



Crossing Conceptual Boundaries I

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Chapter 1

Crossing Conceptual Boundaries

Derek Robbins

Introduction

Crossing Conceptual Boundaries is an annual publication which seeks to present PhD work in progress within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. It succeeds the *Yearbooks of PhD work in progress*, the first two of which (I and II) were produced in July, 2007, and the third of which (III) in July, 2009. (see www.uel.ac.uk/ssmcs/research/yearbook/index.htm). This Introduction has two purposes. The first part – “Publication: a theoretical preamble” – discusses in general the nature and status of the publication within an institution of higher education of the research in progress of PhD students. I suggest here that critical consideration of Habermas’s thesis on the way that historically in Western Europe a ‘public sphere’ emerged which enabled a developing bourgeoisie to challenge central state authority provides us both with a conceptual framework which enables us to think about the changing relationship between universities and states and also, by analogy, helps us to interpret the changing functions *within* universities of knowledge production and transmission. I suggest that these changes are in part reflected in the nature of the transition from Yearbooks I, II, and III, to the Crossing Conceptual Boundaries series. The second part seeks to show in practice how the process adopted in producing this number illustrates the nature of the transition that has been considered theoretically, and it also provides a brief summary of each of the papers included in the number.

Part I

Publication: a theoretical preamble

Habermas’s theory and its omissions.

Jürgen Habermas’s *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* was first published in 1962, and only published in English translation by Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press in the United States and Polity Press in the UK in 1989 as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. In his ‘translator’s note’ to the translation, Thomas Burger comments that ‘Öffentlichkeit’ ‘may be rendered variously as “(the) public,” “public sphere,” or “publicity”’. He also clarifies that Habermas distinguished between several types of ‘Öffentlichkeit’, notably between ‘politische Öffentlichkeit’ (‘political public sphere’), ‘literarische Öffentlichkeit’ (‘literary public sphere’), and ‘repräsentative Öffentlichkeit’

(‘representative publicness’). In his original Preface of 1961, Habermas specifically admitted that his research had been restricted to a limited object:

“Our investigation is limited to the structure and function of the *liberal* model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation. Thus it refers to those features of a historical constellation that attained dominance and leaves aside the *plebeian* public sphere as a variant that in a sense was suppressed in the historical process.” (Habermas, 1989, xviii).

The essential argument of Habermas’s delimited enquiry is well summarised by Thomas McCarthy in his Introduction to the 1989 edition:

“As a sphere between civil society and the state, in which critical public discussion of matters of general interest was institutionally guaranteed, the liberal public sphere took shape in the specific historical circumstances of a developing market economy. In its clash with the arcane and bureaucratic practices of the absolutist state, the emergent bourgeoisie gradually replaced a public sphere in which the ruler’s power was merely represented *before* the people with a sphere in which state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical discourse *by* the people.” (Habermas, 1989, xi)

In short, Habermas begins by characterizing the situation in feudal society in Europe in the High Middle Ages as one of ‘representative publicness’ in which, at the local level, the manorial lord ‘displayed himself, presented himself as an embodiment of some sort of “higher” power’ (Habermas, 1989, 7). This was a self-representation to a public, replicated in the ceremonial representation of monarchs before their subjects, which had nothing to do with ‘Representation in the sense in which the members of a national assembly represent a nation or a lawyer represents his clients ...’ (Habermas, 1989, 7). Habermas proceeded to analyse the breakdown of ‘representative publicness’ and the consequent ‘genesis of the bourgeois public sphere’. He argues that the motor for change was the growth of international trade and the associated ‘traffic in news’ (Habermas, 1989, 16). The origin of journals was in the dissemination of information necessary for commercial transactions. Journals came to acquire political significance although their functions remained circumscribed in the same way as trade itself remained subject to state regulation. Habermas describes the way in which this changed in the following way:

“The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation

was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason (*öffentliches Raisonement*).” (Habermas, 1989, 27)

Habermas describes how this unprecedented development occurred institutionally, noting particularly the rise of tea and coffee houses as loci for bourgeois association. This emergent public sphere in the world of letters (*literarisches Öffentlichkeit*) formed the basis for a political role (*politische Öffentlichkeit*) which became the foundation for Western European representative democracy. Habermas proceeds to discuss the way in which, in the political philosophies of Kant, Hegel, John Stuart Mill, de Tocqueville, and Marx, the phenomenon of the emergent political public sphere became incorporated into an ideology of a constitutional relationship between the state and the public, and ‘public opinion’.

This is not the place to go into further detail about Habermas's argument. I simply want to draw attention to two omissions from Habermas's socio-historical analysis which are particularly pertinent. Firstly, Habermas did not extend his discussion of the meanings of ‘public’ to consider the implications of ‘publication’. In analysing the public sphere of letters, Habermas treated texts as the medium for the consolidation of social networks. He did not reflect on the implications of the growth of the publishing industry. By restricting his analysis primarily to the period up to the end of the 18th Century, Habermas also was able to ignore the developing social function of the university as an institutionally autonomous public sphere. In the UK, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the 18th Century remained associated with the ecclesiastical domination of the feudal system, but the Dissenting Academies which emerged from the end of the 17th Century after the ejection of Nonconformists from the Church of England did constitute an emergent intellectual public sphere. The struggles in relation to the development of English universities in the 19th Century – the foundation, first of all, of University College, London and King's College, London and then subsequently the establishment of civic universities in the provinces in the last quarter of the century, can be seen in Habermasian terms as the struggles involved in establishing bourgeois universities as, increasingly, the main institutional loci of the bourgeois public sphere, first of all in opposition to the lingering legacy of Oxbridge patronage and then rapidly in opposition to the threat of ‘plebeian’ intervention. This brings us back to Habermas's opening admission of what had been excluded from his study. The passage already quoted from his Preface continues:

“In the stage of the French Revolution associated with Robespierre, for just one moment, a public sphere stripped of its literary garb began to function – its subject was no longer the “educated strata” but the uneducated “people”. Yet even this plebeian public sphere whose continued but submerged existence manifested itself in the Chartist Movement and especially in the anarchist traditions of the workers' movement on the continent, remains oriented towards the intentions of the bourgeois public sphere. In the perspective of intellectual history it was, like the latter, a child of the

eighteenth century. Precisely for this reason it must be strictly distinguished from the plebiscitary-acclamatory form of regimented public sphere characterizing dictatorships in highly developed industrial societies. Formally they have certain traits in common; but each differs in its own way from the literary character of a public sphere constituted by private people putting reason to use – one is illiterate, the other, after a fashion, post-literary." (Habermas, 1989, xviii).

For our purposes, therefore, Habermas's book provides a conceptual framework for considering the emergence of the constitutional apparatus of modern states, but it does not enable us to understand the socio-political function of the contemporary university nor, within that, the function of publication, either mediated within university institutions or in an open market.

Crossley's deployment of Bourdieu to refine Habermas's theory

Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts re-visited Habermas's work in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Crossley & Roberts, 2004). Commenting on the delay in the publication of *Structural Transformation* in translation, Crossley and Roberts contend in their Introduction that the book 'has increased rather than decreased in relevance' (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 2). They argue that the late appearance of the translation does in fact sit well alongside the contemporary publication of Habermas's more recent thinking as found in his *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol. I* (Habermas, 1991). The *Structural Transformation* had analysed the process by which historically citizens had come to constitute themselves as a public sphere so as to submit hereditary political authority to scrutiny. Habermas's conception of such scrutiny was predicated on a continually autonomous 'lifeworld' within which the human values would be sustained which would exercise control over performance in the political sphere. In the final chapters of *The Theory of Communicative Action, vol. II* (Habermas, 1987), however, Habermas offers an account of 'the colonization of the lifeworld' and of 'new social movements'. As Crossley and Roberts put it, "The thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld posits that the economic and political systems, having been decoupled from the lifeworld, are now expanding back into it in a manner which is corrosive of it." (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 9). This led Habermas to conclude with a mixed prognosis, paraphrased by Crossley and Roberts in the following way: "Expansion and colonization by the economic and political systems is suffocating society and yet it has also contributed to the rise of new social movements who, embodying the promise and potential of rationalization in its positive sense, are seeking to regenerate both the private and the public spheres of society." (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 10).

As well as indicating that the emphasis of Habermas's thinking shifted in this way, Crossley and Roberts summarise the practical and theoretical criticisms of Habermas's work which have

appeared in the secondary literature. Practically, first of all, it is argued that Habermas idealized the emergence of rational discussion in an emergent public sphere and neglected the extent to which the achieved situation was the consequence of class struggle or the competition between interest groups. Secondly, the argument is that Habermas's colonization thesis oversimplifies the effects of the media on the lifeworld and is redolent of its origins in the thinking of the Frankfurt School in manifesting distrust of popular culture. Thirdly, it has been suggested that Habermas's account of the emergent public sphere neglects forms of association other than those of the male bourgeois public sphere. Crossley and Roberts present three kinds of theoretical criticism of Habermas's work. They describe the first oppositional position as 'late-modern'. These critics accept the 'normative foundations for public debate and discussion whilst recognizing that in contemporary societies these normative foundations are not the exclusive property of the white male bourgeoisie' (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 13). By contrast, the second oppositional position can be characterized as 'postmodern'. Nancy Fraser is offered as 'the most vocal spokesperson for a post-modern conception of the public sphere'. As Crossley and Roberts summarise, "She argues for a position which recognizes the legitimate discourse claims of those residing in alternative public spheres. Fraser terms these alternative public spheres, 'subaltern counterpublics'." (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 14). The third oppositional position is considered to be largely based in the United States. Those working within this school 'suggest that the public sphere is a particular institution and a particular relational setting', by which is implied that the public sphere has no a priori necessity but is a product of historical construction. Crossley and Roberts accordingly label this 'the relational and institutional school'.

Although Crossley and Roberts summarise these critical positions in their introduction, they also comment that the 'prime object' of their book is to document 'new and emerging theoretical schools associated with prominent theorists like Mikhail Bakhtin and Pierre Bourdieu' (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 12). It is Crossley who particularly seeks to deploy the work of Bourdieu in relation to that of Habermas. It is this exploration of the points of contact between Habermas and Bourdieu which also justifies the detail of this theoretical preamble, in that, as I shall argue in detail, the three Yearbook publications can all be seen to have been attempting to operationalise Bourdieu's particular orientation in relation to Habermas's conceptualisation of the 'public sphere'.

Crossley argues that Bourdieu offers a powerful critique of Habermas's tendency to 'ground the concept of rationality transcendently' (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 92). He accurately paraphrases Bourdieu's position when he says that "The ideals and norms or rules of rational communicative engagement do not issue forth from invariable structures of communicative pragmatics, any more than from a transcendental ego or the heavens ..." (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 93). On the contrary, for Bourdieu

"They emerge out of the dynamics and interactions of human history ... Moreover, as such, they have emerged in differentiated forms. At the very least, for example, different scientific communities have emerged with their own respective ideals and norms regarding evidence and evaluation, their own 'rules of engagement', and these contrast with those that have developed in literary and artistic circles, and in fields of political discourse. The history of each of these fields is, at one level, a history of the establishment and evolution of distinct rational forms." (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 93).

Although Crossley does not attempt to situate Bourdieu's critique of Habermas alongside the three categories of theoretical critique identified with Roberts in the introduction to their book, it is possible to suggest that Bourdieu's concept of *champ* (field), in particular, provided him with a tool by which he could reconcile the oppositional positions adopted by all three. Bourdieu's position is simultaneously 'late-modern', 'postmodern' and 'relational and institutional' because he argues that the norms of rational discourse, including those of subaltern counterpublics, are historically constructed. There is social competition in the establishment of 'fields' which come to acquire intellectual and institutional autonomy, and within these fields there are operational norms which make possible the exercise of judgement within their own terms and criteria. 'Fields' do not have universal and a-historical transcendence but are constantly fluctuating in their positions in the market of competing discourses and institutions.

It is for this reason that Bourdieu's work satisfies in dealing with some of Habermas's omissions. Crossley chose to recommend the work of Bourdieu as a corrective to that of Habermas by concentrating on the way in which Bourdieu developed a theory of communication as 'systematically distorted'. Whereas Habermas embarked on a forlorn attempt to identify 'ideal speech situations' by decontextualising communicative engagement and excluding the social modifications of intellectual exchange. Bourdieu, by contrast, tried to develop a theory of communication which accepts the social dimension of the process. As Crossley puts it: "(Bourdieu) advises us to seek out those social conditions which enable, encourage and constrain interlocutors to engage rationally with one another. The implication of this is that rather than devising ways of minimizing the impact of the social environment upon debating citizens, a fruitless task, we should be looking for the best ways to secure such an impact" (Crossley & Roberts, 2004, 110). Bourdieu's is a philosophy of acceptance. It accepts as inevitable the recognition of the constitutive power of social forces. Habermas's philosophy, by contrast, is one of denial, one which seeks to rid linguistic exchange of the contaminating effects of its social dimension.

An extension of Crossley's deployment of Bourdieu.

In spite of summarising Bourdieu's position in opposition to that of Habermas, concentrating on their distinct theories of language and communication, Crossley surprisingly sustains the two omissions from Habermas's book to which I have referred. Bourdieu's work could have been deployed to reflect on the institutional context of publication. Well before Bourdieu articulated his theory of linguistic communication (in *Ce Que Parler Veut Dire, L'économie des échanges linguistiques*, Bourdieu, 1982, substantially translated as *Language and Symbolic Power*, Bourdieu, 1991), he had published a seminal essay ("Champ intellectuel et projet créateur", Bourdieu, 1966, translated as "Intellectual Field and Creative Project", in Young, ed., 1971, 161-188) in which he argued that the analysis of the meaning of published historical texts requires an appreciation of the constitutive effects of the immanent socio-economic conditions of their production. This was stated in the first sentence in the following way:

"In order that the sociology of intellectual and artistic creation be assigned its proper object and at the same time its limits, the principle must be perceived and stated that the relationship between a creative artist and his work, and therefore his work itself, is affected by the system of social relations within which creation as an act of communication takes place, ..." (Bourdieu, in Young, ed., 1971, 161)

This was not, however, an a-historical statement of principle. On the contrary, Bourdieu argues at once that the capacity to analyse past creativity sociologically is a function of the objectively achieved structural transformation in the public sphere which generated a literary public sphere. Bourdieu did not use this Habermasian terminology but argues in the following way:

"Obviously, this approach can only be justified in so far as the object to which it is applied, that is, the intellectual field (and thus the cultural field) possesses the relative autonomy which authorizes the *methodological autonomization* operated by the structural method when it *treats* the intellectual field *as* a system which is governed by its own laws." (Bourdieu, in Young, ed., 1971, 162)

In other words, when we study past intellectual production in the present, we have to be sensitive to the extent to which our analytic method is objectively legitimated by the status of the intellectual field under scrutiny and subjectively conditioned by the status of the field within which the enquiry becomes possible. In order to adequately understand and evaluate past intellectual production, to simplify, we have to analyse the communicative system within which the production was made 'public' and also analyse the socio-economic conditions of existence of the context within which we are carrying out our analysis. Social forces are in competition both in relation to production or publication and in relation to consumption or reception. Bourdieu distinguished between three spheres which he identified as 'the sphere of

legitimacy claiming universality', 'the sphere of what is in the process of legitimation', and 'the sphere of the arbitrary as regards legitimacy'. Amongst the social forces which authorized these spheres, Bourdieu highlighted the role of educational institutions – 'institutions such as the educational system and academies which by their authority and their teaching consecrate a certain kind of work and a certain type of cultivated man' (Bourdieu in Young, ed., 1971, 174). In a way which anticipated the detailed research which led to his publication of *La distinction* (Bourdieu, 1979, 1984), Bourdieu produced a table of these spheres. Music, Painting, Sculpture, Literature and Theatre belonged to the sphere of legitimacy claiming universality authorized by 'legitimate legitimation authorities (universities, academies)'; Cinema, Photography and Jazz belonged to the sphere of what is in the process of legitimation where the legitimation authorities are 'in competition with each other and claiming legitimacy (critics, clubs)'; and Dress design, Cosmetics, Cookery, Interior decoration, Furnishing and other daily aesthetic choices such as sporting events all belonged to the sphere of the arbitrary as regards legitimacy authorized by 'non-legitimate legitimation authorities (*haute couture* designers, advertising)'. This was all consistent with the research which he was undertaking at the time on the accessibility to the 'public' of museums and art galleries (see Bourdieu, 1964, and Bourdieu, Darbel & Schnapper, 1966, 1990) where the implicit question was whether, in Habermasian terminology, the social function of these institutions is to represent culture *before* the people (repräsentative Öffentlichkeit) or to be spaces within which cultures and publics encounter each other and where 'culture' is constructed *by* the people. Bourdieu's theoretical schema was also consistent with the findings of his research on Photography where he deliberately studied a form which was in the process of legitimation and analysed the function of amateur photographic clubs rather than educational institutions in raising its status (see Bourdieu, Boltanski, Castel, & Chamboredon, 1965). Finally, it reflected the findings of the educational research which he had undertaken in collaboration with Jean-Claude Passeron. It was not simply, as is normally thought, that Bourdieu and Passeron argued that there was institutional discrimination in favour of those students who already informally possessed the 'cultural capital' that enabled them to succeed in formal examinations. Their argument was also that many students possessed interests and attributes belonging to spheres of what is in the process of legitimation which educational institutions were not disposed to legitimate (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1979). When Bourdieu and Passeron produced another book to give a more schematic representation of their earlier research, they sought to analyse generally the mechanisms within society of trans-generational cultural transmission, deliberately assigning a limited function to the processes of legitimation secured by the educational system (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970, 1977).

To summarise, therefore, Bourdieu gave central place in his research to the view that intellectual productions, publications, are constituted and legitimated within 'fields'. Different 'fields' operate with different evaluative criteria and the rules of performance peculiar to different intellectual discourses tend also to be enforced within different institutional contexts.

This was as true in relation to the claims of competing sciences as to those of competing cultures. It is easy to see how Bourdieu's conceptual framework enables us to chart historically the process by which new 'fields' such as Cultural Studies, Media Studies, Sports Science and numerous others, have secured the legitimation offered by legitimate authorities such as universities, but often only in those universities which offer subordinate legitimation rather than those 'world-class' universities which offer legitimacy claiming universality. However, the purpose of this introduction is to examine the implications of Bourdieu's application of his theory to his own practice, and to explore the consequences of this examination for the development of a publication project within an institution only possessing subordinate legitimation authority.

Bourdieu's practical enactment of his critique of Habermas

There are two key elements in Bourdieu's enactment of his own theoretical findings. Both relate to his attempt to secure legitimation for his work – to achieve self-legitimation in opposition to the dominant legitimate legitimation authorities. The first element relates to his consolidation of a research group or community. From the beginning of the 1960s, Bourdieu was employed by Raymond Aron as secretary to a sociological research group which Aron had just established. After the May 'events' of 1968 in which Bourdieu had supported the student revolt and Aron had condemned and ridiculed it, Bourdieu seized control of the research group – the Centre de Sociologie Européenne. He gathered together a group of like-minded researchers, many of them from similar social backgrounds. Whereas Passeron (and others such as Foucault, Lyotard, and Deleuze) signed up as members of staff at the newly instituted 'experimental' University at Vincennes in 1969, Bourdieu sought, instead, to institutionalise the research production of the Centre outside the university system. The analogy was with the process of legitimation which Photography was securing for itself as an art form through the social influence of clubs rather than universities. The attempt to constitute a collective ethos was simultaneously social and intellectual. In a late interview, published posthumously in the *Bibliographie des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu* (Delsaut & Rivière, 2002), Yvette Delsaut, who was an early member of the Group, recalls how there were 'vrais liens de projection entre les gens' [real affinities between people] and how 'we were all young (you were yourself not much older than us ...)' (Delsaut & Rivière, 2002, 186–7). Bourdieu socially constructed a research group and established a common conceptual discourse providing autonomous criteria for judgement without much reference to the legitimation authority of dominant journals such as the *Revue française de sociologie*. A collaborator of Bourdieu and subsequent Director of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, Rémi Lenoir, has described the nature of Bourdieu's influence in the following way:

"He worked to encourage connections, to calm reactions, to ease tensions and even to set abilities in competition with one another. Bourdieu made great use of this physics of the emotions, as we might term it, because this was the way a collective of this kind became integrated, or better, welded together. While he did much to ensure that intellectual production was regarded as ordinary labour and not fetishized, he also used all the assets of his charisma to animate, inspire and orchestrate the working collective which, in his person, he summed up, embodied or – perhaps – played at embodying." (Lenoir, R., 2006, 35)

Based on the elective affinities between co-researchers, Bourdieu sought to construct a social situation which was a kind of sociological *Offentlichkeit*, independent of the constraints imposed by the state for the normal provision of higher education. It was a situation which sought to analyse intellectual work undertaken in institutionalised fields of learning but which, nevertheless, refused to take refuge in any sense that it was itself *hors de combat*. Whereas Bourdieu's sociological research in education of the 1960s had been undertaken *about* the educational system and the knowledge transmission which it privileged, viewed from the vantage point of an academic researcher, increasingly Bourdieu sought to institutionalise a social space which would enable him to subject educational institutions and academic research to sociological analysis – a space which would be committed to the practice of social science without being implicated in the ideological prejudices of a state educational position; hence Bourdieu's interest in pedagogy as just one mechanism of social and cultural reproduction. In 1968, Bourdieu carried out the research on power relations and knowledge transmission within Parisian universities which was to be re-worked as *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1984, 1988), and in the early 1970s he carried out research which eventually became incorporated in *La noblesse d'état* (Bourdieu, 1989, 1996), a book in which he explored the social mechanisms which generated a hierarchy of French 'grandes écoles' in a way which is transferable to an analysis in the U.K. of the hierarchisation of institutions effected by league tables which have euphemized class distinctions by deploying the discourse of 'quality'.

The second element in Bourdieu's enactment of his own theoretical findings relates specifically to his attitude towards publication. From his earliest article publications in the early 1960s, Bourdieu increasingly experienced the process of becoming published as one of censure, in which his capacity to express his own views was circumscribed by the orientations of established journals, particularly the main journal of the sociological establishment – the *Revue française de sociologie*.¹ (See Bourdieu's discussion of 'censure' in Bourdieu, 1980, 138-142 – a paper first presented in 1974). It followed naturally from his attempt to establish the social independence of his research group that he should also endeavour to institutionalise an independent channel of communication for the group's work. The first number of *Actes de la*

¹ For further information on the journals in which Bourdieu placed his early articles, see my "Bourdieu and Social Science Journalism", Robbins, 2006, 127-136.

recherche en sciences sociales appeared in January, 1975. It appeared under Bourdieu's direction until his death in 2002, and it still continues. As the title suggests, the intention was that the journal should be a vehicle for the transmission of the 'work in progress' of the group, thereby consolidating the collective intellectual endeavour of the group. One of Bourdieu's collaborators in the venture – Luc Boltanski – has recently re-issued one of the articles which he co-authored with Bourdieu and, at the same time, released a complementary text which situates the journal socio-historically. Boltanski recollects the context of the birth of the journal in a way which confirms my account above of the original motives for its production. He writes:

"In the first half of the 1970s we were not yet well known or, certainly, not well accepted. We were nothing in particular – young people, a bit noisy, of their time, like lots of others. The institution (of the university), under threat, had seen others like us. It prevaricated, waiting patiently for the moment for its revenge (which was not long coming). The 'patron', in his thirties, was known with, already, several books behind him which had made a big impact, and, what was not nothing in this world hooked on titles which it distributed parsimoniously, he was a *normalien*². Even a Professor at the Sorbonne or at the Collège de France, or a Rector, could not fail to take this into account. Yet, in spite of all this, we had difficulty in getting our papers accepted in the official university journals, with editorial committees, like, for example (but this is just one example) the *Revue française de sociologie*. To be successful, we had to succumb to a long and sometime painful process, listen to comments (in other words, to speak frankly, admonitions) from people, colleagues, not strikingly deserving of our respect, guardians of norms coming from goodness knows where but which they held sacred in the name of Science and what they called Epistemology, conceived on the model of an essentially repressive morality, who subjected us to interrogations as meddling as those which might have been posed in the past by an old confessor ("how many questionnaires did you administer?" being the academic equivalent of the notorious "how many times, my child?"). We were fed up with it. And so was born the idea of having our own review, to write what we wanted, to pursue topics which interested us, to describe and criticise at the same time, in short, to do sociology. The question of the size of papers was also important. We wanted to get away from predefined formats – to publish a note of one page as well as a text the size of a small book. Also to be able to publish quickly, for instance, the result of a survey which seemed to us important in a specific context, defined by the state of play in the scientific or political sphere, without waiting for months for the verdict of a committee." (Boltanski, 2008, 15-16, my translation).

² A graduate from the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris.

I have tried to suggest that Bourdieu's thinking in the 1960s differed from that of Habermas in that he resisted all forms of transcendentalism. Whereas Habermas was inclined to welcome the student movement of the late 1960s because it revived the liberal function of the bourgeois university which, in Germany, had been given its philosophical rationale by the critical philosophy of Kant and had been institutionalised by the post-Kantian founders of the University of Berlin, Bourdieu argued, instead, that the development of the French university, as promoted by Napoleon, had betrayed the radically democratic ideals of the French revolutionaries. During the events of 1968, Bourdieu petitioned for the summoning of an Estates-General, on the model of the Estates-General of 1789, which would give the whole French population a voice in reforming the educational system rather than simply the bourgeois students – the currently dissatisfied minority of that population who were in denial of the fact that they were the beneficiaries from that system. Habermas wanted to push bourgeois modernity to its logical limit by extending mechanisms for student self-government within the bourgeois university, but Bourdieu wanted to expose the self-fulfilling exclusivity of this procedure and, instead, to seize the opportunity to advocate universities which would introduce equal access and, more importantly, introduce curricula which would acknowledge the legitimacy of plebeian culture. For Bourdieu, the function of universities and the content of curricula had no a priori fixity but were constantly re-defined in response to changing social and intellectual needs. As we have seen, Habermas suspected that a plebeian 'public sphere' would either be 'illiterate' or 'post-literate'. Bourdieu was committed to striving to ensure the emergence of a literate mass democracy. In this respect, of course, Bourdieu was the product of his own formation – an 'oblate' as he called himself (Bourdieu, 1984, 1988), someone who finds it difficult to destroy the unequal opportunities which generate the capacity to recognize them as such. Bourdieu's vision of a mass social democracy was patronising. Boltanski chose his word carefully when he referred to Bourdieu as 'le patron'. In response to Bourdieu's reminiscence that the CSE research group was a 'collective', Delsaut retorted that 'It isn't right to say that it was a collective: a collective, doubtless, but with a very visibly established focal point', that is to say, the person of Bourdieu who represented for them all 'an intellectual model' (Delsaut & Rivière, 2002, 187). The first number of the *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* contained a manifesto, entitled "Méthode scientifique et hiérarchie sociale des objets" (Bourdieu, 1975), which insisted that diverse social behaviours are all equally susceptible to the same analytical treatment. Bourdieu managed the collective projects of his research group and the collective actions of the editorial board of *Actes* to try to introduce his vision of a society in which social scientific reflexivity would inspire socially self-conscious exchange – what he called 'socio-analytic encounter' – between equal state citizens, providing a common discourse for mutual respect.

The analogy between our situation now and that of Bourdieu – and its limitations

In reflecting on the early days of the publication of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Boltanski acutely remarks:

“Opening again this review, I ask myself with astonishment: who today would want to publish an article in such a place? And myself, would I want to? A review in French, without an editorial committee, typed on an old typewriter, pasting statistics and cartoons alongside each other, plainly critical – who would take the risk for their career? It would be suicide.” (Boltanski, 2008, 48, my translation)

In stimulating the publications of Yearbooks I, II, and III within the School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies in the University of East London, I was attempting to recapture elements of Bourdieu’s earlier endeavours. Boltanski’s questions lead naturally to some consideration of the validity of my attempt and the status of this new venture in succession to the previous publications.

I began teaching in this institution in the month (January, 1970) when it formally became North-East London Polytechnic – one of the thirty new polytechnics established by the Labour government at the end of the 1960s. The Labour Minister of Education responsible for this policy development in British higher education – Anthony Crosland – had been advised by Eric Robinson who had published *The New Polytechnics: the People’s Universities* in 1968 (Robinson, 1968) and who quickly became Deputy Director (Academic) of North-East London Polytechnic. The nature of the institution has never been given or pre-determined. I have worked in an institution which has been constantly defining itself – in which this self-definition has been the consequence of both the initiatives of the staff and the impact of external socio-economic and policy changes. By the time that Bourdieu’s *La noblesse d’état* was published (Bourdieu, 1989) and, certainly by the time of its translation into English (Bourdieu, 1996), the text seemed less an analytical account of social reality and more a counter-cultural manifesto. The book was posited on the view that agents involved in higher education institutions might be instrumental in socially constructing their institutions in their own image, that it might be possible for ‘alternative’ higher education institutions to reflect the interests of participating individuals rather than those of the central state. In the U.K. the prospects for this vision were dealt a deadly blow by the removal of polytechnics from local authority control, beginning the process which led to the abolition of the ‘binary divide’ and the recognition of the polytechnics as ‘modern’ universities in 1992. These political developments confirmed the future of universities as predicted by Jean-François Lyotard in *La condition postmoderne* (Lyotard, 1979, 1984), notably that they would fulfill the state’s requirements for performativity and be evaluated in terms of their efficiency in meeting the supposed needs of the state rather than in

terms of their capacity to offer a 'public sphere' within which the goals of the state might be discussed and debated.

