine expert. But I'm very close friends with [him] because we've worked together and we've been driving through the night, we've faced huge difficulties, and it's an interesting thing about this process that when you've been really up against it in a really bad situation, it might be a violent situation, it might be just the plane didn't arrive and you've got to drive 200 miles to the next place and the conditions are cold or difficult, or it might be that you have to turn something around in no time at all. There could be 1001 things but you go through these really, really intense emotional experiences, and if the person you are working with is able to match your energy and actual drive or maybe exceed it, then you develop a bond, you've been through some powerful experience.' (Interview 37)

### 4.2. Isolation

Our interviewees, then, reported many ambivalent experiences of the intense sociality of cultural work. This was the case not only for those working as part of culture-making organisations, but also for freelancers and short-term workers, who need to maintain contacts. But many freelancers also reported a strong sense of isolation. For one of the music writers we spoke to one of the hardest things about being a freelancer is the isolation: 'you don't talk to anyone and you don't see anyone' (Interview 46). This can be 'crippling' as it has a powerful impact on motivation: '[I'm] filling my day sometimes, even when I've got things to do, [with] very random things … they get me nowhere … and at the end of the day I have this mild sense of self-loathing that I've done nothing useful today'. He links this to his personality:

'I am a born worrier, which probably means I'm not the best person to be a freelance. I am concerned about where the work is coming from, I'm concerned about where the work is going, whether my career path has any direction, and it's quite difficult when you are isolated to get reassurances because you don't see other people. You look at other people and think "how come you've got all that work, where is mine?"' (Interview 46)

The music writer we quoted earlier (Section 3), who referred to his work as involving 'a very complicated version of freedom', was referring to the fact that he didn't have to 'commute or work in an open plan office or deal with moody colleagues' (Interview 4). But the temptation was to take this freedom too far. He says:

'I can write my copy in my pants if I want to but at

the same time it often feels like I don't get very far away from my computer for days at a stretch and that something as simple as getting a paper from the corner shop can just not happen for up to a week. And I literally, you know, will not leave this flat for like three days.' (Interview 4)

He observed that up until a few years ago it was almost expected by magazines that the freelance writers would go to the office fairly regularly. At the time he didn't quite understand the importance of this but now, after spending the last couple of years in isolation, he reflects on the value of regular office visits:

'It was beneficial to you because they saw you there, you seemed to get more work, they seemed to remember your existence. But often you'd just think "what am I going to the [magazine] office for? I have no good reason to be there".' (Interview 4)

In 'the connexionist world' that Boltanski and Chiapello (2005:111-112) identify as central to modern work, 'a natural preoccupation of human beings is the desire to connect with others, to make contact, to make connections, so as not to remain isolated'. In an effort to combat the isolating conditions of freelance journalism, one men's magazine writer (Interview 28) rents a desk in the office of a design agency which is located in a regional 'creative industries' precinct. But whilst a location in such an office space can help to reduce isolation, workers can still feel removed from others in the same profession. As a music writer emphasised:

'It's the same with all magazines; I've never met anyone who works on them. I wrote for *Esquire* for two years and never met anyone. On and off I wrote maybe five or six pieces for them spread over a two year period, but I never met anyone.' (Interview 46)

He says that a positive side of this is that you avoid a magazine's office politics 'but then on the other hand you don't see the fun and games of office life'. For some television workers the issue becomes not isolation from one's profession but isolation from those external to working life. A freelance producer describes how a sense of alienation can occur when spending so much time with a production team; and here the links to self-exploitation are apparent again:

'During the productions, [...] it's impossible to make arrangements in terms of seeing people. I think ultimately your friends get a bit fed up of you never turning up, and so you end up not bothering to ring them, and then actually you are so knackered when you finish the day you want to come back and chill out anyway really, rather than racing off down the pub. So, I think there is a kind of alienating aspect to the lifestyle, which means you tend to spend more time with the people that you work with because they similarly... I mean that's not true. I mean you're obviously not completely alienated, but I think it doesn't always work that well.' (Interview 21)

On the basis of our interviews, then, it seems that isolation, in its various guises, continues to be a danger for most freelance cultural workers.

## 5. Conclusions

Our main aim in this article has been to build on recent studies of working conditions in the cultural industries by paying more sustained attention to the experiences and conditions of cultural workers, and to do so across three different industries, representing different 'logics'. Our research suggests that these experiences are at best *highly ambivalent*. This was the case across all three of the industries we studied as we found no evidence that particular industries or genres produced more positive or negative experiences than others. The high levels of casualisation to be found in all three industries led to expressions of victimisation and anger on the part of many workers; a sense of being on the receiving end of harsh and aggressive treatment. Furthermore, long working hours were combined with a sense of responsibility for agreeing to take on such hours. This is troubling when one considers that the great 'army' of freelancers sustaining the cultural industries have little access to the financial and psychological benefits accruing from strong union representation. Understandably, these conditions manifested themselves in the form of considerable anxiety on the part of cultural workers. Whilst some workers highly valued the freedom purportedly offered by the cultural industries, as our title suggests this freedom is complicated because it involves a very strong sense of ambivalence for many workers. Pleasure and obligation become blurred in a highly challenging way. Another area in which ambivalence was strongly manifest was the requirement to socialise and network. There is a very strong culture of hedonism associated with much creative work and this brought with it burdens for those not inclined to the dominant forms of sociality. The evidence we present above in Section 4 suggests that this has age and ethnic dimensions, though this needs exploring more in future research (as do gender dimensions). Conversely – or perhaps linked to that fact – many workers reported experiences of isolation. Against this, however, other workers emphasised the very real friendships formed in cultural work.

Here, then, in reporting on the aspects of our study related to working conditions and experiences, our emphasis has been on the way that our findings provide broad support for the analysis of problems and ambivalences identified by writers such as Banks, McRobbie, Ross and Ursell. Of course, such ambivalent experiences may seem delightful compared with some of the brutal conditions faced by workers across the world, including the world's wealthiest economies (see Ehrenreich, 2001, for a brilliant journalistic exploration of the conditions faced by maids, shop assistants, waitresses and other workers in the USA). This suggests the need to locate our concerns within broader ethical debates about 'good work' and elsewhere, we confront broader theoretical and historical questions of what the conditions and experiences of contemporary cultural work mean for normative conceptions of labour in modern societies, and of whether autonomy and pleasure might be conceived ultimately as tools of control, encouraging self- exploitation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, forthcoming).

There is a further reason for considering cultural workers besides contributing to our knowledge of their conditions and experiences. Creative industries policy has strongly suggested that jobs in the cultural industries offer better experiences than those older jobs – partly through invocation of buzzwords such as 'creativity' and 'innovation' and that this partly justifies the use of public support to fund the expansion of these industries. It is only through a proper consideration of the experiences available to such workers that such policies can be assessed. As we explained in our discussion of methods, our aim is to use qualitative work to cast light on experiences and responses in the cultural industries. In so doing, we hope to complement the more generalisable findings generated by the quantitative studies referred to at the very beginning of this piece. The quality of working life available in this growing sector may not be as good as many would hope.

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# The presence of precarity Self-employment as contemporary form

Gesa Helms

## On work experience

The work done in academia was different to other types of work. Different certainly when compared to manual work but also to other 'professional' work. Indeed it was not labour as such but a vocation premised on creativity[1] and autonomy. For many of those working in the Higher Education (also HE) sector, either as graduate teaching assistants, postgraduate or postdoctoral researchers and permanent (and not merely open-ended) academic positions, statements such as these captured a set of assumptions about their work identities: the sense of fulfilling one's vocation was the unwritten part of the employment contract. It made a work culture based on long hours and insecurity somehow acceptable.

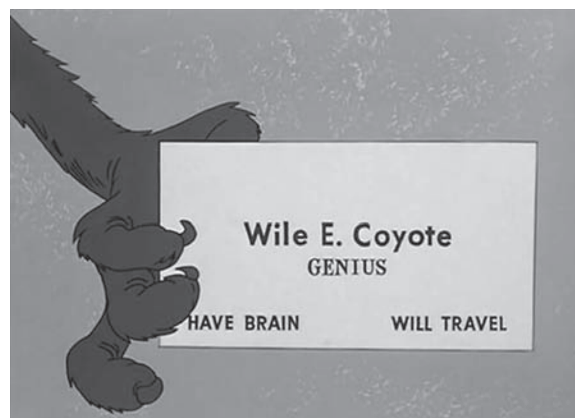
Looking at roughly fifteen years of my own work experience in German and UK Higher Education, I remember throughout it the recurrent discussions over work/life as aspiring academics. 'Getting there', admittedly, wasn't going to be easy. In the German case, the sector was difficult to enter, relying more often than not on the traditions of patronage. In the UK, there existed a relative abundance of entry position jobs but these were increasingly marked by poor contractual arrangements such as high teaching loads or 'casual' contracts that, e.g., existed only at department level and thus remained unrecognised by the University in terms of employment rights.

Despite these initial hurdles, those who persisted also persisted with talking of the rewards: of academic work as personal, meaningful and self-determined and not abstract, alienated and subsumed labour. This mystified talk remained a powerful and pervasive constant over the years. It remained intact despite growing reports over the impact of ever-more demanding Research Assessment Frameworks by which academic units and individuals therein were ranked according to their 'excellence' (in research and not in teaching or administration). It also remained intact in the face of ever more lectures and tutorials being taught on 9-months teaching-only contracts[2]. In the face of this, Neil Smith, in an early text on student and academic labour in the university, reminded us over ten years ago of the following observation by Marx:

> "... [A] schoolmaster is a productive labourer, when, in addition to belabouring the heads of his scholars, he works like a horse to enrich the school proprietor. That the latter has laid out his capital in a teaching factory, instead of a sausage factory, does not alter the relation."[3]

For this article I would like to examine more closely the implications, as they arise from particular types of work (such as academic work) as creative and autonomous: What does this assumed premise mean for the labour process? What does it mean for specific work practices? But also what are its implications for organising such particular types of work and the self-reflection that is a necessary condition for such organising?

My starting point is that of Higher Education labour. However, there is an important component of the above mythology that is shared by artists (for the purpose of this article I am consciously collapsing all those who conduct artistic labour as arts managers, co-ordinators, curators, consultants and advisors into this definition, deliberately taking artistic training as common principle) and academics alike: that of creative and autonomous




individuals in charge and in ownership of their creations. With this starting point in mind I discuss questions around labour process, practice and organising and – to a lesser extent – professional habitus and selfhood[4]. As current artistic professional practice increasingly equates itself with the fostering of creative entrepreneurs (insert 'social' at will), the question for artists, put more bluntly, becomes: how can we challenge the mythology of the entrepreneurial artist who can turn to anything and anything in turn turns to value?

## *Autonomia*, and the critique of immaterial production

The Italian *Operaismo* has provided one of the most important contributions in examining labour agency for the analysis of capitalism. Its confluence of political practice, theoretical work and political practice again such as through the organisations of *Potere Operaio*, the later *Autonomia Operaia* as well as the more diffuse *Autonomia*, as 'autonomy of the social' as it emerged during 1970s and in particular in the 1977 Movement is well documented and of renewed interest for current struggles.[5] They formed out of a cycle of intense struggles within and without the factories of Northern Italy in the 1960s and especially during the "hot autumn" of industrial unrest in 1968. At the heart of *Autonomia's* struggle, politically as well as conceptually, lay the extent to which class composition was no longer confined to the Fordist factory. The political calls for 'We want everything' or 'Let's take the city' of the 1960s and 1970s stand for precisely that.

> "We too have worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle."[6]

*Autonomia's* practice drew on concepts such as the social worker and the social factory. For the Autonomists, these concepts sought to understand a society where nothing was left outside capitalist

production. This subsumption signifies the process by which previously autonomous labour becomes integrated into the cycle of capitalist production as a social relation. Once complete, it signifies a process of 'internal colonisation' where

> "the whole of society becomes an articulation of production; in other words, the whole of society exists as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over the whole of society."[7]

Steve Wright in his discussion of the social factory continues:

> "While the subsumption of all social relations to capital brought with it the generalisation of the wage relation, the advancing proletarianisation of new social layers assumed a mystified form. 'When all of society is reduced to a factory, the factory – as such – seems to disappear', with it 'labour-power itself as commodity'."[8]

The political defeat of the Italian radical Left in 1977 is also well documented. The conceptual difficulties to understand and build on the changes of labour as a class during this time have re-emerged in the more recent interest in the Italian *Operaismo* and an assessment of its current relevance and potential. The scale of popularity of Hardt and Negri's cycle of Empire, Multitude and Commonwealth as well as Holloway's[9] writings for contemporary social movements speaks to this with a certain celebrity status. The continuity of political groups such as *Aufheben* and *Wildcat* speaks of years of political practice – such as militant enquiries.

> Self-employed labour thus presents an investment of one's entire human capital in order to make up for a fundamental lack: the lack of any organisational structure.

Much of the assessment centres on whether key concepts such as social factory, and even more so, those of the social worker, self-valorisation as well as that of immaterial labour are capable of furthering our understanding of contemporary political economy and to develop political strategies for the present. And while not wanting to replay these extensive debates I will briefly sketch out their relevance in relation to the autonomy of academic and artistic labour.

Maurizio Lazaratto[10] defines immaterial labour as labour concerned with the 'informational content' of commodities. Immaterial labour also

> "regards the activity that produces the 'cultural content' of the commodity, immaterial labor involves a series of activities that not normally recognized as 'work' – in other works, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion."

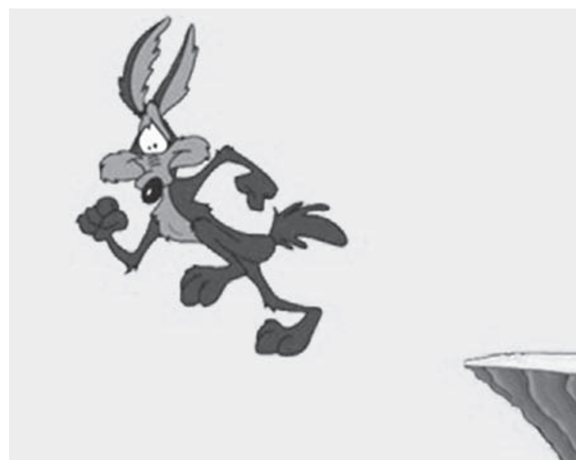
Hardt and Negri expand on this earlier discussion to include also affective labour as it takes place in the service sector. The discussions of Empire and Multitude concerned directly the role of immaterial labour and as such, these debates are several years old. However, a reconsideration of these is timely in the light of how entrepreneurial

creativity, the particularity of creative industries and the investment into these are becoming ever more commonplace in policy and practice. Even more so as notably in Scotland little critical or conceptual engagement takes place around the assumed panacea of a 'creative economy'.

Steve Wright's[11] critique of immaterial labour provides an important contribution for this reconsideration. He questions the assumption of its hegemony; points to the continuity of labour as labour, and to the circumstance that labour before the discovery of immaterial labour also relied crucially on its affective, emotive and cognitive elements (and that maybe only our discovery of this is what is new).

## Labour process 1 (The real subsumption of immaterial labour)

Yet, significant for understanding the limitations of the concept of immaterial labour is less its proclamation of novelty or even hegemony but how Hardt and Negri reject the role of value (i.e. the abstract labour contained in the commodity) for capitalist production. For them, "In immaterial production… the capitalist is increasingly redundant as the organiser of production and the one responsible for innovation".[12] Thus, they duly dispense with the antagonism of labour and capital and instead consider immaterial labour as the foundation of a society without capitalists. The capitalist system thus nicely, quietly even, abolishes itself, alongside history. What they rightly talk about is the circumstance that in capitalism, like in no other form of society, "labour itself produces the means for other labour and production… traditional Marxism called this the 'socialisation of labour'."[13] Yet, rather than representing the arrival of utopia, this logic is premised on divestment, taking place beyond our control or will as workers. The labour of earlier work is in fact 'dead labour', it is no longer ours nor active (to be drawn on at will) but in the process of socialisation has become part of capital. In its dead form, which is 'lost to us', labour comes to face us objectively as part of a capitalist social relation that ensures our ongoing bind to and exploitation by the production process.



Lazaratto's[14] examination of agency for immaterial workers provides a first insight into its limitations. The call to 'become a subject' at the workplace was less of an invitation to express oneself creatively in the midst of post-Fordist restructuring but instead a highly authoritarian demand issued by management: to express oneself meant to take responsibility. Production cycles premised on such subjectivity take place right across society and are no longer confined to the factory. They draw on a wide range of work skills to manage social relations and elicit co-operation. Often project-based, immaterial labour is marked by precarity and the production of contemporary subjectivities where:

"[b]ehind the label of the independent 'self-employed' worker, what we actually find is an intellectual proletarian, but is recognized as such only be the employers who exploit him or her."[15]

Furthermore:

"It is worth mentioning that in this kind of working existence it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish leisure time from work time. In a sense, life becomes inseparable from work."[16]

While Lazaratto provides a prising open of the antagonism between capital and labour that may well be specific to the immaterial worker and thus can provide leverage for autonomy and also sabotage, *Aufheben* caution strongly against a naïve hopefulness for the multitude of immaterial labour: the problem resides in a dangerous misunderstanding of (a) the objectification that takes place in a capitalist society; and (b) the subjectification that characterises this specific division of labour. Thus, immaterial labour – as an imposed form of capitalist production – is not to be fostered, promoted or celebrated but indeed to be overcome. Thus, the antagonism that Lazaratto identifies above requires recognition and strategic appropriation. Yet, this can not be done by simply doing more, better, faster, shinier immaterial labour in the false assumption that this labour already presented a set of social relations that was 'beyond capitalism', without capitalist producers and their exploitation (see also Anthony Iles and Marina Vishmidt in this issue who explore further the inabilities of immaterial labour).

While marked by precarity, for many artists, and for increasingly more of those working in HE, much in these types of labour offered a fair amount of interest, diversion, autonomy and creativity. The relative absence of the pain and boredom that is characteristic for the experience of subsumed labour has led to overheard conversations (as recent as March 2011) among academic staff who "couldn't see the point of strike in their privileged position as their activity didn't really constitute 'work'"; or who "didn't need payment for conference travels as these really were holidays". Here, taste and privilege mark for once the relative class privilege that originates from self-identification with the educated middle-classes or bourgeoisie. It also justifies the particular division of labour into creative/autonomous 'non'-work and shitwork.

The working conditions of what is not considered work have begun to rapidly unravel over the past year: immaterial labour at the university is revealing its pain, boredom (even if only in the repetitiveness of external income or publication targets, which again remain outwith reach in one's continuing over-workedness) and in fact as pretty shit work, where UK permanent academic staff also only have a job security of three months should senior management decide on one's own redundant status.

## The presence of precarity. Self-employment as contemporary form

The preceding section has situated immaterial labour firmly within a capitalist social relation and a specific labour process that – albeit in different processes and forms – subsumes immaterial labour as it does material labour.

This article begun with an alignment between artistic and academic labour in their shared belief in creative and autonomous practices and work identity formation. The moment of difference between these labour processes (though recognising variations therein) lies in their form of practice and organisation: academic labour to a large extent takes place within a major institutional form of the public university that increasingly pursues entrepreneurial aims. And while conditions of contract, working time and employment rights are being attacked for permanent staff in addition to those in that ever-expanding part of academic work on 'atypical contracts', it is nonetheless a sector with traditional union organising and representation and wage employment.

Angela Mitropoulos[17] argues how in fact the absence of precarity and a hegemony of regular work presents an historical as well as geographical exception. Her argument is that not only has

"the experience of work in capitalism [...], for the most part, been intermittent, without guarantee of a future income, without punctual limit and, oftentimes, without income at all. Indeed, regular, full-time and secure work, where it did exist, depended upon the organisation and maintenance of precarious conditions for the vast majority of the world's population."

…it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish leisure time from work time. In a sense, life becomes inseparable from work.

Thus, for her, the existence of precariousness is in fact the capitalist norm. This recognition of precarity as 'business as usual' engenders a particular politics and organising – rather distinct from those around immaterial labour, to which I will turn later on.

Sergio Bologna, whose Tribe of Moles (1977) has provided to this day one of the most insightful accounts and analyses of the struggles of the *Autonomia*, dismissed twenty years ago the debates over immaterial labour as "a 'myth' that more than anything else obscures the lengthening of the working day."[18] For Bologna, the inability of the *Autonomia* to understand fully the new kind of class composition that took over from the factory workers of the 1960s has led him to focus on what he calls the second generation of self-employed workers (in Italy) from the late 1970s onwards.[19] He argues for a qualitatively different form of wage labour. He is also, however, clear that this does not transcend capitalist production, and leaves little doubt at the illusion of freedom that is commonly attested to the *free*-lancer.[20] Per immaterial labour (as many of his self-employed subjects' work is that of service provision) the social relations on which a wage labour contract is premised are changed - to the effect of individualising risk (by withdrawing a guarantee for subsistence).

Over the subsequent sections I am drawing on several of his eleven theses (originally, ten written in 1997 plus another, extended, one added in 2005) on self-employment.[21]

## Labour practice (Relationality)

A task, if conducted as wage labour, is bound by organisational rules. These rules premise the task on particular methods or codified knowledge. If this task is conducted freelance it can and in fact has to draw on the entirety of knowledge, experience and skill of the self-employed worker. Thus, every single time, the task takes on a

different form to its previous one.

Already visible in this non-standardisation of freelance work, the particular content of communicative and relational activities that have to be mobilised establish self-employed labour as fundamentally different from wage labour.[22] Self-employed labour thus presents an investment of one's entire human capital in order to make up for a fundamental lack: the lack of any organisational structure. In this sense, Bologna points to the contradiction in itself of considering self-employed workers as entrepreneurs or one-person companies – due to the lack of organisational infrastructure no one can realistically 'go into business for oneself'. This recognition is highly relevant in the context of debates over artist unions: are they servicing – guild-like – associations or organising unions? What does this mean for questions over economic (rather than moral) solidarity? I will return to these questions later on. Crucially, the majority of these relational activities remain 'unproductive' and hidden: the hours spent on the phone, in making contacts and maintaining these.

## Labour process 2 (Risk and the form of the wage)

The valorisation of one's self in the relational labour practices outlined above already points to the extent to which 'non-normative lifestyles' have become productive and valorised. More acutely, however, is the extent to which this presents, as Angela Mitropoulos[23] calls it, the "transformation of risk into profit, the re-impositions of limits through contract, and the restoration of productivist (and reproductivist) norms through intimate self-management." What is happening here is no less than "the systematic displacement of capitalism's risks and crises onto households…".

As Bologna[24] observes, a remuneration that is characterised by payment of an invoice no longer achieves the status of a guarantee of subsistence but remains a simple payment subject only to tax law. And while this insecurity may be anticipated for a start-up or occasional freelance work, Bologna observes that it is in the consolidation phase of self-employed workers where the biggest problems of insecurity and risk are emerging. Notably driven by the demands of markets to accept every potential client, the control over free time decreases steadily.[25]

Both, Mitropoulos and Bologna are clear that the 'pursuit of non-conformist lifestyles' as well as the 'refusal of the assembly lines' are based in social changes. As Bologna expresses it, the risk of self-employment was readily accepted by the 'no future' generation where a desperate and short-term view on life prevailed. Recent explorations into offering loans and credit-schemes specifically for artists in Scotland take these risks further – accompanied by the dictum that 'risk is designed to enhance the creative process', as expressed by the Chief Executive of Creative Scotland during the course of his interview for this issue. The workshop on Loans for Art Organisations at the Art+Labour event organised by *Variant* and *Making A Living (MAL)* at Glasgow's CCA, provided a suitable fact-finding mission as to the difficulties of recouping debt and reassigning it as subsidies in the case of the Catalonian Government.[26]

## Labour organising (The question of economic solidarity)

One outcome of the ways in which labour practice and process of self-employment valorises no commodities but the self-employed worker herself lies in an easily-observable behaviour across academia and the arts: the practices of secrecy and guarding one's own expertise, and the mystification of processes of production, sources and contacts as all these are regarded as crucial to one's own value. In Bologna's words,

"we are witnessing a 'becoming clandestine' of skills. The self-employed workers become individuals of a drama by Molière, jealously and meanly guarding their microscopic secret knowledge."[27]

When faced with the rising degrees of risk and insecurity, a reconsideration of paid employment becomes increasingly attractive. Yet, here also has the ongoing neo-liberalisation undone so many of the contractual rights of a subsistence that was embedded in a wage contract. Thus, the question arises: Do we not need forms of solidarity to safeguard self-employed workers' rights? Bologna emphasises the right to strike as the key to understand capitalist social relations and the democratic constitution of society. He also points rightly to the extent to which the institutionalisation and integration of this right into the workplace has also historically proven to be the most effective way of defusing the explosiveness of the threat of strike action when it is not merely symbolic. The events around the demonstrations in London on March 26th 2011 and the 'deviations' from a legitimated and symbolic march provide illustration to that point and the continuing difficulties of the unions to recognise the weakness of symbols alone.[28]

In current forms of organisation, self-employed workers are dispersed across social space and rather clearly aware of the need to demonstrate utility (be it for the *Big Society* or for the extensive disciplinary roles that early 21st century social control has to offer: artists in prisons or trainers in HE skills frameworks) alongside an impressive amount of competition for doing so. Reducing the wage relation to a matter of tax law rather than an institutionally embedded right also allows for demands only to be made retrospectively through court action. Upon surveying these conditions, Bologna regards the oldest (and weakest) form of economic solidarity through mutuality and guild-like associations as the one for the self-employed to fall back on, or rather, to begin with.

