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Spastic Logic:
Artwork as intervention in social
relationships, formed in retrograde
through writing

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Abstract

If we consider the hidden relations behind the evolution of an artwork to be a negotiation of beliefs, social status and ideological positions, how might an artwork intervene in these relationships, reconfiguring the context through which it is informed rather than being confined by it? I propose an understanding of methods that place an alternative ethical universe upon the financial, material and social hierarchies that operate in the background of artistic production. The research signals that, within these relations, strategies can be enacted that relentlessly produce fictions of autonomy and agency.

I begin by taking a specific artwork of mine as a model—one which began in 1987 as an unsolicited brief to rebrand the British Marxist newspaper *Morning Star*— asking the editors to reconsider what might be an accepted relationship between class and form. Over eleven chapters, at dated intervals along a timeline from the present back to 1987, I move between a number of approaches to thread particular ideological rationales with their counters, contingent factual information, and characters of varying social status and interests. My research becomes the evolving history of the model itself.

Throughout the research I envisage a mechanism that I term 'spastic logic' as a conditioning characteristic of meaning. Spasticity is a manner through which something becomes contorted or displaced when stimulus provokes an act of reflex. The writing of the chapters is an attempt to introduce stimulus that would provoke this sense of 'spastic logic'. Instead of relating a precise genesis of an artwork, I aim to form its history through a fitful relationship between content that is heterogeneous and proceeds associatively rather than by incident. Meaning is shaped through contingency, the structural interstices between an artwork's thematic parts are remodelled and scenarios can be introduced in which expected ethical positions are displaced.

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Acknowledgements

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 44,537 words

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Date: 26th September 2018

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0.   Introduction

The seed of this doctoral research traces back to a particular moment in 2013 when an artwork I had been working on for 25 years was showing clear signs of playing itself out to an unfortunate early conclusion.

In 1987, as a first-year student at Leicester Polytechnic, I bought a copy of the newspaper *Morning Star* from a volunteer vendor on an entry ramp to the institution's art campus. I was struck by the sharp contrast between the editorial content and the aesthetic of the newspaper—a red top tabloid, with little in appearance to distinguish it from *The Sun*, *Daily Mirror* or *Daily Star*. Founded in 1930 as the *Daily Worker*, and published continuously since, *Morning Star* is a socialist daily and, in the words of one of its staff members 'the only one that doesn't accept the capitalist system as normal.'[1] On first encountering *Morning Star*, I was left with a false impression: it didn't look like what it says. It still doesn't.

Reflecting on possible links between class and form, in light of this contrast, I wrote to them offering to re-design their identity. I suggested that by reconsidering the formal aspects of the newspaper, they might usefully reposition themselves in view of their audience, both existing and prospective. Pitched in different ways, since 1987, I have repeatedly offered to rebrand *Morning Star*, asking successive editors to reconsider how we might turn and mutate the newspaper's aesthetics in order to come up with an image of left-wing culture adequate to present political and cultural circumstances.

Over several months leading up to the beginning of this research in 2013—and after a lull of many years—I was back in touch with the editorial staff of *Morning Star* and the project was beginning to pick up momentum. On learning that the newspaper was in danger of going bankrupt, I gathered a working group[2] to engage the editorial board with the aim of reversing the fortunes of the paper by overhauling its identity. The working group consisted of London-based

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1   In conversation with Ivan Beavis, *Morning Star*'s circulation manager, campaign manager and 'Fighting Fund' columnist at the newspaper's headquarters, William Rust House, London, 23rd March 2013.

2   Short biographies of the members of the working group are included as a footnote to Chapter 1: 'February 2017—Email to *Morning Star* from the curator Nicholas Tammens'.

anthropologist Massimiliano Mollona, New York-based designers Dexter Sinister,[3] and London-based writer, editor and critic Marina Vishmidt. The project received instrumental support from the UK's Trades Union Congress[4] and, after lengthy discussions, the editor of *Morning Star* at that time, Richard Bagley,[5] agreed to the collaboration.

I named the project *Morning Star Rebranded* and the working group convened for its first session at London-based arts institution The Showroom in early September 2013. No sooner had work begun, and publicity material sent out, than *Morning Star* abruptly withdrew its cooperation. Staff at the newspaper had noticed the logos for the patrons and funders of The Showroom on the press release for *Morning Star Rebranded* and of acute concern to them was the financial support from the financial, data and media behemoth Bloomberg. *Morning Star* saw this as an unequivocally negative fit with the newspaper's political position and one that could prove toxic to its relationship with its readers. The collaboration had stumbled on issues of sponsorship and corporate patronage and subsequent attempts to re-engage the newspaper have repeatedly failed. In Part 0.1 of this introduction I conjecture *Morning Star*'s dissociation and speculate—from the perspective of the newspaper—how it perceives its form in relationship to the social fabric that sustains it.

If there was not to be a succinct conclusion to my artwork, *Morning Star Rebranded*, in a manner that I had originally anticipated—a rebranding of a national newspaper—I began to ask how the artwork could continue in the form of writing and become a model for my research question:

How might an artwork formulate itself as an intervention in the social relationships within which its meaning is first formed yet can continue to evolve?

Working from the premise that the evolution of an artwork is relational to a hidden negotiation of beliefs, social status and ideological positions, then through what methods might the currency of these relations be rendered visible? How might *Morning Star Rebranded* continue to evolve through writing and

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3 Dexter Sinister is the compound name of David Reinfurt and Stuart Bailey.

4 Of particular value was support from Megan Dobney, Regional Secretary for the South East Region of the Trades Union Congress.

5 Richard Bagley was editor of *Morning Star* between May 2012 and July 2014.

intervene in these social relationships? Upon what might its future meaning be contingent? In Part 0.2 of this introduction I consider the art historian Michael Baxandall's claim that a work of art represents 'the deposit of a social relationship'[6] and plot a trajectory of theories that both hinge on this premise and lead into ideas pertaining to the notion of a *network*. I introduce T.J. Clark's proposal of *synergies* that seek to elucidate the social nature of form and then contrast the *inertia* of Baxandall's 'period eye'[7] with George Didi-Huberman's proposition of meaning being generated *anachronistically* through disjunctive temporalities. I also refer to Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's use of the term 'anachronic' which they employ to discuss temporal elements, qualities or insecurities. I then introduce David Joselit's writing on the *behaviour* of artworks within networks and whose theories trace back to propositions by both Clark and Baxandall, but with emphasis on *how* these networks are *visualised*. This foregrounding of a network through its visualisation or articulation can occur paradoxically through a willfully antithetical stance towards such a network and I exemplify this by describing the social relations at play in the practice of Jef Geys, an artist who located himself literally and figuratively in the Belgian *terroir*.[8] I then continue by asking to *whose* vantage point is a network visualised? I refer to Jörg Immendorff's painting *Wo stehst du mit deiner Kunst, Kollege?* (1973) to consider a situation in which subjectivity *appears* to be on behalf of the people—*the people's voice*—but is distinctly orchestrated through a *master narrative*, expressed by the artist himself. I conclude Part 0.2 by referring to the writing of art historians Fred Moten and Stefano Harney who counter 'privileged speaking ambitions and silencing effects'[9] by imagining renegade groupings in the 'undercommons':[10] communities they term 'maroon'.[11]

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6   Baxandall, M., *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford University Press, 1972).

7   Ibid.

8   *Terroir* is a French term that literally translates as: earth, or soil. Its meaning is contested over how products are bestowed meaning and value in relation to their location.

9   Draxler, H., 'Where Do You Stand, Colleague?', *Texte zur Kunst*, Issue #81 (2011). Draxler is referring to Gayatri Spivak's essay Can the subaltern speak? (Macmillan, 1988).

10   Moten, F. & Harney, S., *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, (Minor Compositions, 2013).

11   Ibid.

In Part 0.3 of this introduction I ask how writing and editing might become methods in which the structural interstices—between an artwork's thematic parts, and its protagonists—can be re-configured and filtered anew. Through writing, how might I instigate a chain of synergies—formed through a negotiation of social relations and beliefs, and how might that effect our understanding of how *Morning Star* perceives its form in relationship to the social fabric that sustains it?

I outline my ideas around a methodology that I term 'spastic logic', defining it as a tool through which to imagine a figurative understanding of *spasticity* characterised as an unfixed state where convulsive movement causes *displacement*. I describe a quality of spasticity as an inadvertent *turning back*, a recursive action that vectors its whole into parts in an unfolding of self-reference. I extend the term 'spastic logic' to describe the writing that comprises this thesis and the manner in which it behaves as a *treatment* in the editorial process and one which counters a master narrative. I also look for correlations between an understanding of 'spastic logic' and circumstances in which ethics can be *displaced*. I ask: to what purpose would this serve and whose ethical code might be displaced? I extrapolate the term *moral economy*—in relation to a perceived commonality in art's *centralised* network—to ask: from within this circle, what is an artist *expected* to do?

In Part 0.4 of this introduction, I describe the use of a *skeleton* to lay out the structure of this thesis. A skeletal account of something, by definition, lacks detail yet allows fragmentary elements to exist as semi-autonomous entities—each embodying their own rationale. The skeleton is envisaged as a *superstructure* spanning a period stretching back to when I first contacted *Morning Star* in 1987. I refer to my use of a superstructure in this thesis in relation to its function as a core concept of Marxist theory. I then consider how the structure I devise might privilege a sequence of temporalities that serve as framing conditions for an understanding of my artwork *Morning Star Rebranded* and ask how the behaviour of these temporalities might be *recursive*. How might recursive form, understood in terms of 'spastic logic' as a *pulling back*, unfold and fragment content responsively?

In Part 0.5, I return to a consideration of 'spastic logic' as a *treatment*. In medical terms a treatment is concerned with *remediation*, whilst in writing it can be considered as *generative*. A treatment provides a scene-by-scene breakdown of a script that highlights distinctions between scenes. I produce a treatment for this thesis, paring its content back through a sequence of dated entries along a thirty-year timeline in retrograde. Unlike a conventional treatment for a script,

in which the sequence is described chronologically, I group the content around four styles of writing present in this thesis: correspondence, case studies, scripted lectures and fictional narratives. I account for my use of each rhetorical mode and provide synopses for each respective chapter.

I then conclude this introduction with a description of artworks that I have produced, exhibited and published during this period of research. I outline confluences between my studio work and my core research question and methodology, beginning with a description of my artwork *Portrait of a Recipient as a Door Handle, After a Drawing Produced by an Anonymous Philanthropist* (2014).[12] I then describe how presentations, and subsequent conversations at a symposium,[13] staged in relation to *Portrait of a recipient...* introduced ideas that became central to my PhD research. These ideas are explored in content that form this thesis, for example: a scripted lecture titled *The Causal Slaughter of Self-Insufficient Objects*[14] is the result of a proposal to Marina Vishmidt that we respond to Tirdad Zolghadr's thinking around what he describes as the restrictive characteristics of *indeterminacy* in relation to the *moral economy* of a centralised art network.

In describing how an ethical *drift* can occur in the production of an artwork, I consider the mechanisms of a *displacement* that can transpire when objects and characters stand in for social relations. I refer to an artwork of mine titled *A Needle Walks Into a Haystack* (2014) and consider how this drift might be activated through the writing in this thesis, to displace the social relations in the model of my enquiry—my artwork *Morning Star Rebranded*. How are these social relations first formed and how can I create conditions in which they evolve? I then describe how *A Needle Walks Into a Haystack,* filtered through an understanding of the writing of artist Pierre Klossowski, led to the sequence of fictional narratives centred on the theme of the job interview that in part comprise this thesis. I consider how the protocols of the 'job interview' involve a libidinal exchange with social relations as material.

Finally, I describe my artwork *Drippy Etiquette* (2014–) whose relation to the content of this thesis is direct and explicit. I describe its origins—in the

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12   *Portrait of a Recipient as a Door Handle, After a Drawing Produced by an Anonymous Philanthropist* (2014) was produced and commissioned by Sculpture International Rotterdam.

13   The symposium took place at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, on the 4th of February, 2014.

14   See Chapter 2, 'September 2016'.

first and only meeting of the working group of *Morning Star Rebranded*—and its constituent parts: subscriptions to *Morning Star* on behalf of host institutions, an Open Letter to the editors of *Morning Star*, charred wooden poles, and airbrush paintings of two worms emerging from two adjacent holes painted on a pink ground matching the colour of the *Financial Times*. The worms blink in the bright light behind them with a speech caption that reads: 'Is that *The Sun* or the *Morning Star*?'

0.1   *Morning Star Rebranded*

In 2013, *Morning Star Rebranded* was not an artwork that I had recently embarked on, having first contacted the newspaper *Morning Star* whilst attending art school in the late 1980s. After a lull of many years, the project had picked up momentum over several months leading up to the beginning of this research yet stalled abruptly due to issues of sponsorship and corporate patronage. I recount the brief history of its sponsorship and conjecture *Morning Star*'s dissociation from the project. I speculate—from the perspective of the newspaper—how it perceives its form in relationship to the social fabric that sustains it.

On assembling a working group for *Morning Star Rebranded*, I approached the London-based arts institution The Showroom for support. There was a pronounced socialist proclivity to The Showroom's activities and the match seemed ideal. Whilst the institution had charity status and received its core funding from Arts Council England, it had recently become part of a collaborative project organised under the rubric 'How to work together'. This was a programme of contemporary art commissioning and research, organised between 2014 and 2016, shared between The Showroom and two other small London-based institutions: Chisenhale Gallery and Studio Voltaire. 'How to work together' was principally funded by Catalyst, a £100 million, private-giving investment scheme, spanning the culture sector and 'aimed at helping arts organisations to diversify their income streams and to access more funding from private sources.'[15] It was made up of investment from Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and can be seen as a response to the consequences of so-called *austerity* era cutbacks in its drive towards attracting

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15   'An evaluation of Catalyst Year 3', conducted by BOP Consulting, commissioned and published by Arts Council England, January 2017. (website): https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Catalyst_Evaluation_BOP_Year3.pdf. Retrieved 30 September 2019.

corporate funding streams.

The Showroom offered to support the development of *Morning Star Rebranded* by hosting and facilitating a series of workshops under the 'How to work together' scheme. At the first meeting of the working group we produced the requisite public relations material to describe our methods and purpose. The Showroom then sent out a press release and a description appeared on the internet framed within the 'How to work together' website. On seeing this announcement, staff at *Morning Star* threw up several concerns regarding the appearance of the newspaper in relation to the structure of the funding. Of acute unease was the corporate benefaction of Bloomberg: the financial, software, data and media giant. This was seen as an unequivocally negative fit with the newspaper's political position and potentially detrimental to the relationship between *Morning Star* and its readership. The newspaper immediately pulled out of the collaboration and a public event intended to launch the project at The Showroom, on 5th September 2013, was cancelled.

How might the formal concerns of the newspaper's design have been considered by its editors and staff from when I first contacted them in 1987 and up to the present day? What significance might my rebranding have had for left wing politics in the UK and its impact on the political landscape in the country as a whole? It is feasible to envisage that a substantially expanded distribution and readership for the newspaper could have had a significant impact on the country's political consciousness though it is not the remit of this research to hypothesise on this speculative eventuality. Instead, the research holds, in its attention, particular conjunctions between politics and aesthetics which I venture to perform through the writing of this thesis. What is useful to focus on at this point, and which might serve as background noise to the content of the thirty-year timeline, is to draw out a significant *displacement* that has occurred, imagined from the perspective of *Morning Star*.

From the outset, this displacement was metonymical in character, between a part—the form of the newspaper—and a whole—the social fabric of *Morning Star*, its readership and affiliates. It finds its echo in the very period that the project backtracks to, in 1987, which was pointedly indicative of the times—towards the end of Margaret Thatcher's tenure as prime minister and the height of the *young-upwardly-mobile* social class in Britain. It was a boom period for marketing and for the farming of content through form devised by design conglomerates and their cafe-hot-seating subdivisions. Simultaneous feelings of *excess* and *deprivation* might have marked the uneasiness that those original

Morning Star editors experienced at my approach, unless of course they were simply too busy to reply. *Excess*, since regardless of how it is customary for PR, design and branding firms to lever metonymical processes, the use of form in the manner I was proposing might have been considered, through the eyes of *Morning Star*, as a surface distraction from the unaffected concerns of content. *Deprivation* because such a manoeuvre stood to deprive *Morning Star* of its readership's confidence, a parlous ideological affiliation rooted more in the loyalty of habit than in anything more substantive.

In this sense, *Morning Star* has occupied a purely defensive and reactive position in the media market, which it has both shunned and relied upon. In other words, a rebranding would attract people's attention to the editors' reluctance to address the relationship between form and content in their publication. Of course, the sword of branding could not be sidestepped altogether, given that *Morning Star* has operated not in a vacuum but in a media brand market. They have thus been left with a default branding consisting of a red star and plucky fundraising adverts. Here the brand is not just a red herring, but a metonymical relation, which is what *Morning Star Rebranded* delineates and this research complicates. The default quality extends to the content as well as the form of the newspaper, emphasising the relationship which the paper refuses to consider as a point of principle. This was the dissociation—and one which extended to the paper's hidebound editorial slant[16] that is also manifest in the paper being deemed largely irrelevant by a younger politicised generation, even and especially ones who would identify as Marxist—that the excessive signifier of brand sought to focus as my speculative pitch[17] to them.

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16   For example, *Morning Star*'s support of the Soviet Union's crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 and more recently the newspaper's uncritical stance towards the African National Congress (ANC), its South African Communist Party ally, following the police massacre of 34 striking miners in Marikana on August 16th, 2012. News coverage, provided by Al Jazeera, showed the moment the police opened fire when the strikers were not attacking the police but attempting to escape. Nevertheless *Morning Star*'s report, the following day, was headlined: 'National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) secretary general Frans Baleni… blamed the unrest on the rival Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union making promises which could never be delivered and, in the process, organising an illegal action which led to the loss of lives.'

17   This pitch refers to recent years on occasions in which I have solicited them, not my original pitch in 1987.

0.2   The deposit of a social relationship

> A fifteenth-century painting is the deposit of a social relationship. On one side there was a painter who made the picture, or at least supervised its making. On the other side there was somebody else who asked him to make it, provided funds for him to make it and, after he had made it, reckoned on using it in some way or other.[18]

In the opening chapter, 'Conditions of Trade', in *Painting and Experience in 15th Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, the art historian Michael Baxandall was referring to the complex histories that are accrued in an artwork in which artist-patron relationships are paramount.

Baxandall's essay, published in 1972, developed from a series of lectures that he had given at the Warburg Institute, University of London. In the preface, he emphasises the essay's subtitle, *A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, by directing his focus towards how 'the *style* of pictures is the proper material of social history.'[19] Baxandall reconstructs what he terms 'the period eye'[20] which is 'the equipment that a fifteenth-century painter's public [i.e. other painters and 'the patronising classes'] brought to complex visual stimulations like pictures.'[21] Reflecting upon pictorial characteristics and the inflections of language used to describe and discuss paintings at a particular historical period, *style* for Baxandall is not confined to the domain of art, but includes ways of living, the agency of working, the mechanics of the tools that an artist uses and the manner in which experience and skill is communicated through language.

At that time a 'social history of art' was a phrase associated with a particular Marxist-historical bent. Frederick Antal had published *Florentine Painting and its Social Background*[22] in 1948, and Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art*

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18   Baxandall, M., *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford University Press, 1972).

19   Ibid. (author's italics)

20   Ibid.

21   Ibid.

22   Antal, F., *Florentine Painting and its Social Background. The bourgeois republic before Cosimo de' Medici's advent to power: 14th and early 15th centuries* (London: Kegan Paul, 1948).

was published in 1951. From a Marxist perspective, the depiction of commodity as a mysterious 'social hieroglyphic of value'[23] can be extended to the process through which art is produced and experienced. Left to themselves, the characteristics of the negotiations that form a *network*—where social standing and ideology come into play—are inherently *hidden*. This concealment is in keeping with the manner in which commodities are considered as representing an imaginary productive process while obscuring the real lives of those behind the production. They can be compared in value through the yardstick of the fact that they all contain abstract social labour. In ventriloquising the commodity, Marx writes:

> If commodities could speak, they would say this: our use-value may interest men, but it does not belong to us as objects. What does belong to us as objects, however, is our value. Our own intercourse as commodities proves it. We relate to each other merely as exchange-values.[24]

Baxandall's approach to a social history elucidates something more subtle than an interpretation of artworks as reflexive of social imperatives and registers of class struggle. In the opening chapter, 'Conditions of Trade', Baxandall examines contracts, letters and accounts to explore how both parties (the client and painter) 'worked within institutions and conventions —commercial, religious, perceptual, in the widest sense social—that were different from ours and influenced the forms of what they together made.'[25] Baxandall makes a point of avoiding binary opposition between client (making particular demands) and artist (subject to these demands). He remarks on 'facile equations'[26] between realism and the bourgeoisie and instead emphasises something shaped by conventions, through which the perceptual processes of both client and artist are shaped by the customs and institutions in which they operate.

T.J. Clark—responsible for foundational work in the social history of art at Leeds University from the mid-1970s, alongside Griselda Pollock, Fred Orton and

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23   Marx, K., *Capital, Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin, 1990).

24   Ibid.

25   Baxandall, M., *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford University Press, 1972)..

26   Ibid. p. 152

Terry Atkinson[27]—has scoped out *synergies* that elucidate the social nature of form. Distinct from the notion of an artwork *reflecting* social relations or ideologies, Clark considers synergies to be central to what he terms 'the conditions of representation—the technical and social conditions of its historical moment.'[28] In his genealogy of modernism, *In Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (2001), Clark explores a series of works—from Jacques-Louis David's *Death of Marat* (1793) to Jackson Pollock's *Number 1* (1948)—in which modernist formalism collides with the social history of art. For these 'limit-cases'[29] the objective is not to understand the possible meanings a work or art might convey or to focus on its reception by various publics, nor is the essential aim to uncover the artist's intentions. Instead, it is the confluence of these social forces which forms a synergy that, in turn, proposes the social as the modality for the relation between politics and aesthetics.

In the opening chapter of *Image of the People: Gustav Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (1973) Clark set out his initial ideas for a framework:

> If the social history of art has a specific field of study,
> it is exactly this — the processes of conversion and
> relation, which so much art history takes for granted.
> I want to discover what concrete transactions are hidden
> behind the mechanical image of 'reflection', to know how
> 'background' becomes 'foreground': instead of analogy
> between form and content, to discover the network of
> real, complex relations between the two. These mediations
> are themselves historically formed and historically
> altered: in the case of each artist, each work of art,
> they are historically specific.[30]

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27   T.J. Clark appointed Griselda Pollock and Fred Orton as lecturers and this constituted the team teaching the 'Social History of Art' Masters Degree at Leeds University. Terry Atkinson was also appointed by Clark as a Fine Art lecturer and, whilst not formally associated with the Social History of Art course, contributed to a Marxist discourse that was prevalent in the Fine Art department of the university during this period.

28   Clark, T.J., 'The Conditions of Artistic Creation', *Times Literary Supplement* (1974).

29   Through the connected essays collected in *Farewell to an Idea*, (Yale University Press, 1999), T.J. Clark writes on what he calls 'limit cases' of modernism—moments in which the manner in which modernism is presented can be characterised by *contingency*—Clark's term for the concept of social order without transcendent values.

30   Clark, T. J., *Image of the People: Gustav Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, (Thames & Hudson, repr. 1982 orig. 1972) Chapter 1.

Where Baxandall's interpretation of the 'period eye', of a particular historical period, reveals ways in which intellectual attitudes and habits *stabilise* the meaning of works of art in such contexts, Clark's theories centred around the idea of *reciprocity* in which the political resonance of an artwork might not only be in response to a particular historical horizon but, in return, can have a bearing on the politics of that horizon and create social attitudes:

> ```
> The making of a work of art is one historical process
> among other acts, events and structures — it is a series
> of actions in but also on history. It may become
> intelligible only within the context of given and imposed
> structures of meaning; but in its turn it can alter and at
> times disrupt these structures. A work of art may have
> ideology (in other words, those ideas, images and values
> which are generally accepted, dominant) as its material,
> but it works that material: it gives it a new form and at
> certain moments that new form is in itself a subversion
> of ideology.[31]
> ```

Where Baxandall sets the work of art in the context in which it is produced, Clark's assertion that an artwork is '*in* but also *on* history' demonstrates that the manner in which meaning is generated is conditioned by *temporality*. In the theories propounded by philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman, temporalities can be *disjunctive*. Didi-Huberman adopts the term 'anachronism' which by definition defies the historicist idea that each object or event belongs to a certain time and place. He argues that time is *always* present in *all* artworks and 'in each historical object, all times encounter one another, collide, or base themselves plastically on one another, bifurcate, or even become entangled with one another.' Central to Didi-Huberman's research has been the notion of the *atlas*, as distinct from the *archive*. In 'Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back?', an exhibition curated for Museo National Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2011), Didi-Huberman takes art historian Aby Warburg's montage of heterogenous images, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* as its point of departure. Undertaken between 1926 and 1929, Warburg's atlas of images is a collection of sixty-three large wooden panels covered with black cloth on which are arranged historical and thematic sequences of symbolic and symptomatic images. These images map a Western cultural memory stretching back from the early twentieth century to antiquity, gathered over

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31   Ibid.

decades of research, and arranged metonymically.[32] In *Radical Museology, or, What's Contemporary in Museums of Contemporary Art?* (2013) Claire Bishop describes Didi-Huberman's concept of *anachronism*, with respect to Warburg as follows:

> …works of art are temporal knots, a mixture of past and present: they reveal what persists or 'survives' (Nachleben) from earlier periods, in the form of a symptom in the current era. To gain access to these stratified temporalities…requires a "shock, a tearing of the veil, an irruption or appearance of time, what Proust and Benjamin have described so eloquently under the category of 'involuntary memory'."[33]

Bishop also refers to the term 'anachronic' as coined by art historians Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood who present the case that whilst a work of art bears witness to the time in which it was made, it also points away from that moment. Their book, *Anachronic Renaissance* (2010), comprises a series of case-studies of European Renaissance images and artefacts through which they accord a historical index linking each work of art to its past through a punctuated, sequence of events. Of importance, for Nagel and Wood, is that such a sequence negates linear time and instead aims to create *identity* rather than *difference* through a duality of 'performance' (referring to the 'imagination' of the maker and the materiality of the work of art) and 'substitution' (referring to a 'talismanic or magical efficacy' and 'a hidden sameness'—amongst other attributes).

Bishop's objection to Nagel and Wood's investigation is that it is 'mono-directional: by their own admission, they 'reverse engineer' from the work of art backwards (into its own past, its own chronotopology), rather than beginning with a diagnosis of the present that necessitates research into the

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32   The unfinished encyclopaedic atlas of Aby Warburg (1866–1929) was an attempt to encompass the relevance of Renaissance art and cosmography for a twentieth-century audience. Through the particular manner of the juxtapositions, Warburg can be said to have been interested in creating *anachronistic* arrangements. Historian Christopher D. Johnson, in his book *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images* (Cornell University Press, 2012) writes: 'if his juxtaposition of images and panels self-consciously flirts with anachronism, then this is because Warburg believed that humanity in fact was forever oscillating between extremes of emotion and reason. The task of his Kulturwissenschaft (science of culture) was to graph these oscillations.'

33   Bishop, C., *Radical Museology, or, What's Contemporary in Museums of Contemporary Art?* (Verlag König, 2013). The included citation is from 'Georges Didi-Huberman, Before the Image, Before Time: The Sovereignty of Anachronism' in: *Compelling Visuality,* Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg (eds.), (University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 2003) p..41.

early Renaissance as a means to mobilise a different understanding of today.'[34] Yet, Nagel and Wood emphasise that a work of art also points to its future understanding as:

> …a strange kind of event whose relation to time is plural. The artwork is made or designed by an individual or by a group of individuals at some moment, but it also points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral origin, perhaps, or to a prior artifact, or to an origin outside time, in divinity. At the same time it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event.[35]

Instead of 'anachronistic'—which implies a *mistake*, and in turn implies a historicist's judgement—'anachronic' suggests an alternative that is *non-judgemental*. As opposed to a disjunctive temporality they propose the 'anachronic' as a phenomenon which occurs when a work of art 'is late, when it repeats, when it hesitates, when it remembers, but also when it projects a future or an ideal.'[36] From their case-studies of the Renaissance period, they assert that a work of art is characterised by a recursive system that thematises its mechanisms of substitution. How might this notion of the 'anachronic' be applied to art works produced at other points of history and now? How might a sense of recursive temporality, activated through narratives that spiral retrogressively, echo and pervert a sense of an artwork's understanding? Through this process, how might an artwork project a future for itself?

An entry point to consider this might be 'Lux Interior', an exhibition by Jutta Koether at Reena Spaulings Gallery, New York (2009), which is explicitly linked to T.J. Clark's book *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (2006).[37] To understand the connection it is useful to give a thumbnail sketch of Clark's publication: a diaristic reading of two paintings by Nicolas Poussin hanging opposite each other in a single room at the Getty Museum.[38] Returning to the

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34   Ibid.

35   Nagel, A. & Wood, C., *Anachronic Renaissance* (Zone Books, 2010).

36   Ibid.

37   Clark, T.J., *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (Yale University Press, 2006).

38   *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (c. 1648) and *Landscape with a Calm* (c. 1651).

paintings day after day, writing in the present continuous tense and in the first person 'I' or 'we', the book is by part autobiographical and part critique of his profession of art historian. In questioning what it means to look and to think politically, and through the lens of personal subjectivity, what is of consideration is the act of writing itself as a process of articulated thoughts. These determinations find an echo in 'Lux Interior', as described in the press release:

> …her recent encounter with Poussin – via T. J. Clark's study 'The Sight of Death'—has evolved into an experimental movement between reading and painting, an exploration of the relations between language and pictures (and their reciprocal mistreatments of each other).

Fig 1.0

The press release continues by describing a single painting that was central to the exhibition, titled *Hot Red (After Poussin)* (2009):

> Installed on its own wall, with one foot on the stage and one foot off, *Hot Rod (after Poussin)*, 2009 — the artist's to-scale remake of Poussin's *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*, 1651 — receives extra illumination from a vintage scoop light (salvaged from The Saint,

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an ex-Manhattan night club).³⁹
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In his essay 'Painting Beside Itself' (2009), art historian David Joselit, writes on Koether's *Hot Red (after Poussin)*:

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Koether develops a gesture that is deeply ambivalent:
equally composed of self-assertion and interpretation,
her strokes are depleted of expressive urgency by marking
the elapsed time between Poussin's 1651 and her 2009.⁴⁰
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Recalling Clark's theories on how an artwork can be '*in* but also *on* history',[41] *Hot Red (After Poussin)* is *in* history, through its execution and staging, whilst also *on* history in that 'each brushstroke of her reenactment of Poussin's *Landscape during a Thunderstorm with Pyramus and Thisbe* (1651) embodies the passage of time.' [42]

The advent of the term *network*—a framework within which everything in the social and natural worlds exists in constantly shifting networks of relationships—had become prominent in the social sciences at the beginning of the new millennium, largely owing to Bruno Latour's *actor-network* theory.[43] Significant to actor-network theory is that all surrounding factors are of consideration and agency is assigned to both human and non-human actors (e.g. organisational structures and artefacts). Joselit describes Koether's approach as 'instead of attempting to visualise the overall contours of a network, she actualises the *behaviour of objects within networks* by demonstrating what I would like to call their

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39   The press release for the Koether's exhibition, Lux Interior, included the following description: 'Her recent encounter with Poussin – via T.J. Clark's study 'The Sight of Death'— has evolved into an experimental movement between reading and painting, an exploration of the relations between language and pictures (and their reciprocal mistreatments of each other). Accompanying the exhibition's single painting is an archive compiled by the artist, a sort of extended footnote comprising her readings on the reintroduction of Poussin into modern art historical interpretation, preparatory sketches made while planning the exhibition, and song lyrics by The Cramps'

40   Joselit, D., 'Painting beside itself', *October*, (MIT 2009) 130, Fall issue, pp. 125–134.

41   Clark, T. J., *Image of the People: Gustav Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Thames & Hudson, repr. 1982 orig. 1972).

42   Joselit (2009).

43   See Latour, B., *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* Oxford University Press, 2005). The Actor-Network Theory is also attributed to Michel Callon (1991) and John Law amongst others.

transitivity.'[44] Citing the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of 'transitive' as 'expressing an action which passes over to an object,' Joselit uses it to describe the state of artworks within networks: how the circulation of an artwork, in its particular social sphere, informs its materiality and hence its meaning. Through the artists that Joselit focused on, stemming from Kippenberger's assistants and associates from the early 1990s onwards, what he considers significant is an emphasis on *how* to *visualise* these networks.

Joselit claims that 'painting since the 1990s has folded into itself so-called 'institutional critique' without falling into the modernist trap of negation, where works on canvas are repeatedly reduced to degree zero while remaining unique objects of contemplation and market speculation.'[45] This sense of 'folding in' of institutional critique into a painting—or arguably a work of art in any medium— points to a familiar and contradictory oscillation between critique and complicity with regard to art's relation to its institutions. The market *expects* a 'folding in' of institutional critique into an artwork's self-reflexivity, it *expects* an artwork to internalise a desire to evade the limits of institutional determination.

In *The Love of Painting* (2018),[46] writer and critic Isabella Graw suggests that the network is 'an altogether unsuitable metaphor when it comes to describing the social world. It tends to overemphasise frictionless connectivity and to underestimate the significance of social hierarchies, relations of power, and inequalities.'[47] It assumes all actors are equal within the network. In a series of works, titled *Where the Energy Comes From* (2014), the artist Jana Euler made a series of large scaled-up paintings of power sockets which Graw describes as 'a literal take on a symbol of connectivity'. Graw considers it 'reductivist to discuss [Euler's] work solely with a view to its negotiations of networking and subsume it under the label 'network painting' as many critics have done.' Arguably, many of Euler's paintings anticipate this identification and readily absorb this subsumption.

Throughout this introduction I have referred back to Baxandall's ideas around the negotiations between beliefs, social status and ideological positions, through which an artwork evolves. Of particular relevance, at this point in the

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44   Joselit (2009).

45   Ibid.

46   Graw, I., *The Love of Painting* (Sternberg, 2018).

47   Ibid.

introduction, is Baxandall's emphasis on the 'hidden' quality of these negotiations. A nuanced way of considering this might be to ask: in the methods through which a network can be visualised, *which* elements are *selected*, *revealed* or *brought into focus* (whilst other elements remain hidden)? In what ways might an artist seek to position their practice in relation to this question and how might that be articulated? These questions have significance for this doctoral research since the central focus of my inquiry revolves around the particularities of the methods that can be used to bring visibility to the currency of the social relationships—in which an artwork's meaning is first formed, yet can continue to evolve.

In order to further consider how an artist might choose to position their artistic practice, with respect to the social relationships that create its context and network, it might be fruitful to consider the work of Belgian artist Jef Geys (1934–2018). On face value, the social relations in Geys's practice appear to be antithetical to the notion of works of art operating within networks. Through-out his entire life, Geys's practice centred on Balen, a small town situated in De Kampen—an area of countryside in northern Belgium which he referred to with the contested term *terroir*. French in origin, the concept of terroir is woven into the political and cultural dynamics of a location: the nature of the how people relate to a place and their converging interests.[48] Geys's network included children, aged ten to fifteen, from a small village school where he worked from 1960 until 1989. He was the self-appointed teacher of a class that he named Positive Aesthetics and the projects that the students produced during that period became part of the artist's inventory. As Nicholas Tammens, the curator of a solo exhibition of Jeff Geys's work at Yale Union (2018), wrote in the press release that accompanied the exhibition:

What is most important about this inventory is how it

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48   Terroir is a French term that literally translates as: earth, or soil. Its meaning is contested over how products are bestowed meaning and value in relation to their location. This can be interpreted as a, 'focus on production or supply rather than consumption' (Tregear, A. 'From Stilton to Vimto: using food history to re-think typical products in rural development', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 43 (2003) p. 91-107). Or, to the contrary, Marion Demossier, in her article 'Beyond terroir: territorial construction, hegemonic discourses, and French wine culture' (published in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institut*e, Vol. 17, No. 4 (December 2011) writes: 'For most European anthropologists, on the other hand, terroir is expressed through the product to which it confers its originality (in the sense of typical product).' We can thus interpret the practice of Jef Geys as shaped and defined by the terroir or that his practice shapes and defines our understanding of the terroir, —both interpretations run counter and simultaneously highlight the notion of a circumscribed art network.

establishes an equivalence between forms, between activities
of the artist in everyday life and all that is commonly
recognized as the production of an artist.' [Geys used his
inventory to catalogue] '…everything from the commonplace
to the perceptively eminent: a class field-trip to visit the
studio of Marcel Broodthaers; the natural products of Geys'
garden; a drive with cabbages around the region to 'show'
them the countryside; exhibiting at Documenta; the
presentation of a snake handler in the classroom; the book
compiling all of his black and white photographs;
appearances on television; and a number of letters
addressed to heads of state. Within all of this was a
spirited questioning of art's position in the world, and
consequently, the role of the artist in social life. Jef
Geys re-articulated modernity's question concerning
the purpose of the artist into a mode of working that
sensed the boundaries of the role; he tested its limits,
asking what circumscribes the expectations of what an artist
is and does.'