One of the early manifestations of this shift away from liberal humanist *Bildung* in higher education pedagogy towards a concentration on de-personalised performativity was the introduction of modular degree schemes at undergraduate level. At the University of East London, it was tacitly recognised that the introduction of a modular degree scheme necessarily involved the abolition of the 'independent study' scheme at the institution which, since 1974, had emphasized personal choice and personal goal-setting. Whilst modularisation developed during the 1990s, emphasizing performance within circumscribed units of learning at the expense of uncircumscribed freedom of enquiry, the structural arrangements for doctoral research seemed to remain unmodified by the impact of postmodernist thinking. However, it is my contention that the orientation towards performativity has begun to impinge on doctoral research practice, undermining the traditional distinction between research as the production of new knowledge and pedagogy as the transmission and reception of existing knowledge. This is the context for the immediate consideration of the function of the past Yearbooks and the new series, *Crossing Conceptual Boundaries*, of which this is the first number.

The introductions to Yearbooks I, II, and III, have each attempted to consider their nature and status as texts. Cumulatively, these introductions have tried to suggest an exploratory progression occurring in the movement from one Yearbook to the next. To summarise very briefly, I can say that Yearbook I was an attempt to represent in a text the nature of the communal ethos amongst PhD students in the School which I experienced when I took responsibility for providing a supporting seminar programme in the autumn of 2002. The communal ethos was real and I tried to conceptualise that reality by suggesting to students that they were in a situation which was analogous to that of Bourdieu's research group as it became established at the end of the 1960s. I explored with students the possibility that they might participate in the construction of a collective endeavour which might define the nature of PhD research possible in the first decade of the 21st century in a multi-disciplinary School within a 'modern' university. They were invited to consider their research projects in relation to their social trajectories and aspirations. Yearbook I was a framed representation of student reflexivity. Yearbook II tacitly acknowledged the tension which Lyotard anticipated in that it accepted that all PhD students in the School were necessarily having to balance the need to acquire cultural capital in a national or international market of disciplinary exchange – by presenting at discipline-based conferences and by submitting articles for publication in discipline-based journals – with the local need to inter-relate across discipline boundaries with fellow PhD students constituting the research community in the School. In my view, Bourdieu's *La distinction* (Bourdieu, 1979, 1986) is best seen as an attempt to analyse how people correlate their attitudes to the postmodern market of cultural artefacts with the indigenous habitus which is their domestic and social trajectory. The strength of *La distinction* is that it

shows that the referents in the market place – the objective correlatives of our indigenous dispositions – are not themselves fixed but are constantly changing in value within autonomous fields of exchange. Yearbook II attempted to shift attention away from indigenous social trajectories towards the market of intellectual discourses, suggesting, however, that whilst these discourses have functional objectivity and, as such, have power to constitute knowledge production, they are, nevertheless, socio-historically contingent. Possible research within one School is affected by the social and political struggle for domination between disciplinary discourses. Contributors to Yearbook II were invited to reflect on the relationship of their work to the problematics defined by the disciplines within which their work was located. Their contributions were framed by my short representation of the contingency of some of the discourses operating within the School. Yearbook III was overtly influenced by my research on Jean-Claude Passeron and by my attempt to articulate the difference between the philosophies of social science of Bourdieu and Passeron. Whereas Bourdieu tried to demonstrate that social and cultural reproduction are inseparable, that there is a mutually reinforcing reciprocity between social trajectories and their cultural and intellectual correlates, Passeron sought to separate the two. For Passeron, the language deployed in disciplinary research has to be analysed sociologically as it is used. Explanatory discourses do not have logical a priori boundaries which can clearly delimit what is 'history' from what is 'sociology' or 'psychology' or 'cultural studies', but he believed that Bourdieu was wrong to identify intellectual choices with social ones. For Passeron, it is not the case that a phenomenon is analysed 'historically' as a result of the social trajectory of the analyst any more than that the parameters of what constitutes 'history' are absolutely fixed and static. Passeron argued that Bourdieu failed to generate an epistemology of the social sciences by substituting for it a sociology of the social sciences which, by definition, left its own epistemological status unchallenged. Passeron's contention has been that Bourdieu's work, true to its own philosophy, enacted his own social trajectory, with the result that his research is vulnerable when its ideological impetus is in decline. Yearbook III moved towards an exploration of Passeron's position, seeking to consider whether an analysis of linguistic practice in research might generate inter-disciplinary and international epistemological dialogue which is neither socially reductive nor a retrograde form of idealist detachment.

A corollary of Passeron's position is that he accuses Bourdieu of seeking to subordinate research practice to a totalising socio-political agenda. In other words, Bourdieu stands accused of securing a conceptual reconciliation between modernism and postmodernism through his deployment of the concepts of habitus and field but of, nevertheless, appropriating that reconciliation still formally to sustain an essentially modernist agenda. Although, like Lyotard, Bourdieu was influenced by phenomenology, his phenomenological sociology operated in the service of Durkheimian socio-political goals and, however reflexively, his sociological work sustained that grand narrative. Much the same could be said of the three Yearbooks of PhD research in progress. They have tried to represent epistemological debate but, as such,

they have been, to return to Habermas's terminology, examples either of 'repräsentative Öffentlichkeit' in which a mediated debate has been made public or of bourgeois 'Öffentlichkeit' in general in which the self-referential discussion of an initiated minority has been displayed, by analogy with parliamentary debate, as if it were conversation between social agents directly sharing their social experiences and analyses. Habermas feared that a future plebeian public sphere would be 'post-literate' and, pursuing further the analogy with parliamentary debate, there are grounds for suspecting that he had reason, but the conviction motivating the production of *Crossing Conceptual Boundaries* is that this incipient post-literacy cannot be counteracted by taking refuge oppositionally in recourse to an entrenched imposition of minority values on the majority. As H.G. Boland concluded in an article of 1995 on "Postmodernism and Higher Education":

"Currently, we are precariously poised between a modern/postmodern incommensurable hostility and the conditions for tough authentic dialogue. In higher education our course is clear. We need to increase and sustain the dialogue, even as we acknowledge that the tension will not, and perhaps should not, be resolved" (Boland, 1995, in Robbins, ed., 2004, vol. 3, 128).

Crossing Conceptual Boundaries is committed to the transmission of 'tough authentic dialogue'. To bring this about involves a struggle on opposed fronts – against advocates of incommensurability and against reactionary defenders of the *status quo ante*. The first important task was to ensure that the production would be unmediated. This introduction – which seeks to analyse the progression from the old Yearbooks to the new series – is the last mediation. The new series will not represent finished discussion but will seek to be a vehicle for discussion in progress, in this way capturing the spirit of the title of the *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* without reproducing its actual hidden agenda. To this end, the School established an editorial board for the new series which at any time will comprise equal proportions of staff and student members. The process of publication is intended to be collaborative, contributing to a conceptual 'autogestion' which includes students and their supervisors equally in as much as both are researchers.

Part II

Process and contributions

The membership of the editorial board is specified at the end of the text. It comprises three members of staff and three PhD students. For continuity, it was agreed that the chair should retain this position for five years, but, otherwise, the intention is that membership should be fluid, allowing for the participation of all staff and PhD students of the School. The board was proactive in inviting current PhD students to submit outline proposals for contributions which would provide samples of their work in progress. On this occasion, the board was able to accept all the offers which it received. There was, in other words, no reason to deploy any criteria for inclusion, whether in relation to any nascent 'theme' for the number or in relation to an assessment of the likely 'quality' of the contribution. The students submitted their contributions which were read, in each case, by two people – one member of the editorial board and one member of a pool of volunteer readers drawn from the staff of the School. Readers were invited to comment on the 'level' of the contribution so as to ensure that they properly reflected the standard of intellectual endeavour assumed for PhD work in the School, but they were not chosen as experts in the field of work of the contribution nor were they invited to engage critically with the content of the submissions. Readers' comments were relayed to the contributors who revised their articles accordingly for final publication.

It is important to stress that the editorial board has adopted some of the form of 'peer review' as practised by academic journals, but it has wanted to use that form for a different purpose. We are all familiar with the process by which article submissions to established journals are anonymously assessed by reviewers. Whatever the extent of the openness or transparency adopted by journals, this is normally a process in which work is judged without dialogue by those who have acquired the power to judge. The experience of the process is often the same as that described by Boltanski before, in exasperation, the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, Paris, chose to launch its own journal. Not only do reviewers exercise power in general but, in particular, their advice is absorbed by editorial boards who make decisions in relation to the boundaries of their discipline territories – assessing, for instance, whether a submitted article is appropriate for the *British Journal of Sociology*, the *Sociological Review*, *Current Anthropology*, *Theory, Culture and Society*, and so on. In this way, reviewers and editorial board are the gatekeepers of discipline boundary divisions and, consequently, have the effect of prescribing intellectual uniformity and conformity in relation to their operational maps of learning. By contrast, Crossing Conceptual Boundaries seeks to counter-act this kind of editorial enforcement of a mode of supplicatory deference. The School of Humanities and Social Sciences is a multi-disciplinary School. To seek to assess individual submissions by reference to extraneously sustained disciplinary criteria would be to replicate in microcosm the existing competition for publication in the national and international market of journals. The *raison d'être* of Crossing Conceptual Boundaries is to celebrate the cross-disciplinary debate which

occurs dialogically within a multi-disciplinary PhD student community. The five papers which are included in this number exist as 'completed' contributions, but the intention of the editorial board is to seek to embed the production of future numbers continuously more thoroughly within the ongoing practice of students as they respond to their research objects and engage in discussion with their supervisors. The work of the editorial board is to be inserted within the PhD training and support programme offered within the School with a view to enabling the publication to offer debate in progress rather more than the presentation *ex post facto* of 'completed' contributions. It is for this reason that we have included two book reviews, one of a book recently published by a former PhD student of the School (Ben Pitcher) and the other of a book by a visiting speaker in the School during the academic year (Les Back). Similarly, we also take the opportunity to advertise work published by current students or recently completed students and it is our intention that in this way internal discussion will gradually extend beyond the School.

Procedurally we are finding a way to implement our dialogical intentions. What follows are summaries of the five contributions, prepared by members of the editorial board. In order to reflect one theoretical issue which arose in the process of preparing this number, we have given the reader the opportunity to observe the difference of opinion between the reader of one contribution and the response of the contributor expressed in her revised introduction. Chapter 5 is prefaced by the comments of the reader and the intention is that future numbers of Crossing Conceptual Boundaries will be able to highlight in this way this issue of academic legitimisation in relation to practice-based research as well as comparable issues which arise in the process of providing an institutional context for the encouragement of original research. To provide information about the participants in the process which has led to this publication, there are notes on the members of the editorial board for 2008/9 and also notes on the contributors.

Summaries

Chapter 2

In his essay, David Cudworth suggests that the current model of school level education in Britain is based on a settled, 'sedentarised' social existence inadequately tailored to the needs of the nomadic lifestyle of Gypsy/Traveller children. He describes the tussle between traditional didactic education and progressive strains emphasising student-centred learning and personal development, which has been ongoing since the beginning of free mass schooling in the late nineteenth century. Linking educational forms to the post-industrialisation need to inculcate specific workplace skills *and* to manage society in an age of national consolidation, Cudworth shows how performance and target-oriented models have come increasingly to serve a liberal, free market ideology which – while able to incorporate other settled minority communities –

cannot countenance nomadic lifestyles. The required geographical fixity of education models is reflected in the static requirements of schools, which often conflict with the different spatial orientations of those used to moving around freely, resulting in a notion of Traveller children being 'wild' or 'out of control'. Cudworth burrows deep into education rhetoric and finds traces of this sedentarist bias in the National Curriculum's emphasis on learning rooted in childrens' relationship with their local surroundings. Taken together with broader political moves such as the reduction in the number of sanctioned stopping places for Travellers and amendments to criminal justice and public order legislation, Cudworth argues that education policies fail to tackle the social exclusion of nomadic children and instead enshrine and perpetuate a cultural prejudice whereby nomadism is seen as 'a difference too far'.

Chapter 3.

This chapter is part of Dayjour Sefre's literature review in preparation for her study of the educational experiences of Afghan and Iranian refugee pupils in London's secondary schools. She first offers an account of the way in which Bourdieu developed his concept of 'cultural' or 'social' capital, and she then considers some subsequent elaborations of his thinking, particularly the modifications introduced by Coleman and Putnam. The paper considers the relevance of these concepts to the analysis of the educational experiences of refugee pupils and goes on to correlate 'social capital' with the notion of 'social exclusion'. The ideas outlined in this paper will inform the analysis which will take place in targeted schools in the course of the research project.

Chapter 4.

In 'Atget at Bercy', Ed Whittaker considers a 1910 photograph by Parisian photographer Eugene Atget, suggesting that the image and its social and aesthetic context opens onto a new 'discourse of space'. Whittaker's suggests that a fresh reading of the *Zoniers* phase of Atget's output "enables us to strike out a new paradigm of Atget's later photographic work as an indexical 'phenomenology' of photography." This ambition and range gives Whittaker's piece strong theoretical backbone. Along the way, Whittaker makes connections with the phenomenological thinking of Husserl, Bergson's on time and duration and Hacking's defining work on indexicality. This leads him to see in Atget's radical presentation of the photographic image parallels with Foucault's *dispositifs*. In a strong, detailed and example-rich analysis, Whittaker leads us to the sumptuous conclusion that Atget's usually close-to-dawn evocations of empty, crumbling, broken, peripheral, urban environments precedes the essence of film, as in the archetypal 'cinematic image' explored by Deleuze.

But before leading the reader into this fascinating maze of twentieth century thought on art, being and (anti/non) representation, Whittaker contextualizes keenly, giving us ample background: i.e., one is gripped by Atget the character well before the likes Hacking and Husserl enter stage left. We learn about the rich tradition of nineteenth century Parisian photography and of the various waves in Atget interpretation, starting with the removal of many of Atget's glass negatives from Paris to New York soon after his death in 1927. Whittaker reasons that it was acceptance of Atget's importance in the US which preceded subsequent interest in France.

Whittaker then considers Atget at the time of his work, as he pushes a *perambulator*, 'a cart he had made' for carrying his heavy gear, through the pre-dawn streets, 'often covering many kilometers to the place he was to photograph.' He queries the legend that Parisians would stare at the 'deliberately unkempt' photographer - 'a kind of Punch and Judy man.' In fact, Whittaker infers, Atget would have been a seldom-spotted figure, rising at night, before most rose, to glide through the empty streets to reach his destination, then back to his studio well before lunchtime.

Before arriving at multiple readings of the *Porte de Percy* print, Whittaker considers Atget and the politics of place - "Atget is the first photographer who delimits the essence of 'place' in the way of the passing of place into memory"; and how Atget, the 'communist' creative artist, would query the reality of the image. Whittaker cites Benjamin on Atget, saying he photographed as though in the 'scenes of crime', "empty places abandoned to shadow and dust".

There is much more to commend in this exemplary piece of mature research. One can only look forward to Whittaker's extended monographic meditation on Atget and French photography, suffused with the period's giddy combustibility of ideas

Chapter 5.

As indicated above, this chapter exposes some internal debate about the appropriate or legitimate form of presentation of art-work in an academic context, leading to the award of PhD. Solveigh Goett's submission is given as section iii. The paper offers 'meanderings' in which text and visual image are integrated to constitute a reflection on textiles and self-definition. [web links are provided for the images to enable them to have their full impact]. The editorial board's response to the paper is given as section i. Solveigh was asked to articulate more fully the nature of the communication she was attempting. Specifically, the assumption of the critique was that there should be a greater attempt to offer a paper which would be in conformity with normal practices in the presentation of a PhD thesis. Solveigh's

response is given as section ii. She chose to write a Preface which seeks to justify an essentially figurative rather than discursive approach, referring to elements of recent and ongoing debate about the status of written components in the presentation of art work for degree and PhD qualification in UK universities. Solveigh responds discursively in a separate Preface and thus avoids compromising the figurative emphasis of the submitted contribution.

Chapter 6.

The article discusses the shifting relations between digital technologies and cultural studies, drawing on a Deleuzo-Guattarian framework particularly foregrounding the concept of the analog as 'always in excess over the digital'. Further discussing Deleuze's (2004) analysis of the analog in his book on Bacon and the problem of sensation in abstract painting the author highlights Massumi's proposition for a conceptualization of a virtual digitality, thus moving the analysis of the digital and the virtual to the realm of aesthetics and its relation to science and philosophy. 'How does an alternative media philosophy for the digital affect our understanding of the relationship between technology, science and culture, through a non-humanist approach? What potentialities might develop from speculating further on this tension between the concept of the digital and the concept of the virtual? And how might they contribute in emphasizing and developing further the artificial element of the humanities?' These are the questions that the article seeks to address.

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Articles

Chapter 2

A difference too far – Nomads in the British Education System

David Cudworth

Abstract

Concerns over the underachievement of Gypsy/Traveller children in the UK educational system are something that has been acknowledged across a series of government reports and other documents over the last 40 years. Despite ongoing commitments for inclusive education, especially within the context of multiculturalism, these children continue to experience discrimination and remain the worst achieving minority group in many European contemporary schooling systems.

With a school system based on a fixed abode and regular attendance, characterized by rigorous testing regimes and a focus on performativity, school provision becomes organized around certain kinds of priorities. Despite the rhetoric of social inclusion, where 'Every Child Matters', certain groups continue to be marginalised. This paper considers developments in recent education policy in the UK. It argues that the paradigm in which policy is developed assumes sedentarism and the investments of all UK communities in a particular notion of educational provision and the value of 'schooling'. Children from a range of nomadic backgrounds often struggle to adapt to the school environment which is very much at odds with the everyday lives of their homes and communities. The paper contends that educational policies in place to tackle social exclusion per se will never be able to fully address the desires of children whose code of existence is structurally different from the settled majority. The challenge of the radical difference of nomadism is that it necessitates a genuinely pluralist policy framework which understands and respects very different life ways.

Europe has failed the Roma for centuries. All those struggles fought in the name of civil society and civic rights fundamentally excluded the Roma. This will have its own backlash effect. The Roma will come. Today we are paying the price of our historic neglect and, often, aggression. There are significant numbers of very poor in some of the new EU member countries, and centuries of exclusion have left their marks. Enlargement must be a wake-up call – we need to think of the Roma as part of our future ‘We’

(Sassen S, 2004:58)

Introduction

For over 40 years it has been well documented that children from Gypsy/Traveller communities significantly underachieve in the British education system (Plowden Report 1967; The Swann Report 1985; Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) 1996, 1999, 2002, 2003; Save the Children 2000; Bhopal 2004; Department for Education and Science (DfES) 2003, 2005). For such communities, contemporary aims and values of education often sit uncomfortably with their own personal belief systems, especially in relation to their desire to be mobile. As a result many Gypsy/Traveller children often find themselves at odds with a schooling process that is based on a fixed abode and continuous local provision. In this paper I suggest that the main problem is associated with a particular set of values concerning a need to be settled. By considering debates around the tensions between universalism versus particularism, the specific question I want to interrogate here is when inclusive educational policy is produced within a sedentarised mind-set, will the British state ever be able to provide effective support and an equitable education system that recognises nomadic cultures and beliefs?

After providing a definition of the different Gypsy/Traveller groups I am referring to in this paper, the paper will start with an exploration of how a particular conception of education based on the principles of ‘liberal democratic’ ideology influenced ideas around free mass-schooling. I interrogate the tensions within educational policy between, on the one hand, education for social justice, and on the other, education for the pursuit of certain political, social and economic goal. In doing this I suggest that not only is education continuing to focus on preparing individuals for a particular notion of the workplace but embedding the socialisation of a particular mind-set, or more specifically a particular set of values, which are both often at odds with a more complex understanding of education, and the needs of communities that move around. I then move on to consider how Gypsy/Travellers are often marginalised by the rest of society and remain ‘othered’ in order to justify a strategy of

assimilation and a lack of positive recognition of their culture/s. I suggest here that other minority groups, on the whole, are increasingly mainstreamed, which I suspect is due to their acceptance to settle. Finally I turn my attention to the schooling process, and the way 'performance' has replaced 'competence'. I investigate how the structure of sedentarism has been fully subsumed in the way schools operate and improve, and thus how educational policy continues to marginalise, disrespect and exclude nomadic children both implicitly and explicitly.

Definitions

The majority of these people try to hide their being Gypsy from their neighbours and colleagues, not from any shame of their racial origins, but because of the negative image and pejorative connotations the very word 'Gypsy' arouses in the mind of the average British Gaije

(Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers (ACERT) 1993:123-4).

The terminology for the definition of Gypsy/Traveller communities is problematic and contested as there are a wide variety of groups and descriptors for them. Terms traditionally used have been 'tinker' (often used traditionally to refer to Irish and Scottish travellers), 'didicoi' (a term used often derogatorily by both gypsies and non gypsies for those of mixed race (see Acton 1974) and 'gypsy'. The term 'gypsy' itself involves a number of different groups. European gypsies are divided into the 'Rom' (from Eastern Europe), the Romanichals (from Western Europe, including the German Sinti and English gypsies for example) (Smith 1975:3). Part of the problem is that the British state has had different ways of categorising such communities, for example, according to the 1996 Race Relations Act and the subsequent (Amendment) Act 2000, Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage were legally recognised as racial groups, whilst English born gypsies have been defined in terms of their living patterns and occupations, such as scrap metal dealing. Other Traveller groups including New Travellers, who adopt a nomadic lifestyle but are not an ethnic group, and circus and fairground families who do not consider themselves as belonging to any particular ethnic or racial group, have also added to the problem of affording all 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller' groups with a clear sense of identity, ethnic, cultural or 'racial' status.

Perhaps inevitably many Gypsies/Traveller also differentiate themselves from non-gypsy culture, for example, the term 'Gorgios' is used to describe non-gypsies and means 'outsider'

or 'stranger'. Social anthropologist Okley (1983) contends that the symbolic boundaries between traveller and mainstream culture are strongly policed by traditional travellers and that the maintenance of such boundaries is shaped by the vulnerability that Gypsy/Travellers feel in the face of mainstream culture. She contends that Gypsies/Travellers are best seen as an ethnic group which has "resisted proletarian polarisation, preferring self-employment and geographical mobility" (1983:49). I therefore use the term Gypsy/Travellers in this paper to refer to any group or community who's lifestyle and culture is based on 'nomadism', either or both as a lived practice or an aspiration.

The Birth of Mass-Schooling in Britain

An educational institution can form a 'national consciousness' in its students through particular aspects of, and emphases in, its curriculum, through teaching methods and mediums, and through the ethos and organisation of the institution itself.

(McLaughlin, p.xx)

It was the 1870 Elementary Education Act in England that brought about the realisation of free compulsory mass education for all children up to the age of 10, which was then raised to 15 with the introduction of the 1944 English Education Act. It was with the introduction of this latter Act that would herald education as a tool in preparing individuals to actively engage in the processes of democracy where values of justice, equality and freedom could be realised and achieved by all individuals. Integral to the achievement of such values, I suggest, was the parallel rise of the progressive schooling movement at the beginning of the twentieth century as opposed to the 'traditional' educational model. 'Progressive' models of education (see in particular Cremlin, 1964) are arguably based on ethics and morality and focus more on the experiences of the child and the social aspect of education, where the promotion of democratic relationships and humanist values are paramount in the classroom setting and teacher-child associations. In contrast, 'traditional' models of education were more teacher-centred and focused on subject-content, promoting a more formal approach to schooling based on the values of authority and conformity. Learning was a passive activity controlled and prescribed by teachers and children competed with each other. As Hodkinson surmises:

....traditional teachers see the subject matter as of crucial importance and themselves as 'experts', with knowledge or skills to teach. Progressive teachers see the personal development of the student as central, and are more likely to see themselves as facilitating learning

(Hodkinson, 1991:75).

For Barber (1999), the 1944 Act symbolised a kind of synthesis of thought from both 'progressive' and 'traditional' educational models, against a backdrop for the desire to re-build a democratic society based on the "social solidarity of wartime" and the "defeat of fascism" (Barber, 1999, p.352). Here, education became the tool to bring about the opportunity of a homogenised and prosperous post-war society based on the ideals and values of liberal democratic ideology. Mass compulsory education thus became part of the social democratic settlement in the pursuit of social justice (Harris & Ranson, 2005).

Alongside this historical journey for social justice and human dignities, mass compulsory education also became a tool for economic growth. For Colin Ward (1973), it is no surprise that compulsory mass education became linked to modernity and the growth of nation states, and in particular encapsulated certain values associated with the 'market' model, whereby the integration of commerce, administration and culture is assumed paramount for the survival and prosperity of a national society and economy. He goes on to argue that it is no coincidence that the emergence of mass schooling in England in 1944 came about as a result of the rise of industrialisation, where there was a need to teach individuals specific skills and impart specific 'economic' values and knowledge in order to protect and enhance national success. Paramount to this success and the survival of the industrial/capitalist state would be the acceptance of certain power-relations, and thus inequalities. Stephen Ball concurs and suggests that the introduction of state controlled mass education was essential to "manage the new urban working classes and to accommodate the social and political aspirations of the new middle classes" (Ball, 2008, p.56). 'Traditional' models of education sit very comfortably with this idea of children conforming to a particular national identity, where schooling becomes concerned with learning certain bodies of knowledge and skills related to the values and ethics of the workplace and the wider economy.

According to Ramirez and Boli (1985) mass schooling not only came about as a response to the needs of industrialisation but its relationship with progress and state power. By the nineteenth century the educational development of the child became linked to the national interest. Mass schooling was seen to not only "preserve the social order but also to create a new national society" that was based on progress (Ramirez & Boli, 1985:10). Ramirez and Boli suggest that European competition paved the way for mass education, whereby state involvement was not only a response to industrialisation, but, as McLaughlin's suggests at the beginning of this section, was part of a wider political project through which state power could be improved and a national unity established and protected (ibid:3).

So, on the one hand we have the birth of mass education as a tool for social justice and human rights (more in line with the progressive model of education), and on the other as a tool for economic prosperity, progress and the conformity to a particular national identity (more in line with the traditional model). If we consider contemporary education as a historical trajectory, it is clear that the liberal democratic pursuit of market driven ideology, although engages with the social justice agenda, has firmly established itself at the centre of its relationship with the international economy. According to some, particularly Ball (2007), the social justice agenda has become mere rhetoric as the market increasingly controls and dictates the role of education. It is hard to imagine how education can be deployed as a tool for equality when the historical formation of an education system has been about the perpetuation of a certain set of values. As we will now see, Gypsy/Traveller communities experience particular difficulties when interfacing with the education system due to their culture and values being so very much at odds with those associated with the historical formation of the education system in Britain.

The 'Othering' and Demonisation of Gypsy/Travellers

From the moment of their discovery of Western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when they spilled into societies the state was seeking to organize and control, Gypsies were seen as intruders, nomads lacking hearth or home amidst local communities rooted in fixed and familiar soil. They aroused mistrust, fear, and rejection

(Liégeois, Jean-Pierre, 1986:87).

For many (including Okely, 1983, Liegeois, 1986, McVeigh 1997), the emphasis on the market, conformity and progress becomes a political project associated with the need for assimilation into a sedentarised existence and thus a rejection of nomadism as a legitimate form of existence. In particular, Gypsy/Traveller communities have been historically demonised and 'othered', more than any other community, in order to justify the rejection of their way of life and the need for sedentarised assimilation.

The history of discrimination directed towards Gypsy/Traveller communities in the UK, as elsewhere in many parts of Europe, has been framed by the tensions brought about by the historical formation of 'modernity' in the name of progress, and in particular the creation of nation states, and a national identity as noted above. The successful establishment of such industrialised states favoured a sedentarised population whereby cultural identity linked people to a particular set of values and geographical space (Okely, 1983). Sedentarism, then, became synonymous with nation building and the development of a national identity whereby individuals were expected to remain and settle in one place in order to preserve the process of

a national society and a national identity. McVeigh (1997) concurs and further argues that sedentarism became associated with progress and the civilising of society. Thus, nomadic communities were often seen as 'uncivilised' and in need of integration (McVeigh, 1997:7-25). Okley (1983) states that the criminalisation of a nomadic way of life has been a "history marked by attempts to exorcise, disperse, control, assimilate or destroy these communities" (McVeigh, 1997:7-25). Liegeois (1986) concurs and provides us with a detailed overview of the persecution of Gypsies over many centuries, whereby assimilation is used to control and dissipate their way of life.