The forms of co-operation and solidarity that can arise from self-employment remain to be probed further. This will need to involve an exploration of self-organisation – in the form of artist-run spaces (that don't take the form of career collectives[29]) as well as current forms of alternative education spaces. Bologna[30] raises the problems with the principle of demand by outlining how the demand that is made within traditional bargaining processes has little relevance for the labour form of self-employment. The 'something else' he calls for remains without further specification; into his placeholder I would like to insert, if only temporarily, the 'Occupy everything, Demand nothing' that is running through the current UK anti-cuts and education protests, as it did previously through other (student) movements as a similar questioning of well-worn demand rituals.[31]

## Attempting the present

Bologna enquires into the new modalities of labour in the present while being attentive to the continuities and insecurities that are transferred onto self-employed subjects. His study takes us some way towards unravelling some of the myths

around creativity and autonomy in immaterial labour (be it as artists or academics). The starting point for his investigations into the practice and politics of self-employment were those of his own precarisation after having lost access to his tenured post as university professor in the wake of the retributions of the Italian state in the late 1970s. Self-employment, for him, as well as the 'discovery' of a precariat for those with cultural capital in the 1990s, was based on personal experience; an experience which contradicted the beliefs and stories told before about 'one's place' that are so powerful for the bourgeoisie's engagement with the academy. This observation about self-interest but also the precarisation of the

> This needs to take serious class recomposition and the devolution of risk to those subjects previously cushioned and sheltered by relative class-privilege.

bourgeoisie is an important one: it is important for our understanding of class and class subjecthood. This understanding needs to take serious class recomposition and as such the devolution of risk to those subjects previously cushioned and sheltered by relative class-privilege.

I am also raising this point since it requires a calling into question of assumed understandings of class divisions between a culture of (UK) middle classes and working classes. These remain unfortunately too often anything but new in the studies of working class lives and firmly rely on the examination of cultural preference if not socio-economic class indices. Instead, going back to a Marxist understanding of class in relation to the means of production and ownership of these allow us to consider that drinking latte, flat whites or similar may not determine one's class belonging. Consequently, a dismissal of self-employment, or rather freelancing, as the territories of the middle-classes (i.e. *not* working classes) does not take us very far if we fail to consider how such 'autonomy' of self-employment is indeed firmly woven into a process of subsumed labour.

Here, the observation that the modalities of real subsumption have changed – and now have taken on the forms of labour which in earlier decades seemed bracketed off as professional work – resonates with Angela Mitropoulos's[32] writing on precariousness and risk management. She asserts that capitalists were forced "to resort to precarisation so as to renew accumulation and re-impose discipline and control" as a result of social

and migration movements but also a rejection of factory work and the nuclear family. She continues that,

"[t]his is why analyses and political struggles around precarity are often in danger of re-asserting the politics of Fordism – not in any actual material sense, since the conditions which made that possible have long been surpassed by various struggles, but as the resurgence of affective attachments to conservative agendas, as the aspiration for transcendental securitisation, whether theological, militaristic, or as a combination of both."[33]

## Openings

Immaterial labour is premised on a particular division of labour and indeed the emergence of immaterial production. The reasons for creative workers choosing arts or academics choosing the academy lie also in the belief that this particular labour feels less alienated, that subsumption of labour is less of an issue than elsewhere. To reiterate, the problem with this approach is twofold. Firstly, the particular division based on creative work and shitwork means there is plenty of shitwork to go round. The discovery of precarity came at a point when HE graduates were also recruited into shitwork and thus an externalisation of bad working conditions could no longer be upheld. Secondly, both forms of labour are part of a process whereby dead labour (in past or present) is subsumed into capitalist production. Consequently, subsumption and alienation are experienced across these forms of work.

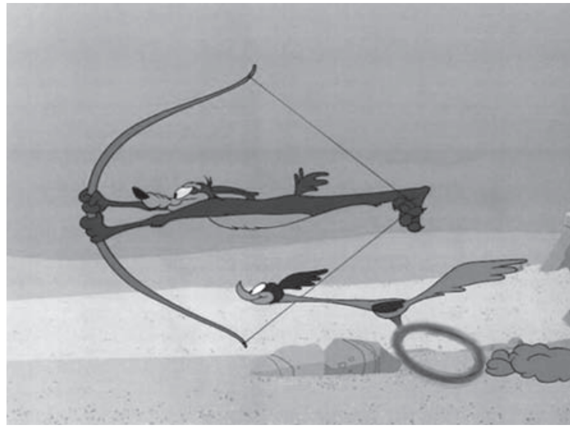
Taking on board *Aufheben's* considered and sustained critique of immaterial labour it has become evident that there is no point in arguing for more immaterial labour as a way of forcing the antagonism between labour and capital if immaterial labour itself is an already subsumed form of labour. It indeed needs to be overcome. In order to do so, I have argued in this article (along with others) that a first necessary step is an enquiry into the forms under which contemporary labour is produced and subsumed. The social or diffuse factory as one of *Autonomia's* concepts made some of these arguments. The value of Hardt and Negri in popularising these in recent years may only lie in engaging critically with Empire, Multitude and Commonwealth to carefully prise open their many flaws.

As proposition for such enquiry into contemporary forms of labour I have drawn on Sergio Bologna's studies on the particular form of self-employment. The insights offered in his work in regard to labour practice, process and organising can be harnessed to ward off claims to individual career-making, thrift and aspirations as 'best practice' of artistic professional development. They can also provide an opening for discussion and strategy that is attentive to the specificity of contemporary (not to call it immaterial) production with a focus on the particular social relations it engenders and to be attentive to continuities to earlier forms of production.

This is important now – as ever – at a moment when personal insecurity, fear and frustration over the limitations that immaterial labour poses for oneself are more easily becoming visible as precisely such social relations within an economy that is premised on our dead labour – be it labour as 'creative' work or shitwork.

"Bourdieu and Castell[s] [as public intellectuals of the Left] have spoken of the danger of a disintegration of the social network. They were probably thinking 'with yearning' of the old concept of solidarity between work colleagues, between people who go the same way to work every day, ... in other words, a micro-society in which the clock regulates the working day like a bell in an monastery. ... What seems to me questionable is the idea that is sometimes implicit in such descriptions: that solidarity grows up naturally in the case of 'normal' wage earners, while egoistic, individualistic behavior is the sole domain of the self-employed. This is true neither of the past nor of today. Solidarity has always been a political process, has always been the effect of education. (...)

That is why I do not yearn for the good old days. They have gone for ever. We should rather be worried about our inability to depict the present. That is the real disintegration, the disintegration of a culture that is no longer in a position to illustrate present-day labor or to give an account of it..."[34]



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### Notes

1. Creativity – in academic circles frequently talked of with hopefulness: to be original, innovative and energetic, creative researchers have found their way into the skills agenda for researcher development. The link – and with it the absurdity of this hopefulness – to a creative industry (or knowledge industry) remains wilfully under-researched. Thus, we have to look at the critical politics of artistic practice for an undoing of the panacea of creativity. For this article, a reference to Olma (2007) and his discussion of a conference on creative industries in Amsterdam will have to suffice as an overview of the controversies; in the following 'creativity' is employed as part of academic mythology.
2. A challenge to this mythology, however, is being undertaken by US-American 'adjunct staff' with their protest over working conditions as the casualised academic workforce without tenure (Jaschik, 2011). There also exists an ever-expanding literature of personal blogs of people leaving or staying in North American Higher Education, such as the *Because: a Manifesto* and responses to it (paraphernalian, 2011; justbeinglacey, 2011).
3. Karl Marx 1867, quoted in Smith, 2000: 330.
4. There is no doubt that the institutional conditions of academic and artistic labour are often very different. The former in the context of a large public employer, the latter almost exclusively operating on the basis of a self-employed workforce. And still, there is fraying at the edges: the types and conditions of contract that become common place in UK teaching and research are defined as 'atypical'; consultants operating freelance within areas of skills and employability; artists are rarely artists alone but also health and social workers, curators, advisors and consultants with various types of contractual arrangements. A closer enquiry into these differences is for another piece of work while this article takes the shared identities of personal vocation in academic and artistic labour as common ground.
5. E.g., Cuninghame, 1995; Birkner and Foltin, 2006; Cleaver, 2002; Frombeloff, 1993; Holloway, 2005; Negri, 1991; Tronti, 1971.
6. Tronti, 1979: 1.
7. Tronti, 1971: 51f.
8. Wright, 2002: 38, quoting Tronti 1971.
9. Holloway, 2005, 2010.
10. Lazaratto, 1996: 133.
11. Wright, 2005.
12. *Aufheben*, 2006: 31.
13. *Ibid.*: 32.
14. Lazaratto, 1996.
15. *Ibid.*: 137f.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Mitropoulos, 2010: 1.
18. Bologna, 1992, cited in Wright, 2005.
19. Most of this work is published in Italian, with a number of texts also translated into German (Bologna worked in Germany for a length of time in the 1980s). Besides the translation of *Tribe of Moles* and a few other texts, there are also various interviews with him available in English.
20. Bologna, 2006: 110.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*: 10.
23. Mitropoulos, 2010: 4.
24. Bologna, 2006: 27.
25. *Ibid.*: 38f.
26. A translation of relevant Spanish newspaper articles can be found at <http://www.variant.org.uk/events/art+labour/CatalanLoan.pdf>
27. Bologna, 2006: 36, translation by author.
28. See the text by Escalate (2011)
29. KRAX CARGO, 2008.
30. Bologna, 2006: 113.
31. See also <http://libcom.org/forums/theory/demand-nothing-25062010> for more on 'demand nothing'.
32. Mitropoulos, 2010: 3.
33. See Helms, Vishmidt and Berlant (2010) for a further discussion of such affective attachments and investments.
34. The quote continues: "…as people like Studs Terkel or Martin Glabermann have done in their writings on the multinational working class in the USA" (Ronneberger and Schöllhammer, 2004).

# The Intangibilities of Form

## John Roberts

*The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*
John Roberts

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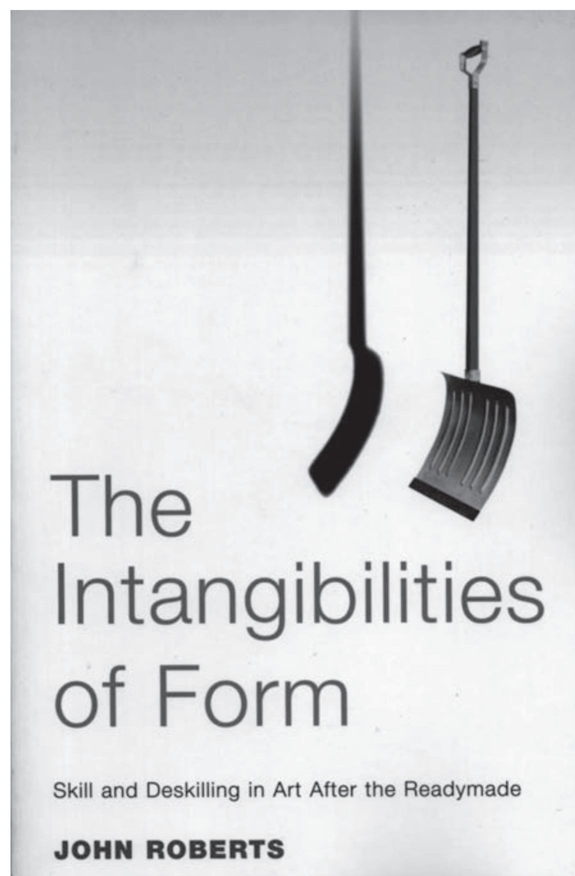
### Preface

This book elaborates a labour theory of culture as a model for explaining the dynamics of avant-garde art and the modern expansion of the circuits of artistic authorship. In this the writing involves less a discussion about specific artworks (or their interpretation), than an analysis of the kinds of labour contained *in* artworks, as a reflection on a wider debate about artistic labour and productive and non-productive labour and the limits and possibilities of authorship. Why is it that artistic labour is taken to be an exemplary form of human activity and, as such, is judged by some writers to be the basis for the emancipation of all labour? How have productive labour and non-productive labour impacted on the production of avant-garde art challenging traditional accounts of aesthetic value and expression? Adorno's critique of aesthetic theory charted a similar philosophical terrain in the 1960s, but in *Aesthetic Theory* (1970) specific categories of labour were never made expressly visible in relation to the visual artwork, just as the relations between productive labour and artistic labour were kept at a distance. In *The Intangibilities of Form*, I have made these relations explicit, by insisting that it is impossible to explain the ideals of the early avant-garde without stressing the overwhelming importance artists have placed on *how* they have laboured, in contradistinction to, or identification with, how they perceived others (non-artists) labouring.

For the early avant-garde – as much as for the post-Second World War neo-avant-gardes down to the present – the identification or misidentification with various forms of productive and non-productive labour has determined what kind of function and use-values art might best possess in order to secure its critical identity or autonomy. This process is reflected from the 1920s onwards, of course, in the increasing withdrawal of the notion of artistic value from the mimetic capacity of the expressive hand in painting and sculpture. With the rise of the readymade there emerged an irreconcilable displacement of the link between handcraft and skill. This initiated a huge explosion in revolutionary thinking about the social form of art beyond the artisanal production of the conventional studio. As the artisanal became dissociated from the category of art, authorship came more and more to incorporate both the *non-artistic hands of others* and the development of mechanical/technical and executive artistic skills. Indeed, the use of non-artistic labour in the form of delegated work or the incorporation of productive labour in the form of the readymade defines the broader political horizons of the early avant-garde: the dissolution of the division between intellectual labour and manual labour as the basis for the future dissolution of art into social praxis. For example, Productivism emphasized the assimilation of the worker into the artist and the artist into the worker in order to transform the alienated character of both, just as Constructivism stressed the importance of the need for the artist to incorporate the technical results of productive labour into artistic practice if art was to find a place beyond its own alienated aestheticism.

This displacement or dispersal of the artist's hand into forms of heteronomous labour is the radical disjunction at the heart of modern practice after the readymade, and, as such, is what distinguishes the modern from the pre-modern: the fact that at the point of the dissolution of its traditional forms art invites both productive and non-productive labour into its realm as a means of




reflecting on the conditions of both art *and* labour under capitalist relations. The introduction of the readymade into art, in this respect, represents the impact of a more fundamental set of cultural changes: the increasing interaction between artistic skills and the social relations and material forms of technology (artistic *technik*) under the increasing incorporation of technology and science into production (general social technique). This raises an important methodological question: what kind of theory of authorship do we want after the displacement of the author from the centre of his or her artisanal labours in the twentieth century? One in which the decentred author is returned to art history merely 'intertextualised' within a history of artistic styles, or, one in which artistic authorship as an 'open ensemble of competences and skills' is grounded in the division of labour and the *dialectic of skill–deskilling–reskilling*? This distinction is crucial because, despite the general cultural assimilation of the avant-garde and acceptance of the readymade in contemporary practice, there is much intellectual confusion about what constitutes skill in art after the readymade and the critique of productive labour and art in the early avant-garde. If today there is a notional acceptance that the readymade, and later Conceptual art, have irreversibly changed the value of what artists do, there is little understanding about why – on the basis of the alignment between artistic technique and general social technique – this is the case, and therefore, a limited understanding of why deskilling in art after the readymade does not represent an *absolute* loss of artistic sensuousness.

General social technique – as the dominant framework of art's technological reproducibility and distribution – subordinates handcraft to technique; in this it follows the law of the real subsumption of labour. Yet, because art is not wholly subject to the law of value (to the discipline of the technical division of labour and necessary labour time), the subordination of handcraft to technique does not result in the stripping out of skill from art in the same way sensuous artisanal skills have been stripped out of productive labour since the nineteenth century. The absence or presence of skill in art, therefore, is not derivable from a model of handcraft *as such*, because art does not experience an incremental process of deskilling which leaves producers at a lower level of capability than previously attained, otherwise we would only be able to designate certain kinds of handcrafted objects as art. Deskilling in art, rather, is the name we might give to the *equalization of artistic technique after art enters the realm of general social technique.* In other words, deskilling is what happens when the expressive unity of hand and eye is *overridden* by the conditions of social and technological reproducibility; it is not a value judgement about what is or what is not skilful according to normative criteria about art as painterly or sculptural craft. Accordingly, the split between artistic labour and the conventional craft-based signs of authorship which follows from this split, necessarily links artistic skill in late capitalist culture to a conception of artistic labour as immaterial production. *Artistic skills find their application in the demonstration of conceptual acuity, not in the execution of forms of expressive mimeticism.*

However, this immaterial definition of artistic labour is not reducible to a practice of speculative 'thinking' as if art was simply cognate *with* scientific and philosophical discourse or the Beauty of Spontaneous Ideas – the mistake made by some early advocates of Conceptual art and the mistake made by much digital and telematic art theory today. The readymade may have stripped art of its artisanal content, but this does not mean that art is now a practice without the hands of the artist and without craft. On the contrary, art's emancipatory possibilities lie in how the hand is put to work *within*, and by, general social technique (and therefore in relation to the techniques of copying and reproducibility), and not through the subordination of the hand to such techniques. This is because the hand still remains key to the 'aesthetic re-education' and emancipation of productive and non-productive labour. This is why I stress the importance of the emergent totipotentiality or multifunctionality of the hand in artistic labour in contrast to the operative hand in productive and non-productive labour. As the mediator of *best practice*, the emergent totipotentiality of the hand remains central to the social destruction of the real subsumption of labour and the technical division of labour in any post-capitalist system. Without the qualitative transformation of the relations of production the hands of productive and non-productive labourers will continue to be subordinate to the machine, even when machines are taken into collective ownership – as the history of Stalinism amply demonstrates.

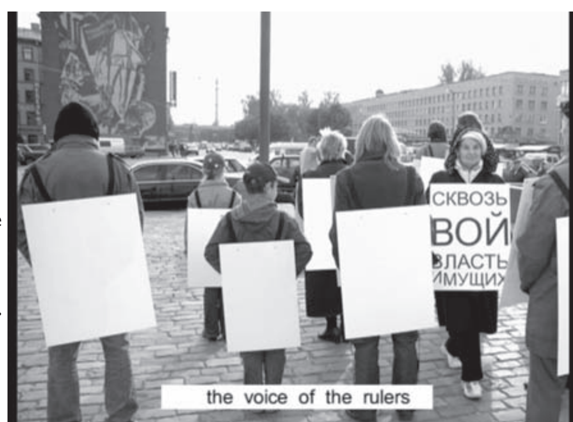
This argument seems to me to be in keeping with the central emancipatory thrust of Marx's *Capital* and the anti-technist wing of the Marxist tradition: the necessity for an aesthetic critique of the value-form. But the agency of the emancipatory content of emergent totipotentiality is not another name for the 'aesthetic'. That is, the agency of this emancipation is not secured simply through an imposition of aesthetic labour onto heteronomous, productive labour. This is a form of art-led idealism, inherent to many kinds of aestheticized politics, on both the left and right. Autonomy, rather, has to enter the realm of heteronomous labour through heteronomous labour's (workers') own collective agency. It is only when productive and non-productive labourers refuse to labour – and, as a result, the value-form is dissolved, thereby opening up a self-reflective space for 'aesthetic-thinking' – that the emergent totipotentiality of artistic labour will truly be able to enter productive relations and be able to transform the heteronomous conditions of labour and everyday praxis. In this way, by emphasizing the production of art within a dialectic of skill and deskilling the defence of artistic value is divested of its common confusion with traditional forms of painterly and sculptural sensuousness. Indeed, the virtue of the dialectic of skill and deskilling in thinking about art after the readymade and Conceptual art is that the problems of making and talking about art are grounded in the indivisibility of technical issues and social questions. This is

why there is such a general air of melancholia in much contemporary art criticism and art history, radical or otherwise (Benjamin Buchloh, T.J. Clark, Thierry de Duve, Hal Foster), because there is an overwhelming attachment in this writing to loss of affect in front of the artwork at the expense of any deeper understanding of the technical conditions of modern and contemporary practice. This book refuses this melancholia – at the same time as refusing any of its plaintive or affirmative 'others' – by insisting on the interrelationality of skill and deskilling (or what I call the craft of reproducibility as opposed to say, craft *and* reproducibility), before we can embark on a discussion of value. This distinction is the difference between seeing art history and cultural theory as disciplines where artistic practice is theorized primarily in relation to the social histories of 'expression' and 'style', with all the concomitant problems of historicism, and seeing artistic form in relation to the social and intellectual division of labour. Consequently, this book establishes another topology for modern and contemporary art: one in which artworks, after the readymade and the craft of reproducibility, become focal-points for the redefinition of skill within a socially expanded understanding of the circuits of authorship. My primary concern in *The Intangibilities of Form*, therefore, is with the process of deskilling and reskilling as it bears on the exchange and collaboration between artistic labour and non-artistic labour, artistic hands and non-artistic hands.

In the introduction [*Replicants and Cartesians*], I explore artistic technique and general social technique in relation to the issues of reproduction, reproducibility and copying. I then expand on this in a discussion of Duchamp, the readymade and the commodity, Duchamp's work providing an important range of reflections on artistic labour and authorship. On the basis of Duchamp's reading of his early unassisted or stand-alone readymades as sites of 'rendezvous' between conflictual or opposed concepts (such as complex labour and simple labour, artistic labour and productive labour), we are able to examine how his work opened up new circuits of authorship to the artist. This reading of Duchamp as a theorist of artistic labour differentiates my position from much of the new Duchampian scholarship, with its emphasis on Duchamp as an artist of consumption. In my reading Duchamp is always an artist of production.

The second half of the book examines the expansion of art's circuits of authorship after the readymade has been internalized, so to speak, as 'first practice' in art after the 1960s and the rise of Conceptual art. In this respect this half of the book offers a more generalized picture of where artistic labour and non-artistic labour are conjoined in post-Conceptual and contemporary practice, and what distinguishes the labour of the contemporary neo-avant-garde artwork from the early avant-garde artwork. What function does the dialectic of deskilling and reskilling perform in art after the immaterial transformations of productive and non-productive labour and the expansion of intellectual labour in art? What are the dynamics between art and general social technique today in conditions of the age of the hyper-museum? Is there an actual convergence between the immaterial skills of post-Conceptual art practice and the immaterial labour of some sectors of the new economy? And, if so, how does this form of the skilling–deskilling dialectic equate with the circuits of authorship developed in the early avant-garde? These are substantive questions, particularly as classical notions of autonomy in art have come under further scrutiny in the epoch of art's digital temporalization and post-visual transformation into social technique.

In short *The Intangibility of Form* reinstates the dialectic of deskilling–reskilling in art as a way of explaining why the question of authorship has been so fundamental to avant-garde art and neo-avant-garde in the twentieth century. For, without addressing this dialectic the avant-garde remains incomprehensible as a revolutionary critique of both art and productive labour. The first part of this revolutionary critique is, no doubt, more believable today than the latter part, given the present utopianism of the aesthetic critique of productive labour. But, nevertheless, the emancipatory horizons of this critique continue to assert themselves in both political philosophy and artistic practice. This makes my claims for the centrality of the deskilling–reskilling dialectic less obdurate than might first appear. For even in a period of extraordinary corporate control of culture, and the heightened efflorescence of the capitalist sensorium, the effects of this critique continue to form the political horizons of artistic practice in all kinds of public and subterranean ways. Art's critique of political economy shapes the content of practices in many surprising directions and in many surprising places. As such, *The Intangibility of Form* is not only concerned with recovering a history of the hidden labours of the artwork, but also with setting this history in the context of the critical demands of the moment.



*Right: Angry Sandwichpeople or In Praise of Dialectics* (2005), video stills, Chto delat? (Tsaplya, Oleynikov and Vilensky). chtodelat.org

Opposite page: Chto Delat? newspaper 03-27 'Great Method' to take away at their 'Chronicles of Perestroika' (2009) installation at the 11 Istanbul Biennale and part of the Chto Delat project 'Experiences of Perestroika. What does it mean to lose?' (2008-2009).

## Introduction: Replicants and Cartesians

In the 1980s the debate on simulacra, copying, surrogacy and authenticity dominated Anglo-American art discourse. There was a widespread assumption that claims to subjective expression and aesthetic originality on the part of the artist were a myth, a delusional hangover from the Cartesian fantasy of the 'inner self' as an authentic expressive self. Since the 1920s and the social claims of the early avant-garde the continual expansion of technology into art's relations of production made it increasingly difficult to equate normative value in art with such claims. Touch and manual dexterity had lost their place as markers of artistic taste and authority. As such, the artist was no longer seen as a self-confirming 'creator', but as a synthesizer and manipulator of extant signs and objects. What largely united these earlier anti-Cartesian moves was a theory of montage as social praxis. Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Alexander Rodchenko, EI Lissitzky, John Heartfield, Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann, all saw themselves, essentially, as artistic *constructors* and *fabricators*. As Hausmann declared: 'We call this process photomontage because it embodied our refusal to play the role of artist. We regarded ourselves as engineers, and our work as construction: we *assembled* [in French: *monteur*] our work, like a fitter.'[1] In the 1960s and 1970s, this, in turn, was taken to be part of a deeper historical shift in the subjectivity of the artist: the dissolution of the creative *singularity* of the (male) artist. The post-gendered monteur was now merely an ensemble of techniques, functions and competences. In the 1980s much critical art and much art theory under the banners of postmodernism and post-structuralism was produced within this framework.

Today this sense of a 'paradigm shift' is the commonplace stuff of postmodern history and theories of the 'end of modernism', taught in art schools and art history and cultural studies departments in Europe and North America. Where once the expressive skills of the (male) artist were existentially inflated, now they are deconstructively deflated. Indeed, the critique of authorship is now the template of contemporary neo-Conceptual art and post-object aesthetics from Glasgow to Manila. Yet, despite this would-be theoretical displacement of the artist from the privileged scene of his or her production, the issues of simulacra, copying, surrogacy, virtuality and the readymade remain largely one-dimensional in art theory and contemporary

cultural theory. This is because the theoretical moment of the debate on authorship in the 1980s has come down to us through a discourse of apocalyptic anti-humanism, unnuanced anti-aestheticism and undialectical social categories. The effect is to reduce the critique of authorship either to the 'end-game' reproduction of preexisting artistic moments or styles, or to an eclecticized intertextuality. As a consequence the critical agency of the artist's labour has become diminished or flattened out, as if the critique of authorship was equivalent to the *end* of representation, the *end* of art, the *end* of meaning, and the *end* of subjectivity. But, unfortunately, this simplistic historical elision is what has usually stood for thinking in art schools and cultural studies departments in the 1980s and 1990s, dominated as they were by versions of post-structuralist simulation theory and deconstructionism.

