Affective capitalism

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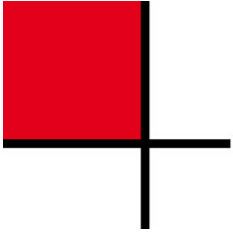
theory
ephemera encourages contributions that explicitly engage with theoretical and conceptual understandings of organizational issues, organizational processes and organizational life. This does not preclude empirical studies or commentaries on contemporary issues, but such contributions consider how theory and practice intersect in these cases. We especially publish articles that apply or develop theoretical insights that are not part of the established canon of organization studies. *ephemera* counters the current hegemonization of social theory and operates at the borders of organization studies in that it continuously seeks to question what organization studies is and what it can become.

politics
ephemera encourages the amplification of the political problematics of organization within academic debate, which today is being actively de-politized by the current organization of thought within and without universities and business schools. We welcome papers that engage the political in a variety of ways as required by the organizational forms being interrogated in a given instance.

organization
Articles published in *ephemera* are concerned with theoretical and political aspects of organizations, organization and organizing. We refrain from imposing a narrow definition of organization, which would unnecessarily halt debate. Eager to avoid the charge of 'anything goes' however, we do invite our authors to state how their contributions connect to questions of organization and organizing, both theoretical and practical.

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The cover photo is from Paul Vanouse's artwork Labor (2015).

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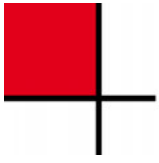Tero Karppi, Lotta Kähkönen, Mona Mannevuo, Mari Pajala and Tanja Sihvonen

Introduction

> Experience taught me a few things. One is to listen to your gut, no matter how good something sounds on paper. The second is that you're generally better off sticking with what you know. And the third is that sometimes your best investments are the ones you don't make. (Trump, 1987: 58)

This editorial begins with a quote from a figure who hardly needs an introduction: Donald J. Trump, businessperson, television personality, author, politician, and the nominee of the Republican Party for President of the United States in the 2016 election. It is not only this quote, but also Trump's areas of influence that can be used to outline the different fields where we track the emergence and appearance of what, in the context of this special issue, will be defined as *affective capitalism*. Affective capitalism traverses different fields from business to politics, media to decision-making, investment to knowledge production. The citation is also a reminder of Brian Massumi's (2002) analysis of Ronald Reagan in 'Autonomy of affect', one of the core texts on affect theory. In the essay, Massumi argues that affect is a story about the brain and the brainless. It is a story about listening to your gut, no matter how good, bad, rational or irrational something sounds on paper. Listening to the gut, for Massumi (2002: 29), is to understand the force of 'a half-second lapse between the beginning of a bodily event and its completion in an outwardly directed, active expression'. Massumi conceptualises conscious intention and brain activity as different things; before intention or rational elaboration arrives, the body-brain has already formed a thought. Here, sticking to what you know is constantly challenged by the affectivity of the body, which can potentially evoke 'the new'.

If affect has the potential to arouse the body beyond rationality and activate us as subjects, it is no wonder that its powers have been subject of capture and capitalisation. What we call affective capitalism in this special issue, was already formulated by Massumi (2002: 45): 'The ability of affect to produce an economic effect more swiftly and surely than economics itself means that affect is itself a real condition, an intrinsic variable of the late-capitalist system, as infrastructural as a factory'. There are a number of industries that invest in affect production from reality TV shows to social media sites, from celebrity blogs to the credit industry and lending businesses. To capitalise on affect is to capture, structure, and modulate the infrastructures where it moves (see Parikka in Obsolete Capitalism, 2013). When a businessman becomes a reality TV host and then a presidential candidate, what binds these different fields together is the ability to build affective infrastructures that appeal to people and activate crowds. We see and feel it happening, and yet what actually happens in the process is difficult to describe.

While the scientific premises of Massumi's argument may be subject to criticism (e.g. Hemmings, 2005; Leys, 2011; Wetherell, 2012: 55-65), his idea of a body and its capacities to affect and become affected has been influential in what has been defined as the affective turn in cultural studies. In this context, Massumi's 'Autonomy of affect' is only one of several significant branches of affect theory. In fact, in the *Affect theory reader,* Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010) note that there are a number of different approaches to affect theory ranging from Spinoza to psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and theorisations of materiality. Moreover, theories of affect and its manifestations in capitalism do not follow one particular branch, but emerge from various strands of theorisations. The different strands and their differing notions of affect are adapted and crossbred across disciplines. Methodological takes on affect vary not only according to the theoretical frames, but also according to context, topic, and discipline. Thus, in this special issue we emphasise the multiplicity of approaches that can be used to understand and elaborate on the ways in which different bodies, individual and collective, material and immaterial, technological and cultural, financial and economic come together, affect and become affected in different encounters.

Interconnections of affect and capitalism

Affect theory has already been mapped in several publications (e.g. Clough, 2008; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Wetherell, 2012; Paasonen et al., 2015), and our aim is not to give a detailed overview of the field. However, a few theoretical trends dominate the discussion of affective capitalism, and as such deserve closer

examination. Some of the strands approach affect more pragmatically – and may even offer an explicit definition of it – while others do not try to specify affect, but understand it rather as modes of intensification, movement, and capacities. The latter notion of 'affect' is based on the above-mentioned idea – the bodily capacities to affect and become affected. In this view, affect is not so much a property of a subject or a body, confined to subjective human or non-human experiences, but rather an active, moving relation, and a collectively formed and circulated capacity (e.g. Stewart, 2007; Clough et al., 2007; Anderson, 2014).

The conceptualisation draws on a broader philosophical project, particularly on Gilles Deleuze's idea of reality as a field of quantities of forces. These forces have the capacity to affect and be affected by other forces. The definition draws on Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics* (Deleuze, 1988; 1990; 1992), and appears in a series of Deleuze's (and Felix Guattari's) works. In the Spinozian-rooted notion of affect as *bodily capacities*, bodies are not seen as entities, but rather as assemblages that extend beyond clearly defined boundaries (e.g. Massumi, 2002; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Blackman, 2012). Moreover, this account 'moves away from a distinctive focus on the human body to bodies as assemblages of human and non-human processes' (Blackman, 2012: 1), which further accentuates the dynamic nature of affect. Indeed, affect is irreducible, as Ben Anderson (2014: 17) suggests, and involves different forms and multiple processes of organisation, which are interconnected.

If affect is abstract and escapes exact definitions, capitalism feels almost like its opposite in the ways in which it has been theorised since Marx. In contemporary cultural and political theory, affect has been employed in critical readings of capitalism and post-Marxist revolutionary politics. The need for these theories has been evident especially among the younger generations in Europe struggling in the midst of financial and political crisis. They are facing what has been referred to as the 'New Normal', that is, material and affective unpredictability on a scale previously unheard of amongst the educated middle classes. Hence, theories of affect and capitalism often derive from analyses of post-Fordist precarity (e.g. Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007; Berardi, 2009; Ross, 2009; Berlant, 2011a; Standing, 2011; Weeks, 2011; Fleming, 2014), academic and digital labour (e.g. Terranova, 2000; Ross, 2004; DeAngelis and Harvie, 2009; Gill, 2009; Hearn, 2010; Gregg, 2011; Scholz, 2013; Huws, 2014), and austerity politics (e.g. Quiggin, 2010; Blyth, 2013; Brown, 2015). Furthermore, theorisations of affect and capitalism often connect with the Italian autonomist movement, especially with the notions of refusal of work (Tronti, 1965/1980), immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1996), and affective labour (Hardt, 1999).

Although theories of affect and capitalism have mostly been developed in the context of post-Fordist politics, we are aware that understanding capitalism as two monolithic frameworks, Fordism and post-Fordism, has been criticised. As Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter (2008) argue, the historical tradition of Fordism is multidimensional and changing, not monolithic. Fordism entails, for instance, phases that Feruccio Gambino (1996) calls 'pre-trade union Fordism' during 1903-1941, and 'regulationist Fordism', which was connected to centralised union bargaining and Keynesian welfare systems. Therefore, theories of capitalism influenced by the Italian autonomist tradition should rather be seen as a European reaction to the erosion of the welfare state than as a universal theory of affect and capitalism. As Lauren Berlant notes, there have always been workers outside Fordist structures for whom 'the ongoing prospect of low-waged and uninteresting labor is…nearly utopian' (2007: 275). The articles in this special issue do not offer a universalising account of affective capitalism, but analyse affective capitalism in particular contexts – in fields such as entrepreneurial coaching, creative work, and brain research, mainly in Europe and North America.

There are tensions between the Italian autonomist tradition and feminist theory, labour history and affect theory due to the classed and gendered limits of the immaterial and affective labour debates (e.g. Dowling, 2007; Fantone, 2007; Morini, 2007; Weeks, 2007; Hearn, 2011; McRobbie, 2011). Nevertheless, autonomist theory has been essential for scholars analysing the affective structures of capitalism and new ways of making profit in post-Fordist capitalism. For autonomist theory, affect is key to understanding and contesting capitalism. The concept of affect is not only used to examine capitalism itself, but also to explain the highly affective relationship between capitalism and the worker. Mario Tronti, for instance, suggests that the path to the rejection of the ideology of self-management and capitalist production is through affect, as only the 'alienated' worker is truly revolutionary (Tronti, 1973: 117; see also Bowring, 2004: 108). In this tradition, affects thus have revolutionary potentiality.

Recently, autonomist Marxist theory has moved from considering the potentiality of antagonism to the potentiality of affirmative feelings such as love and desire. For Michael Hardt (2011), for instance, love seems to open up the possibility of a new world and the creation of powerful lasting bonds. In research on cultural work, this kind of analysis on capitalism and affects as transgressive has raised several questions in relation to post-Fordist work cultures where socializing is not only about pleasurable potentiality, but also a compulsory requirement for securing a job in the future (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Gregg, 2011; Hearn, 2011). Feminists, in particular, have argued that affects cannot be freed from capitalism because care work has always been an integral part of capitalist production and

the Fordist sexual contract (McRobbie, 2011; Adkins, 2016). Furthermore, in her discussion with Michael Hardt, Lauren Berlant argues that love is not entirely ethical as in both love and capitalism, 'greed is good' (2011b: 685). Taking into account these discussions, we want to highlight the ambivalence and messiness of affects, capitalism, and their interconnections. In other words, affective capitalism is a broad infrastructure in which the emotional culture and its classed and gendered history merge with value production and everyday life.

In addition to Deleuzian rooted conceptualisations of affect and the autonomist tradition, Eva Illouz's (2007) historicisation of the emotional style of 20th century American capitalism has inspired contributors to this theme issue (Graefer, Vänskä, Mikołajewska-Zając). Illouz does not operate with the concept of affect, but rather, offers a sociological analysis of an emotional culture. Illouz argues that the development of modern capitalism coincided with the development of an emotional culture where 'emotional and economic discourses and practises mutually shape each other' (*ibid.*: 5). In Illouz's analysis, a therapeutic emotional style was central to the development of 20th century 'emotional capitalism' (*ibid.*) in the USA. The therapeutic ideal of communication enabled a new kind of management of workers and provided a link between individuals' self-understanding in the private and the public sphere. The contributions to this theme issue offer different approaches to analysing the characteristic formations of affect in contemporary capitalism. While the therapeutic discourse identified by Illouz continues to be influential in early 21st century management and self-help literature, the importance of affect for contemporary capitalism in many ways bypasses therapeutic discourse. With the development of big data, algorithmic culture and datafication – tools and technologies that make it possible to turn aspects of our life into computerised data and further into new forms of value – affect does not have to be verbalised as emotions in therapeutic communication in order for companies to be able to mine for profit the 'archives of affect' (Gehl, 2011) left by people's digital media use, networked social relationships, and consumption habits.

Digital media and network culture have been identified as important features of the contemporary capitalist production and consumption of affect (e.g. Paasonen et al., 2015). Political theorist Jodi Dean (2009), for example, describes the merging of capitalism and democracy as 'communicative capitalism' where networked communications enable capitalism to profit from the democratic ideal of participation. In the digital media environment, participation is fetishised and formatted as contributions where the content is no longer relevant; only the circulation of messages matters. Thus, communicative capitalism captures political energies, packaging 'political interventions...as contributions to its circuits of affect and entertainment' (*ibid.*: 49). Several contributors to this theme

issue likewise analyse the ways in which social media, blogs and digital 'participatory culture' (Jenkins, 2006) around television provide capitalism with the opportunity to exploit affective labour and the affects of media users (Graefer, Krüger, Nikunen, Sampson). However, by using the concept affective capitalism we want to signal a different focus than Dean's concept of communicative capitalism, which is primarily concerned with the impact of networked communications on democracy. As Susanna Paasonen et al. (2015: 14) argue, affective values tie in with 'political economy', 'human agency', and 'networked technologies' in multiple ways. Moreover, digital networked communications, while important in contemporary capitalism, are not necessarily a defining feature of affective capitalism, as it is discussed in this special issue.

Mapping affective capitalism

The contributions to the special issue address ways of capturing affect in different contexts, such as debt, media and popular culture, brain research, humanitarianism, and pedagogy. The articles by Greg Seigworth and John Carter McKnight and Adam Fish offer two different approaches to understanding the role of affect in cultures of debt and lending. Seigworth's article examines body as a 'debt garment'; how our relationship to credit and debt is evolving in contemporary control societies as a bodily garment, woven into everyday life as wearable 'expressive infrastructure' (Thrift, 2012). In a Deleuzian vein, Seigworth studies debt as affective, related to affective capacities of bodies. Turning his attention to ontology, Seigworth suggests that we are becoming the embodiments of affective capitalism through the growing engineering of living-with-debt. Gradually, the weight of debt-carriage on bodies and subjectivities will be distributed less by touch and more by gestures, which are hard to restrain. Offering a series of 'threats' to the subject, Seigworth considers the ethological, ecological, existential, ethical, and aesthetic aspects of indebtedness.