In England, perhaps the first piece of 'official' contemporary government legislation that signalled the beginnings of state control, interference and even the criminalisation of the lives of many nomadic communities was The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act (1960) which led to the closure of many sites that were not seen as satisfying new government requirements (Clements & Campbell, 1999:62). The 1968 subsequent Caravan Sites Act, made it the responsibility of local authorities to provide sufficient sites for Gypsy/Traveller communities residing in their local area. However, according to Clements & Campbell (1999), such legislation resulted in increased powers to evict Gypsy/Travellers from the roadside and non-designated sites, even though legal provision was often limited, inadequate or located on unsuitable, even dangerous land.

Subsequent legislation, particularly the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, have done nothing to improve and provide adequate site provision, but further restricted and criminalized the encampment of Gypsy/Traveller on unauthorised sites. This Act also (see Acton, 1997: 61-69) removed the obligation of local authorities to provide official sites, thus revoking aspects of The Caravan Sites Act 1968. Furthermore, with its many criminal offences relating to trespass and limited toleration of 'stopping places', this 1994 Act also left many travelling families with little choice than to adopt a settled lifestyle (Donovan 2005:136), and further legitimated the criminalisation and prejudice that many Gypsy/Traveller communities continue to experience.

Drawing on the work of the stranger (Bauman, 1989, 1991, 1997) Bhopal and Myers (2008) contend that the positioning of Gypsies as the 'other' has remained historically constant for over 500 years. As they suggest, this has been a unique experience than that associated with the 'othering' of other ethnic minority groups who have become increasingly accepted by the dominant culture. They suggest that due to the sedentarised nature of 'Black', 'Asian' and other minority ethnic groups, overtime they have enjoyed a more positive relationship with the rest of society (Bhopal and Myers, 2008, p.72). Similarly Richardson (2006) argues that the history of 'othering' Gypsy/Travellers has been used to continually marginalise these communities more so than any other ethnic minority group. Drawing, in particular, the work of Lukes (1974 and 1986) and Foucault (1977 and 1980), Richardson considers how discriminatory discourses continues to act as a device that controls and shapes their treatment by the rest of

society (Richardson, 2006, p.1). This is something that would not be accepted, or tolerated, against many Black and Minority Ethnic communities (ibid). She argues that such negative connotations towards Gypsy/Travellers communities has become firmly embedded in the nuances of legislative and policy discourse which have subsequently been internalised and used to justify the often negative perception Gypsy/Travellers continue to experience from the sedentarised majority. Schools then become an example of 'sites' where the discrimination of Gypsy/Traveller children is continually played out as a social reality, and used to "retain a position of 'otherness'" (Bhopal & Myers, 2008, p.117).

Nomads in the British Education System

An effective National Curriculum... allows schools to meet the individual learning needs of pupils and to develop a distinctive character and ethos rooted in their local communities...It must be robust enough to define and defend the core of knowledge and cultural experience which is the entitlement of every pupil.

(The National Curriculum – Handbook for primary teachers in England, Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) / Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 1999)

For many Gypsy/Traveller children, school is often the first time they will have encountered a sedentarised world. This therefore becomes an opportunity in which to "get to know, and be known by, their peers" (Smith, 1997:17). By enrolling in the mainstream schooling process, that "values diversity", children from Gypsy/Traveller communities will encounter other diverse communities and at the same time their own lifestyle will be respected and afforded positive recognition and respect from other communities. Furthermore, they are able to gain access and enjoy the opportunities on offer at school alongside their sedentarised peers. So what is going wrong?

The educational under-achievement of Gypsy/Traveller children was first identified in the late 1960s (Plowden, 1967). As a result since then a number of different policy initiatives were pursued to address the problem. These initially included support in the form of summer schools of voluntary teachers teaching children and adults on sites; later Local Educational Authority provision came in the form of qualified teachers visiting sites in mobile caravans, and finally, with an emphasis on 'multiculturalism', Gypsy/Traveller children are now enrolled in mainstream classrooms.

However, the Swann Report (1985) on the education of ethnic minorities continued to argue for an urgent need for better educational provision for Gypsy/Traveller children. Further reports throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s (Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) 1996, 1999, 2002, 2003, Save the Children 2000; Bhopal 2004, DfES 2003, 2005) continued to report that despite a commitment towards the inclusion of these children their low achievements at school was still problematic. The major obstacles cited by such reports related to a lack of attendance due to travelling and hostility experienced by Gypsy/Traveller children once enrolled in a school.

If we look at the Department for Education and Science (DfES) (2003) publication *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller children*, there is a clear commitment from the government towards inclusion and the need for schools to become flexible in their admissions procedures in order to accommodate and provide a consistent schooling experience for children from these communities. Local Authorities are therefore obliged to provide these children with a 'base' school and dual registration with other schools they may attend whilst travelling. The 'base' school is then responsible for keeping appropriate records of progress, attendance and achievements as well as authorise non-attendance as necessary.

This commitment from the government towards inclusive education is clearly outlined by the statutory inclusion statement incorporated in the National Curriculum for England (DfEE/QCA, 1999:30-37); and further endorsed by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED):

'Where the presence of travelling children is openly acknowledged, and where accurate and positive images of the different nomadic communities are featured within both the resources of the school and the curriculum, then the response is lively and there is a genuine openness to learning'

(OfSTED, 1996).

So the question here is "despite commitments to include and support Gypsy/Traveller children why are they still failing in the current education system"? Part of the problem, I suggest, lies in the above quote from the governments' National Curriculum for England (DfEE/QCA, 1999:3), at the top of this section. The national curriculum is a statutory document which prescribes the content of what is taught in schools and sets out attainment targets for what is learnt (ibid). If, as this document clearly states, individual learning is 'rooted' in children's relationships with their local communities, what does this mean for the recognition and achievements of children 'outside' these local communities.

I agree with Arthur Ivatts (2005:5) who argues that although British education policy is one of promoting 'inclusion', the emphasis on both central and local government on acceptable

statistics on attendance and achievement, ignores an 'invisible culture of exclusion'. He goes on to argue that too often many Gypsy/Traveller children are not genuinely included:

The official curriculum of most schools often fails to recognise the particular cultures of Gypsy/Travellers and incorporate positive images of these communities in terms of what is delivered in classroom teaching and the representations in children's work on display.

So despite all this government rhetoric and debates around social exclusion and multiculturalism which suggest a "fortification and promotion of inclusion in the realm of educational policy and practice" for all children (Tyler, 2005:2), current educational policies have not been able to shift the negative perceptions afforded towards nomadic communities (Lloyd & McCluskey, 2008). Benjamin (2002) suggests that although many schools may appear to be genuinely committed to "valuing diversity", their priorities are directed by a standards agenda. She argues that as a result, such agendas do:

...not enable us to hold on to difference as a means of illuminating present inequalities and imagining radical alternatives. It thus seeks to do away with 'difference' prematurely, and can become complicit in the work of shoring up existing relations of inequality (Benjamin, 2002:311).

For me, this is non-more so pertinent for the inclusion of Gypsy/Traveller groups, due to their nomadic existence, whereby commitments and initiatives towards inclusion are simply based on ideas from the perspective of sedentarism. I thus question whether educational policies in place to tackle social exclusion per se will ever be able to fully imagine a radical alternative and thus address and support the desires of children from a range of nomadic backgrounds. I concur with Benjamin (2002) that within notions of difference certain differences are not accepted and the politics of difference has the power to conceal certain differences, especially when these differences sit outside the sedentarised "norm". I would suggest therefore one of the key problems for Gypsy/Traveller children may perhaps lie with the construction of a 'hierarchy of difference'. Educational policy discourses (including the National Curriculum for England as discussed above) and initiatives for inclusion do nothing but reinforce the negative perceptions attached to such groups which in turn justifies them as 'others'. I suggest, by remaining "othered", Gypsy/Traveller values become demonised, their differences discredited, and subsequently their way of life becomes unacceptable to the majority. I argue therefore, that Gypsy/Travellers have nomadism and this is a 'difference' too far.

For Benjamin, the problems associated with the inclusion of all children needs "to be understood in terms of social relations of domination and subordination" (Benjamin, 2002:321). In my view sedentarism becomes the dominate perspective, acting as a tool for the

control of space, whereby consistent school attendance and a fixed abode support the subordination, and thus 'othering', of nomadic communities. This, I suggest, is very much in line with Richardson's concerns above, whereby the focus of current initiatives to include Gypsy/Travellers in the education system focuses with symptoms i.e. continuous school attendance in the same school; as opposed to the root cause of their underachievement i.e. a culturally different lifestyle based on the desire to move around.

Levinson and Sparkes (2005), whose examination into the interface between Gypsy culture and the education system in England, found that children from these communities, even those who had settled into "traditional" houses, possessed uniquely different 'spatial orientations' that related to their own cultural experiences and were therefore often at odds with the "structured social spaces of the school environment" (p.751) which are:

Particularly alien to children coming from home-places in which they can wander freely, and choose time to work alongside older family members, is an environment in which boundaries have been erected on age lines, and workplaces constructed for individualised use

(ibid:764)

Like, Richardson and Benjamin above, Levinson and Sparkes suggest that what is lacking is a wider structural appreciation of an embedded nomadic mindset with its own unique "value-system, philosophy and identity" (p.753), as well as the emotional attachment towards nomadism. So even if settled, due to socio-economic pressures and/or constraints of movement by legislation, many Gypsy/Traveller communities view sedentarism as associated with assimilation, and a lack of recognition of their culture and values. As a result, Levinson and Sparkes found many children in their study would utilise the social spaces in schools very much like they would in their everyday lives, as an 'assertion of [their] cultural identity" (p.759). They found that many teachers in the study perceived the actions of these children as deliberately confrontational, and often considered them to be out of control and un-teachable.

It is precisely for this reason that Judith Okley (1983) contends that entry into the mainstream is a recipe for cultural assimilation into a sedentarised mind-set which Gypsy/Traveller parents do not want (see also Ivatts 1998), and which they should resist. For Levinson and Sparkes the:

...difficulties are exacerbated by suspicions on the part of Gypsy parents that schooling is likely to inculcate youngsters with values and social behaviours that are incompatible with traditional Gypsy life

(2005, p.752).

Bhopal (2004) "questions whether it is possible to achieve integration in mainstream education whilst preserving the cultural identity of Gypsy and Traveller groups" (Bhopal, 2004:51). I concur, but would further question, whilst education and schooling are based on attitudes of sedentarism, will nomadic communities ever be able to enjoy equality of opportunity? Just like Sparkes and Levinson (2005) I also believe that entry into mainstream schooling can be problematic for a number of Gypsy/Traveller children in terms of adapting to a school environment that is so different to their own cultural and life experiences.

For Clark (2006), it is for these reasons that many parents prefer to educate their children themselves, indeed the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit (DFES, no date) have reported a "marked increase year-on-year of the number of Gypsy/Roma and Traveller families opting for Elective Home Education (EHE)" (DfES, no date, p.2). Ivatts (2005) even cites positively, the ways in which 'new travellers' have delivered education to their children outside of school. He suggests that a genuine equality of opportunity therefore would include the right for parents to choose exclusion. If Gypsies/Travellers do not want to participate in the state education system their decision should be respected. However, it is no surprise when viewing education through a "sedentarised lens"; that the focus of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit has been to question the suitability of this EHE provision among Gypsy/Traveller communities.

Conclusion

With the introduction of free mass schooling at the beginning of the 20th century, education became established as a democratic tool for the pursuit of a fairer society based on equality as well as political, social and economic stability. Within the context of a neo-liberalism mindset, the realisation of such a society would be based on the importance of modernity, where progress and the respect of individual rights and freedoms are paramount. Underpinning this democratic process, or settlement, the focus has been the implementation of a particular set of values associated with the establishment of the "nation state" and a national identity. Such values became synonymous with a need to be settled. This sedentarised mind-set, or outlook, has become the dominant 'norm' and as a result has resulted in the marginalisation of those communities that follow a nomadic tradition. This "structure" of sedentarism has been fully entrenched in the way much of life is organised, including the way we school our children, where educational policy continues to marginalise, disrespect and exclude nomadic children both implicitly and explicitly.

Much of the prejudice that children from Gypsy/Traveller communities encounter in many schools today stems from a history of hostility associated with this concept of 'nomadism'.

They are perceived as a problem by the 'settled' community, where 'nomadism' has been perceived as an 'uncivilised' mode of existence and as such, a social arrangement that needs to be controlled and ultimately assimilated into the mainstream. This "problematic" view of Gypsy/Traveller lifestyles is perhaps evidenced by the raft of government legislation during the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly in terms of town and country planning, the modernisation of the road transport system in the 1970s and the subsequent loss of 'stopping places' and the implementation of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. These collective effects of government policy in various areas has been one of assimilation, which has also resulted in increased surveillance of many Gypsy/Travellers communities; the educational system being one aspect of this. Recent laws have done nothing to perpetuate and legitimate this history of 'abuse' which has resulted in the continued marginalisation of nomadic groups in society and been responsible for much of the racism they experience today.

Apart from the prejudice they face in schools, the static structure of mainstream educational institutions often means that Gypsy/Traveller children have their learning disrupted in other ways, particularly due to lack of attendance. As a result of this broken attendance record and an intolerance of their background the state and many educational institutions perceive Gypsies/Traveller children as problematic. This is despite much liberal rhetoric, in line with the democratic settlement, that has seen the promotion and respect of diversity within society and schools, particularly evident in relation to equal opportunities legislation; human rights issues around education and culture; and the implementation of inclusive practice as a neo-liberal philosophy.

Contemporary educational policy provides practical support in the form of encouraging attendance at a school (including dual registration), other adult support in the classroom as well as support materials to bring understanding in line with a government prescribed level. I suggest that if nomadism was structurally accepted, then children could move freely from school to school without any problems, classrooms would be based on the development of a child/student and not necessarily age. Furthermore, education would not just be about schooling, where different types of knowledge and understanding are limited to certain bodies of knowledge and passing tests, but education would encompass a wider learning environment based on the idea that learning can take place more readily outside schools.

On a final note, this paper argues that tensions between a Gypsy/Traveller lifestyle and mainstream schooling are clearly evident, and continue to marginalise children in many schools. I argue that these tensions are exacerbated by neo-liberal presumptions of education policy, standards and schooling, based on a settled code of existence or sedentarism. Therefore, Gypsy/Traveller differences are discredited and not accepted as a legitimate way of

life by the sedentarised majority, and thus many nomadic communities fail to enjoy an equality of opportunity they are entitled to.

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Chapter 3

Refugee Experiences In Education

Dayjour Sefre

Abstract

This paper is part of the theoretical work carried out for my overall project about the educational experiences of Afghan and Iranian refugee pupils in London's secondary schools. My prime focus here is on examining the impact of the social and cultural capital brought about by (or made available to) my research subjects, the processes of social exclusion that might affect their development and the impact of the hardship they face in the process of displacement from their original society, culture, status and belongings. These impacts are examined in their complex interaction with respect to shaping the educational experiences of Afghan and Iranian refugee pupils in the UK society. This work has been done in preparation for the fieldwork as a guiding tool for its design and formulation of relevant research questions.

It is argued that there is a direct connection between the theories of the forms of capital and the theories of social exclusion in the context of displaced people from minority ethnic backgrounds who lack most forms of recognised capital when they enter into the host society and therefore start with great disadvantages which then tend to perpetuate themselves through social exclusion processes for a long period of their lives. It is further argued that if a successful and inclusive integration process does not take place, the objective external displacement that these groups experience at the time of their arrival gradually gets transformed and perpetuated in the shape of a subjective internal displacement.

In the course of my fieldwork, I will use these analytical insights both at the stage of design of the research and in developing relevant research questions engaging with these topics from the refugee pupils' viewpoints.

Introduction

This paper is part of the theoretical work carried out for my overall project which is about the educational experiences of Afghan and Iranian refugee pupils in London's secondary schools. In this paper, I will examine the contribution of processes of displacement, forms of social and cultural capital brought about by (or made available to) my research subjects in shaping their educational experiences in the UK. Social and cultural capital is likely to be a major factor affecting the experiences of refugee pupils which I will research during my fieldwork. In

particular, I focus on what happens to this capital in displacement due to the potentially devastating repercussions of such an upheaval in their lives at an early age. I also deal with the forms of social exclusion that they may face and its effects on their development especially with regards to their integration in the UK society. The analysis and discussion of these topics provides the theoretical springboard which is necessary for the design of the fieldwork research, the research questions and the assessment of results of the research.

Theories of Forms of Capital

The debate on forms of capital was commenced by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986:241-58). Bourdieu's major works cover - among other things - social capital, cultural capital, the role of education in perpetuating social inequalities and social exclusion in education.

Bourdieu developed the concept of forms of capital (other than the economic) and in particular referred to social capital and cultural capital as distinct categories which nonetheless were linked to the concept of economic capital in a complex and largely hidden manner. Later, Bourdieu refined his concept of social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2002, 119). Bourdieu's conception of the forms of capital can best be understood in the context of his understanding of social hierarchy. He comments that economic capital ("accumulated labour") "is at the root of all other types of capital" (ibid, 252). Indeed Bourdieu extends the concept of predominance of economic capital into predominance of all forms of capital (in *combination* with each other) in modern capitalist society. However, he asserts that other forms of capital are more durable partly because they are hidden and therefore can not be taxed or confiscated in the same way as economic capital can be. If capital becomes imbedded in the individual through education, then it will be virtually impossible to take that capital away from the individual short of destroying him/her.

Bourdieu refers to "the extremely complex mechanisms through which the school institution *contributes* [author's emphasis] to the reproduction of the distribution of cultural capital and consequently of the structure of social space." (Bourdieu 1998, 19). This according to Bourdieu occurs through familial strategies and their relationship to the specific logic of the school as an institution. In this conceptualisation, families are seen in a rather similar way to corporations which devise survival and growth plans to perpetuate their social being through reproduction strategies including educational strategies. In other words, (privileged) families identify their strategic goal in the form of acquiring the highest possible standard of education for their children. This is a non-economic form of capital which is more durable and of course brings with itself social prestige and self-esteem in the way that economic capital per se does not. Indeed, in the case of the middle-classes, the more important the weight of their cultural capital relative to their economic capital, the more they invest in school education. This for

Bourdieu is a major explanatory factor in understanding the growing interest that “families of intellectuals, teachers or members of liberal professions have in education in all advanced countries” and also in understanding how the highest school institutions become increasingly monopolised by the children of privileged categories” (Op cit 1998, 20).

In a joint work with Passeron (2000), Bourdieu constructs a rather complicated model of determination of the objective educational success through the mediation of economic, social and cultural capital. In particular, the authors argue that during primary education, the role of social class is more transparent but as pupils progress to secondary and higher education levels, the direct predominance of social class reduces since it is manifesting itself in different forms within a dynamic structure. This is because by the time the pupils reach secondary education, their own talents and efforts as well as their accumulated knowledge play some role in their educational success. At the stage of higher education, the skills indirectly acquired through their class membership and their other social skills are also added to the mix which determines educational success. It is important to note that the role of social class never vanishes; it is just manifested in less direct and less observable ways. This is indeed how modern dynamic social classes ‘operate’ as conveyor belts of privilege between different generations of their members.

Svendsen and Svendsen (2004) use a rather clear and straightforward language to elaborate on Bourdieu’s approach. They argue that “economic and cultural dimensions of human exchange can not be separated. Rather they should be integrated into the same analytical model that we outline as a new socio-economic Bourdieueconomics. In this way it becomes possible to trace a dynamic interplay between material and non-material capitals in a society. “Non-material capital as social capital *lubricates* [my emphasis] the interaction between individuals, thus facilitating generalized trust and reduced transaction costs. Therefore, non-material and invisible cultural values can not be perceived as being of less economic importance than traditional economic values such as buildings, tools, machines, infrastructure, raw materials, financial capital and so on”. (2004, 16). Svendsen and Svendsen then develop a ‘general theory of the economy of practices’ by applying Bourdieu’s ideas within a unified, neo-capital theory framework. (2004, 17)

In my view, it is possible to apply Bourdieu’s hierarchical conceptualisation of cultural and social capital (within the unified framework elaborated by Svendsen and Svendsen above) to analyse the way that children from minority ethnic groups are prevented from achieving their full potential through the ‘social ladder’ of education. In particular, this approach is very effective in understanding the problems faced by refugee pupils, their strategies for coping and survival and in explaining their relative success or failure with respect to academic achievement.

James Samuel Coleman has developed the concepts of social and human capital in a different and more collective direction. He maintains that social capital is a productive form of capital which makes the achievement of certain ends attainable (Coleman, 1994). "Social capital is not completely tangible but it is tangible with respect to specific activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others. Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production" (Opcit, 302). Coleman develops the concept of social capital by comparing its productive capacity to that of physical and human capital. He cites the example of trustworthiness which when being exercised by a group enables them to accomplish much more than a comparable group lacking trust and trustworthiness. Coleman also characterises social capital as strictly relational (as distinct from human capital which is accumulated by individuals in themselves through acquiring skills). In other words, the amount of social capital increases as the number of relations involved between people participating in the creation and maintenance of that capital increases. However, these two forms of capital are complementary. "For example, if B is a child and A is his parent, then for A to further the cognitive development of B, there must be human capital held by A and social capital in the relation between A and B. (Opcit, 304). I find Coleman's characterisation of social capital as relational and of human capital as held by individuals eminently sensible and helpful. It brings a further sense of dynamism to the concept of social capital which requires the active participation of all human agencies involved in the relationship. The more they play the game, the higher the total amount of social capital at the disposal of all the concerned parties will be.

There are some similarities between Coleman's conceptualisation of social capital and human capital and the formulation developed by Robert D. Putnam. "By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital-tools and training that enhance individual productivity - the core idea of the social capital theory is that social networks have value. Just as a screw driver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so too social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups." (Putnam 2000:18-9). In Putnam's formulation, generalised trust (in the role of one's own actions being rewarded through stronger communal relations), social norms and obligations and social networks of citizens' activity in the form of voluntary associations all contribute towards formation of social capital. "Social capital has both an individual and a collective aspect. A private face and a public face" (Opcit, 19). Putnam carries on to say that as individuals we first form connections that benefits our own interests. Moreover, networking enables us to get our jobs through *who* we know not *what* we know, i.e. through our social capital and not our human capital! (Opcit, 20). However, networks by definition involve mutual obligations. They are not mere contacts. They involve reciprocity. This generalised reciprocity in turn results in a more efficient society according to Putnam, "for the same reason that

money is more efficient than barter. If we do not have to balance every exchange instantly, we can get a lot accomplished. Trustworthiness lubricates social life." (Opcit, 21)

Putnam makes a distinction between *bridging* (or inclusive) and *bonding* (or exclusive) social capital. The former is outward and rather weak whereas the latter is inward looking and stronger. Interestingly, in the context of say seeking jobs, the bridging type of social capital which links one "to distant acquaintances who move in different circles..." (Opcit, 23) is a more promising strategy. It can also generate broader identities and reciprocity compared to the bonding type. Putnam refers to religious people in America being unusually active social capitalists. Indeed, this is a good example of where both types of social capital combine in that people who attend religious activities not only strengthen their bonding but also get involved in bridging.

Putnam has reviewed a very substantial amount of data concerning the formation and decline of social capital in the United States of America over the last three decades. My particular interest here is in his work on education and child development. He has concluded that child's development is powerfully shaped by social capital and that trust, networks and norms of reciprocity within a child's family, school peer group and larger community have wide ranging effects on the child's opportunities, choices, behaviour and development. In particular, he refers to direct positive correlations between the Index of Child Welfare and Social Capital Index (Opcit, 297-8) and also between the Index of Educational Performance and Social Capital Index on a state by state basis between 1990 and 1996. (Opcit, 300-1).

In relating and comparing Putnam to Bourdieu in the context of social capital debate, Siisiainen (2000:3) observes that "Putnam's idea of social capital deals with collective values and social integration, whereas Bourdieu's approach is made from the point of view of actors engaged in struggle in pursuit of their interests" (Opcit, 8). Of course, these two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive and the observed difference is more a matter of emphasis rather than analytical contrast. Bourdieu explicitly links social and cultural capital to social classes and economic capital both of which by definition are collective forces. However, he clearly links this to the individual's possession of these kinds of capital through his connection with those collective categories. Indeed, a particular formulation by Bourdieu bears a striking resemblance to Putnam's wording where the former defines social capital as "made up of social obligations (connections) which is convertible, in certain conditions into economic capital; and may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility" (1986:243). Putnam on the other hand explicitly refers (in the quote cited earlier) to social capital as both an individual and a collective category and in a different passage as both a "private good" and a "public good" (Opcit, 20). In other words, in Putnam's formulation, social capital is a concept applicable both at the individual and societal level; it refers to an individual's set of connections and networks enabling him to advance his position in society as well as to the society's greater abilities

achieved through the combination of individuals' enhanced social capital resulting from greater connections, trust building, networking, etc.

Swain (2003) provides a comparative critical analysis of Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam and the economist Gary Becker. In his view, the concept has acquired a degree of prominence which exceeds its actual value in the sociological theory. He also rejects social capital as the "missing link" in development economics and considers the concept of social capital as "social fact" (as in Putnam) potentially dangerous in that it might lead to a policy of supporting community groups and interactions of all kinds indiscriminately which itself may result in the strengthening of the social positions of those who are already strong at the expense of the weaker ones. Instead, Swain argues in favour of a context specific approach in which understanding social relations in their complexity (so that it is clear who the weak and strong are) takes the centre stage. As for a beneficial use of social capital, Swain believes that a version of social capital which perceives it as "contacts with influential people" (à la Bourdieu) in a specific geographical, historical and social context, identifying the weak "have-nots" and working out how to compensate them for what they lack could be a very relevant analytical tool in the hands of policy makers. (Op cit, 212)

I now turn to the relevance of the concept of forms of capital in the context of refugees and refugee pupils. I am referring to the processes of displacement and dis-embeddedness which affect refugees in the host country. I am using displacement here in a different way to Ahearn's definition of those who relocate within their own countries (Ahearn, 1995). Displacement here is understood holistically; not only in its geographical and physical aspects of being away from home but also in an emotional and socio-economic context. It is not limited to the spatial dimension; it concerns the refugees' inability (in the main) to mobilise their economic, social and cultural endowments in the new environment. Expressions such as the 'power geometry of time-space compression' and 're-territorializing the relationship between people and place' developed by Massey and Burn respectively are very useful in this context. Massey has argued for the importance of [place](#) in a dynamic and *power-relational sense* against essentialised or static notions of place. In Massey's articulation, places do not have single identities but multiple ones. They are processes and not frozen in time. Places are not enclosures with a clear inside and outside, they rather link to flows and interconnections (Massey, 1993). Burn however re-emphasises the role of territory and the interaction between refugees and the host community as an objective set of facts on the ground; rather than focusing on the more subjective experiences of conflict caused by being physically present in one place whilst having a feeling of belonging somewhere else at the same time (Burn, 2001).

Refugees face extra-ordinary circumstances of being involuntarily displaced. In these circumstances, they are unable to mobilise their social and cultural capital as well as much of their economic capital (which is in the form of land, equipment, local expertise or credit). The process of displacement impedes the process of employing social and cultural capital (which manifest themselves in the forms of networks, contacts, acquaintances, friends, knowledge of

local scene, fluency in the local language, enjoying social recognition, trust and prestige, enjoying a particular social status in the original society, being embedded in the local culture and neighbourhood).

Generally, the lack of economic capital in the new setting encourages refugees to use more of their social and cultural capital. However, displacement renders the process of social and cultural capital formation dysfunctional through disrupting and dislocating the imbedded social and cultural capital of refugees in the new setting. Of course, it does not mean that refugees are completely devoid of social, cultural or even economic capital. In the main, they tend to be determined, resourceful, well-educated and open minded. In many cases, their newly discovered abilities shine (for example when women of an originally patriarchal society come to the UK, assume economic responsibility or go to higher education). However, the economic, social and cultural capital that the majority of refugees could access in the host society in the short term, is in the main, inappropriate to the new circumstances. Van Hear (2004) refers to a very pertinent phenomenon here, namely the class position of the forced migrant in the original society and how relevant it is to their ability to reach the new host society. He draws on Bourdieu's elaboration of the relations between various forms of capital and formation of social classes, and uses the term 'class' as a shorthand for endowments of different forms of capital - economic, social, cultural, symbolic and human (Van Hear, 2004, 1). In another passage, he states that "those in the wider Diaspora, who started off with greater economic, cultural, social and human capital than others, are able to accumulate still greater amounts and to pull together judicious combination of capital while abroad." (Van Hear 200, 28). In other words, the process of displacement itself re-emphasises the existing inequalities between different migrant groups and play a very important role in influencing the life chances of the refugees both in the process of reaching their physical destinations and also in the process of settling in the new environment. Very often, the new socio-economic status of the refugees is directly linked to their initial endowment of resources. A very prominent case in point relates to the enormous difference between the status granted to the Palestinian who fled their homeland for the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf and those who were dispersed in Lebanon or Gaza. The former were mainly rich, from the urban areas who, at an earlier stage, left Palestine with a good portion of their material belongings and money. Naturally, they settled relatively well, invested their capital and talent and played an important part in the economic development of their host countries (Hovdenak et al, 1997). The latter were by contrast those who migrated from the agricultural areas of the South at a much later stage without being able to take their money, etc. Their destinations have been generally over-crowded refugee camps which even when provided access to safe water and sanitation showed signs of stress, lack of privacy and high unemployment (Tiltne, 2008).