Yet, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, strong claims for the 'post-expressive' artist as a kind of art-replicant (exemplified, in particular, by the hyper-simulationist Sherrie Levine) have largely subsided. The end of artistic subjectivity and authenticity, once associated with simulationist kinds of art, no longer seems so radical or meaningful as the crisis over uniqueness has become quiescent in the wake of the increasing acceptance of a 'soft' intertextual model of creativity within many leading teaching institutions and museums.[2] Moreover, there is a broad realization amongst a new generation of artists confronted with the realities of the studio and beyond – rather than the comforts of the seminar room – that the tasks of representation and artistic form don't end simply because they are assumed, theoretically, to have ended. As such, hyper-simulationism has come to be seen less as the ideological impeachment of all other art, than an end-game *style* akin to 1970s monochrome painting, which is why Levine herself soon retreated from the extreme implications of her work. In many respects the problems facing the hyper-simulationists and 'extreme appropriationists' were no different from those experienced by certain Conceptual artists in the early 1970s hooked on the nomination of non-artistic entities and realia as art: by transforming a contingent critical move into a grand repetitive strategy the critique of authorship became dogmatic and naturalized.

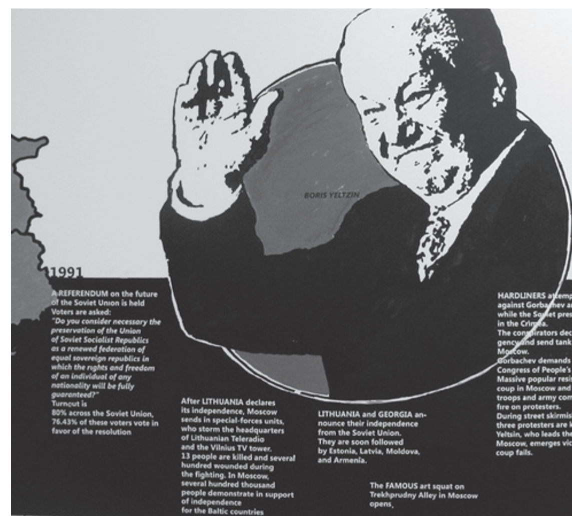
Nevertheless, questions of appropriation, copying, replication, simulation, and so on, have become the necessary terrain on which art after Conceptual art continues to pursue its sceptical skills. There is no value (or critique of value) in art without these forms of scrutiny. Indeed, since the high point of 'appropriationist art' in the early 1980s, a generation of artists have taken this as a 'given' and have largely internalized some notion of the artist as technician, monteur, ideas-manager, constructor, etc. This is why, despite the recurrence of various defences of 'aesthetics', the humanist exaltation of 'self-expression' continues to be theoretically marginalised – at least in the leading academic and cultural institutions, to the rancour of cultural conservatives and leftist philosophers of aesthetics alike. Furthermore, the notion of the artist as a monteur in the broad sense is now one of the key moves identifiable with the dissolution of the boundaries between fashion, style and art in our consumerist-led culture. Many younger artists see their identity as linked to the execution of tasks across formal, cultural and spatial boundaries. Commitment to one method of production or form of distribution, one set of cognitive materials, one outlook, is decried. One of the consequences of this is the emergence of a historically novel tension between a received (and depoliticized) older notion of the avant-garde critique of authorship, and the reinvention of the artist as creative entrepreneur (under the increased glare of celebrity culture).[3] This produces an intense conflict of ideologies: the artist's identity may be deconstructed under the impact of the social relations of advanced art, but it is simultaneously *reconstructed* as an enchanted image under the reified forms of the mass media. The idea of the artist as an ensemble of functions, becomes a set of multitasking *career opportunities*.[4]

But of, course, at the level of political economy, this novel situation for the artist is not so novel as to be historically anomalous. Rather, it is further evidence of how the laws of exchange operate on art in the epoch of its technological expansion and diversification. The acceptance of some aspects of the critique of authorship in early avant-garde art and Conceptual art in current art has become the means whereby the new administration of art has *reinvented* itself in order to secure its access to the new, entrepreneurial, technologically driven culture and to new areas of cultural capital. In the absence of the pressures of the traditional artistic and cultural hierarchies, artists are freed up – indeed encouraged – to become curators and critics, and curators are freed up to be artists and critics, in ways that benefit the multiple commercial ventures of the mass distribution of art. Just as workers involved in immaterial labour are encouraged – or forced – to be multitasking, modern artists are encouraged to think of themselves as active as artists beyond the 'limited' point of production, because, it is claimed, artists need to think of themselves as directly engaged in the mediation of the meanings of their work.

But if this multitasking defines the shift of the social identity of the artist from someone who 'externalizes' his or her self from a position of repressed marginalization, to someone who works openly within a complex division of labour (in the way a designer might for example), it is not the darker side of the critique of authorship, or an understanding of the place of artistic labour within the social totality, that is emphasized. As a model of the artist-as-entrepreneur the notion of the artist as an ensemble of functions turns largely on the pursuit of market opportunities. The militant, destabilizing, uncomfortable aspects of the critique of authorship have been written out of the reckoning, or treated in a cursory and peripheral fashion. This is because, by identifying 'appropriation' and artistic 'hybridity' with the end of the avant-garde, and by linking multitasking with a benign pluralism of forms, the effects of cultural and social division that precede and shape the labour of signification – the materiality of signification – are comfortably disavowed. The allegorical complexities of the intentions and competences that underwrite the critique of authorship – in fact sustain its logic of negation – have been dissolved into a cultural studies model of semiotic consanguinity. Hence we have a situation in which the informal aspects of Conceptual art are now being replicated as a neo-avant-garde, but with little sense of the troubling negation of the social world that shaped the early avant-garde's and early Conceptual art's critique of the category of art. This has led, overwhelmingly, to a critique of authorship without the discomforts of ideology critique and the critique of the capitalist value-form, as if attacking the myth of self-expression was in and of itself a critical strategy. Indeed, the deconstructionist attack on authorship as an intertextual version of *bricolage*, is perfectly compatible with the most conservative views on what artists should now do to define themselves as modern.

Nevertheless, the critique of this benign pluralism is not an argument for the revocation of the original avant-garde or the recovery of a 'lost' Conceptual art. To critique contemporary neo-avant-gardism is not to think of the 'neo' as an inevitable falling away of art from the achievements and commitments of the past. On the contrary, the 'neo' is the necessary space in which the afterlives of art and theory continue to be *reinscribed* with new and living content. As such we need to examine just what the 'neo' of contemporary neo-avant-garde actually comprises, before we can make a judgement about its criticality.

What I am proposing in this book is a model of the 'post-expressivist' artist which actually takes on the challenges of expression and representation that now confront the artist of the new millennium. This means retheorizing what we mean by the artist as critic and representor in a world of proliferating doubles, proxies, simulations, etc. For what is increasingly clear (beyond the recent moments of the radical negation of authorship in Conceptual art and critical postmodernism) is the need for a model of the artist which is *unambiguously* post-Cartesian, that is, a model of artistic subjectivity which refuses the bipolar model of interiority and



exteriority on which modernist and anti-modernist models of the artist are usually based.

In the 1960s the opposition between interiority and exteriority in art took the form of the familiar conflict between modernism (as an expanded sense of art's expressiveness and affectivity) and social realism (as an expanded sense of art's claims on ethical witness and social truth). In the 1980s, this reemerged in the form of a conflict between neo-expressionism and a photographically expanded neo-Conceptual art practice. Today, however, the taking up of a position on either side of the 'interiority' or 'exteriority' debate is inert, if not dead; there is no 'expressiveness' to be won through painting-*as*-painting, just as there is no social truth to be secured through photography (or even photography and text) *as* photography. This is why the weak pluralist intertextuality of

contemporary neo-Conceptual art and theory has become so hegemonic: it takes the very real crisis of the exterior/interior dualism as a point of exit from 'interiority' and 'exteriority' altogether and not as the point through which their boundaries might be reformulated. In dissolving the reified identities of 'inside' and 'outside' pluralist intertextuality comes to dissolve 'expression' and the 'self and the 'real' *tout court*. The crucial question, then, is how the self-evident collapse of older models of expression and critique in art might allow us to continue to discuss questions of criticality, expression and representation in the twenty-first century. How is it possible to think critique and critical difference in an extended world of neo-artefactuality and neo-visualization?

To answer this we need a model of the modern avant-garde artist that is *already* beyond the binary opposition of interior and exterior. Not in order to lay claim to the artist's privileged place in some theoretical discussion about the 'world as text', but in order to inscribe the artist without remainder into the preprogrammed chains of meaning itself. This model of semiosis is not exactly news. It can be described as materialist semiosis, which has a long and venerable history.[5] But so much of this critical programme has been lost or become toothless in recent art theory that we need to remind ourselves of what the critique of authorship was set up to provide in the transformed world of post-1960s art.

Essentially, since the 1960s the self-identity of the artist has become detached from the traditional hierarchies of artistic media. Artists may continue to work as painters, photographers and sculptors, but painting, photography and sculpture are not in themselves privileged sites of expression and meaning for the artist. Rather, specific media are staging areas for the warping and weaving of the process of semiosis across forms, genres and non-artistic disciplines. In this way the artist's skills as a maker of self-conscious artistic signs is indistinguishable from the artist's competence as a theoretical manipulator of 'stand-ins', performative strategies and prosthetic devices. Yet, in most accounts of the critique of authorship, from the readymade to digital technology, there is an unreconstructed tendency to adopt the Cartesian model of the artist as the self-bound manipulator *of* such devices, props and strategies. The artist's creativity is never implicated *in* these processes; that is, strategies of repetition, representation, reinscription and replication are rarely seen as extending the identity and competences of the artist. Technique, technology and artistic subjectivity – art and social *technik* – are separated. This is because simulacra, copying, surrogacy and replication are not seen as the superstructural conditions of art under advanced capitalism, but as simply modes or devices of artistic audaciousness. In other words, if art is always and already embedded in the technological relations of its time, then the technologies of copying, simulacra and surrogacy are the material basis of art's modern semiosis and not mere stylistic options. Second-order is first-order. Consequently, the early and late twentieth-century critiques of authorship is the site where the dissolved category of art and the reconstituted content of artistic technique meet, the gateway through which new artistic identities and relations might be formed and the critique of ideology and the value-form sustained. It is not where the identity of the artist is lost or to be mourned.

From this perspective artistic subjectivity *is* the use and manipulation of 'stand-ins'. There is no point, no place, where the artistic self is free of the constraints of prosthetic devices (be it paintbrush or digital camera), the demands of copying (identification and reclamation), and as such the performative voice or persona (recognition of the split between work and authentic self). In this sense we need to distinguish a fundamental set of conditions for art in the twenty-first century.

Under the capitalist value-form social reproduction – the unceasing production and reproduction of the commodity – and technical reproducibility (general social technique) are conjoined, one driving the other. That is, just as general social technique is subject to the law of value, the law of value is subject to the technical transformations of general social technique. Hence in a system where the continuity of production is based on technological forms of replication and duplication, the technical conditions of social and cultural life will necessarily be based on forms of iteration (the neo-effect). Social reproduction and technical reproducibility become indivisible. The result is that the production of art is no less subordinate to the fundamental logic-of-repetition of commodity-production than other non-cultural commodities. In order for art to secure its 'newness' it must, like other commodities, reiterate itself, otherwise it becomes the thing it once was, abandoning itself to the past and the same. But, if the artwork is subject to the drive-to-repetition of the commodity, the artwork's escape from its own heteronomous conditions of production is not like other commodities. Because artworks are invariably distinct singularities, rather than repeated prototypes, their emergence from heteronomy and their inauguration of the 'new' represents a qualitative break in the *subsumptive* repetition of the commodity form. That is, although artworks seek to reiterate themselves, as all commodities must, this reiteration is determined by the autonomy of artistic subjectivity (as opposed to the heteronomy of productive labour). In other words, in contrast to productive labour's repetition of the 'new' as the 'same', the 'new' is transformed into the 'new' as different, as other to its immediate conditions of production. This event of 'newness', as such, is precisely non-heteronomous, and therefore opposed to the very logic of subsumptive repetition that brings it into being. The important point here is that as a system of commodity production art is both formed by, and is in resistance to, the iterative logic of commodity form; or, rather, the resistance to iteration and the production of iteration are the same thing. The conditions of autonomy and heteronomy are interwoven.

This has a direct bearing on the basis of iterative technique: copying. Copying or replication in art is not an inert practice, the repetition of the prototype, but the very means by which art provides a *new successor* to its chosen antecedent. Thus, the reworking or incorporation of extant materials is as much a means of sustaining what is thought to be authentic and critical, as it is a way of trying to replicate or 'steal' what is felt to be the aura of the image or object in question. In this respect copying clearly needs to be distinguished from plagiarism or pastiche proper given their associations with traditional craft, and of passing one thing off in the style or manner of another. Whereas the latter replicates the admired precedent as an act of indebtedness, the former takes the likeness of thing in order to inscribe it, or reinscribe it, in a critical tradition or novel context. Copying in this sense, therefore, is never strictly copying, never flat mimesis, because it is able to *reanimate* the thing replicated.[6] Or, as Kant puts it, mimesis can be divided into two modes: *nachahmen*, which is merely a form of reproduction, and *nachfolgen*, which is transformative and creative.[7] This is why the act of selecting and presenting a readymade – what I call, in Chapter 2 [*Modernism, Repetition and the Readymade*], copying *without* copying – is always a productive act. Reproduction becomes a form of creative re-presentation, or reenactment, insofar as it brings the thing reproduced to life, or rather, releases it from its previous identity.

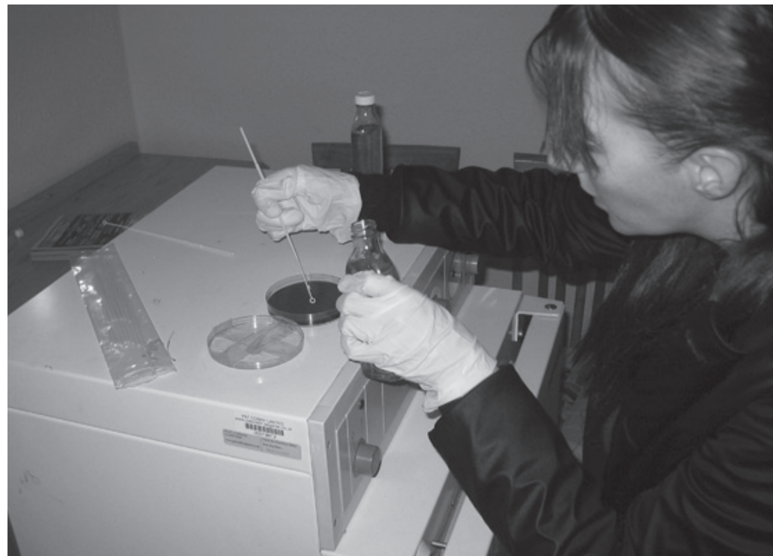
In this regard many theorists since the 1960s have argued that there has been a qualitative technical transformation in how images are produced in art and in mass culture in the late capitalist world. With the expansion of the commodity form a corresponding expansion of the conditions of reproducibility has occurred, bringing with it an unprecedented freedom from the myths of authenticity and originality. Some of this writing embraces this condition[8] and some of it decries its would-be detrimental social and cultural consequences: the loss of a sense of 'tradition', 'artistic skills', and 'stable social identities'.[9] Less prevalent is thinking of the copy from *inside* the conditions of social reproduction and technical reproducibility. By either celebrating or denigrating replication and copying the *nachfolgen* function of the copy is divorced from its constitutive place within the commodity's dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy. One of the results of this is that artistic technique and the various technical conditions of social reproducibility across scientific and technological domains are divorced. If this means thinking of the copy in cultural production from inside general social technique, it also means thinking of general social technique, more broadly, in relation to the sciences

Right: *Growth* (2011) and *Orgia* (2011), Chto Delat? murals by Nikolay Oleynikov based on research realized with the participation of Dmitry Vilensky and Oleg Zhuravlev.

Below: Eugenics propaganda and BioCom ads by Critical Art Ensemble at Flesh Machine, Vienna 1997. critical-art.net

of replication: for example, genetic engineering, the new cosmology, theories of Artificial Intelligence and so on. For, it is the impact of these new sciences on general social technique – on the conditions of the technical reproduction of social and cultural forms – that gives us further insight into the material realities of iteration and the copy in late capitalism, and therefore, also defines those points where 'replicant-thinking' in art and 'replicant-theory' in science come into possible creative alignment. In these sciences the copy is the constitutive means by which the reproduction of difference in any given system is produced and reproduced. The upshot being that the copy is not that which fails the status of novelty, or that which lacks authenticity, but the thing *out of which* claims for novelty – what drifts or mutates the identity of the antecedent – is produced.[10]

Since the 1930s when Walter Benjamin was the first to theorize the conditions of technological reproduction in its modern cultural forms, the supersession of the artisanal in modern life defined the expectations for new forms of art and marked out the new forms of experience emergent from this art. If Benjamin was highly optimistic about these forms and experiences, we at least understand from his work an important historical truth: *art and general social technique does not stand still*. Indeed, Benjamin's writing presaged a vast transformation in the content of artistic and social *technik* in the second half of the twentieth century. Since the 1930s the realities of image reproduction and artistic surrogacy or authorship-at-distance have represented the high ground upon which debates on value in art have been fought out. In fact seventy years on we can now see that the debates on the readymade, on photography, on post-object aesthetics have been the phenomenal forms of a much deeper and more profound response to art's place in the social division of labour. Not only does capitalism strip the artisan of his or her means of production and status, it also strips the artist of his or her traditional 'all round' skills. Under advanced capitalism, therefore debates on modernism, the avant-garde and postmodernism have been principally about rethinking and reinscribing the skills of the artist into these transformed conditions. The contemporary critique of authorship is no more nor less the theoretical expression of these long-term changes. But today the remnants of any nostalgia for the artisanal which once hung over the early twentieth-century debate have long vanished, as consciousness of the copy in our daily technological practices has dismantled notions of expressive and formal uniqueness. The implications for art from this are indisputable. Art is not just a series of unique inheritable objects produced by diligent individualized handcraft, but also the outcome of a set of shared iterative skills, temporal forms and collective relations. In this its forms are dispersible, expandable and endlessly reproducible. Yet discussions of skill, deskilling and reskilling in art are barely broached in contemporary art theory.[11] Too much theory and history, in fact, filters its sense of art's futurity from a narcissistic mourning of art's would-be lost affective qualities and possibilities. As a result the interpretative disciplines can hardly keep up with the social, cognitive and cultural forces that are now bearing down on the category of art. But, if mourning for the lost object has become a substitute for its dialectical appropriation, this does not mean that dialectics itself should lose sight of what is empty, repressive or diminished in the iterative culture of our time. To reposition artistic technique in relation to replicant thinking and general social technique is not an attempt to provide art with a set of functional use-values borrowed unmediated from science, as if the solution to the alienated social form of art was art's greater openness to scientific method and technology *per se*. This is the fundamental problem with complexity theory, and cultural theory influenced by it, which map, in an enfeebled way, a bioscientific model of mutation on to cultural practice and social agency, as if art was a *self-replicating* intellectual system free of cultural and social division.[12] Rather, the fundamental issue remains: how might the autonomy of artistic technique be a condition *of* general social technique, and of use-values external to the realm of art?



Left: *Marching Plague* (2006), Critical Art Ensemble. Filmed on location on the Isle of Lewis, presents a critique of UK-US bioweapons research. It centres on the recreation of secret sea trials conducted by the UK government in the 1950s.

This book, consequently, is an attempt to draw a different kind of map of the culture of art at the beginning of the twenty-first century: one that treats artistic technique as subordinate to, but also reflective on, general social technique as a consequence of the contradictions and divisions internal to both artistic labour and technology. In this the categories of deskilling and reskilling, as I have stressed in the Preface, play a major part in the book's analysis of art's relationship to *technik*. For the production of value in modern art is inconceivable without the idea of the critique and the reworking of notions of skill and technical competence. The very interrelationship between artistic technique and general social technique is predicated upon this. Indeed, it is on the basis of this relationship that the complex labours of art – its 'intangibilities of form' – have been constituted and reconstituted during the twentieth century.

I want to begin, therefore, by looking at what is the founding event of the critique of value and the modern dialectic of skill and deskilling in twentieth century art: the readymade. For it is the readymade, above all else, that is key to understanding the development of the modern conditions of reproducibility in art and art's relationship to general social technique. With the readymade we are, at once, in the realm of artistic labour and productive labour, art's autonomy and post-autonomy, novelty and the copy.

### Notes

1. Raoul Hausmann, quoted in Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, p.118.
2. See for example, Peter Noever, ed., *The Discursive Museum*, MAK and Hatje Cantz Publishers, Vienna, 2001; Gavin Wade, ed., *Curating in the 21st Century*, The New An Gallery Walsall and the University of Wolverhampton 2000; and Sarah Cook, Beryl Graham and Sarah Martin, eds., *Curating New Media, Baltic*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2002.
3. This also works in the opposite direction. The dispersal of 'artistic technique' across disciplinary boundaries has clearly been appropriated as a model of 'good practice' and 'open' management in some of the creative and new services industries. For a discussion of the impact of 'artistic critique' on capital accumulation and the new workplace see Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, London and New York, 2005, and Eve Chiapello, 'The "Artistic Critique" of Management and Capitalism: Evolution and Co-optation', in John Roberts and Stephen Wright, eds., *Third Text*, special issue on 'Collaboration', No, 71, Vol. 18, Issue No.6, Nov-Dec 2004 (see Chapter 6).
4. Tracey Emin's career is a perfect example of this: from neo-Conceptual marginalia to designer of smart bags for the luxury luggage maker Longchamp.
5. See in particular Valentin Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1986.
6. See Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*, Zone Books, New York, 1996.
7. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 2004, pp.194-7.
8. See Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities… or The End of the Social*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and John Johnston, Semiotext(e), New York, 1983.
9. Sec Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman, Semiotext(e), New York, 1991.
10. Genetic engineering instates this process clearly. Cloning – Cell Nuclear Replacement – is the infinite reproduction of the same as the 'new'. That is, cloning is not the *exact* reproduction of the prototype in physiology or consciousness (just as twins born within seconds of each other are not exactly identical). The genome may be reproducible but the behaviour and individual characteristics of human beings are not. As John Harris puts it: 'Autonomy, as we know from monozygotic twins, is unaffected by close similarity of bodily form and matching genome. The "indeterminability of the individual with respect to external human will" will remain unaffected by cloning.' (*On Cloning*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004, P.49). In other words clones are *unique* copies: although a series of cloned sheep have the same somatic form as their prototype, they each will develop internally differentiated neural pathways on the basis of their separate and individuated experience of the world, just like non-cloned sheep.
11. Where it has, it has borrowed its models from the biological, neurological and other physical sciences. One such model is the neurocomputational account of consciousness in the new neurobiology, for example, Paul M. Churchland's work. As he argues in *The Engine of Reason, the Seat of the Soul: A Philosophical Journey into the Brain* (MIT, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1995), his aim is to bring a 'broad range of human artistic endeavour comfortably into the fold of a neurocomputational account of human cognition' (p.298). He calls this the creative deployment and development or 'recurrent manipulation' (p.279) of prototypes. Creativity resides in those people who are skilful at recurrent manipulation, that is, those who are sufficiently learned that they are able to build up a large repertoire of prototypes. When this repertoire is in place humans are in a position to produce new and novel applications of these prototypes by virtue of 'our built-in capacity for *vector completion* or filling in the gaps' (p.280).
12. On complexity theory, see, for example, Fritjof Capra, *The Hidden Connections: A Science for Sustainable Living*, Flamingo, London, 2003. See also, NikIas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000.

# Through A Glass Darkly: Performative Practice... Without Border, Without Name

Katarzyna Kosmala

## Introduction

The socio-economic and ideological transformation of Central and Eastern Europe has accelerated the processes of re-writing 'identity' scripts in the region. A new performative turn can now be observed in art production, theory advancement and curatorial initiatives – an approach which involves geographies of shifting borders and appears to coalesce around a feminist critique of dominant politics without addressing it by name. I would argue that such initiatives enact what sociologist Chandra Mohanty refers to as "feminism without borders"[1], a politically charged network-based movement raising social justice issues positioned in relation to globalisation and neo-liberalism.

Identification processes are tied to their regions, represented through historical issues and the framings of political events. These processes can be expanded to culturally conditioned, socio-political practices and their geographies. Narratives of belonging to post-Socialist spaces, manifested as a sense of fragmented, resisting, ambivalent and performative micro-hi/stories, reveal both the dynamics of political criticism and subversive positions.[2]

I want to introduce and reflect on art practice broadly enveloped in the Central and Eastern European feminist tactics of today. The intersecting histories and cultures, shared traumas, and recent geo-political conditions within post-Socialist Europe, are embedded in these artists' cultural practices. By discussing the instances of cultural strategies purposefully located at the tensions between institutional spaces and independent production, my reflections will focus on the Diaspora-infused artistic strategies engaged in cultural forms of representation.

I set out to explore cultural tactics situated in the neo-liberal context of today that point to alternative modes of instituting and relating to society, individuals and institutions. These practices appear to afford illusionary hopes to those areas that are disempowered locally by the inertia effects of global capitalism, and yet also allow for distance to be maintained from such 'utopian' pursuits. Accordingly, the questions emerge as to whether feminist-infused critiques can become part of broader histories and social and political struggles, and whether feminist histories transgress the market game concerns and celebrity *art-lite* of international biennials? Addressing these questions, let us discuss the examples of emergent practice involving geographies of the in-betweens and the post-Socialist European scapes in particular, and their resistance tactics to potential recuperation by the capitalist institution.

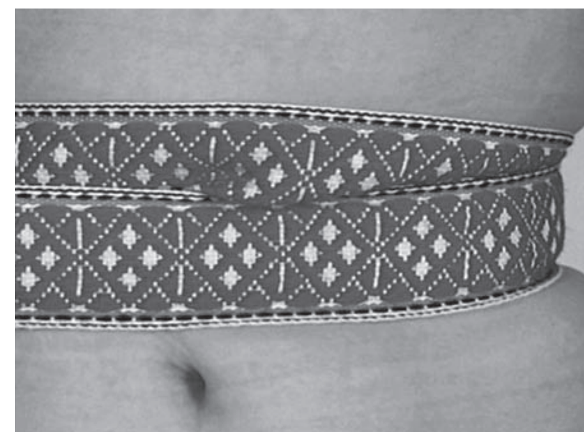
## Embedding Diasporas

The consolidation of the global financial crisis as well as reframing of the socio-political and economic 'transition' from post-Socialism in European spaces have led to the emergence of a critical political discourse in contemporary art practice, a re-mobilisation of feminist politics and the re-writing of histories. At the same time, extensive migration across the border of 'Fortress Europe' has fuelled nationalistic rhetoric and placed a rewriting of neo-liberal sentiments on both sides, East and the West, firmly on the agenda. Against the backdrop of the global financial crisis, public cuts, governmental initiatives supporting EU-policy led private enterprises and ever more precarious nature of employment and social security, questions are raised regarding the future forms of governance and community empowerment.