Carter McKnight and Fish draw from Deleuze's idea of the double-movement of liberation and capture to explore how the peer-to-peer lending company Zopa Limited uses TV commercials in order to attract new clients. Here affective capitalism penetrates different media. TV commercials build what the authors call 'idiotic collectives' glued together by consumeristic affinities. These collectives are then invited to participate in the processes of lending that take place on an online platform where affect is again circulated in the form of trust. The authors draw a picture of affective capitalism where the rational or sensible (in the context of personal wealth-management, 'Sensible loans for sensible people') is mobilised through irrational and even absurd commercials that mobilise affect as emotional triggering.

The affectivity of the brain and triggering of the mind are discussed in several articles of this special issue. Tony Sampson develops a theoretical understanding of the dystopic conditions of affective capitalism through its various manifestations in everyday life. Beginning with Facebook's recent study of manipulating the emotions of the platform's users, Sampson turns attention to the brain as the folding of subjectivity and capitalism. Concepts such as neuroeconomics, neuromarketing, and neurospeculation point towards a turn where the brain is affected in order to manipulate emotions. Sampson's examples of the sensory stimulation of the brain range from marketing to Nazi propaganda and the rise of right-wing populism in 2015. Affect for Sampson operates between the brain and social relationality and is manifested in the moods and movements of the crowd.

Following Eva Illouz's thesis about the emotional style of 20th century capitalism, Annamari Vänskä's article probes the role of emotions in pet dog consumerism, in the contemporary phase of emotional capitalism. Vänskä outlines the emotional history of the human-pet dog relationship, and shows how its formation intertwines with the emergence of capitalism and consumer culture. Analysing two contemporary companies as examples, Vänskä demonstrates how emotions are utilised in the language of marketing and how they are materialised through pet dog commodities. Using a posthumanist approach, she argues that the contemporary pet dog business constructs the dog as a privileged co-consumer.

Antti Saari and Esko Harni's article focuses on the ways spiritual experience and Zen Buddhism-inspired mindfulness meditation are used in entrepreneurial adult education and coaching. They argue that learning discourses resonate with certain dynamics of production in which the labour force has become a mental category, perpetuating discourses of self-fulfilment and flexibility. According to Saari and Harni's interpretation, mindfulness meditation highlights the ability to pay attention to the present, which is celebrated in business literature for its effect on concentration, creativity, and work efficiency. Mindfulness techniques can, therefore, be used to enhance well-being and productivity. The article analyses spiritual experience as an indicator of the inherent tensions in the economy and explores how these highest forms of human existence are used to generate profit. Saari and Harni observe that spiritual experience can be used to criticise capitalism and demonstrate the ways in which spirituality is often assimilated into the management of productive work.

Rhiannon Firth's article takes the context of neoliberal state discourse as its starting point. Firth explores how it harnesses affect in the production of compliant subjects and how the individualised and depoliticised discourses of

'well-being', emotional support and self-help undermine collective political struggle. Firth emphasises the role of the body in effective resistance and focuses on critical pedagogies that have the power to resist state affective discourse. The article draws on psychoanalytic and practiced pedagogies that aim to transgress the mind-body dualism and hierarchy. According to critical pedagogies, it is possible to problematise affective states and thereby raise the political consciousness of learners. Firth's treatise extends beyond these approaches by relying on utopian practices that involve learning through movement, play, and physical activity. These incorporate elements of 'somatic' theory that proposes a holistic approach to the relationships between body, mind, and (human and non-human) 'others'.

A number of the contributions to this issue focus on the role of affect in contemporary media economy and participatory culture. In her article, Anne Graefer analyses the humour of celebrity gossip blogs in terms of affective and emotional labour. Drawing on a wide body of literature from cultural studies, media studies, gender studies, and studies of immaterial labour and cultural work, Graefer argues that celebrity gossip blogs offer a window to the complex, messy and multi-layered cycles of contemporary affective capitalism. Graefer's article sets out to investigate the cycles of making profit in affective capitalism from three perspectives. Firstly, Graefer argues that humour valorises and masks the tiresome and precarious working conditions of bloggers. The work of being funny attaches bloggers to the cycles of contemporary affective capitalism, which relies on creative, precarious, and self-exploitative working conditions to create value. Secondly, humour accretes value for capital by creating a buzz or conversation about a celebrity story. Graefer's examples illuminate humour as central to making economic profit in social media, because it has the capacity to stimulate online interactions through affective 'stickiness'. Hence, thirdly, the uses of humour conceal how the ridiculing and shaming of seemingly 'trashy celebrities' functions to weave people deeper into economic circuits.

Moving away from 'trashy' celebrity gossip, Kaarina Nikunen's article analyse instances where popular media offers itself as a platform for 'doing good'. Nikunen explores the trend for charity reality television where hosts help participants solve a range of real life problems or raise funds for charitable organisations. Earlier research on affect and reality television has discussed how reality TV makes women's care work a source of value for media industries, but also a potential source of personal value for female participants and viewers (Skeggs, 2010; Skeggs and Wood, 2012). Nikunen shows how care work gains new value when it is performed by male reality television hosts, who use their performances of affect and care to build their own brand as good citizens. For humanitarian organisations struggling with reaching audiences in a fragmented

digital media environment, the affective technologies of reality television offer the promise of turning emotional audience reactions into participation and donations.

The question of the affectivity of participation is also central to Steffen Krüger's analysis of the *min 22. juli* (*my 22nd of July*) internet page hosted by VG Nett, an online platform of the biggest Norwegian tabloid daily, *Verdens Gang*. The website was set up a year after Anders Behring Breivik mass-murdered 77 people in Norway. It was conceived as part of the public commemorations of the tragic events and was designed to give Norwegians a platform for individually articulating the ways in which they had been affected by the events. Krüger focuses on the emerging forms of interaction between users and the platform. By analysing both published and censored posts, Krüger notes that affect itself became a constitutive, a priori requirement for participating in the platform.

In her note, Karolina Mikołajewska-Zając highlights some of the difficulties in the changing nature of work done in the so-called sharing economy. Mikołajewska raises key theoretical questions concerning distinctions between production and consumption on the one hand, and between work and labour on the other. The note concentrates on an empirical case, Couchsurfing, which has been discussed in sociological and ethnographic studies focusing on affects and affective labour. However, as Mikołajewska-Zając points out, these studies need updating, because Couchsurfing changed its legal status from a non-profit organisation to a for-profit organisation in 2011. Through analysing the case of Couchsurfing, the note makes a critical intervention in discussions on notions of affective labour, immaterial labour, free labour and social factory.

An appealing mode of capture

The contributions in this special issue provide answers to the question of what affective capitalism is, not by giving essential definitions of the concept, but rather by mapping different places, conditions and apparatuses where we observe affective capitalism at work. We use the notion of affective capitalism to describe a particular mode of capture where resonances between bodies – both human and non-human alike – enter systems of value and value production. Affective capitalism appeals to our desires, it needs social relationships, and organises and establishes them. Our capacities to affect and become affected are transformed into assets, goods, services, and managerial strategies.

The approach in this issue highlights the processuality, relationality and materiality of affective capitalism, as well as the need to recognise, identify and

trace its 'modalities and apparatuses' (Grossberg, 2010) in late capitalism in particular. These modalities and apparatuses, which operate on cognitive, non-cognitive, and even pre-cognitive regimes have different names. In the context of this special issue, we identify only some of them. In other instances, affective capitalism merges with established therapeutic discourses and blurs the limits of intimacy and labour (Illouz, 2007; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010; Berlant, 2011a). Discussions of neuro-marketing (Sampson, 2012), analysis of how financial markets are affected by non-human actors such as trading algorithms (Borch et al., 2015), and analysis of how our relationships to credit/debit change (Deville, 2015), show how affective encounters challenge and supplement economic rationalism (Massumi, 2015). These instances, for us, are different faces of affective capitalism, which are constantly transforming.

The holistically understood concept of affect draws together bodies and their environment and relations with other bodies through 'forces of encounter' (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010: 3). To rephrase, then, affective capitalism is a mode of production where systems of organising production and distribution rely on the capacities of *different* bodies, human and non-human, to encounter each other. These encounters and the relations that emerge are surrounded by a vast array of technologies that produce, capture, valorise, commodify and eventually attempt to transform them into different modes of capital.

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Wearing the world like a debt garment: Interface, affect, and gesture

Gregory J. Seigworth

abstract

What happens when the relationship to credit and debt becomes more about a body's 'going through the motions', more about touch or gesture than about belief or guilt (or sin)? In what ways then does living-with-debt gradually and continuously alter the atmosphere of existence, weaving through and between bodies as a garment to be rhythmically engaged – worn loosely or tightly – and never too easily shrugged off? How should we understand the contact zones, infrastructures, and interfaces where credit and debt are managed, habituated, eluded? Bookended by scenes from *Feed* (a young adult's dystopian science fiction tale of life under real subsumption in late-capitalism), this essay will pursue various 'threads' toward an ontology of debt – moving beyond the realm of the economic to also consider the ethological, ecological, existential, ethical, and aesthetic aspects of indebtedness in our era of affective capitalism.

> ...how to elaborate debt as embodied; i.e. what could be called, for the lack of a better word, "affective capitalism", where the *affect* bit refers to the bodily and often non-cognitive states and excitations; of desires and impulsions; whether in the brain or in the gut. Could this be connected to the wider interest in brain sciences in the context of digital culture (interface design)? (Parikka, 2011: blogpost)

First thing felt[1]

In an early scene from M. T. Anderson's young adult sci-fi novel *Feed* (2002), the story's teenage protagonist Titus wakes up somewhere on the moon – on the morning after his wireless brain-feed had been hacked at a dance-club – to discover that something even more sinister and truly unsettling has transpired.

> The first thing I felt was no credit.
>
> I tried to touch my credit, but there was nothing there.
>
> I felt like I was in a little room.
>
> My body – I was in a bed, on top of my arm, which was asleep, but I didn't know where. I couldn't find the Lunar GPS to tell me. (Anderson, 2002: 35)

Credit or, in this case, its absence is a thing to be felt, a point of contact, accessed by touch. Meanwhile, the body as a whole is adrift, and with parts (sleeping arm) out of place. Both of these details – the relation of credit and debt to our sense of embodiment (and disembodiment) – will prove instructive for the aims of this essay. But to linger for a moment longer over this 'first thing felt'... why does the seemingly more pertinent matter (where am I? where is the rest of me?) follow *after* the tactile inquiry that Titus makes about his credit? In what kind of future, does the contact with credit precede the relation to one's own limbs, to one's entire body, to one's sense of place in the world (even if that world is the moon)?

Meanwhile back on present-day Planet Earth, Bill Maurer – in his book *How would you like to pay? How technology is changing the future of money* (2015) – investigates the potentials that have arisen at the intersection of mobile money and digital currency. Maurer maintains that the basic factors giving contour and tempo to our everyday experience with money are fairly straightforward: 'Existing behavior. Existing infrastructure. Backgrounded technology' (2015: 18). For one brief moment though he does wonder aloud about the ways that the emergence of 'wearable computing, the so-called Internet of Things, and new distributed [payment] systems' bears upon the question 'how *should* we like to pay? What are the moral and philosophical aspects of payment that the collision of new technologies and money brings to the fore?' (28). Although answers to these questions are beyond the immediate scope of Maurer's book, it is precisely the moral and philosophical aspects that arise with the intertwining of new

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technologies, money-practices, and the affective capacities of a body that will join up as the prime focus here.

Beginning with a brief traversal through debt and morality, this essay will – through a set of loosely connected sections that I'll refer to as 'threads' – take up the adaptive behaviors, the algorithmically-refined interfaces & infrastructures, and ubiquitous technologies of mundane credit-debt practices that have come to array or drape themselves about and through the body as a kind of garment: what I am calling a 'debt garment.' Repurposing the words of St. Francis of Assisi who advised that one should '*wear the world as a loose garment, which touches us in a few places and there lightly'* I will endeavor to show how – through ongoing processes of touch, even if only the barest wisp of a touch or the slightest flourish of a gesture – we find ourselves today wearing the world as a debt garment. Its weaves and folds are composed of the soft modulations that Gilles Deleuze claimed were the subtle suturing points and supple guidance systems that contribute to contemporary processes of subjectification within 'societies of control.' Unlike the segmented 'molds' and institutional encasements of disciplinary societies, Deleuze argues that, in our era, 'control' is much more about free-range undulations and the data-sampling derivations of cybernetic meshworks, continuous and unbounded. As such, Deleuze adds: we might speak then 'no longer [of] a man confined, but a man in debt' (1995: 181).

It is through attention to the lived socialities of debt that I hope to gradually pry apart the parentheses in Jussi Parikka's epigraph regarding affective capitalism and its implications with the increasingly fluid ontologies of interface design. At this essay's close, I will return to *Feed's* Titus and the affective atmospheres that permeate the gestural space of his own body following its full re-immersion in the tactile interface-affordances of credit and debt. But this time, in his renewed awareness of the ways that he is perpetually wearing the world as a debt garment (where the lightest touch is smothering), Titus tears at the hem and seams of the debt garment interface: pushing, feeling, depleting, tracking its system-wide movements, punishing himself all the while. Far beyond the reaches of any kind of atonement. Until there is no credit left to touch.

Thread #1: A somewhat breathless and miniature genealogy of debt / guilt

In a previously unpublished writing-fragment 'Capitalism as religion' (written in 1921), Walter Benjamin begins by confidently – if not also somewhat breathlessly – enumerating the three [but wait, no, four!] aspects of the religious structure of capitalism: (1) Not simply mimicking the structure of religion but operating in precisely the same practical and conceptual space as religion – just even more

excessively, capitalism is 'a purely cultic religion' (1921/1996: 288) such that it demands (2) ever greater fealty from each of its worshippers ('no "weekdays"' in capitalism: every day is Sunday in 'all its sacred pomp' [*ibid.*]) and (3) by growing so large in its expansion of despair and guilt that capitalism engulfs even God, 'to the point where God, too, finally takes on the entire burden of guilt, to the point where the universe has been taken over by that despair which is actually its secret *hope*... until despair becomes a religious state of the world in the hope that this will lead to salvation' (*ibid.*: 289). Within capitalism's cult, Benjamin continues, God 'is not dead; he has been incorporated into human existence' but remains, at the same time, 'hidden' and 'addressed only when his guilt is at its zenith' (*ibid.*: 4).