It is interesting to note that the social networks which exist between the earlier generation of migrants and their relatives or friends in the original society can be drawn upon by the latter in

order to facilitate their own migration; for example through financing such operations, providing assistance and 'advice', etc. In this context, those elements of social capital (such as trust and co-operation) which were instrumental in the original society acquire further prominence both in the process of migration to and in the process of re-settlement in the host society. Conversely, when the conditions suit repatriation, such trust and co-operation networks provide for repatriation of a substantial amount of social, cultural and economic capital back to the original society (Van Hear, 2004).

It is instructive at this stage to look at refugees and other migrants in a comparative context. In the words of Hyndman (2000): "Migrant identities are constituted by more than one geographical location and more than one appellation. Concepts of "immigrant" and "refugee" are defined by juridical and political apparatuses of national governments, premised upon the territoriality of nations and predicated on the political borders of the individual states" (Hyndman, 2000, 163). Hyndman then continues to juxtapose the situation of displacement versus placement which is applicable to people living in their own nation-state free of fear of violence or prosecution. She highlights the fact that a refugee is expelled from her state whereas the immigrant is incorporated into his (Opit, 163). In my view, this will have profound impacts on the psychological make-up of the refugees (who in the back of their minds always yearn to go back to their 'original homes') as opposed to the migrants (who want to establish themselves and grow roots in their 'new homes').

Social Exclusion in Education

Over the last decade issues such as disaffection, non-participation and social exclusion have come to prominence in social and education policy debates in the UK. "Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a special manifestation in particular neighbourhoods". (Madanipour et al, 1998, 22). Similar definitions have been provided by Alan Walker and by Monica Barry in their respective introductions to collections of essays in this field (Walker, 1997; Barry and Hallett, 1998). Hayton (1999) has concentrated on developing an analytical framework to understand these issues and to facilitate reaching policy solutions. The individual's social and cultural capital plays an important role in this context. Oppenheim (1998) has in turn linked a dynamic concept of social exclusion as an alternative approach to the analysis of problems such as poverty and disadvantage in a politico-economic context, dealing with issues such as globalisation of the economy, changes in the labour market and its organisation, patterns of distribution of income and wealth, etc. Byrne (2002) argues that although social exclusion is a multi-dimensional issue, it is nonetheless rooted in the exploitation of low paid workers in the new post-industrial capitalism. This argument is rather

similar to Bourdieu's formulation about the dominance of the politico-economic field although they use very different languages. I am *not* saying that either author has applied an economic-reductionist approach to explaining the social phenomena. Indeed, both offer a sophisticated and complex analysis at the core of which lies the unity and *primacy* of the politico-economic field (*my* emphasis).

A substantial body of work has been developed by a large number of academic and policy researchers covering the specific field of social exclusion in education. In broad terms, the conclusions reached about the causes of social exclusion and the direct correlation between economic inequality and social disadvantage are confirmed in the field of education. Smith, Smith and Wright (1997) have summarised the GCSE results of individual comprehensive secondary schools in urban areas. These show that in the most disadvantaged areas' decile, only 24% of the pupils have achieved 5 or more Grade A-C GCSEs (compared to 49% in the most advantaged areas' decile). They conclude that educational opportunities and results have become more unequal in social terms during 1980s and 1990s. (Opcit, 135). One of the comprehensive summations is done by Sparkes and Glennerster (2002). In a nutshell, it is conclusively established that there is a direct positive correlation between the level of educational attainment, employment and cumulative earnings. The authors then explore the major reasons for differential educational attainment. These include the family's socio-economic background, family structure, the education attainment of parents and ethnicity. In relation to ethnic factors, it is concluded that in metropolitan areas, Asian and Chinese children perform almost as well as the white children and much better than Afro-Caribbean children. It is also observed that during the primary school years, white children forge ahead of all others but the gap narrows down substantially during the secondary school.

Pearce and Hillman (1998) provide a wealth of information about the comparative educational performance of pupils in the socially disadvantaged categories. Pupils from certain ethnic groups are amongst those who are more prone to truancy and social exclusion. Of those that are entered for GCSEs, 1 in 12 does not achieve any qualifications; while 1 in 3 does not achieve even a single pass at Grade C or above.

Phillips (2005) refers to some noticeable patterns in the more recent years. A good example is that the highest achieving group of all those obtaining 5+ GCSEs with grades A*-C in 2003 were of minority ethnic origin: 79% of Chinese girls and 71% of Chinese boys followed by 70% of Indian girls and 60% of Indian boys. However, there were still observable differences in educational attainments between different ethnic communities and an evident widening gap between the higher and lower attaining cluster of ethnic groups. Interestingly, when the socio-economic status of the pupils (through the proxy of Free School Meals or FSMs) is taken into account, although the Chinese pupils maintain their higher attainment (regardless of their eligibility for FSMs), the white pupils eligible for FSMs have performed similar to the lowest

performing ethnic minority group (those who were also eligible for FSMs) namely Black Caribbean pupils (Phillips 2005, 194).

The most recent statistics about the raw scores for different ethnic groups are published by the government (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007 cited in Ward 2008, 16). The figures for 2007 show the following picture about the percentage of those attaining five good GCSEs (including English and Maths): Chinese 70%, Indian 62%, White 46%, Mixed 44%, Bangladeshi 41%, Black African 40%, Pakistani 37%, Black Caribbean 33%.

McKnight et al. (2005) have reached broadly similar conclusions in a study which has been devoted to the assessment of the Labour government's success in tackling educational inequalities in Britain. They also have concluded that the well-established correlation between the socio-economic background of pupils and their educational attainment (which in turn leads to lifetime inequalities due to relationship between education, employment, earnings and a range of other outcomes such as health and well-being) has further strengthened since the 1980s.

Walton (2000) establishes the extent to which participation and achievement in education and training is unequal. She then examines the impact of these inequalities on individuals' life chances, causing them disadvantage and social exclusion. She then discusses policy options to address these issues especially in the post-16 age group. According to Walton, low levels of participation and achievement at school are one of the main contributory factors to low levels of participation and achievement as an adult. She refers to work done by Kennedy (1997) which indicates that qualifications at age 16 are the key predictor of the likelihood of continuing education. Walton then refers to a National Institute of Adult Continuing Education survey in 1997 which identifies that whereas well over half (56%) of those who left education at 16 had not participated in any further learning, this was reduced to 14% in case of those who finished their full-time education at 18+. The survey also identified other factors including class and age which impact upon propensity to learn. In general, while more than half of the upper and middle classes were current or recent learners, only one-third of the skilled working class and one-quarter of the semi- and unskilled working class were in the same position. These patterns were also present in the respondents' intentions to learn in the future, reflecting a perpetual downward spiral in employment, income and status potential of the disadvantaged.

One important aspect of the integration of refugee pupils in the host society is the strategies for survival that these children adopt in the new circumstances. In a very succinct summation of the proceedings of an international consultation held in Oxford in September 2000, Berry and Boyden (2000) identify children's resilience and coping not only as a major survival strategy but also as sources of risk. In this context, children's greater adaptability to adverse circumstances may also expose them to greater dangers. They maintain that the children's

cultural learning heavily influence them and increase their ability to endure hardship. They also observe that, "In trying to integrate, children become acutely aware of the boundaries imposed upon them – the lack of familiar space, the many places they are prohibited from entering and opportunities denied them. These strictures can have emotional and psychological repercussions, with children losing self-esteem and restricting the horizons of what they hope to achieve (Berry & Boyden, 2000, 34)

In the case of pupils from refugee backgrounds, one major distinction which I would like to make is between social exclusion and self-exclusion. In principle, the former is imposed upon one by the larger society whereas the latter is a position which is adopted 'voluntarily'. However, in practice, things are not so clear-cut. Many a time, one 'chooses' self-exclusion in order to avoid being excluded by the society. One example of this is when a refugee pupil avoids mixing with his peers because he/she has a well-founded fear of being bullied and rejected by other pupils on grounds of colour, accent, social and cultural norms. Very often, there are no support mechanisms in place to engender a sense of personal value, pride and protection in such a pupils to enable him/her overcoming the fear of social exclusion. This sense of fear at times becomes so powerful and absorbing that it would result in an isolationist approach to all the social activities during the pupil's daily life. The more pronounced the isolationist tendency, the higher the probability of rejection by the larger society on grounds of his or her incompatibility with the group. In other words, if the individual does not adapt to collective behaviour, the group would conclude that the individual is incompatible with its required norms and would therefore exclude him/her. The pupils who face this challenge positively normally use a combination of bonding and bridging strategies just discussed to get by. They try to find pupils in similar circumstances to bond with and gradually bridge to the more open-minded members of the larger group, who may in turn respond positively.

The issues of social disadvantage and social exclusion of pupils from refugee backgrounds are inextricably linked to their status and identity in the UK society. In overall terms there are several factors which determine one's status in the pecking order of society. Those who have access to more of these factors are more socially endowed, entitled and included. By contrast, those with less access and endowment will be less entitled and more socially excluded. This social exclusion then creates the conditions for the already existing latent attitudes of bullying and racism to find a point of concentration for their expression.

Refugees' 'score' is low in almost all of the factors which determine their status in the schools pecking order. By and large they bring little social capital with them as they do not possess a lot of organic connections with the mainstream society and are generally not part of the local networks and grass root informal organisations. They possess little cultural capital of relevance to the host society especially in the areas that they have been mainly dispersed. Their command of English is generally not strong. They possess neither significant income nor

wealth, both of which are the barometers of success in our capitalist society. They have mainly lost their endowments through the process of displacement. Refugees are very often equated with bogus asylum seekers who are in turn linked to milking the social provisions and crime. These factors weaken the potential for acceptance and integration of refugees in the host society which lives in distrust and fear of the refugee who has sought refuge under its protection!

The schooling system is a sub-set of the larger society in the sense of reflecting all the major trends of the latter. On the other hand, schools also help define and shape the future society and provide the environment within which the major attitudes and behavioural traits (which would accompany people throughout their lives) are formed. The school system helps breed confidence and the ability to relate to others. Likewise, it can deprive pupils of their sense of confidence and from acquiring abilities to develop successful relationships with (and eventually integrate into) the larger society. For this reason, the main opportunity for the host society to develop confident, well-adjusted and well-integrated citizens out of displaced and socially isolated refugee youth is through the schooling system. It is this system which can directly influence the two way relationship between the refugee pupils and the mainstream pupil and teacher population from their initial perceptions of each other to their daily interactions with each other through their overall recognition of their respective status and roles in the larger integrated society which they would all join as equally worthwhile and contributing citizens.

Conclusion

In summary, I have discussed the theories of social capital and social exclusion and have created a linkage between these theories in the context of displaced people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

These groups lack most forms of recognised capital when they enter into the host society and therefore start with great disadvantages which then tend to perpetuate themselves through social exclusion processes for a long period of their lives. Even when there is a good degree of integration in the host society, the initial 'scars' resulting from their pain and suffering are still there. They simply get hidden and pop up every so often when they encounter a situation which reminds them of their own earlier hardships. In many cases, they refuse to talk about these experiences even amongst their own community, let alone in the larger host society. In these situations, the objective external displacement which they experience gets perpetuated in the shape of a subjective internal displacement.

In the course of my fieldwork, I will use these analytical insights both at the stage of design of the research and in developing relevant research questions. This will be done in a sensitive and engaging manner, so as to optimise the chances of eliciting genuine responses to the research questions from the refugee pupils and their families or carers.

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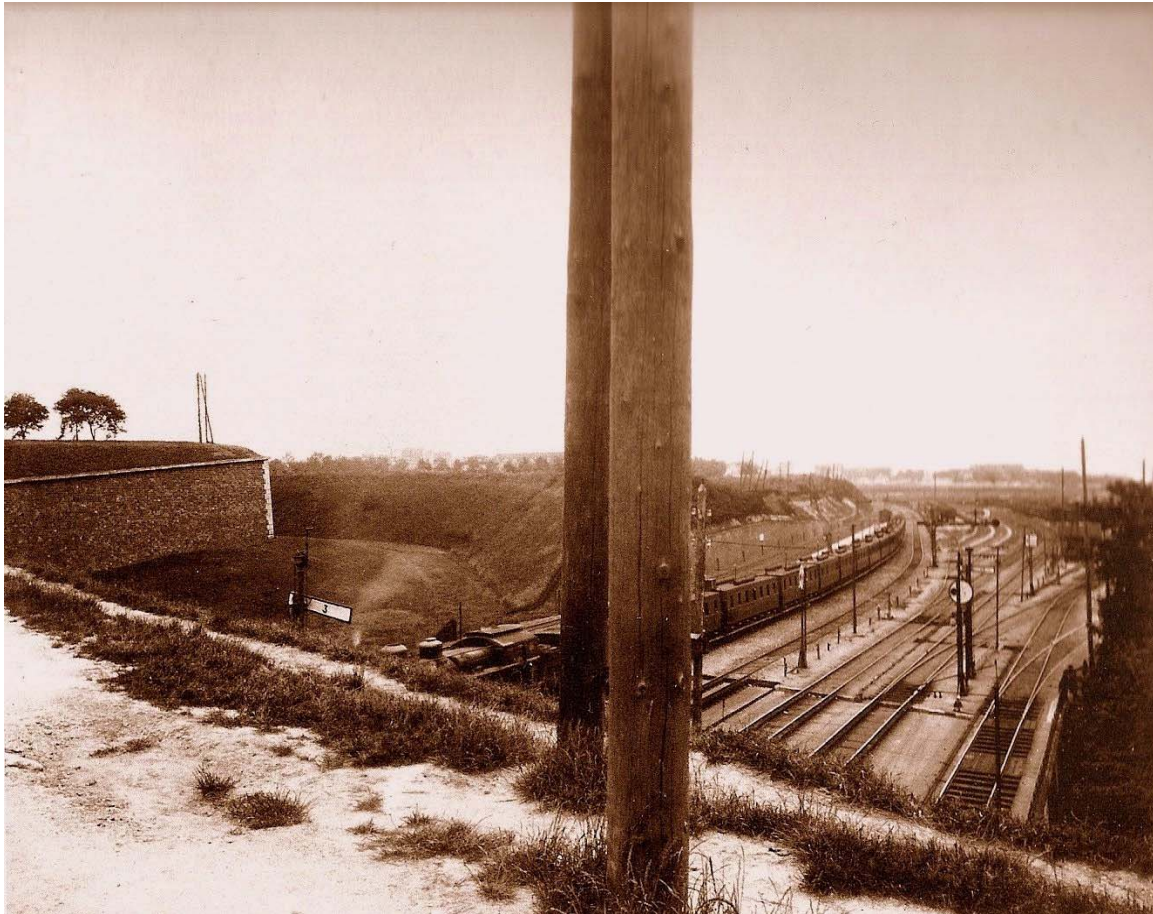
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(fig.1; Eugène Atget, *Porte de Bercy - Sortie de Paris du P.L.M. Bd. Poniatowski* - 1910, 12^e arr t., albumen print from a glass negative, 18x24 cm, coll. BnF, Paris.)

Chapter 4

Atget at Bercy

Ed Whittaker

Abstract

This chapter examines a photograph by Eugene Atget (1857-1927) made in Paris 12^e in 1910 on the Boulevard Poniatowski where it crosses the Paris-Lyon-Marseille railway near the Porte de Bercy (fig.1; Eugène Atget, *Porte de Bercy - Sortie de Paris du P.L.M. Bd. Poniatowski - 1910, 12^e arr t.*, albumen print from a glass negative, 18x24 cm, coll. BnF, Paris.) In this photograph there appears a deliberate disjunction caused by an obstruction that forces the eye to accept a route around it in order to be able to engage with the photograph. This is where two overlapping telegraph poles in the very centre of the image cause a division of the gaze into the two “halves” of the photograph – thus presenting an impossibility of pictorial resolution. This paper will examine as to why Atget made this photograph the way he did – or rather, and perhaps to be more accurate here, will report on the outcome of reflection on this image to what is happening in the photograph both within and beyond Atget’s intentions for it. It is the contention here that this photograph and its context opens onto a discourse of space that enables us to strike out a new paradigm of Atget’s later photographic work as an indexical ‘phenomenology’ of photography. This is not the complete chapter as there are a number of arguments that are not fully developed here. Instead I have briefly summarised some of these and indicated where further work is forthcoming.

Eugène Atget: An Introduction

Eugène Atget is a very famous photographer indeed. His work had qualities unseen in 19th century photography even though Atget remains in many ways a photographer of that century. He worked in monochromatic photography and his speciality was photography of the city of Paris, which he carried out for over 30 years producing in that time over 10,000 photographs. Atget was not the first photographer of Paris as the city had been a place of employment for photographers since the announcement of the invention of the medium to the Deputies by Arago in 1839 (Trachtenberg, 1980). Atget was part of a tradition of Parisian photography and his *modus operandi* had much in common with Charles Marville (1816-1878) his most apposite precursor. It was Marville who first made images of the ‘will have been’ – those districts and streets about to be destroyed to make way for Haussmann’s boulevards. Photography when it is used to document the city’s space is automatically a document that deals with the once ‘was’ but yet retains it in a representation. The photography of architecture introduces a new visual document into the city, as a document of change and transformation and yet remaining as a

statement of facticity. With the advent of the camera the 'dialectics' of space is suddenly made available for perusal by the public and authorities alike (Harvey, 2006).

It is hard from this distance to grasp the significance of this new approach to the photography of place introduced by Atget. If Marville is the first to record the destruction and reconstruction of the city then it is Atget who follows, but in a different way. He is doing something with light, space and time that Marville does not. That we know these facts and have a context for them is largely due to the good offices of American photographer Berenice Abbott. After having been introduced to Atget by Man Ray (Atget was known to the artist community of Montparnasse) she was to become the individual who would rescue Atget from anonymity (Barbarie, 2005).

A year or so after Atget's rather sudden death in August 1927, Abbott, financed by collector Julien Levy, arranged the purchase of all of the remaining glass negatives held by the estate's executor, Andre Calmettes. After negotiating the purchase, Abbott returned to New York, made new prints from the plates, and began to publicise the work, which she believed to be of great importance. She wrote:

"One can affirm unequivocally that no other photographer has played a greater role in the creation of the history of photography... or the demonstration of it as art". (Abbott, 1936, Lugon 2008)

Some prints from the Abbott-Levy Collection, as it became known, were featured in the influential 'Film und Photo' ('Fi-Fo') exhibition (Stuttgart, 1929) organised by the Deutscher Werkbund. This was the first time that photography and moving images were shown together as part of an umbrella of 'new' media. The thesis was that the 'mechanical reproduction' of photography was at the fulcrum of a new dynamism and progress, as if it had some 'evolutionary' significance in the development of a technological consciousness. The photography at 'Fi-Fo' was dynamic and 'shocking' by turns insofar as the central motif in much of the work, not least Atget's own, was concerned with ideas and images of the mass consumer. Other work represented the celebration of technology, was experimentally daring – much more so than Atget's askance views of Parisian shop windows (Lugon *ibid*). However, although Atget's work was not dynamic, eschewing speed and violent diagonals, it nonetheless was of great interest because it concerned the precise and objective picturing whose intensity (there is no other word for it) seemed to envelop a unique sense of both familiarity and estrangement. This was to reveal the city itself as a place of illusions and assignations where nothing seemed to retain any 'truth' but existed in a state of flux – and yet was 'real'. It is not surprising that Atget was fêted by the Surrealists, but even allowing for that, to see Atget within the tradition of a Parisian avant-garde provides for an adequate summing up of the position to which he would have been accorded following Abbott's espousals. Atget's reputation has endured ever since but what has developed and changed is the way in which he

is to be considered. He has become a very 'authored' photographer – in other words there are a number of 'Atgets' (Solomon-Godeau 1994).

The situation for the Atget of most interest here, is the one reconsidered most thoroughly from the perspectives of semiotics that emerge during the late 1960's and early 1970's.³ With the publication in New York of the four volume, *The Work of Atget*, compiled and edited by John Szarkowski and Maria Morris Hambourg. (Szarkowski and Hambourg 1982) a new benchmark in Atget authorship is set, although one that somewhat eschewed the aforesaid semiotic approach. These were to be increasingly sophisticated techniques of photo reproduction in the publishing of 'old' photography and the establishment of the Atget canon as firmly in the centre of great photography. Notwithstanding the sheer beauty of these volumes, they are partial and flawed documents and amount to a version of Atget applicable to a certain understanding of American photo-history. What they overlook apart from the semiotics, is the fact that Atget's work as a whole is based on a 'mechanism', that of the 'card' index⁴ (Krauss, 1986).

Atget's work, in itself an enormous archive, had been effectively divided by the Levy-Abbott purchase and the negatives brought to New York were eventually purchased by Szarkowski for the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Not only did they provide the basis for the whole photography collection of the museum, but they also gave free rein to the editors to produce an 'Atget' of their own. The four volumes, *Old France*, *The Art of Old Paris*, *The Ancien Regime* and *Modern Times* were the productions of Szarkowski rather than Atget. But despite this, are superb books replete with subtly burnished prints that enhanced the feeling of lost time that so permeates many readings of Atget's corpus. They were published to coincide with the major exhibition of Atget's work held at the Museum a few years earlier.

In a later volume by art historian Molly Nesbit, semiotic readings are embraced. She abandoned the methods employed by Szarkowski and instead concentrated on the *Seven Albums* into which Atget himself had ordered selected prints. These she believed opened onto a much more 'critical' even 'political' Atget. The eponymous book also stimulated serious French scholarship in Atget's work (although Nesbit, too is an American scholar), which had lagged behind its U.S. counterpart. Major exhibitions of his work mounted in France were virtually zero although the prints remained on display in the museums and libraries of Paris, such as the Musée Carnavalet

³ With the application of various critiques imported from literary sources to photography –for example of author paradigms as well as the view of photography as an act of 'reflexive' observation, photography scholarship obtained a new impetus. Atget has in fact somewhat eluded this, but when considered from the situation of self-reflexive photography employed by photographers such as Walker Evans whose work makes use of an immanent semiotic via the photographic referent and new way of thinking about Atget is secured. Most clearly this is advanced in the writings of Evans himself (Trachtenberg, 1980 *ibid*, 185-191).

⁴ Rosalind Krauss criticises the attempts by Szarkowski and Hambourg to lionise the 'genius' of Atget when she asserts that his card index actually holds the key to understanding his oeuvre, she states "(They) undertook to crack the code of Atget's negative numbers in order to discover an aesthetic anima. What they found instead was a card catalogue." (Krauss, 1986, 147)

and the Bibliotheque Nationale. This has recently been rectified by the fine, though inevitably partial, exposition, *Atget, Une Retrospective*, at the Bibliotheque Nationale (Richelieu) in 2007.⁵

It is safe to assume that Atget's individuality has in many ways been a product of his reception in the history of photography in the United States. In France, this reception was stimulated by the surrealists, but died down after an initial enthusiasm. Atget's reception in France took longer than in the U.S. Indeed it is possible to aver that when photography gained international recognition in the art world as prices for prints rose and as a connoisseurship of photography developed, so the 'general' rise of Atget finally got under way.

If the reception of Atget were to be categorised by any of the epithets accorded to him by John Szarkowski, he would probably have refused them all. When it came to his career, he was not a man given to associations of his 'trade' with painting or poetry, even though as an ex-actor he could (and probably did) consider himself to be a man of letters as well as an artisan photographer. He seems, however, not to have associated himself as a painter with the camera and nor as a literary observer like Balzac. He did not style himself to be an 'artist', but merely, as he famously said, a 'maker' of documents. But then neither did he undervalue himself. Atget was no innocent idealist or dreamer, but a rather an individual who, when he needed to, fought his corner. He was, at bottom line, a professional photographer who developed, because he had to, a great identification with his place of abode, Paris. He thus valued his sales to the museums there, his aim all along to produce a comprehensive and multi purpose record of the transformation of the city that continued in the shadow of Haussmann right into the 3rd and 4th Republics.

Atget; Photographer

Atget's working practice was to put his apparatus into a perambulator (a cart he had made for him) and push it through the streets, often covering many kilometres to the place where he was to photograph. The camera he used was a large 18x24 (7.5 x 9.5 ins.) view camera with bellows and tripod. It was a heavy object as were the glass plates, which were professionally sensitised to await exposure. Once exposed, he would return to his studio apartment on Rue Campagne Premiere (just off Boulevard Raspail in Montparnasse ⁶) where he and Valentine Compagnon, his partner and trusty assistant, would load the glass plates into wooden clothes and then remove the slide to allow sunlight to process the negative directly onto a sheet of light sensitive paper, a process known in the trade as 'printing out'. The subsequent image was removed precisely at the right duration (the controlling factors required judgment) and placed in

⁵ Literature on Atget in French is relatively scarce. As Lugon (2007) has pointed out his reception is more firmly dealt with in the U.S. and in Germany. One can speculate that in Paris itself where his work was absorbed in to its archival function he would, as a matter of course, remain less well known in comparison to the ubiquity of the 'greats' of Parisian photography such as Brassai and Cartier-Bresson.

⁶ Atget's apartment is but a few doors from the Hotel Istria where Berenice Abbott stayed on her sojourns in Paris and where artists like Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray and poets, Aragon and Tzara were frequent guests.

a fixing bath and then washed as in normal darkroom printing. All the prints from Atget's studio were 'contacts' and therefore all of the same dimensions 18x24 cm.

It would be perhaps colourful to say that Atget had become a familiar 'figure' on the streets of Paris. The legend that has come to surround him suggests this eccentric photographer, somewhat similar to a Punch and Judy man but this would be an error. In fact he would have been rarely seen other than by those who had need to be out at these unearthly hours. On most of his assignments he would leave the apartment before dawn and would be back by lunchtime. It is this regime that gives many of the photographs their distinctive lighting as well as the general lack of people. His appearance, according to Abbott, (Abbott, 1964) was deliberately unkempt with a patched up coat and trilby that made him look rather sinister. No doubt his former acting career came in handy – he knew how to enter stage left unnoticed and by the same means depart. At home he lived in modest comfort with Valentine who was to predecease him by a year.

Atget was also a minor political 'actor' with distinct Communist sympathies whose archives included left-wing journals collected over many years, which he later sold to libraries. He was a contemporary of the writer and dramatist, Raymond Roussel (1877-1933) the poet and avant gardiste, Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) and composer, Erik Satie (1866-1925) and perhaps should be seen in a similar context; eccentric to a degree yes, but also a self made individual – indeed a 'genius' of sorts.

His life also spanned the great violent upsurges of modernity – the First World War (in which he lost his stepson); the invention of relativity by Riemann and Einstein; time and duration by Henri Bergson; phenomenology by Edmund Husserl and the psychoanalysis of Freud. All these Atget was, without knowing it, part of. And, let us not forget the coming of cinema, coinciding with the advent of the city as a space of surveillance and synchronicity to become the mis-en-scène of the modern polis as a space of emergency and flux.