I recently responded to a petition in support of colleagues I closely work with at University of Glasgow to save modern languages/cultures courses from closure. Subsequently, I have been asked to join colleagues in protesting against the proposed cuts through media appeals. Such moves to cut the arts and social sciences, mirrored at other UK Universities, certainly weaken the claims of education to serve the wider community in a globalised world where linguistic and cultural competence is supposed to help build bridges across various forms of cultural divide. The Treaties of Rome were signed more than fifty years ago and subsequently the multi-lingual European Union born. More recent EU 'acquisitions' are not necessarily of post-war Western European origin. I have in mind the Central and Eastern European countries. Their continuing social and cultural invisibility in the European project highlights the problematic situation in the (re)emergence of a European cultural identity. This problem concerns a scarcity of common histories and memories in the search for tangible links between West and East. It is timely to acknowledge other histories of 'our Europe' that include wider cultural and political spaces and transcend 'translation'-based frictions. Despite the on-going protests, despite initiatives such as the plea of Jonathan Bate[3], which details the contribution of the arts and humanities to the value and quality of life, we witness serious threats to the future of education and cultural life in the UK and beyond. I also wonder, what kind of message does it send to those who entered UK academia and art practice from elsewhere, like myself?

Artists, writers and curators from the European Diaspora who often live and work in zeugmatic spaces that can be perceived simultaneously as a home and abroad, have contributed to a revival of politically engaged critical voice, evident from recent theory advancement and curatorial initiatives of the geographies and art scenes of Central and Eastern Europe. As European democratic rhetoric within the global corporate capitalist frame establishes its prominence across political, social and cultural spaces – witness the UK coalition government flagship policy aims of its *Big Society* – critically infused art discourse can form a commentary on contemporary events, such as the 'European project', and can offer a way of intervening in rewriting history. It thus has the potential to form a movement of resistance and protest, a mechanism to initiate change or evoke an alternative voice.

For instance, some artists enact docu-fictions which expose the identity politics inherent within media rhetoric, such as the video works of Tallinn-based artist Eva Labotkin's *Woman in the Field* (2007) and *Belt* (2010). Politicising the video medium, the artist comments on the ideological constructions of '(mother)land' in today's politics. The relationship with one's place is demarcated by giving birth to the land, woman's role in a production of national ideals and sentiments in relation to one's belonging and political discourse on re-terriorialisation of the new nation, its new dreams in new Europe. Other forms of representation on reproducing nationhood are addressed by Belgrade-born and Rotterdam-based Katarina Zdjelar's video *Don't Do it Wrong!* (2007). On a typical morning in a Turkish primary school life the *Independence March* national anthem is first heard. This is followed by a children's collective pledge to "I devote my existence to being a gift to the Turkish existence". Zdjelar comments on the role of state institutions in creating "appropriate citizens of the nation" and their bio-power in daily life. Warsaw-based Joanna Rajkowska project *Airways* (2008) is a video-proposal for a project on the contemporary Hungarian nation. She creates the possibility for an ideal speech moment by inviting the far-right para-political, racist-infused organisation members of *Magyar Garda* and *Goj Motorosok*, and the citizenship-minority groups based in Hungary, which includes Roma people, Croats, Serbs, Germans, Poles, Romanians, Jews, Chinese, Vietnamese, Ukrainian and Russian as well as sexual minorities. Together, they fly over Budapest together in a small tourist plane, "an attempt to reformulate basic human relations, where suddenly what is instinctive and physical influences the political, obviously as an illusionary moment".[4]



Top: *Belt* (2010), video still, Eva Labotkin

Middle: *Don't Do It Wrong!* (2007), video still, Katarina Zdjelar

Bottom: *Airways* (2008), video still, Joanna Rajkowska

But why are such artistic voices necessary? After all, art production is now complicit and closely integrated with global capitalism, both economically and socially, and is largely subservient to that system. Echoes of alternative cultural forms of production, that appear once more to be coveted, can be found in the more or less Marxist-inspired social activisms of the first half of the twentieth century that emerged predominantly in the West, as well as in the

underground and neo-avant-garde movements in the Central and Eastern European spaces in the second half of the twentieth century[5]. But in searching for alternative voices in this cultural turn, beyond cynical play with neo-liberal rhetoric, there is a need to assess the elements of its resistance to dominant capitalist logic. Although it is commonly agreed that art has become assimilated into corporate capitalist systems of (re)production and consumption, contested spaces of struggle for voices other than those of neo-liberal individualism, inflated celebrity culture and consumerism, remain.

Neo-liberal policy is now repositioned as a multiplication of the enterprise forms within the social body. Foucault's bio-politics can be located at the centre of the policy agenda: "It is a matter of making the market, competition, and so the enterprise, into what could be called the formative power of society"[6]. The *Big Society* discourse can be seen as cynically attempting to 'dignify' the cuts agenda via the language of reinvigorating civic society. New neo-liberal rhetoric of the *Big Bank* for the *Big Society* operates here as a re-organisation of the state, emblematic of Foucault's notion of bio-politics which sees the state under the supervision of the market[7]. Indeed, Benjamin Noys argues that the 'grammar' of neo-liberalism continues to dominate our thinking, defining 'us' as those resistant to neo-liberalism as a specific form of governmental rationality, and more generally to capitalism as a 'social form'[8].

Transitions of and in this context are not just economic but social and cultural, with the latter tending to take longer. Every change can be effectively seen as a chaotic polysemy, full of paradoxes of progression and retrogression in response to the new image of the 'new Europe' world, and associated with constructed or assumed shifting identities. Current experiences in the identity arena reveal an increase in dominant nationalistic discourses in which every form of minorities' rights are marginalized, including women's voices and alternative discourses of civil movements that appear 'tamed' both in the East and the West.

Ongoing re-framings of current socio-political conditions have resulted in cultural projects which question more directly the current political climate and dominant ideologies across Europe. Such projects benefited from being less driven by institutional framings, notably the initiatives led by Rael Artel's *Public Preparation* (2007-ongoing), Anata Szyłak's *Alternativa* in Wyspa Institute of Art in Gdańsk (2010-12) or Maria Hlavajova's *Former West* (2008-13). *Public Preparation*, a programme of workshops, meetings, publications and exhibitions co-ordinated in the forests of Estonia, on the outskirts of Tallinn, investigates issues of nationalism and contemporary arts in Europe in the format of international knowledge exchange. *Alternativa* initiative consists of a series of international exhibitions, art events, publications and on-line activities aimed to investigate the ways in which contemporary arts intersect with the political. Located in the premises of the Gdańsk shipyard, "where the workers' strikes of 1980 began the process of the disintegration of the Communist bloc" and now a post-industrial space in an on-going regeneration battle, *Alternativa* addresses the recent histories of collective political movements, testing its possibilities, its failures[9] ("all the dirt put under the carpet"). *Former West* takes the year 1989 as a critical landmark, repositioning socio-economic and political geographies of Europe to rethink global histories and futures of artistic practice, bringing together narratives articulated from the former East and former West of Europe. Attending to the so-called 'block' mentality and 'post-block futures against the backdrop of neo-liberal capitalist realms, *Former West* is co-ordinated at the Basis Voor Actuele Kunst, in Utrecht.

Some forms of critical reframing of today's socio-political conditions have placed the gender question central to their inquiries. Indeed, Bojana Pejić's project which focused on gender differences(s) in Central and Eastern European art resulted in *Gender Check*. Showcased in Vienna, Austria in 2009, and then in Warsaw, Poland in 2010 and in association with the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Iron Curtain in 2007, ERSTE Foundation issued a call for international curatorial projects aimed at framing art forms from the geographies of Eastern Europe. The research, the exhibition, and a symposium have looked at both official and unofficial art from the region demarcated by the Baltic Republics and the Caucasus, starting from the 1960s to the decisive events of 1989 to the present, and framed the work to demonstrate how it tackled gender. The strong undertone was that it addressed the politics of representation and representational politics in the 'block' and the 'post block' realities. Some of the questions the project has asked include: How were workers depicted on Socialist posters? How were male 'heroes' portrayed in officially sanctioned art in Romania in the 1960s? How did female artists see themselves during the transition period after 1989?

Attempted answers resulted in *Gender Check: A Reader. Art and Theory in Eastern Europe* (2010), an edited collection of the essays investigating gender issues in the region by Bojana Pejić in collaboration with ERSTE, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna. The authors discuss how social and cultural developments as well as political ideologies affected the construction of gender identities in visual arts produced before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and although the references to nationalism and national constructions feature strongly, they are not critically addressed. Interestingly, these politically charged, cross-border projects have been led by women, and further, each representing different degrees of assimilation with the European Diaspora trends.

## Situating ambivalent micro-feminisms in the Central and Eastern European territories

I would argue that ontological framings in emergent Diaspora-infused cultural strategies, involving geographies of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), interface at the junction of critical political voicing, performativity and local feminist histories. A performative turn in artistic strategies tied to critical practice has its roots in the underground and neo-avant-garde movements of the second half of the twentieth century, offering a productive perspective on the complexity of identity representation in new Europe. Artists such as Eva Labotkin and Katarina Zdjelar operate in *zones of insignificance*, a psycho-geographical space that encourages critical thinking; the artistic tactics they chose to adopt are situated at some distance from the market and dominant discourses.

Feminism in the CEE has its particular characteristics: historically infused apotheosis of a private space and a preference for subversive positioning. By subversion I mean here an assumed attitude in cultural and political tactics that continue to openly resist patriarchy and the dominant ideology (Stalinist versions of Communism in the 1970s and 1980s and corporate global capitalism now).

Communism created a divide between private and public spheres. Whilst in the West the public sphere was where the struggle for equality discourse (gender equality) was located, in the East it was perceived as the sphere of exploitation and a form of oppression. The private sphere, however, was recognised as a sphere signifying autonomy and resistance. The private space meant openness and communication for those marginalised by the system. Underground artistic movements thrived in the realms of informal spaces such as private apartments or on a street. Such art production and its dissemination were realised outside the institutions, as a cultural and political effort to disconnect from the dominant ideology and censorship. In feminist art practices, it was a terrain for the contestation of the Socialist paradigm of womanhood. The feminist root in the alternative art practices of resisting imposed identities in Central Europe today derives from this historical divide between signifying context of the 'private' and the 'public'. Mihaela Mudure points out the complexity and ambiguous character of this particular link between Central and Eastern European feminisms and Communism. This relationship requires that we understand the co-ordinates of the ideological appropriation of feminisms and a survival of some feminist spaces in the discourse of women's emancipation entailed by Communism. In discussing the link between Communism and feminism, she seems to identify the source of oppression: while Communism relied on the category of class, feminisms rely on the category of gender[10].

A post-Communist re-birth of patriarchy has stimulated gender tensions and is particularly visible in the socially and culturally conditioned reality of transformation and negotiation of 'our European' space. The disappearance of Communist paradigms of Socialism and its accompanying rhetoric of 'equality' have been replaced with the 'new' return of a traditional female signifier. The female body once appropriated by the Communist Party as a symbol in ideological struggle has re-entered conservative political discourse as integral to the nuclear family. This historical appropriation and its importance in the productivity of a nation is perpetuated today. The ambiguous position of belonging to and being on the periphery of Europe (marginal places of influence in cultural discourse) further complicates identity construction.

The notions of national identity, religion and state hold more significant positions in the processes of refashioning the new confrontations which belonging to Europe brings. What becomes evident through such claims is the legitimisation of patriarchy as the socio-economic, political and symbolic order. Consequences of renewed patriarchy are often taken for granted, in particular the existence of social exclusion and gender inequality. On a parallel level, socio-economic 'progress' and EU membership has seen a significant proportion of the Central and Eastern European population experiencing a worsening living standard as a result of amplified change[11]. Instances of violence, aggressive parental authority and female victimisation are all grafted onto poverty and low living standards[12]. This can be extended further and seen reflected in the problems associated with mass migratory movements of cheap labour and the boom in sex trafficking in our Fortress Europe.

As the post-Communist legal and political systems have become increasingly masculinised, and gender relations more dichotomised through consumption and a culture of spectacle, alternative social and cultural movements seem once again stifled. Deconstruction of cultural and visual identities is important not only in dismantling the patriarchal mechanism behind nationalism but also in reflecting on the processes of undoing inequalities and exclusion by dominant systems and their accompanying discourse.

## Performing

The medium of performance that challenged the hierarchy of the arts in the 1970s, and its reiterations across European geographies has become once again an important dimension of reentering into critical debates about gender, inequality and social injustice. Bringing performativity to the feminist critique includes a use of alternative sites of production and presentation (though not *Gender Check* as such) as well as forms of engagement with various degrees of cross-border informal networking platforms challenging dominant ideologies. A transitory state of oscillation between mimicking and assimilating, negotiating another shift in a state of political consciousness, another performative move.

This performative turn appears as a central strategy adopted in emergent initiatives of knowledge exchange and new curatorial initiatives such as *Public Preparation* or *Alternativa*. Such projects, I would argue, are covertly dressed in a feminist critique of dominant politics without addressing it by name. Chandra Mohanty introduced the term 'feminism without borders', to refer to a trend in questioning socio-political change and social justice across spaces of existing social and economic divisions and various *Other* in the context of globalisation and re-iterations of neo-liberal capitalism[13]. I would also add, it is performing without border and without name, reflecting the in-between zeugmatic position and shifting boundaries of seeing through in-betweens. Such routes of inquiry also determine how identities are attached, or not, to place.

*Zeugmatic* in rhetoric refers to the use of a word to modify or to govern more words when it is appropriate. Serial dislocations, migration mobility and the sense of derootedness it creates, metaphorically and materially reflect a performing movement without border and without name. Such movement is realised through a series of spatial and temporal relocations, not only geographically but also conceptually, including migration and the appropriation of ideas, memory, body and sources of Diaspora-routed inspiration for re-writing history through addressing the current political condition.

Performing feminism, without border and indeed without name, is here situated in the new geopolitical reality of Europe and the historically constructed hegemonic discourses of today. Being in-between, results in a sense of being outside the conventions of mainstream cultural production. Feminist performance strategies of the 1970s are echoed in these new projects addressing the critique of politics and art production today. For instance, Kathy Battista[14] salvaging feminist performance art in 1970s London (for 'market sophistication'), has flagged the centrality of domestic space (alongside collective social space) as a site and concern of alternative production. Being outside the mainstream at the fringes of cultural production, yet connected to a discursive circuit spanning the Atlantic, resulted in a type of DIY aesthetics and performative identities. It is a performance of the self that becomes the affordable and accessible tool for critique of current condition.

Discussing the examples that follow, I loosely draw on bell hooks' notion of a feminist movement, advanced in *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (2000), constructing narrative around visual representation embedded in action and merging a kind of restless criticality with a social consciousness. Such method incorporates an element of self-criticality, including reflection on my positioning, class, race – as a writer – and on yours – as a reader. In addition to giving an inclusive approach to gender representation and its geographies, this is a self-reflexive way of de-centering, contesting and problematising the ongoing ideological constructions of global subjectivity more generally.

Nancy Frazer's 'Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History' (2009), published in *New Left Review*, situates the second-wave feminist movement ("not this or that geographical slice of the movement") within the larger political context and its historical moment. She points out that feminist demands for equality have been largely accepted, yet, at the same time, considering the process of feminism's mutation in the evolving realms of neo-liberalism, this acceptance has resulted in a decoupling of feminism's emancipatory potential. I would add that geographical differentiation and versions of neo-liberalisms and nationalisms further complicate the reference to *the* feminist movement. As such, I would argue for its fragmentary and fluid spatial and temporal manifestations. Fraser also contemplates the possibility of reorientation of feminism in the present context of global capitalist crises, which could lead to a new form of social organising. She states: "With the fragmentation of the feminist critique come the selective incorporation and partial recuperation of some of its stands"[15].

I would argue, the performative movement without border and without name could be seen as a platform for reflection on art practice as a comment or intervention in a politics of the everyday, through a resisting agency. However, such artistic strategies are possible when the artists can openly acknowledge their position as marginal and 'defeated' in the dominant system. Such cultural strategies require, as Chris Townsend (2007) argues, a marginal positioning that professional Western artists do not accept and, I would add, of which they are not always aware[16]. Such practices that are not capitalism-driven can become a means and a metaphor, however utopian or real, for social and political change in the post-Socialist reality of the everyday. Yet artistic utopias found at this intersection and their resisting identities remain invisible to Western audiences. This is certainly the case here in Scotland, and the UK more widely, where I live and from where I work.

## Looking... Through A Glass Darkly: Naked Freedom

Although post-Socialist art practice is becoming increasingly integrated into a capitalist system, Central and Eastern European artistic perspectives have something different to communicate. Its creativeness is less a specific repertoire of particular art forms and more a series of idiosyncratic, aesthetic strategies and local applications of already familiar forms (echoes of transgressive gestures, the utopian promise of the avant-garde, play with subversive techniques of performance/technology). Socio-economic and cultural identity construction processes are constituted by an interesting hybrid of ideological domination, resistance, and socio-economic and cultural (meta)change, particularly in the 1990s, a decade which saw the art status of CEE redefined in a globalised (arts) market while nevertheless appealing to what constitutes 'our reality'. The discourse of belonging to 'new Europe' now forms a powerful locus of a management of meanings by which (g)local culture is maintained and transmitted and still the exploitative nature of capitalism criticised while local politics are challenged. Such a position can result in certain way of seeing, drawing on Ingmar Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly*, a way of seeing that challenges reduction of core values that make us.

Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid play out the decentred position of the subject in representations of being European, Balkan, Slovenian, ex-Yugoslavian, queer, female artists. The ironic gesture of their acting enhances critically informed performances of different forms of subjection. This ambivalent performance of identities, at times in contradiction with one another, is realised through deconstruction, appropriation and narrative critique. Working collaboratively for over twenty years using the medium of video, the artists position memories of a Communist past and its symbolism with the contradictions of post-Socialist conditions, and indoing so engage in a critique of hegemony of the West and global capitalism.

In new media art in particular, the abstract quality of a technologically generated and mediated world becomes an expressive means of communication strategy in the region. Enacting can be envisaged as a sort of a leeway for enacting identities, their memories and histories. For gender identification that also includes female masquerade, performativity of sexual and other identities. Performativity relates here to performance in cultural and artistic material practices of posing, representing and identifying with the identities and their forms, advocated by media deconstruction.

In *Naked Freedom* (2010), the most recent video by Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid at the time of writing, the artists conceptualise the possibility of social change under the conditions of financial capitalism and commercialisation processes that permeate art, social, political and critical discourse today. The work also comments on the process of making. The collective process is about simultaneous enactment of social, political, and perfomative practices: it is a collective venture performance for the screen that aims "to resonate with performers off screen". The work connects Ljubljana, Belgrade, Durham/USA and presents a conceptual political space of engagement that allows for rethinking the meaning of local and the conditions for membership into the contemporary communities of practice, in particular, who is to be left out, what is the price to be paid.

Seven young activists, musicians, poets, and youth workers, members of the Youth Center Medvode, have met in a village near Ljubljana to discuss capitalism, colonialism, education, and the power of art as a possibility for a political intervention. There are utopian allusions to rethinking the possibility for a radicalization of what can be termed a 'proper life', citing the work of Jonathan Beller, Achille Mbembe, Gilles Deluze and others:

Achille Mbembe:

<< What connects terror, death, and freedom is an ecstatic notion of temporality and politics>>

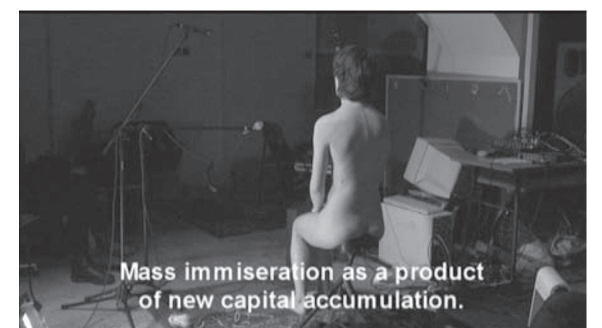
Après Jonatan Beller (one of the performing students):

<<It is cinema, as culmination of industrial technologies that uses the visual to re-organize the sensory world for the State and market>>

The work attends to the questions of idealism vis-à-vis the power of youth, as well as initiating participatory practice through the making of the video via which social relations are sealed, revealing visible agency ready to ask for new possibilities.

Belgrade-based artist and performer Siniša Ilić deconstructs violence (from heteronormative to nationalistic forms of violence) in her performative drawings, a connector between different spaces within the realm of culture, art and activism. The drawings represent violence in a grotesque manner, opening up what is gender violence to wider systemic framings.

The last section of the video addresses the question of border control and the status of non-EU citizens status in Europe. More specifically, the status of African nations in 'Fortress Europe' is addressed through migrant workers trying to live and survive in the European Union today. A historical analysis is offered of the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion and prevention of work and life in the EU, based on a debate-exchange between Marina Gržinić and Ghana-born and Amsterdam-based Kwame Nimako that took place at the 'Workshop on Education, Development, Freedom', at Duke University, Durham, USA, in




*Naked Freedom [Čista svoboda]* (2010), video stills, Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid

February 2010. The workshop was organised by the Center for Global Studies and the Humanities director, Argentinean literary theorist Walter Mignolo, to explore concepts such as global coloniality and the geopolitics of knowledge production. Kwame Nimako runs the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery and its Legacy in Amsterdam. Here the video becomes a kind of docu-fiction, or a *dispositif* for a film, addressing the wider context of global capitalism and labour migration with the aim of confronting the working and living conditions of non-EU residents in particular from the African continent. A history of these relations vis-à-vis the new geopolitical reality of Europe is narrated, one based on the established hegemonic mechanisms of division that are today 'forgotten' but their traces lived through the European food policies.

Through a tactics of resistance, in a relational sense (Kester, Bourriaud), which introduces the concept of emancipation and alternative voices in artistic practice, integration with other outsiders necessarily emerges. *Naked Freedom*'s structure constructs what Gržinić has called a revolutionary *depositif* – a project for possible change, for a different society, different politics and different

place of art in political space.

In an interview with Ana Vujanovic, Gržinić explained: "Our videos are so condensed, almost viscid and heavy, since each frame in the video relates to the production of life and to politics, and only then to art. What we are primarily researching and seeking to express is bio-politics, that hybrid of the biological and the political, the power that organizes not only bodies in contemporary societies but also, to an extreme degree, the conditions of life and politics"[17]. Gržinić's message is that one (here the fe/male artist from the East) is made possible or exists solely on the basis of the subversive performance of various identity-roles and its mis-representation: "There is no difference between my writing, my video, my lectures at the art academy in Vienna: they all are part of the same painstaking, almost bureaucratic work of insisting on constant differentiation and contamination. Everything I do is patiently constructed genealogy of power and dirty relations, the bloody situations of art and politics... There will never be an end to art because too much money is invested in contemporary art productions and also because art today has signed a clear and visibly normalized contract with capital" (Gržinić in conversation with Ana Vulanovic)[18].

Gržinić and Šmid through a "contaminating working strategy", merging spaces, institutions, the inside and the outside and thinking in terms of different economies and different institutional *depositifs* in which one is situated, works and lives, question ownership, for instance, the ownership of histories, including feminist histories.

## Seeing/Noticing

As the crisis in our 'Fortress Europe' unfolds, the next step is to motivate collective action, as Charles Esche in his essay 'Imagine Resistance' in *Public Preparation* (2010) argues, mobilizing the artistic perspective in imagining the world differently, offering the opportunity to change our immediate environments.

*Public Preparation*, is a curatorial project enveloped in participatory strategy. It was established in 2007 in order to address issues associated with current socio-economic and political conditions across Europe, in particular the rise of various versions of nationalisms and state-appropriated collective memory 'boom'. The project was formed as a platform for knowledge exchange and network-based communication, focusing on contemporary art practice and critical thought, and bringing together international art professionals, exhibition spaces of a more formal and informal nature, as well as cultural institutions to engage in questioning the role of the arts in public life and artists' position in political discourse. A series of events were organised from 2007 to 2010 resulting in a contextual framing with the international exhibition *Lets Talk about Nationalism! Between Ideology and Identity,* which opened February 2010 in Tallinn at Kumu Art Museum.

The overarching theme for the *Public Preparation* debate is indeed a concern around growing nationalisms in Eastern Europe (and in the West) and questions about its relation to contemporary arts. Rich comparative perspectives on the construction of nationalism that emerged included insights from 'new' Europe or the former East, represented by Ukraine, Poland, Slovenia, Serbia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, and 'old' Europe or the former West, by Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Austria and Greece, with insights of non-European or European-to-be perspectives such as Turkey, Russia and Israel. Rael explains that over several years of her curatorial practice the majority of the participants represented the geographies of former Central Eastern Europe: "My aim has never been to organize a kind of 'Olympic Games' with an equal representation for all nations – vice versa – the selection of the participants has been closely connected to the practice of these people, what they do and how they think"[19].

Since the Berlin Wall was torn down and the Soviet Union collapsed, a mushrooming of revived democracies has been witnessed across Eastern Europe. The 21st century in this part of the world has been demarcated by the rise of conservatism in politics dressed in dominant masculinities; intolerance, nationalistic sentiments and neo-liberal tendencies mixed with a nostalgia for the past. Over the years, *Public Preparation* materialised in five seminars including several critical presentations and reflective debates on the current condition in the arts and politics, two publications and the international exhibition with a number of new artworks, followed by press coverage and a critical reception in the mass media. For instance, the international symposium on symptoms of nationalism in the practice of contemporary art held in Pärnu, Estonia, in Artists' House in 2008, brought together a network of theorists, artists and curators from Winnipeg, Eindhoven, Istanbul, Tel Aviv, Dublin, Vienna, Istanbul, Berlin, Paris, Budapest and Kiev to address questions of art's role in politics and the artist's role in the processes of resistance, discussing different perspectives and points of view representing European and non-Europen geographies. A year after, in Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Poland, *Crisis Special* of *Public Preparation* was held; a seminar-workshop addressing links between nationalisms, neo-liberal capitalist economy and contemporary arts. There, Marina Gržinić addressed global capitalism in a frame of turbo-fascism: "On the one hand, you have the unification of the national body, war, fear etc. On the other hand, you have autonomy. …if you have money, you have a style, you can be a punk, a hippie etc. Why is it actually called post-modern fascism? Because this involves the fragmentation of the social where practically each of us has to be in charge only of our self. So, it is a global format of govermentality meaning to know how to behave today in the crisis, to actually manage yourself, not to say too much, not to say too little, to be careful not to lose your job, etc"[20]. Łódź-based Iza Desperak talked about the problematic of hate as an escape in relation to frustration with capitalism. Copenhagen-based Jens Haaning talked about the possibilities and impossibilities of revolution addressing questions of consumption.