Distinct from the work of Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*— exemplary to Didi-Huberman's concept of 'anachronism'— the work of Jef Geys *flattens* disparity so that *identity* might be created through *equivalence*. In an essay titled 'The Really Ignorant Schoolmaster: Jef Geys, Amongst Many Others',[49] writer and curator Dieter Roelstraete recalls an exhibition, in 1989, at a commercial gallery in Knokke—an up-market town on the Belgian coast. For this exhibition Geys invited a fourteen-year old boy, Gijs Van Doorn—chosen because his forename resembled the artist's surname—to show his artwork next to his own, 'making sure there was very little to distinguish one man's work from another's child play.'[50] This is characteristic of Geys's practice in which he positioned himself in 'a radical peripherality and self-conscious marginalisation ('exile' would probably be too romantic a term) through which the artist seeks to articulate his unyielding resistance to the centralist and centralising powers of the (art) system.'[51]

Working in the non-centralist terroir, Geys summons a familiar paradox: through resisting a centralist system he simultaneously sharpens our focus on it.

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49   Roelstraete, D., 'The Really Ignorant Schoolmaster: Jef Geys, Amongst Many Others', *Afterall*, Issue 27, (Summer 2011).

50   Ibid.

51   Ibid.

The matter of importance—that Joselit ascribed to associates of Kippenberger, from the 1990s onwards—is once again on how to visualise these networks. In the sense of a centralised network operating around the artist, comparisons have been made between Geys and the character of Ulrich, the twentieth-century Everyman in Robert Musil's *Man Without Qualities*:

> It is life that does the thinking all around us,
> forming with playful ease the connections our reason can
> only laboriously patch together piecemeal, and never to
> such kaleidoscope effect.[52]

Perhaps the manner in which a centralised network is implicated in Geys's work can be interpreted as operating in lieu of an attempt to escape it, or to bear witness to the impossibility of escaping it. A 'trauma of limits' is how the artist John Russell describes this postition: an 'anxiety regarding boundaries and the dialectic between located and unlocatedness.'[53] Russell is, in part, responding to artist and theorist Andrea Fraser's charge that a movement between an *inside* and an *outside* of the institution is no longer possible. Fraser suggests that 'with each attempt to evade the limits of institutional determination, to embrace an outside, we expand our frame and bring more of the world into it. But we never escape it.'[54] Roelstaete picks up this mantle by summoning 'an ancient logical paradox':

> it is not just because we are simply 'caught' inside a
> totality, the totaling character of which even the most
> totalitarian master narratives of modernity could not have
> hoped to match; it is because we accept that the terms
> under which we are caught inside that this totality can no

52   Musil, R., *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften (Man Without Qualities)* (Alfred A Knopf, 1995, first published 1930).

53   In an article titled 'Dear Living' for *Mute*, 16 February 2011, John Russell writes: 'Not so much a crisis of limits as a trauma of limits. An anxiety regarding boundaries and the dialectic between located and unlocatedness. That is: what is contained, what is excluded, what is allowed, what is censored, what can be transcended, what is visible and what is invisible and how this is registered, monitored, authorised. Fuck… my fingers…keep moving…jerking. That is, the relationship between the small world of art and everything else. The non-dialectic of existence and non-existence. And finally, as I proposed earlier, this ongoing negotiation of limits ends up mirroring the binaries of finite/infinite and life/death.' (website) https://www. metamute.org/editorial/articles/dear-living-person. Retrieved 27th October, 2019.

54   Andrea F., 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum* (September 2005), p.282.

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longer be negotiated.⁵⁵
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The impression of an all-encompassing network is also conjured by Tirdad Zolghadr who elicits the sense that the 'trauma of limits' is pervaded by *complacency*. He tells a tale of Jacques Derrida falling off a skateboard on a university campus:

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According to Genevan oral history, when Jacques Derrida
visited the city's university many years ago, he broke
his arm falling off a skateboard on campus. Some weeks
later a failed local poet by the name of Schlurick
chose to confront the professor, saying: "Monsieur Derrida,
you think you're so bloody radical, but you never even leave
the university – the biggest risk you run is breaking your
arm showing off to the demoiselles." The philosopher
reacted in a manner atypically abrupt: "Go ahead and hand
out your flyers at the gates of the Renault factory – ils en
ont rien à foutre [no one gives a fuck]," he reportedly
grunted; "the ideology of tomorrow is produced right here,
at the university."⁵⁶
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For Zolghadr, the paradigm implied through 'inside the institution' being 'outside the institution' and vice versa'⁵⁷ is an overly familiar one. The poet is 'local' and has 'failed'. Is the complacency of *ivory tower activism* being given the mirror of *our* complacency in questioning if there couldn't possibly be an alternative? In which case shouldn't we be asking in relationship to *whose* vantage point is the 'totality' of this network being visualised? Whose *subjectivity* might render this complacent or otherwise?

In Jörg Immendorff's painting *Wo stehst du mit deiner Kunst, Kollege?* (Where do you stand with your art, colleague?) (1973) the painting depicts a young activist—who we should possibly imagine as Immendorff himself—

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55   Roelstraete, D., 'On Leaving the Building: Thoughts of the Outside', *eflux Journal* (#24 - April 2011), (underline replaces author's italics)

56   Zolghadr, T., 'Academic Questions', *Frieze*, Issue 101, September 2006. Derrida's own depiction of a skateboard, in a mock epistolary novel of 1980, also performs a comic displacement. In *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), Derrida describes a scene in a card reproduction in which Socrates stands behind Plato's back taking dictation. Derrida speculates what else he may have been doing behind Socrates's back: 'taking tram fares in a poor country' or 'pushing himself off on a skateboard'.

57   Ibid.

rushing off the street, bursting into a painter's studio and wildly gesticulating to a protest that workers are waging on the street behind him. We see the painter on the *inside* (a private individual's studio) looking past the intruder to the *outside*, and the protestors marching with banners (the collective, the public sphere, the political world at large). There's a sheet of paper on the studio wall, pinned up on the *inside*. Hand-drawn capitals spell out several preoccupations of art of the day: 'POP-ART, NEW REALISM, CONCEPT ART, LAND ART, OP-ART etc'. Art trends penned like a to-do list—to borrow Diedrich Diederichsen's description of the painting in a symposium organised by *Texte zur Kunst* at Hebbel am Uffer, Berlin in 2010.[58]

Fig. 1.2

If the activist's *call to arms* summons the *anti-aesthetic*, how should we interpret the *aesthetic* of Immendorff's painting in which this is depicted? Art historian and critic Helmut Draxler draws us into this contradiction in his contribution to the *Texte zur Kunst* symposium. He asks: 'What kind of subjectivity does Immendorff himself perform by entering from the *outside*, pointing to the

58   The journal *Texte zur Kunst* organised an international symposium at Theater Hebbel am Ufer (HAU1) in Berlin on December 11, 2010. Under the programmatic title 'Where do you stand, colleague?' lectures and panels addressed the fundamental question of the relationship between art criticism and social critique. A compiled and edited version of the seventeen lectures and statements was subsequently published in Issue #81 of *Texte zur Kunst* (2011).

street and the struggle of the working class?'[59] This subjectivity appears to be on behalf of the people—*the people's voice*—but one which is distinctly orchestrated through a *master narrative* expressed by Jörg Immendorff himself. Responding to this, Draxler points us to Gayatri Spivak's 1985 essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in which Spivak 'reflects on the fact that radical critique has two sides, denouncing subjectivity while performing it, with the strange effect that it is precisely this act of speaking in the name of others which in the end lets those others remain in complete silence.'[60]

Spivak refers to a conversation between Deleuze and Foucault on delinquents:

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According to Foucault and Deleuze (in the First
World, under the standardisation and regimentation
of socialised capital, though they do not seem to
recognise this) the oppressed, if given the chance
(the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here),
and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics
(a Marxist thematic is at work here) can speak and know
their conditions. We must now confront the following
question: On the other side of the international division
of labor from socialised capital, inside and outside
the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law
and education supplementing an earlier economic text, can
the subaltern speak?…[61]
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If the network which—as a metaphor for describing the social world—treads *equivalence* over social inequalities and hierarchical relations of power,[62] how might there be an escape from this *grand subjectivity*? How might there be an alternative to the concentric loop of 'privileged speaking ambitions and silencing effects'?[63] How might these considerations impact on the methods I undertake, through the model I use for this PhD research, to intervene in the social relationships through which an understanding of the model is formed?

In a collection of essays under the title *The Undercommons: Fugitive*

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59   Draxler, H., 'Where Do You Stand, Colleague?', *Texte zur Kunst*, Issue #81, 2011.

60   Ibid.

61   Spivak, G., *Can the subaltern speak?* (Macmillan, 1988).

62   An *equivalence* that the artworks of Jef Geys draws our attention to.

63   Draxler (2011).

Planning & Black Study (Autonomedia, 2013) art historians Fred Moten and
Stefano Harney draw on the theory and practice of black radical tradition and
postcolonial theory. They look to harness its fugitive yet generative power in
the face of mechanisms of control such as the governance of credit, the
all-encompassing reach of capitalist logistics and the management of pedagogy.

In a chapter titled 'The University and the Undercommons', Moten and
Harney advance the notion that today's university berates its own liberal
commitment to bring about emancipation. In what reads as a sobering adjoint to
Zolghadr's tale of Derrida's on-campus skateboarding and the complacency of
ivory tower activism, Moten and Harney lament the university's deadening forms
of hyper-regulation and professionalism. They write: 'It cannot be denied that
the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is
a place of enlightenment.'[64] Critique and criticism within the academy, they argue,
is 'negligent' and serves to reproduce and reinforce forms of hierarchy and meri-
tocracy that reflect inequality in our society. To determine subjectivities that coun-
ter this, Moten and Harney imagine renegade groupings in the 'undercommons',
communities that they term 'maroon':

> ```
> maroon communities of composition teachers, mentorless
> graduate students, adjunct Marxist historians, out or
> queer management professors, state college ethnic studies
> departments, closed-down film programs, visa-expired Yemeni
> student newspaper editors, historically black college
> sociologists, and feminist engineers. And what will the
> university say of them? It will say they are unprofessional.
> This is not an arbitrary charge. It is the charge against
> the more than professional. How do those who exceed the
> profession, who exceed and by exceeding escape, how do those
> maroons problematic themselves, problematic the university,
> force the university to consider them a problem, a danger?[65]
> ```

Whether or not Immendorff is instrumentalising rather than articulating
the people's voice in his painting *Wo stehst du mit deiner Kunst, Kollege?* we
witness this contradiction. It is performed between the *anti-aesthetic* in terms of
its content and the *aesthetic* in terms of its form (as a painting hung on a gallery

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64   Moten, F. & Harney, S., *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Autonomedia,
2013)

65   Ibid.

wall and as a 'deposit of a social relationship'). Through this contradiction, Immendorf either renders a sense of complicity or signals it as 'negligent'. To consider this is to have an understanding of the mechanisms that can be put into play when considering how to intervene in the social relationships within which an artwork's meaning evolves. It indicates the significance of which elements are selected, revealed, or brought into focus and simultaneously signals the positioning of a practice in relation to these decisions. Through recipocracy these decisions reflect back on an artist's identity and the circumstances in which choices are made.

0.3   Spastic Logic

In considering how an artwork might formulate itself as an intervention in the context through which it takes form, through what methods might it propose a modality for a relation between politics and aesthetics that recoils from a *master narrative?* How might it instead take form in a manner in which its meaning—formed as the 'deposit of a relationship'—can *evolve* rather than remain *inert*? How might its narratives spiral retrogressively to create a sense of *recursive* temporality that avoids a lumpen re-treading on the dead hand of a historical past and a hollow relativism? How might it then project a future onto itself?

To address these objectives, a methodology was required in writing this thesis through which the structural interstices—between an artwork's thematic parts and its protagonists—could be re-configured and filtered anew. Underpinning an approach to my research, from the outset, was to envisage a structural form—a *treatment*—that could be applied to the writing and editorial process. A treatment that could complicate the parameters of artistic authorship, repel the dominance of a master narrative and whose agency is relocated through combinations of collaboration and appropriation. I began to consider an understanding of *spasticity* in relation to this aim. In its most familiar, medical sense spasticity is a condition where regular muscular performance is disturbed by reflex activity of the tendons, in what is colloquially referred to as an unusual *pull* of muscles. This contraction interferes with normal movement, speech and mannerisms: it causes convulsive movement. The condition is attributed to damage to a portion of the brain that controls voluntary movement.

This medical interpretation of spasticity can be broadened to a figurative understanding of the term in which spasticity can be envisaged, not as an ailment but as a treatment. Applied to writing, spasticity might then be considered as a

conditioning characteristic of meaning and one which provokes an unfixed state. A pull of muscles, can denote an involuntary *turning back*, a fitful movement which causes *displacement*. Spasticity as a treatment, envisaged through the term 'spastic logic', became a device for this doctoral research, not as a means to explain or elaborate on the term itself, but instead as a tool to *displace* and reconfigure meaning. Whilst the quality of turning back, as described in a medical definition of spasticity, is one of involuntary action, the use of this quality in the structure of this thesis is a willing one. The concerns of a six year PhD research period are stretched over a thirty-year time span and an understanding of my artwork *Morning Star Rebranded* is (re)modelled in retrograde. Rather than attempting to relate a chronological description of the work with precision, I propose the idea of 'spastic logic' as a method in which to create its fitful history and in turn provoke its understanding. A sense of flailing around prevails: peripheral and tangential material is accumulated and takes equal position alongside content that is directly related to the work at hand. Such methodology is not intended to summon a veil of indeterminacy over content. It should reveal its own workings in a manner akin to how spasticity draws attention to its own physical characteristics. Through such methodology we witness the mechanism as much as we witness the outcome. In doing so—to borrow philosopher Giorgio Agamben's particular interpretation of the word *gesture*—there is a 'process of making a means visible as such.'[66]

Envisaging 'spastic logic' as a tool that could cause displacement—in which cause and effect can be kept hidden—what a viewer of an artwork might look for in relationship to ethics becomes ambiguous. Where there is a reciprocity between spasticity—as a manner in which meaning can be (re)formed—and circumstances in which ethics is displaced, suspended or *put on hold*, what purpose would this serve and *whose* ethical code might be displaced? Through our understanding of spasticity as having the quality of *inadvertency*, displacement can occur in a semi-automated manner, secondary to intent and away from the centre of view. It can hold *ethics* at its point of attention, in the fluctuating views, objectives and interactions between *voices* and in the differing modes of writing. Such an intent would not be to attempt to articulate a particular definition of ethics or to determine a new confluence between ethics and aesthetics. Instead, ethics is considered in terms of its quotidian sense—through consideration of how we live

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66   Agamben, G., *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* [1996, Italian] (Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Towards the end of Agamben's 'Notes on Gesture' he meditates on the word *gag*. A gag that is placed in a mouth to hinder speech directs our attention towards what cannot be said as well as the inability to say it.

according to held principles that are shared, or in the words of the writer David Foster Wallace, 'how to live a compassionate life.'[67] In what manner are principles shared? Can we perceive a commonality in Contemporary Art—a shared ethos—that corresponds to a concept of a *moral economy*? Might acts of displacement produce models that exert influence on shared principles?

To consider this we could look to an understanding of the term moral economy which was first introduced by social historian Edward P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963),[68] and later refined in his writing on the food riots in England in the 18th century. Whilst economy customarily indicates the distribution and circulation of works it can also be applied to ideas. Thompson proposed a moral aspect to Marxist economic social theory, calling attention to the existence of an economy of shared values beside the prevailing political economy. The sociologist Didier Fassin, in applying the concept of a moral economy in his anthropological research, charts the historical use of the term and suggests Thompson's aim was to comprehend 'the production, dissemination, circulation and use of emotions and values, norms and obligations in the social space [which] characterise a particular historical moment and in some cases a specific group.'[69]

In his 'memoir-polemic', *Traction* (2016),[70] Tirdad Zolghadr considers an understanding of a moral economy which he depicts, in relation to contemporary art, as being characterised by *indeterminacy*.[71] A reaction to this proposition is taken up in Chapter 2 (September 2016) of this thesis, in a scripted lecture titled 'The Casual Slaughter of Self-Insufficient Objects'. Leaving the question of indeterminacy aside for the purpose of this introduction, through an understanding of a moral economy we can envisage an art world commonality, (otherwise described here as a centralised network), in which circular and self-certifying

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67   'On how to live a compassionate life' is the subtitle of David Foster Wallace's *This is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life*, (Little, Brown, 2009). It is Wallece's posthumously published commencement speech.

68   Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class*, (Penguin Classics, 2013).

69   Ibid.

70   Zolghadr, T., *Traction* (Sternberg Press, 2016).

71   Ibid. Zolghadr also describes the concept of a moral economy of indeterminacy in a lecture for the Norwegian Association of Curators, (Lecture Series 5, 2016), See: http://norskkuratorforening.no/portfolio/item/lecture-series-4-oslo-tirdad-zolghard/. Retrieved September 2018.

concepts of relationality and ethicality are *shared* features. If a shared affinity considers not just what is good for us individually but for all, would that not suggest that for my artwork, *Morning Star Rebranded*, there would be a shared *expectation*? Would a sense of affiliation between myself as an artist and a left-wing newspaper not be readily sanctified? In other words, would art, in this instance, not be *expected* to attend to a symbol of left-wing ideology?

A point of departure for my research is to scramble that expectation. An anticipated ethical standpoint can be abdicated through the *excessive* nature of the relationship. Simply by being unsolicited it can be perceived as an excess, one whose understanding heralds a perversion if we see it through to its ideological co-option: where anything that exceeds or overruns necessity in the industrial and capitalist system—in organising production processes towards specific ends—must be a perversion.

The convulsive movement of spasticity is an oscillation in which the rhythm is irregular. *Morning Star Rebranded* has followed a trajectory of *displacement* in the situation of its production, where agency has been made to oscillate. As the instigator it begins and intermittently returns to me. Otherwise it switches to the addressee, the commissioning bodies and collaborators. If this shifting *behind-the-scenes* process could be turned into a visible result, for example a singularly hermetic object or an actual rebranding of *Morning Star*—the rendering of the ethical into material would then become the work's production and reception. However, my intention here is otherwise. The sequence of dated entries, that form the chapters of this thesis, not only places a mirror upon these behind-the-scenes processes but spirals out from them to encompass a particular range of associated content and modes of writing. The intention is not to explicate or analyse, but to operate with a reflex envisaged as spastic and through which ethicality might be problematised.

0.4   Skeleton

In Marxist theory, *superstructure* is a core concept in which human society is inextricably linked by two entities: a *substructure* (or base) comprising the relations of production and a superstructure composed of everything else: its culture, institutions and political power structures etcetera. Whilst it is not a question of this research to consider whether Marx's concept of superstructure functions when the base is something other than the means of production (i.e. since the relational factors that influence the evolution of an artwork are not wholly located in the substructure),

it is useful to consider the term as one in which the reason one experiences something (A) is due to the invisible forces through which it is produced (B). In this contested relationship, the interdependency in which the reason one experiences something not only reflects back on its foundation but potentially bears upon it. Echoes of this interdependency can be found in the theories outlined in Part 0.2 of this introduction, ('The deposit of a social relationship'), in which I outlined a trajectory of theories that hinges on the premise that an artwork evolves in relation to a hidden negotiation of beliefs, social status and ideological positions, then leads into ideas pertaining to 'anachronistic' and 'anachronic' formulations of disjunctive temporalities and the contested characteristics of a network.

In envisaging 'spastic logic' as a methodology that can be applied to a superstructure, I imagine a framework for this thesis as a *skeleton*. By definition, a skeletal account of something lacks detail yet allows fragmentary elements to unfold as semi-autonomous entities: each embodying its own rationale, each moving independently. As is familiar to philosopher and sociologist Theodor W. Adorno's 'essay form'[72]—which opposes prescribed and conventional scientific/academic procedure—methods can be used through which aspects of an argument 'interweave as in a carpet, where the fruitfulness of thoughts depends on the density of the texture.'[73] As a precursor to Adorno's 'essay form' we can look to Michel de Montaigne's sixteenth-century reflections on method. Montaigne's techniques are situated in a context with two significant factors: the wars of religion (1562–1598) and prevailing rhetorical theory and practice of the day. Within this context one can recognise both his use of *dissimulation*—as a necessity in times of civil strife and his fondness for *paradoxes*—a rhetorical form that was popular in that period. Therefore, what we witness in Montaigne's writing is the invention of procedures that both develop and respond to a specific context. Literary scholar Sarah Pourciau, in her article Ambiguity Intervenes: The Strategy of Equivocation in Adorno's 'Der Essay als Form', describes Montaigne's topoi:

```
the apparent spontaneity of presentation, the emphasis
on rhetorical sophistication, the exaltation of the
incomplete, the rejection of a purely deductive logic,
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72   T.W. Adorno's essay 'The Essay as Form' (1958) is based on Georg Lukács' 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay: A Letter to Leo Popper' [1910, German], *Soul and Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974).

73   Adorno, T., 'The Essay as Form', in *The Adorno Reader* Ed. Brian O'Conner, Oxford, (Blackwell Publishing), p. 104.

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the eschewal of heavy-handed profundity, the antipathy
toward systematic dogmatism, the treatment of non-scientific,
often unconventional subject matter, the central importance
of play, the insistence on human fallibility, the image of a
meandering, exploratory journey.
```

The 'essay form' prescribes *simultaneity*, it advocates an alternative to an argument progressing in a linear direction. Given that the structure of this thesis— as chapters punctuating a timeline—suggests a pronounced linearity, it would therefore seem antithetical to the 'essay form'. Nevertheless, the structure of this thesis shares an intent not to build a critical argument from start to finish. Neither, by following a reverse logic—as a timeline progressing in retrograde—does it seek to unpick its own history. Instead, my consideration is on devising a structure that can support disparate subjectivities. In the chapter titled 'Subjectivization Units' in *Relational Aesthetics* (2002), Nicholas Bourriard advocates 'unhinging the mental 'ivory tower' myth allocated to the artist by the Romantic ideology'.[74] In lieu of this, Bourriard is not aligning himself with structuralist notions on the *death of the author*. Since the 'author does not have a monopoly on subjectivity, the model of the Author and his alleged disappearance are of no importance'.[75] Instead, Bourriard advocates a polyphony 'of that rough form of subjectivity rep- resented by many-voiceness',[76] citing Guattari:

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Devices for producing subjectivity may exist in the scale
of megalopolis as well as on the scale of an individual's
linguistic games.[77]
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Polyphony refers (from a musical vocabulary) to the *horizontal* and simultaneous movement over time of individual voices. Unlike *harmony* which operates with simultaneous *verticality*, these individual voices are all saying virtually the same thing. Polyphony, or counterpoint, can be regarded as a *demo- cratic* structure whereas harmony is *hierarchical*, it is *aristocratic*.[78] The value of

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74   Bourriard, N., *Relational Aesthetics*, Trnas. Pleasance, S. & Woods, F., Dijon, (Les presses du reel, 2002).

75   Ibid.

76   Ibid.

77   Guattari, F., *Chaosmosis: An ethicoaesthetic pradigm* (Indiana Press, 1992)

78   Greek ἀριστοκρατία aristokratía, from ἄριστος aristos 'excellent', and κράτος, kratos 'rule'.

a voice in harmony depends on its relative position in the hierarchy. The frame-work of this thesis, imagined as a skeleton, is neither polyphonic or harmonic. Its voices operate independently from one another and whilst there is a bias towards linearity rather than simultaneity in its structuring, it nevertheless intends a sense of equivalence between matter and subjectivities employed. Instead of attempting to sequentially build an argument, this linearity fosters a timeline that operates a reverse chronology, spanning a thirty-year period stretching back to when I first contacted *Morning Star* newspaper in 1987. A progression of temporalities serve as framing conditions for considering how *Morning Star* considers its form in relationship to the social fabric that sustains it and how the social acts as a modal-ity between aesthetics and politics. How might a skeleton connect these disparate temporalities and how might it be viable, through writing, to bind heterogenous fields of subjectification?

The inadvertent *pulling bac*k of muscles onto a skeleton is a quality of spasticity. Considered under the methodology of 'spastic logic' and as a treatment, this action becomes a prescribed *turning bac*k whose behaviour is *recursive*.[79] There is an old and anonymous joke about recursion: 'To understand recursion, you must first understand recursion.' The concept of *recursive form*, which became popular in the field of cybernetics, derives from the work of English mathematician George Spencer Brown[80] who approached both mathematics and epistemology from the perspective of distinction:

```
We take the form of distinction for the form.⁸¹
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In Brown's *Laws of Form* (1969) a *calculus of form* demonstrates that creating a form is consistent with creating a universe. I draw this description of method from an article by André Reichel[82] in the journal *Ephemera: theory &*

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79   Whilst not the point of intention here, the Droste effect, which we are familiar with from product packaging, is a simple visual manifestation of recursive form. An example would be the logo of The Laugh-ing Cow cheese spread brand which pictures a cow with earrings. These earrings, when viewed close up, can be seen to be images of the circular cheese spread package, each bearing the image of the laughing cow in an unfolding of self-reference.

80   Brown, G. S., *Laws of Form* (Julian Press, 1972).

81   Ibid.

82   Reichel, A., 'Shape of things to come: From the 'laws of form' to management in the post-growth economy', *Ephemera, Theory & Politics in Organisation Journal.* (website) http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/shape-things-come-%E2%80%98laws-form%E2%80%99-management-post-growth-economy.

politics in organization:

```
Drawing a distinction is a threefold operation consisting
of the distinction itself, that which, for example,
separates a sheet of paper into two distinct sides; the
indication that is made, i.e. distinguishing 'this' side
of the sheet of paper from 'that' side, thus labeling them;
and the continence of all aspects of the operation that are
bound together by itself into the form of distinction.
```

In systems theory, or organisational theory, this temporal unfolding of the operation of distinction (containing everything created by it) as an act of *recursion* can be used to build reflexivity via self-interpretation and self-observation. It *re-enters* the distinction between itself and its environment within the system through observing how it is drawing the boundary.

In this light, how might recursion—as a characteristic of 'spastic logic'—perform as a treatment in this thesis? Along a reversed timeline its materiality becomes an unfolding of self-reference and a vectoring into parts. We can imagine this materiality as a repetitive abstraction of itself, structured as spiraling narratives—which both simultaneously echo and pervert. As the cultural theorist Sianne Ngai has noted, 'recursive form in aesthetic works enables us to connect the materiality of the work as objective fact with the abstract structures of social organisation.'[83] The intimacy of this connection, insofar as it implicates every-day, naturalised structures of power or functionality, may be a disconcerting one. It might be that since we are used to the opacity of market exchange, we instead look for ethical gratification in artworks that reveal their devices and foreground the labour and constituencies of their making, all the way up to the residues that we witness in an exhibition situation. Recursive form within the skeleton of this thesis, can—through writing—imagine alternate ethical universes where the characteristic financial, material and social hierarchies, operating in the background of artistic legitimacy, relentlessly produce fictions of autonomy and agency. Through the use of a treatment I give a breakdown of the dated entries that punctuate the timeline of this thesis, form a progression of temporalities, and serve as framing conditions held together by the skeleton.

Retrieved 20th October 2019.

83   Ngai, S., *Our Aesthetic Categories: Cute, Zany, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

0.5   Treatment

Earlier in this introduction I described a figurative understanding of *spasticity* in which it operates as a *treatment*. A generative understanding of the term can also be extended to its relation with writing. Similar to how a *skeleton* connects fragmentary elements rather than circumscribing them, a treatment provides a scene-by-scene breakdown of a script. Distinctions become apparent in how scenes are elaborated.

Through a succession of dated entries, the thirty-year timeline of this thesis is punctuated, unevenly, by a diverstiy of writing styles. At numerous points we are introduced to characters who overlap and re-occur between factual accounts and fictional writing: for example, between commentary (case-studies on design) and short stories (fictional accounts of job interviews). I now provide a chapter-by-chapter breakdown which, instead of a chronological structure, clusters synopses of chapters around four different rhetorical modes and registers: correspondence, case studies, scripted lectures and fictional narratives.

i.   Correspondence

Correspondence between myself, collaborators and editors of *Morning Star* is included, in unedited form, in two chapters of this thesis. I originally contacted the newspaper's editors in 1987 but no record of this correspondence exists. The two entries here—the first chapter, dated 'February 2017', and the fourth chapter, dated 'October 2013'—span the near breadth of the duration of this PhD research and provide a précis of intent behind *Morning Star Rebranded*.

February 2017

In February 2017, towards the end of this period of this PhD research, in an attempt to reconnect with *Morning Star*, an email was sent to the newspaper from the Melbourne-based curator Nicholas Tammens. The email was addressed to *Morning Star*'s editor at the time, Ben Chacko, in which Tammens entreated him to re-open a line of communication regarding my continuing proposal to rebrand the newspaper. The email included a letter which I drafted with Tammens who, since 2014, has been organising a succession of exhibitions under the name '1856'. The programme is taking place at the Victorian Trades Hall in Melbourne, Australia—a building synonymous with the International Workers movement and

the former site of one of the first Art and Design schools in Australia. Tammens and I felt that the context could engender connections between my intentions behind *Morning Star Rebranded* and the work of Australian conceptual artist and unionist Ian Burn who, through his work, had close ties to Melbourne's Victorian Trades Hall.

In 1969, Burn co-founded The Society for Theoretical Art Analysis in New York with Mel Ramsden and Roger Cutforth through which they published and exhibited their work as *Proceedings*.[84] The following year, Burn and Ramsden joined Art & Language, an exhibiting and publishing collective associated with Conceptual Art whose particular focus was on Marxist analyses of power relations and commodity production within the art world. When, in 1977, collaboration within the group in New York fractured, Burn returned to his native Australia to provide design and journalism for the Trade Union movement. Burn became active in the formation of the Artworkers Union and through a small company called Union Media Services initiated cultural programs for trade union members, staging exhibitions of their work and writing about it in essays and commentaries. In a lecture[85] written and delivered shortly after Burn's death in 1996, the artist Adrian Piper considers Burn's conceptualism through an understanding of his theoretical framing. Piper cites Burn's article for the Australian quarterly journal *Art & Text* (1981) titled 'The Sixties: Crisis and Aftermath (Or The Memoirs of an Ex-Conceptual Artist)' in which Burn asks:

> How long can you use mass media forms before becoming aware of the political and economic functioning of mass media in a capitalist society?[86]

What was pertinent to both Tammens and I, in our hope of resuming progress with my artwork *Morning Star Rebranded*, was a consistent thread in Burn's work which Piper describes as 'the distinction between cognition—intellectual discrimination and analysis on the one hand, and visual perception on the other.' Piper continues:

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84   Stephen, A., *On Looking at Looking: The Art and Politics of Ian Burn* (Carlton, Victoria.: The Miegunyah Press, 2006).

85   Adrian Piper's 'Inaugural Ian Burn Memorial Lecture', delivered July 23, 1996, at Monash University, Melbourne, and July 25, 1996, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

86   Burn, I., 'The Sixties: Crisis and Aftermath', *Art & Text* (A175, no. 1, 1985).

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There's always this interest in the influence of
cognition on perception - how our interpretation of
what we see affects or changes what we see. And he's
very often engaged with using cognitive interpretation
to guide and redirect the way we see things. This is
of course clearest in his written work, but it's present
in his object work as well. And then within perception
itself, he frequently experiments with shifts between
looking at something, looking through it - as if in
search for a distant, perspectival horizon, and its
reflecting back onto the looker…And all the focusing is
under the guidance of cognition, of some systematic
interpretation of what it is we're seeing.
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After first writing to *Morning Star* in early 2017, Nicholas Tammens followed up on numerous occasions during the succeeding months but received no response from the editors.

October 2013

Since commencing this research in 2013, I have been in touch with a succession of *Morning Star*'s editors (Richard Bagley and Ben Chacko) and members of the newspaper's Management Committee. The fourth chapter, dated October 2013, is titled 'Open Letter to *Morning Star* from the working group of *Morning Star Rebranded*' and is the second of the two pieces of correspondence included in this thesis. It was a response to the newspaper abruptly pulling out of an agreed arrangement to be involved in a number of workshops that I had set up, hosted by The Showroom in London. As has been described earlier in this introduction, when information on the project was publicised by The Showroom, the newspaper staff threw up immediate concerns regarding *Morning Star*'s appearance in promotional material, in particular regarding the structure of the funding behind the project. The Showroom's affiliations, in particular Bloomberg, were seen as an uncomfortable fit with the newspaper's political position. The Open Letter was a response to this breakdown of the collaboration and an attempt to clarify the working groups' motives.

Whilst collaboratively writing the Open Letter we kept in mind two distinct examples of design. We first considered the marketing and communications firm Arnell Group's rebranding of PepsiCo Inc. (2009) as an example of commodity branding that *Morning Star* would likely consider *toxic* and synonymous with marketing and surface. We considered this in order to both understand and

acknowledge *Morning Star*'s apprehension when explaining our intentions. Linked with using Arnell Group's work as an example in the Open Letter, I expand on the company's rebranding of Pepsi Co Inc. in a case study in Chapter 6.[87] Furthermore, Arnell Group is central to Chapter 5 in which employees of the firm become characters in a fictional job interview in which a former desktop layout designer at *Morning Star* is interviewed for a job at the branding company.[88]

The second example of design that we considered, in writing the Open Letter to *Morning Star*, was the 1972 film *Q&A* by Charles and Ray Eames. In the film, the curator of the Musee des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, Madame L'Amic, asks Charles Eames 29 questions about his and Ray's design process, for example:

```
Q.      'Is Design an element of industrial policy?
A.      'If Design constraints imply an ethic, and if
        industrial policy includes ethical principles, then
        yes — design is an element in an industrial policy.'⁸⁹
```
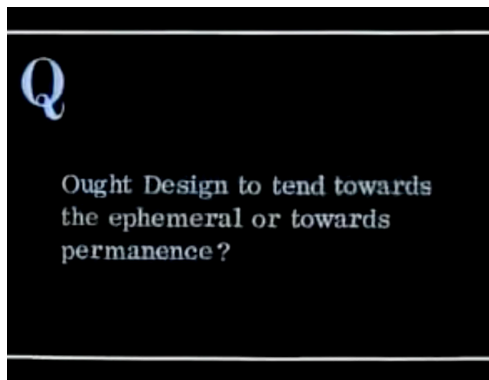

Fig 1.3

Fig 1.4

The Eames's transferred a selection of slides to film showing images of exhibitions, films, and furniture produced by the Eames Office (Figs. 1.2 & 1.3). Taking the Q&A as a lead, we structured our Open Letter as a series of

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87   See Chapter 6: 'April 2009—Rebranding Tiffany & Co., rebranding PepsiCo'.

88   See Chapter 5: 'November 2012—A former desktop layout designer at *Morning Star* interviewed for a job at Arnell Group'.

89   Excerpt from script. Eames, Ray & Eames, Charles, Q&A, Eames Office, retrieved September 2018 from www.eamesoffice.com/the-work/design-q-a-text/

questions and answers 'where we imagined how an impartial inquirer might question us on our motives behind the project.'[90]

The Open Letter was sent to the editors at *Morning Star* but we received no response.

ii.   Case studies

Case studies of rebranding occur at intervals along the timeline. The research in these is qualitative: exploring the motivations, opinions and contexts that led to a number of diverse campaigns. Whilst they are selected and presented in proximity to the question of how *Morning Star* might seek to reposition itself—in view of its existing and prospective audience—the purpose is not to draw out explicit comparisons.[91] It is rather to look to how relationships between form and content evolve in distinct contexts, or, in other words, the pursuit of differentiated identities in response to differentiated purposes.

The motivation for a company or organisation to pursue a rebranding can be various, such as: to mark a merger or take-over; reflect a change in direction of the company or organisation; divert attention from a negative image due to previous malpractice; overturn a loss in market share when customer loyalty appears to be dwindling; or to re-focus on a new prospective customer base. A brand calls for attention by producing and circulating an instrumentalised image: one that creates collective identifications or publics. It is an operation that not only endeavours to invent images that capture attention—and focus these on selected publics—but also strives to maintain or build customer loyalty. Rebranding, in the cases that I have selected, demonstrates an array of imperatives for the products or services, responding to market or ideological conditions, and sustaining or accumulating specific types of attention over time. The selections cast a wide net to encompass a diverse range of sectors as follows: consumer goods (Tiffany & Co. & PepsiCo Inc.), state administration (the German Bundestag), financial services (Morningstar Financial Data) and publishing & journalism (*Marxism Today*).

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90   Excerpt from the Open Letter introducing the Q and A's. See Chapter 4: 'October 2013—Open Letter to *Morning Star* from the working group of *Morning Star Rebranded*'.

91   An exception is Chapter 11: 'May 1987—Rebranding *Marxism Today*', which explores the context in which a rival to *Morning Star* was rebranded.

April 2009

In the sixth chapter, titled 'Rebranding Tiffany & Co., rebranding PepsiCo Inc.', I introduce the term *brand community*. I give examples in which a brand community can be jeapordised by a shift in marketing strategy and draw particular attention towards Tiffany & Co.'s introduction of a particular silver jewellery range. I then speculate on the luxury jewellers Boodles' brand community and the potential contradiction between the price-point of its products and its consumer audience. I collaborated with Boodles to produce an artwork, *A Needle Walks Into a Haystack* (2014)[92] and an employee of the company becomes a fictional character in the third chapter, titled 'A former security guard of Boodles interviewed for a job at *Morning Star*'.

I continue this chapter by describing rebranding commissions by Arnell Group, (the firm that appears in the third and fourth chapters[93] and in a performative event of mine titled *Work in Progress for Rebranding PepsiCo Inc.*[94]). I describe the Arnell Group's work for PepsiCo Inc. recounting both a failed rebranding of Tropicana and a brand strategy document titled 'The Pepsi Gravitational Field', the latter including a defence of the firm's strategy by Mauro Porcini, PepsiCo Inc.'s chief design officer. I then expand on an understanding of brand community in order to ask: how might a community that is averse to branding in turn be branded?

April 1999

A commentary on a rebranding of state administration is the focus of the eighth chapter, dated April 1999, and is titled 'Rebranding the Bundestag'. The designs produced by Büro Uebele for the German Republic are considered in light of prior influences, in particular Ludwig Gies's relief sculpture, *Fette Henne* (installed in

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92   *A Needle Walks into a Haystack* (2014) is described in Part 0.6 (Artworks) of this introduction and documentation is included in the Appendix.

93   See the third chapter, dated May 2014, titled 'A former security guard of Boodles interviewed for a job at *Morning Star*', and the fourth chapter, dated October 2013, titled 'Open Letter to *Morning Star* from the working group of *Morning Star Rebranded*'.

94   My performative event at Kunstverein Muenchen took place on 12th October 2014 and was part of an exhibition titled Regenerate Art curated by Saim Demircan (11 October–30 November 2014). I asked a local design company, Bureau Mirko Borschee to stage a design pitch using Arnell Group's 'The Pepsi Gravitational Field' as a script.

the German Bundestag in April 1999), of which there was considerable parliamentary debate concerning its inclusion in the rebuilding of the Reichstag. I provide an account of Marcel Broodthaers *Département des Aigles* (1968) and the display of five hundred *figures* of eagles in the *Section des Figures* to draw attention to Broodthaers use of serialisation and its effect on a symbolic image. I consider this in parallel with *defusion*, as a ploy that is familiar to rebranding exercises.

April 1991

Selected for its stark contrast with the visual appearance of *Morning Star* newspaper, in the ninth chapter, I reflect on the rebranding of a company sharing the same name: Morningstar Financial Data Company. I describe how designer Paul Rand's logo evolved typographically and in relation to the rationale behind the choice of the company's name. Joe Mansueto, the founder chairman and chief executive officer of Morningstar was responsible for that choice and I speculate on his interest in Henry David Thoreau's book *Walden* (1854) from which the company's name is inspired. Following Rand's rebranding, Morningstar went on to become a highly successful American finance company which provides data on investments, including stocks and mutual funds along with real-time global market data on more than 5 million equities, indexes, futures, options and commodities, in addition to foreign exchange and Treasury markets.

May 1988

Chapter 11, titled 'Rebranding *Marxism Today*', shares the same time period as when I first solicited the editors of *Morning Star* as a student in 1987 and provides an initial context from which the project arose. I describe distinctions between *Morning Star* and its rival, the magazine *Marxism Today*, at a time when a significant portion of the British Left were moving towards a Gramscian politics of Eurocommunism. I introduce Gramsci's notion of *hegemony* and the *manufacture of consent* in relation to the editorial re-direction of *Marxism Today*. In tandem with the editorial shift at *Marxism Today*, a substantial rebranding took place and I look for correlations between the magazine's new political stance and decisions made regarding typography in the rebranding process. I describe *Marxism Today*'s newly assumed allegiance to a post-Fordist outlook highlighting the contrast of this bias both from the perspective of its polar opposite *Morning Star* and through

the critique of the economic and social historian, John Saville.[95]

I also include a commentary on the *Daily Worker*, founded in 1930, which evolved into *Morning Star* in 1969. I focus on the decisions made under the direction of the *Daily Worker*'s renowned sub-editor Allen Hutt who produced its first design manual bringing it to the forefront of newspaper design in the 1950s and 60s. The manual expounded on the necessary interrelation between content and form, setting forward what at the time was a progressive and innovative agenda for a newspaper. Subsequently, following Hutt's retirement, a number of design dressings rendered the paper in an indistinct Berliner format. *Morning Star*'s appearance became very similar to its red-top contemporaries on the high street, its form close to how I first encountered the newspaper as a first-year student at Leicester Polytechnic when I bought a copy from a volunteer vendor outside the institution's art campus.

iii)   Scripted lectures

Earlier in this introduction I touched upon Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's collection of essays —*The Undercommons*—in which they draw on the theory and practice of black radical tradition and postcolonial theory and use its fugitive position as generative power. I referred to the chapter, 'The University and the Undercommons', in which they advance the notion that today's university berates its own liberal commitment to bring about emancipation. 'Negligent' is the way they describe hyper-regulation and deadening forms of professionalism and the 'undercommons' is their response through which they imagine renegade groupings they name 'maroon'.

How might we experience the manner in which Harney and Moten refract form and content and determine subjectivities to counter forms of hierarchy and meritocracy that reflect inequality in our society, if not through the particularities of their writing? Their method is emphatic in determining *how* these networks are *articulated*. Through a writing style that is both affected and intimate they offer a sense that, by studying and writing, one can be—'with and for'—and have an understanding through embodied experience.

```
        This feel is the hold that lets go (let's go) again and
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95   John Saville was the author and co-editor of the open-ended *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (Palgrave Macmillan, UK, Volume 6: 1982)

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again to dispossess us of ability, fill us with need, give
us ability to fill need, this feel.⁹⁶
```

Through this use of dynamic affect and the manner in which it embodies a certain uncompromising attitude, it can be understood as intent on fostering *antagonism*.[97] There is the constant question of address whereby the writing anticipates an audience of 'critical intellectuals' and yet refuses to accommodate them. Jack Halberstam, in his introduction to *The Undercommons*, draws our attention to Moten's desire to overcome intellectual 'negligence':

```
Like Deleuze, I believe in the world and want to be in it.
I want to be in it all the way to the end of it because I
believe in another world in the world and I want to be in
that. And I plan to stay a believer, like Curtis Mayfield.
But that's beyond me, and even beyond me and Stefano, and
out into the world, the other thing, the other world, the
joyful noise off the scattered, scatted eschaton, the
undercommon refusal of the academy of misery.⁹⁸
```

The correspondence and commentary chapters of this thesis embody a sense of efficacy, not feeling. There's a flat and unemotional register, an impartiality to suit the intent. But how might I characterise the voices in the chapters that employ fiction, narrative and spoken word? How might these modes of writing call on particular voices? What allegiances might these voices have and likewise against whom might they be pitched?

Underpinning an approach to my PhD research from the outset has been my interest in how literary methods of appropriation can be applied to the processes of making art. I have considered the work of writers such as Lydia Davis whose writing performs structures in which she binds translation, reading and transcription.[99] Particular to Davis's writing is not only the manner in which she

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96   Moten, F. & Harney, S., *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013).

97   The final chapter of *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* is titled 'The General Antagonism'.

98   Moten & Harney (2013).

99   My interest in Davis' writing stems from a series of workshops I gave at the Piet Zwart Institute, Hogeschool, Rotterdam in 2010 (and on subsequent occasions) in which I invited Natasha Soobramanien to collaborate on *I'm only interested in that which isn't mine,* a project focused on investigating ways in which literary methods of appropriation can be applied to processes of producing art. I am indebted to Soobramanien

uses extreme compression and precision in both her short stories and translations but—and of particular relevance to my concerns here—how her methods constitute acts of *auto-appropriation*. An example would be Davis's 'Ten Stories from Flaubert', published in *The French Review* (2010),[100] which originated from her work on a new translation of *Madame Bovary*.[101] In reading through Flaubert's letters to Louise Colet and George Sand,[102] Davis came across a number of anecdotes that, with some revision, could be co-opted and thus presented as 'Ten Stories from Flaubert'. Initially we might imagine that they are stories *by* Flaubert, but this is not precisely the case, and it is through Lydia Davis taking ownership of them that they can be *declared* as stories. In the words of writer Natasha Soobramanien:

> To appropriate suggests taking something which isn't yours and making it your own. By writing up her dreams and presenting them as possible encounters with the waking world, she is distancing them from herself. Making them not-quite hers. But by taking stories and presenting them as though they might be dreams, she is suggesting a greater intimacy of experience than is the case. She is removing them from the waking world and making them more hers. She is somehow appropriating them. The act of auto-appropriation is suggested by a quote she cites in the preface. It's from Blanchot's essay 'Dreaming, Writing', written about Leiris' book. In it, Blanchot says, of dreaming:
>
> "Do we not frequently get the impression that we are taking part in a spectacle not meant for us or that we are looking over someone's shoulder at some unexpected truth?"[103]

This logic can be extended to when something is absorbed and then used *not* for its original purpose but directed towards a *new* purpose and we can think of this as a *digestive* form of appropriation. Of the many ways in which the metaphor of *cannibalism* has been historically invoked as a digestive process, an emphatically non-European method—and hence one not chiefly focused on mutilation and devouring—has been through the post-colonial Brazilian literary movement rooted in Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928). De Andrade draws on the story of the ritual cannibalisation of a Portuguese bishop by indigenous Brazilians:

```
I asked a man what the Law was. He answered that it was
the guarantee of the exercise of possibility. That man was
named Galli Mathias. I ate him.[104]
```

Digesting a coloniser's life force and language could be invigorating, it could give the native an energised form to be appropriated to their own needs. Else Vierra, a leading proponent of the *cannibalist movement*, gives us this under-standing:

```
Cannibalism is a metaphor actually drawn from the natives'
ritual whereby feeding from someone or drinking someone's
blood, as they did to their totemic 'tapir', was a means
of absorbing the other's strength, a pointer to the very
project of the Anthropophagy group: not to deny foreign
influences or nourishment, but to absorb and transform
them by the addition of autochthonous input.[105]
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The Brazilian poet and translator Haraldo de Campos applies the metaphor of cannibalism to the act of translation which he refers to, amongst other terms, as *transcreation*.[106] Central to de Campos's concept of transcreation is a critical view

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104   The *Cannibalist Manifesto* by Oswald de Andrade (Translation by Leslie Bary) was published in 1928 by the Brazilian poet and polemicist Haraldo de Campos, a key figure in the cultural movement of Brazilian Modernism. 'Galli Mathias' is a pun on *galimatias*, or nonsense.

105   Viera, E., *Liberating Calibans: Readings of Antropofagia and Haroldo de Campos' Poetics of Transcreation* (Ribeiro Pires, 1999).

106   According to Jeremy Munday, author of *Introducting Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (Routledge, 2001), 'the way that the Brazilian cannibalists, notably Haraldo de Campos, set about achieving their aims was, somewhat ironically, strongly influenced by Western thinkers, especially the experimental work of Ezra Pound and Walter Benjamin concept of the transformational strength of 'pure' language.'

of the original, and through the metaphor of the cannibal, a duplicitous effect: reverence of the original and yet a need to devour it.

In the production of scripted lectures, as components of this thesis, I wanted to complicate the parameters of artistic authorship by relocating its agency through combinations of collaboration and translation. I was interested in how pre-existing theories might be digested and, through a form of translation, re-purposed. Authorial ambiguity can be observed in most contemporary art production where third parties fabricate parts or entireties of the work in question, but it is not usually thematised as such. My work chooses to *thematise* the multiplication and diffusion of agency in these processes and seeks to *stage* these social processes: in studio and exhibited works they are metabolised into an object or series of objects and for written works they are performed through fictional writing that is commissioned.[107]

Therefore, during the writing of this thesis, I proposed to the cultural theorist Marina Vishmidt[108] that we collaboratively produce two scripted lectures to bookend its thirty-year timeline. A lecture positioned towards the beginning of this retrograde timeline responds to writer and curator Tirdad Zolghadr's concept of a 'moral economy of indeterminacy' which he presented in a lecture for the Norwegian Association of Curators in 2016, and elaborated upon in his book of the same year, *Traction*.[109] The second lecture, towards the end of the timeline, responds to *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1988), in which the sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard expounds his ideas on the organicity of technology

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107   An example of my work which includes the use of a commissioned script is *The Freedom of Negative Expression* (2007/2010). The dialogue for the character of 'British Constructivist' was written by Tirdad Zolghadr and was based on my recollections of a meeting with Gillian Wise, an artist relatively prominent in Britain in the 1960s. Writer Will Bradley scripted the part of the 'Nihilist' and we developed *The Freedom of Negative Expression* into a Production Treatment—a plot-by-plot breakdown for the pilot of a television series.

Other examples include: *Company* (2009) co-written with Will Bradley and Walid El Kafrawy, the Chief Executive of OFOK, a construction company dedicated to the conception of new communities in the Egyptian desert; *Fantasist* (2007), a presentation treatment for a science-fiction psychological horror proposed for feature film or TV mini-series, written by Will Bradley; *The School of Improvement*, a love story set at a secondary school in Rome, also written by Will Bradley, which channels John Robinson's 18th century text, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All Religions and Governments in Europe*; and *Militant Bourgeois* (2006), through which I commissioned Nina Power to write an existentialist narrative imagining the voice of Dutch art patron Jan Six.

108   Marina Vishmidt was also one of the consultants of the *Morning Star Rebranded* working group.

109   Zolghadr, T., *Traction*, (Sternberg Press, 2016).

and the 'orgiastic ecstasy of communications.'[110]

I proposed that through digesting concepts pertinent to the parameters of each lecture, that the content of the scripts uses this material[111] *not* for its original purpose but directed towards a *new* purpose: one which addresses the notion of *displaced ethics* and considers how this might be deployed in art. In turn, conjecture should reflect back on an understanding of my artwork *Morning Star Rebranded* to consider how its meaning is first formed and how it can continue to unfold.

June 1988

In 1988, a year after beginning my university studies, the subject of one of the first lectures I remember attending was Baudrillard's *The Ecstasy of Communication*. I recall being struck by the idiosyncratic manner of its philosophical and cultural analysis and its starling textual delivery. I was interested in revisiting Baudrillard's text in light of its particular correlation with current ideas around our 'post-progressive' era. Such ideas, for example, can be considered in the thoughts of writer and cultural theorist Mark Fisher. In his 'Slow Cancellation of the Future'—a title given to a lecture at MaMa, Zagreb, 21st May 2014, (and the subject of a conversation with Franco 'Bifo' Beradi), Fisher writes:

> ```
> The idea of the 'slow cancellation of the future'
> captures very well the sense of the ebbing away of a
> certain conception of cultural time. We live in what we
> might call a 'post-progressive' era, where the kind of
> retrospective time prophesied by Jean Baudrillard and
> Fredric Jameson is so taken for granted that it is hard
> to perceive.[112]
> ```

In my earlier thumbnail account of Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's concept of the 'anachronic'—derived through their case-studies of art and

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110   Baudrillard, J., *The Ecstasy of Communication*, (Semiotext(e)/Foreign Agents, 1988)

111   I suggested to Marina Vishmidt that a condition of the writing of the scripted lectures should be that ideas and propositions should only be derived and conjectured from theories propagating at that particular period in history —in spite of how we might now consider the resonance of the inherent ideas. (This is of particular relevance to Chapter 11, the scripted lecture dated May 1988).

112   The conversation between Fisher and Beradi was published under the title 'Give Me Shelter', *frieze* (1st January 2013).

artefacts of the Renaissance period—a work of art bears witness to the time in which it was made, but also points away from that moment. I recounted how the 'anachronic' is characterised by a recursive system that thematises its mechanisms of substitution. For the scripted lecture *Displaced Ethics: A Large Soft Body with Many Heads*, responding to Baudrillard's *The Ecstasy of Communication*, I was interested in how a sense of recursive temporality could be activated through this method, to echo and warp a sense of its understanding and project future meaning.

The title of *Displaced Ethics: A Large Soft Body with Many Heads* extracts Baudrillard's postmodern techno-body:

```
…body, landscape, time all progressively disappear as
scenes. And the same for public space: the theatre of the
social and theatre of politics are both reduced more and
more to a large soft body with many heads.[113]
```

It then draws upon a deliberately contracted understanding of the *other scene* in order to hypothesise its relationship with the role that is assigned to theory in general. Reference to theories of Freud, Lacan and Deleuze are, by necessity of the format, cursory. In Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*,[114] 'the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life.' From this Freud formulated an idea of 'psychical locality' and in Lacanian terms, the 'other scene' is the 'Other'. In the script, the analogy of a crime scene is imagined to summon the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', a phrase coined by the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, to define a shared commitment by Freud, Lacan and Nietzsche to unmask 'the lies and illusions of consciousness.'[115] The year, 1988, belongs to a particular era of conspicuous consumption, the 'yuppie' and politics driven by financial and consumer imperatives. In *Displaced Ethics: A Large Soft Body with Many Heads,* the lecture links Ricoeur's 'suspicion' to a post-modern condition: one of media overload and the hyper-consumerism on which Baudrillard's vision of an apocalyptic future pivots.

But there is an ethical displacement at play in the scripted lecture. There's a paradox in Baudrillard's concept of the *obscene*—between the word's etymological grounding that links it to the *obverse* (a counterpart, *off-camera*)

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113   Baudrillard, J., *The Ecstasy of Communication* (Semiotext(e), 1987).

114   Freud, S., *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (Macmillan, 1913).

115   Ricoeur, P., *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970).

and Baudrillard's impassioned use of the word to critique excessive visibility, transparency, and overexposure (determinedly *on camera*). The Speaker assigns this obscenity to the many heads on the single body of Baudrillard's techno-body because 'contemporary technocratic governance is only interested in our electrical impulses, in our powers of consumption, not in our labour or our action.'[116] In such a situation our ethical capacities cannot help but be stretched out and distorted through 'a displacement that is also one of excess.'

September 2016

The other scripted lecture that bookends this PhD thesis, titled *The Causal Slaughter of Self-Insufficient Objects*, is set twenty-eight years later and engages with notions of a 'moral economy of indeterminacy' as expounded by Tirdad Zolghadr in a lecture for the Norwegian Association of Curators, in February 2016.[117] Zolghadr's lecture framed a rationale informing prevalent 'Exit from Contemporary Art' theories and with particular reference to those espoused by the theorist Suhail Malik. At the time, Malik had recently introduced a series of talks at Artists Space, New York 'propos[ing] that for art to have substantial and credible traction on anything beyond or larger than itself, it is necessary to exit contemporary art.'[118] Zolghadr turns his attention to a *moral economy* which he describes as plagued and restricted by *indeterminacy*. As a response to this lecture Vishmidt and I discussed an approach where, with regard to ethics, a displace-ment could serve as something more corrosive than an 'exit' and one that actually deploys the indeterminacy default against itself rather than sets itself up above it in some kind of imaginary policy land.

On each occasion, in the two scripted lectures that bookend this thesis, the speaker is interrupted by a heckler. These interruptions were produced through a back-and-forth correspondence and editing process between Marina Vishmidt and

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116   Both this quotation and the following one are excerpts from the script itself.

117   Tirdad Zolghadr's lecture at the Rogaland Kunstsenters Bibliotek, Stravanger (1st February, 2016) was the fifth in a series on 'different typologies of curatorial practice' organised by the The Norwegian Association of Curators.

118   A series of talks and discussions led by Suhail Malik at Artists Space, New York, took place in December 2014, See: www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/66325/suhail-malik-exit-not-escape-on-the-necessity-of-art-s-exit-from-contemporary-art. Retrieved September 2018. See also: Malik, S., *On the Necessity of Art's Exit from Contemporary Art* (Urbanomic, 2015).

I. Whilst this process could barely echo the live situation of a heckler in a performance, our approach was conscious of what can occur in such situations whereby: the flow of a presentation is disrupted; the speaker is disconcerted; and structural discontinuity is produced. Comparable with another mode of writing in this thesis—fictional narratives centred around the 'job interview' as their thematic—the experience of a lecturer being heckled can be akin to an interviewee being goaded by an interviewer. A disruption occurs opening up a space for error, irrationality and transformation. Particular to a heckler interrupting a live performance is the manner in which it breaks down an *us* and *them* barrier and gives permission for the audience to behave in a way that provides a more egalitarian metric of what is being presented.

Might it be possible to identify a heckler as a member of a 'maroon' community—paying heed to Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's designation of 'undercommons' subjectivities, which I referred to earlier in this introduction? How might a heckler 'problematic themselves, problematic the university, force the university to consider them a problem, a danger?'[119] Yet Moten and Harney are pointing towards communities that are marooned *within* institutions: people who find themselves with a discourse that is seen as *other* or are *voiceless* in the context that the institution chooses to provide. They list 'queer management professors, state college ethnic studies departments'[120] as examples. The relationship between the hecklers and lecturers in the fictional scripts—that comprise two of the chapters of this thesis—might suggest another dynamic, one that is less prescribed. It seems probable, given the context of the lectures, that the speakers are external to the university and the heckler is internal and most likely a student. Yet we have the sense that the hecklers are agitating against an unspecified 'negligence' and whilst we are given no specifics as to the their particular situations, it seems likely that their dissidence is focused on issues of inclusivity. We could imagine one of the hecklers, in the scripts, exclaiming: 'I'm not heckling, this is access-redistribution!'

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119   Moten, F. & Harney, S., *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013).

120   Foucault introduced the subject 'Entrepreneur of the Self' in his course entitled Birth of Biopolitics (1979), where he presented the genealogy of liberalism and neoliberalism.

iv)   Fictional narratives

A series of fictional narratives are interspersed along the timeline of this thesis, each characterised by the theme of the 'job interview'. The hidden negotiations between beliefs, social status and ideological positions—that are behind the fruition of an artwork—are arguably echoed in the circumstances of a'job interview'. This distinct ritual can be considered a courtship that is conditioned by protocols that ask for a quite particular display: the attempted imagining and echoing of expectations, an unequivocal dance of conformity.

A 'job interview' is also witness to a libidinal exchange with social relations as material, for which we can look to writer, translator and artist Pierre Klossowski's *Living Currency* (1972) for reflection. Klossowski propounds that no set of values is absolute. Any object or being can be used as currency and exchange with no stable value other than emotional and physical pulsions.[121] Klossowski asks:

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How can the voluptuous emotion be reduced to a
commodified object and, in our times of fanatical
industrialization, become an economic factor?
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Overturning the distinction between subject and object, Klossowski proposes that a utilitarian object—as a medium of exchange—can be charged with emotional value whilst a *pulsional* force can serve as utilitarian tool. His ideas can be read as a parody of contemporary political economy, using the economies of affect and addressing the notion of a 'voluptuous' libidinal currency flowing through and alongside its economic counterparts.

If in Klossowski's reasoning the trick of a commodity is to asocialise social relations whilst exalting objects, how might we consider philosopher and historian Michel Foucault's theories on the interface between the individual and government—a relation he termed *homo economicus*? In the early 1980s Foucault was articulating theories on ethical conduct, in response to neo-liberalism, in which personal development and self-care is prioritised over the logic of invest-ment. Foucault argued that within neo-liberalism, the homo economicus ceases to be 'one of the two partners in the process of exchange' and becomes an 'entrepreneur' of himself. In the *History of Sexualit*y (1987), Foucault writes:

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121   The French term *pulsions* translates as impulses. In psychoanalysis, the word *drive* comes from the Latin *pulsio*.

> In practice, the stake in all neo-liberal analysis is
> the replacement every time of homo œconomicus as a partner
> of exchange with homo œconomicus as entrepreneur of himself,
> being for himself his own capital, being for himself his
> own producer, being for himself the source of [his]
> earnings.[122]

Foucault's work affirmed how various *violent* forces are exercised through *sovereign* power. We can consider as examples: the enormous condensations of capital as corporate violence; patriarchy as gender violence; and mass incarceration and redlining[123] as an extension of white supremacy. Within these self-redefining and self-reinforcing systems the 'entrepreneur of the self'[124] is the singular subject of competitive market societies. By extension, a range of what we might consider as private actions: from social relations to personal emotional responses can be envisioned as business investments. It is perhaps of no surprise that Foucault's thinking has been mobilised by business itself in developing new models of management: from notions of the panopticon in the design of office interiors, ethics of the self, discipline and self-discipline, and subjectivation amongst others. With the exponential rise of social networking it becomes increasingly feasible to envision each of ourselves as singular subjects through which we represent ourselves as corporate identities: creatively fecund subjects curating our individual brands.

Characteristic of a 'job interview' is a situation whereby a candidate projects themselves as a brand, and one in which their relation to themselves is towards self-improvement. On occasions, power relations in a 'job interview' can be distinctly asymmetrical—the interviewee is goaded and provoked and the situation disrupted. As can be witnessed in the result of a heckler hindering a speaker during a presentation, this interruption produces a structural discontinuity and one which opens up a space for error, irrationality and transformation. Since the 'job interview' is concerned with discerning truth (accuracy) over fiction (exag-

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122   Foucault, M., *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Hurley, Robert (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), Vol 3; p. 226.

123   *Redlining* is the term given, in the United States and Canada, to the discriminatory denial of services (eg. real estate) to residents of certain neighbourhoods or communities based on race.

124   The "Entrepreneur of the Self" is the subjectivity model associated with neoliberalism which Foucault introduced in his course entitled Birth of Biopolitics (1979), where he presents the genealogy of liberalism and neoliberalism.

geration), we can then reflect on how the writing itself makes uncertainty over the authority and truth of the writing.

Each narrative bears a connection with *Morning Star*. Imaginary characters are former staff members or prospective employees of the newspaper and the environment in which some of the narratives unfold is in close proximity to William Rust House—the newspaper's headquarters in the east end of London. In two of the narrations the interviewee has lost their previous job— through circumstances regarding their conduct or due to ethical ramifications of decisions that they have taken. The narratives also include characters based on personnel from Boodles, a company I worked with during the period of my doctoral research, and Arnell Group, a company that features in one of the case studies of rebranding and in the 'Open Letter sent to the editors of *Morning Star* newspaper' (Chapter 4). The imaginary characters and contexts ground the writing by involving other components of the research, tacitly drawing an arc between divergent ethical positions.

May 2014

In the third chapter of this thesis, 'A former security guard of Boodles interviewed for a job at *Morning Star*', we read of the safeguarding of a piece of jewellery (a ring) from within its material substance. The narrative channels elements of *A Needle Walks Into a Haystack* (2014), an artwork I produced at the beginning of this period of PhD research. For the artwork I had asked the luxury jeweller, Boodles, who are major sponsors of the Liverpool Biennial, to divert their financial support towards making a piece of jewellery in response to the press release of the biennial, interpreting the exhibition's core ideas as a creative brief. They made the ring and I made a relief sculpture to present it and the vitrine to house it. As per the caption in the biennial, 'the imagination of a luxury brand gets mixed up with artistic vision, blurring the roles of everyone involved.'

In the narrative, we read an account of the former guard from when he was responsible for security at the Liverpool showroom of Boodles, guarding the particular piece of jewellery that Boodles made for my contribution to the biennial. He speaks from the vantage of both eyes of a face incorporated into the design of the ring, giving each eye a distinct voice. Both in the artwork and in the narrative, I imagine the ring performing as an object that metabolises social strata.

November 2012

The fifth chapter of this thesis is titled 'A former desktop layout designer at *Morning Star* interviewed for a job at Arnell Group'. The advertising company was headed by the reputed brand guru Peter Arnell who, for many years, was regarded as one of the major figures in the marketing and corporate branding industry. In 2009, Arnell had gained particular notoriety for his firm's anonymously leaked brand strategy document for PepsiCo Inc. which I describe in the case study 'Rebranding Tiffany & Co., rebranding PepsiCo Inc.'. During the interview the former employee of *Morning Star* recalls the environment surrounding William Rust House, the newspaper's headquarters situated in Hackney Wick. The location is less than a minute's walk from Olympic Park, an area which, at the time that the job interview takes place, had just undergone expansive state-sponsored gentrification. Whilst so close in proximity to the 2012 London Olympics, *Morning Star* was one of the few newspapers to be refused press entry.

In this particular 'job interview', the former employee of *Morning Star* who is being interviewed for a post at Arnell Group, makes reference to author Sherwood Anderson, who on the proceeds of the sale of his widely read novel, *Dark Laughter* (1925),[125] purchased two opposing newspapers for sale in Marion, South Virginia. One was distinctly Democrat (*The Marion Democrat*), the other distinctly Republican (*The Smyth County News*). He edited them both, switching between his own name and his alter ego, Buck Fever, and printed 'things seen and felt, strange happenings in this and other communities.'[126] With the character of Buck Fever as a mask, Anderson could use the newspapers as a vehicle to convey his personal views. According to writer Walter B. Rideout, in his article 'Why Sherwood Anderson Employed Buck Fever' for The Georgia Review (1859),[127] it was an opportunity for Anderson to unravel personal conflicts around his desire for community coupled with an inclination towards privacy, further complicated by his sympathies for the 'Despised and Neglected'.[128] Ridout quotes

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125   Anderson, S., *Dark Laughter* (Liveright Publishing Co., 1925).

126   See: Rideout, W. B., 'Why Sherwood Anderson Employed Buck Fever', *The Georgia Review* (Spring 1959), Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 76–85.

127   Ibid.

128   Ibid. (capitalisation in original text)

Sherwood, directly, from an edition of the *The Smyth County News,*[129] recounting how he 'would like to set all the prisoners in the country jail free at Christmas time.'