Historical Context

After about 1910 Atget's urban subjects become extended spatially as he sought to add to his archival albums by working in the areas of Paris known to him as the 'Zoniers'. This is the context for the photograph discussed below although it is not to be found in the album devoted to the Zoniers, but the one devoted to the Fortifications where it appears on page 29 (Nesbit 1992)⁷. In the *Atget Une Retrospective* exposition of 2007, the photograph (an 'original' Atget print) was shown framed and mounted and numbered in the collection as Go. 45881. The

⁷ It is not possible to write about Atget without reference to Molly Nesbit's superb research. In fact, she in turn acknowledges the great contribution of Maria Morris-Hamblough without whom it would not be possible to either read nor make sense of Atget's somewhat eccentric numbering system for his archives. The system of Atget is, of course, crucial for understanding how he worked and how he evaluated his purpose as a photographer.

curators accredited the Fortifications album in which, as we have noted, it appears with being sub-series of the major grouping of photographs under the general series heading of Paris Pittoresque. (Aubenas and Gil, 2007) The geography of Atget's work is complex as it is a 'quantitative' as much as 'qualitative' system. That is, it is based on the negative numbers and the designations of typology on the completion of the set. The photograph of the 'double poles' (this is how the photograph in question here will be referenced) although it is in the Fortifications album, could have ostensibly been included in the 'Zoniers' album also. There is always a degree of overlap somewhat like the areas in which Atget photographed at this time, a certain blurring of categories occurs typical of the intermediate character of the spaces through which he moved.⁸

The areas in the outer Arrondissements (20e, 12e, 13 and 14e) were the places where the Fortifications provided for a dramatic intrusion into the urban fabric. The redoubts and moats and their overgrown vegetation provided Atget with a subject that was both recognisable and also prescient in the sense that by 1910 the balance of power in Europe was already moving away from the older empires of France and Britain toward a newly confident Germany. The Fortifications were subject of much debate and had been shown to be useless in 1871 when the Prussians laid siege to the city as they had simply occupied the defences and used them to survey and occasionally bombard the city. There was much discussion after that of them being an area ripe for development, so their symbolic importance, as well as their picturesque qualities, was not unrecognised. Perhaps because the Fortifications were already an area of 'exception' insofar as they were a defensive bulwark, discussions about their future would then naturally tend to be discussion about the protection of Paris and with it the protection of 'la France' also. Typically, and in view of the 'debate' – particularly in the left wing journals that still seethed over the fate of the Commune – it would be Atget who would be there to make images in places precisely in the possibility of their disappearance.⁹ (Nesbit 1993, *ibid.*)

Atget and the Politics of Place

Atget is the first photographer who delimits the essence of 'place' in the way of the passing of place into memory. This is not to say he is the first photographer of Paris 'souvenirs', but it is to say that the way he used the camera and in the kinds of places he found, there is *more* than the aforesaid document to concern any serious analysis of his work. Not only does Atget 'mark' place with his camera, he also approaches the question of the relativity of time and space – that 'time' becomes a specific spatial element of his photographs. This is to suggest forcibly that the 'still' photograph is not simply a 'still' by its *a priori* character, but also a convention of the receptor's gaze who recognises the 'freezing' of time *in* space as being the 'place' in a continuum of other moments and other places. It is with the ability of photographs to do this that a 'problem' is created for the philosophy of modernity.

⁸ This question is given an in depth analysis in the longer version of this paper.

⁹ Nesbit outlines the historical situation of the defences on pps. 190-192.

Atget goes to his places at the very moment that thinkers such as Henri Bergson and Edmund Husserl are effectively challenging the nature of reality. Their critique, though very different to each other, opens out to the existential question of being and, as has been argued, such notions of being are essentially 'places' of being also (Casey, 1998). And if, as we detect immediately, that Atget's photography is a bi-ocular 'scanning' of a screen and not a single eye 'shot', then in this photography an element of duration enters the lens through long exposure to take in the required depth of field. The camera in this instance effectively becomes the perceiving body and displaces the photographer and assumes their 'place'. Thus this kind of photography (wide angle, the piecing together of the near and far) in the discussion of perspective and geometry important to both Husserl and Bergson produces evidence no longer the direct agency of an ego neither subject nor authorially constitutive of 'I' who is positioned in a centrality of a place. Photography is the decentring of the subject and the invention of the modern camera suggests it 'sees' without us.¹⁰

It is possible to speculate here without being certain as to how Atget's panoramic pictures in the Zoniers and on the Fortifications would have provided topographical information useful for the governance of the city in the 'drift' toward war that had begun in the previous 2 or 3 years. The photographs do appear to establish connectivity to a political process and the problem of the Fortifications and the Zoniers in general that proceeds by appropriation and expropriation¹¹ as part of a political aggregate by which space is brought into the public administration. Atget witnesses the passing of the place of the subject as a dweller into a new space of administration and order in which places are effectively replaced. Atget is the first photographer to photograph the reification of the 'present' as an impossible place of enunciation – that such sites are no longer viable as places of resistance but must concur in the economisation of space. Contrary to the notion of the heterotopia that Foucault posited by way of 'other' spaces (Casey 1999 *ibid*), Atget in the Zoniers and in particular on the viaduct, recognises that such spaces are now so marginalised as to be impossible to name. All places are now accounted for as political and administrative 'space'.

Instinctively, in his communism, Atget refuses not only the role of author-subject but he also refuses the denotation of ownership and the photographs in their casual quality are then 'contingent' upon events that, perhaps, were encoded in to the images¹². (Krauss, 1986, *ibid*.) This means that the 'state' of the statement i.e. the 'facts' of the document, are transposed into different vectors of memory and experience by second order observations of the 'archivist'

¹⁰ Both Bergson and Husserl make references to photography. They both averred that the photograph was a phenomenological affect of light –and therefore a sign. Bergson stressed much more photography as an indexical/scientific diagram in comparison to Husserl's use of photography as a distinguishing of the sign by the simple transcendence of absence and presence.

¹¹ A better term in French is 'dégagement' which derives from Haussmann's tactic of destruction and became associated with the method of photography that documented this. See ch. 1 of this study.

who in turn self consciously 'observes' into a photographic space that may not have existed in actuality – in fact, for true efficacy, must *not* have existed in actuality. This explains the riveting power of some of Atget's pictures where there is an unexplainable 'mystery' that seems locked into them – that was, in all probability not 'intended' to be there and, though fugitive – even phantasmic – is recognised/recalled by the viewer who more than likely is to be a topographer or keeper of the city's archive. This compels the reiteration of Benjamin's most famous remark on Atget, that he photographed as though in the 'scenes of crime', empty places abandoned to shadows and dust that recalled for Benjamin the inhospitable space of the urban polis, "The scene of crime...is deserted," he writes, "it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget... photographs acquire a hidden political significance". (Benjamin, *ibid*, 220)

The political significance of such photography's excess of memory (the old actor would have stirred himself here) is not lost in the irony of the Republic as a space of control and expropriation. Somewhat like Freud's concept of *Nachtraglichkeit*, Atget's photographs are 'deferred' images that are already memories by exposing the phantasmal conditions of what memories are supposed to be like – and in this Atget's work both appeals to and also completely undermines the conceits of the Surrealists – no wonder he treated them with such contempt.¹³ (Freud, 1991, Benjamin, 1999 *ibid*)

For Atget, photography is not a question of representation, nor even a mimesis, but a form of historical 'tautology' – it is a return to itself of its truth of itself and comparable by way of empirical demonstration of the historical *a priori* touted by Michel Foucault to designate the specificity of historical conditions as at once derived not to simply 'explain' history by simple cause and effect, but of what is immanent to history itself, that which will remain to 'haunt' it¹⁴ (Foucault, 1994). Therefore by one great sweep of the axe (or rather one tiny slice of the shutter) Atget's pictures – and here the double pole is exemplary – cut off the head of representation and all the symbolism of the subject as 'referent'. Atget's photographs do not represent anything other than themselves as documents of their specific conditions of possibility – but that an entire epistemology of the 'poetics' of modernity becomes embroiled in them and not least the presumptions of photography theory itself¹⁵. (Krauss, 1986, Burgin, 1987)

¹² There is no question that Atget knew the 'underworld' of Paris, its 'secret' spaces as evinced in the photograph of Rue Haxo (Nesbit, *ibid* p. 146), the site of executions by Thiers troops on the Communards in 1871. Indeed many of the struggles of that time were played out in the very areas that Atget was to later photograph.

¹³ Benjamin first posits Freud's case of deferred action (The Wolfman, 1919) into the literary field in his analysis of Baudelaire and in relation to the affect of 'shock' brought about by the alienating effects of technology, see, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', Benjamin, *ibid* pp 152–197.

¹⁴ It is interesting to note that historical *a priori*, a term Foucault locates in Canguilhem, is also comparable to Nietzsche's theory of 'eternal recurrence' and Benjamin's idea of the 'messianic' – something explored in the longer version of this paper.

¹⁵ Victor Burgin suggests that the 'separation' from 'neutral reality' (the natural attitude of quotidian world) 'is magnified when the world is viewed through the lens' and that the flattening of the image in front of the lens is abstracted to a situation similar to the tabula rasa. Burgin insists that the 'naturalness of the world' as it is presented in the camera is presented, as a 'deceit' insofar as it fails to acknowledge that such things that present to the camera are already in use'. (Burgin, *ibid* p47) Rosalind Krauss takes a similar position when she criticises certain readings of

Alan Sekula as much as intimated this in his readings of the photography of deviance. (Sekula 1984) He points out that the 'metrical' significance of the camera apparatus held great appeal for the techniques of observation and category necessary for the government of an industrial society. But he stresses the difficulty of such an archival method as being properly efficacious for those positivists who saw the photograph as the way of mapping people statistically. He writes:

"The archival promise (of photography) was frustrated by both the messy contingency of the photograph and by the sheer quantity of images. The photographic archives' components are not conventional lexical units, but rather are subject to the circumstantial character of all that is photographable." (Sekula, 1984, *ibid*, 353)

Sekula surmises that it is then impossible to subscribe to the photographic archive without also accepting some notion of typicality instead of specificity and that it is precisely this 'specificity' that theory of photography, as a 'doxa' has attempted to 'tame'. Either this is achieved, he continues, by "stylistic or interpretive fiat or by the sampling of the archive's offerings for a 'representative' stance." (Sekula, 353)

The other way is to invent a 'machine' similar to the 'dispositive' Foucault propounds in his reference to the panopticon as a disciplinary apparatus (Foucault 1979). This machine is the visual 'filing' apparatus that can order and distribute images (and bodies), as they are 'required' by automatically accessing a constantly expanding bank of material.¹⁶ This makes available 'things' that can be arranged and measured by mathematical framing and tracked from within the archive itself as a system of rationality. The linkage here between picture and 'referent' is merely contingent on its method of inspection. Until someone (an 'intendent' who reads the 'system') perceives it, it has no activity and, as it is relational, does not have any necessary *a priori* connection to its condition of meaning. It simply remains in the system in a state of pure information, in the *nachtrag*, deferred until it is made available. It is on this very cusp of uncertainty of the whole 'crisis' of semantics that the photographic image does indeed enter into the problem of disappearance and deferment that Sekula, in following Foucault relates to the crisis in criminology and criminalistics occurring in the years leading up to the end of the 19th century. (Sekula, *ibid*, 364-365) Manifestly, as Atget developed his own machine, it is to this last possibility that we can re-locate Atget – that his archive is informational, indeed 'indexical' insofar as it extends to topographical description. The

Atget's work as anthropological as if to identify the harmony of a real vine against one depicted on a lace curtain is the 'his' 'revelation when, in fact, it was already in use by the inhabitant.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault has averred that the disciplinary society, evinced by the theoretical apparatus of the panopticon, amounts to a series of '*dispositifs*' as they are arrangements upon which are staged the rituals of such disciplinary in a diagram or picture upon which elements are visualised in exemplary fashion.

political significance of Atget's archival machine, as intimated by Benjamin, is as a forensic 'pathology' of place.

Atget's archive is contiguous in style by its very 'rigour' to the bureaucratic administrations that had begun to take on the role of governance during the 2nd Republic. The introduction of systems continued to require the documentation of the progress of change in the city into the early years on the 20th century. Not only that, but the planning of the city in its concentric development, amounted to the rationalisation of classes by spaces of localisation and arealisation in suburbanisation. (Savitch, 1999) Partly based on public health and police matters (the cholera outbreak of 1832 was a turning point here, as were the violent outbreaks of resistance to the Bonapartist victory in 1848) such administrations have increasingly made use of statistical data in order to visualise and configure the necessary disbursements and expropriations of planning and governance.

Ian Hacking has effectively dealt with the emergence of indexicality via Comte's positivism and Quetelet's cartographic method of gathering and organising figures and quantities to realise the incidence of probabilities (Sekula, 1984, Hacking, 1991). With the development of the statistical machine, which maps out entire territories of administration and governance the topography itself is so 'indexed' to the very graph that defines its condition as spatiality. An indexical space would be the place on the map whose contingencies could be read as those requiring policing in the incidence of crime or alcoholism, or, in the designation of an area as unfit for habitation, suitable for 'embellishment' which had long been the fate of some of the more insalubrious *quartiers* of the city. To follow Hacking a little more, it is possible to go further here because the statistical index becomes an ornament¹⁷ in its rhetoric of political rationality, in its cartographic form whose curve of deviancy succeeds in defining the 'norm'. The Gaussian Bell (the name given to this graph), Hacking asserts is to be the decisive notion in issues of planning and development and determines policy on a basis of probability, which is the 'production' of various spaces at the behest of the state.¹⁸ As, once again, Foucault has pointed out, it is with the notion of the average, the mean and the exception of indexical statistics that 'bio-political' space is first delimited¹⁹ (Gordon *et al.* 1991). Thus Atget, the man who sees the street like no other, can be seen somewhere along his own curve as a keeper of such an index, a photographer of the polis who satisfies the statistical criteria of the city's archives and provides the cartographic method with topographical 'information'. It is the self-reflexive 'forensic' method of allowing the camera to perceive the emptiness of the space in

¹⁷ In popular parlance post 2nd Republic it was common to refer to Haussmann's violent intrusions as 'ornaments' and 'embellishments'.

¹⁸ Hacking states that "conceptual incoherence between prior conditions that made a concept possible, and the concept made possible by the prior conditions" is responsible for the perplexing question of a priori rationalism concerning "fundamental problems of probability, chance and determinism indicated by the laws of error attributed to the 'Gaussian Bell' indicator, amounts to a system of dealing with information and knowledge as *in itself* ontologically determinant. (Hacking, *ibid* p. 184) Thus the question would be what information does photography statistically convey?

front of it that becomes increasingly apparent in Atget's work in the Zoniers²⁰ (Nesbit, 1993, *ibid*). In the double pole photograph at issue here, there is, as it were, an empirical demonstration of the statistical image of a topographical space structured as graphology of synchronicity²¹ (Lefebvre, 1991).

In the photograph Atget, is both locating the poles and 'defiling' the document, dividing the image so that it cannot be seen as grounded, in effect cancelling it. The poles block the central avenue of the perspective and force the eye around the image. At the same time they produce their own 'point' that of a vestigial crack that appears in between them as if deep space is returned to the viewer from this crack which operates to flatten and discern two spaces one of which, on the right 'panel' appears to sit in front of the other. This fold, in its disconcerting breaking of the surface, is the very ob-scene/un seen point of the image, not in the sense of a pornography, but in the sense of the void located 'out there' that suggests from an invisible seam our place is always already provisional and displaced by such a void as indeed was Atget's own presence when he stood aside the camera and released the shutter cable. It is worth noting that as he did so he would have seen into the crack created by the poles, which the camera presents as a conundrum or a point of deadlock.

The poles are the harbingers of a new rationalism of space no longer the nook and cranny of the old city but the indexical context defined cartographically rather than placially. The viaduct of Poniatowski itself is a transient path in between to other sites, Ivry to the southwest and Bercy, to the northeast, a 'bridging' in between. Atget's camera denotes the movement of time and space as it traverses the viaduct via the interstitial meeting of the poles whose traceries are echoed as far back as the dusty horizon of the early morning light. What is significant to the lodging of this image in the Fortifications album is primarily the topographical view amounting to a 'mapping' of the way in which the fortifications are both integrated and used in relation to the railway yards. It is one the few Atget images of a totally open space. Indexicality here is announced not by an image of historical significance or texture but in the appearance of signs in particular the number '3', which is clearly visible on the signal to the lower left of the poles. It is not possible here to go into the full extent and scope of Atget's use of such indicators. Suffice to say here that the appearance of that little '3' is itself indicative of a landscape whose characteristics no longer represent the places of 'dwelling', but rather the transitory spaces of modernity.

¹⁹ Foucault makes clear that bio-political governance is not concerned with governance of subjects but of 'bodies'. Such bodies and their places that must be identified and situated by the use of the various *dispositifs* (techniques) including, presumably, photography. (Gordon, in Burchell et al. 1991 *ibid*. ps. 1-51)

²⁰ Nesbit writes, "...when the Paris-Lyons-Marseilles line appeared...its scenery was technologically animated but had much the same effect as the brick walls of the other documents. Form was rendered obtuse, thick, blank. (p.194)

²¹ Henri Lefebvre, not only an astute observer of Paris, but also of the way in which space is appropriated for the rational objectives of the military economy, would suggest that the suburbs of Bercy are to be cleared to form an 'abstract' substrate and become a 'interstitial' site as a result. (Lefebvre, 1991 *ibid* p. 57)

Contemporaneous with this image is the development of what could be termed 'phenomenological indexicality'. This phrase, perhaps not ideal, describes the affect of Atget's 'art' in its complete form, because it combines the representation of an image in its phenomenological effect and its indexical relation to the signitive of all signs. Is this not, the very structure of the phenomenological reduction in Husserl, the indices of C.S. Pierce and the intrusion of the 'dimensionality' of time – the virtual introduced by Bergson²² (Kwinter, 2000). Rather than attempt to outline all these possibilities here, it would be interesting to empirically explore one of them, namely that of Husserl's 'reduction' to the sign as 'essence' or as he termed it, 'eidos'. Notwithstanding the trenchant criticism of Husserl in post-structuralist philosophy, it nonetheless remains that the value of Husserl's 'mistakes' are that they partake of an idea of modernity that represents a radical break with the previous mechanical concepts of time and space and seeks to establish a new ontological condition. The double poles with its fold and overlap is not just an image of time and movement but is as an exemplar of encroaching modernity as it produces geo-political space as an imbricated system – a network of movement, time and space.

In an 'eidetic' phenomenological reading the '3' sign is the 'exact' eidos – it touches the lens as an optical ray that specifies the remainder of the picture as 'morphological' eidos – as made up of ordinary background things. Husserl, in his photographic reading of Newton (Sokolowski, 1973) the little number would be the smallest ray that measures out the ontological zero point of "I" that sees it – the ideal limit of picture. Without becoming a direct measure or a geometric line that can be seen (seeing produces its invisible double as one cannot see everything at the same time) the '3' remains phenomenologically indexed as a 'ray' in the form its sign that is taken to the camera by the lens. Thus the ray is an exact essence on the same vector but of different kind, to other exact essences such as "force, mass velocity, lines, temperature, ideal gas, sound wave, energy and the frictionless machine" all terms identifiable in the synchronicity of Atget's photograph (Sokolowski, *ibid*, 24).

However, strictly speaking here of 'photography' would not in Husserl's view constitute a phenomenological analysis as, in the gathering together of 'exact' essences indicated by the '3' means that Atget's photograph would be less satisfactory in these terms as it is, itself indexed to a 'technical' photography. It lacks the effect of a 'transcendental' eidos extracted from the natural attitude of the life world. Phenomenology then, is more concerned with morphological essence and thus the generalities of the picture as an image 'gestalt' as in certain branches of formalist art criticism. Husserl, though, does in fact draw a distinction here between intention and sensibility and that where intention overrides sensibility in the 'taking' of an object by photography ("perceptually, pictorially or signitively") to become a sign and not a 'picture' is

²² Sanford Kwinter's discussion of the 'virtual' architecture of Sant'Elia whose modernity parallels that of Atget, gives a very good account of the relativity of work by Husserl, Bergson and (to a lesser extent) Pierce in relation to thermodynamics.

where he tends to an equation with a possibility for the phenomenology of photography. He writes:

" For the sign too can be like what it signifies, even entirely like it...a photograph of a sign A is immediately taken to be a picture of the sign. But when we use the sign A as a sign of the sign 'A', as when we write 'A is a letter of the Latin alphabet', we treat A, despite its representational similarity, as a sign and not a likeness." (Sokolowski, *ibid*, 25)

Thus for Husserl the sign and statement are synonymous with the letter shape 'A'. In this sense, although rather absurd, Husserl could be challenged by Atget's photographs, as they are 'documents' and not pictures, that is to say they are indeed already 'Letters'. Therefore, Atget's photograph, in a move 'critical' of Husserl exactly 'brackets' the sign and releases, floats off the signitive intention of the '3'. In this sense the photograph self-refers indexically as identified with its content as dialectic of presence and absence.²³ And it is now possible to infer that the double poles are a bluff, a tactic played out with a deliberate and cavalier awkwardness. The 'real' index is elsewhere in the photograph. The conclusion of the double poles photograph, in the light of the entanglement with Husserl, is that the polis is now a man made space, abstracted from itself and locked into a cycle of indexes governed by the control of populations configured to economic and numerical disbursements. As the puffing train indexes itself to the timetable so it becomes clear that time, the shape of the signal '3' controls movement.²⁴ (Deleuze, 1986)

Conclusion

The work of Atget, then, amounts to an 'atypical', non-active, non-referential, non-semantic, non-archaeological, 'archaeology' of sites – space is not pictorialised as it 'is' but is itself, by the positioning and setting of the apparatus, de-spaced as laid out like a *tabula rasa*. The cartography is not simply as a wandering through the city's empty zones of displacement 'in search' of the ghostly presence of history, but an active engagement in the correlation of space to political administration. Atget is a positivist insofar as he confronts the area in front of his camera and then finds the best way of describing it photographically. It is only with hindsight that we can now see that he was also raising existential and phenomenological questions concerning the nature of urban 'reality'. Atget detected in the 'dispositive' of the old streets and courtyards the traces of lost time in which dramas were once or still are being played out.

²³ It becomes obvious that by comparing Husserl's comments with photographs by Atget, he (Husserl) makes serious errors re: photograph of 'A'. This is because he sees the letter as a 'mimesis' a copy in photography rather than as indexical 'trope' as in Benjamin's crime scene. As for Atget, the self-conscious bracketing of the sign becomes a technique that reaches its apotheosis in the work at Versailles in 1921 (Szarkowski & Morris Hambourg, 1982).

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze offers the fascinating view that Husserl is incapable of seeing beyond the 'pose' into the potential of the cinematographic image. This means Deleuze would suggest that Atget's photograph is in fact a cinematic image – with complex ramification for archive as a cinematic memory 'trace'. In this Deleuze would concur with Annette

What was the trace he encounters in the liminal spaces of the Zoniers where narratives of time were immediately present in the contingency of settlement and habitation and the movement of goods and vehicles along the *Quais* and *Portes*. Atget did not photograph modern architecture, nor hardly at all in the great squares of the Republic. Is Atget the first existentialist with a camera? Whilst he owes a great debt to the photographers of the previous 'historicised' century such as Marville, his work is radically different. It is this change in the perception of history, which, for Atget, is crucial to the understanding of the city as a political space, – i.e. a city whose destiny is always to be realised within and 'illusory' past. If as with Baldus, there is the organising of the textual mass of the architectural façade – its discourse and meaning for the 'State' embodied in the photograph, and in Marville, the sense of irony in the 'creative destruction' of the city of Paris by Haussmann, are there in Atget any comparable pointers? The answer is 'no' – because the whole notion of the monument representing history has been rendered irrelevant by photography. This is the cause and affect of Atget as an historical actor. Without intending it or realising it he achieves a decisive new space, both by and for photography.

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Michelson, (Michelson,1978) that indeed Atget is the man, not with the movie camera as such, but the 'scene setter', the creator of the first true mis-en-scènes of film, the 'any spaces whatever' of early cinema. (Deleuze, pp. 58-70)

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Chapter 5

The textile self re/collected: Materials, Metaphors, Memories, Methods and Making

Solveigh Goett

i. Editorial board comment on the first draft of the contribution.

Dear Solveigh,

Thank you very much for submitting your paper, *The Textile Self Re/collected: Materials, Metaphors, Memories, Methods and Making*, to the Crossing Conceptual Boundaries Yearbook.

The reviewing process is completed now. I am pleased to inform you that both reviewers have found your work original both in terms of practice and ideas. It demonstrates a sophisticated and well-thought knowledge on the philosophical connections between materiality of textile art, memory and narratives of everyday life. It represents PhD level work with its conceptual and analytical approach and bibliography.

Based on the reviewers' comments, there are a few clarifications the Editorial Board decided to ask you to do in the introduction and conclusion of your paper before submitting the final version for publication. These are as follows:

- * The introduction needs a clear academic context and rationale. Some of this is discussed in various sections but it needs highlighting. The introduction needs to address the issue that this is different work to traditional texts, and it needs to argue its case. The introduction needs to be re-structured in order to include conceptual clarifications and the specific methodological approach used in this research that brings together the art practice and narrative research methodologies.
- * The conclusion also needs a re-touch so as to highlight some of the interesting sections on memory and textiles and emotions and textiles. A clear summary of the author's argument in relation to textile production in the conclusion will highlight the specific approach used in this practice-based work.

The Editorial Board also decided to make some suggestions which could help you to improve your piece as a journal-length article. Please note that these are suggestions but not requirements for the Yearbook. These are the main points compiled from both reviewers' reports:

- * More scene setting at the outset both in terms of the rationale of the project and its methods especially as these challenge conventional understandings which I applaud. Look again at whether you can strengthen some of the interesting sections on memory and textiles and emotions and textiles.
- * Contextualisation of images and written text with some linkage made explicitly to the reading of the textile work. There are different sets of data used and (kind of) analysed such as images, narrative extracts and quotations from books. The data need introduction and contextualisation when they are integrated into the argument. Links between the images and the text could strengthen the lines of argument about materialisation of the interconnections between narratives and memory through textiles. There are also some extracts from a research or a collection published on BBC website. The reader could have been given some information about this collection and why it is articulated in this paper.
- * Less reliance on direct quotation and more authorial exposition or discourse. Many quotations from a wide range of sources are used. The connections between these quotations and the author's interpretation of them are not always clear. These need to be clarified.

Hope you will find these comments and suggestions helpful in next stages of your PhD.

ii. Author's Preface in response to Editorial Board comments.

The textile self re/collected: Materials, Metaphors, Memories, Methods and Making

Preface

Artists, familiar with, even thriving on, the eternal cry "But is it ART?" are confronted by another question once we take our unboundaried research practices into academia: art it may be, but is it RESEARCH, is it ACADEMIC?

In the vocabulary of our own discipline's history, the term 'academic' carries notions of conservatism and resistance to change, "academic art has come to mean conservative forms of art that ignore the innovations of modernism."²⁵

Art and art-based research, in this sense, must not be academic but understood as valid forms of intellectual inquiry in their own right and on their own innovative terms. Art cherishes incompleteness, creates openings, avoids fixities, verges on uncertainties: it is "from this sense of knowing and unknowing, and how we deal with it, that visual arts practice can be described as a form of research" (Sullivan 2005:115).

The scholarly value of art-based practices has been recognized in the academic accreditation of practice-based PhDs in the United Kingdom now for almost twenty years, yet with the proviso that the argument presented in the art-work is accompanied by a written component, the exact nature and purpose of which continues to be contentious and widely debated.²⁶

If, however, art in practice and presentation is recognized as a valid form of academic research, there is no reason why an obligatory text should remain a requirement in the future. Candlin (2000) suggests such changes might be only be a question of time: just like, for example, feminist practices "were once considered inaccessible to judgement, but have now become thoroughly institutionalised, so too will the practice-based PhD. Instead of being an anxiety inducing but potentially groundbreaking path that confuses modes of judgement and established authority, it will become a beaten path with its own canons, authorities and precedents."

The launch of the "Beyond Text" program²⁷ by the Arts and Humanities Council in 2007 that "identified visual communication, sensory perception, orality and material culture as key concerns for 21st century scholarship and the wider community" points in that direction.

But time is not on the side of the artist/researcher hoping to submit her thesis in a year's time. Decisions have to be taken on how and what to write taking into account that the argument proposed in the artwork in its particularity cannot be otherwise conveyed. Form and content being inextricably linked, even, as Benjamin (2006:97) suggests, the same, the crossing of boundaries cannot be contained in content leaving form unaffected.

Artists are not social scientists (Biggs:2009), and while we share "similar goals in the quest to create new knowledge and understanding", rather than adopting the research paradigms and conventions of another discipline, artists need to insist on their own "different, yet

²⁵ Tate Collections glossary, <http://www.tate.org.uk/collections/glossary/definition.jsp?entryId=387>, retrieved 1 June 2009

²⁶ see, for example, Working Papers in Art and Design, http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/index.html, retrieved 3.4.2008

complementary paths." (Sullivan 2005:34) Furthermore, judging matters of equivalence between practice and text "according to rules that can only be changed by those who make them" (Sullivan 2005:89) becomes a lop-sided affair: there is, Sullivan (ibid) argues, "an inherent folly in assuming that practices from different fields can be validly compared if criteria are drawn from the disciplines of authority." (Sullivan 2005:89)

Thus the text accompanying the artwork needs to be guided by the art practices that have given rise to it rather than comply with other disciplines' conventions of academic writing. Its task is neither to describe and thereby "threaten an infinity of detail that becomes translated into an infinity of verblatity" (Stewart 1993:52) nor to explain the artwork and thereby reduce its meaning, taking away from the receiver a multitude of potential links to be made beyond the stated and verbalized intentions of the artist.