Benjamin readily acknowledges of course that it is Nietzsche, in *On the genealogy of Morals*, who got here first, proclaiming that his philosophical understanding of the 'paradigm of capitalist religious thought is magnificently formulated' (*ibid.*: 289). In Nietzsche, the whole discourse of indebtedness parasites Christianity, becoming a morality play in parallel: concerned with its own historically particular construction of capitalist subjectivity around guilt and obligation and conscience and interiority (although Benjamin notes that this parasitic relationship of capitalism to Christianity in the West eventually undergoes a reversal). Hence, for instance, Nietzsche cannot help but call attention to the etymology of the German word *Schuld*; says Nietzsche: 'the major moral concept *guilt* [Schuld] has its origins in the very material concept *debts* [Schulden]' (cited in Conway, 2008: 61). It is a congruence that Benjamin refers to as 'the demonic ambiguity of this word' (1921/1996: 289) And, to some extent then, Benjamin's fragment efficiently sketches – in miniature – Nietzsche's Übermensch, as well as his notion of 'the eternal return', to describe how the 'intensification and development' of capitalism depends upon an ever-accumulating, continually proliferating recirculation of debt / guilt that finally grows 'right through the sky', breaking open the heavens (*ibid.*).

But almost as soon as Benjamin manages to capture the Nietzschean genealogy in this highly condensed form, he sputters out a few short paragraphs later (name-checking Freud and Marx along the way): first writing himself a brief in-text memo about the need to work up a comparison 'between the images of the saints of various religions and the banknotes of different states' (*ibid.*: 290), followed by a long list of references to be further explored. But Benjamin does offer one partially fleshed-out paragraph at the close of the fragment about how 'the first heathens certainly did not believe that religion served a "higher", "moral" interest but that it was severely practical' and, thus, 'religion did not achieve any greater clarity then about its "ideal" or "transcendental" nature than modern capitalism does today' (*ibid.*). This seems perhaps a slightly off-kilter

assertion, one that is at least partially out-of-sync with those more standard readings of Nietzsche's Christianity/capitalism mutual parasitism. It is as if Benjamin is saying: fealty to or belief in such structures, in the end, has less to do with morality or guilt or conscience or sin (as any kind of interiority or trajectory of redemption or transcendence) but, rather, is more connected to what is divulged through, say, more 'practical' externalizations and sets of outwardly directed acts as found across bodies, gestures, surfaces.

This is not unlike what Deleuze and Guattari, via their own uptake of Nietzsche in their *Anti-Oedipus*, trace out in their genealogy of the debtor-creditor relationship: not something derived through relations of exchange and mutualized states of obligation and reciprocity but, even more, forged through modes of inscription, markings, and codings (1971/1983: 190). The prime focus of these inscription-processes is the body (historically, at first, the body as a brute, physical entity but, later, located more within the adjacent atmospheres of a body's capacities / affects). Additionally, like Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that, in securing fidelity to the project of capitalism, an inner-dwelling sense of belief is not required –

> the capitalist is merely striking a pose when he bemoans the fact that nowadays no one believes in anything any more. Language no longer signifies something that must be believed, it indicates rather what is going to be done...Moreover, despite the abundance of identity cards, files, and other means of control, capitalism does not even need to write in books to make up for the vanished body markings. (*ibid.*: 250)

In the transitions from sovereign to disciplinary to control societies, debt, say Deleuze and Guattari, has become simply 'a debt of existence, a debt of the existence of the subjects themselves' (*ibid.*:197). From actions taken directly upon – marking – a body (sovereign) *to* those enclosures that come to bear upon the souls of a citizenry (disciplinary) to the 'self-transmuting' weavings that transpire throughout and alongside the real-time movements and habitualized patternings of daily existences (control), we glimpse the dim outlines of making of a debt garment – perhaps growing looser or more intangible over time in some ways (in an era of flexibility, convenience, all-access) and yet tighter in others (with, for instance, the impersonal encroachments of various check-mechanisms, data-gatherings, and profiling machines).

All this goes toward saying that more traditional Nietzschean-based conceptualizations of debt that adhere closely to its initiating moralizations are no longer as entirely applicable to contemporary processes of subject-formation; the wages of sin and the bearings of guilt do not circle around and impinge upon a body – on any and every 'body' – in the ways that they once might have. While

there may be the vestiges of some residual form of morality-as-social-obligation still at work up and down the line of current entanglements of credit and debt, the affective frissons of guilt and conscience and belief do not quite operate with the same force or along the same vectors as they once (or ever?) did.

Thread #2: Materializing debt, or, debt has a hand in making and destroying worlds.

Despite a great deal of (worthy) attention given to the calculative and speculative ambience of today's credit and debt practices, debt is – and always has been – material: affectively so. Long before the time when old materialisms were new again, there was the ancient belief in the matter of our inextricable bindings to each other and to our world through an immanent and mutually constitutive indebtedness. In fact, the earliest known philosophical utterance in the Western World is a fragment credited to Anaximander (c.610–c.546 BCE) that, in one translation, reads:

> The beginning of all beings is the unbounded and *from there* is the coming to be of all things and *into there* is also their passing away according to necessity and they pay each other their justified debt and penance for their injustice according to the law of time. (cited in Gillespie 2013: 57)

For Anaximander, every being (human or non-) arises from and returns to undifferentiated matter – what he called the 'apeiron' which has been translated variously as the 'unbounded' or the 'unlimited' or the 'infinite' (Gillespie, 2013: 56–57). But in that moment in the *capacity for* coming to be and of taking – however briefly – consistency of form, each being (and all beings) accrue debts to one another and to an always-more-than-'natural' world.

We then should never forget to remind ourselves that debt's ontology binds us to the never-less-than inherently social and relational: despite any ongoing attempts to get each us to imagine that we must finally bear our debts individually / personally. In his *The social life of money*, Nigel Dodd says matter-of-factly:

> Debt is arguably what makes money social, defining its capacity to be what Simmel called a claim upon society. Or to express this in another way, it is debt's fundamental sociality that makes it possible for money to exist. (2014: 92)

But I would hasten to add (and Dodd would no doubt agree) that this sociality of debt – a debt that arises at the very moment of one's coming into existence – is never fully sealed up or sealed off from the world as a whole; debt and the social are never solely constituted by the human.

So, although we might primarily think of debt in strictly quasi-moral and monetary terms, debt is likewise always and necessarily *ecological* and *ethological*. Debts arise as the processual or lived-relations to the immanence of the world, of a world, of singular worldings, or what Jakob von Uexküll referred to as a creature's 'umwelt': the interleaved milieu where it becomes impossible for a body and its world (or a world and its bodies) to ever be sifted out as fully separable entities. Thus, any critical discourse of debt must endeavor to unfold the variety of ways that relationships of credit / debt can be alternately world-making and unmaking: and, in ways that do, by necessity, always fold the other-than-/more-than-human into their composition.

Thread #3: Debt always marks an imbalance, a mismatch of resources and rhythms.

Credit / debt relationships are, by the very nature of their taking-place and by their ensuing trajectories, *asymmetrical*. It probably goes without saying that, around the issues of credit and debt, questions of access, power and lived potentials / precarities are arrayed or distributed unevenly across spaces and, especially, passages of time. An all-at-once collective and singularizing arrhythmia – sometimes barely perceptible, while at other times impossible to ignore – has long marked the expansion / contraction of human–nonhuman bonds as credit and debt. And, thus the constitutive materialities of credit and debt can never be fully discharged. That is one way to understand what Anaximander might have meant by the rising and falling rhythms (the bindings and dissipations) of 'injustice according to the law of time'. The cumulative asymmetries / arrhythmias of human indebtedness to the whole matter of each other (and the entirety of impersonal matter that transcends any such intimate relatedness) can offer one way of registering this reciprocating-but-thoroughly-uneven worlding: the anthropocene, then, as simply the tipping point when the ecological debts owed by humans to the world strikes an irreconcilable imbalance.

Thread #4: Living debt today: a new aesthetics of existence, often a time of bare existence.

Immediately after Deleuze remarked that 'A man is no longer a man confined but a man in debt', he hastened to add that, with so much of humanity 'too poor to have debts and too numerous to be confined: control will have to deal not only with vanishing frontiers, but with mushrooming shantytowns and ghettos' (1995: 181). The accountings of debt and credit in control societies take on a wider compass here – not merely concerned with biological life or even less cognitive

life, but, more precisely, as Maurizio Lazzarato argues, focusing on 'existential life' or, that is, as he continues: existence as 'the force of self-positioning, the choices that found and bear with them modes and styles of life' and, hence, in debt we find a renewed emphasis upon the way that 'the material of money is [grounded] not in labor time, but the time of existence' (2012: 60). Debt long preceded market exchange and wage-labor as the chief means for securing the ties of human beings to the ongoing organization of the social. However, for a time – stretching from the late industrial age through the mid-20th Century Fordist era (when the ascendancy of productive capital and wage-labor served as the foregrounded bases for most efficiently holding social relations together) – the creation of debt as a prime project for subjectivation within the social fell briefly into eclipse in the West particularly. But it is now, once more, the intimacies and abstractions of everyday credit-and-debt management that have reasserted themselves, beginning in the mid–1970s and surging more fully into the present. Debt returns with a vengeance (see: the re-emergence of new debtor prisons) as an effectively pre-primed and deep-seated suturing mechanism for fastening broken and frayed affective ties to the sub- and supra-personal conditions of sociality, as a chief marker for the time of existence itself.

This 'renewed emphasis' upon 'the time of existence' calls for, then, a means of evaluating the felt or sensed values that attend to living with credit / debt as modes or styles of life, as an alternately ruthless and occasionally opportune stylistics of living-on or living-through, as an art of timing and as a perpetual shuffling and transformation of affective–material forces. Thus, it becomes possible to imagine – not just the ethological, ecological, existential, and ethical approach to credit and debt – but an impersonal yet visceral *aesthetics* of credit and debt as well.

Lauren Berlant's work in *Cruel optimism* – with its call for a 'materialist context for affect theory' – provides one way of glimpsing what an aesthetics of debt can offer to critical analyses. Here Berlant focuses on 'how the activity of affective attachment can be located formally in a historical, cultural, and political field in ways that clarify the process of knotty tethering to objects, scenes, and modes of life that generate so much overwhelming yet sustaining negation' (2010: 51-2). How, then, to offer a critical accounting of credit and debt that squares up with the paradoxical nature of 'modes of life' that remain tied optimistically, if not also precariously, to those obstacles that actually impede one's flourishing? What might be revealed through an aesthetic inquiry into modes of living-with-debt that leans more decidedly on the realms of the material and sensory?

Could it be that, at the level of entire populations, the existential bearings of indebtedness – again, what Lazzarato calls 'the force of self-positioning' – have

never been more bare, yet more exposed to techniques of aestheticization today, for better *and* for worse, than at any time before in history? At the very least, one could plausibly claim that the matters of self-positioning – of locational awareness and embodied movement – are lived differently now than in times-past and, in part, this ongoing alteration is linked to significant technological and economic shifts. Or, from a slightly different angle, as Brian Massumi phrases this transitional moment in the opening pages of his *Power at the End of the Economy* (in his own darkly humorous way):

> when markets react more like mood rings than self-steering wheels, the affective factor becomes increasingly impossible to factor out. It becomes obvious that the 'rationality' of the economy is a precarious art of snatching emergent order out of affect. The creeping suspicion is that the economy is best understood as a division of the affective arts. (2014: 2)

Perhaps then it is less the matter and more *the manner* of self-positioning, locational awareness, and embodiment movement that threads through and connects the frayed aestheticized layers and moods (more so than 'modes') of social existence. While this particular thread ends here, I promise that I will circle around to rings – 'mood' or otherwise – soon.

Thread #5: Debt is woven into everyday life as a wearable infrastructure of feeling.

Lived relationships with debt and credit continually configure and are reconfigured by the resonances that rebound or refract around / through the place-positions (an embodied locational awareness) of the particular and the general. There is nothing especially new or somehow wholly unique about this. However, I would argue that the telescoping movements between the particular and the general (between near and far, between singular and generic, between action-at-a-distance and intimacy) are engaged differently in our present moment. That is, the material and ambient actualities of debt and credit are less about assembling any kind of perpetually trailing block-by-block, well delineated spatio–temporal envelopes for subjectivation (i.e., disciplinary societies). Instead, contemporary workings of debt and credit are *more concerned with* how to inflect themselves, more fluidly, at what Nigel Thrift calls 'the rate of life itself' (2012: 144): as found, for instance, in the ways that the algorithmic, 'real-time' machinic modulations of the corporeal and incorporeal run alongside and then slightly in front of the rhythms and ever-emerging (re)(de)stabilizations of the 'quantified self', as various existential registerings slip ever more seamlessly into the pervasively calculative environments of the everyday. Ever more subtle undulations of credit and debt content themselves in moving forward and

spreading lightly (but forcefully) across the sure and steady extraction of vastly smaller profit-takings through a heightened, densely packed coordination of pinprick pilferings of the mundane.

Perhaps, even more so, the ecologies of 21st Century credit–debt capturings – with their various mindings and tendings – are increasingly coming to function as new kinds of everyday *textures* to be engaged with and quite often worn: like a pair of shoes, like a ring, like a cloak, like a patch, like a badge, like a hairshirt, like a halo. This kind of lively, wearable, mobile texture fits around its in-dwellers as a swath of ceaselessly churning surface-effects strung along in the socially networked / experientially-attentive modes of digitized living and through the multiplying push-feeds of miniaturized, instantaneous self-to-ecosystem relays. This is what information-architectural theorist Malcolm McCullough calls 'foraging across the abundant facades' of our 'ambient commons' (2013: 161-4). Or, along the same lines, consider such texturings in the ways that Susan Elizabeth Ryan does, in her illuminating *Garments of paradise*, when she calls attention to the cultural interface of dress ('skin/dress/tissue/textile' as interconnected interfaces) and how the creation of '[a]ffective wearables reflect the biometric information registering on or through the skin, from on or beyond the body, and activate either a remote display or one that is worn as clothing or accessory' (2014: 134-135). Promise or threat: wearables and the movements of capital steadily converge along ever-widening circuits of extraction and expressivity.