Rael explained that she has tried, via the *Public Preparation* project, to contribute to a public sphere by 'producing' a kind of emergent critical discourse that has led to the discussions that are now topical in Estonia as well as in other parts of former Eastern Europe and beyond.

The choice of spaces is critical for such projects. The Wyspa Institute of Art in Gdansk is one of the most symbolic and mythical spaces of the Central Eastern European geographies, situated on the declining shipbuilding site. Once the cradle of the Solidarity movement, it now awaits a blue print for its post-industrial restructuring. The contemporary tensions in which the site is enveloped become the platform for addressing art production today by seeking alternative political framings for sustainable economies and cultural production to thrive. Oliver Ressler's *Alternative Economies, Alternative Societies* project, initiated in Ljubljana in 2003, and closely linked with the Wyspa's framing as oscillating between alternative space and fictional art institution, offers insights into peripheral theories and localised art practices, social and economic forms of organisation the projects such as *Alternative* or *Public Preparation* also explore. The book-catalogue published following the *Health and Safety* exhibition at the Wyspa *Alternative Economies, Alternative Societies*[21] features the text-transcripts of video installation narratives, including among others: Chaia Heller talking about libertarian municipalism; Takis Fotopoulos addressing inclusive democracy; Michael Albert on participatory economics; Paul Cockdhott reflecting on the possibilities of new Socialism; Marge Piercy on feminist utopias; Rafał Burnicki discussing anarchist consensual democracy; Maria Mies on the notion of subsistence; Nancy Folbre advocating caring labour; Christopher Spehr on free co-operation; and texts historically framing workers' collectives in places such as former-Yugoslavia (Todor Kuljic), Spain (Salome Molto) and France (Alain Delotel). These are 'minor' voices, yet, voices that aim at broadening perspectives on various other social and economic forms of organisation and art production today.

Above: *Monuments* (2008), installation, Tanja Muravskaja; *Light Breeze* (2009), *The Yellow House*, (2009), *The Last House* (2009), *In Front of the Maize Field* (2009), Csaba Nemes.

Left: Erden Kosova (Istanbul) at the 'Symptoms of Nationalism and Critique of Nationalism in the Practice of Contemporary Art' in Pärnu, July 2008.

From Tallinn to Gdańsk and back, *Public Preparation* has accumulated into the international exhibition *Let's Talk about Nationalism! Between Ideology and Identity*, showcased at the Kumu Art Museum in Tallinn, Estonia in 2010. The curatorial strategy addressed not only the arts and politics interface but also the relationships between the institutional establishment and critically infused art production. For instance, Tallinn-based artist Tanya Muravskaya's installation *Monuments* (2008) refers to conflicts arising in association with processes of commemorating the past in public spaces and the re-writing of histories through treatment of their material signifiers. She explained: "two equal mounds – one of limestone, the other of glass. Limestone is the historical calling card of industrial Estonia and the former Estonian Soviet Socialist republic. It was precisely this limestone wall that used to be the background for the concerned-looking soldier in the Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn. The installation's glass section represents Estonia's newest, renovated, Europeanised and Euro-repaired history. The loose body of broken glass is a reflection of the construction of a new monument close to the displaced soldier"[22].

The works in the exhibition were displayed according to three key themes: ideological habits, reproduction of a nation, and conflicts. In addressing the latter, Budapest-based artist Csaba Nemes uses painting as a medium to portray crime locations associated with the racist murders of Roma people by a group of right-wing fanatisists in Hungary: "The only thing we see are rural houses", as in the work *Yellow House* (2009). The aim of the exhibition reflected the overarching theme of *Public Preparation*, namely to open up a debate for addressing the role of arts participation in the challenging public sphere of today. The idea was to map and to better understand the notion of contemporary nationalist discourse and critical art practice in today's European context. "The main generators of contemporary nationalism are two forces: firstly, the ever increasing mobility of large human groups and mass migration and, secondly, globalisation and the increase in power wielded by supranational [bodies]", argues the curator, Rael Artel, in the exhibition catalogue, "while immigrants are primarily seen as an economic threat [in populism] and nationalism is expressed through xenophobic and racist attitudes and behaviour; globalisation and international power structures are considered to be a threat to national identity'[23]. The conceptual installation work with explicit political content, by Copenhagen-based artist Jens Haaning, *Eesti* (2010) consists of a white cube space with the monumental black text *EESTI*, which means Estonia in Estonian.

For me personally, *Public Preparation* acts as an action research curatorial strategy with an impact. A strategy that involves art institutions through commissions of international scale exhibitions and simultaneously operates as a cross-border

Left:
*Eesti (Estonia)* (2010), mural installation, Jens Haaning.

network-initiated venture involving the public through informal and appropriated spaces. *Public Preparation* is in a stage of rethinking how to re-activate the important discourses of politics and arts today, currently being exposed in Budapest.

## Evoking

The newsprint-look exhibition catalogue did not gloss over artistic representations, instead it reflected a multilingual art discourse on globalised nationalisms, a discourse that combines spaces of the East and the West, featuring texts written in English as well as Russian and Estonian. The texts attempted to respond to what we witness; that is, the mushrooming of sentiments of neo-liberal capitalist entitlement and the nationality-focused nostalgia of belonging on both sides of the once Berlin Wall.

The catalogue for *Public Preparation* has contested the stability of the meanings of key terms associated with the exhibition, with the open invitation for the reader to interpret these 'given' definitions. Included in the concise *Dictionary of Terms*[24] are:

A-Assimilation
C-Chauvinism
E-Ethnic group, ethnicity
F-Fascism
I-Identity
I-Ideology
I-Integration
M-Migration
M-Minority
M-Multiculturalism
N-Nation
N-National rights
N-Nationalism
N-Nation-state
N-Nazism
P-Patriotism
P-Propaganda
R-Racism
X-Xenophobia

The given definitions demarcate the socio-economic and political spaces we occupy geographically and mentally; spaces that make us, spaces we breathe, less or more consciously. *Public Preparation* certainly opened the possibility for more democratic reframing; 'opening' up key institutional terms, vocabularies and, subsequently, challenging the reduction of our life to what Foucault termed as *bio-politics*[25].

We require new interlocutors; skills that allow us to translate and work across cultural divides and multiple languages to act against the bio-politics stream. I certainly include myself as part of this collective project of Diaspora, a movement that also encompasses spaces of, as John Berger referred to[26], "the countless personal choices, encounters, illuminations, sacrifices, new desires, grief and finally, memories...which are, in the strictest sense, incidental to the movement". Incidental yet important, opening up possibilities for shaping new heteronomies.

## Un-categorising

A Diaspora-infused movement of a more performative nature, loosely situated in feminist praxis (without addressing it by name), provides a politically charged platform of investigation. Feminist politics don't need to appear explicit (as for instance it did in *Gender Check*), rather, 'feminisms' and 'post-feminisms' have become conflated or perhaps appropriated here in the discourses of artists, critics and curators working with the politics of contemporary arts and new media.

Seemingly, amongst many artists, curators and writers, there is now a strong interest in developing new ways of working in conjunction with a public that attempts to blur a distinction between the art and the audiences. In *Searching for Art's New Publics* (2010)[27], David Beech argues for the art of encounter; capitalising on Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, Bishop's antagonisms and participatory art objects, and Kester's ethics of artistic conduct. In seeking new ways of engaging the public in knowledge exchange through art discourse, we need to be mindful of constructing social divisions through participation, including hierarchies of authorship, responsibility and control. These hierarchies also include geographies of regions and institutional boundaries. Further, there is a risk of re-appropriation, such as the UK's latest sound-bite of the *Big Society*[28]. Lord Nat Wei, a social entrepreneur who currently advises the coalition Government on aspects of taking forward the *Big Society* agenda and driving implementation, has recently contacted Rael with regard to *Public Preparation*...

If the next step is to motivate collective action, the task for artists, writers and cultural workers should not be to defend what we have – a socially divided neo-liberal system, of which a capitalist driven hierarchical 'art' is a part, and an unfolding global corporate capitalism. As Slavoj Žižek graphically illustrated in reference to his book *Violence*, democratically narrating it on Youtube[29]: "Is not our consumerist society one big Gulag?"[30] The game that global capitalism allows us to play today cannot go on forever. What we need, instead, is to affirm what art might be; a challenging, bold, provocative and seductive alternative to the status quo. In a way, I would argue, a feminist perspective in a form of performative movement, without border and without name, may provide a way forward ...to wake us up from political apathy, manifested as ever more atomised pretences of *me*-culture and a mode of being-by-consumption; *jouissance* and enchantments of entrepreneurial spirit and activism propagated by heteronormativity and media spin.

To A. M. and all those on the other side.

BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY
Budapest Version
YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED!
Opening: March 21, 7pm
On view: March 22 throughout April 5, 2011
Opening hours: Tue–Fri 4pm–7pm
Organizer: Hungarian University of Fine Arts
www.publicpreparation.org
labor.c3.hu
Curator: Rael Artel

### Notes

1. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Duke University Press: Durham, 2003)
2. Katarzyna Kosmala, 'Expanded Cities in Expanded Europe: Resisting Identities, Feminist Politics and their Utopias', *Third Text*, 24(5): 541-555. 2010.
3. Jonathan Bate (Ed) *The Public Value of the Humanities* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2011) opens up one of key debates aimed to maintain support for education and the role of the arts and humanities in cultural life.
4. Joanna Rajkowska, 'Under the Palm Tree', *Public Preparation. Conteporary Nationalism and Critical Art Practices*. Rael Artel (Ed) (Tallinn, 2010). p. 24.
5. Katarzyna Kosmala, 2010 pp. 542-543.
6. Michel Foucault, The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008). p. 148.
7. Michel Foucault, *ibid*.
8. Benjamin Noys, 'The Grammar of Neoliberalism', Accelerationism Workshop, Goldsmiths: London (14 September 2010).
9. See http://criticalpracticechelsea.org/wiki/index.php?title=Alternativa_meeting_in_Gdansk_-_December_2010
10. Mihaela Mudure 'Zeugmatic spaces; East/Central European Feminisms' in Blagojevic, J. Kolozova K and Slapsak, S. (Eds) *Gender and Identity: Theories from and/or on South-Eastern Europe* (Athena, KaktusPrint, Belgrade 2006). p. 420. See also Katarzyna Kosmala 2010 p. 545.
11. http://www.panix.com/~lnp3/faq/uneven_development.htm
12. *Ibid*. There is still a large area across the region occupied by rural communities, many living on a sustainable economy, at times deficient with regard to the modern contemporary living standards and education. (Iveković, 2006)
13. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 2003.
14. Kathy Battista, 'Performing Feminism', *Art Monthly*, February, 2011.
15. Nancy Frazer, 'Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History', *New Left Review*, 56, March-April, 2009, p 99
16. Chris Townsend 'Protest Art' Art Monthly, February 2007
17. Marina Gržinić in conversation with Ana Vulanovic. In Gržinić M and Velagic T (Eds) *New Media Technology, Science and Politics: The Video Art of Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid*, (Locker: Vienna, 2008).
18. *Ibid*.
19. Rael Artel in a virtual interview with me. 19-20 February 2011.
20. Marina Gržinić, 'Global Capitalism and Turbo-Fascism', *Public Preparation. Conteporary Nationalism and Critical Art Practices,* Rael Artel (Ed) (Tallinn, 2010). p. 56.
21. Aneta Szyłak and Oliver Ressler (Eds) *Alternative Economies, Alternative Societies* (Wyspa Institute of Art, Gdańsk 2007)
22. Tanya Muravskaya in conversation with Rael Artel in *Public Preparation. Conteporary Nationalism and Critical Art Practices*. Rael Artel (Ed) (Tallinn, 2010). p. 79.
23. Real Artel, 'The Curator's Forward to the Exhibition', Let's Talk about Nationalism! Between Ideology and Identity Exhibition Catalogue. Kumu Art Museum, Tallin, 2010. p. 15.
24. Eva Piirimäe, Dictionary of Terms [EN], *Let's Talk about Nationalism! Between Ideology and Identity,* Exhibition Catalogue. Kumu Art Museum, Tallin, 2010. p. 77.
25. *Bio-power*: a technology of power, a way of managing people as a group; the practice of modern states and their regulation of their subjects through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations." (p.140) *Histoire de la sexualite. I: la Volonte de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, 'An Introduction'*, trans. R. Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1978, in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
26. John Berger, *Hold Everything Dear. Dispatches on Survival and Resistance*, (Verso: London, 2007). p. 2
27. Jeni Walwin (Ed) *Searching for Art's New Publics*, (Intellect Press, 2010).
28. *Big Society*: still under the external discipline of the market, restrained by administration processes, and importantly under an internal discipline in the way people are intrinsically (morally) motivated. It is self-organising ... but obviously that organising stops at that (form of) organisation.
29. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5r8C6O0Jk5E
30. Slavoj Žižek, *Violence*, 2008.

# Make Whichever You Find Work

Anthony Iles & Marina Vishmidt

'Art's double character as both autonomous and fait social is incessantly reproduced on the level of its autonomy.' – Theodor Adorno

'If you take hold of a samovar by its stubby legs, you can use it to pound nails, but that is not its primary function.' – Viktor Shklovsky

## Introduction

The recent uptake of the post-autonomist immaterial labour thesis draws cultural practitioners closer to the critical self-recognition of their own labour (waged and otherwise) as alienated, as well its formal commonality with other kinds of affective labour at large.[1] Art finds itself in a new relation with abstract value, whether it's the typical forms of contemporary work or financial mechanisms. This applies both to the structural re-composition of work by 'creative' and self-propelled forms of exploitation as well as the inscription of art in social policy agendas tending to enhance market values. In an unprecedented way, art not only reflects but revises the productive forces, shading into forces of 'non-production' and devalorisation in an era of debt-financed austerity. However, as art expands to include more and more fields of social action within its imaginative and institutional remit (political activity, work, education), the paradox remains that the social effectiveness of art is guaranteed by its separation from capitalist work. Thus, art's estrangement from labour continues apace, but, at this historical juncture, coincides with labour's estrangement from labour: labouring subjects who do not identify with themselves as labour. On the one hand all labour becomes in some sense aesthetic self-creation, on the other, formerly unalienated forms of activity are subsumed by capitalist social relations on an unprecedented scale. All this poses the contradiction that, rather than heralding communism, the enactment of micro-utopian experiments in spaces overdetermined by existing social relations dominated by abstract value comprises a measure of, not how close but, how far we are from the emergence of truly emancipatory practices.

## Class Relational

'The social character of production does not prefigure anything: it merely renders the basis of value contradictory.'[2]

Value is the capitalist category par excellence – the category and lens through which every thing, every object and all social relations are viewed. Value, with its twin poles of use-value and exchange-value, is the core of the real abstraction that mediates all social relations through the commodity.

'[...] there is no use-value other than in the form of value in capitalist society, if value and capital constitute a forceful, totalising form of socialisation that shapes every aspect of life.'[3]

In a society organised by the abstraction of value, that is, a society in which profit is the imperative for co-operation and production, the chief product not the commodity but the class relation between capital and labour: this is why it makes more sense to speak of capitalism as a social relation rather than an economic system. This social relation has been de-stabilised in the decades of the neoliberal turn, as de-valorisation and debt replaced expansion in the financialised economies of the West. Globally, the growth in surplus populations greatly exceeds those earning a living from the fabled spread of market relations to the overheated industries and real estate of China and south-east Asia. Class, like labour, is now experienced as an 'external constraint'.[4] While it can be argued that by and large most people have always related to capitalist work as an external constraint rather than as a source of pride or class belonging[5], the implication is rather that work has increasingly been de-valued of all political *and* economic salience. We only need refer to the numerous instances of factory closures in recent years in which workers have mobilised to demand bigger payouts and not to keep their jobs: the terrain of struggle has shifted to reproduction. As described by Marx this overarching dynamic has been in play since the introduction of machinery within large scale industry: 'the machine does not free the worker from the work, but rather deprives the work itself of all content.'[6] Similarly, through its own logic of inexorable expansion, art has arrived at a period of disidentification with its terms and categories. Art becomes the agent of hollowing out of all which is incorporated into it – participation becomes instrumentalisation, representation becomes parody, autonomy becomes hard labour, politicisation becomes cynicism. Doubtless, art has been involved in this endgame since reflexivity became an integral part of the concept of what art was.[7] Art as we know it in the present and recent past is in fact characterised by its role as a 'vanishing mediator', terminally driven to dis-affiliate with its own disciplinary boundaries and to collapse the distance with all which lies outside it. The 'aesthetic regime', as discussed by Jacques Rancière, is in fact nothing more than this tendency to collapse distinctions, hierarchy, representational orders and so forth, guaranteeing itself a 'weak' autonomy by relentlessly levelling the ossified categories of industrial modernity. However serviceable this might be as a formal sketch of the raison d'etre of the 19th and 20th century avant-garde, it stops somewhat short of the specific de-naturing operations enacted by 'contemporary' art in an historical era where dis-affiliation and estrangement is primarily the affective and structural force of money, in relation to which art may offer a provocative realism, a 'cultural confinement' (Robert Smithson) of broken allegories but also real strategies situated in a social field of 'non-art' (labour, politics) increasingly devoid of content and ruled by contingency.

It is possible to draw a link between the critique of labour as a ground for human emancipation (communism) in recent debates around the term 'communisation' and the critique of labour found in critical aesthetics, from Schiller onwards, which proposed a genuinely human community bonded together by play rather than production; collective determination as a work of art. The rejection of work and the affirmation of direct social relations unmediated by the alienating abstractions of money, state or labour is an invariant across Romantic aesthetics and are also reflected in the political theory emerging at that time, such as Utopian socialism, continuing to pervade the mature writings of Marx and having great currency across the Left spectrum up to the present. But the rejection of work is not simply a constant in the attempts to re-envision social

Right: *The Last Days of Jack Shepard* (2009), video stills, Anja Kirschner and David Panos. kirschner-panos.info

Below: *Zero Dollar* (1978-84), Cildo Meireles

Bottom: *Ten Thousand Cents* (2008), drawn by 10000 anonymous artists, custom software, variable Size. Initiated by Aaron Koblin & Takashi Kawashima. tenthousandcents.com

relations on more emancipatory lines beyond the capitalist forms by which we know them; it is also the problematic at the root of art. Yet, there is a contradictory dynamic of futility, absurdity and waste in the dominance of abstract work as well. Concrete examples are easy to come by, whether it's (the perhaps apocryphal) digging ditches and filling them in again in the works programmes of the Great Depression or the workfare and 'work-readiness' initiatives through which outsourced employment services fulfil their government targets in the neo-feudalism of the 'Big Society'. Times of capitalist crisis turn the usual reserve army of the unemployed into the biopolitical problem of 'surplus populations' which the state can no longer afford to support, a problem which elicits more regressive and insufficient responses from the state every time it occurs. It may be that in the shift to be currently observed from a cod-progressive New Labour agenda of social inclusion founded upon financialisation to a hardly-unexpected one based upon serfdom when the asset bubbles collapse, art could potentially again become a 'progressive' critic of the mode of production and the barbarism of its social relations, tied as it is for its material and critical identity to those selfsame relations.

## A Kind of Disjunctive Synthesis

'The artist's political engagement cannot consist in expanding art into society, but only in reducing art's claims through the deconstruction of those mechanisms that establish and maintain "the artistic" as different from other social practices.'[8]

The project of the dissolution of art into life – expressed variously in surrealism, the situationists, dadaism, constructivism, productivism, futurism, conceptual and performance art – has drawn life into art's orbit but also bound art closely to the potential transformation of general social life. The analogy with communism is that communism argues for the generalisation of creativity through the overcoming of the social domination of abstract labour and the value-form, which will also mean a dissolution of the boundary between a reified creativity and a rarefied uselessness – art – and the production of use-values – work.

The disjunction, on the other hand, comes from the tradition of critical Marxist aesthetics, which argues that it is precisely the other way around – art must maintain its difference from capitalist life in order to exert a critical purchase on it. It is the degree to which the separation between art and life, between art and work, is viewed as a problem which can be overcome in the here and now or the symptom of a problem which can only be overcome with the destruction of the value-form and the re-founding of social relations on other terms that marks the difference between these two traditions. Fundamentally, they are premised upon a variant understanding of art's role in capitalist subsumption.[9] Would art disappear in communism or would everything become art? The same question can be asked about work – would communism entail a generalisation or the abolition of work? After 500 years of capitalism, are we any longer in a position to distinguish capitalist forms from their unadulterated contents, i.e. work and capitalist work, art and commodity art, life and capitalist life, even use-value and exchange-value?

## Artists on the Assembly Line

'The figure of the avant-garde artist and that of the factory worker, both ghostly and interdependent, are two poles of modern alienation... they confront us as figures calling for an equal degree of wariness.'[10]

The spectre of the artist intervening directly in production, has, like Rodchenko dressed in a production suit fashioned by Varvara Stepanova, continued to haunt Left art historians and social-critical artists alike. The artist going into industry has always had an element of dressing up. Just as communist intellectuals in Weimar Germany competed, both in their lives and their works, to 'look' more proletarian, the most radical of Soviet constructivist and productivist artists appear ultimately to be participating in a dress rehearsal for a putative revolutionary role curtailed by Stalinism.[11] One irony here is that those artists who completely dissolved themselves into the figure of the worker are for that reason unrecorded in art history.[12] Another is that as radicals increasingly fell foul of the disciplinary arm of the Soviet state, many who had celebrated the dissolution of art into industrial production met their end worked to death.[13]

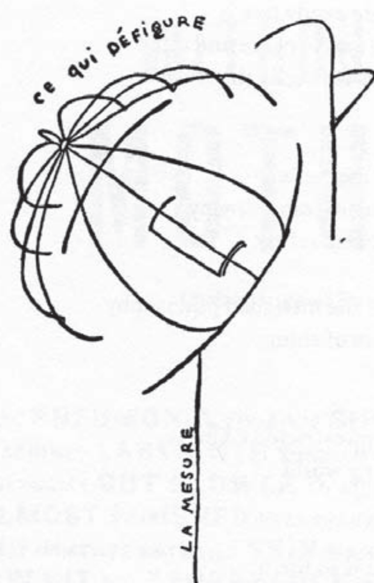
Under the rationalising Taylorism of the New Economic Plan (NEP), Soviet production after 1921 did not depart from, but rather aped value production, albeit in dysfunctional form at first. In this context an experimental concert held at Baku in 1922 involving the foghorns of the Caspian Fleet, factory sirens, artillery, hydroplanes, and choirs can be interpreted as a kind of 'cargo cult', calling forth an imago of industrialisation.[14] Progress was regression, seen in the light of the spurious combo of capitalist methods of industrial production and anti-market forms of distribution, themselves vitiated by the NEP. Likewise, the new model of artwork as embodying truth to production (*faktura*) did not go far enough, stopping short of a thorough critique of value and pre-existing models of production. Instead, those artists who had celebrated creative intervention in the factories effectively worked to discipline and police workers in the work place and outside it.[15]

A proponent of 'left' productivism, Boris Arvatov, made a contribution to this debate which was overlooked at the time and has been only recently recovered. His theoretical output attempts to close the enforced distinction between production and consumption native to capital and reproduced intact in much Marxist theory. In a recently translated text, Arvatov foregrounds the status of *things* as central to the communist transformation of everyday life.

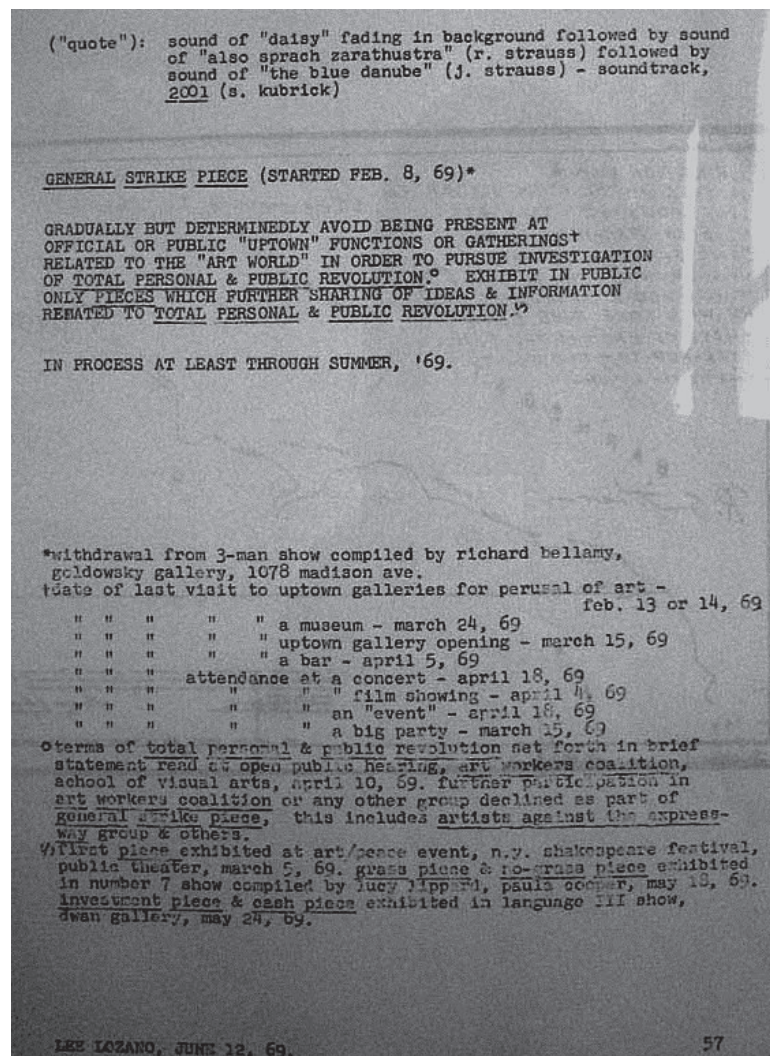
'If the significance of the human relation to the Thing has not been understood, or has been only partially understood as a relation to the means of production, this is because until now Marxists have known only the bourgeois world of things.'[16]

Arvatov insists that the polarities which organise bourgeois life, i.e. labour in opposition to everyday life, consumption in opposition to production, would be completely dissolved under communist social relations. Instead of being freed of materiality, proletarian culture will be 'imbued with the deepest sense of Things'.[17] He goes on to imagine a state in which objects become 'comrades' or 'co-workers', where humans have an immediate and sensuous relationship to the material which constitutes their world. The agency formerly attributed to objects as bearers of value, 'a relation between persons – expressed as a relation between things',[18] was to be abolished and the thing become 'functional and active' in a different sense.[19]

Arvatov's prefiguration of a 'communist object' and new materialist social relations sits uneasily with art and labour's instrumentalisation under Bolshevism. Drawing upon the insights of Walter Benjamin on collecting, we can speculate that it is only things liberated from use which cease to be commodities. The socialist object is not just one that's been taken out of commodity exchange and put to good use in a new society; if it was really socialist, it would never be put to use as we know it.[20]




Left: *VIS-À-VIS* (1918), Francis Picabia


("quote"): sound of "daisy" fading in background followed by sound of "also sprach zarathustra" (r. strauss) followed by sound of "the blue danube" (j. strauss) - soundtrack, 2001 (s. kubrick)

GENERAL STRIKE PIECE (STARTED FEB. 8, 69)*

GRADUALLY BUT DETERMINEDLY AVOID BEING PRESENT AT OFFICIAL OR PUBLIC "UPTOWN" FUNCTIONS OR GATHERINGS† RELATED TO THE "ART WORLD" IN ORDER TO PURSUE INVESTIGATION OF TOTAL PERSONAL & PUBLIC REVOLUTION.° EXHIBIT IN PUBLIC ONLY PIECES WHICH FURTHER SHARING OF IDEAS & INFORMATION RELATED TO TOTAL PERSONAL & PUBLIC REVOLUTION.