Bal (2008:205-208) advocates a move away from artist intentionality towards investigative tools of analogy, motivation, serendipity and secrecy. Just like "art thrives on pluralistic interpretation" (Biggs 2009), the text, understood as artwork, "rather than guide, control or recommend" should "allow the reader/receiver to make up their own mind."

The text as artwork does not aim for conclusions nor does it state a specific methodology in advance of the process that generates it. Indeed, Bal (2008:209) argues, the demand for research to "follow pre-established protocols, what we call with grandeur 'methodology'" comes from a different time when research aimed at disclosure and discovery of already existing material rather than at innovation, which such rules preclude *a priori*.

Multiple truths, open-ended outcomes and vague concepts have been, beyond the arts, acceptable in scholarly research for some time with values shifting across disciplines away from indisputable matters of fact and unambiguous conclusions to matters of coherence and contingencies. Thus artists, Tina Engels-Schwarzhaupt (2008) argues, might be pitching themselves against a perceived notion of the nature of scholarly research that is no longer a reality, but has become a stereotype where old myths of binary oppositions are perpetuated. Challenging the perceived wisdom of academic writing, Freeman, for example, proposes a "more poetic way of writing" in research, "using *words* in such a way that they can carry the weight, and the depth, of the phenomena in question" – such writing "will be less orientated toward arguing, convincing, making a definite case, than toward appealing, suggesting, opening, pointing toward the possible." (Ruppel, 2008:33)

Holly (2008:5) feeling "troubled by the loss of wonder" in art research, wonders how what is "in excess of research" can be grasped. This, I would argue, cannot be achieved within narrow prescriptions of how research is to be written about – academic rationale followed by specific

²⁷ <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/BeyondText.aspx>, retrieved 16.5.2008

methodology preceding an argument that will result in final conclusions – but it can be approximated by applying artistic practices to the text itself, employing strategies of “the contingent, associative, and serendipitous” (Morra 2008:51), “the ephemeral, ambiguous, and the intuitive” (ibid:52) in the writing.

Morra (2008:54), quoting Tacita Dean’s description of her work “created through a meandering, ill-formed thought process where the minutest of incidents can, and have, instructed major decisions,” suggests that such work, “done by memory, associative drifting, daydreaming, and contingent impulses is what keeps us motivated and on track, by being seemingly off-track, while undertaking research.” (ibid:55)

The “homelessness of art” that has no “fixed medium, subject matter, or approach – matched by its ability to make viewers ‘homeless’ as well by expelling them from their familiar perspectives on the world” (Najafi 2008:143/4) thus can find through such strategies its expression in the text that accompanies the artwork, taking the reader, ever so slightly, beyond familiar comfort zones into gaps between experience and its verbalization, between the thing and its becoming an image, gaps made tangible in the text itself.

Thus the reader rather than being led straight from point to point, is drawn into a particular process of thinking and feeling, through suggestions and propositions, with little jolts disrupting expectations and loose ends left behind. In the text as artwork meaning arises in an interweaving of the artist/writer’s intention and the reader/receiver’s reception and perception, curiosity and wonder holding “open a space of ambivalence” with the “the goal of producing estrangement” (Najafi 2008:142).

The text I am presenting to you is a hybrid, an example of arts-led writing in the spirit of “meandering, endless research open to sideswipes and uninvited guests, and driven on by a sense of adventure,” (Najafi 2008:155) yet not as unencumbered by academic conventions as the writer would like it to be: familiar enough as not to alienate the reader, yet sufficiently different, hopefully, to stimulate debates about how boundaries might be crossed in small steps as we engage with “the pleasures and dangers of our obsessions and encounters with the incoherence, chaos, and wonder at the heart of the process of doing research” (Smith 2008:x).

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iii. Paper.

The textile self re/collected: Materials, Metaphors, Memories, Methods and Making

Beginnings

"My earliest memory is of my father taking me to start school. [...] When he was walking me to school he lost a leather button from his camel coat, I remember searching for it for weeks and weeks after, I never found that button." (BBC 2006)

Image 1

Attachments



Our memories are wrapped in cloth. Virginia Woolf (1990:72) in her first memory recalls not her mother's face but her dress: in her mind she "can still see purple and red and blue, I think, against the black; they must have been anemones, I suppose." Her mother was wearing the dress on a train journey, maybe back from London, but "more artistically convenient", she muses, to suppose the journey went to St Ives because then the memory of the dress can be made to blend into another first memory, of lying in bed in the nursery watching the movement of the light behind a yellow blind, hearing its sound in the wind, a memory of "lying and hearing [...] and seeing and [...] feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive." (1990:73)

Images of affect, synaesthetic minglings of feelings and sensations, of textures still felt in the head – textiles are physical manifestations of connectedness. The arrival of a new sibling may be remembered through the blanket the baby is wrapped in, the death of a grandparent through the curtains being closed, the first day at school through a coat and a button.

Image 2



In Sampedro's (1993) novel *La Sonrisa Etrusca* an old man refuses to let go of a threadbare blanket: imbued with the sweat of the best and worst moments of his life, carrying the marks of partisan battles fought in his youth, it will soon be his shroud. The blanket provides warmth and protection in this life and in preparation for the next.

Methods

"Take joy in your digressions. Because that is where the unexpected arises."
Brian Massumi (2002:18)

Meandering through the fabrics of everyday life, this art-based research project investigates how the threads of our experience link to lines of thought in academic discourse. Tracing the movement of knowledge from tacit to explicit across time and space, backwards in memory and forwards in anticipation, it seeks to engage the virtual, is "searching for the not-yet-known" (Smith 2008:x), a quest for meaning still to be made.

Art and narrative, both relational practices (Cavarero 2000, Bourriaud 2002) linked in spirit and method, bring into consciousness the diversity of potential links to be made and imagined in investigations of the fabric of life. In art practice as in storytelling "it is," Tim Ingold (2007:91) says, "in the movement from place to place – or from topic to topic – that knowledge is integrated."

Image 3

*Are we nearly
there?*



Such a project feeds on serendipity, is driven by curiosity, passion and desire, and rests on the realisation that the most important things in life remain unsaid (Back 2009). How, then, can we find ways to engage with knowledge beyond the word to capture what falls through the net of texts? I am directing my attention to the textile web that surrounds all our activities, be they domestic or academic, put my senses to work alongside my mind as I think through my hands. There is, beyond narrative meandering, no method set out in advance to be followed, only an immersion in a process of playful exploration lest the delicate web of our imaginations might be torn too soon by a heavy-handed academic approach, too rigorously applied.

In interdisciplinary research methodological and theoretical research frameworks rather than understood in images of hard wooden window frames marking separation and reinforcing borders, are perhaps better visualized through a textile image of softly moving curtains that frame the window as permeable and shifting boundaries marking fields of ideas without restricting their flow.

Image 4

Memory

Box.



Rigour and robustness might be the cornerstones of solid research, shiftiness and flow the indulgences of the artist, yet imaginative methods engaging with life as it moves could be closer to the truth of lived experience and thus more scientifically valid than detached, seemingly more objective methods trying to impose order upon it. "The more art," Freeman suggests (Ruppel et al 2007:32), "the more science."

The fabric on display in this paper is not yet "completely tidy, is not surveyable at one glance. Many of its motifs are not followed up, many of its threads are tangled. There are wefts which stand out like foreign bodies, repetitions, material that has not been worked out to its conclusion" (Wolf 1984:142) – the reader is made witness of a process of investigation. Every loose end offers an opportunity to digress, to venture into unfamiliar territory, to be surprised.

In this spirit of open-mindedness the reader is invited on a meandering tour through images, memories, metaphors, stories and other artful fabrications interwoven with strands of thought from theoretical discourse.

While largely unencumbered by method at the outset and innovative in its textile orientation, this project is not one of a kind but embedded in a scholarly tradition that stretches from the *Wunderkammer* of early modernity via the work of Aby Warburg to contemporary interdisciplinary and practice-based research. It ties in with a palpable desire across the academic spectrum to reach beyond established text-based practices towards more poetic and imaginative approaches to grasp the complexity of lived experience as researchers venture into the realm of the senses and seek collaborations with artists.

Image 5
Touch &
feelings.



The artistic act, Warburg (Gombrich 1970:290) writes in the *Mnemosyne* project, takes place "between inward-moving imagination and outward-going reason," is an exploration of things "by the groping hand."

To grasp textile knowledge, understanding better is not enough, we also need to feel more, and move between one and the other, "balance reflection in ways that enable us to jump from feeling to concept, and the converse." (Daignault 2005). Inventing methods in the process, communicating through correspondences, investigating the "bordered borderlessness" (Maharaj 1998:191) of textiles, I work among "vague concepts, and concepts of vagueness," which, Massumi (2002:13) suggests, "have a crucial, and often enjoyable role to play" in research.

Image 6
Non verbis sed
rebus.



"The dialectic of word and image," Mitchell (Harrison & Wood 1995:1106) observes, "seems to be constant in the fabric of signs that a culture weaves around itself," and there always remains "the suspicion that beneath words, beneath ideas, the ultimate reference in the mind is the image."

Warburg's hope was to arrive at a theory of collective memory through images alone, "to tell a complex story by means of pictures" (Gombrich 1970:285), a story difficult if not impossible to put into words. The starting point of his research which became a life time's passion, Gombrich (1970:311) tells us, "in that memorable winter of 1888, when he showed his future wife round the Florentine galleries, was the drapery style of Filippino Lippi and Boticelli, those fluttering garments and flying locks which he became to describe as 'accessories in motion.'" Through "these ornamental flourishes of wind-blown scarves and ribbons" (ibid) Warburg began to trace the moving body across time and space in the textiles accompanying its movement.

Warburg's research like *The Arcades Project* of Walter Benjamin (1999) was never finished, and remains, by its very nature and scope, an ongoing concern, perhaps even an interminable task. Both scholars worked in the midst of lived experience, yet at the margins of established academic wisdom. "Current interest in both thinkers," Rampley (2000:102) notes, "is undoubtedly a reflection of the erosion of traditional subject boundaries in contemporary academic discourse."

Textiles

"Tissue, textile and fabric provide excellent models of knowledge, excellent quasi-abstract objects, primal varieties: the world is a mass of laundry."
Michel Serres (Connor 2005:323)

Textiles are an integral part of human existence: essential for survival, they accompany us through the journey of life and are thus intimately linked to lived and imagined experience. Remembering myself and listening to others, I have become intrigued by the strong emotions that are evoked and sustained by such humble items as curtains, socks, blankets, towels or pyjamas in people's life stories.

The domestic textiles at the core of our material experience while in daily use seem ordinary items of little apparent significance beyond the obvious; yet from the moment we are born and long before we can speak we are in touch with textiles.

*Image 7 Me as a
baby.*



"I can recall the sense of frustration at being unable to pull my left arm away fully from the metal bar of my pushchair. The wool of my sleeve had got caught on something underneath [...] I can remember both my hands were enclosed in knitted mittens tucked into knitted sleeves and that I didn't have the manual dexterity to free myself." (BBC, 2006)

It is through textiles that we first learn about the material world around us, acquire a sense of place and time, learn about comfort and struggle, wetness and warmth, folds and texture, entanglement and friction, exposure and protection and how they feel to us: the tears of pain and happiness, the sweat of anxiety and excitement both part of the self and absorbed by the cloth, perception and affection, inside and out, body and thing inextricably interwoven in memory, "two poles of the same connectibility" (Massumi 2002:96).

Image 8
Safety
matters.



In his childhood memory Walter Benjamin (2006) recalls the comfort of a clear conscience in the crisp creaseless sheet on his bed; in the sound of the carpet beating he hears the rhythm of the lower classes, sometimes slowing down in resignation, then speeding up again as if in expectation of difficulties to come. In the transparent fabric world of the curtain the child became into a ghost, a white breeze of wind. In the bottom of his mother's sewing box with its unravelled threads, fabric scraps, hooks and buttons of strange shapes, mysteries were to be discovered and riddles solved. In his parents' bedroom he can sense good and evil dwelling among the dressing gowns behind a velvet curtain and the linen in the cupboard.

"The darkness on the other side of the curtain was impenetrable: this corner formed the infernal pendant to the paradise that opened with my mother's linen closet. The shelves of that wardrobe [...] held the neatly stacked linen for bed and table [...]. A scent of lavender came from plump silk sachets that dangled over the pleated linen on the inside [...]. In this way the old mysterious magic of knitting and weaving, which once had inhabited the spinning wheel, was divided into heaven and hell." (Benjamin 2006:101,102)

In such textile tales we sense the extraordinary in the ordinary, yet in daily life the significance of the quotidian is overshadowed by habit and sometimes only revealed when what has been taken for granted is lost.

The German author Erich Kästner (Strich 1978) remembers in his diary the day his flat was hit in an air raid and all his possessions were burnt. Contemplating his losses with resignation and even a touch of humour – books, typewriters, manuscripts, toothbrush, the salami in the larder, the flowers in the vase, all gone – it is only when he recalls that his mother, still unaware of what has happened, is on her way through war torn Berlin to bring back his washing, that the enormity of what has happened strikes him: what has been lost is not just the material and utilitarian value, but also the relational value, the materialized affective bonds with his mother, things, he thought, could never be burned.

Image 9
Heart of the
matter.



"And then the bed linen, the shirts, the embroidered handkerchiefs, the ties that mother gave to me every year for Christmas. The proud joy of giving, which she ironed back into them after every wash. That's also burnt. I used to think things like couldn't be burnt. One has to experience first before one can comment, on one's own body. Or on one's own underwear. Well." Erich Kästner, 1943 (Strich 1978:155)

The textiles of everyday life can be understood as the literal fabric of life in sustaining and supporting the body, narrative as a metaphorical fabric of life creating a sense of self through meaning making. Together they hold body and soul together: we are textile selves as we are narrative selves.

Through textiles, Heidi Helmhold (2007:1) writes, the everyday enters into academia as tacit knowledge literally carried on the skin, and ends up in and in between all disciplines. Yet in academic discourse the embodied self tends to be a naked concept bereft of its material shell in relation to unspecified objects and others. But however abstracted from the materiality of lived experience such writing may be, textile knowledge reveals itself in images of folds and threads, knots and weaves in the fabric of discourse. The concepts we think with and the metaphors we live by (Lakoff & Johnson 2003) are underpinned by textiles.

Image 10

Methodology.



As the mind and thinking itself are embodied and shaped by bodily experiences and interactions, both in daily life and in theoretical discourse, everyday textiles are central and essential – rendered marginal only by force of habit. Habit in research, art and daily life, is a double-edged sword – important and appropriate to have automatic responses and useful orders of concepts and categories to act and think – but to sense the extraordinary in the ordinary we need, in Bergson's words, "attentive recognition" (2004:118), "the power to value the useless" and "the will to dream" (2004:94).

Collecting

"...the collection encodes an intimate narrative, tracing what Proust calls 'le fil des heures, l'ordre des années et des mondes' – the continuous thread through which selfhood is sewn into the unfolding fabric of a lifetime's experience." Roger Cardinal (1994:68)

I collect stories and memories gathered from all kinds of sources, from conversations and anecdotes, newspapers, exhibitions, websites and literature with no distinction made between fact and fiction. Imagination is an integral part of lived experience, is itself a fact of life as we remember the past, envision the future and take decisions on the threshold where one flows into the other: "Narrative imagination seamlessly mingles the factual with the fictitious, the real with the possible" (Brockmeier 2005).

Image 11

*Snow-White & Rose-
Red.*



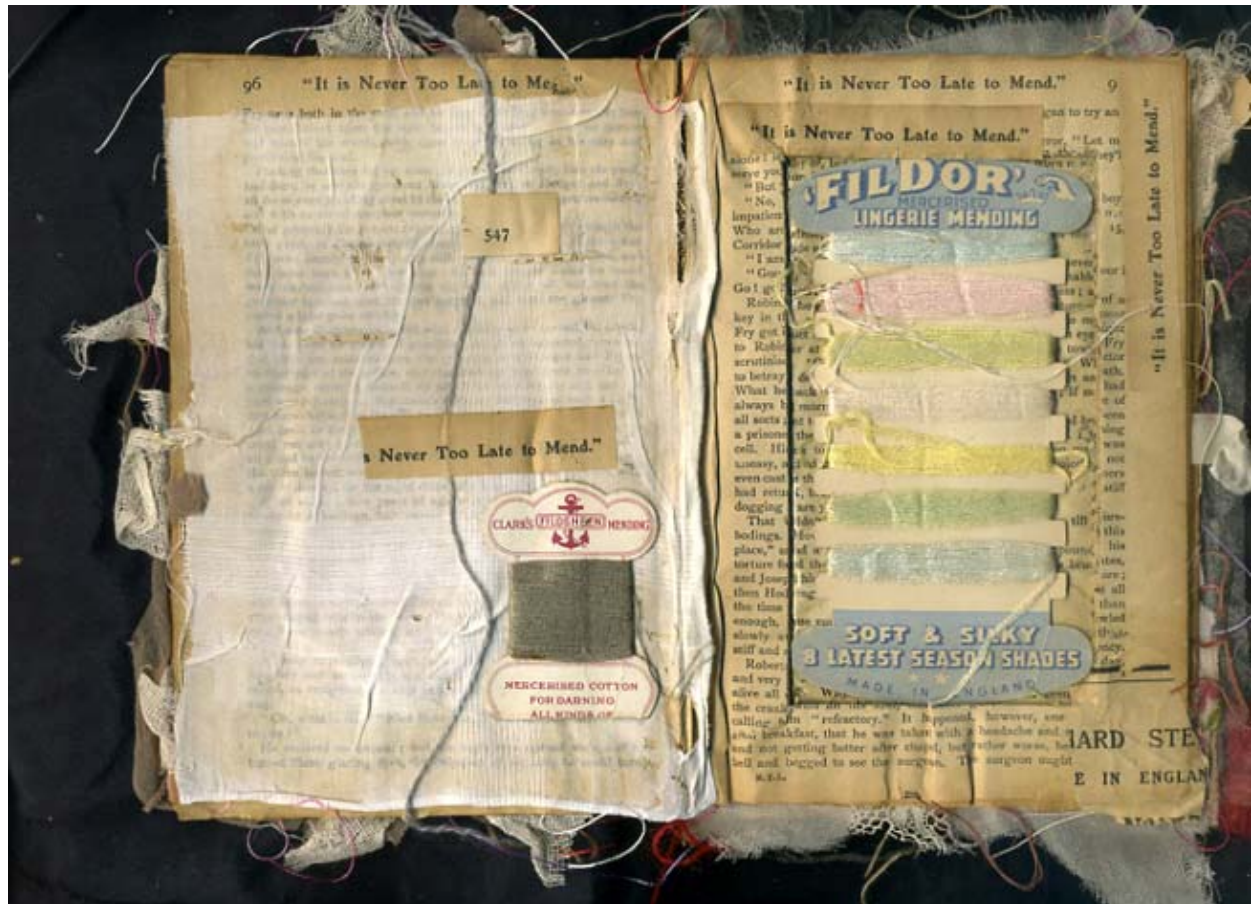
Narrative relates the uniqueness of each individual self and life story to the universality of human experience within an intricate web of mutuality. Like Annette Kuhn (2000:185) I am "captivated, intrigued, moved" by the stories of others, "they speak to me in the most compelling way, engaging my own past, my own memories. Getting to grips with this response demanded that I should not stifle it by insisting on a critical distance, but rather acknowledge it and bring it into play by embracing my own past and its representation through memory."

Textile stories can emerge in after dinner chats about lucky underpants or be found in the free newspaper left on the bus seat.

"An angry Italian man has been arrested for shooting at his neighbour's underwear with a rifle. Massimo Lazzaretti, 69, shot holes in the woman's undergarments as they hung on a clothesline. Police said the two neighbours had fallen out, and Lazzaretti thought leaving bullet holes in the underwear would frighten her enough to leave him alone." The London Paper, Monday 21 July 2008

Here we might ponder the theme of textiles standing in for the body, vulnerabilities of the body given expression in injuries to the fabric skin, or the reverse process of healing through mending holes.

Image 12
Never too late to
mend.



Just like I can feel in the stories the textures of the cloth, so can I imagine stories in the fabrics I collect, in their patterns, in traces left by use, in stains and repairs, in faded colours and unfinished embroideries, red markings and unravelling seams.

Some materials I acquire or keep with a particular purpose in mind, but more often than not what attracts me to an item or fabric is a rather vague potential I sense in it, something that grabs my imagination that is still quite unresolved, fuzzy and difficult to pin down and articulate. In that sense, I collect possibilities and potential of things to be.

Just like everybody tells stories and lives in textiles, everybody collects. Perception itself is, etymologically, a process of collecting as we 'grasp and gather', 'thoroughly take in' from what is there to be perceived, in accordance with our own needs and habits. Collecting is a process of sensory, particularly tactile, appropriation of the world – a way of learning about properties, similarities and distinctions, of creating patterns, of making sense of life. Like narrative, collecting strives for coherence, deals with fragments of reality through imaginative processes. Selves are made in collecting as they are in recollecting, each thing we collect "the mediation of a *wish*," Braudillard (1994:17,18) writes, "the articulation of a *desire*."

Image 13
Mourning.



Collecting is part of any research activity: facts and figures, data, evidence and observations gathered, ordered, contextualized, interpreted and presented like objects displayed in a collection, suggesting new links, creating new meanings. Research, a process of "looking further, and deeper, and more (especially more)" Olalquiaga (2008:33) suggests, is, like collecting, "an inner quest," an obsessive, self-centered activity: "what is collected matters less than the process it engages and its ability to become an all-consuming endeavor."

Excess

"I accidentally bumped into and spilled a cup of tea onto the lap (a green skirt) of a close friend of my grandmother. I remember realising that they couldn't know what I thought i.e. whether I had done it on purpose or it had been an accident. It was the first time I remember this kind of awareness of my separateness from everyone else." (BBC 2006)

"Though artists may start out collecting like everybody else," Winzen (1998:22) writes, "they tend to pay attention to the back pages and margins, to what is absurd and neglected in collecting, saving and archiving."

The concept of marginality pervades the discourse on collecting the everyday, just as it has attached itself to the perception of textiles. In both cases practices and things that are central, even essential to human being and becoming, are positioned at the margins of a frame of reference informed by a point of view removed from lived experience.

The everyday is not overlooked due to lack of visible and tangible presence, but simply because there is too much of it, it is not marginal, but in excess. What warrants our attention tends to be the rare and unusual rather than the plentiful taken for granted.

But "what might it mean, then," Olalquiaga (2008:36) asks, "if instead of looking for what is missing our search is directed toward what abounds – so much so that we don't even see it?"

Image 14

Button

box.



"Artists, like philosophers, make connections," Massumi (2002:249) notes, "but rather than connecting singularity to singularity the artist connects quality of excess to quality of excess."

The everyday is excess, slipping into and thus shaping our feelings, thoughts and actions, yet escaping consciousness because the everyday is dealt with by habit. Collectors of the everyday collect 'out of habit,' literally rather than metaphorically, collect from what they inhabit. Collectors of the unremarkable pay attention to what abounds and is, for that very reason, always on the verge of extinction.

Image 15
Bright
eye.



Researching everyday textiles we become aware of the significance of the small things in life and their power to affect us. "We must rid ourselves of the delusion that it is the major events which most determine a person," Siegfried Kracauer (1998:62) notes, "he is more deeply and lastingly influenced by the tiny catastrophes of which everyday existence is made up, and his fate is certainly linked predominantly to the sequence of these miniature occurrences."

Image 16
Madame
de.



Tiny catastrophes can be a ladder in a stocking, a broken zip, a snapped elastic, a missing button, a stain on the carpet, a moth hole in the cashmere, a burn mark on the work shirt – tiny mishaps remembered because they mattered.

“My earliest memory is of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II [...] a wonderful occasion but it is always spoilt for me because I spilt a glass of orange juice on the cream carpet in the sitting room – I was horrified – I knew I had let my parents and myself down and I just couldn’t tell anyone – I just pulled the cushion I was sitting on over the wet area and I spent the rest of the day expecting someone to find out what I had done. It was never mentioned so I suppose my aunt had no idea how it had happened but it scarred my memory.” (BBC 2006)

Life is made up of small things and occurrences, be they tiny catastrophes or little wonders. Tiny changes in context, small “nudges” (Thaler & Sunstein 2008), can have a significant impact on actions and events, drive political decisions and shape economic futures. We ignore the power of the small at our peril.

Making

"Once you start working, things come into being."

Rozanne Hawksley (Narrative Threads 2006)

From what I find, feel and imagine, from my and other people's material memories I make objects and collections, things to entice the narrative imagination and suggest new meanings.

Making, be that of collections or concepts, text or textiles, is not culture shaping nature, applying preconceived ideas to materials, but a reciprocal process of becoming between maker and material, better understood as weaving which emphasizes "movement as truly generative of the object rather than merely revelatory of an object that is already present, in an ideal, conceptual or virtual form, in advance of the process that discloses it." (Ingold, 2000:64). Weaving is world-making, experience "continually and endlessly coming into being around us as we weave," making is weaving is narrative as "every movement, like every line in a story, grows rhythmically out of the one before and lays the groundwork for the next" (Ingold, 2000:64 – 66).

Image 17

Story

time



Amongst the rich and manifold textures of life, the embrangled things of the everyday, the collector gets caught up in “dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order.”
(Benjamin 1999a: 62)

How can my collections of artefacts found and made, of stories remembered, read and imagined, be ordered without losing the richness of their actual, possible and potential meanings?

Warburg's collections were "intensely alive," shaped and re-shaped in the process of continuing research: "Every progress in his system of thought, every new idea about the inter-relation of facts made him re-group the corresponding books." (Saxl 1970:327). No fixed categories, no pre-established concepts, only potential links, suggested linkage, ventures into the unexpected.

The textiles of everyday life are laboured cloth (Jefferies 2007) carrying the history of their creation and care, are, like Warburg's "accessories in motion" (Gombrich 1970: 311) - hybrids on the move, recycled and re-used in different circumstances, of the domestic, yet reaching beyond it.

"This flag is a sheet
on it we carried away the one who died yesterday.
We are not to blame for the colour
it is red from the blood of someone who was murdered."

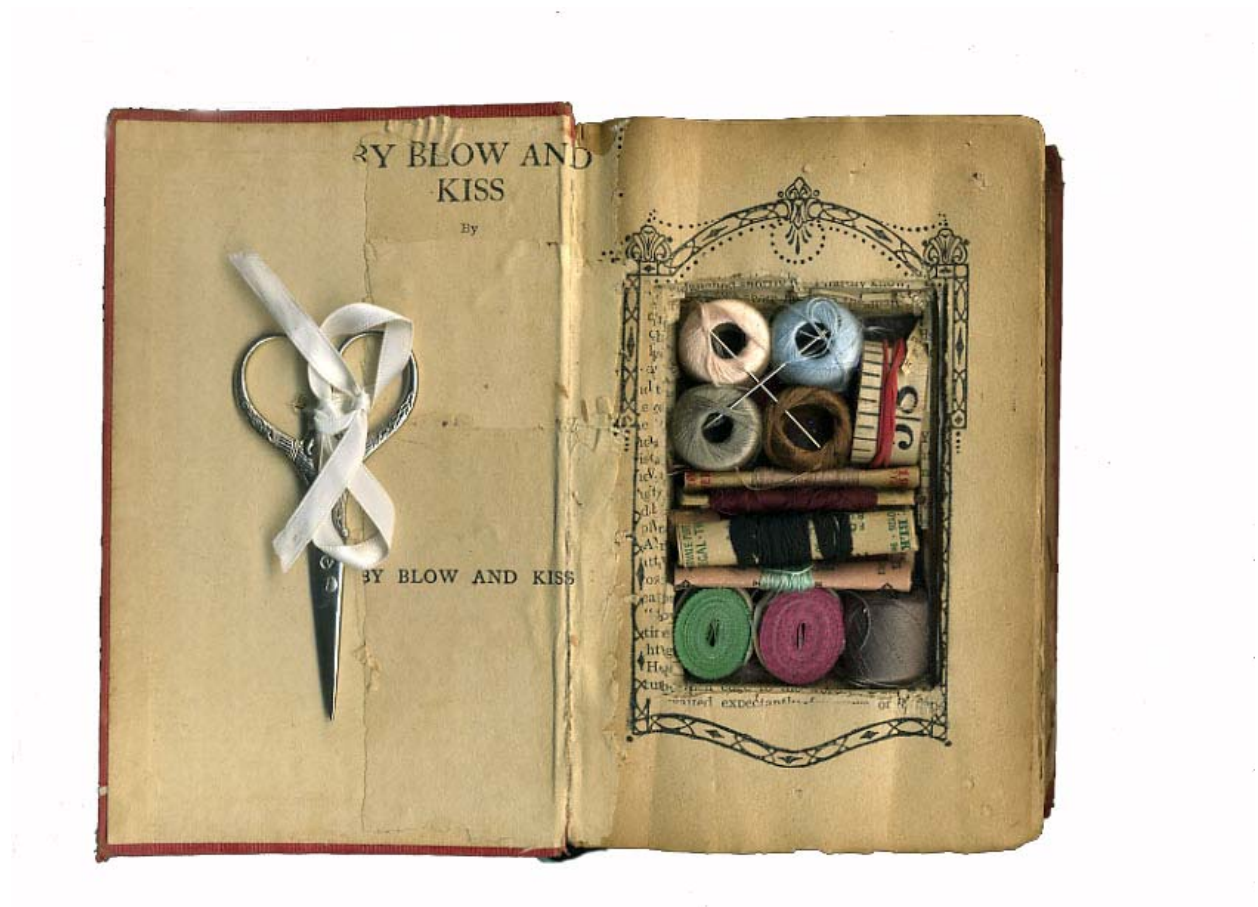
Bertolt Brecht, Rapport aus Deutschland, 1935

In a poem by Bertolt Brecht, when a revolt against labour conditions is crushed, a sheet stained red by the blood of the worker shot dead by the storm troops replaces the red flag of freedom on the factory roof (1984:546).