Nigel Thrift describes this as the rise of an immanently 'expressive infrastructure' marking a next phase in the operative logics of capitalism: a logic – one of many of course – operating as a 'new medium [that is composed of] neither time nor space nor time-space but something else, something closer to movement moving' (2012: 151). This 'movement moving' becomes a means for fashioning a perpetual composition and regeneration of the forces of innovation as distributed amongst and engaged through the subtlest nestlings of the inanimate, inorganic and incorporeal with the quite permeable (to-affect-and-to-be-affected) human. And Thrift ventures that this expressive infrastructure relies perhaps most of all on 'a project of channeling and damming affect and imagination through the laying down of technology (and the practices associated with it) that demands more than concentration and acceleration but also reworks the substance of what we regard as the world, down to the smallest grain of interaction, through an architecture of intimacy' (*ibid*.: 144). And he sums up: 'This new kind of massed and yet also individuated land *will feel with us* through its ability to pre-empt and nudge our thoughts [by] placing consciousness everywhere, revealing new means of extracting surplus and thereby turning a profit' (*ibid*.: 155).

So, this is the fresh (and perpetually refreshable) terrain where the extractive-conjunctive assemblages of creditworthiness and indebtedness roam – characterized by what, as Joe Deville (2015) observes, are a wide variety of 'attachment devices' for debt, each with their own particular 'lures for feeling'. As such, these mobile and evanescent credit and debt assemblages must always seek the means to traverse – often in a single bound – the particular and general, the massed and the dividuated, the granular and the planetary in the ongoing process of soliciting and securing debtors' bodily dispositions to their debt devices.

Thread #6: The shifting weight of debt–carriage is distributed through posture and touch.

If this rolling composition of debt's own architectural intimacy is best conceived as the sensory arrival of a more complexly interwoven, restlessly innovative texturizing worlding, then critical analyses of debt might be well-served to consider the sort of roles then that *tactility* and *touch* play in the accommodation and adaptation of bodies to the haptic affectivity of everyday indebtedness: along with bodies' potentials for resisting, disarticulating, or swerving away from such apparatuses of capture too.

After all, Lauren Berlant argues that a materially-based affect theory can be understood as a means of writing a '*proprioceptive history*, a way of thinking about represented norms of bodily adjustment as key to grasping the circulation of the present as a historical and affective sense' (2010: 20, italics added). And I would likewise claim that the worlding-relationality and extra-somatic sociality that practices and assemblages of credit and debt have always brought into existence – perhaps now more pronounced than ever before – are also the primary affective interfaces by which we transduce the sense to our (shifting) place or non-place in the world: at once, existential-ecological-aesthetic-ethological. This continually evolving, expressive infrastructure raises fundamental questions about the ways that people – quite literally – *'carry' debt* now and how they (we) will carry debt in the future.

The first thing I felt was no credit. I tried to touch my credit, but there was nothing there.

We are all touched through our relation to debt in different ways. The forms and formattings of this 'touch' are varied, complex, and interlaced. How then to consider the very nature, the sensation, the matter of this *indebted touch* itself? For instance, what roles do mobile / pervasive communication devices play – as key nodes in an always-evolving ontology of the day-to-day – in giving tempo,

contour, and 'feel' to a visceral registering of debt-carriage? Still further, as techniques of perpetual digital connectibility pass from the handheld and into an ambient architecture of affective affordances and consumer / debtor captures, how do these real-time coordinations intersect with the more typical and historically sedimented moral, impersonal and financial calculations of credit-access and debt-opaqueness?

Debt weighs on the matter of bodies and subjectivities and worlds, and this weight is distributed across an expanse of small-scale, up-close interactions while simultaneously engaging with more far-flung large-scale calculations. If the ubiquitous nature of 'proprioceptive' debt has become one of the defining aspects of our era, then debt's pervasiveness cannot be directly confronted as merely an issue for consciousness-raising and critique. Instead, debt must be met and addressed in its myriad entanglements with matter and the social, in debt's extensions (and overextensions), its sympathies and aggressions, its engagement with bodily potentials and movement-restrictions, and combined then as an expressive infrastructure where the techniques and technologies of existence fold and flow in and through our touchy-tactile carrying capacities for indebtedness.

Thread #7: Practices of living debt and credit will come to be navigated less by touch and more by gesture, like a fin slicing through air.

Treating touch and tactility as principal points of focus for future-oriented work on issues of credit-debt work are, however, not quite on the mark. If we are to begin to address the load-shifting moving-movements in the ways that credit and debt are carried, then we'll need to understand that the hand is *often the final place* where things – like debt – pass on their way toward disappearing: like some new version of well-worn magic trick, disappearing into the surround, into the ambient umwelt of intimacy and extrusion (although such a disappearance is rarely fully complete and can come boomeranging back at you).

That is, to return to the anecdote from *Feed* that opens this essay, it should be clear that Titus is not actually reaching out to physically 'touch his credit' rather he is making a credit *gesture*. Titus' body – or, more precisely, the movement space-time of his body's proprioceptive envelope – has become an interface for his credit: part of one continuous surface of credit / debt affordances and bodily affectivity. Here affect and debt have come to operate in the same rhythmic-gestural-conceptual space, occupying the same wedge of existential locational-positioning, and all the while moving at the rate of life itself. In his oft-referenced essay 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', Walter Benjamin wrote of the barely noticed ways that bodies tactilely appropriate architecture and

how the turning points of history are often located in the gradual altering means of sensory appropriation (1936/1969: 240). Such is increasingly our circumstances today with the growing tactile and rhythmically attuned appropriations and expropriations of debt with the rise of the gestural interface.

William Bogard, in an essay called 'Control surfaces and rhythmic gestures' (2013: n.p.), shows how 'haptic research has already discovered ways to diagram the surface of the human skin as a data entry and retrieval system' and how these surfaces are a modulating space between a body's capacity for gesture *and* a technical assemblage's own complex modes of entrainment.

As an illustrative example, consider the 'Fin' ring. Tagged with the catchphrase 'Wear the World', this ring (currently in the midst of product design and testing) is a kind of wearable expressive infrastructure that turns your palm and fingers into a numeric keypad and your entire hand into a gestural interface. The hand thus serves as fin for navigating through thin air.

Figure 1: chart showing the basics for how the 'Fin' ring will operate[2]

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[2]   https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/fin-wearable-ring-make-your-palm-as-numeric-keypad-and-gesture-interface
See also, Fin's promo video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZ6PVBvQf-g

Bogard writes that:

> ...control is about engineering the human body's interface with surfaces, flesh to glass, then distributing those connections in nested rhythmic figures, timing their onset and decay, and modulating their intensity (amplitude, frequency). How often do you check your email, or scroll through a screen? Tap, double tap, swipe, pinch, wave, hold, drag, blink, utter – a controlled gesture can be any rhythmic movement, including thinking, that connects you to a ubiquitous world of digital screens...Every interface, in effect, is a gesture, a moving diagram that marks the connection of bodies...[T]he control of interfaces is the control of the temporal distribution of gestural figures, the timing of connections, their onset, frequency, repetition, decomposition, and so on. (*ibid*.)

And this particular cybernetically-inflected historical turning point, as signaled by the gestural interface, reveals the capacity for technological assemblages to adjust to bodies, their machinic components, and ongoing events on the fly through 'the ability to make minute and flexible adjustments in the timing of events, to produce moving figures, not just fixtures' (*ibid*.): that is, to move not just at the rate of life itself but to inhabit its smallest, seemingly-inconsequential vibrations, its rhythms and gestures.

Similarly, as we saw in the case of Titus, the credit / debt gesture serves as an open-ended, congealing-and-re-congealing set of rhythmic affectivities continually contoured through their dovetailing with a seamless real-time access-loop of credit-debt modulations. The debt gesture is the infinitely adjustable accretion and replaying of gestural surfacing-contact moments; it is how the matter of indebtedness turns into the affective *manner* of bodily comportments. The debt gesture becomes an intimately-dividualized means of wearing the world.

Thread #8: The multitude beckons: 'Pants sale'

Maurizio Lazzarato, at the end of *The making of indebted man* (2012), holds out some modicum of future hope for what Nietzsche called 'a second innocence', marked by the moment when Nietzsche says that 'atheism might release humanity from this whole feeling of being indebted towards its beginnings, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a sort of *second innocence* belong together' (Lazzarato, 2012: 164). Lazzarato argues this would be a

> ...second innocence [oriented] no longer toward divine debt, but toward *mundane debt*, the debt that weighs in our wallets and forms and formats our subjectivities...We must recapture this second innocence, rid ourselves of guilt, of everything owed, of all bad conscience, and not repay a cent. (*ibid*.)

But, as we have seen, 'mundane debt' is precisely what the gestural interface is set to rhythmically inhabit through the touch-free intimacies of surface control: making our wallets weightless perhaps while continuing to form and format subjectivities in new modulatory ways. It is, you might say, easier now to imagine the arrival of worldwide atheism than to somehow imagine an end to indebtedness.

In the penultimate scene from M.T. Anderson's *Feed*, Titus – who, by this point in the story, has long been back in touch with his credit – has just arrived at home after leaving the death-bed of his ex-girlfriend Violet. (Violet has been turned down by her insurance company for risky brain surgery that might save her life: in part, because the algorithms that follow and guide her everyday buying behavior are no longer able to construct a recognizable consumer profile based on her purchase history and browsing activity.) At the same time, the planet is falling into environmental catastrophe. People are developing huge weeping lesions (which for a time become a new fashion statement, a new aesthetic). Hair is falling out. Lips are curling back exposing everyone's gums and teeth. Giant cockroaches and rats are roaming in huge swarms through the ventilation systems of the decaying infrastructure. Forests are being chopped down because 'air factories' are more cost-efficient. The oceans are mostly dead. Yes, you won't find a contemporary young teen science fiction story much more bleak. And Titus is no hero in this tale; he loves this world, he lives a life of privilege, and blithely perseveres in the midst of all this decay. He broke up with Violet at the onset of her illness, but her fate has also stirred something in him: something he cannot quite put his finger on.

While Titus cannot articulate anything close to a semblance of resistance or even the vaguest political tactic (whenever Titus tries to narrate a story it always ends up, he claims, sounding like the opening credits of a sit-com or like the voice-over to a movie trailer), he does have the debt gesture and so he uses it, over and over again, feeling himself at one with the entire expressive infrastructure, its moving movement, its intimately exteriorizing impingements: the very (dis)embodiment of affective capitalism.

It all begins when Titus notices that there is 'a special on draft pants at Multitude' (yes, Multitude)

> I ordered the draft pants from Multitude. It was a real bargain. I ordered another pair. I ordered pair after pair. I ordered them all in the same color. They were slate. I was ordering them as quickly as I could. I put in my address again and again. I ordered pants after pants. I put tracking orders on them. I tracked each one. I could feel them moving through the system.

> Spreading out from me, in the dead of night, I could feel credit deducted, and the warehouse alerted, and packing. I could feel the packing, and the shipment, the distribution, the transition to FedEx, the numbers, each time, the order number traded like secret words at a border, and the things all went out, and I could feel them coming to me as the night passed.
>
> I could feel them in orbit. I could feel them in circulation all around me like blood in my veins. I had no credit. I had nothing left in my account. I could feel the pants winging their way toward me through the night.
>
> I stayed up all through the early morning, shivering, ordering, ordering, and was awake at dawn, when I put on clothes and went up to the surface, and watched the shit-stupid sun rise over the whole shit-stupid world. (Anderson, 2002: 230-1)

And so Titus' debt-gesture becomes a way too of gesturing toward the process of grieving, a touching but touch-free moment of reaching for what-is-not-there from out of the very midst of a world of indebtedness that you are always already wearing.

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Zopa's lambs: Video ads, internet investment, and the financialization of affect

John Carter McKnight and Adam Fish

abstract

This article is about how affect is mobilized through video advertising to encourage people to try new practices: discuss money and use peer-to-peer banking. A 2013 television commercial for a UK-based peer-to-peer lending firm demonstrates how affect is mobilized in the context of financialization in an age of austerity and increasing social inequality. The commercial, 'Zopa Lambs,' assembles imagery of an idealized rural England to obscure geographical and class differences among its customers while positioning the firm as a trustworthy upholder of conservative banking values against predatory payday lenders and irresponsible global banking firms. While the firm is entirely internet-based, in an environment of relatively low financial and technological literacy, trust is constructed heavily through the use of traditional media. While financial instruments generally are marketed through affective associations with particular status circles, here that circle is constructed neither as a wealthy urban elite nor as a populist mass, but as the 'sensible:' a weighted term carrying affective resonance with times of austerity, capital investment rather than consumption, and an idealized rural past.

Affect and its capture

In December 2013 the peer-to-peer (P2P) lending firm Zopa Limited ('Zopa') aired a television commercial in the UK which began with an announcer's plummy tones declaring that 'when it comes to money, there's a particular L-word that people don't like to talk about.' That 'L word' was 'loan:' the commercial then substituted every mention of the word 'loan' in describing its product with the term 'lamb,' an image of a fluffy lamb obscuring the word 'loan' in the commercial's text. The 30-second spot ends with the tagline 'Sensible

Loans for Sensible People,' the only time in which the actual L-word at issue is used.

Our study of Zopa began with a set of expectations, nearly all of which were to prove incorrect during the year and a half of our work with the firm, examining its role in the ecology of UK-based alternatives to high-street banking. Key among those expectations was the conception of P2P as being grounded in a techno-libertarian rhetoric related to that of the Pirate Bay, the Pirate Party, filesharing communities, and open-source software development. What we found was the keyword 'sensible,' a term freighted in Zopa's usage with social class and regional overtones, deployed to position the firm, its customers, and its products in a particular niche within not only retail financial products in the UK but within an ongoing, contentious discourse around class identity playing out in the popular media. 'Zopa Lambs' represents a distillation of that discourse, and this work attempts to elucidate it as a study of a manifestation of affective capitalism in an era of austerity, financialization, and growing inequality.