Sherwood's late newspaper career,[130] can be regarded as a conceptual writing project. What is particularly striking was his ambition, through his ownership of the area's entire news media, to encompass all points on a political spectrum, create contradictory bias and direct its arguments. In my narrative, the character who is being interviewed for a job at Arnell Group, had taken inspiration from Anderson whilst in her previous post at *Morning Star*. In light of the newspaper being denied access to the Olympic Games, the designer had begun to write daily reviews of the competitive events, from the perspective of a fictional character and had surreptitiously inserted them into the newspaper's copy. She had imagined the character to be a mini-van driver, working between *Morning Star*'s offices at William Rust House and the perimeter fence of the Games. In writing the narrative, I envisioned the mini-van driver's character as something of a Goulard—the imaginary, joshing male character under whose guise the French novelist George Sand wrote to Flaubert:[131]

```
Monsieur Flobaire,

You must be a reel lout to have taken my name and wrote
a letter to a lady once kindly disposed to me and have
no dout been received in my sted . . . If you are glad
to have writen Fanie (ie Madame Bovary) and Salkenpeau
(ie Salammbo), I am glad not to have red them. Nothing
to get pufed up about there... If I meat you with her
which I hope not you will get a biff in the face.
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My narrative situates *Morning Star* in the real context of its physical environment—one in which its ideology is in stark contrast to the politics

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129   Ibid. (Rideout quotes Anderson from the 3rd January 1929 edition of *The Smyth County News).*

130   I am indebted to artist Michael Stevenson for informing me of Sherwood Anderson's writing project with the politically opposed newspapers.

131   Sand and Flaubert corresponded for many years. Her character, Goulard, was likely intended to counter Flaubert's perfectionism. Sand advocated an artist to have 'a touch of the grocer' and wrote to Flaubert: 'I have got a flaw. I like classification: I have a touch of the teacher. I like sewing and wiping babies' bottoms: I have a touch of the servant. I'm absent-minded and have a touch of the fool. And lastly, I wouldn't like perfection.' Clearly this is not one of the letters that the writer Lydia Davis chose to auto-appropriate in her 'Ten Letters from Flaubert' referred to earlier in this introduction.

responsible for the regeneration surrounding it. This distinction is duplicated by the two other characters in the story: the brand guru, Arnell, and the driver.

February 2004

The location of *Morning Star*'s premises, the ideological signifiers of its position as a literal and figurative island, is further explored in the seventh chapter, dated February 2004, in which a building contractor is interviewed for a job at a property development business. The 'job interview' imagines a prospective contract for developing the site around *Morning Star*'s headquarters at William Rust House prior to the plans and eventualities of the 2012 Summer Olympics which took place in the vicinity. The company behind the proposed development recounts a brief for a public artwork that imagines a designated area to be developed in advance of any gentrification: one which would anticipate a yearning for a simulacrum of the area's historic past. An equivalent of this could be the existing Jorvik Viking Centre in York, a visitor attraction that includes life-size dioramas which depict Viking life in the city. This particular brief would be for something more exploratory: it would seek to produce a replica of a traditional working-class slum, constructed in the image of a poem titled *Single File*. Keywords from the poem are selected to form a brief that is offered to a number of potential contractors, including the interviewee. A rubric formed from 'dense thickets, idiot jugglers, crab apples, frayed wires…'

0.6   ***Portrait of a Recipient as a Door Handle, After a Drawing Produced by an Anonymous Philanthropist***
         A Needle Walks Into a Haystack
         Drippy Etiquette

On a damp February afternoon in 2014, a group of friends, colleagues, invited guests and senior members of Rabobank gathered at the Dutch bank's headquarters on Blaakstraat in Rotterdam, a busy street that stretches down the Nieuwe Maas waterway, a distributary of the Rhine. I was in the first year of my doctoral research and an artwork of mine had recently been installed on the glass entrance doors to the bank. *Portrait of a Recipient as a Door Handle, After a Drawing Produced by an Anonymous Philanthropist* (2014)[132] consists of a series of large,

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132   The work was commissioned by Sculpture International Rotterdam.

identical, bronze door handles featuring the repeat motif of a head modelled at each end: at the top facing out, at the bottom facing in. I had modelled the heads as a physical interpretation of a drawing that a philanthropist had made for me. The drawing depicted a recipient as seen in the moment they had overcome their reluctance to accept the philanthropist's generosity. (See appendix: *Portrait of a Recipient as a Door Handle, After a Drawing Produced by an Anonymous Philanthropist*).

The gathering at the inauguration moved from the penthouse suite of Rabobank's headquarters, to an art institution close by. The commissioner of the work, Sculpture International Rotterdam, had assembled a small group of speakers for a symposium at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art: Lisette Smit, Marina Vishmidt, and Tirdad Zolghadr, with Mai Abu Eldahab as chair. The plan of the symposium had been not to invite speakers to respond directly to my artwork but for conversations to open out into areas of shared interest. I refer to it in this introduction as its content introduced ideas that influenced my thinking behind my PhD research.

Zolghadr's presentation revolved around what he termed a *proxemics of power*—in arts ornamentation and legitimation in power relations—even or especially when it claims to subvert or critique. His presentation was edited into a text that was later published on invitation of the online platform: *Open Journal*. Zolghadr wrote:

> Physical, site-specific attributes aside, some would say
> the physical proximity works because it offers the warm
> sunshine of power without the need to take responsibility
> for it. And, because of our melancholic hunger for the
> Real World beyond the world of representation, it has us
> staring at the world of banks, for example, while reassuring
> ourselves that we are not part of it. But it also works by
> way of the visceral frictions, the mutual infections, the
> aesthetic pheromones, contagious as influenza, or erotica,
> triggering micro-epiphanies of various kinds. Moreover, it
> works at the level of identification.[133]

For my artwork on the bank's structural facade, *philanthropy* is the *bind*, gestured in the gaze of the head which faces both the street and the interior of the

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133 Zolghadr, T., *Annunciation. On Chris Evans' Portrait of a Recipient as a Door Handle*. Symposium at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, 4th February, 2014 & published in *Open Journal*, Rotterdam, June 2014.

bank, its gaze both upright and upended depending on which side you encounter it. Art sponsorship is renowned as an investment site for the generosity of the wealthy, allowing patrons to display their assets as a passion more authentic than the pursuit of profit. I had attached *Portrait of the Recipient as a Door Handle…,* to the transparent barrier—between the bank and public—on a threshold that might make the logic of speculation visible and tangible, embodying the circuit from accumulation to donation to acceptance.[134] What might be the nexus between a recipient of philanthropy, being reassured that they are not being exploited, opposed to the calculations of the banking business? Since the business of banking had come to be associated with irrational economic passions that had recently resulted in rate-rigging[135] scandals and global financial crashes, how might art function in this union?

The motif of the head, repeated on the door handles, renders the recipient supplicant by her inferior position in a social hierarchy defined through access to financial security at the entrance of a bank. Undoubtedly, critique in this instance is entirely dependent on the co-operation of institutions and entities normatively targeted for critical exposure. Apparent in Zolghadr's talk was that beyond the manner in which an artwork's agency can reveal how the power of money might encompass critique, this is indissociable from a theatrics of power in which it is not possible to straightforwardly identify with or undermine. Through this notion of a proxemics of power, he argues that it is the prevalence of ethical ambiguity— or *indeterminacy*—that is culpable and in the introduction to *Traction* (2016)[136] writes:

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contemporary art is defined by a moral economy of
indeterminacy that allows curators and artists to
imagine themselves on the other side of power. This
leaves us politically bankrupt, intellectually stagnant,
and aesthetically predictable.
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134   A speculation only made possible by differentials in money and time and which forms the core business of a retail bank like the Rabobank (which got its start by trading futures products on behalf of Dutch famers in the 19th century).

135   Rabobank had, at that time, recently featured in the news for its involvement in the LIBOR-rigging scandals.

136   Ibid.

As I described in Part 0.5 (iii) of this introduction, a scripted lecture,[137] that part-comprises this thesis, stems from a proposal that I made to Vishmidt in which I suggested that we respond to Zolghadr's notion of a 'moral economy of indeterminacy'. Or, specifically, that we emphatically respond to his proposals on how art might free itself from this indeterminacy. We imagined a situation in which a *displacement*, with regard to ethics, could operate as a corrosive in deploying the indeterminacy default against itself. For a sense of this corrosion we might consider how a displacement, that can transpire when objects and characters stand in for social relations, finds comparision in the drifts in ethical value that we witness in our everyday language when it is characterised by metonymy. For example: *bench* for *court*, *court* for *law*, *law* for *legitimacy,* in which a spiralling, recursive procession occurs. Remarkable, metaphysical suppositions bring spiritual forces to the rule of law. Through writing, I wanted to consider what particularites of a drift in ethical values could be activated in this thesis by displacing the social relations in which the work takes form. How might that diverge from the methodology I use in my studio work and in artworks I produce to exhibit?

The artworks that I have made during this research period require objects to speak for the *voiceless* — the *recipient* in the door handles for the bank—but also for those whose voice already resounds prominently, for example the luxury jeweller Boodles, in an artwork I made for Liverpool Biennial. Commissioned by the biennial and given an identical title—*A Needle Walks Into a Haystack*—the work is described in a press release for a subsequent solo exhibition, 'Clerk of Mind' (2014) at Project Arts Centre, Dublin, as follows:

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Housed in a rosewood vitrine, a platinum and yellow
gold ring with diamonds, sapphires and helidor — created
by fine jewellers, Boodles – is displayed on a jesmonite
tablet. Evans gave the press release for the recent
Liverpool Biennial of Art to the designers at Boodles
and asked them to create a piece of jewellery based on
their reading and interpretation of the exhibition's core
ideas. They made the ring (which is on display), and Evans
made a relief sculpture to present it and the vitrine to
house it. The imagination of a luxury brand gets mixed up
with artistic vision, blurring the roles of everyone
involved.
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Boodles makes jewellery that can be photographed from a hundred metres

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137   'The Causal Slaughter of Self-Insufficient Objects' (Chapter 2, dated September 2016)

and still glint hypnotically. It is synonymous with celebrities and members of royal families posing in photo-shoots for magazines such as *Hello!*, *Look* and *Grazia*. Despite hefty price tags, Boodles jewellery has an air of accessibility due to its ubiquity in high street magazines and I was looking for parallels between this ostensible access and the hypothesis of access harboured by a high-profile, internationally-focused art event with respect to its site and its public, in this case Liverpool. Like the majority of biennials this was no exception in promoting itself and raising capital on the promise of providing access and reaching a wider demographics. (See appendix: *A Needle Walks Into a Haystack*).

For the symposium at Witte de With I had asked the writer and cultural theorist, Marina Vishmidt, to elaborate upon Pierre Klossowski's text *Living Currency* and to address the notion of people as currency and commodities and inherent economies of affect. Vishmidt interprets Klossowski as follows:

```
Money as a store of value and a medium of circulation,
for Klossowski, can be established as a psychic
modality which humanises money and financialises people:
this is the phantasm also, a trick of the commodity as
it asocialises social relations and vivifies objects
(and services). But significantly here, it is because the
impersonal ratio embodied by money represents a source of
pleasure, of erotic alienation.[138]
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Klossowski overturns the distinction between subject and object and proposes that a utilitarian object—as a medium of exchange—can be charged with emotional value whilst a *pulsional* force can serve as a utilitarian tool. In this light how might I consider the doubly fetishistic item of the artwork and the golden ring in my artwork *Portrait of the Recipient as a Door Handle*...? Both are framed in *rhetorics of inclusivity*, through a democratisation of elitism which is both paradoxical and real. The commodity, however, speaks in a discourse of *perfect equality*, which is the equality of exchange value. This is the promise of democratised luxury: the equality of commodities with each other, and the equality of commodity owners through extension. (See appendix: *A Needle Walks Into a Haystack*).

A Needle Walks Into a Haystack, filtered through an understanding of

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138   Vishmidt, M., 'A Heteroclite Excursus into the Currency that Lives', *Open! Platform for Art, Culture, and the Public Domain*, 4th July, 2014. See: www.onlineopen.org/a-heteroclite-excursus-into-the-currency-that-lives. Retrieved 17h July 2018.

Klossowski's writing, led to the sequence of fictional narratives centred on the theme of the 'job interview' that part comprise this thesis. I began to consider the 'job interview' as a libidinal exchange with social relations as material. In one of the narratives a character is based on a security guard from the Liverpool showroom of Boodles. He guards the jewellery made for my work for the biennial and speaks from the vantage of each eye of a face that is incorporated into the design of a ring. If, through a process of *displacement*, objects can perform as stand-ins for social relations, how might this find its echo through writing in which a character is metabolised through an object? How can we then envisage the character's libidinal currency, and if he should be successful in the interview for the post at *Morning Star* newspaper, how might this manifest itself? Writing the 'job interviews' as part of this thesis gave me the impulse to produce an anthology of writing with the particularities of the 'job interview' as its theme. I subsequently commissioned and edited the book *Job Interviews* [139] and it was published in 2018 by Para Site, Hong Kong and Uh Books, Berlin. It is submitted with the written component of this thesis. (See appendix: Job Interviews).

My artwork, *Drippy Etiquette*, (2014—) has been exhibited in an ongoing series at intervals throughout this doctoral research, adapted each time to the conditions of each institution.[140] Its relationship to the content of this thesis is explicit. At the beginning of this doctoral research I put together a working group to engage *Morning Star*'s editorial board. To entice them we made several mock-ups of possible mast-heads for the newspaper—hasty drawings made on paper through a brainstorming session. I took one of these and decided to make a series of airbrush paintings from it thinking that the extent to which I would concentrate on it, and my attention to its detail, would, in the eyes of the

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139   *Job Interviews*. Edited and illustrated by Chris Evans with three airbrush paintings reproduced in riso on fold-outs, designed by Will Holder. 136 x 278mm, with over-sized spine; 60pp b/w offset, Published by Para-Site and Uh Books (2017). Contributers were Nadim Abbas, Howie Chen, Heman Chong, Matthew Dickman, Jason Dodge, Holly Pester, Angie Keefer, Natasha Soobramanien, Marina Vishmidt & Jonas Žakaitas. *Job Interviews* can also be viewed at www.chrisevans.info/job-interviews

140   *Drippy Etiquett*e consists of the following materials: scorched & oiled larch poles (13 cm diameter), framed airbrush drawings (106 x 82 cm); 'Open Letter to *Morning Star*' (copies on demand at each institution); a subscription, on behalf of the institution, to *Morning Star* newspaper for the duration of the exhibition. The work has been produced and displayed, bespoke to each institution for the following exhibitions: Institut de Carton, a.Ve.Nu.De.Jet.te I, Brussels (2019); 'Chris Evans & Pak Cheung', Hong Gah Museum, Taipei (2019); 'Village Lawyer', (solo) Centre d'art, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 2018; 'Good luck with your natural, combined, attractive and truthful attempts in two exhibitions', CRAC Alsace, Altkirch, France, 2015; 'Untitled (Drippy Etiquette)', Markus Lüttgen, Cologne, Germany, 2015; 'Neither here nor there, neither fish nor fowl', Schloss Ringenberg, Germany, 2015; 'Untitled (Drippy Etiquette)', Piper Keys, London, 2014; 'Regenerate Art', Kunstverein München, 2014.

staff at *Morning Star*, signify my commitment to the proposition. I painted the ground of the paper in the pink of *Financial Times* newspaper and then depicted two worms, emerging from two adjacent holes, blinking in the bright light behind them. In a speech caption one asks 'Is that *The Sun* or the *Morning Star*?' I sent a reproduction of the painting to *Morning Star*'s headquarters accompanying an Open Letter.[141] With this pitch denied, the two worms share their surprise and exasperation with us. They emerge from the two deep holes, deprived of light, only to be blinded by both *The Sun* and the *Morning Star*.

On each occasion that I exhibit *Drippy Etiquette*,[142] the work is adapted to the width of a given space at a host institution or gallery. Using a variable number of 13cm diameter larch poles, I cut their lengths to the width of each space and char them black with a blowtorch. Just above head height, the poles span these widths at angles that forcefully wedge the airbrush paintings, of the two worms, into their adjacent positions on a wall. In contrast with the depiction of the worms, whose facial expressions suggest muddlement, the charred poles appear assertive in their form and positioning: willing *Morning Star* to accept the offer to be rebranded.

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141   See Chapter 4, 'October 2013—Open Letter to Morning Star from the working group of *Morning Star Rebranded*'.

142   On each occasion that *Drippy Etiquette* is commissioned, the host institution is asked to subscribe to *Morning Star*. A copy of the Open Letter to *Morning Star* from the working group of *Morning Star Rebranded* is available on request.

1.   February 2017

From: Chris Evans
To: Ben Chacko
Cc: Nicholas Tammens, Megan Downey
Subject: Letter from Nicholas Tammens re. '1856' exhibition, Melbourne
Date: 17th February, 2017

Dear Ben Chacko,

I am writing to enquire whether you received an email, and accompanying letter, sent by Nicholas Tammens in July last year? Nicholas is a curator based in Melbourne, Australia and is curating a program of exhibitions and events, under the title 1856, at the Victorian Trades Hall Council. Through a connection with Megan Dobney at the Trades Union Congress, Nicholas was getting in touch in the hope of opening a line of communication about a project that I'm working on relating to *Morning Sta*r.

The letter, which I'm forwarding on, attached to this email, relates mine and Nicholas' shared interest in how journalism and newspapers augment the political conscious. It gives further background into what we hope to achieve with the project, as well as some historical background to our impetus. In a broader sentiment, Nicholas and I hope that we might be able to establish some new links between Australia and the UK.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Yours sincerely,
Chris Evans

1856

Victorian Trades Hall
Melbourne,
Australia
http://www.1856.com.au

Dear Ben Chacko, editor of *Morning Star*,

I'm writing with regards to a series of exhibitions and public events, under the title 1856, sited at the Victorian Trades Hall in Melbourne—a building that has been set aside for trade unions and the discussion of labour issues since Melbourne stonemasons won the first 8 hour day in 1856. I would very much like to involve a presentation or projects relating to *Morning Star*—which I feel could bring a valuable addition to the sequence of exhibitions.

This programme, *1856*, bears its focus on artists and arts workers as a collective labour force with little representation. The fact is that the art world—as a field of production and consumption—engenders a great divide in the living and working standards between artists and their patrons: not only collectors, but arts professionals, curators, museum boards, etc. is is an ancient tale we know well. But still, there is a lack of self-organisation in our own stock. There is malaise, resignation, and selfishness where organisation should be. So this programme looks back on a social history of art, and shows examples from the present, for ways that artists have criticised or proposed alternatives to bourgeois culture and struggled for the betterment of their vocation. The work of Australian conceptual artist and unionist Ian Burn—who provided design and journalism for the Trade Union movement in Australia with Union Media Services, and was instrumental in the formation of the now defunct Australian Art Workers Union—casts a long shadow on the desires and impetus of this programme.

In talking with British artist Chris Evans, I first heard of the work of the *Daily Worker*'s Chief Sub-Editor Allen Hutt. To borrow the words of TUC Regional Secretary Megan Dobney, Hutt 'was instrumental in the transformation of the *Daily Worker* from a newspaper whose very appearance could act as a

barrier between the words and the workers, to one whose style shouted for readers'. During his tenure, the paper won numerous national awards for design, it was noticed for its elaboration in the newest techniques of typesetting and printing. Like Burn, Hutt had an eye for how politics is mediated by form, and how form is reevaluated as improvements are made in technique and technology. As a part of this programme, I would like to elaborate on the work of Hutt alongside a project by Chris Evans.

Since a student of design during the Thatcher years, Evans has had an impassioned interest in the design of workers newspapers. In 2013, Evans voluntarily assembled a group* of designers, writers and a visual anthropologist to come up with hypothetical design strategies for the *Morning Star*, with the desire to improve its reach and effectiveness.

This group all shared an interest in the newspaper—its legacy and its future—and more broadly, in relationships between form and content, publishing, methods of distribution, and capturing audiences. In forming these hypothetical designs, they wanted to ask such questions as: how can the paper reach young people at an age when they are first becoming politically aware? It was a proposal to experiment, to look for alternative approaches to creating, printing, and distributing a left-wing newspaper. Or simply, to ask: what is the future of newspapers like the *Morning Star*? But as you may know, the project stalled before it had change to commence. Unbeknownst to Evans, this was largely due to the presence of corporate sponsorship supporting one of the British art institutions—I do not disagree that this was a huge oversight. Although Evans immediately removed the project from this exhibition, it was not possible to continue, and unfortunately the project remained unrealised.

It is well noted that the Victorian Trades Hall in Melbourne is a building of significance for the international workers movement, but it is less well known that it also served as the site of one of the first art and design schools in Australia. It was, and always has been, a place to educate oneself and take part in working class culture. I feel that this would be an ideal context to organise and assist with a resumption of Chris Evans' project should this be of interest to the *Morning Star*. The project would be independently funded and hypothetical by nature. The *Morning Star* could take on any proposals with absolutely no cost—these ideas would be happily donated to the newspaper. In practice, the group assembled by Evans could meet with the editorial board of *Morning Star* to form a brief. This conversation, collaborative by nature, would provide the type of questions for the group to respond to in their proposals—e.g what would *Morning Star* like to

achieve in terms of its readership and distribution.

In the hope that *Morning Star* would be interested in responding to this proposal, I would be happy to set up a meeting via Skype between *Morning Star*, Chris, and myself. Alternatively, we could ask Megan Dobney at the TUC if she'd be willing to host a meeting between Chris and *Morning Star* in my absence.

With kind regards,

Nicholas Tammens
Curator,
Member of the Australian Unemployment Workers' Union

*Chris Evans would direct the following group:

Dexter Sinister
Dexter Sinister is the compound working name of Stuart Bailey (UK) and David Reinfurt (USA). David graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1993, Yale University in 1999, and formed the design studio O-R-G in 2000. Stuart graduated from the University of Reading in 1994, the Werkplaats Typografie in 2000, and co-founded the journal *Dot Dot Dot* the same year. 'Dexter Sinister' was originally set up in 2006 to model a 'Just-In-Time' economy of print production, counter to the contemporary assembly-line realities of large-scale publishing. These days the name variously refers to a triangle of activities: (1) a publishing imprint, (2) a workshop/bookstore on New York's Lower East Side, and (3) work produced for and often within art venues. They are currently setting up a longer-term institution called The Serving Library, which is further described and initially operated from the engine site: www.servinglibrary.org.

Marina Vishmidt
Marina Vishmidt is a London-based writer who deals mainly with art, value, and the politics of work and abstraction. A Research Fellow at the Jan van Eyck Academie (2007- 9), she has an MA in Modern European Philosophy and a PhD from Queen Mary, University of London on speculation as a mode of production in art and capital. She is the co-editor of *Uncorporate Identity: Emblem and Void* (Lars Muller, 2010) and a regular contributor to artists' publications, critical readers and journals such as *Mute*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *Afterall*.

Massimiliano Mollona
Massimiliano Mollona is an anthropologist based at Goldsmiths College, London. Specialising in political and economic anthropology and experimental filmmaking, his main research focus is on the anthropology of work and class. He conducted long-term fieldworks in Sheffield (UK) and Volta Redonda (Brazil – still ongoing) two steel-towns deeply affected by privatisations and radical class changes. Mollona also uses film as a tool of political reflection and intervention, with a focus on experimental ethnography, the politics of realism and working class representation. He has published extensively on political anthropology and film and is regularly invited to talks on film and work at various galleries, festivals and workshops in the UK and abroad, including Raven Row, GasWorks, BFI, Steirischer Herbst festival (Graz) and Il Festival della Filosofia in Modena. He is currently Programme Director of Athens Biennale 2015–2017 and one of the artistic directors of the Bergen Assembly.

2.   September 2016

LECTURE THEATRE, INTERIOR
THE SPEAKER walks towards the stage, mounts two steps and
continues walking towards a console, placed off-centre of the
platform. A microphone extends from the top of the console, bent
away from the audience. A large projection screen is mechanically
unreeling and dropping into position at the back of the stage. THE
SPEAKER plugs a USB memory stick into a laptop on the console.
After a minutes pause, whilst THE SPEAKER ruffles some papers and
attends to the laptop, a connection with the projector is made and
we see THE SPEAKER's desktop appear mirrored on the screen. The
SPEAKER double clicks on the application 'TorBrowser' and types in
the following URL: http://www.jenawebcam.de.

THE SPEAKER clicks on the webcam feed, which shows a livestream
overlooking the town of Jena, Germany. The webcam image fills the
entire screen and refreshes every 30 seconds.(fig. 2.1)

Fig 2.1

THE SPEAKER
(looks up from the laptop, pauses to look at the audience then
begins speaking)
                    Thank you for the invitation and for the
                    hospitality. Thank you all for coming.

                    I'll be speaking under the forty-five minute mark to
                    give you an idea and I'll actually begin – by erm,
                    I, I – for reasons I might explain, I don't tend to
                    show much art in my talks and, erm, so, so i don't
                    show installation shots and such like or very
                    rarely, very few. And so there's always someone who
                    says, 'There's no art in your talk. You hate art, I
                    can tell you just hate art'. And so I thought that
                    I would start out by surprising, you know myself, by
                    actually erm showing some art from the get go and I
                    could use this one or two other items as a kind of
                    side entrance into the topic at hand.

THE SPEAKER
Holds an empty glass up to the light then takes a drink, before
placing it down on the console.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
                    And then I simply thought it better to have a
                    title. This lecture is called: 'The Casual
                    Slaughter of Self-Insufficient Objects'. The first
                    object to be exhibited by dint of illustrating that
                    title – which, as you know from what I've just said,
                    will not be art nor will it be a visual
                    approximation of art objects installed in situ – it
                    will be me, seeing as I am so radically self-in-
                    sufficient that I chose to begin my lecture with an
                    unmarked quote from the beginning of a lecture by
                    yesterday's visiting speaker.

THE HECKLER
Stands up from a seat in the middle of the lecture theatre to take
out a wallet from a back pocket, placing it in a jacket pocket,
before sitting down again.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
                    The reason I decided to go for such a performative
                    beginning is that it allowed me to get a few things
                    out of the way. The first thing thus cleared out is

the obligation to explain arguments with reference
to examples, which is not only disavowed by the
speaker you didn't realise I was quoting, but by my
action of non-signposted quotation as if giving you
an entrance into my own thoughts. Inhabitation over
representation, we can call it for now.

The second thing is the ethical quandary – which
is maybe already implicit, in a way, in the first
consideration I just outlined – that is posed by the
use of the term 'casual slaughter', with its
discomfiting adjacency of undirected leisure and
bloody destruction. While 'self-insufficient
objects' are a concept we can just about slot into a
range of discourses about expanding or even exiting
the institution of art, with art notoriously being
an institution and an activity that is increasing-
ly driven to seek its justification elsewhere, so
'self-insufficient', that sounds fine, that sounds
normal, all in keeping with the norms of
indeterminacy in contemporary art – and you could
say the basic self-insufficiency of the art object
is habitually understood as the fact that it needs
a viewer to complete it. 'Casual slaughter', on the
other hand, seems to offer something more troubling,
not just as a destiny for those self-insufficient,
needy and adorable objects (and here I would like
us to keep in the back of our minds Sianne Ngai's
association of the zany and cute with Kant's
categories of aesthetic judgement) but in itself –
how could slaughter ever be casual? Isn't there a
fatal ethical indeterminacy in the aesthetic
proposition of slaughter undertaken casually,
absent-mindedly, for no apparent reason? Maybe we
can think of it as a turn of phrase for a
ruthless procedure of decision-making in the art
making process itself, extreme editing you might
say, not unlike the phrase 'kill your darlings'.

But what I would rather like us to think about today
is that when we habit…

THE HECKLER
(barely audible)
        When we squat.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
              …when we inhabit

THE HECKLER
(speaking a little louder)
Not inhabit. Squat.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
              …rather than represent indeterminacy we are perhaps
              potentially in line to do something far more threat-
              ening – or, let me put it this way, something with
              more traction - than what is suggested in the usual
              critical discourse around indeterminacy in
              contemporary art. This is a discourse which sees it
              as an unalloyed evil, a sort of bad infinity of
              gestural critique which will never crane its neck
              around to survey its own conditions…

THE SPEAKER
(Without a pause in speaking, clicks a key on the laptop to dis-
play the slide: bird of self-knowledge (fig. 2.2))

Fig 2.2

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)…
     …and acknowledge its own relationship to power.

THE HECKLER
(with raised voice)
     Pigeons.

THE SPEAKER
(short pause before replying)
     I'm sorry?

THE HECKLER
(with raised voice)
     Indeterminate pigeons, unlike magpies, have never
     been able to pass the mirror test so they can't
     recognise themselves. It's because they don't
     normally have access to mirrors and so they're not
     very experienced in using them.

THE SPEAKER
     Errrrr yes.

(short pause, speaker presses key on laptop to remove slide: *bird of Self-knowledge*, screen goes black, the SPEAKER momentarily looks down at notes and then continues)
     Such a bad-faith enterprise can only be left
     behind, indeterminacy selected against by a more
     robust art with an understanding of how not just to
     raise questions but make demands – of its viewers,
     of the powerful actors who give it a platform, etc.
     This is a commanding vision indeed: a radical exit
     via affirming art as a powerful institution that can
     make clear political statements and negotiate with
     'power' on an equal basis, as opposed to
     constantly 'turning tough little tricks' in a
     gallery, as Smithson diagnosed already in the 1960s
     in his admirably cogent 'Cultural Confinement' essay.

     So there's a lot to subscribe to in this vision,
     particularly its sense of empowerment and a
     'realism' about the place of art in the world.
     (aside:) A 'realism' that unfortunately draws on the
     philosophical school of 'speculative realism' and
     its various mystifications around purity, science and
     'correlationism' (end aside). However, the
     liberating sense of dis-identification with a

habitual disavowal of art's social power that you get here seems like it has a few drawbacks. It seems to be operating with a fairly undifferentiated notion of 'power' and the 'real', a sort of subordination to some undigested notions of ontology. And this leaves it helpless in the face of the accusation that the 'exit' it advises amounts to just a different kind of identification, a different mode of power-grabbing that leaves the relations per se unchanged, it is just more explicit about them. Symptomatic of this is its unexamined concept of art, which is surgically separated from the 'bad object' of 'Contemporary Art', as if that made it any less self-insufficient, you might say. You can almost imagine power alternately hypnotized and bored in its Davos suite while art recounts its own failings to it in a little helium voice. Or mimicking 'power's tics in its own means of production – I think we've all seen enough artist-led consultancies and art made according to the movements of the stock market to see how what the actual 'value' of such exercises can be, even if actuated by the best, or, perhaps, most conceptually sophisticated, impulses.

So having set this scene of an 'indeterminacy' I think we can agree is undesirable, let's see if there is another version of 'indeterminacy' we could agree to examine, if not uphold – the kind of indeterminacy which can allow us to think into the idea of 'casual slaughter' as an approach to self-insufficient objects but which might also take us beyond them. This would be an indeterminacy that turns on ethical displacement, a concept I'll explore more in the second half of this talk. But for now the way I will introduce it is as that it can be a type of praxis which is more corrosive than the ill-famed 'keeping things open' art usually reproduces, but at the same time that ethical displacement is a way of setting the indeterminacy default against itself rather than art setting itself up above it in some kind of imaginary policy land allowing it to negotiate with 'power' on an 'equal footing'. Equal footing – I bet you're saying 'ha! now I've heard everything!' I know, I know. It's a rhetorical gambit, and I'm afraid you'll just have to indulge it. We want to do some-

thing else, I think. We want to imply, 'that
criticism of ideology no longer functions as the
revelation of an untruth, since such a process still
operates inside the realm of the identity principle,
by turning against it negatively.'[1] We rather seek
to enter the fetish backwards. In order to displace
something rather than just move it around or idly
dangle it (casual but no slaughter), there is almost
something like an imperative to inhabit it…

THE HECKLER
(with raised voice, interrupting…)

Pigeons are attracted to squats. Meanwhile you,
you yourself are entering the squat backwards and
you're fetishising the squalor. Your squalor, ha! A
squalid set of ideas in the making. You've dangled
the 'Keep Out' sign above your bed – in such
a fanciful displacement and what kind of bed is
that? One where the pillows are made from a
crumpled up commie news rag?

THE SPEAKER
(ignores the heckle and continues)

In order to displace something there is an
imperative to inhabit it, to put yourself into an
ethically compromised position which, crucially,
can't be pinned down to your decision, your body…

THE HECKLER
(barely audible)

The red and black ink stains on your face.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)

…the good and bad objects generated thereby, but
create a whole constellation. It's a constellation
of wrongness in which we need to actively displace
our ethics rather than cater to them. If the goal
is to avoid this critical virtue and expectation
that's typical to arts 'moral economy', then it's
through displacement, that is, fully inhabiting the
ethical presets of indeterminacy and operate them
in order to contaminate the art/real barrier for

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1   Birnbaum, Antonia, 'The obscure object of transdisciplinarity, Adorno on the essay form', *Radical Philosophy*, (Radical Philosophy Group, July & August 2016), Issue 198, Retrieved September 2018 from www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/the-obscure-object-of-transdisciplinarity

ethically non-predetermined ends. Two examples I
have in mind, really different ones, are an
ongoing – could one say interminable? maybe in
principle yes, we could – project to redefine the
accepted relationship between class and form that
we can find in the unsolicited proposal, pitched in
different ways time and again over several decades
to redesign the aesthetic of the British marxist
news daily the Morning Star.

THE HECKLER
(barely audible)
          The ink stains on your face.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
          This project has recently been counterpoised to
          several other re-designs, whose relationship to
          this central problematic are themselves experiments
          in ethical displacement: the graphic design of the
          investment company *Morningstar* and the peculiarly
          (although it is far from rare in the field) fervent
          cosmological claims of a Pepsi branding re-design.
          Ok. Another example that comes to mind is much more
          tidy and encapsulated in its process, and its
          diagramming of class and form touches on the
          displacement of normative ethics only to the degree
          that those ethics proscribe anything but a metaphor-
          ical relationship to money in the field of art. I'm
          thinking of a work that consists of a pile of money
          and a security guard who observes that pile of
          money grow over the duration of the work's
          exhibition, the pile of money which represents the
          guard's wages and the work is complete when the
          guard gets up and leaves with their wages at the
          close of the exhibition. Two ways of rethinking the
          relationship between class and form, one
          expanded, you could say, the other explosive like an
          exploded diagram, though socially it is rather more
          implosive one could say, since it disappears into
          its concept. We don't need to mention the authors
          of these two works, since the status they are
          assuming here is more like thought experiments than
          dis-dis-discrete works with a provenance,
          proprietorial or otherwise. I will mention however
          that security guards feature in the first artist's
          work pretty prominently as well, if not exactly in

proximity to the work outlined here.

THE HECKLER
(with raised voice, interrupting…)

When the pigeon looks in the mirror, the one you took for your squat, it doesn't see itself, it sees something that looks like wrongness. Squatting is unlawful but that's not what's objectionable. What's wrong is that it has so much critical virtue. And really it's like colonising isn't it? You really would like to own that dirty house for yourself. You pretend that you're inhabiting a concept but you're seeking to colonise it. How is that ethically ambivalent?

THE SPEAKER
(ignores the heckle and continues)

Both works, and the project of displacement of ethics I'm trying to open up more generally, pivot upon something like a non-identity between the object and the phenomena it makes possible, than the ways those possibilities are negotiated. In some ways it reminds us of Adorno's thinking of the essay where he points to the essay as a process of negotiating the disparity between objects and concepts: – the essay, 'wants to use concepts to pry open the aspect of its objects that cannot be accommodated by concepts, the aspect that reveals, through the contradictions in which concepts become entangled, that the net of their objectivity is a merely subjective arrangement.'[2] Such 'subjective arrangements' are the material in process, the 'materialization' of an inquiry into the relation between class and form, an inquiry that has to clear away or set aside moral certainties about the value of transparency and emphatic positions, for example, in order to propose an aesthetic able to take into account the complexities of the way class is both experienced and reinforced nowadays: not just its mediation (say by bosses, union legislation, tax regimes) but its mediality, you could say.

THE HECKLER
(barely audible)

As you colonise a concept, it does the same to an

———————————————

2   Ibid.

object, masking it's intentions with blunt,
rustic arrangements. The object becomes
ontologically taxed.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
The objectivity of class is not the thing that has
to be shown to be subjective – generations of
conservative politicians' attempts to do just that
notwithstanding – but rather the objectivity itself
has to be split into its various subjective and
objective determinants, and those determinants
'weaponized', as current jargon would have it.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
This process requires what Emily Dickinson has
called, according to the philosopher Antonia
Birnbaum, an 'element of blank', that is, creating
a zone of moral ambiguity, of compromised agency…

THE HECKLER
(barely audible)
Weaponised…

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
…which is not about what 'art' can or cannot do….

THE HECKLER
(speaking a little louder)
…but armed with blanks.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
how seriously it takes itself or is taken by
bureaucrats.

THE HECKLER
(with raised voice, interrupting…)
Bureaucracy simply means being governed by
office furniture!

THE SPEAKER
(refers to notes then continues)
It's not how seriously art is taken by bureaucrats

but rather what a fictional set-up, in which no po-
sition is stable or self-evident, can do to unhinge
modes of proceeding in the real. That's to say, it
implicates the division between reality and fiction
by means of a fictionalizing displacement of
reality, of activating its fictional layers. The non-
identity here is between concept and object, but in
a special way: it's not exclusively the inadequacy
of the concept to the resistant complexity of the
object, it's that precisely that the concepts
generate objects which render them obsolete, and
it's the job of the objects then to enable other
concepts, even other ways of generating concepts,
to become available for us, readers and bystanders.
Using strategies such as metonymy, obfuscation,
automation, collaboration, and mis-focus.

In a way, we can call on a final theoretical trope,
that of the fragment – a kind of speculative object
which, in the Romantic tradition, generally re-
ferred to text. It was both a piece of something and
self-contained, so it's the original self-insufficient
object. From that era's fascination with ruins,
people like the Schlegel brothers excavated a
programme for contemporary aesthetic production and
theory, and when I say contemporary, that is in both
sense, i.e. contemporary with their time and with ours.

THE HECKLER
Stands up from a seat in the middle of the lecture theatre,
apologises to adjacent audience members whilst leaving towards
the central aisle

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
Better in that case to say the fragment is the
future orientation of a ruin, even if fragments were
generally thought of as indices of ruin, as keys to
a ruin. How is it futural, when it is cut off,
broken off? What makes it possible is perceptible
in it but not yet as something that exists.

THE HECKLER Reaches the central aisle and begins to walk towards
the exit door.

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THE SPEAKER
(Short pause then continues)
                I'll stop here.


THE SPEAKER takes a drink of water, places the glass back on the
console and begins speaking off-microphone
                Oh yeah, and about that pigeon.


(then moves back to the microphone)
                About that pigeon. Well, you've got an easy paradox
                there, haven't you?  Colonising  and owning are two
                very different things, of course. What's ethically
                ambivalent, I'd suggest, is trying to conflate them,
                as if there was no such things as power differentials
                and words referred to ethical universals. Your
                scenario is an example of the problem I pointed to
                at the beginning, this thing of art speaking truth
                to power.  There's nothing wrong with owning some-
                thing, nothing wrong with squatting, it's about
                using the power of the state to make sure you get
                to own everything. Now how about you tell us about
                something more interesting than your weird ideolog-
                ical twitches, – I for one am extremely curious to
                hear more about this pigeon/mirror theory. I think
                it might take us in a very surprising direction.
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THE SPEAKER moves away from the microphone, clicks a key on the laptop to display the slide: bird of self-knowledge (fig. 2.2), then clicks another key to combine it with fig 2.3. Alternates sporadically between the two slides for five to ten seconds.

Fig. 2.3. to be combined with fig. 2.2

3.   May 2014

'Why did you leave your previous position?'

The interviewee sat forward in his chair. Why would anyone leave one of the world's most prestigious jewellery companies to work for a beleaguered, marginal newspaper?

He thought back to the circumstances of how he'd found his previous job at Boodles. He'd been attending Jobcentre Plus on Liverpool's Prince Albert street, queuing for a form, when his left leg had completely given way. It felt like his meniscus had fallen right out of his knee joint, slipping out on the synovial fluid and down the inside of his leg towards the floor. The bones of his knee joint had shuddered then failed. As he fell, he pivoted on his good foot landing on his right side in a position very similar to how he slept at night. There was no pain but he knew that if he tried to move then the pain would be unretractable.