IN PROCESS AT LEAST THROUGH SUMMER, '69.

*withdrawal from 3-man show compiled by richard bellamy, goldowsky gallery, 1078 madison ave.
†date of last visit to uptown galleries for perusal of art - feb. 13 or 14, 69
" " " " " a museum - march 24, 69
" " " " " uptown gallery opening - march 15, 69
" " " " " a bar - april 5, 69
" " " attendance at a concert - april 18, 69
" " " " " " film showing - april 4, 69
" " " " " an "event" - april 18, 69
" " " " " a big party - march 15, 69
°terms of total personal & public revolution set forth in brief statement read at open public hearing, art workers coalition, school of visual arts, april 10, 69. further participation in art workers coalition or any other group declined as part of general strike piece, this includes artists against the expressway group & others.
first piece exhibited at art/peace event, n.y. shakespeare festival, public theater, march 5, 69. grass piece & no-grass piece exhibited in number 7 show compiled by lucy lippard, paula cooper, may 18, 69. investment piece & cash piece exhibited in language III show, dwan gallery, may 24, 69.

LEE LOZANO, JUNE 12, 69. 57

Above: *General Strike Piece, Feb. 8, 1969*, Lee Lozano.

## The Communist Imaginary

Having drawn from accounts of Soviet productivism the twin problematic of an insufficient critique of the value-form and the tendency of artists to police productive output in industry, John Roberts attempts to retrieve a 'communist imaginary' within relational aesthetics and socially engaged practices.[21] This can be juxtaposed with Stewart Martin's attempt to formulate an 'artistic communism' by revisiting the aesthetic content of Marx's vision of communism contra the 'artistic capitalism' enacted by these 'relational practices'.

Despite noting the separation within the 'relational' turn of liberatory social activity from a critique of labour and its aestheticisation of politics, Roberts sees in this 'genre' a valuable 'holding operation' which 'keeps open the ideal horizon of egalitarianism, equality and free exchange.'[22] On the other hand, as described by Martin, relational aesthetics stands as an epiphenomenon of the current phase of real subsumption within capitalism.[23]

'The dissolution of art into life not only presents new content for commodification, but a new form of it in so far as art or culture has become a key medium through which commodification has been extended to what previously seemed beyond the economy.'[24]

Martin therefore recognises relational aesthetics as a form of 'capitalist productivism' while Roberts' commitment to a 'labour theory of culture' causes him to perceive a general limit in contemporary art's inability to imagine a space for artists' collaboration with workers. This is anomalous with regards to earlier criticisms of productivist interventions into the factory and that it elides the very question of the indistinction between artistic and alienated labour. Having failed in the 'factory', radical art must shift its attention to 'the social factory'.

One of the problems of recent accounts of the relation between productive labour and artistic labour is a reliance upon post-autonomist accounts of the socialisation of work in advanced capitalism. Central to these accounts is Maurizio Lazzarato's concept of so-called 'immaterial labour' – the notion that all work was becoming increasingly technologised, dependent upon and productive of communication and co-operation rather than a finished product. A common move is to bridge two concepts of autonomy – that of art's autonomy in capitalism which was developed by Theodor Adorno, and the autonomy of the working class as developed by the 'workerist' communism of 1970s Italy. Significantly, many commentators overlook

the fact that immediately after its formulation Lazzarato quickly abandoned the term and its problems:

'But the concept of immaterial labour was filled with ambiguities. Shortly after writing those articles I decided to abandon the idea and haven't used it since. One of the ambiguities it created had to do with the concept of immateriality. Distinguishing between the material and the immaterial was a theoretical complication we were never able to resolve.'[25]

In the early 21st century, claims for the hegemony of a class of immaterial labourers could be disputed by pointing out the drive of capital towards absolute surplus extraction in the Global south. After the 2008 financial crisis, the dramatic shake out of overinflated values and optimism about the agency of this new class brought to new light the relation between the material and the immaterial. Furthermore, viewing contemporary labour through the lens of immaterial labour tended to reproduce rather than disassemble the dominant division of mental and manual labour in capitalism. Art can then be seen as the fetishisation of this division, which is refined and generalised in the 'creativisation' of 'post-Fordist' work, as well as in adding value to de-industrialised locales.

According to Stewart Martin in his 2008 essay 'The Pedagogy of Human Capital', terms such as 'immaterial labour' and 'self-valorisation' both operate with a problematic concept of autonomy. Autonomy can be said to have been thoroughly internalised by capital in its attempts to collapse the subjectivity of living labour as its own and through its moves to ideologically and actually commodify previously non-capitalised areas of life. The move to aesthetics is then seen as a way of dissolving the autonomy/heteronomy distinction, reliant ultimately on domination (even and especially when it's the 'self-legislating' kind), through the agency of play and the invention of 'forms-of-life' resistant to an autonomy thinkable only through capital's laws.[26] This harmonious prospect does presuppose a rupture with existing forms of 'capitalist life'. This rupture has been explored historically in specific 'avant-garde' art practices, left communist movements, and in the recent period through specific experiments in art that perform and perforate the certainties of art, finance and work.[27] Viewed thus, we can outline other relationships that bind artworks to the political economy of their times.

## Financialisation: Form Follows Finance

Theodor Adorno conceives of 'aesthetic forces of production' which inescapably imprint the artwork.

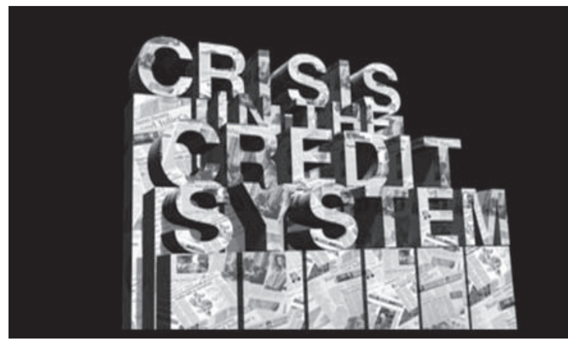
'...the artist works as social agent, indifferent to society's own consciousness. He embodies the social forces of production without necessarily being bound by the censorship dictated by the relations of production.'[28]

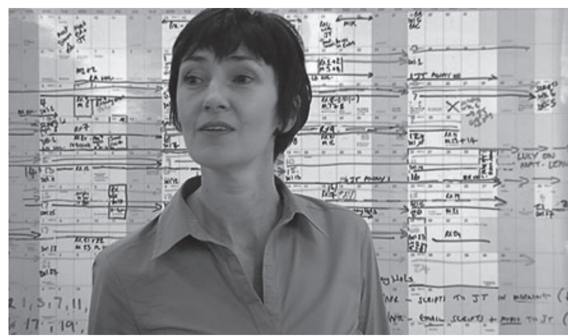
Art manifests the existing forces of production, but can deviate from their determinations through the 'indeterminacy' native to the discrete agency of art (Kant). In his book *Symbolic Economies*, Jean-Joseph Goux relates Marx's schema of the development of a general equivalent to the invention of forms of representation; of art, literature and language.[29] He contends that modes of signification and capitalist systems of exchange develop in parallel.

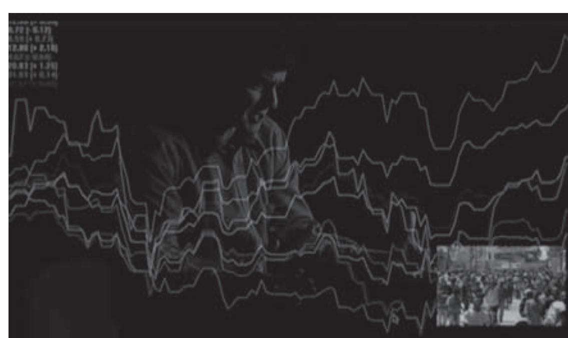
Goux describes the tendency within capitalist exchange towards abstraction and the tendency to 'dematerialisation' in art as two sides of a general crisis of representation punctuated by historically locatable crises in the value form (1919, 1929 and 1971). Each crisis marks a limit to the existing system's ability to represent real world goods through money, and in each case resolution of the crisis is by way of an expansion, or further abstraction, of the money-form. Put crudely, the drives towards abstraction in both art and money are entwined.

Drawing on Goux's theory, George Baker has argued that Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp's development of the readymade was a response to the proliferating commodities of the early twentieth century:

'[...] the readymade responded not to the commodity as an object, but to its existence as a form of exchange, a tool of circulation, a temporary pitstop on the endless racetrack of money.'[30]







Right: *Crisis in the Credit System* (2008), video stills, a four-part drama, Melanie Gilligan. www.crisisinthecreditsystem.org.uk

Francis Picabia's work, *Vis a Vis*, 1918, bearing the phrase 'The measure – that which disfigures', points to the centrality of the measure to capital's expansion and equilibrium. Capitalist exchange is the mediation of all production through a general or universal equivalent – money/gold. Money is therefore the measure which disfigures all by quantifying all. The 'emergency' suspension of the gold standard by Britain, Germany and the US during the Second World War coincided with a crisis of representation in art that resulted in the readymade and 'automatic' forms which bring artistic representation and economic exchange into an uncomfortable collusion.

Art is both an innovator in forms of representation – extending the limit of what can be represented – and, at times, its undoing – eschewing equivalence and disrupting orders of measure. Art as a special commodity rebels against its commodity status by seeking a transvaluation of all values.

'Great 20th-century avant-garde art – and poetry in particular – from Celan to Brecht and Montale, has demonstrated the crisis of experiential units of measure. ... This emphasis on immoderation, disproportion and the crisis in units of measure is to be credited greatly to avant-garde art and this is also where it edges up to communism.'[31]

Arguably the movement towards financialisation created a dynamic where art and capital showed parallel tendencies to escape from engagement with labour and into the self-reflexive abstraction of value. As gold became paper and then electronic signs, money increasingly became autonomous from productive labour. The movement of self-expanding value, appearing as money making money on financial markets, dissolves all prior values and relationships into abstract wealth. Similarly in art, expansion of its claims upon material previously alien to it tends towards the hollowing out of this material's substance. One notable aspect of dematerialisation in art is its proximity to deindustrialisation. The early stages of the period of advanced financialisation or 'neoliberalism' saw a re-engagement with industrial materials and (vacant) industrial spaces by artists. Another is the tendency towards abstract thought and linguistic claims with the integration systems and new technologies. In this sense, the conditions set by the movements of finance provide the material and conceptual parameters for art. Art operates in these conditions but also upon them to transform their terms.[32] Both speculative commodities, art is backed by the credibility of the artist and money by the credibility of the state. As such, like credit notes, art is a gamble on the future which will not necessarily pay off: 'Artworks draw credit from a praxis that has yet to begin and no one knows whether anything backs their letters of credit.'[33]

Yet art is engaged in an endless testing of its own condition which anticipates negations of the determinations of the value form from inside, rather than beyond, its tensions. And if the complicity between money and art has led to unseemly games with both, the strain of this relationship has also ushered in forms of critical reflexivity. Some recent artworks which enact this are Melanie Gilligan's four-part video, *Crisis in the Credit System*; Anja Kirschner and David Panos' *The Last Days of Jack Shepard*, which connects the 2008 financial crisis to the South Sea Bubble; Hito Steyerl's *In Free Fall* (2010), or Goldin & Senneby's multi-author distributed filmic, literary and performance project, *Looking For Headless*. *10,000 cents* by Aaron Koblin and Takashi Kawashima uses the digital labour management of Amazon's Mechanical Turk to create a replica $100 bill.[34]

Throughout art's development in advanced capitalism, tension with commodification has also been preformative in other ways, for instance by gravitating towards uselessness and negation. The critique of commodification reaches an apotheosis with art's confrontation with contemporary finance, for in finance art's negation of use has been mirrored, refracted and become abstract domination. If, in art we find the outline of an emancipatory practice to come then it is important to bear in mind that this remains a model and not a programme; it is 'a model of emancipated labour, not the model through which the emancipation of labour will be accomplished.'[35]

## What is There in Uselessness to Cause You Distress?

'If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value.'[36]

In art from the 1960s onwards, though tendentially earlier, some might say from Duchamp, developed late capitalist modernity offered some exits for practitioners who saw the division of labour between art work and regular work as a political issue. One can 'refuse work' within art, rejecting the making of art objects and socialisation as an atomised elite subjectivity by exiting the art world and art practices and becoming invisible or imperceptible

in its terms. There was also the rehearsal of work in the art domain, from proletarian stylistics to managerial protocols, marking the shift to the so-called 'post-industrial' in the West. Also, there was the problematising of the distinction of art work from domestic labour. Conceptual art itself was premised on an expansion of art's competence via the dissolution of its borders. The strategy of disappearance was enacted, by, among many others, Lee Lozano who withdrew from art socality, art making and art institutions, Charlotte Posensenske who went into social activism, or Lygia Clark who went into tactile therapeutic interventions (all of whose work has since then of course been re-capitalised by critics, curators and collectors). The industrial/post-industrial shift was reflected in the work of Tehching Hsieh and Robert Morris, for instance; and the problematising of artwork/housework was seen in the oeuvres of Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Mary Kelly, who followed the premises of de-materialisation, feminism and psychoanalysis. Seth Siegelaub's career as a curator, lawyer and artist in one would be exemplary of the classic conceptualist act of expanding art's competences by blurring its borders. The paradoxical identification with extra-artistic labour while rejecting artistic labour entered another phase with artists such as Gustav Metzger (leader of an art strike and proponent of auto-destructive art) a pre-eminent operator of the 'creative-destructive' vector at the time, and the Artist Placement Group.[37]

The Artist Placement Group (APG), operating in the UK and Europe from 1966-1989, initiated 'placements' of artists in firms and organisations, creating a forerunner to artist residencies. The main difference with the artist residency as it exists now was that the artist was re-defined as an Incidental Person (IP), a kind of de-skilled and disinterested agent whose insertion into 'alien' organisational sites promised no specific outcome. The earlier-cited repudiation of art, whether it was negative, e.g. withdrawal from art, or positive, e.g. expansion of art's remit, here took a further turn. The IP bracketed both 'art' and 'work' in the emergent concept of the 'professional' as a neutral and unmarked social being.

For the early 19th century Utopian socialist, the Comte de Saint-Simon, politics was a 'science of production' and the role of artists was itself a political role bound up with the multivalent aspects of art, use and poiesis.'[38] Here we can see prefigured the deployment of artists in industry as promoted and practised by APG. The significance of this Saint-Simonian precursor is not only that from a certain perspective APG reproduce the role of the artist as part of a problematic managerial vanguard of a new system. Saint-Simon's 'prosperity' is not productive in the capitalist sense but emancipates workers from work to pursue 'enjoyments'.

Traditionally, capitalist modernity has excluded art from instrumentality because it was seen as an exception, a free creative practice which was pursued for different ends than other business or professional activity, and untainted by politics.[39] But this can also of course be re-framed as placing art in service of a 'higher' instrumentality, the one of displacing and reconciling bourgeois contradictions. The Adornian complex of art as the absolute commodity captures this sharply, if hermetically. The concept of the Incidental Person then could be read as a subversive affirmation of this: putting purposeless purpose to work.

APG's 'non-technical non-solution' exposed them to accusations of having social-democratic illusions, fetishising management, and the naivete of an explicitly non-antagonistic research-based approach.[40] Whereas APG's placements were guided by a characteristically obtuse notion of 'use', artists are inserted into social contexts now precisely because they are deemed useful

for executing state or corporate goals. Such an outcome is already evident in the history of the contortions APG went through in trying to 'sell situations' to UK culture bureaucracies in the 1970s, as they alternately embrace and back off from the entrepreneurial and employment potential of the 'placements'. They assert that they aim to 'provide a service to Art, not a service to artists', while the notion of the Incidental Person is itself predicated on a loss of self-evidence of what Art is or even its right to exist, as Adorno put it. The IP is a 'de-materialised' artist.[41] The very absence of instrumental benefit in the long 'time-base' impact of the presence of the IP in organisations was framed by APG as economically productive in the visionary sense today's business climate needs. By the early 1980s, the concept of 'human capital' had begun to circulate in policy circles, and APG's proposals started to make more sense; importantly, 'human capital' was taken in the most diffuse of senses as well, contrary to the accounting fictions that characterised the later 'creative economy' paradigm.

A few implications arise here. One is the IP's repudiation of the Productivist legacy of sending artists into the factories and improving the labour process: the IP brief was totally undetermined – APG took artistic alienation from productive life seriously. Yet this challenge to use-value and useful labour was beholden to a vision of artistic neutrality which can be seen as readily morphing into the non-specialised but omni-adaptable 'creative' of today. The negativity of non-specialism has to harbour a moment of refusal or open itself up to be colonised by whatever capitalist forms of life are in the air at the time. And there has been a lot written, by Benjamin Buchloh and others, about the 'aesthetic of administration' really translating into the artist adopting the position of the manager or bureaucrat, rather than worker, thus reinforcing the division between mental and manual labour.

A retort to APG's attempts to expose commodity production to the transformative non-instrumental ends of aesthetic pursuit can be derived from the self-activity of workers at one of the companies they targeted for placements: Lucas Aerospace. While APG were unsuccessfully approaching management at the company, the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Steward's Committee was countering management-imposed restructuring with their own alternative corporate plan. The plan proposed the reorganisation of the company around the production of 'socially useful products and human centred technologies' developed by the workers themselves.[42] Setting out to address 'the exponential change in the organic composition of capital and the resultant growth of massive structural unemployment' directly, the Shop Steward's Committee practically rejected the division of manual and intellectual work, forming a 'unique combine of workers within Lucas between high level technologists and shop floor semi-skilled.'[43] Wary not-only of the traditional command structure of management, Lucas workers were also conscious of the incursions into the abode of production by the autonomous sphere of finance experienced as a second order of remote command.[44]

The plan was developed on company time and in the context of sit-ins and demonstrations to contest the top-down restructuring. This meant that the 'creativity' of labour was matched by, and in fact conditioned by, the negativity of labour expressed by stopping or slowing-down production.

The Lucas Corporate Plan posed the problem of the emancipation of labour as a struggle over the content of work and the use-values it produces. Yet this approach strategically included both a rejection of and a compromise with the market.[45]

## What's The Use?

Because all capitalist commodities are products of abstract labour, the dimension of use-value supposedly unrelated to social form is subsumed in this homogeneity and abstraction insofar as use-value is part of the commodity. Use-value bears the same relation to exchange-value as concrete labour does to abstract labour; it is its opposite (particular, individual), but subsumed into the general form of value which hollows out particularity.

Moishe Postone identifies 'labour' as a capitalist category and thus a reified one.[46] This is relevant also to the de-socialised or idealised positioning of use-value, and ultimately testifies that the art into life versus critical autonomy paradox for art cannot be resolved within the form of value so long as the social form of their production is determined by value. The form of social labour in capitalism is nowhere the same thing as concrete labour, or even the ahistorical 'metabolic interaction with nature':

'"Labour" by its very nature is unfree, unhuman, unsocial activity, determined by private property and creating private property. Hence the abolition of private property will become a reality only when it is conceived as the abolition of "labour" (an abolition which, of course, has become possible only as a result of labour itself, that is to say, has become possible as a result of the material activity of society and which should on no account be conceived as the replacement of one category by another).'[47]

Until recently, communist theory posed the problem of production as one of separating use-value from exchange-value, yet these insights suggest that destruction of the capital-labour relationship must also bracket off and destroy use-value as a constitutive category presupposed by value. The principle that labour cannot serve as a ground for emancipation is a perspective common to left communist theory like the Frankfurt School, German 'wertkritik' (value-critique) and the ideas around 'communisation' circulating today.

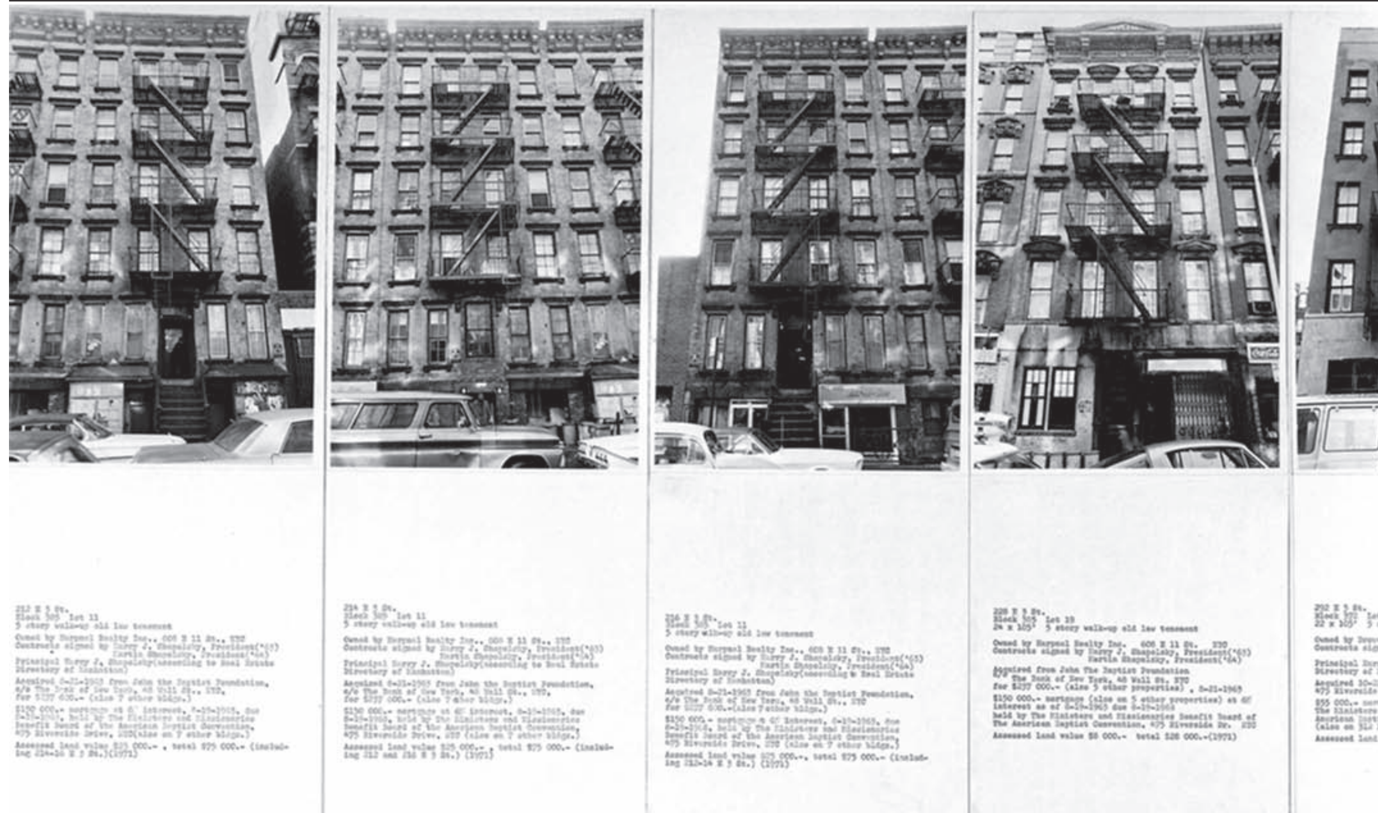
## Don't worry, mate, it's only art, it's not worth it, or: the Labour of the Negative

'It is the sphere of the *enchanted gesture*, in which the artist's special personality gives to the rest of humanity the *example*, in the form of spectacle, of those forms-of-life that they are forbidden to assume. ... Art is given a *monopoly on the how of acts*. The setting-up of an autonomous sphere wherein the how of every gesture is endlessly weighed, analysed, subjected to know-how, has not ceased to shore up the prohibition on any mention of the *how* of existence in the rest of alienated social relations.'[48]

Increasingly, artistic labour apes forms of service work in its performance of affect and forms of social provision, whilst capital (at least in the West) appears to be going through an anti-productivist, if not outright destructive turn. Current attempts to bind more closely to the market sectors not organised according to the law of value – art, but also education – testify to capital's problems of valorisation. This is a crisis of the very reproduction of the capital-labour relationship and thus of the social division of labour that holds art and labour as separate realms.