We assemble a theory of affect from media and cultural studies focusing on how affect is generated, circulated, captured, and capitalized on media and technological systems. Key to the theory of affective economies is the notion that producers and audiences are recursively linked through mediated networks. Emotional connection may develop resulting in either empathic activist networks or 'resonant collectives' or self-interested mobs like rioters or 'idiot collectives' (Hands, 2014). Affective collectivities aggregated through television advertising would be designated as 'idiotic' in so far that they are first self-serving entities collated only because of emotional resonance and consumeristic affinities. These idiotic collectives are joined by emotional affinity but not empathy. In this case, Zopa hail's an audience as a sensible class of consumers conscious of cost and tentative about public discussions of money. This we argue, is the mechanism for the generation of affect in television viewers.

The advertisement is aired on television, a conservative medium of sobriety. Zopa uses this familiar medium to disarm a rather radical notion, that individuals would use the internet to lend money to each other thereby routing around the central role played by banks. In this manner, a comforting affect is circulated on a traditional medium intended to facilitate the consumption of a relatively revolutionary concept: P2P lending. The video needs to motivate television advertising viewers towards online practices. Thus, the affective dimension of 'Zopa Lambs' is not only its call to emotions but also the way the video is communicated across online communities.

These efforts in televisual trust development succeed, however, only when they link to online practices, that is, to people actually using the Zopa interface to lend and borrow money. It is this transition from lean-back television viewing to lean-forward online interactivity that the affect is 'captured' in an affective economy. It is instructive to consider affective economies in light of Deleuze's concept of the 'double-movement of liberation and capture' (1972). Affective economies provide corporations opportunities to capture social capital in the form of affective intensities. Chow says captivation 'is semantically suspended between an aggressive move and an affective state, and carries within it the force of the trap in both active and reactive senses' (Chow, 2012: 48, in Berry, 2014). As a double-movement, affect is not exclusively an economic unit; as emotion also has the capacity to motivate people towards political activism and other 'resonant collective' activities. In our case, affect is captured by corporations capable of situating themselves at key junctures in the affective economy. The political potential of P2P lending, namely its capacity to decentralize banking, is completely ignored in this movement towards the sensible.

Finally, the affect that is generated in television audiences, circulated on television and online, and captured in an online banking platform, is eventually capitalized on by Zopa. The concept of 'affective economy' provides an insight into the capitalization of affect. Ahmed introduces the concept of 'affective economy' as an economy where emotions are not just experienced, but constantly being accumulated and exchanged between people. As Ahmed argues, 'emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation' (2004: 45). Thus, what scholars of affect in new media point out is the capacity of emotions to be produced, circulated, and 'captured' in online economies. Scholars often mobilize affect to theorize not quotidian but rather intense states of being, political passion, for instance. We consider the more conservative and 'idiotic' manifestations of affect, how the mundane emotion of sensibility is constructed.

Thus this article is about how affect is mobilized through video advertising to encourage people to try new things: talk about money and peer-to-peer banking. Zopa attempted to do this through producing a television commercial which substituted a discussion of money with a discussion of 'lambs.' This switch, it was hoped, would entice a collective of people reticent to do so to discuss money and use an unfamiliar online lending system. In the process of the analysis, we endeavor to contribute to affective theory by situating the theory in terms of media-based circulation, personal economics, and class. Our position is that corporations use affect to create the conditions for the financialization of affect—or how discourse of money becomes embedded entertwined with other forms of being, namely, *sensibility*. These are not politicized, 'resonant collectives' but

rather, classed-based idiotic collectives aggregated by the persuasive powers of advertising. This article illustrates the findings of an 18-month investigation into P2P banking that included limited participant observation, select longitudinal interviews, and an analysis of primary marketing documents.

Zopa and P2P lending

Recently, P2P lending systems have emerged as a popular vehicle for unsecured consumer and small-business lending. Crowd-funding systems operate as a mixture of charitable donation and pre-purchase. By contrast, P2P lending involves the exchange of funds at commercial rates of interest, competing largely in the personal-investment market on price, by 'disintermediating' banks with relatively high overhead costs. Where filesharing sites provide minimal architecture for the mutual transfer of data, auction sites like eBay.com operate as marketplace infrastructure, enabling transactions between buyers and sellers and providing a reputation system driven by customer rankings. P2P lending firms are similar to auction sites, but offer critical intermediation, typically by evaluating the creditworthiness of potential borrowers through credit checks and underwriting due diligence. Those failing credit checks cannot borrow through the firm. While Zopa's ethos of P2P may appear inclusive of a variety of financial classes, it must reaffirm pre-existing class demarcations.

Zopa was the first P2P financial firm in the UK, founded in 2006, and has remained the market leader, with £697 million lent as of 18 December 2014. (Zopa.com, 2014). P2P consumer finance comprises 31% of the £1.7 billion UK alternative finance market as of 2014, a market which nearly tripled in size during 2014 (Nesta, 2014). However, the same survey notes that awareness and understanding of the alternative finance market is low within the UK, with 42% completely unaware of such practices and platforms, and 60% unlikely to use them out of lack of knowledge and fear of risk (*ibid.*). While growing at an impressive rate, Zopa must familiarize potential clients with its rather novel products. Clients also need to have or develop financial as well as technological literacy. It is the difficulty of doing both of these tasks, encouraging experimentation while building trust, which is Zopa's challenge for future growth.

Zopa is a technology company that wants to make using computers to manage personal capital easy. Thus, the task of the company is to link financialization to the pre-existing practices surrounding social media. Financialization designates the manner in which a discourse of money becomes embedded within practices usually not regarded as financial issues. Parenting, is a key example of a realm of

social life that has shifted from being about the welfare and education of young people, to largely a discussion of the costs associated this daycare and provisioning a child. Furthermore, it means teaching the youth about financial management. In this way, parenting has become financialized. Zopa's challenge is to take link online practices such as social media use to discussions and practices of money so that personal computing becomes financialized. To do this, they replace uneasy concepts of money, banking, and the internet with comforting images of lambs in familiar situations like the English countryside. This shift is linked to macro-economic trends attendant with neoliberalism wherein the personal wealth self-management is linked to being sensible.

Theorists argue that the rise of television financial news as 'infotainment' is an essential aspect of financialization, both reinforcing the sense of importance of financial knowledge and providing information and markers of legitimacy through the endorsement of particular products and practices by television 'experts' (Clark et al., 2004). While our research supported the role of media experts in legitimizing alternative financial firms and products, including Zopa, it, along with the Nesta study, suggests that the general level of financialization in the UK is lower than that of the more thoroughly studied US. In this environment, Zopa has had to transform its products and messaging substantially to reflect a general ignorance of and timidity about financial innovation in the retail UK market.

Critically, Zopa operates not only within a relatively underdeveloped environment of financialization, but one in which a range of financial discourses are being advanced and challenged in the mainstream press and politics. While on the one hand, bankers are criticized for excessive salaries, offshoring jobs and profits, and impersonal business practices, welfare claimants and segments of the working class are stigmatized in the media for their consumptive practices and for profiting unfairly from welfare benefits, with their consumption underwritten by extortionate payday loan firms. Thus Zopa works to position itself on the one hand as not a group of greedy financiers and on the other not pandering to the greedy lower classes: neither a bank nor a payday lender. In order to do so, the firm uses a variety of strategies to identify itself as heir to middle-class values and practices abandoned by groups at both ends of the class spectrum: the 'financially challenged middle,' in the words of one executive. This article brings together an analysis of data gathered through interviews and one particular advertisement, 'Zopa Lambs,' in the context of affective rhetorics of class within the contemporary UK.

Zopa Lambs: Enacting middle-class Englishness

'Zopa Lambs' begins with an establishing shot of a quintessentially English vista (Figure 1): low rolling hills with a flock of sheep in the foreground, a hedgerow and trees in the middle ground, and a village obscured by haze in the distance. One is struck by what this image is not: representative of the central London environment of Zopa and other financial institutions, nor of the suburban row houses of the firm's lenders, nor of the Northern working class neighborhoods of the potential borrowers the advertisement is ostensibly aimed at. Rather, it is to Austerity Britain what Tolkien's Shire was to a generation that had survived world wars: a soothing vision of quintessential fantasy-Englishness.

Figure 1: The British Imaginary. "Zopa Lambs - 2013 TV Advert," copyright Zopa 2013, source https://youtu.be/FhvI8x1kH38

The announcer explains that 'people don't like to use' the 'L-word,' and so 'lamb' will be substituted, as a cute lamb raises its head to block the word 'loan' on the screen. Zopa is defined as 'a personal lamb company that offers lambs to people who are sensible with money.' Despite the regulator-required financial text on the screen, the visual and auditory message is that Zopa is offering the idyllic vision of fantasy Englishness – not a better working class life or entrée into the middle class but rather bucolic vision – and not to anyone but to the 'sensible' (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Not The Consumption Basket. "Zopa Lambs - 2013 TV Advert," copyright Zopa 2013, source https://youtu.be/FhvI8x1kH38

'Sensible' was used frequently in the Zopa offices as well as in marketing material, and with a sense of cultural weight beyond its literal meaning. Asking Zopa employees to articulate what the term meant to them was surprisingly difficult: eventually it was one of the firm's non-English employees who was best able to capture the term's connotations in English culture. While a linguistic analysis is well beyond the scope of this work, we were told that it has affective referents to post-World War II austerity, of a piece with the omnipresent 'Keep Calm and Carry On' images and related memes, with 'mend and make do' another affectively related phrase. Thus key attributes are the delay of gratification and consumption. In short, an assertion of normative middle-class values against the supposedly consumption-driven 'undeserving poor.' Correspondingly, the examples of why someone 'sensible' would want a Zopa 'lamb' are 'a new kitchen or a car'—according to the advertisement—a capital investment in one's property or a reliable means of getting to work.

The commercial concludes with the first use of the word 'loan,' now that any problematic associations with the lower classes have been broken and replaced with those of life in the Shire. Just to make sure, though, the word 'sensible' is used twice in the five-word tagline (Figure 3). Also present, for the second time, is a reference to the 'Most Trusted' award from Moneywise, 'the UK's leading personal finance magazine' which Zopa won in 2014. This is an expected move both from concepts of financialization (Clark et al., 2004) and from our own observations that Zopa's customers tend to seek trust in new media via verifications from traditional media: telephone calls, television news, and magazines.

*Figure 3: Sensible and Trusted. "Zopa Lambs - 2013 TV Advert," copyright Zopa 2013,
source https://youtu.be/FhvI8x1kH38*

'Zopa Lambs' is a snapshot of a moment in the financialization of the UK. It uses
powerful affective associations to engender trust in the firm, but by means which
neither assume a high degree of financial and technological literacy on the part of
the viewing public nor market a neoliberal or consumerist vision. Rather, the
firm engenders affective associations with a bucolic imagined England as an
assertion of traditional values, or what Polillo (2013) would call conservative
banking rhetoric.

According to Polillo (2013), as a result of conflict as a structural property of the
financial system, bankers occupy two rhetorical positions, 'conservative' and
'wildcat,' which vie for support from the state in terms of regulation, policy, and
institutional structure. Polillo's conservatives seek financial stability through an
exclusionary logic, where wildcats seek financial democracy through an
inclusionary logic. Conservative bankers create financial instruments with
signals for banking tradition, austerity, thoroughness, competence, prudence,
and principles (*ibid.*: 57). Wildcats, by contrast, construct prestige out of violating
conservative boundaries, accusing conservative bankers of undue privilege who
close off the boundaries of financial status groups (*ibid.*: 60).

Zopa is a relatively new and unknown entrant into the personal finance market,
and a very different firm from a high-street bank: driven by marketing and
software experts rather than veterans of the financial sector. As a classic example
of a 'wildcat' in Polillo's schema (2013), one might expect a rhetorical message of
democratization of access to financial instruments, an assault on the exclusivity
and privilege of bankers, and associated populist imagery. Yet, Zopa is implicitly
asserting an affective claim in 'Zopa Lambs' and its other messaging that other

financial firms have abandoned banking conservatism: by lending to people who are not 'sensible' – profligate lower and upper classes alike. Polillo asserts that 'bankers are specialists in the production of collective identities, which they attach to financial instruments, and then police by restricting their circulation to individuals or organizations that fulfill the criteria specified in their identity.' (2013: 220) Thus, the final remark in Zopa's commercial, 'sensible loans for sensible people.' As you will read below, the construction of the conservative and sensible Zopa user is mirrored in changes made to the way Zopa presents itself online to its clients.

Socio-technical mainstreaming: The safeguard changes

In an interview we conducted in mid 2014, Zopa CEO Giles Andrews defined the firm's original heavy users as 'freeformers' – sophisticated people who don't trust institutions, and who are largely self-employed. They are independent, have the skill to self-select products, and are of a demographic who are moving away from packages of travel, albums of music, and lifelong party affiliation. Zopa's early branding, he claims, thus developed around themes of choice, self-reliance, and collaboration, themes which appealed strongly to IT professionals, who comprised a significant portion of the 'freeformers' at Zopa. Andrews notes that the investigation prior to investment of this group is based on examination and exploitation of the platform, not of the product's financial risk. 'Trust,' for these individuals, thus meant trust in the software to perform according to specification, rather than the stability of the firm, its ability to provide credit-checking services, or a low risk of loan default. These early adopters didn't require comforting advertisements to build up their faith in the company. This conception of trust is common in alternative finance products appealing to a highly technologically literate demographic. For example, bitcoin has been described as 'a shift from trusting people to trusting math' (Antonopulous, 2014).