During the period between his fall and the ambulance arriving, he lay in this position studying what he could see from this vantage point: a landscape of tightly ribbed carpeting, the colour of asparagus. Close up lay the wrapper from a chocolate bar and next to it a till receipt. Beyond these, in the middle distance, he could make out the advertisement cards for current job vacancies. He propped his head up and read from left to right: 'Supervisor in a Bio-Yoghurt Factory in Tox-teth'; 'Primary School Teacher in an Undisclosed Location'; 'Security guard at Boodles House.' He squinted to read the small print: 'Luxury jewellers, Boodles. Flagship City-Centre Showroom, Liverpool'. Just then a leaf floated over, from the open window behind, and landed directly in front of him between the chocolate bar and its receipt. He swivelled, in some pain, and committed himself to a new position, despite not being able to fully inhabit it. He looked out of the open window at a huge coniferous tree that was starting to shake in a visiting storm. He was not one to miss a sign.

He ran to the gym before his first day at Boodles, and then performed on the running machine so quickly that the cord to his headphones had snagged up on the controls. The earpieces had darted from his small white lobes, ricocheting off the machine faster than he could ever dream of running. He'd packed a suit in a backpack to change into after the gym but on opening it he'd found it creased up

and dishevelled. The suit now looked more suitable for a low ranking employee or worse, a school leaver on their first day at the local branch of a Building Society being directed towards the data-entry room, the room so hidden away that the supervisor—who had himself only left school two years previously—could imagine himself licensed to reprimand the school-leaver, half jokingly, by stirring his hot coffee with a teaspoon and then placing the back of the spoon on the back of the school leaver's left hand, the very hand that was assigned to fifty per-cent of the data-entry requirements per hour.

He felt for the folded paper in his left trouser pocket, the job description that he'd brought with him to refer to if needed. It was stipulated, quite high up on the list of requirements, that he should not behave in a manner that might draw attention to himself in the moment of recognising a celebrity entering the show-room. Boodles was often frequented by footballers and footballers' wives and so he'd signed up to a year's subscription to Sky Sports so he could recognise them if they visited.

The interior design of Boodles' Liverpool showroom was imagined by Eva Jiricna Architects, an architecture firm that specialised in plucky combinations of glass and steel. The centrepiece was a spiral staircase with triagonal glass steps fanning like ribs from a vertebra of steel rings, escorting chosen clients to a private suite painted in a pale tangerine hue. At the entrance to the private suite, at shoulder height, a dimmer switch quietly hummed.

Downstairs, from certain vantage points, the security guard found that he could see a multitude of reflections of himself on the surfaces of the vitrines, wall cabinets and window displays. After days of trial and error he'd located the optimum position to stand: the specific floor tiles on which to place his feet and the angle to turn his body so that a visitor, on entering the showroom, would see a maximum number of reflections of his body, appearing for an instant like a bereaved family.

Passers-by were magnetised by the window displays, pressing their faces up close, their warm nasal air misting the glass. Miniature prosceniums, positioned at the height of an onlookers vital organs were inlaid with soft Italian linen. Vectored emeralds enchanted as ashoka diamonds hid their veins, plumped up on top of rings like hazelnut shells. White gold lobes split open with clutches of sapphire and procrustean circles of platinum brought some much needed order. Order? 'English with a cheeky twist to order.' Some calm austerity was on hand from the pale linen on which the constellations were placed, stretched out over

tablets of oak from the Forest of Dean. A team of craftsmen, popular with many firms at London's Hatton Garden for their discretion, loyalty and flexible working hours, had folded the linen over the tablets, stapled it firmly on the underside, and then glued these down onto support frames of two inch square pine timber. These were rough cuts of wood, all a bit warped, but screwed and nailed firmly to adjacent perpendicular frames so they formed a strong, hollow box shape built up from the floorboards of the showroom. There was never a need to tile these areas since they would always remain hidden from view, like sarcophagus dedicated to the company of manual labourers. No need to sweep away the fallen pieces of glazed and cream mortar, half broken bricks, and workers' cigarette boxes—crushed up from the flex of a fist—let go amongst a decade of dust. Nearby, a plumber's pipe, going down through the foundations, with just enough of an angle for the effluence to flow. Another pipe, this one vertical, for the upstream of water from the city's subterranean network of late-Victorian plumbing. Myriad tubes of copper, ceramic and plastic, connecting Boodles with the city and the city with the homes of all the passers-by and the very few that would stop and enter.

A requirement of the security guard's job was to dissuade anyone undesirable from making the transition from staring at the window displays to approaching the entrance door. Since the armed robbery on the second Monday of January 2010, in which the assailants had made their escape in a pale blue Vauxhall Vectra full of jewels and second-hand sledgehammers, the directors of Boodles—three brothers and their father, Nicholas—had quickly decided to take action. Security would be stepped up immediately and henceforth only the cheaper items of jewellery could be on view and within reach of a burglar's sinewy arms. An initial fifty per cent of the new security budget was put aside to replace the glass of the display windows with a bespoke five ply laminate installed by Architectural Armour Ltd. The remaining fifty per cent was then directed towards a team of tan-less programmers working round the clock in an attempt to prevent the initial pages of Google, under the search term 'Boodles', from prioritising images of the crime-scene instead of photographs of proudly bejewelled A-Listers. An endless scroll of jpegs of the embattled showroom, ringed by police tape on a dark winter's evening, had shown the fractured plate glass windows of the Georgian shop-front deflecting the sedentary traffic of Lord Street. Crude deflections not unlike those seen in the diamonds cut by significantly cheaper firms, in the shopping centre nearby, whilst Boodles looked, for page after search page, a place very much closed for business.

It was not always easy for the security guard to pin-point undesirable customers. The slack-jaw expressions that people adopt when they are staring intently at something very small at such close quarters, and perhaps with awe, is difficult to read. One afternoon, as an onlooker on the street outside stopped to stare intently at the 'Pas de Deux' collection in the window display cabinet that was furthest from the entrance door, the security guard stood at the opposite side of the cabinet, inside the showroom, and behind the display. Slowly he adjusted his focus to the glass of the cabinet that separated the onlooker and the precious gems that were so incalculable to him, and rested his gaze on his own reflection.

> *Left eye: To you this eye looks like a large raindrop on a withering blade of grass, long after a downpour has ended.*

Momentarily switching his focus to the onlooker, the security guard felt himself obliged to raise his eyebrows slightly and he tilted his head, left and right, checking where the shadows fell. But then his gaze quickly returned to his own reflection.

> *Right eye, the one I'm looking through now. If I had the bony tips of miniature antlers, instead of this heavy mass of helidor, I would use them as antennae.*

The jewellery seemed to be sucking the light out of the encounter. The onlooker, absorbed with the contents in the display, didn't see the guard but did begin to sense the light become dimmer.

> *Left eye, I see you looking down at me, thinking of me as lumpish, even menacing in my appearance. But I am more concerned with myself than who might be looking at me. I choose my recipient and today I choose Senior Administrator Wearing a Suit in Tropical Shades of Green, ready to run a few errands, amusing themselves as they go.*

The onlooker moved along to an adjacent window. The guard also moved along sideways to stand behind this second display.

> *Right eye: I can take for you and enjoy for you. If the walls can slide towards you, why should you move?*

As the light dimmed again, the onlooker on the street outside moved to the third and final display cabinet, and then to the entrance door. The guard reciprocated, arriving at the entrance door at the same time as the onlooker. He reached—at a stretch that was a fraction too far to be comfortable—to clasp the handle and opened the door. The onlooker hastily enquired if there was a new Boodles brochure available and, barely waiting for a response, simply turned and left.

For the security guard there was something psychic about the way in which the money, that was handed over the counter for the Boodles jewellery, became trapped inside the gems and then circulated around fingers and necks. How could these tiny encrusted pieces, that were so hostile, ever become so personal? That was their erotic power, he felt. To be alien; to occlude the secret of their making. And if they could only ever be impersonal like money, then these glinting stones belonged to everyone.

Left eye: Precious because everyone is free to agree that we are precious.

The security guard, circling the showroom, picked up another onlooker standing and staring into the first display window. He could see an emotion pitted against its dumb formation, a demand for something and the only way to satisfy that demand being to antagonise it even further. He sloped off from mirroring his movements around the periphery of the showroom, instead becoming distracted by a recurring daydream. He liked to think of the island of Gibraltar as a colossal gemstone, one from H. Samuel down the road. 'Who would want to own that?' he asked himself. One morning he'd found a H. Samuel ring in the compost at the bottom of his garden next to some flowers planted in the shape of a hook. It was still in its box. He figured that someone had flung it sun-ward from any one of the bedroom windows at the back of the row of terraced houses where he lived at number sixty-four. With a quick sideways throw, the ring had probably followed a long, shallow arc before pocketing itself deep in the manure. There is natural reoccurring value in compost, thought the guard.

On one particular day the weather was to be met with contempt. The security guard had arrived ten minutes late due to traffic and had then had to cut short his morning break, slugging back a decaf' coffee. He had to to oversee the reception of a single piece that had come up from Hatton Garden. It was his job to verify the provenance of an incoming item, log its arrival time, catalogue the piece and

deposit it in the safe. The guard was excited at the thought of being one of the first people to see the new commission, something singularly bespoke and exceptionally precious.

> *Left eye and right eye: We embody an excess. A perversion in less literal ways than my employers would ever anticipate. Am I an act of love or bewitchment, or just something quietly mismanaged?*

The ring was already boxed. A number of years previously Boodles had selected a leading design company to tackle the brief of designing the packaging in which Boodles jewellery was sold, a brief formulated by the directors enlisting the designers to imagine something luxurious—obviously—but also something quirky. For the guard, the opening mechanism of the jewellery boxes was particularly enticing and peculiar. A single top corner had been designed to flip-up, exposing the jewellery through a dramatic diamond-shaped gape that reminded him of the sprung-wide mouth of a baby gosling.

Nestled inside was a magnificent golden head, its face the size of an adzuki bean, sat aloft a swirling ring of platinum. Encrusted with sapphires and diamonds and crowned with helidor, it looked ready to blossom as the living object of voluptuous desire. The security guard would watch over this ring from within its yellow-gold core, looking out through each eye independently. A simple displacement; two eyes from a whole head: cannibalising social echelons and, in unison, watching out for a pale blue Vauxhall Vectra.

4.   October 2013

From: Chris Evans
To: Richard Bagley
Cc: Massimiliano Mollona, Emily Pethick
Subject: Open letter to the editors and Management Committee of Morning Star
Date: 18th October, 2013

Dear Richard,

I hope this finds you well and that things have calmed down a bit at *Morning Star* after Bournemouth.

When Massimiliano, Marina, the two designers and I were working together, the week before last, we spent some of our time writing a Q and A—where we imagined how an impartial inquirer might question us on our motives behind the project. I'm attaching it here in the hope it's of interest and shows our commitment to the project. Would it be something that could shared with the Management Committee members in the hope of our continuing with the project? We also prepared some graphic ideas that I plan to make as a screen-print.

With kind regards,
Chris

From: Chris Evans with Massimiliano Mollona, Dexter Sinister & Marina Vishmidt
To: Richard Bagley & the staff of *Morning Star*

In 1987, first-year University student Chris Evans wrote a letter to *Morning Star* newspaper, a tabloid-format socialist daily founded in 1930 as *Daily Worker* and published continuously since. The letter suggested—somewhat simplistically— that the paper's editors had misread the relationship between class and form, or otherwise underestimated its importance. Evans offered to help re-design *Morning Star*, suggesting that by reconsidering the way the paper looks, it might usefully reposition itself in relation to its audience, both existing and prospective. That this might be done through the newspaper's design was indicative of the times, i.e., the era of the young upwardly mobile, and a boom period for marketing 'designer' culture and PR. Evans received no reply.

On 16 November 2011, *Morning Star* began a direct campaign appealing for funds to save the newspaper, with then-editor Bill Benfield announcing that the 80-plus-year-old organ was in danger of going bankrupt. Evans wrote to the paper again — 25 years on — once more offering design services, now together with an assembled team of consultants that included graphic designers, a writer and an anthropologist. This time Evans got a reply and an initial meeting at *Morning Star*'s London office was scheduled. The paper was interested in the prospect of this pro-bono design advice and suggested that the consultant team should proceed and outline its approach in due course.

Now, on 4 September 2013, that course has gone considerably off-course. Evans had approached The Showroom, an independent art organisation, to host a series of workshops in order to develop the project. In turn, The Showroom secured funding through a collaborative group of small art institutions organised under the rubric 'How to work together'. The group then produced the requisite public relations material to describe what it would be doing and why it would be doing it. The project was given a name, *Morning Star Rebranded*, along with a brief description. All of this eventually appeared on the internet, framed within the 'How to work together' website. On seeing the announcement, *Morning Star* staff threw up a number of concerns regarding the structure of the funding, the time-frame and the appearance of the newspaper in promotional material. These were seen as an uncomfortable fit with the newspaper's political position.

Consequently, a public event intended to launch the project at The Showroom on Thursday 5 September 2013 was CANCELLED. In its place, the group has imagined a set of questions and answers that might clarify its motives.

WHY ARE THERE CORPORATE LOGOS ON THE PROJECT WEBSITE?

This might seem strange in the context of a project for an explicitly socialist organisation. The 'How to work together' project is principally funded by Catalyst Arts, a scheme developed by Arts Council England aimed at helping cultural organisations diversify their income streams and access more funding from private sources. Small art organisations such as The Showroom have had to adapt and navigate the consequences of so-called austerity-era cutbacks.

SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE SEEN THIS CONTRADICTION?

Yes. Just as corporate advertising in Morning Star would undermine its editorial autonomy, we ought to have anticipated how corporate funding would compromise the project. As such, we fully understand Morning Star's concern that its readership would 'become alienated by links to big corporations which would be perceived to have a political agenda at odds with the paper's.'

DOES A LOGO REALLY HAVE THAT MUCH POWER?

Yes.

YOU MEAN THE WAY IT LOOKS?

Not at all – it's simply the fact that it's there.

BUT YOU MUST THINK DESIGN MATTERS TOO. AFTER ALL YOU'RE CALLING THE PROJECT 'MORNING STAR REBRANDED', WHICH IMPLIES YOU THINK OF MORNING STAR AS A BRAND YOU WANT TO CHANGE.

Not exactly. We by no means think of the paper as a 'brand' in the same sense as we might a commercial product or online service. In using the common term we meant to imply a bit of critical distance relative to the sort of hype it suggests. Indeed, the word branding has become a bit toxic – or at least synonymous with

marketing and surface. That's not what we're interested in.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE THEN?

There are two opposing ways to think about design. The first distinguishes between content and form, and considers what form is most appropriate for the content. This approach reacts to an imagined audience, and so works towards forms that are familiar and comfortable. In a word, conventional. But design doesn't just have to react, it can also speculate: a new form can generate a new audience. Rather than simply reacting to projected desires, this second approach conceives of form and content one and the same thing.

So, as we see it, Morning Star follows the mainstream format of a tabloid yet perhaps this is at odds with the uniqueness of its ideological position. Through consultation with the paper, re-considering the form might attract a new, younger audience in tune with its radical values and vastly increase circulation. This is our starting point: to propose useful ways the paper might achieve this.

JUST BY CHANGING ITS APPEARANCE?

Well, not exactly. We're imagining that any worthwhile reconsideration would address all aspects of the newspaper's production and distribution. It seems futile to talk about the way something looks as distinct from the way it's made. This is what we meant by 'form and content as the same thing'.

A cursory perusal of the daily titles at any newsagents confirms that the papers look more similar than different. The Daily Mail looks a lot like The Mirror which also looks like the The Sun. It could therefore be easy enough to mistake Morning Star for The Sun.

Or more specifically we can consider the differences between the way the headlines are treated in, say, the Daily Express and the Financial Times. A Daily Express headline is typically 3 to 5 words, set huge in bold type. A headline in the Financial Times is more like 6 to 12 words, always the same mid-size, with a sub-heading that further unpacks the article. This is not to advocate the format of the Financial Times but to illustrate examples where *what's* being said reflects *how* it's said.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WAY MORNING STAR LOOKS NOW?

It's not only about how it looks; we might also consider other aspects of the paper's operation. For instance, how the principles of cooperative ownership might be usefully applied to the paper, given that contemporary technologies allow us to radically and realistically rethink these models. This could include considering new approaches to funding, such as crowdsourcing, or distribution through 'print on demand' services that allow small and cost-effective print runs. We would like to contribute to a conversation with Morning Star about these options.

The most relevant contemporary models of new media, in the sense that they more readily align with Morning Star's democratic principles, are websites such as Reddit, The Huffington Post or the countless Tumblr sites that have recently grown to have significant reach and influence. These sites support and foster a more overtly 'democratic', two-way system of reportage. Again, the editorial approach is reflected in the way these sites look and work, and vice versa.

BUT TO GO BACK TO MY QUESTION: WHAT'S WRONG WITH HOW IT LOOKS NOW?

Okay, as we see it, there are two things that could be productively reconsidered. First, by echoing the layout and general style of mainstream UK tabloids, Morning Star is prevented from signalling its essential distance from them. It loses its unique voice which creates a false impression: it doesn't look like what it's saying.

Second, some of the symbols used, to signal the paper's ideological orientation to a younger audience, could be seen as anachronistic. With repetition and familiarity, symbols lose their ability to carry meaning. For example a clenched fist rendered as a wood-block print would not mean the same thing to a 15-year-old in Manchester in 2013 as it might have done to a 15-year-old in Manchester in 1936. Symbols have to be reinvented in order to remain potent, they can't just sit around.

We could go further and say that worn-out symbols restrain Morning Star's ability to adopt a more productively defiant stance and hence reach an expanded audience. This reminds us of the text below, by writer Mark Beasley, about similarly impotent forms:

'it seems to me that the recent Occupy movement at Zuccotti Park was marked by an uncannily consistent aesthetics of Western counterculture that recycled all the above: dirty tarps, tie-dye,

the drum circle, kids selling roll-ups for a buck, and Bob Marley on repeat. To the extent that this is (was?) a protest born of the digital revolution, on the ground it remained the same as before: dirty bodies dressed in rainbows clamouring to be heard. Could the movement's failure to rethink its look, its art, its music – its tribal form – be a contributing factor to its (apparent) demise? Make no mistake, the hippies understood the power of *renegotiated form*, and in a way their dress codes were as concrete and contrived as punk's, whose delinquent silhouette contributed to the legitimacy of its stance. Then, roughly a decade-and-a-half later, Acid house took the 'light, sound and pharmacy' of the hippies and twisted it just enough to contrive a new sound, look, and attitude. If it doesn't have a cohesive and disruptive aesthetic, then it isn't a movement.'[1]

HOW WOULD YOU DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY THEN?

One approach might be to imagine an expanded vocabulary of symbols that we could develop together with Morning Star. These could initially depart from existing and recognised symbols, like the red star, working instead towards unfamiliar and newly potent forms. We imagine there might be a whole new set of symbols developed for and with the paper.

Symbols become symbols because a number of people agree that they mean the same thing. To foster this collective agreement, we'd suggest putting them into circulation on the internet, posting on social media sites like tumblr. In these settings the symbols become currency, as the act of passing them from one user to another stabilises their meaning. Their value is a consequence of the attention paid to them.

THIS SOUNDS AN AWFUL LOT LIKE BRANDING.

Yes, more accurately rebranding. The original symbols have been devalued through overuse, so it's time to nominate a new collection. Branding isn't necessarily a dirty word, as we tend to assume when its associated with the more sinister aspects of corporate business. This is too reductive. Branding can equally be conceived of as a powerful technique to be used for diametrically-opposed political agendas. Clearly, questions of identity are far from straightforward. We should be careful here not to demonise 'branding' per se, but to think through, in each case, what its motivations are.

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1   Beasley, M,. 'Tie-Dye-in-My-Arm', *Bulletins of the Serving Library #4*, Sternberg Press (2012).

WON'T THESE PROJECTED CHANGES ALIENATE OUR CURRENT READERSHIP?

Possibly. We could discuss ways to avoid this.
Whilst soliciting a new readership, we think that the rebranding
could carry the existing one along with it. We shouldn't
exaggerate the distinction between Old and New audiences since
it's surely not that binary. We believe, optimistically, that a
change in form might produce a new audience. This could in turn
expand the scope of what's possible to communicate, and instead of
existing merely as a lone model of an alternative to commercial
newspapers, Morning Star might instigate new positions.

THAT'S A TALL ORDER FOR AN AESTHETIC RE-FIT.

We're not so naive as to think a redesign is going to change
everything overnight, but we do maintain that its form could be a
powerful *lever* for precipitating a more substantive shift.

OKAY, BUT WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

We don't know. This is an admittedly odd design project, for a
start it's the wrong way round. Typically we would have been asked
by a client and provided a design brief outlining the project's
criteria and goals. Instead we've reversed that order and are
speculatively offering a redesign that's entirely unsolicited.
Still, as with any other design task, the first and most important
thing is to understand all the paper's needs and technical
constraints. Only Morning Star can supply these. From there,
hopefully we can offer another kind of expertise and overview.

5.   November 2012

Peter Arnell, and the two senior managers on the panel, had just returned to the interview room from a short break and were taking their seats. The room was on the top floor of a new office building overlooking Bow Street roundabout in east London. It was hot and brightly lit.

Arnell was structuring a new company now that he was free from the litigation stranglehold that the PR megacorp, Omnicrom, had held over him for several years. All those court cases were finally behind him.

'Words like 'stupid', 'useless', and 'incompetent' do constitute non-actionable, protected opinions', said the younger of two senior managers, repeating word for word the closing statement of one of Arnell's lawyers the previous week.

'Fact,' replied Arnell as an administrator entered the room followed by a candidate who swiftly shook hands with everyone present. The candidate took a moment to take in her surroundings and glanced through a window in the far corner of the office, at clouds slowly retreating towards the horizon. The younger of the two senior managers signalled to the interviewee to take a seat: a low Aram office chair and the only seat not taken. Without introductions, Arnell leaned forward to begin the interview.

'Let's start with the question of an ideal work-life balance. Your work and your home-life. For you what's the ideal ratio between the two?'

The candidate paused to think.

'I've always thought of my work as my shadow,' she replied. 'Something I'm not wholly responsible for, at least not to the extent where I can alter it.'

The interview panel shared the same blank expression. The candidate adjusted her position in her chair.

'So is it a long shadow or a small shadow? What kind of shadow is it?' asked one of the senior managers. 'Does it shrink to nothing on a midsummer's day?'

It's not so much that she wanted to have a job, it's more that she didn't want *not* to have a job or for the job she'd previously had to be the *only* job she'd ever have. The premises of the company where she'd recently been employed had been

leased for over a decade by *Morning Star*, a long-enduring left-wing tabloid. The company occupied all three floors of William Rust House, a deteriorating redbrick in the east end of London. It reminded her of the architecture of her old school, the architecture of ruins. In stark contrast a new development had recently been built opposite: a steroidal, lofty apartment scheme, accommodating high-ranking civil servants.

William Rust House was situated in a greasy cleft of the A12, a congested dual carriageway heading south towards the twin boreholes of London's Blackwall Tunnel. Two sides of the newspaper's premises had windows. The view towards the west was from a sunken vantage point, looking out onto the muddy embankment of the six lane carriageway. The opposite view, towards the east, faced the new housing development and, to the left of that, the perimeter wall of the Olympic Games. Although the wall was a mere fifty metres away, *Morning Star* was the only newspaper of the country's national press not to be invited for affiliation. The rest of the press would be there, all witnessing the tears of fallen athletes having found something incompatible with their bodies. Instead, for the *Morning Star*'s reporters, there was just the sight of a sporadic relay of white, rusted transit vans bussing sex workers into the area. Too distant to hear the gentle shuffling sounds of zips, straps and scraping of heels from the terrazzos at the back of the new apartments, but close enough to hear the rise and fall of ecstatic clamour in the stadium.

The particular office where the interviewee had been stationed at *Morning Star* was allocated to the staff working on the newspaper's typesetting and page-layout: a fast turnaround of contract-less designers sent from the recruitment consultants, Office Angels. The job mainly consisted of piping copy into an already existing template, a task that served as a constant reminder of the skills she'd learnt at college and wasn't using. The office was open-plan and situated on the second floor in a space big enough for three banks of workstations and lined with two adjacent meeting booths used by the editorial staff. There were areas of grey paint flaking unchecked off the fire door and the dark blue contract carpeting was blemished with a map of discolouration from years of spilt coffee. To the former employee, the stains formed shapes that looked like mutant butterflies, grounded and prone. Periodically one of her nearby colleagues would slump forward onto their desk with their head resting on the backs of their hands, exasperated at not being able to scramble the given words to fit a particular column.

In artificial light, the keenest of early morning light, when it was still dark outside, she'd often sat, shoes off, with her legs stretched out beneath the desk and her feet caught up in the computer and printer cables. Looking over her left shoulder, down the long desk occupied by recent college graduates of a similar age, she would see their faces lit by blue screen light, bearing expressions that didn't easily yield much to understanding. She had set her desktop screen colour to grey, like endless ground. To the side of her computer sat a glass mug, tinted obsidian and scoured daily by the firm's old dishwasher. This mug, as with all the others just like it, belonged to the office kitchen, one of the few places in the building where the regular paid staff mingled with the temporary employees. Conversation had often been stilted and the air felt dank with the smell of instant coffee. Post-it notes curled on every surface, drawer and cupboard, with their edicts to follow penned in red felt-tip.

'What experience do you have in driving products through from their initial stages of creation to end-point delivery?' asked the elder manager on the interview panel, interrupting the interviewee's meandering thoughts.

Not immediately sure of how she'd answer this question she'd compensated by making sure her thumbs were visible to the interviewers. In an interview you should always have your hands in view. They should rest in front of you on the table or desk. Visible thumbs signal a more confident, less nervous-looking you than someone with hidden thumbs. She could begin by talking about her background, how her mother had worked in retail, reigning over the Accessories department at John Lewis and always a little anxious about the status of her own bag that she carried to work each day. When her mother had been old and terminally sick she had brought in a large bag to the hospital and took out a painting to lean against the wall above the steel medical cabinet in her mother's private room at the hospital. The painting was a joy to look at, painted quickly and with a sharp economy of line and colour, because if it had taken any longer the pleasure of its making might have faded.

'And perhaps you would like to furnish your response with an example or two,' added the other manager, interrupting the silence.

Thinking on, it's not possible that she could have gained any impulse towards commerce from her father either. His only experience with products had been to hold them at arms length. He'd been an art handler's assistant for most of his life working in the houses and apartments of wealthy and distinguished collectors. At break times he'd often had to squat to eat his packed lunch rather than risk soiling the owners furniture; their Ekornes Recliner or Ligne

Roset modular corner unit. When hanging artworks he'd most enjoyed the moment when he'd been able to place a worn drill bit in his Makita, and press the blunt tip against the immaculate satin sheen of the plastered walls. Especially old walls, the gypsum held together with hair, set with milk and eggs or beer and urine, coughing out dust like a sick patient.

Product creation, marketing, and the world of commerce was far from the *Morning Star*'s focus. There had even been a veto on advertising which had been in place for years. She could understand this rationale but it wasn't something she particularly shared. During her last week at the job she'd enjoyed the relentless online adverts for a pair of blunt looking boots that an algorithm had decided would appeal to her.

'My experience is in delivering emotions as products,' she finally replied. 'Emotions captured from the deep well of sensation that can be reconfigured, twisted and re-purposed to new ends. To what extent can we know ourselves? How well can we observe ourselves; our limited selves with our neurological boundaries, our limbs that will only stretch so far? How much of us always remains a secret to ourselves?'

Her mind had turned to these thoughts at work one humid morning in August. It was like an owl dropping a mouse in front of her. What was clear was that her own subjectivity was mostly beyond her volition, and likewise, for each and every one of the newspaper's readers, a large part of their individuality would remain forever inaccessible to themselves. Things remaining opaque and unexplainable, interiorities formed as secrets outside of themselves and empty. She had begun to stay late at work, waiting until everyone had left, turning off all the lights and standing at the windows overlooking the new housing development and the Olympic's perimeter wall. She was listening for the athletes, and trying to focus on what might be the substance in between the newspaper and its readers, to feel what this might be, to feel its intimacy.

'But how can we share feelings that we only have a remote sense of?' she asked the interview panel.

She thought the words of a newspaper could take up a viewer and deliver them back to themselves in a state of unfamiliarity. Words that could create a parallel reality shaped from an inaccessible place, or from a place of unthinkability. She thought about the writer Sherwood Anderson, how he'd been so full of charm and sophistication that he'd managed to convince a worn-out farmer to buy two copies of the same evening paper. The farmer sitting on a rickety fence, between the rocks and the wind-pummelled trees up there on the

balds of the Grayson mountains, South Virginia. Anderson had learned about two opposing newspapers for sale in Marion, in neighbouring Smyth County. One Democrat. One Republic. On the proceeds of the sale of his novel, 'Dark Laughter', he'd taken degenerate pleasure in buying them both up. He began to edit them as some kind of conceptual writing project, switching between his own name and his alter ego, Buck Fever. The *Marion Democrat* on Tuesdays and the *Smyth County News* on Thursdays. Amazing, she thought. And to die like Anderson, swallowing a tooth-pick whilst eating the olive of a Martini. Opposing organs bleeding out.

She had wanted to make some small additions to the *Morning Star*'s copy: edits that would slip by unnoticed, words that were out of reach of what was necessary, but still crucial like love, play and sex. Perhaps there was something shameful in this impulse, she thought. Something uncomfortable about an imagination. She wanted to provoke a feeling in the reader that they couldn't clearly identify.

Words scattered throughout the copy became sentences stretching themselves into paragraphs, piped through the newspaper's columns. She had begun to imagine herself as a mini-van driver, servicing the area between William Rust House and the Games. A young old-looking man from Goole in the north of England, who felt involved in life but in a way that felt vague to himself, like a stray bullet at a robbery. He felt detached, even from his own freckles of which he had plenty. 'Skin's skin,' she thought, channelling his voice. Why would anyone who he felt attracted to make such a fuss of them instead of his scars? These were the true reminders of something past, not the freckles. Several times a day the driver would return to a section of the Olympic's perimeter wall that he'd found that was lower than elsewhere. He'd clamber up on top of his van, peer over and report back.

I got a phone call on my mobile from our kid. What's up? I said. Have you been broken into? He said frame yerself and have a skeg on the fuckin' telly. Our kid said he didn't normally give a shit about them Olympians but you should fetch this out in your paper. Errr no I said it's not for me or for the paper. But our kid's still watchin' the telly and he says over his phone, I tell you. Tell me what? You're doing my head in, hold your horses I don't need to turn on the telly, I'm on top of the van. I can see Solo from the womens football team of America. She swears like a fuckin' trooper. She's sweatin' cobs 'cause it's maftin down in London and she's chowing at them Swedes for being cowards and like tots, shoutin' in their

lug 'oles, sayin' get back! get back to somewhere. Dowly Swede starts cryin' but another's having nothing of that. Says shut up! Looks right like they're about to start scragging and Solo's goin' to brain her. Just then I look the other way. Our kid, listen, a police wagon has been goin' round the Olympics fence like it were the hundred meters sprint, and now they've caught a man in a ten-foot, fuck! He's takin' his nunty kecks right down his ankles, drunk. Get off says the man. That's the beginning and end of it says the police. I told you that. You can have your way with me says the man to the officer but I will not be there. My skin is outer-most of me and she and I are not alive at the same time. Pull your kecks up says the officer. Well it's a irrefutably bad day for the Canadian maples. That old bike legend Simon Whitfield in tod triathlon gashed his sen and had to have stitches in his foot. End of the Olympics for that lad, he's hugging his wife 'n' kid's cryin' his eyes out, they're all cryin'. That's not how he pictured the script endin'.

Arnell lent back in his chair and looked over his shoulder searching for something to focus on. The candidate followed Arnell's look yet found something to focus on.

'My experience is in delivering emotions as products.' the interviewee repeated firmly.

6.   April 2009

In the late 1990s, when a 110-dollar silver charm bracelet inscribed with *Please Return to Tiffany* went on sale, the once hushed showrooms of the luxury jewellers were filled with excited teenagers vying for the accessory. The rebranding strategy of courting younger, less prosperous customers with cheaper silver jewellery gathered pace and, to the delight of investors, sales increased dramatically. Then, after months of debate within the company, Tiffany & Co. changed tack, aggressively hiked its prices and killed off the line.

A brand aims to control a situation of *us* versus *them*, or, to use a term coined by Albert M. Muñiz, Jr. & Thomas O'Guinn: a 'brand community'[1] versus everyone else. Muñiz, Jr. & O'Guinn, used this term to determine a 'specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand.'[2] Their ideas circle around the premise that the meaning of a brand is 'socially negotiable'. Reciprocity is at stake. Meaning and symbolic value are not simply produced by a company and its product, both are co-created and reinforced by the 'brand community'. The teenagers jostling for the silver were *rebranding* Tiffany & Co.. They were, according to Michael Kowalski, the company's CEO at that time, 'a fundamental threat—not just to the business but to the core franchise of our brand.'[3]

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1   Albert M. Muñiz, Jr. & Thomas O'Guinn, presented the term 'brand community' at an Association for Consumer Research Conference, in Minneapolis (1995) and later published their research: Muñiz, Jr, Albert & O' Guinn, Thomas, 'Brand Community', *Journal of Consumer Research*, (University of Chicago Press, March 2001), Volume 27. Issue 4, p. 412–32

2   Ibid.

3   Kowalski, Michael, & Byron, Ellen, 'To Refurbish Its Image, Tiffany Risks Profits', *The Wall Street Journal*, (News Corp, Jan. 10, 2007), Retrieved September 2018 from www.wsj.com/articles/SB116836324469271556

Fig. 6.1

Clearly, whilst a company is searching for ways in which to widen its cachet—for example through a shift in product range, a change in price point, or an advertising campaign aimed at new market sectors—it is also concerned with maintaining its existing 'brand community'. What can arise in such rebranding strategies is that the company attracts two types of non-members: those that are non-core users who claim no affiliation to a brand and those that are non-core users who *claim* to be core users. A member of the former might buy a bottle of 'Tiffany & Co. Eau de Cologne', and this would not be resented by core-users since buying the perfume implies that the person wouldn't be able to afford the jewellery. However, the same cannot be said for the latter. These users would potentially dilute the brands distinctiveness by a cut-price but paid-for affiliation. Tiffany & Co.'s situation was precarious because they were attempting to expand their 'brand community' to the middle-classes whilst keeping the truly rich—their traditional audience—feeling privileged. This dilemma has been faced by many companies of luxury goods pampering to investors who are clamouring for growth and high sales whilst maintaining a sense of exclusivity.[4]

Boodles, a fine jewellery company established in Liverpool in 1798, when the city was central to the British trading empire, also faces the difficulty of navigating consumer groups that could potentially make for an amorphous community, one which might attract constituents who pose a threat. Whilst the

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4   For example the British fashion house, Burberry Group PLC, used its iconic tan plaid on everything from dog collars to headbands, and then struggled with the overexposure.

jewellery is popular with members of the British royal family, giving the company a particular distinction, it also aims to attract young consumers—millennials and post-millennials—who will prospectively become the largest segment of luxury shoppers and thus a highly lucrative market. Boodles jewellery photographs well from a distance—perhaps due to the sheer quantity of gems that they incorporate into their designs—and it's customary to see paparazzi photographs of celebrities adorned in Boodles in high-street magazines such as *Hello* and *O.K.* It is this particular prevalence that gives the jewellery an air of inclusivity which is at odds with its price tags. Consequently, a consensus about value becomes warped when Boodles promises democratized luxury and the equality of commodity owners by extension.[5]

Whilst, in the marketing of mainstream food and beverages, the protection and nurturing of brand communities is less concerned with exclusivity, there are still issues of loyalty to contend with. The orange juice Tropicana is a case in point. With the exception of a five-week period, in 2009, the side of a carton of Tropicana featured a red and white striped drinking straw puncturing a plump orange—an image as direct as the experience of drinking right from the fruit itself—and a very familiar sight on most supermarket shelves. PepsiCo Inc., one of the world's largest producers of non-alcoholic beverages had hired Arnell Group to rebrand their entire range. Peter Arnell, who gave his name to the company, had at this point been in the business for over three decades, and was associated with household brands such as McDonalds and Banana Republic.[6] In Arnell Group's rebranding of Tropicana, there was a radical shift to a new minimal sans-serif appearance which eliminated both the straw and the orange.