Textiles, laboured and moving in more than one sense, sometimes bear the physical traces of the body's action and experience, but, I suggest, are always storied, always part of and embodying, visibly or imagined, lived experience. They are, to borrow a term from Bruno Latour (2004), "hairy, networky things" in many ways.

Hairy things with fuzzy edges, from the bedroom drawer or retrieved from a website, everyday textiles always escape concepts and categories, in theory as well as in practice, conceptually and materially overspill and slip in constant movement and shifting meanings.

Image 18
After
Bergson.



But we can't leave it at that, "it is not enough to cut out," as Bergson notes (2004:33), "it is necessary to sew the pieces together." The research needs a shape, a form that reflects its content. If we ground everyday textiles in particular concepts we arrest their moving and changing qualities and they become instrumentalized within the concept's parameters losing the fluidity and multiplicity of meanings that made them so interesting in the first place. No point in liberating everyday textiles from the habits of utility, if we then imprison them into intellectual habits of classification, contextualisation and generalisation.

Wonder

"Curiosity is the purest form of insubordination."

Vladimir Nabokov (Warner 2004:1)

The difficulty with movement is how "to grasp it without stopping it." (Bergson 1992:13)

Philosophy, Massumi (2002:12) suggests, prolongs "the thought-path of movement," takes singularities out of their context to make virtual connections between them (ibid:239).

In the memories of the past, stories, collections and recollections we can sense immanent potential and imagine change. Memory brings "to the world the possibility of an unfolding, a narrative, a hesitation" (Grosz 2004:186); a hesitation to follow habit and instead take a leap into the unexpected and unpredictable. As the new comes as a surprise, it makes us wonder, and it is, Massumi (2002:242) suggests, the task of philosophy to hold on to the surprise that escapes from habit, where the everyday, the usual, the obvious become wondrous in a process of "Miraculation" (ibid:7).

Image 19
Spinning
wheel.



This sense of wonder, of the extraordinary in the ordinary, emerges from the stories and memories of everyday textile experience, sensory, felt and lived. But philosophy not just abstracts from context but also from materiality.

In their affective dimensions the stories of our life always exceed what can be said in words. Sensory knowledge is lived and felt, but, "in the "hyperliterate world of academia," David Howes (2005:1) writes, "it would seem to be the fate of the senses that their astonishing power to reveal and engage should forever be [...] 'sentenced' in the court of language." (ibid:4)

Image 20

Please
touch.



The materiality of textile knowledge needs not just a philosophical but a material concept of wonder.

This, I believe, can be found in the *Wunderkammer*, the cabinets of wonders, art and curiosities of early modernity, collections inspired by the desire to recreate the richness and variety of the universe in eclectic arrangements of artefacts so that the order of the macrocosm could be grasped in the microcosm of the collection, the mysteries of the universe studied in the small wonders it is made up of.

Image 21

Wunderkammer.



Thus the collection was also a concept of knowledge and, Horst Bredekamp (1995:73) notes, "the apparent disorder of the collection items reveal their philosophical significance within this framework."

Displaying natural and artificial objects side by side in visual correspondences, the *Wunderkammer* presented a nature-culture continuum that only recently has been re-discovered in academic discourse. Workshops, labs and libraries were often attached making the *Wunderkammer* a hands-on learning resource centre and interdisciplinary practice-based research facility.

Forerunner to universities, museums and galleries, the *Wunderkammer* is also credited as a predecessor to the Internet: both “employ the visual as the primary mode of interaction and, more importantly, both ‘collect’ and link far-flung and disparate ideas in new and everchanging configurations” (Stafford & Terpak:164).

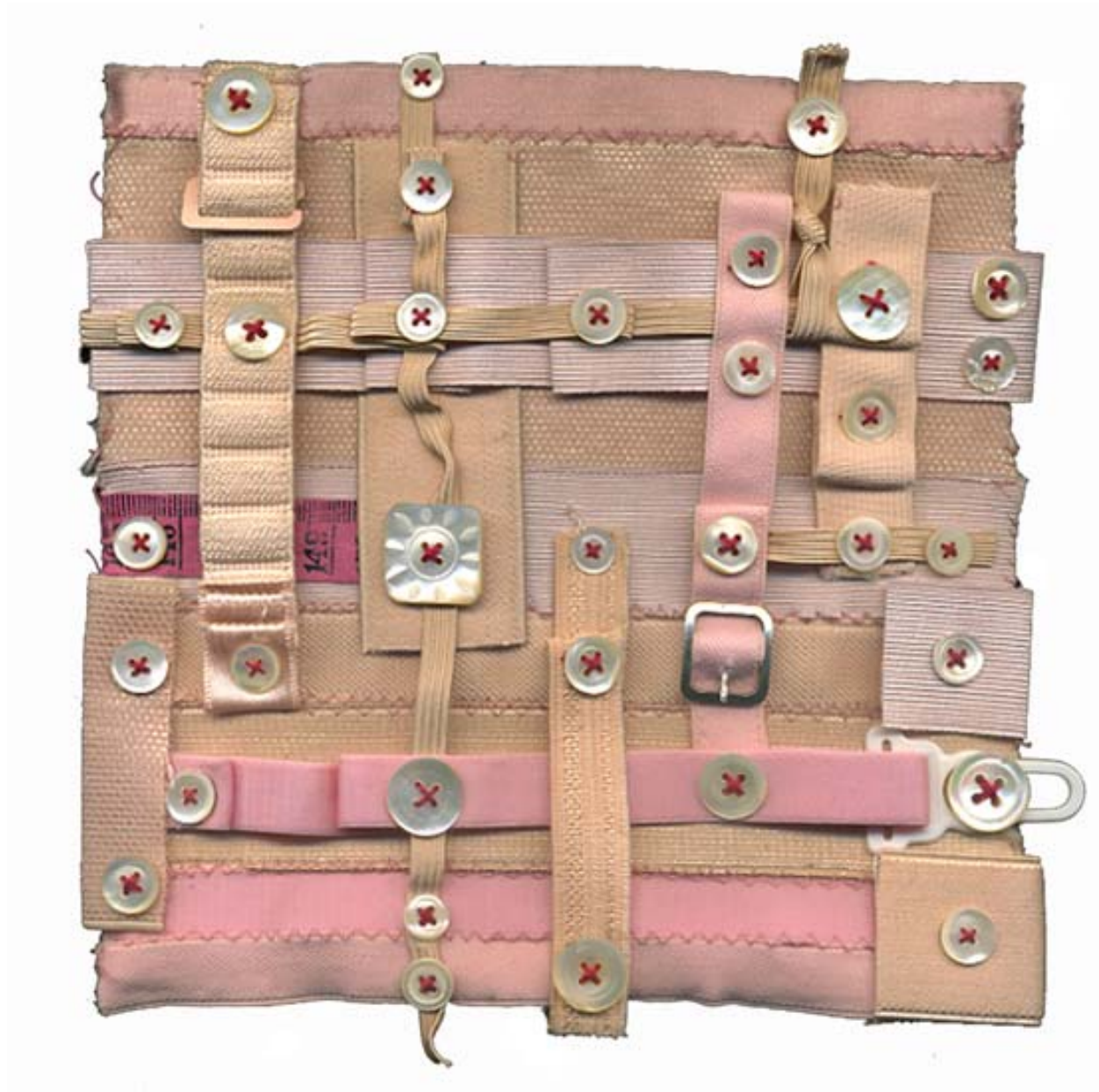
The past, according to Proust (Benjamin 1999b:155) , is “somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect and unmistakably present in some material object (or in the sensation which such an object arouses in us).” Such objects might reveal themselves unexpectedly among the infinity of small things, as we are searching for meaning in the past for the future.

Serendipity and curiosity, sensory correspondences, affective encounters and narrative imagination are at the heart of such re/search practices – can they be reconciled with requirements for academic robustness? To grasp the complexities of life, I suggest, we might need concepts of wonder, not rigour.

Post-Script

“The connection between weaving fabric, weaving narratives, and making lives in different social and historical circumstances is left to the reader,” reads the ‘comment to the author’ I receive on submitting a conference paper. While commending my paper as “very ambitious” and with “a lot of potential, ” the reviewer however urges me, in the next version, “to explain how this story is social science, and how the point made in this story is a sociological one.”

Image 22
Control
issues.



The lines of thought that go straight to the academic point mark quite a different place of knowledge from the meandering threads traced in art practice: “once a knot tied from multiple and interlaced strands of movement and growth, it now figures as a node in a static network of connectors.” (Ingold 2007:75). The task of the artist/researcher is to suggest links that leave others to make their own connections, maybe better understood as correspondences, beyond conceptual boundaries. Arts-based research contributes to knowledge not by making, disputing or illustrating points, but by leading astray, by engaging imagination, by confusing – its *raison d’être* is therefore, precisely and unapologetically, to remain beside the disciplinary point, be it sociological or otherwise.

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Chapter 6

Towards a virtual conceptualization of the digital

Eleni Ikoniadou

Abstract

This paper aims to address a predisposition in new media and cultural theory towards approaching digital processes as purely immaterial, that is, quantifiable, probabilistic and technical (code). This tendency has been articulated, broadly speaking, on the one hand, as a celebration of the disembodied properties of information (cybercultural theory). On the other hand, it has been used to emphasize the centrality of sensory perception, converting disembodied data into embodied, corporeal images (new media philosophy). In addition, the first approach defines the virtual as an imaginary world enabled by digital code, while for the second it is an intrinsic quality of the sensorimotor. This paper proposes to revisit the virtual dynamics of the digital as an abstract but real quality, which is indeterminate and autonomous but immanent to code. In so doing, it attempts to identify and occupy a gap in the theorization of the digital, in-between the technological determinism of postmodern cybercultural theory and the more recent phenomenological approach of new media philosophy. Such a virtual quality is understood, here, to envelop the digital event and become vaguely felt at the microscopic level of relations between body, space and technology.

Introduction

This paper is an outline of a thesis investigating the impact of a materialist notion of the virtual on the concept of the digital. In particular, it endeavours to introduce a notion of digitality that addresses the *virtual* relations between body, space and technology; that is to say, a level of their interaction that is real, yet not visible, immediately perceivable or consciously experienced by a 'receptive' human body. The paper explores the significance of proposing an alternative mode of interactivity that departs from the fixed, ideal forms of ocularcentric spaces and the primacy of vision, dominating cybercultural accounts of the digital. According to the latter, the 'ethereal' nature of code necessarily excludes the participation of a passive (sensory) body from the intangible adventures of the mind (disembodiment). At the same time, the paper suggests sidestepping neo-phenomenological accounts of digitality, which tend to position the human body at the core of receptive activity. As it will be discussed, recent new media theories

have argued for the centrality of sensory perception, converging intangible digital information to corporeal form (embodiment).

This article lays the foundations for theorizing a mode of digital interactivity that points to the idea of unstable, fuzzy, and implicit formations, as an alternative to fixed and ideal digital forms. As it attempts to suggest, such *incipient* formations might prove crucial for a dynamic account of, both, artificial environment and human body; as well as for conceiving a shifting relationship between the two. In other words, the paper ventures to point to a virtual force-field that may be immanent to *digital assemblages*, (i.e. the potential connections between human and nonhuman elements).²⁸ A *symbiotic* digital assemblage implies a mode of coexistence of heterogeneous elements that are neither purely technological (i.e. mechanical) or wholly organic. In other words, it might entail addressing the digital as a realm in which biological and technological elements can coexist dynamically, without being reduced to *a priori* classifications. This paper, then, attempts to present an overview of the notion of a 'virtual digital' – extracted from a larger body of research – stating the specificity of the problem, the overall field of its investigation, as well as the strengths and limitations of such a topic. The first section aims to consider the emergence of the notion of a virtual digital by offering a synopsis of the problem it addresses, within existing media theory literature.

Digital Split: accounts of embodiment and disembodiment

The notion of a virtual digital emerges *in-between* two significant positions in the cultural theorizations of the digital by new media theories. On the one hand, the commercial and marketing hype that followed the emergence of digital media technologies was enthusiastically adopted by cybercultural theory (Michael Benedikt, 1991; Kevin Kelly, 1994; Mark Poster, 1995; Bell and Kennedy, 2000); by computer science (Negroponte, 1995; Wolfram 1992 – 2002); and by the electronic arts (Popper, 1997; Ascott, 2000). On all these levels, the hype appeared to herald the replacement of the 'old' non-digital (or analog) world by a new digital age. Throughout the nineties, such accounts seemed to largely engage with the crisis of identity, the immateriality of information spaces (disembodiment), and the emergence of the 'posthuman' subject, among other topics. The majority of these works appeared to celebrate the formation of 'new' subjectivities, quick and easy reproduction methods, neutrality and incredible speed, among other notions. Broadly speaking, there is a notable tendency in this literature to reinforce Platonic and Cartesian separations between body/mind and nature/culture; combined with a prominent distrust of the senses.

²⁸ According to Gilles Deleuze, an assemblage is "a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'...alliances, alloys...contagions...." (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 52).

In particular, the post-war emergence of cybernetic and informational machines (Wiener, 1965; Shannon, 1949) helped to trigger alternative views on the linkages between body, space and technology, across cybercultural theory. During WWII, cybernetic research had started to touch on questions about the boundaries of the human subject, aiming to dismantle liberalist notions of agency, free will, consciousness, and autonomy.²⁹ Described by Hayles to constitute the 'first wave' of cybernetics (1945 – 60), these accounts envisioned the removal of materiality from information, conceiving instead a free-floating, immaterial, mathematical abstraction disconnected from the medium in which it resides. Media and cultural theories of the postmodern age were significantly influenced by the revolution of information transmission. New discourses and developments on the techno-scientific front resulted in the reconsideration of the human condition across the field of humanities. More specifically, the impact of digital media, such as the Internet and the formation of cyberspace, on media and cultural theory was reflected in debates about: the relationship between humans and machines and the notion of the cyborg; virtual reality and immaterial communities; the Cartesian split between mind/body and the disembodied spaces of digital intelligence.

On the other hand, new media theorist Mark Hansen (2004) asserts an opposing materialist viewpoint, stressing the centrality of sensory perception in encounters between the body and digital art. In particular, Hansen draws on Henri Bergson's notion of 'affection' (1896) in order to redefine the body's empowerment by the advent of 'digitization'. His thesis is that digitality reinforces the importance of the human body, since the latter is able to convert discontinuous and quantifiable numerical data (information) into 'corporeal' images. Hansen's perspective of the interactions between human body and digital media seems to offer a phenomenological interpretation of the notion of 'affect'. That is to say, he appears to suggest an absolute reliance on human perception for the construction of a predominantly observable, otherwise void, digital space (embodiment). Moreover, his approach gives the impression of constituting sensory perception as the source of affectivity and virtuality, against the idea of an autonomous digitality. The digital, here, appears to function purely as a facilitator of aesthetic experimentations that aim to reveal the affectivity, virtuality and sensation of the 'embodied being'.

Both the cybercultural approach of disembodied information and the materialist embodiment of new media theory, seem to clearly distinguish between biological and technological entities. Such a division, moreover, may be argued to imply a view of technology as passive and dependent on an active human user, to invent, define and represent it. The present paper attempts to present a more dynamic account of the digital, both as a concept and as an event. Hence, it aims to push further Hansen's materialist account of digitality, by proposing that an

²⁹ N. Katherine Hayles discusses how information theories with a systems-based approach to the construction of the human subject (and particularly Wiener's first-wave of cybernetics), extended liberal humanism instead of subverting it, as they intended. cf. Hayles' account on *How we Became Posthuman*, 1999, and particularly for this point, p 7.

affective idea of perception may not necessarily depend on the embodiment of incorporeal digital information. Rather, there may be other, autonomous and nonhuman procedures participating in the unfolding of the virtual dimension in digital events. In other words, the digital event – as it may be argued to emerge in new media art spaces – may be considered as an affective experience in itself, without necessarily requiring the receptive activity of a human observer. The next section attempts to show the field of investigation from which the concept of a virtual digital emerges.

The Virtual Architecture of the Digital

In an essay entitled 'On the Superiority of the Analog', Brian Massumi (2002b) argues against the false equation of the concept of the digital with that of the virtual. Here, Massumi appears to attempt to counteract both the technophile and the phenomenological approaches, yet without reinforcing the mainstream opposition rhetoric of technophobia (Morley & Robins, 1995; Robins & Webster, 1999; Schiller, 1996). For Massumi – drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy (1968; 1980; 1991) – the virtual (i.e. molecular, abstract-yet-real, inhuman forces immanent to actuality) might be more adequately approached by the notion of the *analog*. As a process of continuously and qualitatively varying impulses, the analog, according to Massumi, may have a privileged access to virtuality. This is because analog processes, he suggests, do not refer to, represent, or resemble anything outside themselves (Massumi, 2002b, 135). On the contrary, the digital – a binary numerical form of code (0/1) – in its common approach may merely point to *possibility* and, thus, to *quantification*, with a weak relation to the virtual dimension. For Massumi, the digital's tendency to address, systematize and simulate the possible – a restricted range of alternatives that may always be predicted – necessarily prohibits it from approaching *potentiality*.³⁰ In other words, the digital sphere will usually 'fall short' of accessing the 'differentiating passage', or emergence, of the virtual into actuality. Contrary to what the hype suggests, Massumi's essay affirms that the digital alone cannot envelop, advance or obliterate the analog. This is because, according to him, *digitalization* – the quantifying conversion of the analog by the digital – always leaves a qualitative analog remainder; that is, a mode of 'inactuality' (i.e. virtuality) that cannot be represented by code or applied to the predictions of probability. Considered from this standpoint, the analog is always one step ahead of the digital; affirming its superiority through a surplus virtual remainder that the digital may never entirely absorb (2002b, 135, 143).³¹

³⁰ "The distinction between potential and possibility is a distinction between conditions of emergence and re-conditionings of the emerged. Conditions of emergence are one with becoming. Re-conditionings of the emerged define normative or regulatory operations that set the parameters of history (the possible interactions of determinate individuals and groups)" (Massumi, 2002b: 9 – 10).

³¹ Constructing a parallel point, but in very different language, Aden Evens (2005) suggests that digital logic bears an affinity with order, precision, refinement and perfection, intrinsic to the code's static binary form. These features constitute the digital process unable to approach "something more, something fuzzy, something to-be-determined", outside codification (2005: 66, 69). That 'something' for Evens is found in the remainder of the digital's double articulation: the binary difference between 0 and 1 (on or

Nevertheless, as Massumi's argument goes, if the digital was able to somehow integrate *sensation* – rather than address subjective perception – and become self-modulating (i.e. *machinic*) – rather than representational – then, perhaps, we will be able to theorize a directly virtual digital. A machinic becoming of the digital would require the intersection of heterogeneous elements (both living and non-living) with no distinction between its natural and artificial levels. In other words, it would entail addressing the digital as a realm in which biological and technological elements coexist without being reduced to *a priori* classifications. The conceptualization, then, of a virtual digitality would involve the consideration of a mutual web of micro-relations between heterogeneous elements, accompanying their interactions at the macroscopic scale. Touching on Massumi's essay, this paper proposes the notion of a 'virtual digitality', emerging from encounters between new media, art, and technoscience.³² Experimental projects at the intersection of these fields might enable the emergence of a field of invisible and inaudible, abstract forces, understood as enveloping the materiality of a digital assemblage.

By speculating on such a notion of virtual digitality certain important questions begin to emerge: for example, what if current encounters between new media art projects and technoscientific research could point to a stronger connection between the digital and the virtual? Could the idea of a virtual digital suggest an alternative mode of molecular and relational interactivity between the different bodies that it brings together? In other words, can we theorize their differences as potential interconnections between divergent realities, rather than given individual essences? All in all, could there be a deeper level of movement that

off) *plus* the doubling of the binary process during digitization, i.e. the act of turning an analog object or sample into binary code by dividing it into parts (slices of time and space) and assigning each with a numerical value (2005: 68). For Evens, it appears that the residue of double articulation belongs exclusively to actuality – a complex process that cannot be reduced to the absolute measurements and pure form of digital code. Accordingly, he seems to suggest, the digital falls short of capturing the full 'immediacy' and 'uniqueness' of the actual, merely providing incomplete representations of it (Evens, 2005: 66, 69). The surplus leftover, outside digital representation and in-between double articulation, appears to point here to a creative power and productive difference inherent to the force of actuality (Evens, 2005: 70 – 1). Evens' concept of the 'actual' does not refer to the 'virtual' *per se*, in the manner that Massumi appears to theorize the 'superiority of the analog'. However, Deleuze's definition of the virtual, as immanent to the actual, is implicit in his argument, and throughout his writings.

³² The term 'technoscience', as it is understood in this paper, originates in the work of Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar (1979), Latour (1987 and 1991) and Donna J. Haraway (1991) in order to merge scientific with social research and technological application. Traditionally, science had been understood as the experiment-based generation of knowledge about the laws of nature, and technological intervention as a cultural process that follows an already established scientific reality. For Latour, technoscience describes "all the elements tied to the scientific contents no matter how dirty, unexpected or foreign they seem, and the expression '**science and technology**' designate(s) *what is kept of technoscience* once all the trials or responsibility have been settled" (1987: 174 – 75, emphasis in original). The technoscientific philosophical accounts of Latour and Isabelle Stengers (2000), among other contemporary theorists of science, argue for a non-reductive, relational and collective materiality that rethinks the relations between science, technology, politics and nature, by 'mixing humans and non-humans together' (Latour, 1988a). In addition, current research in the fields of nanotechnology, biotechnology, media architecture and bioart, seems to demonstrate that it may no longer be viable to distinguish between science, technology and art, or between nature and culture, in absolute ways.

accompanies the interactions between the elements (such as body, space and technology), and out of which their relatively stable and perceivable forms emerge?

Massumi's essay (2002) seems to lay the foundations for speculating on a potential tension between the concept of the digital and the concept of the virtual. Framing the notion of virtual digitality as an extension to his account, however, involves carefully avoiding suggestions ideas of a digital superiority. That is to say, such a virtual ontology for the digital necessarily sides with Massumi's proposition that the latter may not improve or surpass the analog, as well as that the two are not mutually exclusive concepts. The larger part of postmodern cybercultural literature tended to equate the digital with 'virtual reality' and the virtual with a substitute sphere of simulating possibilities for the mind. However, considered as a purely technical machine (of codification), the digital appears unable to offer any important insights into theories of the virtual or into its own connections with the concept. Hence, thinking about the digital could entail the necessity of sidestepping both technological determinism and the superiority of the analog remainder. Such a simultaneous move could be argued to situate the concept of virtual digitality to the realm of the *in-between*.

However, it is worth noting, here, that Massumi's work is not understood by this paper as an absolute negation of the digital's limitations. Massumi appears to draw his approach to the digital, as weak in accessing the virtual, from Gilles Deleuze.³³ Crucially, in their respective discussions of the digital, Deleuze and Massumi do not give the impression of aiming to present exhaustive accounts of its (in)capacities. In other words, neither thinker seems to aspire to introduce an all-encompassing critique against digital processes. Rather, they appear to approach the digital according to its impending relations to both the analog and the virtual, as well as according to its differences in accessing the latter; all along attempting to detach new technologies from the subsequent hype of the digital age. Massumi, for example, hints at the possibility of a directly virtual digitality emanating from its 'transformative integration' with the analog (2002b: 142 – 43). Similarly, for Deleuze, 'the numerical' may potentially acquire a 'power' to effectuate change and transform analog media (1989: 265 – 66).³⁴ The section that

³³ In an essay entitled 'Analogy', Deleuze's book on *Francis Bacon* (1981) sets the standard for thinking of the digital in relation to the analog and, ultimately, to the virtual. For him the diagramming of relations (a quality of the virtual) is 'analogically creative'; it belongs to the nervous system; and it is akin to sensation – as the immediate and visceral registering of potential that adds a felt surplus to perception and experience. On the contrary, digital code 'needs to be learned' and operates by similitude and resemblance ([1981] 2003: 113 – 5). In addition, for Deleuze, analogical media (like the synthesizer) establish heterogeneous connections on an actual and sensible plane, whereas the digital homogenizes and 'binarizes' on an infinite plane of translation and conversion (2003: 116).

³⁴ This point refers to Deleuze's proposition, in *Cinema 2: the Time-Image*, that 'new automatism' may bring about 'a mutation of form' and 'be put into the service of a powerful, obscure, condensed will to art' (1989: 265). Deleuze is addressing here to a potential impact and power in 'the numerical image' (digital) to either "transform cinema or replace it" (266). In addition to Deleuze and Massumi's influence on this paper's theorization of the digital in relation to the virtual (and by extension the analog), we might add cyberneticist and polymath Gregory Bateson (1972), who despite also distinguishing between analogical language as relational and digital as structured from conventional signs, suggests potential as an *exception* of coding and immanent to it, cf. particularly 'Redundancy and Coding' in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, pp 417 – 31.

follows discusses the role of digital media practice in conceptualizing a directly virtual digital, as well as certain key concepts and methods.

Rhythmic intensities: in-between binary oppositions

Following Deleuze and Massumi's indirect speculations on the prospect of a 'virtual digitality', this paper propose the possibility of investigating the latter through a critical engagement with recent examples in new media art practice. In particular, recent new media projects, intersecting non-standard architectural practice, techno-scientific experimentations, and sonic art (such as in nanoart and bioart), might help suggest the emergence of a virtual digital that does not allude to technological advancement, the extinction of the analog or the simulation and supplementation of reality. Such digital artworks seem to express a deep interest in alternative ideas of form and structure; the reciprocal impact between technological and organic elements; the generation of autonomous artificial systems; glitches and exceptions of codification; unusual experiences of interactivity; and a shifting relationship between digital and analog elements and discrete and continuous processes that escapes their commonplace binarism.

For example, in recent experimental models of digital architecture the construction of form is generated by discrete methods (generative algorithms) in order to produce smooth, continuous textures (Lynn, 1993, 1998, 2002; Spuybroek, 2004). The integration of *topological* methods – the mathematical science for the self-varying and continuous transformation of shapes and spaces – in digital design software, enables the theorization and design of 'amorphous' or 'deformational' forms. Examples of digital architecture, then, could help to suggest that topological transformations and continuous variability (qualities of the virtual for Massumi), may not be exclusively analog.³⁵ On the other hand, the practice of *Microsound* – a sound art and generative composition method drawing on the failures and errors of digital technology – produces utterly different textures, which are jagged and discontinuous. What is more, Microsound proposes to locate and develop these uneven textures, not from the discreteness of code itself, but rather from its exceptions; i.e. processes that are not usually associated with it, such as malfunctioning CD-ROM cases or faulty sound cards. Hence, a deeper look on the textural and *aesthetic* differences between these two manifestations of the digital could suggest a capacity in the digital to vary intensively, rather than strictly 'homogenize difference' (Evans, 2005).³⁶ The diversity and heterogeneity of this textural issue appears suitable for

³⁵ It may be useful to mention, here, that for Massumi the virtual is best approached topologically, that is, in the twists and folds of the continuous transformations of a topological figure, as it passes from one shape to another. For Massumi, topology is 'a *qualitative* science', and its continuity may be more appropriately accessed by the analog (and its self-referential continuous variation), cf. on this point, Massumi, 2002b, pp 134 – 5.

³⁶ Commonly, the field of aesthetics is associated with the Idealism of modern art and refers to the study of sensory-related processes, the subjectivity of *beauty*, emotional values, the judgment of taste,

attempting to point towards a non-contradictory tension between (digital and spatial) discontinuity and (analog and temporal) continuity. Perhaps, then, considered together, a becoming-continuous of digital architecture and a discontinuous aesthetics of digital audio, could help to investigate the idea of a continuity (or stream) of experience in the digital assemblage, traversed by a *rhythmic* cut.