Initially, Zopa offered its lenders a suite of tools to manage lender's investments through the platform, in addition to the firm's services as a credit-checking intermediary. The Zopa site presented lenders with the opportunity to bid on requests for funds in distinct brackets of risk and return, with the site acting as a clearinghouse for matching bid/ask orders. A core of frequent users tended to bid low, undercutting the price offered by other lenders, in order to maximize the amount of their funds which would be matched by a borrower request for funds. This system arguably rewarded frequent visitors to the site, who could monitor the range of lender offers and alter their own to enable a quick lending match. Infrequent or less-sophisticated users would find that they would not be able to

find matching requests for their funds, such that their investment would sit idle, earning no interest.

Hulme and Wright's extensive 2006 study of Zopa's business model made much of the desire for 'risk and playfulness' in the firm's early devoted customers (2006: 32-4 et seq.), noting that 'Social Lending' users self-described as 'rational, savvy actors who have a particular willingness to take risks and who feel compelled toward sensation satisfaction owing to their disposition for pleasure seeking,' and as 'playing a kind of game, which is simultaneously calculating and strategic and motivated by a deeper urge to create a pleasurable and playful experience' (*ibid.*). They acknowledge, however, that even in what may have been a heyday of fit between the technological infrastructure, rhetorics of empowerment, and a userbase seeking a playful, risky, competitive environment, members' feelings of control were largely illusory, 'created by the different disciplinary technologies forming the basis of Social Lending schemes and mainstream financial institutions' (*ibid.*).

Zopa management viewed the low rate of bid/ask matching as a challenge to the firm's ability to grow and as fundamentally 'unfair,' a term used often by managers in discussing the firm's early architecture. Thus in 2013, Zopa sought to replace one customer group – the playful, risk-taking technologists of Hulme and Wright's 2006 report – with another –risk-averse, less technologically inclined near-retirees. To do so they changed their product from a customizable basket of loans to a pre-selected one, instituted a self-insurance fund called 'Safeguard' to cover bad debt losses (as governmental deposit insurance only covers bank deposits, and p2p firms are structured to avoid categorization as a deposit-holding bank) and began to simplify the processes of borrowing, lending, and monitoring investments via the firm's website. Zopa's marketing changed to stress trustworthiness of the firm and of their borrower base in response to extensive demographic profiling of their new target audience. One manager described Zopa as having the opposite marketing issue from bitcoin and other early-adopter-phase alternative financial technologies: rather than complexity, obscurity and novelty being attractions, market research indicates that Zopa's new lenders want the firm to be famous – covered in the mainstream financial media in particular – for them to feel better about their decision to invest.

'Trust' for these lenders is crucial, and it is based in knowledge of the decision-making of their peer group, defined fairly narrowly in age, social class, wealth, and financial literacy. In focus group testing, while borrowers disliked testimonials with photographs of other borrowers, lenders responded strongly to facial photographs as signifiers of commonality with their socio-economic class. One of the indicia of trust is the assertion that Zopa is a 'real company:' several

employees noted that many of the phone calls they receive simply want to know that Zopa has an office with 'English-speaking' people answering the phone. This is arguably a marker of low technological literacy, that reassurance can be delivered by an old, established technology (voice telephony) that cannot by a newer technology (an interactive website, an email contact form). It does certainly signify a desire for additional markers of trust prior to the decision to become a lender. Similarly, Zopa holds an annual party for its customers in London, which is attended almost entirely by late-middle-aged male lenders. Interviews with attendees suggested that the use the party to reaffirm the boundaries of their status group: attendees are more interested in speaking to each other than to Zopa employees, though the celebrity status of Andrews, the CEO, is important for them in establishing legitimacy. The humor and whimsicality identified by Hulme and Wright has little appeal. Lenders are not interested in the technology of Zopa or in pure maximization of financial return, but are primarily motivated by personal goals, particularly around saving for specific family-related projects such as an adult child's wedding or house down payment, and of performing the social identity of savvy and *au courant* middle-class investor.

'A feeling of community' and 'the desire to be part of something' were mentioned as motivations for, and outcomes of, lender attendance at Zopa's annual party. However, it is important to distinguish these feelings from those appearing in the conclusions drawn by Hulme and Wright in 2006. Hulme and Wright analogized 'Social Lending' to the worker-created Friendly Societies of the 17th through 19th Centuries in the UK . Whether this analogy was appropriate at the time, it is not a fit for the nature of Zopa's customer base in 2014. What Zopa's lenders seek to be a part of, and to police the boundaries of, is a 'status circle' as Polillo (2013) uses the term borrowed from Max Weber: a group marked by their possession of a financial instrument which indicates status through exclusion. Lenders seek tokens of social likeness with each other: photographs on the website, visual and verbal cues at the annual party, which signify maturity, moderate wealth and financial sophistication. Zopa is not a mutual aid society: it is a circle of holders of a somewhat novel financial instrument which constructs its holders as financially prudent, savvy, and prosperous, built on the aggregation of demand for a different financial instrument entirely – 5- and 10-year unsecured loans – by individuals who are not constructed as a status circle and who are geographically and culturally far removed from Zopa's lenders.

Despite the significant socio-cultural gap between Zopa's southern English middle-class retiree lenders and its northern English working-class young-parent borrowers, Zopa's marketing has consistently attempted to elide those distinctions by attempting to create an affective group of the financially

'sensible.' In July 2014, we watched the production of a series of marketing videos in which lenders were repeatedly pressured by the contractors conducting the interviewers and Zopa marketing staff to claim that the 'sensibility' of borrowers was a factor in their lending decisions, despite none of the lenders mentioning this factor and significant resistance from some. Given the evident sophistication of Zopa's marketing operations, including the collection and analysis of a broad range of qualitative and quantitative data, this insistence seemed curious. The remainder of this paper will provide an explanation for this focus in Zopa's affective messaging, arguing that its emphasis on the 'sensible' is not intended to appeal to potential lenders so much as it is to position the firm as a legitimate participant in the UK retail financial market, in contradistinction to 'payday lending' firms which have come to be associated with unscrupulous business practices and a lending base stereotyped via narratives of 'poverty porn' as irresponsible, consumption-driven scroungers, or 'chavs.' It is in this context that the 'Zopa Lambs' commercial acts as a key text of affective messaging, associating the firm with a range of traditional British middle-class financial discourses.

Affective capitalism

Zopa's corporate strategy, internal processes, and external messaging are the products of a complex interplay of British financial regulation (itself significantly different from US and European counterparts), an e-commerce ideology of the superiority of data collection and analysis to sectoral industry experience, and global processes of financialization and affective marketing. Taken together, these disparate elements form a remarkably coherent and sophisticated synthesis of corporate practice behind increasingly more 'simple' user experiences and advertising messages. It is this simplicity which this paper problematizes. This paper demonstrates how the above elements have interplayed in the production of the almost comically simple 'Zopa Lambs' advertisement.

As an entirely web-based business, Zopa is encountered almost exclusively through screens: in the first instance, its website through which borrowing and lending takes place. Other screens, however, are nearly as important: coverage in financial segments of the news has played a critical role in establishing the firm's credibility, according to Zopa's CEO and other executives. This interplay of retail finance and the media, especially television, is key to the process of financialization. Clark et al. (2004) describe the blending of finance and entertainment at the core of the concept definition of financialization as the effects of finance on social relations, a scope far too great to be of any real utility). The authors see the rise of financial media messaging as popular entertainment

as a consequence of deregulation, requiring greater attention to financial products at the personal level rather than the delegation to the welfare state or lifelong employer which was a norm for much of the 20th Century in many nations, This process, they claim, is building upon the essential and deeply historical role of money and finance as performative (e.g. Graeber, 2011) to create an environment in which the value of financial products is increasingly bound up with their media image. By performative we refer to theories of finance, such as derivatives models, which influence the developments of markets themselves, whereby the market comes to match the financial theory (Callon, 2007).

Thus financial products, previously regarded as arcane and a matter for either the extremely wealthy or for institutional experts, have taken on the attributes of intangible products generally within a consumer capitalism driven by affective messaging. Jarrett (2003) remains one of the best analyses of the marketing of web-based products, describing the 'e-commerce consumer' as conceptualized by firms as not merely or primarily a 'rational actor' per the traditional economic and marketing literature but one vitally concerned with social relationships, such that consumption of online goods becomes a means of expressing and codifying social identity. In this environment, successful brand advertising involves the synthesis of tangible product characteristics (as the rational-actor role of consumers cannot be ignored) with 'symbols, meanings, images, and feelings from a culture, to create a brand that is loved' (Jarrett, 2003: 344).

Internet-based firms, however, diverge significantly from the values and practices of traditional firms and advertising agencies. Where the 'Mad Men' era relied on an intuitive sense of the zeitgeist to generate those images and feelings, a key marker of the Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005) business model is the belief that the collection and analysis of vast amounts of data enabled by a new generation of communications and computing technologies can be used to generate more powerfully persuasive and better-targeted messages. Andrejevic (2011: 615) refers to this belief as 'the data-driven fantasy of control in the affective economy,' yet whether the business practices driven by such beliefs are fantastical or not is open to question: certainly Zopa's dramatic growth after the Safeguard changes would suggest that their business practices and ideologies are remarkably realistic.

Following Polillo (2013), financial instruments may be classified along two axes: exclusivity and control. Exclusivity refers to the size of the potential group of holders of the instrument, control to the extent to which the holder is able to influence the instrument's value (e.g., the manager of a hedge fund has high control, the holder of a food-stamp coupon low control). With exclusive instruments, unofficial, non-market relations among an elite group of holders

are the key interactions. Historically, such relations have been the basis for much financial regulation within England (Scotland having a significantly different banking and regulatory history) (Moran, 1984, Gola, 2009). Polillo (2013: 7) observes that financial instruments thus become 'loaded with the solidarity and social honor of membership' in a class of holders. Zopa operates within the uniquely exclusive environment of English retail financial products, one long marked by a small oligopoly of major banks and a relatively closed social elite at the intersection of corporate banking and governmental regulation marked by consensus decisionmaking within a highly homogenous group.

In Polillo's terms, Zopa has been acting as a 'wildcat' pursuing a strategy of financial democracy, or the opening up of access to elite financial instruments for a mass consumer public, versus 'conservatives' who stress stability through elite control. Polillo observes though that wildcat pressures to open up financial markets are 'aimed at corroding those old networks and at creating the space for new systems with a different architecture of exclusion' (2013: 13). In an institutional context, then, Zopa's messaging has two simultaneous aims: to recruit a group of customers from those previously excluded from the elite (by providing a P2P product previously limited to the technologically and financially savvy which offers rates of return otherwise only available to the very wealthy) while constructing that group as exclusionary of those 'beneath' them. In short, Zopa attempts to align itself with middle-class values against a financial and social elite on the one hand and the 'undeserving poor' on the other.

The challenge Zopa faces, though, is that the extensive data it has collected on its users shows that it does not have one customer base but two, with borrowers and lenders differing in nearly every key demographic category. Certain themes recur in the way management describes their current lenders: they are primarily male, around age 50; living in southern England; risk-averse; motivated by fear of poverty, inflation, low returns from savings accounts; and self-describe as experienced investors who dabble in the stock market and use P2P as part of their portfolio, while borrowers are from the English Midlands and North, often in public service employment, and in their 30s with young children, seeking to borrow for home improvement. In the words of one Zopa executive, borrowers are 'my friends from school who stayed up north and started families' while the lender is a 'doctor outside London in the country 5 years from retirement.' Despite these differences, the executive classified both their customer bases as united under the umbrella of 'the broad and financially challenged middle.'

While Zopa has extensive data on its user base, including geographical dispersion of borrowers and lenders, it does not make this information publicly available on its website. According to Zopa marketing staff, this is intentional, to

elide geographic and related class distinctions between borrowers and lenders. Rather, Zopa has focused on the term 'sensible' as the affective link connecting its users. This term attempts to establish a contrast between Zopa and payday lending firms, which have garnered negative press for high-risk lending to a social class of users often stigmatized in a genre of press known as 'poverty porn' (Jensen, 2014) for being socially and financially irresponsible and dependent on the largesse of a 'sensible' middle class. Zopa's focus on the disciplined working-class and less wealthy middle class subject, however, contrasts with the expressed interests and self-descriptions of lenders, who focus on financial return, their own financial sophistication, and openness to financial and technological innovation, in which the backgrounds, bodies and values of borrowers are unified into a black-boxed financial instrument.

However, much of the message involving the construction of the 'sensible' borrower, including, we argue, 'Zopa Lambs,' is only incidentally concerned with convincing potential lenders that the firms borrowers share middle-class investment goals rather than valuing lower-class conspicuous consumption and even less with appealing to potential borrowers. Zopa staff generally agree that their loan product competes almost entirely on technical features, particularly price: borrowers seek the lowest interest rates, and find Zopa's grant of more control to holders than conservative banks allow, particularly the ability to repay early without penalty, an attractive feature. Affective notions of brand loyalty and group identity are believed to be almost entirely irrelevant in the borrower's purchase decision. Correspondingly, lenders generally express little interest in the identity of borrowers, individually or as a class, preferring to regard the loan product as a financial instrument rather than a conduit to individuals of a different social class. Indeed, we witnessed lenders protesting, often strongly, against being asked to state on-camera for a Zopa promotional video that 'sensible borrowers' factor into their affiliation with the firm and its products.

We argue, following Polillo, that a key purpose of the 'sensible' messaging in creating an affective class of the 'financially challenged middle' is not in the first instance to ascribe prudent middle-class values to Zopa's actual and prospective borrowers, but rather to the firm itself. Jensen (2014) describes a spate of British television programs in 2013-2014 commonly referred to as 'poverty porn' – in which welfare benefits claimants are stigmatized as morally corrupt, motivated by consumption rather than investment, and profiting from the largesse of the welfare system. She links the discourses of poverty porn to those of a neoliberal assault on the social solidarity underlining the welfare state through politicians' division of people into 'skivers and strivers,' 'shirkers and workers.' A third element to be linked to these discourses is that surrounding alternative financial firms in the same period: in a number of news articles, the 'undeserving poor'

are linked to predatory payday lending practices, particularly those of the firm Wonga (e.g., Swinford, 2013, which claims that 'Britain has an 'Alice in Wongaland' economy in which people are taking out payday loans and raiding their savings to fuel shopping sprees'). Wonga came under attack in the media both for unscrupulous collection practices, such as sending fake letters from attorneys, but also for underwriting the consumption practices of a social class unable to afford the luxuries they crave. It is in this media environment in which 'Zopa Lambs' is situated. Zopa has undertaken a series of actions, including actively seeking governmental regulation and forming a trade association, which excludes payday lenders, to distinguish itself from firms associated with both immoral business practices and immoral customers.