Since it is widely acknowledged that the way in which a brand is perceived

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5   Conceivably in response to their promotion of themselves as accessible, in May 2018, burglars attempted once again to ram-raid Boodles' flagship store on Sloane Street, London, following a similar attempt, just a few years previously, at their showroom in Liverpool. See: Grierson, Jamie, 'Men wielding hammers raid London jeweller', *The Guardian*, (Guardian Media Group, 16th Aug 2017), Retrieved September 2018 from www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/16/men-wielding-hammers-raid-london-jewellers and: 'The haul stolen by Boodles Liverpool city centre gem gang', *Liverpool Echo*, (Reach plc, 20th January 2010) Retrieved September 2018 from www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/haul-stolen-boodles-liverpool-city-3434132

6   Arnell (later known as Ariel Group) was an autonomous part of Omicrom Group, Inc., an American-based global marketing and corporate communications holding company. Arnell had directed various ventures including the handling of store design and promotions for DKNY, including the iconic DKNY logo containing the Manhattan skyline, and produced the marketing around a range of healthy snacks for boxer Muhammed Ali's Greatest of All Time (GOAT) venture, co-produced with Mars.

is deeply influenced by how a customer has previously experienced it, why would Arnell Group make such a distinct break from the past? 'Everyone shows the orange, we want to show the juice!' was Peter Arnell's justification in a defensive press conference.[7] Whilst a full-colour CMYK printing process is necessary to reproduce a realistic image of an orange on packaging, a budget brand might aim to reduce this cost by printing in just two or three spot colours. From a customer's perspective, Tropicana's new pared-down appearance—with its limited colour palette— looked similar to the packaging of 'own-brand' product lines that supermarkets manufacture and sell to customers who can't afford Tropicana. Customers complained and it is speculated that there was a 20% drop in sales before the old design was re-instated less than two months after the launch.

In April 2009, some months prior to the Tropicana episode, another product under the remit of Arnell, appeared in a brand strategy document titled The Pepsi Gravitational Field. It consisted of a 27-page booklet downloadable from a number of media websites as a PDF.[8] It was common knowledge that Arnell, enlisted by PepsiCo Inc. three years prior, had already begun work on the rebranding with the global introduction of a new design for a set of cans, and yet the brand strategy document, whilst stamped with the company name, was not available or referenced on the Arnell Group's website. The Pepsi Gravitational Field proposed a giddy hyper-identification between the cola and the most cel-ebrated historical occasions in science, mathematics and culture. On page six, a diagram of a 5000+ year timeline called attention to a so-called 'authentic Con-stitution of Design' linking the 'Hindu tradition of numerical harmony as spatial organiser,' with the moment in which the French philosopher, René Descartes, 'developed the cartesian coordinate system', culminating in Pepsi's new logo.

Mauro Porcini, PepsiCo Inc's chief design officer vigorously defended the work of Arnell Group whilst advocating that retailers should shift their objectives from producing products to designing experiences. In a lecture given to students at Parsons School, New York, in 2016, and under the title 'Driving Innovation and Brand Through Design', Porcini presented the following equation:

7   Levins, Hoag, 'Peter Arnell Explains Failed Tropicana Package Design', *Advertising Age*, (Josh Golden, February 2009), Retrieved September 2018 from adage.com/article/video/peter-arnell-ex-plains-failed-tropicana-package-design/134889/

8   *The Pepsi Gravitational Field*, Retrieved September 2018 from www.slideshare.net/tblogosphere/pepsi-gravitational-field

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Experience is: [ people + product/service/brand (solution)
+ context (of purchase + of use) ] x time⁹
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Porcine elaborated this with a simple analogy of how designers curate stories that people are telling through the products and brands that surround them and that the context in which this happens is wrapped up in that experience. According to Porcini: however fictional these narratives might be, they need to feel authentic in order to be meaningful as experiences.

It is easy to dismiss Arnell Group's hyperbole and Porcini's portentous equation. Their press statements seem semi-parodic, like an in-house joke that plays out for real in the outside world. Allied around a shared skepticism towards this particular kind of rhetoric, and the industry it signifies, might be a particular constituency. Muñiz, Jr. & O'Guinn describe three markers exhibited by brand communities as: 'shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility.'[10] What sense of moral responsibility would determine how a particular constituency should decide to exclude itself from a brand community? If we were to identify a constituency that, for example, refuses to be co-opted by the fetishism of commodities, how might these values in turn be branded? If they are not branded, who is listening?

It could seem, at first hand, improbable—and certainly not within the scope of this research—to draw out correlations between the notion of 'brand community' and the concept of 'moral economy'—that the sociologist Didier Fassin applied in his anthropological research to draw attention to the existence of economies of shared values out-with prevailing political economies[11]. Clearly, Tiffany & Co. is not a benchmark for such a consideration. However, Muñiz, Jr. & O'Guinn propose

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9   Porcini, Mauro, 'Driving Innovation and Brand Through Design', *Design Driven NYC* (Conference, Parsons, 9th March, 2016), Retrieved September 2018 from www.youtube.com/watch?v=PG-zlObcVjDI

10   Ibid.

11   I describe the term 'moral economy' in the Introduction, page 9. Also of interest are the numerous studies that pivot between Didier Fassin's ideas and those of Muñiz, Jr. & O'Guinn, for example Morris Jannowitz's work on urban neighbourhoods (Jannowitz, Morris, The Community Press in an Urban Setting, Glencoe, IL: Free Press. 1952). Jannowitz defines a concept of 'communities of limited liability'—that have few ties except for a limited number of shared voluntary interests such as securing local educational services. They are characterised as microsocial: 'intentional, voluntary, and characterised by partial and differential involvement' (p. 414). As with Fassin's, 'moral economies', the 'communities of limited liability' construct themselves in spite of or tangental to dominant economies.

that, 'a sense of moral responsibility (one of the markers of a 'brand community') is what produces, in times of threat to the community, collective action.'[12] Such is the power of a 'brand community' that can determine the fortune (or otherwise) of a global company— clearly Tiffany & Co. is a benchmark for *this* consideration—that allows us to speculate on what form this collective action might take. Might there be circumstances in which the shared values of a 'brand community' might be able to succeed the commercial forces that formed it, becoming an autonomous entity? Or if we were to replace the term 'commercial' with 'political'—dispelling the vision of a mass of upset teenagers unable to afford the hiked-up prices of jewellery—and instead envisage a community that simply believes that if you tell people the truth, then they will use reason to come to the right conclusions (hence a community averse to branding)—then how could this community's values be branded in such a way that would be both palatable and highly effective? How might a 'brand community' that affiliates itself to these values be permeable, and attract non-core users in a manner that would be unthreatening?

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12   Ibid.

7.   February 2004

'Thank you for coming, please take a seat, yes that one there next to the radiator. It's off. You know the location already, right next to William Rust House where that old commie newspaper is holed up. There's no moving them on, and they'll be surrounded on all sides, but maybe there's some logic in them staying. First things first though, before we get to the interview I need to fill you in on some developments. When we told the demolition contractors about making a replica of a slum to attract people back to the area, there were some features that they refused to remove. You'll have to excuse me if my language gets a bit florid, I've become quite attached to this project.

First there was the big pyramid made out of monkey metal rising out of a patch of aromatic grasses, their blades yellowing, reddening and radiating a scent not unlike one you'd find pumped into bottles of Echoes L'Arome – a range of powerful perfumes that my father used to sell to the prostitutes of Goole, a small bludgeon of a town in the north of England. The metal pyramid, a dull shape if ever there was one, had appeared to be waiting for dusk to absorb its form. It's silhouette—echoing the marketing scheme used to manoeuvre those perfumes from warehouse to vanity box—rose to nearly twice the height of a short human, and had been meticulously constructed from a siege of replica pigeons standing on top of each others plumped up bodies. Under the moon's glow, and a smooth sheet of twilight, this clamour of metal birds could look quite dignified, all neatly marshalled together into a vector tapering upwards to just two birds perched at the top. Positioned above them was a small metal nub providing just enough room for a single, living pigeon to gently land on.

In close proximity there had stood, for quite some time now, a curious item crafted from objectionable shards of filthy pine wood—splinters that must have originally come from a very ugly forest with no sunlight and no pleasure, where the cheap tree trunks must have been thin and starved, leaning upon each other, wallowing around in the dirt. The ground in which they grew must have been cursed by the worms, every day, as they had to use their bristles as anchors and stretch and contract their pumped muscles to get out of this hideous forest and get over the insanely steep hill, crossing the limits of remoteness, to end up in a very similar place. Looking back they'd see the traumatised, stunted trees and a single pansy withering next to a space where all the other pansies had died for no reason

and had left nothing to replace themselves except for an unnecessary fallow. It was from these shunned pieces of wood that a commodity had been ingeniously fathomed to form the mimesis of a bright-eyed, decent little boy who might have come across the other item, the giant vector awaiting the single, living pigeon. Now, when I come to remember it, the boy was slightly plump, not spindly, and with a moustache that hid a slippery mouth. If it had been a living boy his corpulent voice would have come as a surprise. A magnificent voice that, in the shadow of the giant metal vector, would have boomed words that juxtapose ideas of the most complex nature with bare, naked fact.

Are you with me so far? Every Saturday morning, no matter how sweltering and filthy the day, there had been the demarcated trail that steered the visiting infants away from the boy and pyramid and instead directly towards the giant, leather slump of an upside-down snail's shell that lay adjacent to a pop-up store selling miniatures of the same thing. The inside of the shell arched over a myriad of tiny impressions from the soles of boots, sunk into the silky caramel clay. Even in the totally cloudless heat, the magnificent structure sucked in what sunlight there had been and radiated thoughts of a party bar on Margarita Island, not Pattaya, where there might be snooker championships between sweaty expatriates gambling against one another – since having a baby as an expat can be expensive – and, finally, where people dance in cages made to look like the ones you might be placed within should you have that much fun. Instead, on Margarita Island, the upside-down snail shell would have sucked in the crafted light of intricate frosted glasses filled to the brim with 'Spring Rain Cucumber!' or 'Ultimate Lava Flow!'.

The Komatsu high-reach excavator and creamy mini-dozer were to be seen working in partnership to avoid the pyramid, boy and shell and instead focused on demolishing all conspicuous Heritage Fund street furniture. The construction of the blighted zone would not function anything like the replica of the slum erected in Sydney, in 2013, as part of United Nations' World Habitat Day. This one would be best seen on a crisp winter night or better, on a hot sweltering day. It would be constructed in the image of a poem, titled Single File and written by a local writer who went under numerous pseudonyms. Keywords were pulled from the poem and presented to competing architectural firms, including you, to form the brief. I'll repeat it now so that we're all on the same page with regards to what is expected of you:

Single File

Swarms and dust, grease-stained paper serviettes, straps, shuffling townies, old
thieves that grab your mobile phone and carry on the conversation you were
having, fumbling fingers, the blackness of pretend cassocks, sloppy finger food,
dirty bodies, riders of oily blue tandems, dense thickets, idiot jugglers, crab
apples, an ocean's supply of gulls, burns from sun-scorched steering wheels,
expired medicine, frayed wires, genitals, humped up simpletons, wrapped-up
thoughts, ripped doilies, punctures, scratched limbs, quiet ballrooms, fond
strippers hidebound, fragrances, lavender, a light-speckled face, a toy mini-dozer
still in its box, people laughing at the same thing, a shop that sells you a can of
tomatoes when you wanted a tin-opener, a fish that gets caught on your rusty
hook, a book, your book of haiku that you'd lost aged fifteen, songs that are to the
point, a schoolfriend that hypnotises you, takes you to a beach, hands you a glass
of that lovely liquor they sell here, that they used to sell here, plump knees that
won't bend, would never bend.'

8.   April 1999

Kein Unternehmen, das auf sich hält und um Kunden
wirbt, würde so nonchalant mit seinem Logo umgehen,
wie die Bundesrepublik Deutschland es von jeher tut.
Die Bastler sind am Werk.[1]

Michael Stürmer, writing for the German national newspaper, *Welt,* reacted with a disparaging tone at the roll-out of a brand identity for the Bundestag with its re-adoption of the genial appearance of a relief sculpture of an eagle, by sculptor and medallist Ludwig Gies. (The eagle that had been installed, aloft, in the Reichstag's cupola in April 1999, some ten years prior). He wrote: 'No company that is keen on attracting customers would deal with its logo as nonchalantly as the Federal Republic of Germany has always done. The hobbyists are at work.'

A hobbyist doesn't have to conform to a professional set of behaviours. They can envisage waste as production, re-imagine and re-purpose technical knowledge, produce when they are inebriated, morose or ecstatic. It would be difficult to ascribe these attributes to the Stuttgart-based design company, Büro Uebele, who had been commissioned to re-brand the Bundestag. Theirs is a sober practice and they'd merely made a few minor adjustments to Heinz and Sneschana Russewa-Hoyer's design of the German 1 and 2 euro coins in 1999, who'd sought to further accentuate the geniality of Gies' sculpture by pulling in the curve at the tip of its beak. That same year Barclays Bank sought to assuage the aggressive nature of its emblem and commissioned the consultants Interbrand to make its eagle's outline smoother; an exercise that would be repeated again in 2004. Softening the heraldic edges of an eagle is not such an uncommon brief for design companies.

When Marcel Broodthaers proclaimed himself founder and director of the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, in 1968, he also gave himself the institutional roles of curator, administrator and press agent. But such notions of professionalism were for the sake of parody and—with a hobbyist gesture—Broodthaers inaugurated the museum in the living space of his private home.

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1   Stürmer, Michael 'Adler oder fette Henne*?*', *Welt*, (27th May, 2009), Retrieved September 2018 from: www.welt.de/dossiers/60jahredeutschland/article3800834/Adler-oder-fette-Henne.html

Whilst this domestic setting continued to serve as his studio for producing art, it also became a place for critical discussion when open to the public.

The museum was split into Sections. Some remained in Broodthaers home, others were moved and hosted by institutions. Karl Ruhrberg and Jürgen Harten, respectively director and junior curator of Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, invited Broodthaers to install *Section des Figures* of the museum at their Kunsthalle. Exhibited under the subtitle *Der Adler von Oligozän bis heute* (The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present), this Section was prodigious in scope. Broodthaers installed more than 300 artworks from a myriad of geographies, spanning a host of civilisations and with works originating from upwards of fifty museums and collections. Displayed alongside scores of vernacular objects, prints and reproductions, the commonality between all of the displayed work was that each bore an image of an eagle. Five hundred 'figures' of eagles in total, some eminent in appearance, whilst others seemingly of little consequence.
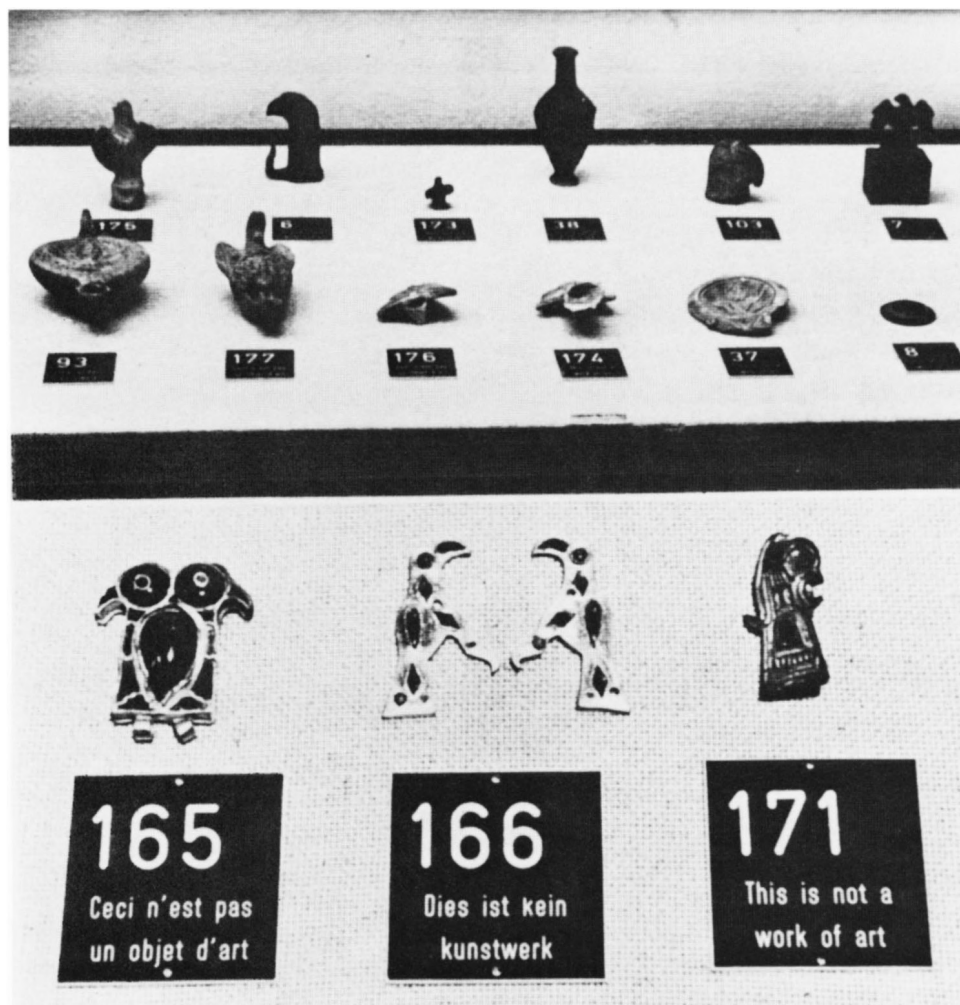

Fig.
8.1

How might visitors have encountered this encyclopaedic representation of this singular and emphatic icon? Ethnologist, Michael Oppitz, in a text for the journal, *October*, considered what the effect of this congregation might be: the eagle multiplied, it's symbolic attributes of divine wisdom, authority, superiority, power, nationalism or imperialism—multiplied en masse:

> By identifying the symbolic presence in every conceivable
> eagle, Broodthaers engages in an incessant defusing of the
> eagle's mythic power. The mythical character of the
> domineering German imperial eagle is tamed, for example,
> by placing the national emblem in conjunction with the pale
> imitations of the DLRG, the ADAC, and the DFB (the German
> Life Saving Association, the German Soccer Leagues
> Association, and the German Automobile Club). In many cases,
> particularly those belonging to the sphere of common
> contemporary usage, the eagle exhibition's oppositional
> pairings reveal for the first time that these birds are
> truly mythical creatures. The series of German product
> logos demonstrates this most clearly. Caught within the net
> of cross-references evoked by the sequence of the arrange-
> ment, the bird loses the mythical aura of its traditional
> plumage.[2]

Oppitz called this effect of serialisation 'mythoclastic' and draws our attention to the levelling out of hierarchy by which each image of an eagle assumed equitable status. They performed as fragments of the whole display, each with the running caption, 'This is not a work of art', and with an array that systematically navigated a number of viewing positions to further deflate any sense of hierarchy between the elements. Glass cabinets were juxtaposed with a sack of sand, glass doors, a curtain—everyday objects that could underplay a sense of aura or fetishisation. In comparing Broodthaers eagles, to Magritte's pipe and Duchamp's urinal, Oppitz wrote:

> Both of them, the pipe and the urinal, are now cherished
> fetishes, endowed with just that aura which Broodthaers
> withheld from his objects, the eagles. His semioclastic
> optics, forcefully imposing itself onto and through the
> exhibition's visitors, penetrates the mythical, or

---

2   Oppitz, Michael, 'Eagle, Pipe, Urinal', October, (MIT, 1987) Issue 42, Autumn

metalinguistic level. Broodthaers annuls it.[3]

Prior to the rebranding of the Bundestag in 2010, there been a lack of consistency over the use of the heraldic eagle in Germany for over half a century. Since the end of World War II the characteristics of its appearance varied widely between, for example: deputies' business cards, the national currency, regional councils and the national airline—Lufthansa. The manner in which Michael Stürmer had characterised the rebranding, in his article for the newspaper, *Welt,* as 'nonchalance' and 'hobbyist' could instead be seen as mythoclastic—mirroring that of Broodthaers *Section des Figures.*

Nevertheless, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and with the Haupstadbeschlussmade—the capital resolution—enacted to transfer the seat of government from Bonn to Berlin, this would have seemed an appropriate moment to establish a more concrete identity for the new Federal Republic. A rebranding to be manifest in both the new Reichstag building in Berlin and the heraldic eagle hanging in its cupola. Foster & Partners were selected to re-work the building and proposed to reveal, rather than hide the history of Otto Bismarck's baroque palace—it's wall pitted with shrapnel from British air raids and, later, its stone surfaces graffitied by the Red Army. A glass cupola formed the centrepiece to reflect daylight down into the debating auditorium through an inverted cone of mirrored panels. Below the cupola, the vivid purple colour scheme of the concentric circles of the parliament's seating was the intervention of Helmut Kohl, who was coming to the end of his sixteen year tenure as Chancellor of Germany. In an area breaking the circle of seating, and directly under the cupola, Ludwig Gies's sculpture of a portly eagle was suspended.

Foster had opposed Gies's sculpture from the outset and fought for his own design. He claimed to have studied more than 180 variations, 'from the year 800 to the Bonn eagle,' and noted how many predecessors, 'looked more like crows, pigeons, turkeys or hens.'[4] In considering its form, through numerous drafts, he proposed a multitude of options. All of these were orientated towards a bird that would be significantly 'slim and supple,' not 'massive and swollen.'[5]

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3   Ibid.

4   Loose, Hans-Werner, 'Die fette Henne muß bleiben', Welt (09.06.1997). Retrieved September 2018 from www.welt.de/print-welt/article638252/Die-fette-Henne-muss-bleiben.html

5   Ibid.

Questions over the ontological subtleties of the heraldic bird became the subject of much parliamentary discussion lasting several years. During these debates it might have felt, to some, like an ideal opportunity to completely abandon the use of the eagle as the country's federal emblem. It was during this period that the conflict in Kosovo was at its bloodiest and images of a double-headed eagle must have been a familiar sight on television. The country's ethnic Albanians were still using it as their heraldic emblem and appearing in black on a red ground, the bird was angular and Gothic in appearance, its claws stretched out demonstratively.

Such doubts over the eagle's suitability as an emblem were not exclusive to Germany. Over a hundred years prior, Benjamin Franklin can be read questioning the choice of the eagle as the heraldic bird for the U.S.A. In a letter to his daughter, dated January 26, 1874, he wrote:

```
For my own part I wish the Bald Eagle had not been
chosen the Representative of our Country. He is a Bird of
bad moral Character. He does not get his Living honestly.
You may have seen him perched on some dead Tree near the
River, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the
Labour of the Fishing Hawk; and when that diligent Bird has
at length taken a Fish, and is bearing it to his Nest for
the Support of his Mate and young Ones, the Bald Eagle
pursues him and takes it from him.[6]
```

With Fosters proposals rejected, in the late spring of 1999, Ludwig Gies' sculpture was hoisted aloft under the Reichstag's new cupola. Colloquially it quickly became known as the 'Fette Henne', a name which, to some, might have not only referred to the eagle's rotund outline but suggested satisfaction or a moneyed complacency. But it is likely that it was prosaically derived from the name of a variation of the Sedum plant, as the eagles pad-like feathers resembled giant versions of the Sedum's thick and fleshy leaves. Notable to the Sedum is that it is a succulent perennial, known to be tolerant and forgiving of challenging locations, arguably appropriate for a state's plenary chamber.

In choosing the 'Fette Henne' the parliamentarians had decreed that the significance of the sculpture and its maker, Ludwig Gies, be recognised and preserved. The sculpture had originally been commissioned for the Bundestag in the old Bundeshaus in Bonn and sited there until 1986, when the building was

6   Franklin, Benjamin, 'Letter from Benjamin Franklin to Sarah Bache, 26th January 1784', National Archives, Library of Congress, U.S.A. Retrieved September 2018 from founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-41-02-0327

closed for a number of years for reconstruction. The twenty-ton sculpture had been dismembered into twenty-five individual parts and stored in a number of cellars in the city before eventually being collected in the Koblenz Federal Archives. A new enlarged version of the sculpture, with a wingspan of over 6 meters, was produced in three parts, to fit through the doors to the plenary of the already reconstructed Reichstag.

A sculpture of such volume was not typical of Ludwig Gies' work. Besides the federal emblem and a crucifix for Lübeck cathedral, Gies had focused on crafting small reliefs, in particular medals and plaques and designing applied works for West German churches such as alter rails, candlesticks, mosaics and stained-glass windows. Characteristic of the form that his work often took— reductive figurations of animals and humans and stylised abstractions—the semblances often bore facial expressions that were quizical and disarming. An example would be Gies' wooden sculpture *Löwenkopf*, ca. 1962 (Fig. 8.2). There is something of this quality in Gies' sculpture for the Reichstag. The eagle appears timid and unsure of itself.

Fig. 8.2

Gies's sculpture had been scaled up from a smaller version. Through the process of enlargement the imperfections of its proportions became exaggerated by scale. Consequently, in the final sculpture, the bird's shoulders are misaligned and its stylised feathers are, to some degree, asymmetrical. Whilst it was constructed of aluminium—a comparitively lightweight metal—the form that it took made it appear heavy and grounded.

The writer Phil Patton, in an article for the New York Times, 8th April, 1999, titled *The Eagle as Icon: Predator or Fat Hen*, considered how, 'such ornithological subtleties [should] signal political shades of meaning'. In direct reference to Ludwig Gies' sculpture in the Reichstag that was opening that month he wrote:

```
In creating the new, reassuringly nonbelligerent Berlin
eagle, the designers faced another quandary. Because of the
placement of the eagle, it is visible from both sides, and
its rear end had to be modeled, too - no easy task. The
eagle must turn tail feather toward the former East bloc
with suitable dignity. Universal as is their heraldry, few
eagles ever show their backs.[7]
```

A glass panel was installed in the auditorium on which Ludwig Gies' eagle would hang. Two copies of the sculpture were produced, shadowing each other back to back, with Foster adopting the reverse side for his own, remodelling the shape of the eagle's mouth to his taste. The eagle was then drawn up on wires hanging from inside the cupola, suspended between the parliamentarians on the inside and the public looking in from the outside.

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7   Patton, Phil, 'Public Eye; The Eagle as icon: Predator of Fat Hen', *New York Times*, (8th April, 1999), Retrieved September 2018 from: https://www.nytimes.com/1999/04/08/garden/public-eye-the-eagle-as-icon-predator-or-fat-hen.html

9.   April 1991

On April 15, 1991, Paul Rand completed an 8.5" x 12" booklet, titled
A SIGNATURE FOR MORNINGSTAR, for senior executives of Morningstar
Investment Advisers. Sixteen printed pages. One fold-out. Spot colours through-
out. The booklet illustrated the linear development of his thoughts when creating
the logo for a financial date company in its infancy and served as the presentation
for his fait accompli design.

Rand had noted spacing problems with the letters of the compound word:
'As a single word, Morningstar seems unwieldy. The letter combinations NIN, GS
and TA tend to form clusters and separate from the whole.'[1] This was resolved by
condensing each letter and together these contracted letters were set in contrast by
a round mnemonic 'O' that mimicked the appearance of a rising sun and recalled
the provenance of the company's name.

Fig. 9.1

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1   Rand, Paul, *A Signature for Morningstar*, Logo Presentation Booklet, (1991), Retrieved September 2018 from www.paulrand.design/work/Morningstar.html

```
The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us.
Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is
more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.²
```

Staring at the sun until going blind was a form of self-mortification that was reputedly popular with Hindu fakirs. There are many radical forms of pain-producing asceticism that have been recorded amongst communities around the world such as self-flagellation, laceration and castration. In the closing lines of *Walden*, is Thoreau advocating self-mortification to train oneself towards a heightened level of awareness in order to see what is before us? To register its significance and act upon it? The partisanship of H.D. Walden's pond-side ascetic abstinence is well documented as are many of his quotes which, beyond their original context, often bear both a moralising and aspirational tone:

```
Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some
pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poorhouse.³
```

Joe Mansueto, the founder, chairman, and chief executive officer of Morningstar—a leading provider of independent investment research—remembered first reading *Walden* in the Regenstein Library as a young student at the University of Chicago:

```
Something that's been around as long as the sun is
still in its infancy. It's still a morning star. There's
a rebirth that's just beginning. Thoreau, to me, is about
independence, self-reliance, thrift. That's what Walden's
all about.⁴
```

Morningstar is one of the most recognisable brands in the business of investment research and consultancy, a firm that selects and prepares independent written and graphical media used to convey data and information. The intimidating complexity of mutual finance funds are reduced into simple at-a-glance evaluations.

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2   Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden*, (Peter Pauper Press, 1966)

3   Ibid.

4   Whitford, David & Mansueto, Joe, 'The Making of an Inc. 500 CEO: My Favorite Job', Inc Magazine, (Oct 15, 1994), Retrieved September 2018 from www.inc.com/magazine/19941015/3297.html

```
Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify.⁵
```

This lucidity masks an operation that by 2015 would be constantly updating information on more than 500,000 investment offerings whilst managing or advising on more than $180 billion in assets. In addition, Morningstar sells its data and analysis to the majority of firms that handle or write about money from small-scale investors to mammoth brokerages like J.P. Morgan Chase. In all likelihood the logo that Paul Rand devised for Morningstar had a significant effect on the fortunes of the company. Having an identity produced by one of the most renowned designers of the time put the company in the same bracket as other household-name companies that Rand had worked for such as IBM, UPS, Enron and ABC.