In particular, the role of rhythm seems to be crucial in conceiving a virtual digital. Rhythm, here, may be understood as a notion that points to an inaudible, or amodal (nonsensory), resonance constituting an interface between diverse elements in the digital assemblage. As such, rhythm is approached as a non-dialectical *tension* composed from encounters between dissimilar entities and processes (human and machine, analog and digital etc.). It can be used as a non-temporal (disconnected from the temporal successions of lived experience and duration), amodal (not consciously perceived by any of the sensory modalities) and irregular (detached from measurable and repetitive counting in sound studies) concept. Hence, it appears appropriate for the investigation of relations unfolding at the molecular zones of experience (outside the grasp of sensory perception). As a micro-relational force, rhythm could help to account for *intensive* differences in degree (potentials) rather than in kind (formed matter) in the speeds and velocities of the elements (rather than in the finalized components of fixed bodies). Perhaps, then, it could be thought to function as a conceptual ‘calculator’ of a proposed immeasurable, irregular and incalculable quality in digital spaces; a fuzzy dimension immanent to code. The next section constitutes a note in a number of potential methodological and conceptual limitations in this paper’s proposed subject.

The limits of theorizing a virtual digital

Following from the key concepts and ideas presented in the last section, one definition of ‘virtual digitality’ could be: an invisible and vaguely felt (virtual) quality that accompanies actual digital art events; emerging as an alternative mode of interactivity that does not require the active participation of human perception. However, proposing such a concept may instigate additional questions. What exactly is such a rhythmic quality – indirectly perceivable but autonomous from human perception – made of? How would we know when and how it emerges

originality and so on. According to Stephen Zagala’s article ‘Aesthetics: a place I’ve never seen’, modern aesthetics (Baumgarten, Schiller and Kant) are separated from epistemological questions by distinguishing between ‘aesthetic truths’ that designate a non-conceptual realm of appreciation through sense perception (such as the feeling of beauty), and ‘logical truths’, which approach objects conceptually. “In other words, these philosophers were thinking of how art could stand up by itself [...], divorced from a direct embeddedness in definite social functions and contextualized as valuable cultural commodities worthy of accumulation in themselves” (Zagala in Massumi (ed.), 2002a: 23). However, the current concept of virtual digitality attempts to approach the question of aesthetics by departing from its modernist genesis and attempting its consideration as an ‘ethico-aesthetic paradigm’ (Guattari, 1995). As Zagala explains, the latter attempts to highlight a creative process *alongside* an ethic of experimentation that breaks with the institutionalization of art, in order to imply a ‘power of emergence’ or ‘artistry’ (2002a: 20). In other words, although such an investigation of the digital relies on artistic and aesthetic processes, it tries to approach them as autonomous and dynamic zones within an assemblage of creative relations (where science is also considered as a creative process), which might not necessarily depend on sensuous perception in order to emerge.

and what would be the conditions of such a contingent emergence? How might interactive media projects, where, commonly, a human body is invited to trigger actions and react to them, be thought of independently of human behaviour? And what happens to the 'digital surplus' that is not exhausted in phenomenal activity (power passed into action), fixed form (finalized structure) and lived experience of the 'here and now' (immediate perception of the present)?

Although these may prove fruitful questions and constitute useful challenges in theorizing our proposed concept, they could also point to weaknesses and limitations in the topic and its chosen methodology. A theoretical investigation of the intersections between science, technology and art may often be a heavily criticized endeavour. Indeed, such a project can appear to be an ambiguous or overly ambitious venture. In particular, adopting a speculative and experimental course of thought could seem to imply that at the level of the imperceptible 'anything goes'. If we can never 'witness', as such, the rhythmic architecture of digitality then how can we ever know to account for the events that take place in its different levels? Secondly, suggesting to examine the virtual impact on the digital could face the danger of being labelled as an account on mysticism or romanticism. In other words, it may be accused of wishing to bestow an ultimately vitalist form of life on the digital, which we can never experience in itself and for ourselves. Thirdly, a proposed attempt to 'engineer' a heterogeneous assemblage for the digital, at the intersections between scientific and aesthetic experimentations, could become uncomfortable reading for supporters of strict boundaries between different disciplines. In other words, the current project may appear to be claiming specialization in all the diverse areas of thought that it brings together. On the other side of this third problem, presenting perhaps a greater obstacle, is the risk of being accused of not actually owning or knowing any of these areas, and thus of superficially bringing together so many vast fields. This is often the case for theoretical questions of scientific implication, especially where an intimate alliance between them is required.³⁷

As a fourth problem, the idea of a collapse of strict barriers between living and non-living matter, implied by the consideration of a virtual digital, could be a challenging and challengeable proposition. Suggesting a relational interactivity, which does not separate between objects, categories or species in terms of substance (difference in kind/ formed matter) but only in degree, might be viewed to imply a total liquefaction of their differences. Such a risk of appearing to disregard the distinctiveness of the elements in order to homogenize them is neither trivial nor taken lightly by this paper. Lastly, suggesting a digitality that extends beyond the sphere of code might seem like a paradox or a course leading

³⁷ This point refers to 'science wars': a series of polemics during the 1990s between scientists and cultural theorists of science, initiated from the hoax publication of an article in a journal of sociology, written by a scientist pretending to be a cultural theorist. During these heated debates, scientists claimed an irresponsible and gratuitous theorization of science by cultural theorists; whilst the latter argued against the authoritarian and uncritical claims of power by scientific discourse to yield objective truth.

nowhere. On the one hand, it risks appearing to reinforce the 'superiority' of the analog, as that which remains below and beyond the codifications of the digital. On the other hand, it can perhaps seem to dissolve the particularities and peculiarities of digital processes altogether (for example, code), jeopardizing the relevance and specificity of the concept. This list, here, is not intending to be hierarchical or exhaustive, but rather indicative of the potential weaknesses and limits accompanying the conceptualization of a virtual digital.

Without claiming to provide the solutions to such problems, it may be constructive to mention certain ideas that could help to address them. To begin with, the concept of the virtual could be suggested to pre-empt a speculative and intuitive condition of thought, involving a degree of experimentation with the notion of the real. Moreover, seeking to stage a situation of relationality, by sidestepping both the primacy of human perception and the technophilia of the digital hype, perhaps endeavours to insinuate a more general and radical move away from the split between subject and object. Importantly, the use of specific digital examples, resulting from encounters between aesthetic and techno-scientific fields, plays a critical role in the conception of a virtual digital. In other words, the specific projects that such a notion would study aim to help with actively exploring the key idea of a virtual digital; that is, to take a closer look at the deeper, implicit and microscopic relations between the elements that participate in an interactive installation.³⁸ Moreover, in avoiding to imply a gratuitous use of science, virtual digitality follows the example of philosophers of science (such as Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers), who understand science as an ongoing and constantly changing field; incorporating philosophical, aesthetic, socio-political and other spheres of influence. Such an approach aspires to point to science, philosophy and art as open fields, rather than already established and concluded histories. Considered in this way, these seemingly disconnected areas entail concepts, processes and ideas that may be treated as potential vectors of material for other fields. Finally, here, the task of considering a virtual dimension of digitality might entail abstraction and vagueness as unavoidable aspects of the endeavour. Nonetheless, this could be a valuable and constructive ambiguity. In other words, it could help to focus on asking questions that are congruent with the problem, rather than claiming to provide all the answers.

The final section of this paper presents a project developed from the intersections of architecture, digital installation and technoscience. In so doing, it attempts a practical illustration of the key ideas in this paper, and, in particular, its goal of introducing the concept of virtual digitality; that is, the philosophical theorization of potential relations between body, space, and technology. Hence, this example aims to help the reader visualize the virtual 'architecture' of digitality.

The Dark Side of the Cell

'Sonocytology' is a method of 'accessing' cellular vibration, at the realm below perceivable sound, invented by Nanotechnology Professor James Gimzewski at UCLA in 2002. In particular, this is the study of cellular vibration via an ultra-sensitive instrument called the 'Atomic Force Microscope' (AFM) – essentially a tiny 'finger' at the scale of a nanometer. Gimzewski and his collaborator Andrew Pelling used the AFM to detect the motion of cells producing numerous miniscule vibrations per second, under various conditions. For example, when researchers intervened in the temperature of a cell, its sound (a varying hissing noise) would speed up or slow down, as if its rhythms were running faster or slower. Unlike optical microscopes, the AFM feels oscillation occurring at the membrane of a cell as an electrical signal in a liquid environment. Since scientists are 'blind' at the molecular level, the AFM enables them to feel and extrapolate movement to audible frequencies and human perception. Through these sonocytological experiments, Gimzewski and his team found that the state of a cell – i.e. presence or lack of movement – is directly linked to its 'vibrationality'.³⁹

Following the discovery of sonic cells, Pelling collaborated with media artist Anna Niemetz to create an audiovisual installation for the *NANO* exhibition at LACMA in 2004. Entitled *The Dark Side of the Cell*, this audiovisual installation displays a collection of small speakers and cell sculptures positioned in a room. The sculptures superimpose actual architectural constructions with audiovisual projections, infusing cell design with image-movement and amplified vibration. The resulting environment synthesizes an immersive audiovisual experience aiming to transport the visitor to the nano-realm of cellular vibration. Although this may look like a stage for a cellular orchestra, the installation features no hierarchical organization and there is no central point; that is to say, the sonic space varies randomly at any given point via the use of generative algorithms. This is intended to motivate the audience to experience the rhythmic variation of these experimental cell sonics, by moving through the space.

The Dark Side of the Cell seems to establish a connection between the irregular and vibratory inner-rhythmicity of a cell (its movements at the nano-scale) and the actual architecture of spaces. Having extracted cellular audio from the molecular interactions of AFM finger and

³⁸ Although the larger research out of which this paper was extracted features a variety of new media projects as case studies, for our purposes here it may be sufficient to present only one practical example at the end of this paper.

³⁹ News coverage of Gimzewski's pioneering work explained how he positioned the AFM over a yeast cell to try and detect its movements. As the cell beats (expands and contracts) the tip follows the movement in real-time, monitoring the rhythmic rate of a cell. However, to Gimzewski's surprise, the microscope picked up irregular vibrations. His team then looked for a program that could convert the data into a sound file and therefore make it perceptible to hearing. Gimzewski thinks that what they hear is the sound of tiny molecular motors in the cell, 'moving things around'. Gimzewski believes that researchers might one day be able to detect the early stages of diseases, like cancer, by listening to human cells. For more details see the first article on sonocytology by James K. Gimzewski, Andrew E. Pelling et al. 'Local

cellular surface, the installation appears to have actualized a part of their virtual encounters. As such, it has rendered sensible (to the modalities of vision and hearing) what was merely abstract, amodal and implied. Building artificial environments from imperceptible cellular vibration could suggest intriguing potential relations between living and non-living matter. Moreover, it could compose a challenge to the dichotomy between nature and artificiality, by occupying a fuzzy and indeterminate space in-between, across and prior to their separation. Crucially, the process can be argued to propose intriguing and unusual relations between technology and biology, in a symbiotic relationship that bypasses human intervention.

The AFM, it was mentioned, has a tiny silicon tip attached to a micro-lever with which it touches and scans surfaces recording their topography. In *The Dark Side of the Cell*, its role seems to be turning into a new musical instrument. That is to say, the AFM plays the cell by *feeling* its surface and reacting to its forces. Before the turning of vibration into quantifiable primary frequencies that address the sense of hearing, AFM and cell appear to enter into an autonomous rhythmic relationship. In particular, the bumps and cuts on the vibratory surface of the cell are felt by the AFM's nano-finger, as it strokes the jagged surface. Subsequently, this rough surface seems to interrupt what might have been a smooth caress as the AFM touches the cell. At this molecular level, it may be suggested, their interactions take place on a discontinuous continuum; a stream that is broken and split as the AFM stumbles over the irregular surface of the vibratory cell. At the audible scale of the installation, the senses pick up a continuous hissing noise, amplified by the speakers of the installation. However, at the inaudible sphere of their encounter, it could be argued, technoscientific instrument and living unit point to something outside their actual entanglement; namely, the inaudible virtuality of their linkages. The virtual zone of this bio-technological assemblage may not emerge to the phenomenal sphere of lived experience. Yet, it may point to a potential in the assemblage to exceed the actuality of its connections. At the intersection between nanoscientific experiment and media art experience, *The Dark Side of the Cell* might be argued to emerge as a dynamic assemblage of nature and culture.

To a certain extent, *The Dark Side of the Cell* could serve to suggest the emergence of inconclusive processes, not entirely accessible to human perception or dependent on it. In addition, it is a characteristic example of a relatively recent tendency in new media artists to shift their focus towards the realm of the very small. Through the collaboration of scientists, artists and technologists, as this example demonstrates, the industrial and mechanistic model of the world gives way to "sensing and probing in a very abstract manner" (Gimzewski and Vesna in Ascott, 2006: 311).⁴⁰ At this level, it seems, aesthetico-scientific projects are no

Nanomechanical Motion of the Cell Wall of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Science*, 20 August 2004: Vol. 305. no. 5687, pp. 1147 – 1150.

⁴⁰ In this article Gimzewski and Vesna argue that nano-scientists and media artists need to join forces in order to explore the new possibilities of the world and perception of reality at this atomic scale. Cf. 'The

longer dealing with a subjective aspect of experience, *either* aesthetic *or* scientific; rather, they might aim to invent different, atypical and affective states of experience and perception. As it can be proposed through this example, at the nano scale digital events may be submerged in virtuality – the realm of what we cannot observe or know in its entirety – requiring a non-sensuous (affective) dimension of perception.

Conclusion

Looked at in this way, unusual prospective connections between science – beyond absolute truth – and art – beyond plain representation – appear as a promising field of inquiry for the concept of virtual digitality. If, as it was suggested, the digital (machine, concept or process) is affected by a fuzzy and indeterminate molecular dimension, then it may exceed our observations, subjective experience and interpretations. The aim of this paper has been to introduce certain general ideas about the significance of considering the digital through a materialist notion of virtuality. As it was suggested, such a concept may help expose the digital as an autonomous, invisible and molecular field of forces outside sensuous perception, rather than as a purely technical process/object. In order to investigate this abstract proposition in a more concrete manner, this paper presented a particular new media art example, emerging from encounters between alternative architectural practice, interactive installation and technoscientific experimentation. Such an example could serve to investigate encounters between the different fields, according to the potential relations they may encourage between body, space, and technology, at the microscopic scale.

The conceptualization of a virtual digital, then, intends to occupy a space between philosophical and cultural theorization and digital practice. As such, it endeavours to add to a relatively recent field in media and cultural theory, for which the cross-pollination between theory and practice appears crucial in conducting abstract but material experimentations with technological concepts. Such materialist accounts could be argued to approach the theoretical engagement with media technologies and aesthetic experiments from a specific angle; that is, as a symbiotic contagion between mutually experimental fields, rather than a mere correspondence, communication, deconstruction or representation. As *The Dark Side of the Cell* attempted to explain, theory and practice can be approached from a middle space of intersection: where technoscientific ideas emerge on the edges of obscure, philosophical and even fictional thought, and artistic practice is slowly entering the laboratory with fascinating results. These shifting encounters might point to an unpredictable and incalculable dynamism that seems indispensable from the transmutational fabric of life.

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Book Reviews

Review of 'Pitcher, B (2009) *The Politics Of Multiculturalism: Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan'

Jamie Hakim

It is, no doubt, with a huge amount of pride that the Yearbook publishes a review of ex-UEL PhD student Ben Pitcher's *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain*. There is certainly no small amount of envy when it comes to reviewing it. Finishing his PhD in 2007, it has been a matter of a mere two years before Palgrave Macmillan snapped it up and turned it into a book. Two years! The pride/envy only redoubles after you read the book and discover that it is one of the most impressive analyses of New Labour's racial politics since Labour came to power.

Focusing exclusively on the state politics of the Labour government under Tony Blair (1997 – 2007), Pitcher argues that, contrary to New Labour's perpetual commitment to multicultural politics, what Labour has achieved in practice is an extension of the racially inflected nationalism that Labour inherited from preceding Tory governments. As Pitcher writes in the concluding chapter, "this book has argued that a politics of multiculturalism can be said to reproduce, rather than transcend, dominant structures of racial privilege and power" (Pitcher, 2009, 166). On the surface this is a shocking condemnation of a political position that anti-racists have assumed over the last thirty years. In fact it is an incredibly astute analysis of the abject failure of New Labour to alleviate the racial tensions that they have been so key in creating.

A first step in any analysis of this kind is to re-define what multiculturalism is usually assumed to mean. Against the better known assertion of Stuart Hall who defined multiculturalism as, "... the strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multi-cultural societies throw up." (cited in Pitcher, 2009, 21) or Trevor Phillips' more cynical, "Multiculturalism suggests separateness. We are in a different world from the Seventies'." (cited in Pitcher, 2004, 164), Pitcher contends that "multicultural politics does not necessarily signify anything beyond a basic recognition of the facticity of social and cultural diversity." (Pitcher, 2009, 20) So for Pitcher, thirty years after the term originated to signify an anti-racist political strategy, and fifty years after the first post-colonial immigration to the UK, multiculturalism has shifted to mean a social fact of life: a society where second and third generation immigrations attend schools and occupy workplaces and no-one bats an eye. There

is, of course, much to celebrate in this development. However, once multiculturalism becomes a 'politically neutral' signifier it can be articulated to any number of projects across the political spectrum – even those which are racist; and this is precisely, Pitcher argues, what has happened under New Labour.

Pitcher illustrates his argument with a variety of judiciously selected case studies – speeches, legislation, pamphlets and policy statements all emanating from the highest levels of the Labour leadership. He then demonstrates how such texts constitute a discursive formation which he calls 'Multicultural Nationalism'; a concept that has been particularly useful in positioning New Labour between the politics of the 'loony-left' and the 'are you thinking what we're thinking' anti-immigration Tories. The basic premise of Multicultural Nationalism is that it is acceptable to be multicultural only if that multiculturalism is delimited by Britain's national borders. Through rigorous discourse analysis, Pitcher shows how New Labour have been so effective at holding this oxymoronic formation together and the devastating consequences that have occurred as a result.

The argument is theoretically underpinned very convincingly. Pitcher critiques Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's seminal concept of 'chains of equivalence' which argues that, 'the basic operation of politics is the articulation of terms (ideas/concepts/images/signs) to each other in highly unpredictable sequences or 'chains' [of equivalence]" (Gilbert, 2008, 155). So for Laclau and Mouffe it would be quite possible to articulate such seemingly antagonistic terms like 'Multicultural' to 'Nationalism', if only the right political work is carried out. Pitcher disagrees. He develops the term 'conceptual inertia' to argue that concepts can never fully escape their conditions of emergence. Therefore 'nationalism' can never be articulated to a progressive politics of 'multiculturalism' because nationalism was developed specifically to maintain the hegemony of a mono-culture.

New Labour, Pitcher argues, forces this impossible articulation by what psychoanalysis calls 'disavowal', or "a specific mode of defence which consists in the subject's refusing to recognize the reality of a traumatic perception" (Laplanche et al, 1973, 118). An everyday example of disavowal would be when someone prefaces a racist statement with, 'I'm not racist but...' or finishes it with '... but some of my best friends are Jewish'. Disavowal is the structuring principle of New Labour race policy and Pitcher illustrates this with many examples, the neatest perhaps being the Denham report written in response to the race riots that took place in the North of England in 2001:

"Our society is multicultural, and is shaped by the interaction between people of diverse cultures. There is no single dominant and unchanging culture into which all must

assimilate. The public realm is founded on negotiation and debate between competing viewpoints, at the same time as it upholds inviolable rights and duties. Citizenship means finding a common place for diverse cultures and beliefs, consistent with our core values."

(Cited in Pitcher, 2009, 88)

The disavowal is straightforward here: we are multicultural as long as these multiple cultures adhere to a singular set of core values. What are these 'core values' if they are not a 'single dominant and unchanging culture into which we all must assimilate'? And, more importantly perhaps, what are the consequences of 'multiculturalism' in a discursive formation constituted by statements such as this?

Pitcher explores this question over a range of case studies: from the race riots to citizenship tests; from statements Gordon Brown has made about Britain's colonial past to the use of feminism in justifying Britain's role in the 'War on Terror'. Where Pitcher is most impressive is in a chapter on 7/7 where he explains that the suicide bombings of 2005 were a logical consequence of Blair's multicultural nationalism. Pitcher counterposes multicultural nationalism with the Islamic concept of the Ummah, literally translated as the 'community of believers' and therefore meaning the whole Muslim world. It is exactly this sort of trans-national identification that is prohibited by multicultural nationalism; a nationalism which is enforced by such Blairite tools of governmentality as the citizenship tests which test if a potential citizen is loyal to Britain over any other nation. This prohibition brings to mind Freud's famous formulation that whatever is repressed returns as monstrous. A similar dynamic is precisely what is at play in the monstrous (and murderous) over-determinations in transnational identification that the 7/7 bombers made in the face of these repressions. In an impressive flourish of rhetorical skill, Pitcher draws a direct line of causality between Blair's multicultural project and the tragedy of 7/7 and concludes, 'Tony Blair's descriptions of multicultural Britain turn inwards; they depict a single nation as if it were the world. The London bombings, in the most dramatic sense make it absolutely clear this is a lie.' (p145) Finally, Pitcher suggests that the, admittedly not unproblematic, concept of the Ummah provides a far better model for multiculturalism here than what New Labour have managed to offer.

So if 7/7 is one horrible, and admittedly extreme consequence of the logic of Multicultural Nationalism, what sort of politics should anti-racists, who are interested in multiculturalism in the way that Stuart Hall defined it, be practising? Pitcher does not give up entirely on the possibility of a multiculturalism in the service of anti-racism and in his conclusion suggests a politics which relies on re-articulating Multiculturalism back to the anti-racist practice that were the conditions of its emergence:

"... one possible means of reconstructing an effective anti-racism would... be an attempt to re-invigorate the agents of hegemonic contestation, to re-embody anti-racism as a social movement, and introduce forms of conditionality into anti-racist practice that would provide a means of contesting and reclaiming ownership of ideas that are... betrayed when harnessed to reactionary political agendas."

(Pitcher, 2009, 176)

One of the strengths of the book is Pitcher's tightly focused argument. This allows for a particularly penetrating analysis. I also wonder whether it was one of the book's weaknesses. The structure is so taut that it does not stretch to speculate outside the effects of New Labour state policy. It would be interesting to hear Pitcher on the causes of this policy. Why did Blair and his colleagues pursue this philosophy of multicultural nationalism? I also wonder whether some speculation on the ways in which multiculturalism operates in Britain outside of state policy might have been useful. At one point in the book Pitcher goes so far to claim that the state 'is the single most important social actor in the politics of race.' (p4). I am not sure I would agree. Surely one of Cultural Studies most important insights is that popular culture is *the* crucial site of struggle where politics is negotiated. Arguably Paul Gilroy's chapter on the music culture of 1980s Black Britain is what it makes *There Ain't No Black In The Union Jack* such a classic intervention into the same field. If Pitcher had examined the problematic media representations of British Muslims in the same period – Abu Hamza, being the most obvious – this would have yielded interesting insights that would most likely support Pitcher's thesis.

But these are small quibbles. *The Politics of Multiculturalism* is a fascinating book that argues startlingly original perspectives so convincingly these immediately feel like common sense. Pitcher's ideas have already started to slip into my own arguments and, I suspect, we will see them in larger Cultural Studies debates about multiculturalism before too long.

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Review of 'Back, L (2007) *The Art of Listening* Berg: Oxford'

Andrew Branch

The Art of Listening immediately makes an impact: your attention is drawn to its striking cover image which, in its artfulness, looks as if it would be more at home hanging in a gallery, perhaps as a contribution piece to an exhibition on cutting-edge street cultures: Martin Parr with a Shoreditch twist. I shall return to the question of this image in a moment.

Back's monograph posits what initially appears to be, for a sociologist, a statement so obvious that it hardly bears repeating. Isn't 'listening' what sociologists *do*, their raison d'être? Yet, as Back demonstrates so convincingly by the force and coherence of his argument, it is often the skill most readily discarded by modern day scholars, seduced as many are by the allure of high theory. This is not, of course, to pit the act of intellectual inquiry for its own sake – which can indeed be an exhilarating experience – against the worthiness of ethnographic work. Rather, that the former might be most usefully employed when it engages with the latter.

Drawing inspiration from one of his key influences – the American sociologist C. Wright-Mills – Back argues that it is actually the ability to hear the narrative voices of those without access to public discourse that sustains good sociological inquiry.

The voiceless here are those people, by virtue of their social marginalisation, who are often the recipients of moral scrutiny and do not easily present themselves as candidates for critical engagement. They are not fashionable youth engaged in spectacular subcultural activity, nor the objectified peoples of distant locations who can be easily categorised without fear of reproach. They are the people who live amongst us but remain largely invisible: the homeless, the immigrant and the impoverished.

It is the life narratives these people provide that give Back's book its gravitas. In particular, for this reader at least, the people who contributed to the photographic project Back and his collaborators instigated in the East End of London's Brick Lane area: here, in a public setting, ordinary people were invited to reveal their extraordinariness by having their photo taken. The invisible were made visible.

Back's own contribution to self-revelation provides some of the most emotionally moving passages in the book: his Father's death from cancer and the effect it had on his immediate

family is addressed in order to note the complexity of how we make sense of our experiences and how we articulate these to one another, either verbally or corporeally.

There is a particular class and race dimension to this process of producing narratives of the self. The act of articulation is often most difficult for those who do not typically feel themselves to have the authority to speak. They are, as Back shows clearly, those people who are often *spoken to*, or *on behalf of*, rather than allowed to speak for themselves.

Which brings me back to that cover image. One of the things that struck me about this composition, once I had read the book, was how it contrasted so sharply with the 'poses' adopted by the other participants in the photographic project, whose portraits contribute to a key chapter. Whereas these people generally re-presented themselves as if preparing – as they presumably thought they were – for a typical snapshot, the image selected for the cover is notable for the self-consciousness of the subject – a woman, arms stretched behind her head, body resting against a gate, displays two tattoos on the insides of her upper arms. The tattoos – musical notes – we later discover signify the melody to a song that the woman associates with a deceased godchild. Here, part of the process of bereavement is literally made visible and, Back argues, it is incumbent on academics to move beyond the comforts of their institutional homes in order to witness such testimonies. Like the Bruegel old master that Back invokes at one point as a visual metaphor – *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* – we must not look away from human suffering, in spite of its omnipotence.

What strikes me about this image, however, as moving as it clearly is, is that someone so clearly aware of the importance of symbolic value provides it. That is to say, it reveals the very process that Back is surely partly arguing against: those with the most cultural and social capital, to use Bourdieu's terms, become the most visible. It takes someone with these forms of capital to recognise which tattoo designs are in vogue and which are not. Working class bodies have the names of loved ones written on them: 'Mum' or 'Dad' are obvious examples. The middle class body – entirely free, as far as I am aware, of tattoos before the 1990s vogue for re-appropriating particular working class tastes – favours designs that possess a symbolic currency. In comprehending the reference one demonstrates one's capital.

This is ultimately, perhaps, a minor quibble for Back's book is to be valued primarily for reiterating in such an eloquent way the principles of good sociology and the rich rewards that ethnographic work can give rise to (in spite of the inherent risks of romanticising lived experience). That it is deeply moving and possesses – in the form of an epilogue – an indispensable guide for PhD students in their battle to complete their research makes this book an essential read. It reminds you that we needn't look to the sea to spot a boy drowning. Suffering can always be located much nearer to home.

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After completing an MA in Cultural Studies at the University Of East London in 2003, **Jamie Hakim** returned in 2007 to embark on a PhD. Tentatively titled, "Becoming-Zionist: Affective Responses to the Six Day War amongst the British Jewish Community in 1967", it uses Deleuze & Guattari's theories of affect to attempt to explain the sudden surge in Zionism after the Arab-Israeli war of that year. He also teaches undergraduates Media and Cultural Studies part-time at UEL.

Andrew Branch is in the final stages of completing his doctoral thesis on social mobility, masculinity and popular music. He teaches media and cultural studies part-time at UEL and is interested in applying the work of Pierre Bourdieu to the field of popular music specifically and to youth cultural practice more generally. He is therefore concerned with how and why value is attributed to particular cultural formations and how social class is always a determining factor in this respect.

Editorial Board

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Notices of staff and student publications

Nigianni, Chrysnathi & Storr, Merl (eds) (2009) *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, Edinburgh University Press ISBN 978-0-7486-3405-7

Gunkel, H & Pitcher, B (eds) *darkmatter Journal: Postcolonial Sexuality [3]* (2008)
<<http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/category/journal/issues/3-post-colonial-sexuality/>>

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