'Zopa Lambs' evidences the low level of financialization, or the imposition of requirements of financial interest, knowledge, and practices once the province of institutions, onto the individual. It assumes an unwillingness to engage in discussions of personal finance, and uses euphemism and affective sleight-of-hand to render the subject palatable to a middle-class audience. While financial instruments generally are marketed through affective associations with particular status circles, here that circle is constructed neither as a wealthy urban elite nor as a populist mass, but as the 'sensible:' a weighted term carrying affective resonance with times of austerity, capital investment rather than consumption, and an idealized rural past. 'Zopa Lambs' reflects the use of affective association in marketing digital financial innovations in an environment of distrust of both elite bankers and a stigmatized underclass of an imagined consumption-driven 'undeserving poor'.

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Various joyful encounters with the dystopias of affective capitalism

Tony Sampson

abstract

This article contends that what appear to be the dystopic conditions of affective capitalism are just as likely to be felt in various joyful encounters as they are in atmospheres of fear associated with post 9/11 securitization. Rather than grasping joyful encounters with capitalism as an ideological trick working directly on cognitive systems of belief, the article approaches them as a repressive affective relation a population establishes between politicized sensory environments and what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call a brain-becoming-subject. This is a radical relationality (Protevi, 2010) understood here as a mostly nonconscious brain-somatic process of subjectification occurring in contagious sensory environments populations become politically situated in. The joyful encounter is not therefore merely an ideological manipulation of belief, but following Gabriel Tarde, belief is always the object of desire. The article discusses various manifestations of affective capitalism and repressive political affects that prompt an initial question concerning what can be done to a brain so that it involuntarily conforms to the joyful encounter. The article also frames a second question concerning what can a brain do, and discusses how affect theory can conceive of a brain-somatic relation to sensory environments that might be freed from its coincidence with capitalism. The second question not only leads to a different kind of illusion to that understood as a product of an ideological trick, but also abnegates a model of the brain, which limits subjectivity in the making to a phenomenological inner self or Being in the world.

Introduction

To develop a theoretical understanding of the dystopic conditions of affective capitalism we will need to grasp its various manifestations in everyday life. The most recent and conspicuous of these appearances is perhaps Facebook's notorious attempt to engineer the emotions of their users (Kramer et al., 2014).

In 2014, Facebook carried out an experiment involving the manipulation of the emotional content of posts and measuring the effect these manipulations had on the emotions of 689,003 of its users in terms of how contagious they became. The researchers who carried out the experiment found that when they reduced the positive expressions displayed by other users they produced less positive posts and more posts that are negative. Likewise, when negative expressions were reduced, the opposite pattern occurred. The rather paltry findings of the study led the researchers to conclude that the 'emotions expressed by others on Facebook influence our own emotions, constituting experimental evidence for massive-scale contagion via social networks' (*ibid*.).

Emotional contagion is not an exceptional concept in science or philosophy. Indeed, aside from much recent neuroscientific work in this area, we can also look back to Hume's understanding of sympathy as a sort of early philosophy of emotional contagion (Ellis and Tucker, 2015: 63-64). So even if this contentious attempt by Facebook to influence moods produced meagre evidence of contagion, the design and implementation of the experiment itself should perhaps alert us to a potentially Huxleyesque mode of mass manipulation. Nicholas Carr (2014) described it accordingly as a 'bulletin from a dystopian future'. Moreover, the dubiously titled research paper that followed ('Experimental evidence of massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks') draws attention to how the social media business enterprise's cultivation of big data flouts ethical considerations. In their endeavour to engineer emotional contagion the Facebook researchers did not ask for consent or refrain from involving minors in the experiment. In effect, they treated their users like lab rats (Carr, 2014: webpage). However, what is more concerning about this study, as Carr contends, 'lay not in its design or its findings, but in its ordinariness' (*ibid*.). This kind of research is, it would appear, the social media business norm; part of a 'visible tip of an enormous and otherwise well-concealed iceberg' (*ibid*.) in the industry. To be sure, the one thing that both the disparagers and apologists of Facebook seem to agree on is that user manipulation is rife on the internet.

This article begins by expanding on Carr's dystopic assessment of the Facebook experiment by briefly asking what we can learn about affective capitalism from the aesthetic figures that populate Aldous Huxley's notion of soft control. In *Brave new world* and *Brave new world revisited* (originally published in 1932 and 1958 respectively) Huxley presents a comparable model of control that taps directly into the affective states of the brain-somatic relations of a population engaged in everyday joyful encounters. In *Brave new world* joy is triggered by the drug Soma which is consumed along with the hypnopaedic rhythms of 'beating of drums...plangently repeated and repeated' so that they quell any misguided

thoughts of nonconformity (Huxley, 2007: 69). Huxley's joyful encounter is, it would seem, an affective manipulation that exploits bodily desires in order to influence belief in the political new order. He writes that it was not 'the ear that heard the pulsing rhythm, it was the midriff; the wail and clang of those recurring harmonies haunted, not the mind, but the yearning bowels of compassion' (*ibid*.). Although the widespread proliferation of drugs like Prozac and Ritalin have prompted some authors to draw comparisons between Huxley's dystopia and the present day (Rose, 2005), I will argue here that Huxley's rhythmic entrainment of somatic desire and belief are comparable to more generalized mechanisms of control in times of affective capitalism.

Mechanisms of control are grasped here through the many *interferences* that crop up between current scientific emotion research and Huxley's dystopian novel and help us to address a question concerning *what can be done to a brain* so that beliefs can be manipulated by way of appeals to desire. Moreover, rather than grasping these repressive joyful encounters with capitalism as a mere ideological trick working directly on cognitive systems of belief, they are conceived of as occurring in the affective relations a population establishes between politicized sensory environments and what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call a *brain-becoming-subject*. This is a *radical relationality* (Protevi, 2010), understood in this context as a mostly nonconscious brain-somatic process of subjectification happening in the contagious sensory environments populations become politically situated in. The joyful encounter does not therefore simply function in ideological registers, but following Gabriel Tarde (as developed in Sampson, 2012), belief is always grasped as the object of desire.

Attention is accordingly turned toward other manifestations of affective capitalism; beginning with the so-called *emotional turn* in the neurosciences, which is increasingly influencing how marketers and political strategists, for example, target affective brain-somatic states in an effort to manipulate the mood of a population. So-called neuromarketers are, like this, adopting novel tools, like Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) and electroencephalography (EEG), that can supposedly correlate bodily arousal and the modulating rhythm of a brainwave to salient consumer emotions implicated in, for example, empathy toward brands leading to purchase decisions (Vecchiato et al., 2011). Likewise, researchers in the US are using MRI scans to speculate on the differences between political preferences according to parts of the brain implicated in social connectedness (*Science Daily*, 2012). While clearly acknowledging the speculative nature of the claims of these commercial and political offshoots of the neurosciences, I contend that the emotional turn opens up a second unignorable question concerning *what can a brain do*.

Before even beginning to approach this second question, we need to grasp a historical trajectory of the joyful encounter and in particular its modern origins in fascism. Here I want to draw specific attention to the significance of what we might call a *double event* of affect implicated in the political control of the sensory environments in which brains (and bodies) become subjectified. This is a double capacity to affect and be affected by events (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 257). Beginning with John Protevi's (2010) analysis of passive and active affective registers in the joyful encounters with the far right of the 1930s, the discussion moves on to look at more recent manifestations of a right wing political affect that are once again spreading across Europe. To be sure, grasping the affective capacities of the brain-somatic relation to contemporary sensory environments becomes imperative, I contend, to understanding the various social, cultural and biological triggers for this current wave of right wing populism.

This second question is further approached via Catherine Malabou's (2009) effort to draw on the neurosciences to grasp how to free the brain from its coincidence with capitalism. Indeed, by re-appropriating the emotional turn, Malabou conceives of a plastic brain that is already free, but through a circuitous convergence between capitalism and neuroscience becomes trapped in the model of a flexible brain. In short, flexibility is for Malabou the 'ideological avatar' that hides the potential of neuronal plasticity to be free (*ibid.*: 12). Here I will similarly expand on possible alternatives to a mode of capitalism that increasingly targets noncognitive brain functioning by, firstly, exploring the *radical relationality* established between brains, bodies and sensory environments (Protevi, 2010), and secondly, grasping the rhythmic composition of imitative encounters (Borch, 2005) that position subjectivities. This is an appeal to an affective relationality that crucially does not coincide with the sense of the inner world of subjective experience Malabou seems to refer to, but points instead to a brain-becoming-subject composed of relations. As Protevi describes it, 'we do not "have" relations, but we are relations all the way down' (2010: 174). Indeed, the theoretical potency of concepts like joyful encounters, radical relationality and brain-somatic relations is that they help us to rethink power relations by circumventing a phenomenological worldview determined by subjective personal experience of external reality alone. Again, following Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) appeal to neurology we find an alternative to Malabou's synaptic essence of self; that is to say, a mind that needs to know what is *inside* our brain so as to reveal who 'We' are (Malabou, 2009: 3). Unlike the phenomenologist's person who thinks beyond the brain toward a *Being in the world,* Deleuze and Guattari (1994) argue that *there is no brain behind the brain.* It is the brain that thinks, not the mind or the person, as such. This is a theoretical move that is seemingly counter to a tradition in the humanities that has either ignored affect or more recently tried to situate it as something that is guided by human meaning

making, discourse and ideology (Wetherell, 2012). In this tradition the vulnerability to various encounters with capitalism (and microfascism) is, as follows, grasped as nothing short of an ideological illusion that shapes belief, as such. However, via Deleuze and Guattari, and Tarde, the tendency to sleepwalk toward a repressive subjectification is inversely understood as a reconfigured illusion in which beliefs are engendered by desire.

Due to its engagement with neurology certain aspects of this approach will most probably trouble theoretical perspectives that maintain the rigidity of a divide between culture and biology. However, while it is important to retain a sense of criticality when approaching the hyperbole and speculative nature of neuroscientific enquiries into the biological brain, it is equally important to acknowledge the hypothetical nature of both sides of this divide. This article therefore concludes with a brief footnote concerning the potential of a more productive interference established between the opposing models of the brain adopted in representational and nonrepresentational theory. In place of the thick line often drawn between the representational spaces of discourse, meaning and ideology, on one hand, and nonrepresentation and affect, on the other, the discussion concludes by drawing on Henri Bergson's (1911: 52-53) notion of an insensible degree of separation between affect and representational space to help to briefly reconfigure the relation between desire, belief and illusion.

Everybody's happy now; in everybody else's way

> 'Don't you wish you were free, Lenina?'

> 'I don't know what you mean. I am free. Free to have the most wonderful time. Everybody's happy nowadays'.

> [Bernard Marx] laughed, 'Yes, "Everybody's happy nowadays"…But wouldn't you like to be free to be happy in some other way, Lenina? In your own way, for example; not in everybody else's way'. (Huxley, 2007: 79)

A dystopian interpretation of social media begins by conceding that most people probably get an enormous amount of pleasure from their time on platforms like Facebook. There might be certain anxieties over how many 'friends' or 'likes' a person has acquired, but social media evidently provides fun and idiocy in equal measure (Goriunova, 2012). So the kind of user manipulation social media companies engage in needs to be grasped as part of a dystopian trajectory that a large percentage of the population are seemingly happy to go along with. Indeed, the exploitation of affective states associated with emotions like happiness is significant here since, on one hand, susceptibility to the suggestions of marketers is not arrived through cognitive processes alone, but coincides, to a great extent,

with noncognitive encounters associated with joy, and on the other hand, joyful encounters do not simply lead to the sharing of more joy, but also become part of an affective contagion eliciting conformity and entrainment. There is, like this, a joyful kind of collective encounter occurring in social media manipulation that is comparable in many ways to the rhythmic refrain central to that which controls Huxley's *Brave new worlders*: that is, *everybody's happy nowadays – in everybody else's way.*

Other emotions are evidently triggered by this rhythmic refrain. But mass fear, anxiety, hatred and jealously are perhaps merely in the service of the subjectification of Huxley's 'happy, hard-working, goods-consuming citizen' (*ibid.*: 208). It is for this reason too that social media makes for an ideal test bed, or nursery, for cultivating, triggering and potentially steering joyful emotional contagions toward some predefined consumer-driven goals. Certainly, distinct from mass broadcast media, which proved to be an effective means of spreading emotions from the 1930s onward, the users of these networks are more predisposed, it would seem, to share their joyful experiences in exchange for the tools that allow them to freely do so; to post silly cat images, update profiles, to 'like', to 'share', to 'retweet', to 'upvote', and so on. Given the right tools, people become, as William S. Burroughs (1985) wrote in an essay in the mid-1970s, a controlled population who are happy to turn themselves on. Evidently, despite the controversy surrounding the Facebook experiment, many users of Facebook will be blissfully oblivious to (or perhaps not at all troubled by) their participation in their own manipulation, or indeed, the many other attempts to trigger the emotional contagions they become (involuntarily) engaged in.