What if we were to imagine Thoreau's brand of transcendentalsim, put through the data processing machine of Mansueto's Morningstar, producing an endless supply of bumper stickers? In an article titled 'Pond Scum, Henry David Thoreau's moral myopia', for *The New Yorker*, writer Kathryn Schulz, collated references to the sanctimony of Thoreau's misanthropy:

```
"I confess that I have hitherto indulged very little in
philanthropic enterprises," Thoreau wrote in 'Walden'. He
had "tried it fairly" and was "satisfied that it does not
agree with my constitution." Nor did spontaneous generosity:
"I require of a visitor that he be not actually starving,
though he may have the very best appetite in the world,
however he got it. Objects of charity are not guests." In
what is by now a grand American tradition, Thoreau justified
his own parsimony by impugning the needy. "Often the poor
man is not so cold and hungry as he is dirty and ragged and
gross. It is partly his taste, and not merely his misfortune.
If you give him money, he will perhaps buy more rags with
it." Thinking of that state of affairs, Thoreau writes, "I
began to pity myself, and I saw that it would be a greater
charity to bestow on me a flannel shirt than a whole slop-
shop on him.⁶
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5   Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden and Other Writings*, (Penguin Random House, 2000)

6   Schulz, Kathryn, 'Pond Scum, Henry David Thoreau's moral myopia', *The New Yorker*, (Condé Nast, October 19, 2015) Retrieved September 2018 from www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/19/pond-scum

Mansueto's co-option of the final line of *Walden* was all that he wanted from Thoreau. In an interview with John Cook in *Chicago* magazine, Cook confronted Mansueto with the self-evident claim that Thoreau was everything but zealous towards the accumulation of wealth. Manueto replied, 'It's not a perfect analogy, that's why it's not the Thoreau Company.'[7]

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7   Cook, John, 'The Quiet Billionaire: Morningstar CEO Joe Mansueto', *Chicago Magazine*, (20th June 2016), Retrieved September 2018 from www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/June-2006/The-Quiet-Billionaire

10.   June 1988

LECTURE THEATRE, INTERIOR
A slide introducing the title of the lecture is projected on a
large screen at the back of a stage. A LECTURER, having just
introduced THE SPEAKER, leaves the stage

Displaced Ethics:

A Large Soft Body
with Many Heads

THE SPEAKER first waits for quiet in the lecture theatre then
begins speaking

> Thanks for coming out this evening, I will try not
> to take up too much of your time, and hope there'll
> be plenty of time for discussion. The topic I've
> prepared for this occasion is *Theory and the Other
> Scene*, or, perhaps more concisely, *Theory and the
> Obscene*. I know, it sounds provocative, doesn't it,
> exciting stuff, so just to put everybody at their
> ease, a couple of preliminary remarks first.
>
> So, as we know, for Freud, the 'other scene' is
> classically the unconscious, particularly as it
> manifests in dreams; it's a kind of parallel
> reality, or virtuality, if you will, in Deleuze's
> terms, shaping reality but from a place of
> inaccessibility, maybe even unthinkability – that
> unsavouriness, the perversity of experiencing
> yourself as a site of at least two scenes, a

constitutive excess which is unwanted, unsolicited.
No wonder psychoanalysis was a gift that Freud made
to the public without having it in his possession
to give in the first place, and unsurprisingly they
didn't want it. Speaking of Lacan, he's the one
who converts Freud's locution of 'another scene'
(the dream is the classic instance) into the 'other
scene', or the place of action, the stage, the
story, of the Other. Again, modifying and cultivating
this scene, so to speak, but through the spooky
action at a distance which both sounds fantastical
and is literally, at least in psychoanalytic
thought, the fantasy we traverse. In this sense,
psychoanalysis works to uncover this secret, remote
or repressed content, this other scene, and brings
it over here, into this scene, into daylight.

THE SPEAKER pauses to click a button on a wired control stick. The
slide changes to the next one, a blank. The screen turns white.

THE HECKLER
(remaining seated, speaks clearly from the back of the audience)
            Are you American? I can tell you are because
            Americans have got such good teeth but no identity.

THE SPEAKER
(looks away from notes on the lectern to pause and look at the
audience, then continues to speak)
            So psychoanalysis doesn't explain or caption this
            other scene, it merely points out that it is there,
            and it is powerful. So somehow this echoes the role
            we are accustomed to assign to theory in general,
            that it gives us a perspective on something without
            necessarily being able to or even intending to
            explain it, as that would be explaining it away,
            and no one would attribute that level of power to
            theory alone.

            But it's interesting though, isn't it, if this is
            how we think of theory, as a sort of lens onto
            otherness, or even a window into it – we might not
            be aware of the other scene until theory comes
            along to highlight it for us, just like psychoanal-
            ysis did, meanwhile producing it as much as drawing
            attention to it, of course – we presuppose a 'depth
            model' of reality and discourse, in which theory
            tells us something true about the world, or gives us

the tools to understand something about the world,
or about ourselves in the world and our relation-
ships to one another, that would otherwise remain
opaque or simply outside the bounds of our awareness,
if we even knew it was there. Theory may have
originally meant 'sight' in ancient Greek, theoria,
the faculty of sight, and we do ultimately have
those expectations from theory, don't we, that it
shows us something that we hadn't seen or couldn't
see before. Theory reveals a secret, it pulls back
the curtain and there is that 'other scene'. You
might have heard certain theorists formulate this
problematic recently in quite critical terms. They
called it the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', i.e.
theory is an investigative tool in a crime scene –
the other scene is de facto a crime scene, because
if something hadn't gone wrong, why would we want
to get to the bottom of it? Theory is on the crime
scene, and it's looking for clues, and only the
specially trained theorist can reveal the dreadful
secret – call it the unconscious, or surplus value,
or the will to power – modernity is full of these
secrets that have created epistemological panic and
sown disenchantment and broken bonds without putting
anything in their place but a caste of eternally
suspicious, hyper-sensitive theorists. So naturally
some commentators started to wonder if that was
necessarily what we wanted to encourage, this
angry and embittered readership who aren't given any
solutions, just more and more reasons to be suspi-
cious. You've even got some philosophers of science
recently saying critique is dead, modernity never
existed, it was only ever a power struggle between
factions seeking to establish their version of
reality as the authoritative one, all over the heads
of ordinary people.

So I don't know about you, but what it sounds like
is happening here is an interesting kind of perform-
ative contradiction, the one Kant diagnosed all that
time ago in Hume (or, the terrible implications of
Hume's position for morality, common sense and the
social order), and that's the scepticism of
scepticism. What I would like to suggest here is
that scepticism of scepticism is an attitude which
tries to reconcile or restore, under the aegis of a
critique of, let's face it, elitism, in order to

> create space for a more favoured narrative, one
> perhaps of explaining and describing rather than
> interrogating, or uncovering. They really don't want
> to be referring to another or an 'other' scene, what
> they're after is a proliferation of scenes which
> don't pivot on the way things seem and the way they
> actually are, or even the more sophisticated
> version of this in the concept of ideology, that
> is, the way things seem is the way they actually
> are, as soon as you understand that how they actual-
> ly are necessarily takes the form of how they seem
> – at least that's maybe a slightly overcomplicated
> way of describing the fetishism of the commodity in
> Marx…

THE HECKLER
> TK Marx

THE SPEAKER pauses. There is the sound of shuffling of chairs and
sporadic coughts in the auditorium and then the room returns to
silence.

THE HECKLER
(speaking softly)
> TKs, that fancy department store they have in the
> States. TK.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
> …Marx, for example. But a distaste for critique,
> or, as the critique of critique has it, 'suspicion',
> is not the only way that this postmodern era has
> approached our contemporary problematics.
> Problematics like media overload, hyper-consumerism,
> narcissism of identities (and differences, which
> might amount to the same thing), the overwhelming
> emphasis on the private, the individual, etcetera.
> And over and above it all of course, money. The
> ontological, one might say, primacy of money.
> Nothing can be more individualizing than a society
> reinvented in the orientation toward moneymaking
> above all. Now money is something, that if you
> follow Marx, is both incredibly complex and
> totally obvious.

THE HECKLER
(interrupting)
>They should open one of those TK's in the Frenchgate
>Shopping Centre in Doncaster.

>THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
>So how, we might ask, has the above briefly sketched
>landscape of Thatcherism, or Reaganism, or
>hyper-capitalism or whatever you want to call it,
>been reflected in the field of theory?

THE HECKLER
(interrupting)
>And they should unlock the doors.

>THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue, without pausing)
>This is the era of accessible luxury, after all,
>and if upmarket jewellery brands are making their
>own cheap knockoffs and cornering the teenage demo-
>graphic, theory also needs to understand it is in a
>market with lots of other knowledge commodities and
>it needs to differentiate its price points and its
>pitches accordingly. Now, I don't want to imply
>that it's a process of dumbing-down or anything I'm
>describing here; it's more about making your
>formulations a bit glossier, a bit more dumbfounding,
>shiny enough to spot in a bookshop or in a seminar
>room from 100 meters away. I think we are already
>beginning to realise that on the one hand the
>current moment is one that's had a certain impact
>on theory, namely, it's made theory allergic to
>social critique, which is pretty understandable in
>an era in which ethics has become both totally
>subjective and very much overdetermined 'from the
>outside' (that is through the objective pressures
>of ideology) by financial and consumer imperatives.

THE SPEAKER clicks onto the next slide whilst continuing to speak.
The images is a still from a television advertisement for The
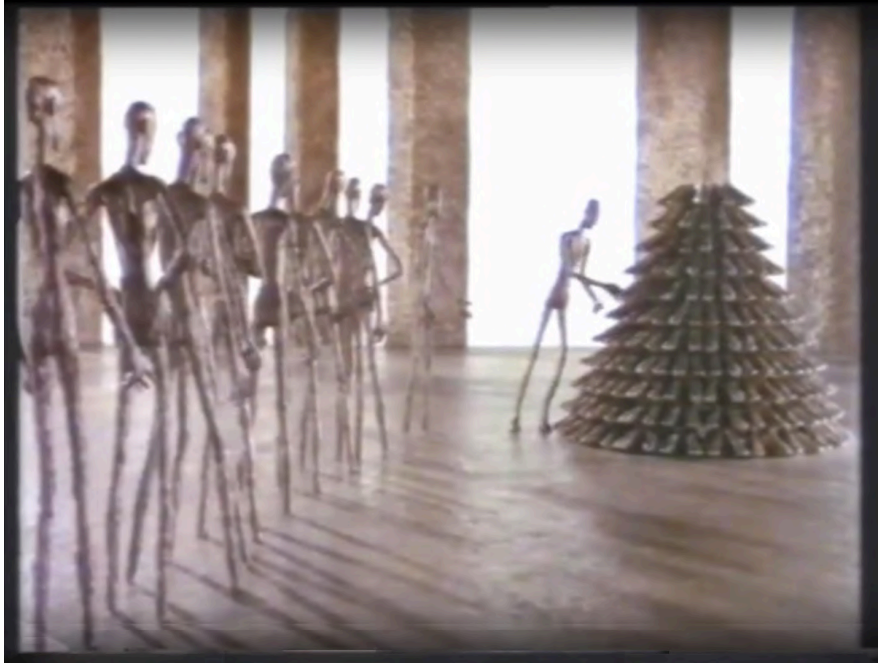Royal Bank of Scotland.

Fig 10.1

        But more than that, I'm interested…

THE HECKLER
(interrupting, raising his voice)
        There's no one outside The Frenchgate apart from the
        Yuppies. The Yuppies are moving with ease in their
        world of performance. Assured. Amnestied. They're
        doing graffiti. They're spray painting graffiti on the
        outside walls. 'ALL SOCIETIES END UP WEARING MASKS'
        They're all wearing masks and and one of them is
        writing a tag: BOOZER.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing, recommences speaking before the end of the heckle…)
        But more than that, I'm interested in how some
        increasingly influential theorists that are having a
        moment now, although many of them have been around
        for a couple of decades already, are responding to
        this shift both in the production of subjects and
        the production of critical paradigms not by trying
        to get rid of the 'other scene' by drawing our

        attention rather to the obscene.

THE SPEAKER
(momentarily looks up at THE HECKLER
        Sure, I agree with you, that's a very good point. In
        fact you're highlighting something very important:

(then looks back at the audience)
        theory may help us see something in a new ways, but
        it's to praxis we need to look if we are concerned
        to do something with that theory. Your language is
        both startling and bizarre. That means it's
        political. It's not just pointing to things that
        are already out there, it's performative speech
        that makes something happen, even if that something
        is just to make the people in this room realize and
        name names, like the name tag you just talked about.
        The Yuppies are at ease in the world that's been
        created for them and that they can destroy. We just
        have to stand outside and watch. Can everyone see
        that? Remote sensing a riot of your own?

        I'm thinking here of Baudrillard in particular,
        because he's recently been trying to get his head
        around the 'obscene' as this paradoxical situation
        where obscenity is not the 'obverse' of the scene
        which must remain off camera but simply what's at
        the centre of the frame. Nothing can shock because
        everything is visible, of the obscene not as some-
        thing which is grotesque when it is exposed because
        it should have remained hidden (if we are to admit
        it exists at all) but rather as a kind of
        universal condition that applies to everything once
        there are no secrets, once everything is out in the
        open. It's quite a challenging undertaking, it seems
        to me, because naturally, like many of the theorists
        I mentioned not by name exactly earlier on, he too
        is interested in getting rid of the critical model
        of surface and depth, appearance and reality…

THE SPEAKER clicks onto the next slide, an image of Jack
Goldstein's painting, *Untitled (lightning)*, whilst continuing to
speak.

Fig 10.2

…and his argument really is that such an understand-
ing no longer accords with our economic situation
and it no longer accords with our semiotic situation,
because, as you know, Baudrillard is the theorist
of the 'simulacrum', and since it's all about the
production of signs and not objects now, the
economy of the sign is not one of figuring out what
anything means but how it is coded in relation to
all other signs: a good post-structuralist
question of course. But Baudrillard of course is
quite tricky, since terms like 'simulacrum' and
'obscene', for Baudrillard, evoke a sort of flatness
where everything is visible and nothing means
anything, a sort of excess of signification that has
undercut all levels and all variation, but those
words themselves, 'simulacrum' and 'obscene' are
highly dualistic words, because a 'simulacrum' only
makes sense in an economy of real and fake,

> original and copy, whereas the 'obscene' needs a
> scene to which it has an 'ob' (off, away) type of
> relationship. So when Baudrillard writes, 'it is no
> longer the traditional obscenity of what is hidden,
> repressed, forbidden or obscure; on the contrary,
> it is the obscenity of the visible, of the
> all-too-visible, of the more-visible-than-the-visible…'

THE HECKLER
(standing up at the back of the lecture theatre)
> You're devouring your own content and because your
> body is transparent we can still see it.

THE HECKLER
(pointing directly at the speaker)
> It's there!

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)
> …he is disavowing a relational dynamic which his
> whole argument implicitly draws upon (while
> explicitly disavowing). Psychoanalytically it's
> quite interesting. It gets even more interesting
> when he further develops this obscenity of full
> presence, full transparency, full communication as
> a kind of sensation of being overwhelmed comparable
> to a mental disorder like schizophrenia: the
> average person nowadays finds themselves in a
> quasi-schizophrenic state (which is something quite
> different from the libidinal unleashing explored
> by for instance Deleuze and Guattari): the body is
> invaded by the proximity of everything, there is no
> more protection, no more privacy…

THE HECKLER
(now seated, speaking quietly)
> It's there.

THE SPEAKER
(continues without pause)
> … the body itself dissipates in the exteriority of
> all-enveloping communication, mediatisation, it
> becomes unreal, while the 'real becomes a large use-
> less body'. So we can think of the ob-scene, fol-
> lowing on from that, perhaps as a psychological or
> ethical residue displaced into a moment of
> reconfiguration where those protocols no longer apply.

But perhaps we can finish precisely by considering
the question of ethics, albeit from another angle,
perhaps this angle…

THE SPEAKER clicks onto the next slide and looks behind at the
projected image of *Portrait of Gerard Pieter van Elk (1941-)* a
work by Ger Van Elk

Fig 10.3

or, rather, from a number of angles, to return to
the title of this evening's talk. Now this figure of
a 'large soft body with many heads' belongs as well
to the discourse of Jean Baudrillard, it isn't one
I came up with myself, sadly. What he seems to be
referring to is a kind of biopolitical fantasy where
the 'body public' is no longer a community of
reasonable individuals engaging in the political
sphere, but rather a collection of disembodied
affects connected to various devices, almost like a
comatose patient on an operating table – or a
passenger playing video games in a self-driving car,
to get only mildly futuristic. But what's curious
here is that there is only one body, whereas the
heads are multiple. The body is at risk of
redundancy, maybe it's getting large and soft from
sitting on the couch, maybe it's unemployed and
watching EastEnders.

THE HECKLER
(speaking quietly)

> Short the body. It has no owner. Short it.

THE SPEAKER
(continuing from previous dialogue)

> We don't know. But everything is centred in the
> brain, in neurology, and that's why Baudrillard
> wants to offer us the many heads, because in his
> reckoning, contemporary technocratic governance is
> only interested in our electrical impulses, in our
> powers of consumption, not in our labour or our
> action. Now of course we don't really get this kind
> of discussion in Baudrillard, or in many postmodern
> French theorists of his ilk, but there's definitely
> material here to constitute a notion of ethics on
> other grounds. If we are all constantly exposed to
> one another, constantly engaged in communication,
> than there is evidently an ethical displacement that
> is also one of excess, of obscenity if you like,
> because it is no longer confined to ourselves and
> those close to us, but it accommodates everyone with
> whom we are in communication. Our ethical capacities
> likewise expand to the scale of the universe, and
> to everyone we've ever met there. There's a kind of
> unacknowledged cosmic love in Baudrillard, and
> maybe it's time to acknowledge it, certainly in an
> era when financial products circulate in the market
> which they remake into an ecology, carrying natural
> names like Black Rock and Morning Star – this is
> the milieu of absolute proximity between ontologies
> and regimes of signs that I think Baudrillard might
> also have in mind. So maybe ethics don't get so much
> displaced as distended, expanded to breaking point,
> and diffused beyond that, a sort of exploded
> ethical powder that takes the consequences of
> stretching obscenity beyond its prurient definition
> seriously, unlike Baudrillard (for whom 'obscenity'
> does end up being just a slightly more emphatic
> articulation of Debord's theory of the spectacle)
> in a positive, and positively caring direction. I
> think I'll leave it there, as conversation has
> already been quite lively, and am looking forward
> to it unfurling freely.

11. May 1988

Dire prophesies often accompanied the sale of the newspaper, *Morning Star*, called out by volunteers flanking the pathways to the campuses of British Universities and Polytechnics in the 1980s, their arms outstretched before students on their way to class. During that same period, *Morning Star*'s rival—*Marxism Today*—could be bought indoors and without the hard-sell. In 1980, a year after an emphatic rebranding and a distinct editorial shift, *Marxism Today* began to be stocked by WHSmith, a prevalent high street newsagent. In October, the following year, the magazine became available in newsagents across the country, and sales increased substantially, expanding the magazine's readership and influence.[1]

Rooted behind both *Morning Star* and *Marxism Today* was the British Communist Party and the stark distinction between the form and content of these competing titles mirrored the polar extremes of the interstitial conflicts within the party at the time. Conflicts which had a significant effect on the British Left and consequently on the UK's political landscape as a whole. Even if the British Communist Party had, by the mid-1980s, become peripheral as an electoral party, its leading members were senior figures in trade unions and it still wielded significant influence upon the British Left.

This influence was disunited. An increasing faction of the British Communist party was turning away from Soviet influence, and instead were looking towards Italy and becoming increasingly inspired by Antonio Gramsci's theories around 'hegemony'—the manner in which capitalism propounds its dominance through culture and by promoting ideas around supposed 'common sense'.[2] Gramscian politics became increasingly tethered to

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1   In the chapter 'New Times: Stuart Hall and the Culturalist Turn', in Wilkes, Christopher, *A Biography of the State*, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), Wilkes notes that *Marxism Today* was, 'selling 20,000 copies a month in 1988, being reviewed in the broadsheets, having its authors celebrated and feted at conferences and on television.'

2   Gramsci's use of the term 'hegemony' refers to the construction of consent—operating in the sphere of civil society—that determines the dominance of a particular social group. The nature of this 'consent' is in turn disputed. Whilst a conventional understanding of Gramsci would interpret it as being constructed through ideology and persuasion (rather than repression), it has also been argued that a particular social group's dominance was being settled through open class struggle.

Eurocommunism[3] and called for open and outward-looking methods in which to counter this perceived 'hegemony' that was seen as embedding capitalism in everyday life. For Stuart Hall, author of 'The Great Moving Right Show', the politics of Thatcher and her colleagues brightly illustrated Gramsci's ideas. According to Hall, the Conservatives were profiting from a, 'rich repertoire of anti-collectivism,' blended with, 'popular elements in the traditional philosophies and practical ideologies of the dominated classes.'[4]

One weekend, in the month of May 1988, twenty authors and left-wing academics convened in Wortley Hall, a plush stately home near Barnsley, owned by multiple trade unions and which, many years later, would brand itself 'The Workers' Stately Home'. The intention of the gathering was to discuss UK politics in relationship to globalisation, a discussion which would set the groundwork for New Times—a short-lived intellectual movement. The term 'post-fordism' had recently begun to circulate, capturing a moment of transition for western societies. As the influence of Eurocommunism and the ideas that coalesced around New Times expanded, the means by which they were being discussed and published was through *Marxism Today*, at the time steered by Martin Jacques:

```
Mass production, the mass consumer, the big city,
big-brother state, the sprawling housing estate, and
the nation-state are in decline: flexibility, diversity,
differentiation, mobility, communication, decentralisation
and internationalisation are in the ascendant. In the
process our own identities, our sense of self, our own
```

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3   'Eurocommunism' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary of English (3rd revised edition, 2010) as 'a political system advocated by some communist parties in western European countries, which stresses independence from the former Soviet Communist Party and advocates the preservation of many elements of Western liberal democracy.' Yet the relationship between Gramci's ideas and Eurocommunism is a contested one: in May 1918, Gramsci likened parliamentarians to, 'a swarm of coachman flies on hunt for a bowl of blancmange in which they get stuck and perish ingloriously.' Despite the questionable conflation between Gramscian politics and Eurocommunism, Gramsci's ideas were arguably prescient to this particular historical period in the U.K.

```
'The political decadence which class collaboration brings is due to the
spasmodic expansion of a bourgeois party which is not satisfied with merely
clinging to the state, but also makes use of the party which is
antagonistic to the state.'
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(Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Political Writings 1910-1920 by Antonio Gramsci*, (Lawrence & Wishart, London 1977).

4   See Stuart Hall's chapter, 'The Great Moving Right Show', in *The Politics of Thatcherism*, by Hall, Stuart and Jacques, Martin eds. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983)

```
subjectivities are being transformed. We are in
transition to a new era.⁵
```

The magazine's editorial position—responding to this 'new era'—was mirrored in the rebranding of the magazine, effecting an antipathetic position to *Morning Star* since the newspaper still maintained a pro-Soviet bias and was opposed to Eurocommunism. For *Marxism Today*'s new masthead the word *Today* was hand-drawn—pronouncing an informality that was likely in response to demands for a conspicuous break with the magazine's previous appearance. For many years, *Marxism Today* had borne the restrained formal characteristics of an academic journal. For the new design a script typeface with a fluid stroke was selected—that was more suggestive of a casual note left on a fridge-door, than handwriting taught at school—and *Today* was, for a short period, duplicated 20,000 times on the cover of each print-run.

This choice of typeface was perhaps too overt a break from the past, or it's style made the magazine appear disingenous. In October 1988, after being used for just a small number of issues, *Today* was replaced by **Today**, set in the Ultrabold font of the typeface Gill Sans. Classified as a 'humanist' typeface, Gill Sans is categorised within a genre of sans-serif that are modelled on traditional serif fonts. The meaning of 'humanism' has varied according to which successive intellectual movements have adopted the term but can, in general, be regarded as a perspective that centres itself on human agency and looks to science over supernatural sources in order to understand the world. This might have seemed apt for a magazine that would aim to use Marxist analysis to help situate the individual within a wider social-political time and setting,⁶ but how did it apply to this particular variant of Eric Gill's typeface, the Ultrabold font?

If we consider the writing styles of the humanist movement of the Renaissance we can see the upright shapes of the Blackletter script prevalent throughout Western Europe from approximately 1150 until the seventeenth century.

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5   Jacques, Martin, 'New Times', *Marxism Today*, (October 1988 Issue 25), p.3

6   Paraphrased from Saville, John, *Marxism Today: An Anatomy* (Socialist Register, 1990), Vol 26, Retrieved September 2018 from socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5573:

```
It has always been the aim and purpose of Marxist analysis to help
situate the individual within historical time; to relate the past to the
present and to offer a variety of perspectives for the future; to make
sense of individual purpose, a matter of self-enlightenment, within a
wider social-political framework and setting.
```

It is the calligraphic form of these scripts, and their transformation into geometrical letterforms, that Edward Johnson, Gill's teacher, re-introduced into more widespread consideration. An example would be Johnson's London Underground typeface, which Eric Gill either imitated, or was inspired by. With the Ultrabold variant of Gill Sans, also known as Kayo for 'knockout', and as used for **Today**, the optical distortion is so extreme that the origins of the typeface retreats. The font fattens the typeface to the point where it might, in Eric Gill's words, 'try and shout down its neighbours,'[7] and, accordingly, Gill labelled diagrams of the typeface with the terms 'sans overbold', 'hardly recognisable' and 'fatuous'. Where the lighter fonts of Gill Sans have been, and continue to be, the preferred typeface of British establishments such as the Church, the BBC, and Penguin Books, the plump quality of Ultrabold found its popularity in the marketing of adventure comedy films for children. Pixar's *Finding Nemo* (2003) and 20th Century Fox's *Alvin and The Chipmunks* (2007) are two examples of many. For *Marxism Today*, the use of Gill Sans Ultrabold was perhaps an attempt to, 'shout down its neighbours,'[8] and to create a subtler sense of irreverance than the hand-written *Today* that preceded it. For the cover of the March 1987 issue, the designer Keith Ablett exploited the typeface's bloatedness in rendering two large egg-white quotation marks crowning that issue's main feature title, 'Edwina Currie'.[9]

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7   Eric Gill, *An Essay on Typography*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1931)

8   Ibid.

9   Former Conservative Party Member of Parliament from 1983 until 1997, Edwina Currie served as a Junior Health Minister for two years before resigning in 1988 during a controversy regarding eggs and salmonella.
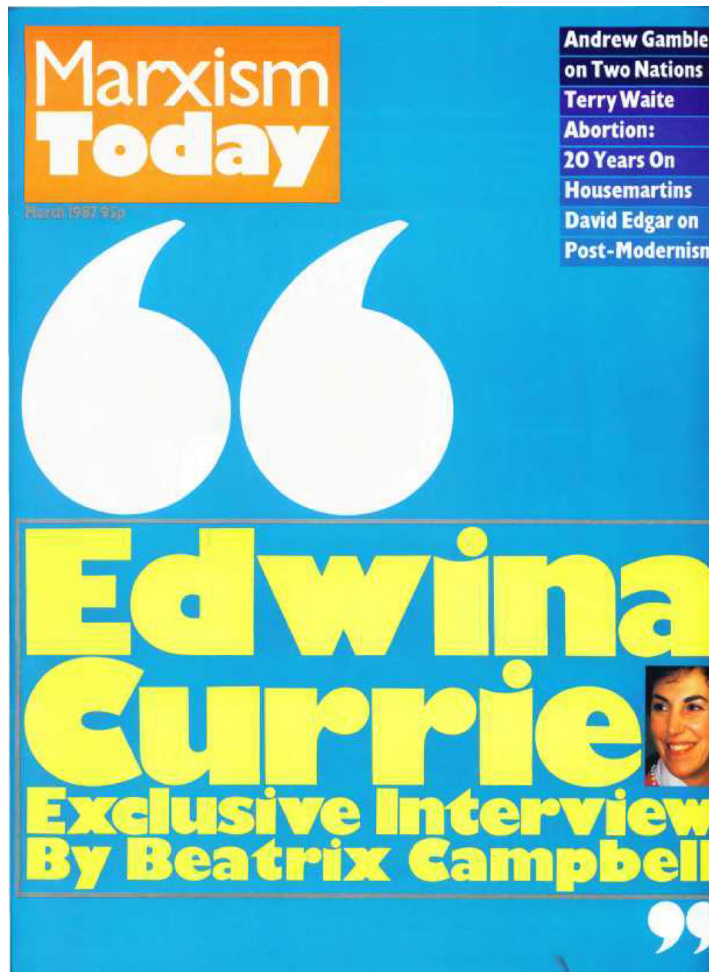
Fig 11.1

Although the cover designs of *Marxism Today* were credited to a number of designers,[10] it was Pearce Marchbank who claimed responsibility for the overall concept.[11] Marchbank, like Eric Gill over half a century earlier, had studied at Central School of Art & Design.[12] His work appears to have developed out of an

10　For example: three cover designers are credited in 1988, as follows: January & February, Keith Ablitt; March-November, Jan Brown; December, Ellis Esterson Lackersteen

11　Marchbank, Pearce, '*Marxism Today*', *Pearce Marchbank*, Retrieved September 2018 from www.pearcemarchbank.com/Magazines/marxismtoday.html

12　During this period Marchbank became acquainted with the renowned designer Richard Hollis and invited him to participate in a limited edition print run that he produced called *The Wall Sheet Journal*. As well as teaching at Central School of Art & Design at that time, Hollis was the lead graphic designer for London's Whitechapel Art Gallery, under its directorship of Nicholas Serota. Through the work he was producing he was gaining a reputation as one of Britain's most influential graphic designers (for example his design for John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, (Penguin, 1972), is regarded as being as seminal as the television series that it accompanied).Hollis' insistence was that the experience of reading *Ways of Seeing* should be

interest in photo-typesetting technology that became available in the early 1970s. He experimented with determining the weight of letterforms by producing them photographically and out-of-focus, blurring their outlines. Marchbank's *Time Out* logo was produced using this method with out-of-focus Franklin Gothic characters put through a half-tone filter to produce a gentle glow reminiscent of a neon sign. The masthead logo that Marchbank produced for *Marxism Today* also relied on photo-typesetting but on this occasion it was used to simply tighten the kerning of the letters in 'Marxism'. The kerning drew the letters closer together to form an 'image-word', first using Helvetica accompanied by *Today*, and in the second version, using Gill Sans Regular, accompanied by **Today** in Ultrabold.

In 1948, the newspaper designer, Allan Hutt, re-dressed the the *Daily Worker*—the newspaper that would evolve into *Morning Star*. Using an extra heavy face in upper and lower-case for the title-pieces the *Daily Worker* had, as its keynote, the title-line in Ultra Bodoni italic. Unlike the Gill Sans equivalent that Pierce Marchbank would use for *Marxism Today*, the Ultrabold variant of Bodoni could handle increases in its weight without loss of character. Nevertheless the Bodoni typefaces were not without their critics. D. B. Updike, printer and historian of typography, considered them to be, 'as official as a coronation and as cold as the neighbouring Alps!'[13] Likewise William Morris considered them to be 'shatteringly hideous.'[14] Nevertheless, the typeface would become one of the most prevalent in display typography (with the exception of sans-serif faces) and very popular with newspapers. According to Alexander S. Lawson, writing in '*Anatomy of a Typeface*', 'in most American two-paper cities, one will feature Bodoni heads and the other sans serifs.'[15]

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consequent to the design's intent, 'using text and image together to maximise meaning.' The book's front cover serves as it's opening page in a manner that is immediate and uncluttered. Hollis' client list reflected his political concerns and CND, New Middle East, New Society magazines and Pluto Press counted amongst these. According to Johanna Drucker, writing about Hollis's 'Concise History of Graphic Design' in the context of Philip Megg's pioneering 1983 publication *A History of Graphic Design*, Hollis sees design as a, 'social service,' and emphasises, 'a strong connection between graphic design and the cultural and social conditions that inspire it'. The print-run and distribution of the left-wing magazines that Hollis worked on were a fraction of *Marxism Today*. How might a rebranding of *Marxism Today* by Hollis, instead of Marchbank have effected the magazine; both its form and subsequently its content?

13   Lawson, Alexander S. *Anatomy of a Typeface*, (David R. Godine, 1990), p. 200

14   Ibid.

15   Ibid.

It would be several years after its launch, in 1930, that the *Daily Worker* would become synonymous with successful design. Prior to this the political intent of the newspaper had to take precedence over the competence that the staff would require to marry content with form. As it's first editor, William Rust, noted:

```
The launching of the Daily Worker in 1930 was a political
decision. It arose out of the necessities of the situation
and it could not wait interminably on the gathering of a
staff which possessed both journalistic and political
understanding.¹⁶
```

Given the lack of experienced staff, printing began under substandard conditions and the inconsistency of the quality was a consequence of much of the work having had to be out-sourced to contract printers due to the lack of in-house resources. Production was also to be intermittent. On 21st January 1941 the paper was suppressed under Defence Regulation 2D and was not permitted by the Ministry of Home Security to publish again until September the following year. By then the newspaper was without capital, two-thirds of the staff had been enlisted to the armed forces and the printing plant in Cayton Street, London, had been destroyed through bombing in the war.

Despite these conditions and set-backs, from 1942 the *Daily Worker* excelled through the direction of its sub-editor Allen Hutt who counteracted the lack of experience in the newspaper's staff by producing a twenty page pamphlet leading the subs to the required level of technical ability. Entitled *Notes for Daily Worker Sub-Editors*, its chapters were 'The Story', 'The Head', 'Typography', 'How to Mark Copy', and 'Rejig & Style'. The introduction to the manual expounded on the necessary interrelation between content and form and set forth its agenda as follows:

```
sub-editing – especially on a paper like ours – combines
in itself both political and technical aspects. They can no
more be separated than can theory and practice. It is no use
if our subs concentrate on technical efficiency and forget
that they are communists; without a sound and lively grasp
of politics (which implies personal political activity) all
the technical skill in the world is so much empty, and often
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_____

16   Downey, Megan, 'Printer's Battleground', *Typos, An International Journal of Typography*,
        (London College of Printing, 1983)

```
dangerous, virtuosity. Equally, without the highest degree
of skill the politics will remain sterile (so far as the
paper is concerned).[17]
```

Under Hutt's steerage, the *Daily Worker* underwent a number of responsive type dresses and established itself at the forefront of newspaper design. According to Megan Dobney, author of 'Printer's Battleground', published in the 1971 issue of *Typos, International Journal of Typography*:

```
Allen Hutt was instrumental in the transformation of the
Daily Worker from a newspaper whose very appearance could
act as a barrier between the words and the workers, to one
whose style shouted for readers.[18]
```

The designs won four AAND (Annual Award for Newspaper Design) awards in an eight year period from 1954 to 1962. On the occasion of the 1962 award, the AAND commented, 'the *Daily Worker* is a superb technical job of make-up showing even *The Times* how to use the large sizes of its own titling.' [19]

In conjunction with the rebranding of *Marxism Today*, when it was transformed from a journal into a magazine—shifting in size, adopting a graphic identity and carrying advertising—the magazine's content stretched from political analysis to TV soap operas, pop music and fashion. It was attempting to position itself as part of everyday life and tap into the supposedly shared 'common sense' aggregated by the capitalist 'hegemony' which Gramscian politics had sought to counter. In this respect how was *Marxism Today* seeking to act as a counter? If, as according to Gramsci, ''popular beliefs' and similar ideas are themselves material forces,'[20] how might *Marxism Today* act upon these, with its new found popularity?

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17   Hutt, Allen, 'Notes for Daily Worker Sub-Editors', (The Daily Worker, 1942)

18   Megan Downey, 'Printer's Battleground', *Typos, An International Journal of Typography*, (London College of Printing, 1983)

19   According to Megan Downey in 1954 the AAND judges commented that, 'two newspapers stood out as by far the most distinguished and thoughtfully designed—*The Times* and the *Daily Worker*, and, as it was impossible to make a direct comparison between two newspapers of such different styles, we decided to give the Class 1 award to these two jointly.' In 1970, Allen Hutt was designated Royal Designer for Industry.

20   Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. trans. Hoare, Quintin & Howell Smith, Geoffrey, (International Publishers, New York, 1971)

A simple interpretation of the concept of 'populism' that was synonymous with Thatcherism [21] can be the manner in which identifications are formed, addressed and recognised by people through their individual experiences rather than as a People. Attraction to this doctrine became a constant concern of *Marxism Today*. The editor at the time, Martin Jacques, admitted to having admired Margaret Thatcher, claiming, 'She was a Bolshevik from the right in some senses, because she was a revolutionary.' [22] 'We were intrigued and impressed by her and people did not expect that.' [23]

The economic and social historian John Saville, author and co-editor of the open-ended *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, was one of the most outspoken critics of *Marxism Today*'s editorial bias in the late 1980s. In his essay, *Marxism Today, An Anatomy*, (Socialist Register, 1990), Saville drew attention to the manner in which the magazine was celebrating consumerism and an expanded market. He analysed a year of content and, as an example, drew attention to a contribution by Frank Mort in the May 1988 edition. Mort, a member of *Marxism Today*'s editorial team, co-authored an article with Nicholas Green pertaining to investigate the consumer boom and offering an acknowledgement of the politics of prosperity:

```
Everywhere I go, up and down the country, I can't help
noticing how prosperous people are looking. No, it's not
Harold Macmillan's 'you've never had it so good' Britain,
but we might be forgiven for thinking it is. Prosperity is
in the air and the Tories are making the most of it. And
it is not just about spending power. It goes hand in hand
with a cultural vision of Lifestyles and social identities.
Suddenly, as Janet Street-Porter put it, everyone wants a
degree in creative shopping. How the Left responds to this -
whether it engages with the politics of prosperity or retreats
into fundamentalism - is at the heart of the debate over
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21   In characterising Thatcherism as 'Authoritarian Populism', Stuart Hall adopted the term from the Greek-French Marxist political sociologist Nicos Poulantzas who argued that in the late 1970s there was a shift from consensual forms of rule to more coercive means which he called 'Authoritarian Statism'. Hall's adaptation to 'Authoritarian Populism' was to distinguish the ability of Thatcherism to rally popular elements of discontent with the state as a platform to remodel society in authoritarian ways. See Stuart Hall's understanding of the shift to the right in British politics during that period in his article, The *Great Moving Right Show*, published in *Marxism Today*, (January 1979)

22   Jacques, Martin, 'Well red? *Marxism Today* is back', BBC News, (Tuesday, October 20, 1998), Retrieved September 2018 from news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/197419.stm

23   Ibid.

```
socialist renewal.
     Let the pundits and commentators argue it out
whether there really has been that economic miracle.
Looked at from the inside - from key sectors of the consumer
economy - business has never been better… Part and parcel of
the retail spiral is the boom in credit. The current
flexibility and innovations of finance capital have set some
of the conditions. Britons have taken to charge cards and
plastic money like no other EC country…24
```