The tendency towards uselessness and negation propelled by the real subsumption under abstract labour and the commodity-form of all those expanses of social experience which

Left: *Looking for Headless* (2007-), ongoing project, Goldin+Senneby. goldinsenneby.com



Above: *Shapolski et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* (detail), Hans Haacke.

used to provide capital with a dialectical contrast and a 'standing reserve' can also be seen in the alienation from labour which simultaneously makes itself felt in art, in work and in radical politics. Returning to *Symbolic Economies* and its schemas of resonance in abstraction, it may be ventured that a common tendency of all progressive social movements at the time Goux was writing (1969) was a rejection of labour, even in the labour movements, who fought hard to wrench more money and more life, not more work, from capitalists and the State. Jean-François Lyotard was writing his famous 'evil' book, *Libidinal Economy* several years later, arguing that alienated labour is a source of self-destructive *jouissance* and can never be affirmed as a productive praxis once freed of its value-form integuments. This accords with the 'communisation' position – labour, and the class politics emerge as a hated situation enforced by capital which has nothing to do with emancipation. One also hears sometimes that neoliberalism won because people did not want to be workers any longer, but they didn't realise that not being workers meant getting rid of capitalism. The ongoing reproduction of the social relations of capital, with the politics of its class relations shattered, meant that competitive individualism becomes the only credible form of human autonomy – and the community of capital the only credible form of the human community. This situation registered quite early in the stronghold of competitive creative individualism that can be said to have prototyped it – art – in line with the the tendencies explored in the preceding discussion on financialisation and form.

The struggle over the wage and struggle against waged work has not been entirely alien to artist groups who have agitated around the issue of artists' fees or institutionalised in artists unions. The strength of those collective formations is by and large associated with the strength of the union movement and/or social democracy in their respective national bases (so Scandinavia and Canada have strong artists unions, while the attempts in the UK and the US have either failed or never coalesced). Less official groups include the Carrot Workers Collective in London, or W.A.G.E. (Working Artists in the General Economy) in NYC, who demand reimbursement for 'critical value' in 'capitalist value'. This latter is certainly a materialist critique of the non-reproduction artists are tasked with advancing for everyone – at least they should be paid for it. Yet the barrier to this provocation, which is also implicit to it, is, as Paolo Virno puts it, 'Nowadays artistic labour is turning into wage labour while the problem is, of course, how to liberate human activity in general from the form of wage labour.'[49] This question of liberating human activity is bracketed in the question of artistic labour, which, in its post-object phase, appears as labour which cannot find value on the market. Thus it is, in Marx's definition given earlier, 'useless labour', and as such can only model liberated human activity for free. This shows that the art sphere has a problematic relationship to the commodity not only at the level of the artwork, but at the level of labour. If the problem of measure comes up here, it also comes up in the relationship to temporality. Guattari and Lazzarato, among others, have contended that the political importance of art in capital is not its symptomatic distance from abstract labour, but its capacity to interrupt or displace the capitalist time – whether homogeneous and empty or fractal and just-in-time – which structures that labour and the 'multiplication of the "enterprise" form within the social body'.[50] Art can introduce an 'order of difference' into this experience of rationalised time, 'a window of meaninglessness in order to produce a new meaning'.[51] So art is capable of exposing the problem of measure, whether applied to labour or a temporality which ultimately comes down to labour-time under the form of value. Further, art stands between a conscious process and an unconscious one, closely tied to the development of individuality and difference, from which it is possible to outline a generalisation of art *different* to that which we live through today.

## Conclusion

The problem of the historic avant-garde, especially the Soviet example of Productivism, is also the problem of communism – does work need to be valorised or negated, and under what conditions? Besides Adorno, the history of philosophical aesthetics since Schiller is permeated by a rejection of work, and this can be drawn up to the last fifty years of post-avant-garde debates in roughly this trajectory: art that refuses work – art that refuses the commodity – art that refuses the 'artwork' (Conceptual art, 'service' or 'relational' practice, etc). Meanwhile, capital refuses work but only by dissolving it in the ooze of universal (debt-financed) commodification, which may include art in its moments. Throughout the 20th century a dialectic of into life versus art against capitalist life has been played out. For this reasons, the negativity of capitalist value has to be recognised as well as the negativity of labour-power, lest we reify negativity as the simple absence of productivity, anti-politics, and the charm of futility. To avoid such an easy totalisation, the link from art to finance – to self-expanding value, to recursivity and abstraction – has to be maintained. Art's relation to the value-form and role in socialising value-relations emerges in the forming of a speculative subjectivity suited to a speculative economy.

> 'Art is now the absolute freedom that seeks its end and its foundation in itself, and does not need, substantially, any content, because it can only measure itself against the vertigo caused by its own abyss. No longer is any other content – except art itself – immediately for the artist the substantiality of his consciousness, nor does it inspire him with the necessity of representing it.'[52]

This is the generic creative subjectivity of the artist, key to the Western liberal discourse since the Enlightenment, whether as civic model or as exception that proves the law of capitalist social relations,[53] and it has less relation to the negativity of labour-power than to the negativity of the ever-mutating form of value. Contra to the thesis that the dissolution of the borders between art and productive labour (or art and politics) heralds emancipation, this may be read instead as an index of the real subsumption of generic human capacities into the self-valorisation process of a capital which is no longer sure about where value comes from or how to capture it; a process as self-referential and totalising as the expanded field of art. In looking at this relation, we must remain vigilant about turning critical categories into positive ones. The history of socialist politics as well as the ideologies of capitalist futurism and the divagations of socially concerned art offer no shortage of examples of doing the opposite.

However, artworks do not simply pass through a moment which bypasses use value, but that cannot be subsumed under exchange value: they also connect with a form of activity which presages non-objective relations between subjects, activity which dismantles 'the subject as congealed technology'.[54]

> '[art] is the outcome of an activity that is not a free act of consciousness but is nonetheless an activity, and not merely a thing in itself that cannot appear to consciousness. The productivity of genius hereby exposes an activity in which consciousness and non-consciousness relate to each other as alternative modes of an absolute activity that is their common foundation.'[55]

Once art starts to 'model the shift to the service-based economy' it becomes strictly speaking impossible to distinguish art from non-art. In its articulation with the consolidation of artistic subjectivity, but also in its epigones in the creativity of finance and the self-invention of human capital, we're back to the autonomy-heteronomy nexus. Art is the apotheosis of exchange-value and the total eclipse of use-value in the Modernist artwork, but if 'form follows finance' with the centrality of abstract wealth to social relationships, then it can be argued that art that attempts to repeat labour, services and other extra-artistic practices within its institutional sphere is not just recapitulating all those practices' submission to exchange-value in their desire to become useful, but use-values' own equivocal and submissive relationship to exchange-value as the reality of capitalist existence. In this sense, current art is tied to the 'non-reproduction' of the class relation between capital and labour, and also the loss of distinction between art and labour under the rule of abstract value in the specific social forms which it has taken under financialisation – debt, precarity, innovation, rent-seeking, etc. Yet, this typology can also be seen more dialectically when the use-value embodied in work and the uselessness embodied by artwork can no longer be practically or philosophically distinguished. Viktor Shklovsky's samovar hammering a nail finds its contemporary complement in a mannequin arm breaking the glass window of a Tunisian shopping centre. As a period in which culture has been put to use every which way draws to a close and we can expect job-creation schemes to rival gallery press releases in their fantastic non-solutions to advancing doom, art's capacity to be not-identical and not-labour may appear anew in the ruins of its social synthesis, side by side with all those useful things (education, social security, 'jobs, growth, justice'...).

### Notes

1 Though there are others, the two primary accounts we are referring to are: John Roberts, 'Introduction: Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text* 23:4, 2009, pp.353-367, and Stewart Martin, 'Artistic Communism – a sketch', Third Text, 23: 4, p.482.

2 Theorie Communiste, 'Self-organisation is the first act of the revolution ; it then becomes an obstacle which the revolution has to overcome', http://libcom.org/library/self-organisation-is-the-first-act-of-the-revolution-it-then-becomes-an-obstacle-which-the-revolution-has-to-overcome

3 Endnotes, 'Communisation and Value-form Theory', in *Endnotes II*, 2010, p.88.

4 See, for example, Theorie Communiste, 'The Present Moment', http://libcom.org/library/present-moment-theorie-communiste

5 In his study of the interactions between a group of workers and utopian socialists in 19th century France,

Jacques Rancière describes the tensions between these workers who simply did not wish to work, but rather pursue any and every desire to do otherwise, and their patrician mentors who found and forged in them an image of the dignity of labour. If in Rancière's account the fault is with the middle-class leftists' lack of vision and innate reproduction of a class-relation, Theorie Communiste's thought poses the question as a structural relation which only now, after the failure of the worker's movement, can be overcome. See Jacques Rancière, *Nights of Labor,* trans. John Drury, Philadelphia: Temple University Press,1989 and Theorie Communiste Op.Cit.

6 Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol.1, Trans. Ben Fowkes, London: Penguin, 1990, p.548.

7 The reference point for this is usually located in G.F.W. Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, and is discussed at length by Rancière in several of his writings. See Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, London: Penguin, 1993 [1886] or at http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/ae/index.htm. For the Rancière discussion, see Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans Gabriel Rockhill, London: Continuum, 2004 or *Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran, London: Continuum, 2010, or *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran, Cambridge: Polity, 2009.

8 Stefan Germer, 'Haacke, Broodthaers, Beuys', October, n°45, 1989. p 54.

9 Stewart Martin, Op.Cit.

10 Tiqqun, 'A Problem of the Head', Trans. Gabriel Levine in *Opaque Presence*, Eds. Andreas Broekman and Knowbotic Research, Zurich: diaphanes, 2010, p.131.

11 John Willet, *The New Sobriety: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period 1919-1933*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1987, pp.173-176.

12 This primarily is a question of art historical visibility, but Simone Weil captures succinctly the more grisly side of this equation in her text 'The Mysticism of Work' - 'Manual labour. Time entering into the body. Through work man turns himself into matter as Christ does through the Eucharist. Work is like death.' Sian Miles (Ed.), *Simone Weil: An Anthology,* Virago, 1986, p.181.

13 Aleksei Gan, Gustav Klucis and many other constructivist pioneers died in labour camps between the 1930s and 1940s. See Richard Andrews, *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism: 1914-1932*, New York: Rizzoli, 1990, p.232 and p.263.

14 For more about the Baku Symphony see Pontus Hultén, *Poetry must be made by all! Transform the world!*, Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1969. T.J. Clark indicates that the avant-garde exhortation to workers to take up their place at the factory work bench must be read in the context of a near total collapse of the fledgling industrial base in Soviet Russia during the post-revolutionary years. T.J. Clark, 'God Is Not Cast Down' in *Farewell to an Idea*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001, pp.225-297.

15 Artist Karl Ioganson lists among a number of outcomes he achieved during his placement at the Protatchik factory 'the raising of the productivity of labour by 150 percent'. Op.Cit. John Roberts. p.531. Worker-poet Alexey Gastev became in the 1920s head of a Time League charged with improving efficiency by monitoring lateness and time-wasting on shop-floors across Russia. John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form*, London: Verso, 2007, p.124. Film-maker Aleksandr Medvedkin was deployed on a 'kino-train' shooting, cutting and screening films around the Soviet Union to educate workers on vital matters such as health and the necessity of meeting their production targets. See Chris Marker's film *Le Tombeau d'Alexandre / The Last Bolshevik*, 1992.

16 Boris Arvatov, 'Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing (Toward the Formulation of the Question)', Trans. Christina Kiaer, in *October*, Vol. 81 (Summer, 1997), p.121.

17 Boris Arvatov, Ibid., p.121.

18 Isaak Illich Rubin, *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, Trans. Miloš Samardžija & Freddy Perlman, Delhi: Aakar Press, 2008, p.34 (quoting *Capital* Vol.1 p.167).

19 Boris Arvatov, Op.Cit., p.126.

20 We are indebted here to Nicholas Thoburn's research on the 'communist object' which brings Arvatov and Benjamin into dialogue. Though Thoburn's examples are excellent prototypes one could question the existence of communist objects before communist social relations have taken hold. Nicholas Thoburn, *Communist Objects and the Values of Printed Matter,* London: Objectile Press, 2010 reprinted from *Social-Text 28* (2), Summer 2010.

21 See John Roberts, 'Productivism and Its Contradictions', *Third Text*, Vol. 23, Issue 5, September, 2009 and John Roberts, 'Introduction: Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text* 23:4, 2009, pp.353-367.

22 John Roberts, 'Introduction: Art, 'Enclave Theory' and the Communist Imaginary', *Third Text* 23:4, 2009, pp.353-367.

23 'Real subsumption' denotes the organisation of the work process, (Marx) and, tendentially, of social relations outside the workplace (Negri, Hardt) as an indicator of capital's control of production. 'Formal subsumption' refers to capital seizing hold of the results of work but not yet of the way work is organised. The two stages have been used in an historical register, but it is more accurate to speak of them as competing and coexisting tendencies. Here, Martin's discussion of real subsumption is referring to sense in which capital does not just reify affect and sociality, and produces art which mimics that, but makes them directly 'productive' of surplus value, with art which mimics that as an emblem of this shift. See Stewart Martin, 'Artistic Communism – a sketch', *Third Text*, 23: 4 and the essay 'Absolute Art Meets Absolute Commodity' in *Radical Philosophy*, 146 (November/December 2007).

24 Ibid., p.482.

25 'Conversation with Maurizio Lazzarato June 23, 2010 – Public Editing Session #3' in *Exhausting Immaterial Labour in Performance,* Joint issue of *Le Journal des Laboratoires* and *TkH Journal for Performing Arts Theory* (no. 17), October 2010.

26 Stewart Martin, 'The Pedagogy of Human Capital', *Mute*, 2: 8, and http://www.metamute.org/en/Pedagogy-of-Human-Capital

27 A whole history might be written, which by focusing on the labour of negation – the opposite pole to an aesthetics of productivity – would bring to light strike works, spoof works, and artists who simply slip out of the ordered tradition of art history to exit artistic production completely and deliver a practical critique of both work and artwork. Critics of the Bolshevik enthusiasm for scientific management included not only Russian Mensheviks and anarchists, but also key Marxist theorists such as Rosa Luxemburg and Amadeo Bordiga. Artistic peers on the German left celebrated the refusal of labour (strikes) and the critique of both the existing organisation of productive forces and work itself (good examples are painter Gerd Arntz and writer Ret Marut/B Traven). Dada simultaneously mounted a critique of the division of labour, the art object and the commodity.

28 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, Trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, London: Continuum, 2007, p.55.

29 Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990.

30 George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007, p.23.

31 Paulo Virno, 'The Dismeasure of Art. An Interview with Paolo Virno', http://classic.skor.nl/article-4178-nl.html?lang=en

32 In 1971 Nixon definitively unloosed the U.S. Dollar from the gold-standard. No longer was there anything but a theoretical limit to money (credit/debt) supply. We list a few key examples of art directly engaging with the new terms of exchange below. Hans Haacke, *Shapolski et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System*, May 1, 1971. Haacke's work draws attention to the way a burgeoning speculative investment structures social relations. Lee Lozano's *Real Money Piece*, 'Offer to guests coffee, Diet Pepsi, bourbon, glass of half and half, ice water, grass and money. Open jar of real money and offer to guests like candy'. The 'guests' were all artists. Some took money, some borrowed money, some did nothing. Lozano's work poses the question of what happens when the general equivalent's special status is denied – if money is treated as, instead of ideal mirror, one of many objects; its mediating role denied things become unequal – non-equivalent. Daniel Spoerri signs 10-deutschmark checks and marks them up by 100%, and sells them as his artwork, 'In exchanging art for money, we exchange one abstraction for another.' Cildo Meireles, *Money Tree*, contrasts real value to symbolic value by presenting a pile of 100 Brazilian one cruzeiro notes on a plinth. The piece was then offered for sale at 20 times the real value of the notes. Robert Morris's 1969 *Money*, made the proposal that the Whitney Museum invest $50,000 as a work of art – a performance piece in which capital does the performing.

33 Theodor Adorno, Op.Cit., p.110.

34 This specific relationship between financialisation and art is explored in detail in Melanie Gilligan. *Notes on Art, Finance and the Un-Productive Forces*, Glasgow: Transmission Gallery, 2008. The political fall out of the financial crisis and cultural responses are explored in a special issue of *Mute*, 'Living in a Bubble: Credit, Debt & Crisis', *Mute* vol 2 #6, September 2007.

35 John Roberts, *Intangibilities of Form*, p.209. Two specific art practices that consciously take on the genre of the 'model', whether it is modelling global chains of production or the transactions of 'the economy', are those of Mika Rottenberg and Michael Stevenson, who undertake this through films and conceptual re-presentation of objects, respectively. Here, 'model' is used in a narrower sense than in this passage, but clarifies the relation of art to knowledge production which will be taken up below.

36 Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, Trans. Ben Fowkes, London: Penguin, 1990, p.131.

37 Howard Slater points out that Metzger and Lozano's strike projects can seen as examples of working class cultural forms making an entrance into the privileged field of art. 'The Spoiled Ideals of Lost Situations: Some Notes on Political Conceptual Art', http://www.infopool.org.uk/hs.htm

38 Ibid., p.12.

39 Diedrich Diedrichsen, 'Audio Poverty' at http://e-flux.com/journal/view/143

'There is nothing that bourgeois culture values more highly than the break with its own economic principles, provided that it is capable of valuing this break economically. This has nonetheless led to great freedoms; in particular, it has given rise to the ethic of a freedom as devoid as possible of anything that can be valued economically. While this ethic has always been ideologically contaminated, it was still extremely productive – as the avant-gardes of the twentieth century witnessed.'

40 Critiques of APG from the Left claimed that the placements served to legitimise corporations. The APG response to that was that the systems of time and measurement used by their critics on the Left and the Right, as well as the designation Left and Right themselves, were inapplicable to a project that was trying to work with a different conception of time and accounting altogether (the latter being the delta unit, or 'unit of attention'. See Claire Bishop, 'The Rate of Return', *Artforum*, October, 2010. p.231-237; Peter Eeley, 'Context is Half the Work', *Freize*, issue 111, November-December, 2007; Howard Slater, 'The Art of Governance', http://www.infopool.org.uk/APG.htm and John A. Walker, 'The Individual and the Organisation', http://www.artdesigncafe.com/Artist-Placement-Group-APG-John-Latham-Barbara-Steveni

41 Slater, op.cit.

42 Among the products developed were: a mobile cart for Children with Spina Bifida, a light, simple, portable life support system, an energy conserving system using gaseous hydrogen cells, designs for solar collecting equipment and low energy house components.

43 Mike Cooley, *Architect or Bee?: the human / technology relationship*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1987 (Second edition), p.65.

44 '[…] capital which has now become external to the production process. There are hordes of accountants, financial planners, monitors and other nonproductive workers who are simply there to act as police people for external capital. This is part of the wider process in which finance capital increasingly dominates industrial capital, a moribund stage in which the production of capital becomes more important than production itself.' Ibid., p.134.

45 This approach is summed up by Lucas engineer Mike Cooley, '[…] we sought a mix of products which would be profitable by the present criteria of the market economy and ones which would not necessarily be profitable but which would be socially useful.' Mike Cooley, Op.Cit. (second edition), p.119.

46 See especially the chapter on abstract labour in Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.199.

47 Karl Marx, 'Draft of an Article on Friedrich List's book: Das Nationale System der Politischen Oekonomie I' (1845) at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/03/list.htm

48 Tiqqun, op. cit., p.130

49 Paulo Virno, 'The Dismeasure of Art. An Interview with Paolo Virno', http://classic.skor.nl/article-4178-nl.html?lang=en

50 Benjamin Noys, 'The Grammar of Neoliberalism', paper delivered at the 'Accelerationism Workshop', Goldsmiths College, 14 September 2010.

51 Lazzarato, op.cit.

52 Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1999, p.35.

53 As John A. Walker writes, artists are 'revered because they appear to possess the secret of creativity and therefore epitomise the condition of individual freedom, spontaneity and fecundity which the ideology of Western democracy insists its citizens should aspire to.' ('The Individual and the Organisation', Op.Cit.) The existence of such a figure is predicated on the 'solidarity in existence, of art as separated sphere from the rest of social activity, and the inauguration of work as the common lot of humanity.' (Tiqqun, Op.Cit.) This is perhaps only a restatement of Marx's point that the assumptions of democracy, such as freedom, individualism, etc., can only really flourish in a market-based society.

54 Theodor Adorno, Op.Cit., p.53.

55 Stewart Martin, 'Artistic Communism – a sketch', *Third Text*, 23: 4, p.484-485.

# The State of Poetic License

Owen Logan

In their different ways, the books looked at in this article concern a politics of substitution, a sleight of hand trick, whereby competing ideas about art and culture eclipse economic thought. *The Social Impact of the Arts, An Intellectual History*, by Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett; *No Room to Move, Radical Art and the Regenerate City*, by Josephine Berry Slater and Anthony Iles; *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*, by Scott Lash and Celia Lury, all explore the spectacular clash of ideas about art and culture which overshadows economics – the dismal science. However, readers of the above books might still be reminded of Bill Clinton's rebuke to George Bush senior: "It's the economy stupid!" Because, oddly, none of them look into what may be the most crucial cultural-socio-economic matter of all, namely, the contest between economic survivalists and economic imperialists.

Until the revelation of stains on a dress and, on his character, Clinton pursued both interests in the United States with equal enthusiasm. Bush junior's more single minded representation of the imperial interest was of course disastrous for the United States. According to his detractors, his only certain achievement was that throughout his presidency there was "no known oral sex in the White House". Saddled with such a legacy, manifested not least in the crisis of the US car industry, Barack Obama has brought Motown music (the black Fordist product) back to the White House where it is on track again as an officially consecrated gift to the world.[1]

What is striking about the British books mentioned above, is how class has been abstracted by critical discussions of arts and culture, in much the same way Detroit's car industry jobs are outsourced. A largely unexamined antagonism, class, now seems to exist as an old fashioned, and sometimes sentimental refrain in cultural theory. This attitude might change as 'economics' and academia meet on increasingly unfriendly terms. Nevertheless, the difference in attitude between books written in the past twenty-five years, compared to the outlook of writers before the era of 'globalisation' will be obvious in this article. What this difference means is less obvious, and is the subject of what follows.

Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett , the authors of the 2008 book T*he Social Impact of the Arts, An Intellectual History*,[2] are certainly aware of the way culture has become an object of protectionism, and potentially a protectionist instrument, for nations preaching the dogma of free trade in all other areas. Culture was given a legal boost by the Unesco Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions which came into force in March 2007. Because culture includes such things as cuisine, this treaty could, in theory, impinge on the domain of agribusiness as much as media corporations. Regarded as something like a protectionist's charter, and no doubt as the thin end of the wedge into a broader economic hegemony, the US and Israel were alone in their opposition to the treaty.[3] With characteristic British parochialism, Belfiore and Bennett have little interest in such matters. They briefly mention the Uruguay Round of negotiations on world trade on page three, where they also quote President François Mitterrand who expressed the French survivalist interest when he remarked that "a society which abandons the means of depicting itself would soon be an enslaved society."

From this point in their book, actual market conditions rarely intrude into Belfiore and Bennett's history of ideas about the arts and culture. Accordingly, their history emerges from a roll call of rather materially disembodied voices. The ideas of civilisation we meet could at least do with a better economic timeline, if not a material analysis. That would have helped to put some badly needed contours on their map of the claims made about the positive and negative impacts of the arts.[4] It is also noticeable that the contents of this book belies its technocrat friendly title, because what these authors are really aiming for is the space between contemporary policy discourses geared towards the socio-economic impacts of the arts, and reasoning about culture and society in more holistic terms. In fact, the use of the word "impact" is a misnomer when seen in this way. Marxian criticality would turn this on its head from the outset, and address historical social impacts *on* the arts, giving agency more directly to people than to activities. Nevertheless, the gap between these two areas of thought is certainly an important one to close. As Belfiore has argued elsewhere, cultural policy-speak is now an expansive field of "bullshit" and one which is very difficult to avoid falling into.

An example of the perils, aside from its rather misleading title, would be chapter four of *The Social Impact of the Arts*, where the authors discuss the arts in relation to Personal Well-being. However, they do this without registering that the language of *wellbeing* comes into policy discourses, just as the politics of *welfare* are played down. Equally troubling is their very thin engagement with cultural diversity policy, squeezed into chapter six entitled Moral Improvement and Civilisation. By bringing Tony Greaves' writing in at the end here, the authors seem to imply the discussion of 'plural monoculturalism', Amartya Sen's critique of the implementation of multicultural policy.[5] Yet, Belfiore and Bennett seem uninterested in pursuing this, or examining the thinking of 'minority ethnic' artists on these matters.

It is doubtful that the mendacity which troubles Belfiore[6] can be countered if one treats economic thought as if it had not always been integrated within the field of culture and aesthetics just as it is integrated within religious thought. Today, one might even argue that what is on offer from culture is calibrated by the same logic that has given us the wonders of fractional reserve banking. In the financial universe the value of paper money is no longer backed by precious metal but, among other things, by the power to indebt, with the added attraction of recuperating the labour theory of value in the process of accumulating massive interest payments. Comparable to the conjuring trick of "producing money out of thin air" in the universe of capital, any number of projects claiming an "impact" on the social universe, make it look as though art is a productive element of socio-economic transformation, well-being, democratic public space and even happiness, just as the welfare State is rolled back and liberal democracy increasingly takes on the characteristics of calculated viciousness.

Asserting the primacy of these kinds of interconnection, and more especially their implications for practical reason, is not necessarily to collapse distinctive areas of reasoning into one another, but it may be to argue that the connections between economics, politics and culture still need to be examined carefully, and not merely seen *relationally*, as is now the fashion, thanks, in part, to the philosopher Jacques Rancière. Raymond Williams' book *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, first published in 1958, is still a very good example of how to go about the task of examining such connections in depth, and Belfiore and Bennett say that Williams' book also inspired their study, although it is difficult to see exactly how. The keywords emblazoned on the cover of different editions of his classic were; Class, Culture, Industry, Democracy, and Art. E.P. Thompson's critique of Williams' oeuvre was that he treated class as 'a way of life' and not 'a way of conflict'. To that issue, another problem must be added, namely that writers in the arts and humanities today are loathed to address the real extent of economic thought at all.