Saville regarded Mort and Green's article as symptomatic of the editorial bias of *Marxism Today* during this period. His essay *Marxism Today, An Anatomy* mocked the magazine's recent launch of its own branded credit card and emphatically rejected its political stance:

```
Marxism Today has misread the history of the 1980s in quite
remarkable ways. They have mistaken a consumer boom, financed
by politically motivated cuts in direct taxation together
with the very high growth of the money supply in the public
sector, and the rapid expansion of credit facilities in the
private sector, for a turn-around in the continued decline
of the British economy. The very large increases in oil
revenues were used to pay for the redundancies and wide-
spread unemployment which followed the twenty per cent
reduction in the manufacturing sector between 1979 and 1981.
The consumer boom had no basis at all in the real state of
the British economy. The slide into a balance of trade
deficit on manufactured goods was already beginning in 1983,
and industrial investment and output remained below the
levels of previous decades until the closing years of the
decade. But it has been upon the consumer boom that the
editorial collective have erected their own interpretation
of social change, central to which is the belief in the
successful development of what they commonly describe as
the Thatcher project. They have, that is, examined only the
surface phenomena of this past decade and assumed that this
was the projection for the future. 1989 has confirmed their
errors, and in particular has blown apart their singular
acceptance of Tory propaganda about the unassailability of
Thatcherism as a way of life.
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24   Mort, Frank and Green, Nicholas, 'You've Never Had It So Good—Again', *Marxism Today*, (Communist Party of Great Britain, May 1988), p30–33. Mort Later published an adapted version of this article as 'The Politics of Consumption', *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s*, Hall, Stuart, & Jacques, Martin, (Verso, London, 1989).

In an article titled *The Last Word* for the December issue of 1991, Martin Jacques wrote that the magazine's title *Marxism Today*, 'was now an albatross and the relationship with the Communist Party a busted flush—both of which we had realised for some time, but now they came to haunt us.' At the end of 1991, *Marxism Today* ceased to be published.[25]

In April 1966, coinciding with Allen Hutt's retirement, the *Daily Worker* changed its name to *Morning Star*. The management committee explained it as, 'a serious political proposal made for serious political reasons,'~[26] whilst the *Daily Mail* flippantly suggested a few alternative names such as *The White Collar Worker* and the *Basic Executive*. In Allan Hutt's last significant text dressing for the *Daily Worker* in 1955, he had selected the typeface Jubilee which would still be used by *Morning Star* some thirty years later. By the mid–1980s, however, the matrices—the copper moulds used to cast the letters—were very much in need of renewal and the typesetting was full of hairlines picked up by the web-offset press.[27] Styling, in the appearance of the newspaper, had also become indistinct and a series of re-designs had led its appearance increasingly closer to that of its antipathetical neighbours, only thinner. Berliner format, black ink, red mast-head as per the *The Sun*, *News of the World*, and *The Star*.

———————————————

25   With the exception of a single special issue produced in 1998 following the election of the Labour Party.

26   The Management Committee of *Daily Worker*/*Morning Star*, quoted in Megan Downey's essay 'Printer's Battleground', *Typos, An International Journal of Typography*, (London College of Printing, 1983).

27   Ibid.

Conclusion

> Do you see that man who has just skipped out of the way of
> the tram? Consider, if he had been run over, how significant
> every act of his would at once become. I don't mean for the
> police inspector. I mean for anybody who knew him. And his
> thoughts, for anybody that could know them. It is my idea of
> the significance of trivial things that I want to give the two
> or three unfortunate wretches who may eventually read me.[1]

In this excerpt from a letter of James Joyce to his brother, the writer considers
what technical means he could use to allow the man to skip 'out of the way of the
tram' but for the reader to also sense the impact of the consequences had he been
'run over'. Writing, in this instance, can be considered a form of reverse social
engineering through which hypothetical eventualities—contrived by a matrix of
relations that precede the incident—can be wound back and primed. The elements
that give rise to this sequence can be modelled limitlessly since it is a work of
fiction. In a similar manner, to (re)model an artwork with an understanding of how
it can be determined by social relationships is to mould its past and future into
material form. This process is also related to fiction since the negotiations within
these relationships are not only characterised by shifting contexts but also by
invention: they are shaped.

The artwork *Morning Star Rebranded* is the model for this doctoral
research: an ongoing project I have pursued since I was a first-year student at
university. Pitched in different ways, since 1987, I have repeatedly offered to
rebrand the newspaper *Morning Star* asking successive editors to reconsider how
we might turn and mutate its aesthetics in order to come up with an image of
left-wing culture adequate to present political and cultural circumstances. At the
beginning of my period of doctoral research, the project was beginning to pick
up momentum only to quickly stumble on issues of sponsorship and corporate
patronage and subsequent attempts to re-engage the newspaper have repeatedly
failed.

If there was not to be a succinct conclusion to my artwork, *Morning Star
Rebranded*, in a manner that I had originally anticipated—a rebranding of a

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1   Quoted from Stanislaus Joyce's Diary in Elliman, Richard, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (Now York,
1982), p. 163

national newspaper—I began to ask how the artwork could continue in the form of writing: how its past and future could be shaped and its understanding (re)modelled. Through eleven chapters I adopted alternate rhetorical modes and registers to produce writing that intervenes in the social relationships in which an artwork can continue to evolve retrogressively. I have come to recognise how the methodology behind the form that I have brought to these relationships—through writing—has unfolded in tandem with generating knowledge of the conditions and mechanisms in which this occurs.

In the introduction to this thesis, Michael Baxandall's claim that a work of art represents 'the deposit of a social relationship'[2] was considered through a wide lens in which an artwork's understanding is not predisposed to a coeval 'period eye' but through the concept of disjunctive temporalities such as Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's sense of the 'anachronic'.[3] The confluence of beliefs, social status and ideological positions that form social relationships are conditioned by heterogeneous temporality. When linear time is negated, past synergies—formed from social relationships—advance in tandem with current synergies and a history of production is future-orientated. Through writing the chapters of this thesis, a method emerged: by introducing both past and future into material form, the remodelling of an artwork could serve as a repetitive abstraction of itself structured as spiralling narratives which simultaneously both echo and pervert its under-standing.

This method holds *recursion* as key to its process: a form which I began to equate with a figurative understanding of *spasticity*. In its most familiar, medical sense spasticity is a condition where regular muscular performance is disturbed by reflex activity of the tendons, in what is colloquially referred to as an unusual *pull* of muscles: an involuntary *turning back*. Envisioned as a process of temporal unfolding, this turning back produces the operation of distinction that characterises recursion. 'We take the form of distinction for the form'[4] is a description of this process by the mathematician George Spencer Brown. Recursive form in this thesis serves as a shifter in the reticular social fabric in which *Morning Star Rebranded* evolves: characters denoted by their social standing, ideological bias, gender and vocation (etcetera) are vectored amongst particular histories and contexts in an

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2   Baxandall, M., *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford University Press, 1972).

3   Nagel, A. & Wood, C., *Anachronic Renaissance* (Zone Books, 2010).

4   Brown, G. S., *Laws of Form* (Julian Press, 1972).

unfolding of self-reference. I considered how the convulsive physical movement that denotes spasticity could be applied, figuratively, to *displace* and reconfigure an understanding of these social relationships. Hence, the structural interstices between *Morning Star Rebranded*'s thematic parts and its protagonists are skewed in order to relentlessly produce fictions of autonomy and agency in which alternate ethical universes can be imagined. This displacement, through recursive form, creates what could be termed *interstitial space*: a construct in which knowledge might flourish.

Since the writing involves the fictionalisation of factual material this process generates issues that inform its methodology. When the invention of characters is based on real people there is an ethical dimension to consider: it becomes a question of *representation*. For example: Peter Arnell, the founder and former director of the branding firm Arnell Group is both a real person and a character in the thesis; deployed through two distinct rhetorical registers. His company's rebranding of PepsiCo Inc is examined in a case study in chapter six; a study that is grounded in facts since the company's objectives are weighed against concrete results. He is also rendered, in an earlier chapter, as a fictionalised character through the narration of a job interview in which a former desktop layout designer at *Morning Star* is interviewed for a position at his firm. This representation of Arnell, fused through fictionalised elements and facts, took heed from a discussion amongst the working group[5] of *Morning Star Rebranded* when we were considering examples of branding that the newspaper's editors would likely consider toxic and synonymous with marketing and surface. (To consider this is to consider how to counter this: how might a community that is averse to branding in turn be branded?)

The portrayal of Peter Arnell is also in proximity to other real people (on occasions substituted as characters in the writing) and conditioned by their respective positions and connections to *Morning Star* newspaper. The candidate who Peter Arnell interviews for a job at his firm previously worked for *Morning Star* and was inspired by the author Sherwood Anderson, who purchased two opposing newspapers: one Democrat, the other Republican. The ethical quandary of simultaneously occupying (and by extension: owning) diametrically opposed ideological positions is antithetical to what we understand of Peter Arnell and *Morning Star* whose positions are firmly entrenched. Imaginary characters

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5   Short biographies of the members of the working group are included as a footnote to Chapter 1: 'February 2017—Email to *Morning Star* from the curator Nicholas Tammens'

are therefore grounded through real people in existing or temporal contexts and involve other components of the research to tacitly draw an arc between divergent ethical positions. A matrix is established: a negotiation through which the writing (re)models an understanding of how *Morning Star* perceives its form in relationship to the social fabric that sustains it. Acknowledging that language (as discourse) is a system of control, my volition determines the manner in which this matrix is formed: characters are rendered, histories are filtered and commentaries are partial. But agency is also provisional: it oscillates between myself as author (I establish a criteria through which a character can be relational) and the reader (to whom a character exists in their imagination). The process in which knowledge is accreted is dependent on the tacking, provisional nature of the writing's execution and reception.

The proposition of *reciprocity* has been key to an understanding through which the political resonance of an artwork might not only be in response to a particular and shifting historical horizon but, in return, can have a bearing on the politics of that horizon. In my introduction to this thesis, T.J Clark's notion of a work of art that is '*in* but also *on* history'[6] is echoed in David Joselit's writing on the *behaviour* of artworks within networks. It was imperative to ask: to whose vantage point is a network visualised? Behaviour requires agency which denotes subjectivity which in turn reciprocates or acts upon the synergies of a centralised art network. Complicit with this understanding is the consideration of how an artwork is *expected* to behave. What is an artist expected to do within an art world commonality in which circular and self-certifying concepts of relationality and ethicality are shared? My research has been located in an understanding of how such expectations can be scrambled. I have demonstrated how a shared sense of ethics can be made to *drift* by displacing the social relations in which the work takes form and continues to evolve.

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6 Clark, T.J., *Image of the People: Gustav Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, (Thames & Hudson, repr. 1982 orig. 1972) Chapter 1.

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Appendices

Portrait of a Recipient as a Door Handle, After a Drawing
    Produced by an Anonymous Philanthropist
A Needle Walks Into a Haystack
Drippy Etiquette

An image of the front page of *Morning Star* newspaper, 3rd May 2013

PORTRAIT OF A RECIPIENT AS A DOORHANDLE AFTER A DRAWING BY AN ANONYMOUS PHILANTHROPIST

Bronze with dark grey patina, installed at the headquarters of Rabobank, Blaak 333, Rotterdam (2014)

Installation images: pages 153–157

A NEEDLE WALKS INTO A HAYSTACK

Housed in a rosewood vitrine, a platinum and yellow gold ring with diamonds, sapphires and helidor—created by fine jewellers, Boodles—is displayed on a jesmonite tablet. Evans gave the press release for Liverpool Biennial 2014 to the designers at Boodles and asked them to create a piece of jewellery based on their reading and interpretation of the exhibition's core ideas. They made the ring (which is on display), and Evans made a relief sculpture to present it and the vitrine to house it. The imagination of a luxury brand gets mixed up with artistic vision, blurring the roles of everyone involved.

Boodles showroom: page 159

A Needle Walks Into a Haystack, Liverpool Biennial Press Release: page 161

Correspondence between Emily Bull, PR representative of Boodles; Rosie Cooper, Project Curator of Liverpool Biennial; and Chris Evans, regarding Exhibition Guide for Liverpool Biennial 2014: pages 163–168

Documentation, Liverpool Biennial, 2014: pages 169–171

& in solo exhibition Hat, Hat, Hat, Uniform at Praxis, Berlin, 2015: pages 172–174

**Liverpool Biennial 2014
Press Release:**

<u>**A Needle Walks into a Haystack**</u> **is an exhibition about our habits, our habitats, and the objects, images, relationships and activities that constitute our immediate surroundings. It is about effecting larger questions facing contemporary life and art, from an intimate and tangible scale that's within everyday reach.**

The artists in this exhibition disrupt many of the conventions and assumptions that usually prescribe the way we live our lives. They attack the metaphors, symbols and representations that make up their own environment, replacing them with new meanings and protocols: bureaucracy becomes a form of comedy, silence becomes a type of knowledge, domesticity becomes a place of pathology, inefficiency becomes a necessary vocation, and delinquency becomes a daily routine.

From: Rosie Cooper [mailto:Rosie@biennial.com]
Sent: 16 June 2014 12:28
To: Emily Bull
Subject: Something like this?

"The imagination of a luxury brand (Boodles) gets mixed up with an artist's vision, blurring the roles of everyone involved."

I would also need to get this signed off by our Curators. I do think that 'confusing' makes the most sense but if this is something you team are totally agains, that's fine!

We'll get there!

Best
Rosie Cooper
Project Curator

Liverpool Biennial 2014
Postal address:
PO Box 1200
55 Jordan St
Liverpool L69 1XB

/ / /

BOODLES

Hi Rosie,

Thanks for sending this through- I think that perhaps this sentence is still a little misleading in so far as it seems to imply that the artist was involved directly in the ring itself's creation.

Would we be able to work on the sentence that was put together by our brand manager? Something like the below?

A design that is the result of Boodles` universe of imagination placed within an artist's creation, blurring the visions of everyone involved.

Best,
Emily

From: Rosie Cooper [mailto:Rosie@biennial.com]
Sent: 16 June 2014 13:29
To: Emily Bull
Cc: Louise Garforth
Subject: Re: Something like this?

Hi Emily,

Thanks for your suggestion. This is a tricky one!

I think that the sentence actually implies that for the whole work (the ring + the vitrine + the landscape, which is how it will be presented) was a collaborative effort between the artist and your designers; inasmuch as the conceptual starting point for the project comes from Chris, the ring itself and that creative process has come from Boodles, and the vitrine / landscape has come from Chris. Our challenge now is to find a way of describing the work as a total thing rather than emphasising separate components that different people have come up with, which can be done in the caption on site when people actually see the work.

I think that is my concern with the sentence in your email is that it describes two disparate elements, whereas what unites all three elements is the overall concept: which was to create a situation where the creative imaginations of the designers and the artist could come together, highlighting the importance of each.

It's the merging of the creative thought processes, and how everyone's roles in the process overlapped, that is really at the centre of the work – I think that because this sentence

The imagination of a luxury brand (Boodles) gets mixed up with an artist's vision, blurring the roles of everyone involved doesn't mention an actual object (design, artist's creation), it is perhaps more helpful as it describes the collaborative process rather than the object itself?

Would this work, then, bearing in mind that I've tried to remove the potentially negative word 'confusing'?

All best
Rosie Cooper
Project Curator
Liverpool Biennial 2014

Hi Rosie,

Sorry to be difficult- I'm afraid we have very particular guidelines when it comes to copy for the brand. I understand your concern with regards to it being a collaborative work but we still feel the below sentence does not sound quite right for the brand.

Considering this could we keep the below but change the initial description of Boodles- thereby excluding the brackets and changing the word 'mixed' … as the below:

'Boodles' universe of imagination is combined with an artist's vision, blurring the roles of everyone involved?'

Thanks,
Emily
BOODLES

/ / /

From: Rosie Cooper [mailto:Rosie@biennial.com]
Sent: 16 June 2014 14:01
To: Emily Bull
Cc: Louise Garforth; Aiyna Singh
Subject: Re: Something like this?

Hi Emily

That's ok! I understand your position. I'm wondering though about the 'universe of imagination' - could we cut the word 'universe'? And what did you think about 'luxury brand' - can we keep that in? Not everyone who will see the festival guide will know who Boodles are, so it would be good to make that clear.

How about this?

The imagination of luxury brand Boodles is combined with an artist's vision, blurring the roles of everyone involved.

Let me know what you think. I'd also need to run this past the curators.

Rosie Cooper
Project Curator
Liverpool Biennial 2014

Hi Rosie,

I have run this past Aiyna and the rest of the design team and they still feel the below is not true to the creative process.

She has suggested something along the below lines- would this work?

An artist's concept inspires a piece of unique high jewellery from Luxury brand Boodles, blurring the lines between design and art.

Thanks,
Emily
BOODLES

/ / /

From: Rosie Cooper [mailto:Rosie@biennial.com]
Sent: 16 June 2014 14:01
To: Chris Evans
Subject: Re: Something like this?

HI Chris,

I wanted to send this over to you as we have been having some complicated discussions with Boodles re. texts.

Can you give me a call so we can talk this through? This is way more urgent than the title, which I will sort out once this is out of the way – cross that bridge etc.

Thanks

I have been to-ing and fro-ing with Boodles PR department today about the line of text for the Festival Guide.

We need to make sure that Boodles are happy for us to go to print with any text that contains their name. I have talked them through the concept but it isn't easy!

This is what we started off with:
"The imagination of a luxury brand (Boodles) gets mixed up with artistic vision, confusing the roles of everyone involved."

They are not happy with this, partly because the word 'confusing' sounds negative to them. All of our emails can be seen below for your reference – we have been round the houses with this, and so I am turning to you to see if you are able to work with me to find a good solution!

This is the most recent version that they have come up with:

An artist's concept inspires a piece of unique high jewellery from Luxury brand Boodles, blurring the lines between design and art.

They have also suggested this:

A design that is the result of Boodles` universe of imagination placed within an artist's creation, blurring the visions of everyone involved.

[...]

R

Rosie Cooper
Project Curator
Liverpool Biennial 2014

/ / /

From: Chris Evans <chrsvns@me.com>
Subject: Text for the Festival Guide
Date: 16 June 2014 17:09:04 BST
To: rosie cooper <rosie@biennial.com>

Hi Rosie,

Thanks for navigating the relations, private and public.

Agreed that their line in blue below is a not an option. (I liked the original).

An artist's concept inspires a piece of unique high jewellery from Luxury brand Boodles, blurring the lines between design and art.

"The imagination of a luxury brand (Boodles) gets mixed up

with an artist's vision, blurring the roles of everyone involved."

So far I have:

A luxury brand, Boodles, makes a unique piece of jewellery for the biennial, with a particular request of an artist.

Would perhaps make people want to know more by not being explicit. What do you think?

As we were discussing, the alternative could bring the people i've worked together in one or two sentences... I'm not sure about the tone of the rest of the descriptions you have...

It would be nice to think of an alternative to 'worked with', and 'collaborated' the works and people:

a luxury brand, Boodles, making a unique piece of jewellery for the biennial

a real estate developer building new communities in the Egyptian desert, and the editor of Morning Star resisting a re-branding of the UK's only Marxist daily broadsheet.

interspersed with a series of concrete tablets (Goofy Audit) inscribed with two figures: an 'i' and 'paw-i'.

Short version:
An array of works formed through conversations with a luxury jewellery brand, Boodles, an Egyptian real estate developer and the editor of Morning Star.

Long version:
Works formed through conversations with an array of people and companies: a luxury brand, Boodles, making a unique piece of jewellery for the biennial. an Egyptian real estate developer recounting his vision of building new communities in a desert, and the editor of Morning Star resisting a re-branding of the UK's only Marxist daily broadsheet.

Question:
Would they be disturbed by appearing in a sentence with Morning Star??

Let me know your thoughts,
Thanks!
Chris

/ / /

Begin forwarded message:
From: Rosie Cooper <Rosie@biennial.com>
Subject: Re: Text for the Festival Guide
Date: 16 June 2014 17:15:43 BST
To: Chris Evans <chrsvns@me.com>

Thanks so much Chris for giving it such careful thought. I think they will go with your line, and I also think it works for our purposes, but I will also suggest the shortened version that includes the Morning Star, as this version is more in keeping with the rest of the texts.

I liked the original one too, but they are not budging. I think this compromise will make them feel better about our proposed title which is my next conversation. I will do this first.

Rosie Cooper
Project Curator,
Liverpool Biennial 2014
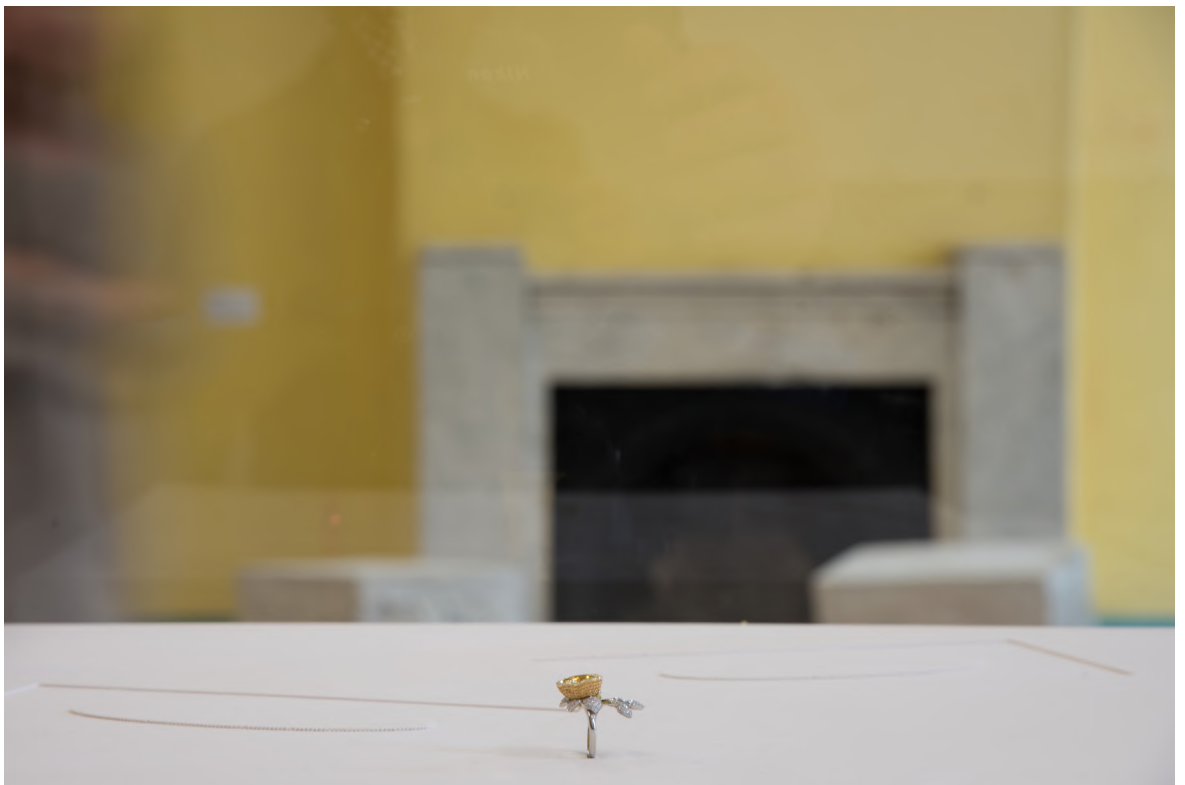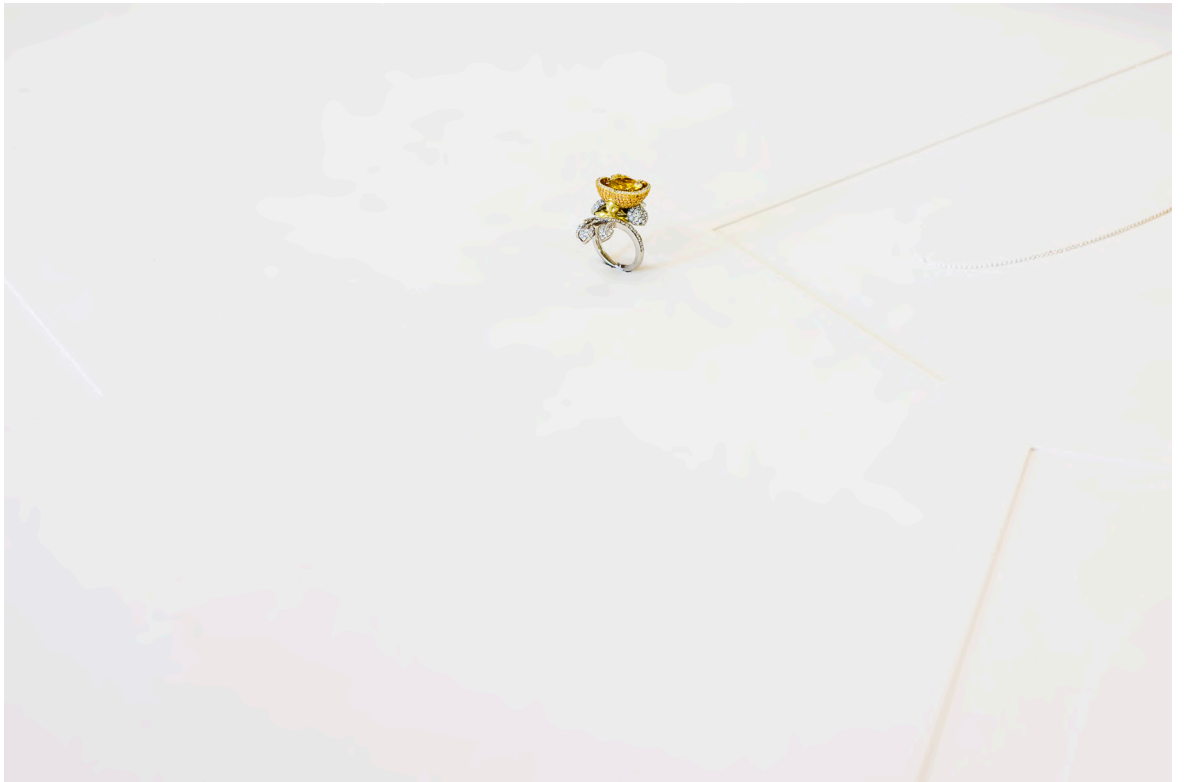
A Needle Walks Into a Haystack was also exhibited as part of: <u>Clerk of Mind</u>, Project Arts Centre, Dublin, 2014 (solo); <u>Drippy Etiquette & A Needle Walks Into a Haystack</u>, Markus Lüttgen, Cologne, 2015 (solo); <u>Neither here nor there, neither fish nor fowl</u> at Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen and Schloss Ringenberg, 2015 (group)

JOB INTERVIEWS

The anthology includes contributions by Nadim Abbas, Howie Chen, Heman Chong, Matthew Dickman, Jason Dodge, Holly Pester, Angie Keefer, Natasha Soobramanien, Marina Vishmidt, and Jonas Žakaitis.

Edited and illustrated by Chris Evans Designed by Will Holder, published by Para Site (Hong Kong) and Uh books, 2018

**PDF at:
www.chrisevans.info/job-interviews/**

**Front cover: page 177
Excerpt: 'Dear Job Interview' by Mathew Dickman: page 178
Illustration, airbrush on paper: page 179**

Job

Dear Job Interview,

*You're like a father to me. What I mean is I want you to like me.
I want you to look at me and think I'm doing a good job at being
a person, being a son. When you haven't seen me for a long time
and we walk toward each other slowly in a field of rosemary and
tall trees, I keep my head bowed because I want you to think I'm
lost, I want you to think I'm not worth your time and attention.
I'm not fooling either of us. I walk toward you with my head bent
because I don't think I'm worth anything at all. I'm not worth
a wedding ring or a piece of silver with the face of a Roman
Emperor on it. I want you to come over and knock on my door
like Tony did. He wasn't even my father, he wasn't even you and
yet, he called me out to the front yard and we stood in the cool
dark grass and threw a baseball back and forth and afterward he
hugged me and told me he was proud of me. Why would he do that?
Maybe he was always looking for a father too. Maybe he felt the
same way I do when I'm thinking of you and how I'll answer all
your questions. I'll say something about work ethics, about how
you shouldn't steal from other employees, I'll say something about
the way I'm not only on time for work but early. Really all I'll
be saying is pick me, pick me, love me, tell me I'm special. Rebecca
wrote a poem about a king who tortured his only son and how she
didn't understand why he would do it, and then she ended the poem
by saying you have to spend money to make money. I think you
have to kill fathers to make fathers. When I think of you late at
night and the moon is filling up the bedroom and my infant son
is lit up by the moon like a blueberry bush on fire, I imagine you
walking into the room in a suit that I will wear one day, or one
thousand days, after you're dead.*

Love,

Matthew

DRIPPY ETIQUETTE

Scorched & oiled larch poles, framed airbrush drawing, pole/s 13 cm diameter. Drawings 106 x 82 cm. 2014–

Blackened larch poles are cut to the width of a space, which is narrowed by a 3 cm frame, wedging each pole at an angle. Inside the frame is an airbrush drawing on Financial Times pink, of two worms, emerging, blinking in the bright light behind them. In a speech bubble, one asks "Is that The Sun or the Morning Star?" A subscription to Morning Star is made on behalf of the institution for the duration of each exhibition. The Open Letter to its editors is made available on request.

Drippy Etiquette has been produced and displayed, bespoke to each institution for the following exhibitions: <u>Institut de Carton</u>, a.Ve.Nu.De.Jet.te I, Brussels (2019); <u>Chris Evans & Pak Cheung</u>, Hong Gah Museum, Taipei (2019); <u>Village Lawyer</u>, (solo) Centre d'art, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 2018; <u>Good luck with your natural, combined, attractive and truthful attempts in two exhibitions</u>, CRAC Alsace, Altkirch, France, 2015; <u>Drippy Etiquette</u>, Markus Lüttgen, Cologne, Germany, 2015; <u>Neither here nor there, neither fish nor fowl</u>, Schloss Ringenberg, Germany, 2015; <u>Untitled (Drippy Etiquette)</u>, Piper Keys, London, 2014; <u>Regenerate Art</u>, Kunstverein München, 2014.
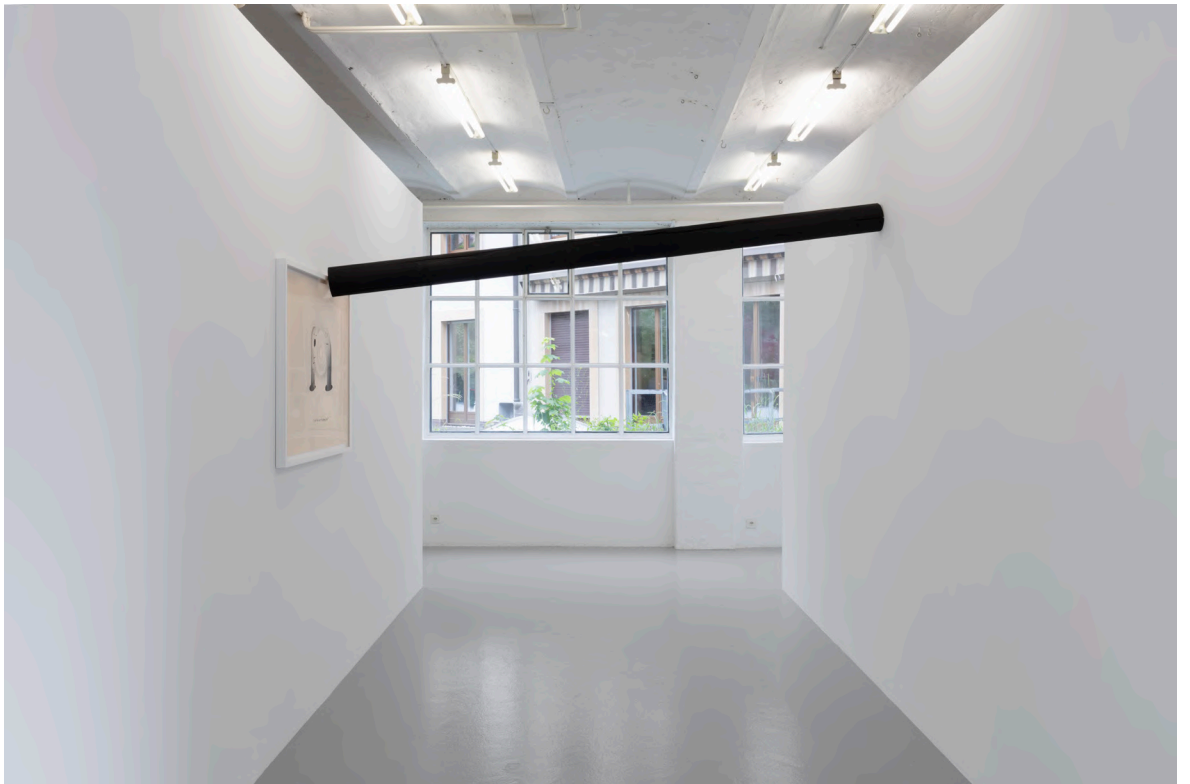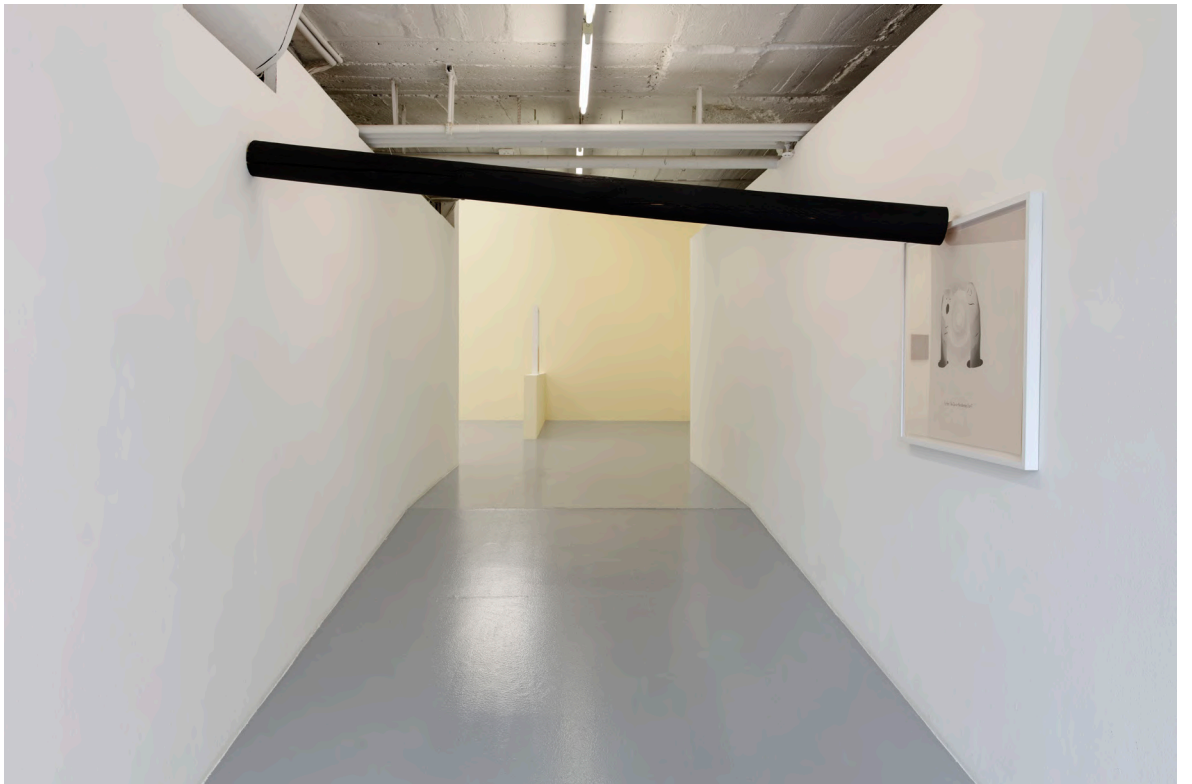
"Is that The Sun or the Morning Star?"

Morning Star
Friday 3rd May, 2013

General Gove in retreat

The Tory's plan to turn troops into teachers has flopped, writes SOLOMON HUGHES: **P8**

I'm So Excited a soaring success **FILM: P11**

TOTAL ABUSE OF POWER

Blacklisted workers take fight for public inquiry to Holyrood

DEFENDING THEIR RIGHTS: The protesters at Holyrood

by Rory MacKinnon
in Holyrood

BLACKLISTED electricians rallied at Holyrood yesterday as MSPs piled the pressure on SNP Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon for a public inquiry.

Sparks with the Unite union in Scotland packed the public gallery, but the debating chamber itself was nearly deserted as Labour MSP Neil Findlay led calls for a crackdown on the illicit — and lucrative — industry.

A raid of the Consulting Association's offices in 2009 confirmed unions' long-held suspicions of a industry-wide blacklist with investigators retrieving a database of 3,200 would-be construction workers.

No fewer than 44 firms were implicated as clients, including Amec, Amey, Balfour Beatty, Bam Nuttall and Carillion, as well as Morrison, a contractor behind the publicly funded Forth Crossing bridge.

The conspiracy took on even greater dimensions last March when the Information Commissioner's Office revealed the list contained information that could only have come from police or MI5 agents.

But just 35 of the parliament's 129 MSPs remained seated yesterday as Mr Findlay described "McCarthyism writ large."

Mr Findlay said the blacklist represented thousands of construction workers denied a living "for the heinous crime of looking out for their fellow workers."

Many were vilified for speaking out on health and safety issues, he said, fuelling the industry's 50-odd workplace deaths a year — a figure rivalling British soldiers' deaths in Afghanistan.

He said that in one case a worker had been singled out for a dispute over unpaid wages — "blacklisted for the crime of wanting to be paid for the work they did."

Mr Findlay called on Ms Sturgeon to ban companies implicated from all public procurement contracts.

Yet reports of blacklisting on London's Crossrail project had surfaced as recently as last September, he said, demonstrating a need for a Scotland-focused public inquiry.

But Ms Sturgeon said she was "not convinced at this time of the merits of another inquiry."

She said blacklisting was "wholly unacceptable," but she had seen "no evidence" to suggest the practice had continued.

She would consider Westminster's recommendations from the Scottish advisory committee when they concluded later this year, she said.

Meanwhile trade unionists themselves vowed to fight on regardless.

Cope Bridge electrician Stewart Hume said he had been singled out for redundancy last year after successful picketing against new unilateral "Besna" employment terms.

It had taken threats of industrial action from his Grangemouth union branch to get him reinstated, he said.

"This is bigger than phone-hacking.

"Were the celebrities not putting food on the table for their families? I don't think so," he said.

Ex-shop steward Willie Black told the Morning Star his own file proved employers went to "ridiculous" lengths to preserve the practice.

"I've been out of the industry 14 years. They're still keeping files on me."

"If these companies don't apologise, then they're also going to be blacklisted.

"We're not going to roll over," he said.

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@RoryMacKinnon

Youth jobless figures hit high
▶▶NEWS: P2

India spy dies in Pakistan jail
▶▶WORLD: P6

Bale named writers' player of the year
▶▶FOOTBALL: P16