What seems to overcome the critical instincts of many writers is the general turn towards culture as promotion of the socio-economic self, the form, the group, the city, the region and the nation. We appear to be reduced to this spurious battle of categories, which, it should not be forgotten, was the desire of fascism.[7] Yet, because capitalism has been globally re-released over the past three decades, the idea of *laissez faire* in culture is now virtually unthinkable. For many leaders, certainly not only for the likes of François Mitterrand, this would signify the road to slavery. The question that is rarely contemplated very much, is enslaved to what exactly?

From the perspective of cultural studies, Scott Lash and Celia Lury in their 2007 book, *Global Culture Industry*,[8] argued that the "true industrialisation of culture", now upon us, amounts to "a post-hegemonic age" in which power "no longer has anything at all to do with hegemony. The power lies in communication itself".[9] This Marshall McLuhan-like claim seems too grandiose and risks verging on the absurd. It fails to confront all sorts of geo-political events hinging on the requirement of natural resources, and the existence of use values, which will not be easily transformed into the exchange values of consumerist culture. To think otherwise is to take for granted the international division of labour and nature as it now stands.

Lash and Urry are certainly not alone in implying that empire is not what it used to be and we are now in an era of communicative capitalism dominated by the forces of consumer sovereignty. A generation of Western critics of capitalism have been accused of dissolving the concrete interests of the West into the seemingly anonymous operations of the global market in this way.[10] Indeed, there is so much obscurantism on the Western leftfield, that it now seems a whole lot easier to come at the new spirit of capitalism from the other side entirely, (from the side now launching a major attack on higher education). As the good Lady Thatcher remarked in one of her more lucid interviews, "Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul". Needless to say the efforts of the grocer's daughter were not aimed at bringing about a post-hegemonic age. They were all about restoring Britain's place in the world through her remarkable alliance with finance, insurance and real estate; the FIRE sector.

## Mozart v. Muzak

Taking Belfiore and Bennett's long view of arts and culture does, at least, show up some of the misleading clashes of meaning which have been kept on the pitch and kicked around partly to appeal to a modern artistic sensibility. Number one on the list should be the grossly inflated distinction between instrumentalism and artistic autonomy. As the authors point out in their conclusion; "instrumentalism is, as a matter of fact, 2500 years old, rather than degeneration brought about by contemporary funding regimes." The perennial issue is art as a means of ordering ideas about culture.[11]

Coming at this from the American progressive social philosophy of John Dewey (1859-1952), Joli Jensen offers an impressive account of the pervasiveness of instrumental logic in her 2002 book *Is Art Good For Us? Beliefs About High Culture in American Life.*[12] As she argues, high culture is regarded like "a tonic and mass culture as toxin: in either case culture is imagined as something we ingest that has direct effects", and in this regard Jensen sees nothing much too choose between flimsy ideas of the "Mozart effect" or the "Muzak effect" both of which are alleged to change our mood and modify our behaviour.

Nor should art as cultural criticism be viewed as social medicine, Jensen argues. The real issue, as it was for Raymond Williams, or Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), is the patterning of social distinction, and the way beliefs about the arts are connected to ambivalences about modern life, democracy technology and commerce.

Jensen's position is that instrumental logic makes 'art' into a self-aggrandizing substitute for criticality and freedom in society. In this regard, she argues that both "art for arts sake" and "art as cultural criticism" are caught up in a misleading culture war over the hearts and minds of the people. Of course this is not an especially North American phenomenon, nor does it really tell us enough about why 'culture' often seems capable of devouring politics.

## Opportunities

The appealing fiction of disinterested or independent production on a battlefield which has been marked out much more broadly by Western intellectuals, comes in various State supported guises today, not only in art for art's sake but also in the form of the sort of critically engaged art longed for by Josephine Berry Slater and Anthony Iles, authors of the recent book, *No Room to Move, Radical Art and the Regenerate City*.[13] What is worth saying right away about this particular contest with the socio-economic instrumentalism of urban regeneration is that while self-declared radical art in Britain, with its "lingering requirement for autonomy", may not be servile, it still takes the form of a public service.

The orientation of much critical art here can be traced back to this particular articulation of bourgeois civic virtue, which Williams contrasted with the virtues of solidarity. A contemporary example of the ethos of public service, now running wild, is only too evident on page eighty-seven of Berry Slater and Iles' book where the Freee collective (Dave Beech, Mel Jordan, Andy Hewitt) are represented by a larger group photo of apparently earnest youths (presumably students in the arts) brandishing posters bearing the words; "Artists cannot bring integrity to your project unless they provide a full and candid critique of everything you do." Of course the most expensive word here is integrity. Having dressed this up in Habermasian theory, Freee look willing to sell it off from the bargain basement of British governance. It's not that they might be putting philosophers out of business; it's that they pose a service which is quite beyond the scope of even moral philosophy.

Straight talking is worn on the sleeve in the discussion of Freee's projects, but it hardly conceals the facts of dependency and institutionalisation posing artfully as autonomy. Two pages after telling us; "there is some tension, usually, but we have also worked with some really supportive and brilliant institutions", Freee go on tell readers how they are "heartened by the possibility that arts institutions might overestimate their own power to neutralise critique by incorporating it. Let them incorporate it even more! Let's saturate the fuckers with critique! Let's see how they neutralise that!" One of Freee's projects resulted in a massive billboard stating "The economic function of public art is to increase the value of private property." While this may be an intention in urban regeneration, the idea that art does actually function so effectively must be a property developer's dream.[14]

Of course Freee are not alone when it comes to artistic hyperbole. As anyone who has had dealings with the British Arts Council system might know, the supposed critical integrity of work done in the name of art is a foundational claim, not a real pivotal value since integrity can only be judged alongside a range of personal virtues which are specifically, and quite rightly, beyond the reach of bureaucracy. What stands in place of integrity is a slippery political contract which, in its current form at least, dates back to the aftermath of the Second World War when a new relationship between art and the State was forged.

There is no clearer statement of this profoundly instrumental contract, intended to end all others, than the following footnote from Cyril Connolly, which may be read as the small print of a quasi-Arnoldian deal which Connolly and his supporters spent much of the 1939-1945 war brokering. As editor of the influential journal *Horizon*, Connolly argued in 1943, that British attitudes should be altered so that art be given "a place in our conception of the meaning of life and artists a place in our conception of the meaning of the State which they have never known before. Never again must our artists be warped by opposition, stunted by neglect or etiolated by official conformity".[15] With this thinking in circulation among the ruling classes, the stage was set for supposedly autonomous art to serve in the glorification of the State.

If commentators like Raymond Williams (1921-1988), Julian Symons (1912-1994) or E.P. Thompson (1924 -1993) are to be believed, the artistic transaction with the State came at the cost of a cultural democracy, which might, in turn, have supported a more resilient social democracy. It is difficult to say whether the cultural wing of the workers movement was betrayed or simply neglected by their Labour Party representatives on gaining power in 1945. Leafing through the pages of *Our Time*, published between 1941 and 1949, one of Britain's few popular leftist journals, one might be forgiven for thinking that a democratic public sphere was already alive and well in Britain. With a war time social contract still in operation, (one which very significantly had the defence of Britain's national integrity to its credit) it may have seemed as if the negative liberties of liberalism did not urgently need to be counter-balanced by the positive liberties of democracy.

Interestingly, positive liberties were pursued much more meaningfully by the labour movement in Scandinavia and in other countries which had been invaded and where large sections of the capitalist establishment were exposed as traitors.[16] In 1960, the well known British historian and campaigner E.P. Thompson, wrote on the importance of opposing capitalism's modes of cultural reproduction, as well as opposing the system at the point of production in the workplace, but the Labour party's adoption of ideas about culture from the New Left, at "the eleventh hour" before the 1959 election, was too little too late. In Thompson's view the Labour party was already "poisoned at the core" by its Cold War nuclear strategy and "the ethos of the Opportunity State."[17]

In the same article Thompson noted that there was a lot of "floating talk (…) about the integrity of the artist and the intellectual worker." But thanks to the gentlemanly amateur tradition lodging within the circles of the Left, he saw precious little material support for actual critical autonomy. The much less convincing part of Thompson's argument was his call to address this disabling situation through a voluntary Socialist tax ("without representation") to support the operations of New Left Review. All this is history. But its real bearing is of course on our own time. Like *Variant*, *Mute*, (publishers of *No Room to Move*) negotiated a fragile platform for critical reflection about the arts in relation to culture as a whole. This has never been a winning position in the arts, and increasingly it looks like a suicidal one.

Mute faces a 100% cut to their Arts Council funding. As a result of such attacks, artists and others working in the cultural sector will find it harder to distinguish the public interest, from private and corporate interests which reach into the public sector to turn the public interest into a market interest. By drawing Georgio Agamben's philosophical writings into the context of urban regeneration – a context which really only exemplifies the structural problems seen by Thompson – Berry Slater and Iles argue that the artist has become "a 'whatever being', good for everything and nothing," the ultimate flexible capitalist subject.

## What do artists want?

Berry Slater and Iles seem ill-disposed to consider what bystanders in the clash between art and culture might reasonably decry as bad art. When these authors argue that "over-instrumentalised art", revolving around bureaucratically determined goals of urban regeneration, "may simply fail to be art" they are of course implying very lofty things for art *per se*. Going against quite a lot of evidence unconsciously provided in the interviews with artists in the urban policy arena, (Alberto Duman, Nils Norman, Laura Oldfield Ford, Roman Vasseur, and the Freee collective) Berry Slater and Iles claim that the future is bleak because "Art cannot do what it wants to do."

This looks like an exaggeration of the fact that artists, like many people, find it difficult to exercise their freedom meaningfully. Artists may, in fact, do what they want to do to a remarkable degree in Britain. The arena that is much more constrained, and increasingly monotonous, is politics, which of course has an impact on the issues of public patronage for the arts. But the two issues should not be confused, even when facing

'March For the Alternative: Jobs, Growth, Justice', London, 26th March 2011 Photographs, Owen Logan.

the sort of swinging cuts now being implemented. As the historian Ben Wilson argues, Britain has become illiberal in politics whilst becoming liberal in manners.[18] Given art's long history of over-eager declarations of integrity, mixed in equal measure with embarrassing compromises, the arts have not done too badly from the mannered liberalism of "a taboo-busting culture."

If, as Berry Slater and Iles claim, art cannot do what it wants, then it seems far too easy to point the finger at the systemic constraint when artists are no more willing to organise to effectively defend their autonomy than when Thompson targeted the core ethos of the Opportunity State in 1960. Since almost every social and environmental ill, and every structural crisis of the public sector, is now turned into an opportunity for a mini band-aid arts project, a critique of the aesthetics of opportunism would be closer to the mark.[19]

'March For the Alternative: Jobs, Growth, Justice', London, 26th March 2011 Photographs, Owen Logan.

The questions that ought to be levelled against the ethos of an Opportunity State, are only magnified by post-industrial ideology. It seems very difficult to grasp what is going on, not least in the "social engineering" happening under the banners of urban regeneration and place marketing and so on, without a critical sense of the doctrine of international comparative advantage. This has allowed for the collapse of the distinction between industry and services and the subordination of the economy to the FIRE sector. Nevertheless, the same competitive edge has served Britain's imperial wing (adjoining the Labour and Conservative parties) very well. Of course artists in Britain may be uncomfortable with their roles in this post-industrial renaissance, but there is no evidence that they are willing to collectively oppose its fundamental basis, any more than trade unions in the global North are willing to adopt the anti free market position of their counterparts in the South.[20]

## Signing up for the Global Bourgeoisie

The 2007 Unesco convention, mentioned at the outset of this article, may be seen as the last vestiges of the UN General Assembly resolution in May 1974 for a New International Economic Order. This challenge to the West's terms of trade was defeated in piecemeal fashion by everything we now know to be neoliberalism. Like it or not, we are sailing in that same capitalist boat which may be one reason migrants come to this land of opportunity and often marvel at the ideological incoherency of the Left. Indeed, when it comes to the doctrine of international comparative advantage, sitting on the fence looks like the most fashionable Left position.[21]

Saying this is not to ignore deep psychological paradoxes of political subjectivities in both the North and the South. However, the contradictions resulting from a global fracture are surely a necessary premise if we are to understand the position of the artist in contemporary capitalist culture.[22] The concept of the "whatever being" used by Berry Slater and Iles comes from Agamben's most obscure musings in his 1990 book, *The Coming Community*, the shortcomings of which are obvious to its author. Notwithstanding his extremely fragmented arguments, the "whatever being" was not intended to mean an indifferent persona but rather a certain singular identity, in limbo, and freed from belonging "to this or that set to this or that class", e.g. "the reds, the French, the Muslims."

Agamben traces the ancient roots of such a liminal status in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (1998) where, far more coherently, he tackles the "bare life" existing and dying in political states of exception (not only concentration camps) which have resulted from the separation between the abstract rights of man from the juridical and substantive rights of the citizen. With that critical history of the European Enlightenment in mind, one may appreciate the significance Agamben and others have attached to an in-between consciousness. However, it seems important not to flatten these matters out and confuse them by ignoring gross inequalities. When it comes to the issue of "bare life", this has hardly ever been a voluntary option in the modern age. Key citizenship rights are denied, eroded, or taken, but they are never carelessly thrown away.

One strata where "the whatever being" has an obvious role is the "planetary petty bourgeoisie" whose vacuity, Agamben observes, nullifies "all that exists with the same gesture in which they seem obstinately to adhere to it: they know only the improper and inauthentic and even refuse the idea of discourse that could be proper to them" from the past. This would be no news to those who preceded Agamben in the critical analysis of bourgeois democracy and who argued, against the tendency of denial, that proletarian agitation has long been the fundamental condition of liberalism. In the short term, at least, the interests of capital and labour could come together in political corporatism, not least because of overlapping sectional interests on both sides.

In the long term the global bourgeoisie – which Agamben sees as a monstrous class, acting locally and thinking globally, and moving us towards self-annihilation – has no real need for any contracts with labour power having created a vast plutocratic network of non-governmental organisations all of their own. For the most part they seem committed not only to undermining militancy, but also to stamping out the labour theory of value wherever it turns up. In this regard, the vaguely left-leaning notion of global civil society looks like a risky political fantasy circulating through the same bourgeois quarters.

## Class, Art and Virtue

Is the art world the natural home for an aspiring global bourgeoisie today? In their 2007 book mentioned above, Scott Lash and Celia Lury paint the now familiar picture of the neo avant garde art scene clasped to the magnetic power of the City of London and fully integrated with capitalism's constant search for (brandable) aesthetic meaning in the global market. The contemporary flows between art and commerce represent an obvious fracture with the complex normativity of the 20th century, when art's newness could be said to be born from its resistance to its own exchange value. Indeed, the nature of the fracture calls into question the basic premises of modernist ideas of the moral dialectic of art "proper". Wherever one may stand theoretically, art demonstrably fails to defend culture from commerce (the object of the 2007 Unesco treaty). Only people can act in this way.[23] Some of them may happen to be artists. But unless artists organise, in ways not seen since the 1930s, their labours will be quite incidental to their political efforts.

A conservative (and profoundly ahistorical) sense of the category of art in the 21st century lends support to the argument that there is no reasonable way to find a "correspondence between aesthetic virtue and political virtue."[24] This is one of the key points in Jacques Rancière's political aesthetics. But in making his case, what Rancière takes as art proper looks exactly like the go-between aesthetic which arises from the consciousness of the "planetary bourgeoisie". In the tradition of *Vorticism*, it is an aesthetic which literally thrives on the tension between opposites as it surfs through places and *themes* hardly ever landing for long enough to be confronted by arts' own territorial problems. Political *issues* (such as arts and urban regeneration) are left to be picked apart by critical artists who want to recover a civic meaning for art and who, thanks to the patronage of autonomy, cannot help but express bourgeois ideas of civic virtue in the process. But in either case, the notion that there is no correlation between aesthetic virtue and political virtue is to ignore the way class consciousness and art have been historically bonded.

Art, no longer to be confused with the mere amusements of the nobility or the commoner, was transformed into culture in the 18th century and signified nothing less than the sensitivities and passions of Europe's nation building bourgeoisie. In their chapter on Moral Improvement and Civilisation, Belfiore and Bennett touch on Remy Saisselin's compelling study of these transactions, and the unintended consequences of attitudes about art which reached a climax in Romanticism. Perhaps the greatest gift to the romantic mythology of the 20th century avant garde, was its repression under fascism and Stalinism, something which tends to make us forget the subtle complicity of the movement in the politics of both.

The link between aesthetic virtue and political virtue, articulated influentially in Britain by John Ruskin (1819-1900), remains as an ongoing, and no doubt unending, discourse. If, as Rancière asserts, there is no correlation between the two areas of virtue, then there would simply be no way to challenge fascist aesthetics without merely resorting to similar totalitarian methods used by the Nazis to banish the avant garde. Nevertheless, the actual banishment of Nazi art from the public memory in Germany is not merely a random historical outcome (as Rancière would have it), rather the discussions about its consignment to the dustbin of history are a sign of some of the raw connections between political and aesthetic virtue.[25]

What is undeniable, and must be admitted in relation to all of the above, is that the interdependency of virtues is one of the most problematic and complicated areas of moral philosophy. Some of the problems are evident in the title of Alisdair MacIntyre's 1991 essay, *How to seem virtuous without actually being so*.[26] (This title might be inscribed on a collective award presented to the art world). However, against MacIntyre's Aristotelian desire for a unified subject, or in other words, for a persona not fractured by histories of socio-political confusion and contradiction, Malcolm Bull argues that the unified subject has, by historical definition, been the political master.[27] On this account, which might offer another angle on the "whatever being", those of us further down in the pecking order are a more complex admixture of the master-slave mentality.

Nevertheless, overcoming this paradox does not mean that MacIntyre, or anyone else, might, in effect, be buying into a dream of mastery as Bull seems to imply. Rather, it is to measure virtues such as generosity and temperance alongside those of justice and courage. The underlying problem takes us back to the start of this article, and to the

economy, not in the sense Bill Clinton meant it but in the sense that Margaret Thatcher said it. Art in Britain still appears to be bound up, and even defined, by her economic project to change the heart and soul. If our post-industrial culture is in need of a heart and soul, art looks as if it is on call to offer that service to a people now more or less compelled to believe in the logic of international comparative advantage and consumer sovereignty. As one of *Mute* magazine's founders recently pointed out, to be a winner in the arts regime of the entrepreneurial nation, the first mode of compliance is "a near religious belief in the power of art to 'deliver' personal transformation."[28]

Of course art and money have always converged just as much as art and politics converge. Art's transformation into 'culture' in the 18th century was only one aspect of the 'blame the losers' rationalism which turned enlightenment values into self-serving dogma. Given the way artists and artistic freedoms have glorified the State in the 20th century, it is still extremely pertinent to consider the impact of class on the way culture is governed, in part, by ideas of what 'art' might do, and what politics increasingly does not do; as if accumulating forms of cultural and social capital was not linked to the possession of political capital.[29] Casting a veil over the very resources needed most by the subordinated classes is surely the greatest disappearing trick performed in the pursuit of bourgeois civic virtue.

On March 26th somewhere between 250,000 and 500,000 people marched in London against government cut backs. Many had placards calling for a general strike. I too would happily raise my hand for a general strike. But to all intents and purposes a general strike would now be illegal in this country – an issue on which too many trade unionists, libertarians and believers in civil society have remarkably little to say. Rather like a people who have swallowed too much well meaning art, our faith in poetic licence has eclipsed our political reality.

## Notes

1 Both Clinton and Obama brought Motown to the White House, See 'Obamas celebrate Motown in the White House', *The Telegraph* (25/2/2011) http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/8347058/Obamas-celebrate-Motown-in-the-White-House.html, accessed March 2011. For account of the factors influencing the decline and crisis of the US car industry see The Great Auto Crash; The Inside Story (Globalisation) by William Vukson (2009) published by G7 Books.

2 *The Social Impact of the Arts, An Intellectual History*, by Eleonora Belfiore & Oliver Bennett, (2010) Palgrave macmillan, Basingstoke (paperback edition).

3 See http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2005/October/20051020170821GLnesnoM3.670901e-02.html

4 The discursive categories Belfiore and Bennett adopt are: Corruption and distraction; Catharsis; Personal well-being; Education and self-development; moral improvement and civilisation; Political Instrument; Social stratification and identity construction; Autonomy of the arts and rejection of instrumentality.

5 For this discussion of diversity policies see *What Price Liberty, How Freedom was won and is being lost*, by Ben Wilson, Faber and Faber, London, pp 363-390.

6 See 'On bullshit in cultural policy practice & research', by Eleonora Belfiore, *Variant* issue 37/38, Spring/Summer 2010.

7 See *Under the Axe of Fascism*, by Gaetano Salvemini (1936), Victor Gollancz, London.

8 *Global Culture Industry: The mediation of Things*, by Scott Lash and Celia Lury, (2007) Polity Press, London.

9 Ibid. p84

10 Fernando Coronil argues that "capitalism parades as (...) universal and independent of its material foundations" thanks to the shift from eurocentric to globalcentric representations. See 'Towards a Critique of Globalcentrism: Speculations on Capitalism's Nature', in *Public Culture* 12(2) 2000, Duke University Press. See also *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies, Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*, by Jodi Dean (2009) Duke University Press.

11 For example, Jacques Rancière, (2009) makes the point that " 'art' is not the common concept that unifies the different arts. It is the *dispositif* [the stance] that renders them visible." Nor is art, in the first instance political because of its content but rather because of the way it reframes culture and politics in this way. See, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, Polity Press, London, p23.

12 *Is Art Good For Us? Beliefs About High Culture in American Life*, by Joli Jensen (2002) Rowman & Littlefield, New York and Oxford. See also Belfiore & Bennett (2010) op. cit. pp 32, 98-99.

13 *No Room to Move, Radical Art and the Regenerate City*, by Josephine Berry Slater and Anthony Iles (2010) *Mute* Books, London.

14 The inflation of urban real estate values is considerably more complex than the presence of public art. It involves a co-ordinated range of public and private investments and public give aways. In relation to the arts, what does seem properly functional in this context is the sort of "social engineering" that involves, for instance, the short term leases aimed at artists, as "scuzzers" in the effort to attract yuppies mentioned by Berry Slater and Iles. And here one may well argue that it is artists that are required as bearers of the entrepreneurial spirit, more or less regardless of the content of their work. See Berry Slater & Iles (2010) Ibid. p11.

15 See Comment, by Cyril Connolly, *Horizon*, London, January 1943. A comparable contemporary argument is made by Martha C. Nussbaum (1995) in her book *Poetic Justice, The literary Imagination and Public Life*, Beacon Press, Massachusetts. Nussbaum's argument for the importance of the literary imagination to jurors, to the justice system and to public rationality in general recalls Adam Smith's (1723-1790) "judicious spectator." This well travelled idea was taken up by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) from his "*liebling*", Smith. As Peter de Bolla argues, Smith's 1759 work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, hangs on the transference of ethics into a politics of seeing, and specifically into Smith's 'doctrine of sympathy' whereby social differences are seemingly overcome by a power of the imagination which allows for the spectator to put himself in the shoes of the other. See *Vision in Context: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Sight*, edited by Teresa Brennan & Martin Jay, (1996) Routledge, London.

16 One cannot walk into a high street retailer like W.H. Smith in Britain and purchase a quality newspaper called Class War, subsidised by the State as a meaning bearing publication. For that near-Habermasian experience one would need to go to a place like Norway where social democracy was not purchased on the political cheap through the notion of equal opportunities and the broader ideological practices of an Opportunity State.

17 See 'The Point of Production', by E.P. Thompson, (1960) *New Left Review*, no 1/1 January/February, 1960.

18 See *What Price Liberty – How Freedom was won and is being Lost,* by Ben Wilson (2009) faber & faber, London, p.329.

19 This is central to Walter Benjamin's definition of 'the hack', made in his 1936 essay, *The Author as Producer*.

20 Presently, incapable of voicing their own interests through anything more effective than a *servicing* union, visual artists are especially removed from their own labour power in "post-industrial" Britain. See "Art Workers Won't Kiss Ass", Comment article by Owen Logan, *Variant* no. 37, Spring/Summer, 2010.

21 This ambiguous position has roots in Marx's critique of Jean-Baptiste Say's law of markets. Say's theories represented the most decisive break with the labour theory of value in classical political economy. Broadly speaking, however, Marx deferred to those aspects of the global market which he saw leading towards communism, in the long run. See, See 'Karl Marx and Say's Law', by Bernice Shoul, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (Nov, 1957), Oxford University Press. The alternative socialist case for State-led semi-autarky is an undeniably utopian position. However, as one of the better known defenders of this position argues, it is no less utopian to believe that capitalism will iron itself out globally. The sort of totalising military-industrial destructive force that it has now produced could barely be conceived when Marx was writing. See *The Post Industrial Utopians*, by Boris Frankel, (1987) Polity Press, London, p267. There of course many 'small is beautiful' arguments which see the State as an unreformable obstacle. As one of the more reflexive advocates of socio-economic regression from society to community, points out, this would be at best a "grubby sort of utopia, not cultured, or liberal, or advanced, or powerful". But, it is hoped, "warm, kind, peaceful, healthy, lazy and parochial." See *To End Poverty, The Starvation of the Periphery by the Core*, by Richard Hunt, (1997) Alternative Green, Oxford p202.

22 See *Global Fracture: The New International Economic Order*, by Michael Hudson, (2005 Second Edition) Pluto Press, London.

23 Without doing down the insights of Theodor Adorno, it would seem that aesthetic philosophy always requires this corrective. In the words of the zealous band leader, played by the late Pete Possethwaite in the film *Brassed Off,* "I thought that music mattered, but does it bollocks, not compared to how people matter…"

24 See *The Politics of Aesthetics,* by Jacques Rancière, Continuum, London, p61.

25 See, 'Banishing the Past: The German Avant-Garde and Nazi Art', by Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, (1996) in *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol.19, no 3, Springer publishing.

26 *How to seem virtuous without actually being so*, by Alisdair MacIntyre, (1991) Centre for the Study of Cultural Values, Lancaster University.

27 See 'Slavery and the Multiple Self' by Malcolm Bull, (1998) *New Left Review*, Issue 231, London.

28 See, http://www.metamute.org/en/mute_100_per_cent_cut_by_ace

29 The complex inter-relations between types of social and cultural capital with political capital is one of the areas of social theory that has been critically gutted by the World Bank's patronage of capitalist friendly research. See *Theories of Social Capital: Researchers Behaving Badly*, by Ben Fine (2010), Pluto Press, London.