Current efforts by social media enterprises to steer affective contagion also resonate with Huxley's interest in the potential of brain conditioning beyond the dystopian novel. In an effort to evaluate the extent to which his dystopian universe of control had become a reality in the late 1950s, Huxley revisited the themes that had obsessed him in the early 1930s, including the potential manipulation of social relations through propaganda, brainwashing, hypnosis and chemical persuasion (Huxley, 1962). The eventual realization of a scientific revolution of control, he contended, would be underpinned by widespread Pavlovian conditioning of behaviour. However, beyond the physical stimulation of behaviour in *Brave new world* we find a brain that becomes the sum of *all* the suggestions made to it. This is an affective suggestibility, it would seem, that expands on Pavlov to consider emotional conditioning as a means to influence belief. Indeed, Huxley's hypnotic suggestions are mass-produced by the College of Emotional Engineering (CEE), located in the same building as the Bureaux of Propaganda (Huxley, 2007: 56). Helmholtz Watson spends his time in CEE between lectures writing hypnopædic rhymes. Assisted by the intoxicating effects

of Soma, the emotional content of these rhymes becomes the mental stuff by which the intentions of the Brave new worlders are shaped. These rhymes tap into affective states by way of the aesthetic power of repetitive drums, and harmonious chords. It is the gut-brain that hears, not the ears (*ibid.*: 69). The recurring harmonies and repetitive words haunted the passions before they infected the mind (*ibid.*). It is these appeals to affective states that repress the population by quelling any misguided thoughts toward nonconformity.

> Ford, we are twelve; oh, make us one,
>
> Like drops within the Social River;
>
> Oh, make us now together run
>
> As swiftly as thy shining Flivver
>
> (*ibid.*: 70)

Ostensibly, there is nothing particularly new in Facebook's recent endeavour to steer intent by exploiting the contagious emotional desires of a population. The history of marketing is strewn with similar attempts to do so. St Elmo Lewis's Attention, Interest, Desire and Action model (AIDA), a prominent template for suggestive advertising developed in the late nineteenth century, made explicit the practical necessity to bring together desire and cognitive beliefs (Heath, 2012: 16-16). Similarly, in the 1920s, Freud's nephew, Edward Bernays (1928), notoriously made the connection between unconscious desires, attention and the selling of products to the masses in his marketing propaganda model. To be sure, the syllabus of any self-respecting emotional engineering degree must surely include a history of response and instrumental conditioning techniques; emphasizing the important role of Pavlov, Watson and Skinner, but also bringing in Bernays's model to illustrate the efficacy of emotional manipulation in marketing. Like this, Bernays well understood the leap from the mere conditioning of habitual responses and reaction psychology (behaviourism) to a propaganda model focused on the creation of 'circumstances which will swing emotional [and psychological] currents so as to make for purchaser demand' (ibid.: 52-54). Indeed, these emotional currents also include tapping into a desire for an authority figure of some kind. As Helmholtz might recount in one of his lectures at CEE; the salesman who wanted us to 'eat more bacon' would persuade us not because his bacon was the cheapest, or indeed the best, but because the doctor, who recommends the bacon, becomes a conditioning stimulus that feeds on this desire for authority. There needs to be, in other words, a complete circuit of conditioning of desires and beliefs in place to assure at least some level of certainly that more bacon will be sold.

The emotional turn

The difference between these old marketing models and the current effort to tap into affective registers is arguably twofold. Firstly, new technologies, like those that allow for massive-scale emotion research carried out on big data samples, as well as biofeedback and brainwave measuring tools intended to detect the visceral stirrings assumed to lead to emotional engagements that inform purchase intent, are now widespread in marketing. Secondly, the focus on Pavlovian brain conditioning has been influenced by a continuously shifting theoretical frame in the brain sciences, beginning with the opening up of the black box of behaviourism to cognitive brain modelling, but now increasingly emphasising the significant role emotions play in decision making processes. To be sure, since the mid-1990s, the neurosciences have gradually moved away from a purely cognitive based approach to the brain-mind problem toward an enquiry into the affective, emotive and feely triggers assumed to be enmeshed in the networks between somatic markers and pure reason (Damasio, 2006). The neuroscientific argument forwarded suggests that the perturbations and disturbances of somatic sensations elicited by certain feelings – predominantly fear – can be subjected to response conditioning. There is an attempt, in the work of Joseph LeDoux (2003), for example, to demonstrate how a lab rat's amygdalae provokes a rapid response based not on cognitive, but emotional information processes (*ibid.*: 120-124). Using Pavlovian conditioning LeDoux points to a pathway that he contends fear travels through, from an input zone (the lateral amygdala) with connections to most other regions in the amygdala, to the central nucleus, which functions as an output zone connected to networks that control fear behaviours, like freezing, and associated changes in body physiology; heart rate, blood pressure etc. (*ibid.*).

Underpinned by similar ideas promoted in neuroeconomics, which correlate changes in brain chemistry to economic decision making, neuromarketing further attempts to go beyond a system of deciding that regards cognitive preferences as a given to explore the hedonic motivations exhibited by neurotransmitters thought to guide choice. It is, for example, supposed that dopamine updates the value an organism assigns to stimuli and actions, determining, some argue, the probability of a choice being made (Caplin and Dean, 2008). Like this, neuroeconomic propositions point toward the potential involvement of dopamine in the formation of expectations, beliefs and preferences (assuming, that is to say, that expectations, beliefs and preferences do not conversely affect dopamine activity).

If these kinds of neuroscientific suppositions concerning the processing of emotion have any credence at all, they will evidently challenge two canonical

postulations at the heart of classical economics and persuasion theory. On one hand, the assumption that economic decisions are somehow guided by purely rational, utilitarian actors, rendered free from irrational emotions, becomes exposed to the uncertainties of a reasoning caught somewhere in between cognition and affect. On the other hand, the emotional brain thesis also challenges the Machiavellian notion that fear is the most powerful means of social influence. A neuroeconomist or neuromarketer might, for example, want to know what makes someone happy before a choice is made, since this state of mind can similarly affect options.

Notwithstanding well-founded accusations of copious fMRI-driven neurospeculation (Satel and Lilienfeld, 2013), the influence of the emotion turn on the marketing industry has, without doubt, been considerable. Whether or not these neuroscientific ideas have any validity is entirely up for grabs, but they have certainly become very well-rehearsed in a circuitous convergence between the neurosciences and the marketing industry. LeDoux and Antonio Damasio are often cited in marketing literature, which, for example, claims to understand what makes a web user want to unconsciously click on certain content by recourse to emotional brain functioning (e.g. Weinschenk, 2009). Neuroscientists have also readily engaged with the burgeoning business of neuromarketing with Damasio, for example, providing the keynote at the 2014 Neuromarketing World Forum in New York. There is an irresistible temptation, it seems, to draw on the emotional turn to grasp how the attention and (purchase) intentions of a consumer in a supermarket or on a website might be automatically guided toward specific goals. So beyond the hype of fMRI speculation, neuromarketing can be understood as a model of persuasion, in the tradition of Bernays, which appropriates emotional desires by way of conditioning reward systems and affective appeals. The aim of social media research like that carried out by Facebook is to similarly make the emotional stuff that motivates people to consume certain products and brands more predictable, and consequently more efficiently reproducible and spreadable.

At its most dystopic, the appropriation of the emotional turn by marketers can be seen as a component of affective capitalism with the potential to manage sensory environments by way of producing a stream of sensory stimuli that conforms the mechanical habits of the consumer to predictable temporal behavioural patterns. This is a mode of affective control quantized by the refrain of habitual social media usage, and assembled in the rhythmic entrainment of brain frequencies, which, at the same time, threaten to transform active populations into a passive, docile consumer-proletariat.

Strength through joy

The joyful encounter has its modern political origins in the fascisms of the late 1920s and 1930s, and in particular the Nazi propaganda machine which thoroughly grasped the purchase of appeals to pleasure as well as fear. The encounters they produced were carefully assembled experiences that tapped into the desires of the crowd. Both Hitler and Mussolini were apparently well acquainted with the late nineteenth century crowd theories of Gustave Le Bon (2002/1895) and not surprisingly they endeavoured to draw on his notion of hypnotic mass suggestion as a mode of control. To be sure, the many direct appeals to desire fit squarely with Tarde's more exacting microsociology of the crowd, particularly his idea that the object of the desires of the social sleepwalker are always belief (Sampson, 2012: 122). That is to say, to make a population believe in fascism it was necessary to appeal directly to desires for joyful sensations as well maintain atmospheres of absolute terror. Like this, the large scale state run leisure organization, *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through joy) demonstrated how the Nazis placed a heavy emphasis on the happiness of the population and its desire to have a good life so that they would associate these feelings of joy with the new order (Fritzschep, 2009: 61). Again, this was not so much an ideological trick working directly on belief systems as it was an attempt at tapping into the crowd's vulnerability to mass suggestion experienced through joyful encounters.

By way of providing a theoretical insight into the affective politics of Nazis joy, Protevi (2010) draws attention to an affective brain-somatic relation that negotiates the world through 'feeling what [people] can and cannot do in a particular situation' (*ibid.*: 180). This is affective political power that can be comprehended here as a *double event* of the affective encounter: the capacity for a body to affect and be affected by its environment (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 257). On one hand, the passive register (to be affected) is grasped politically as an example of *pouvoir*; a bodily encounter in the world similar in many ways to the kind of imitative encounter established between the social somnambulist and the power dynamic of an *action-at-a-distance* described by Tarde (Sampson, 2012: 30). Indeed, it is the passive encounters of a desiring population with a controlling transcendent fascistic leader that seems to lead to a desire for mass repression. On the other hand, the active register (to affect) is an encounter determined by what Protevi (2010: 182) calls 'mutually empowering connections'. Political power as *puissance* is equal to 'immanent self-organization', 'direct democracy', and 'people working together to generate the structures of their social life' (*ibid.*). Is it, in other words, an active joyous affect, increasing the puissance of the bodies that pass through the sensory environment, enabling them to form new and mutually empowering encounters outside the original encounter (*ibid.*).

Thinking through the oppositional tensions of this double event, Protevi raises important questions concerning the multiple processes of subjectification occurring in politically organized affective encounters with the Nazis at the Nuremberg rallies. These large-scale militarized events provided a stimulating sensory environment that can be ethically gauged according to a kind of *pouvoir* that elicits passive joy, while, at the same time, enforcing the rhythmic entrainment and repression of the crowd. As Protevi puts it:

> The Nuremberg rallies were filled with joyous affect, but this joy of being swept up into an emergent body politic was passive. The Nazis were stratified; their joy was triggered by the presence of a transcendent figure manipulating symbols – flags and faces – and by the imposition of a rhythm or a forced entrainment – marches and salutes and songs. Upon leaving the rally, they had no autonomous power (*puissance*) to make mutually empowering connections. In fact, they could only feel sad at being isolated, removed from the thrilling presence of the leader. (Protevi, 2010: 180)

The marketers of early fascist joy also understood that conventional party politics, or indeed totalitarianism, was never going to be something that the population desired. Much better to appeal to the desire to oppose the established political order than it is to appear to personify it. In the early years of Italian fascism Mussolini purposefully positioned his fascism as the 'anti-party' (Obsolete Capitalism, 2015: v) so as to appeal directly to the disaffected working class desire to disrupt. This is an example of a passive joyful encounter since it seems to offer power to those without access to political resources. However, despite initially appealing to productive desires for change, fascism of this kind does nothing more than exacerbate the repression of the masses.

Right wing populism: Waking the somnambulist in 2015

> *Farage...comes along and people connect to him because he sounds like the guy in the street* – Canvey Island Independent Party member explaining the appeal of the UK Independence Party's leader in Essex. (BBC Sunday Politics, 19 October, 2014)

The disempowering encounters with Nazi joy are comparable in many ways to a fascistic trajectory persisting in current waves of right wing populist contagion spreading throughout Europe at this point in time; a disparate series of political movements, which similarly position themselves as anti-parties opposed to the established order. Once again these attempts to position far right politics as a radical movement add up to more than a mere ideological trick by a totalitarian military machine. There is a far more complex and subtle relation established between desire and belief: a relation that has many continuities and discontinuities with the past. To begin with, although the entraining rhythms of marching and salutes have, for the most part, faded into the background (for the

time being, that is), the entrainment of the population by way of affective appeals to feelings about nationhood, race, and unity, persists. Moreover, this is a right wing populism stimulated by affective encounters intended not only to destroy difference and celebrate sameness, but also produce repression through joy. Not surprisingly then many theorists have revisited Wilhelm Reich's question concerning why it is that so many people seek their own repression under regimes with political motivations that are palpably counter to their own self-interest (Protevi, 2010: 178). As Reich put it:

> What was it in the masses that caused them to follow a party the aims of which were, objectively and subjectively, strictly at variance with their own interests? (Reich, 1946: 34)

Indeed, we need to ask why, again, today, so many people desire *pouvoir* over *puissance*. They seem to be wide awake. They do not appear to be deceived. Nevertheless, it is not freedom that the sleepwalking supporters of right wing populism desire; it is repression. They are, once again, in need; it would seem, of a transcendent authority to protect them from what they are told is the chaos of an economic depression worsened by porous national borders open to floods of virus ridden immigrants steeling jobs, scrounging welfare and intent on acts of terror. That is, as well as having someone to blame for their own disempowerment, they crave an authority figure to relate to; someone who personifies prejudicial beliefs and anxieties stirred into action by a fear of the unfamiliar. So where amid all these appeals to the fear of otherness is the joyful encounter? To answer this question there is a need to, on one hand, rethink the sex-economic sociological framework in which Reich framed his original question; that is to say, to move on from its recourse to the inner world of an unconscious mind rooted in biological drives, and address, instead, the affective relations established between the population and the sensory environments that situated it. What seemed to Reich to be the perverse impulses of the fascist unconscious; a desire for repression of biological impulses that seeps through the layering of the unconscious into conscious rational choices needs to be revisited in terms of a political affect that stirs into action a different kind of mass somnambulism. This is not a hidden unconscious seeping out from the inside. Affect is not a fantasy. The sleepwalker is already *out there;* in the crowd; the guy in the street. The somnambulist is a social relation. This is the kind of microfascism that is not simply personified by a transcendental leader either, but as Michel Foucault notes in his preface to *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1984), it is already in 'everyday behavior'; it is 'the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us' (Foucault, 1984: xiii). On the other hand, there is perhaps a need to revisit certain elements of the critique of Marxism Reich offered in the 1940s. Contrary to how the masses have

been generally observed through the lenses of Marxist theory, the working class supporters of these right wing movements did not appear to, as Reich argued, perceive themselves as a hard done by proletariat in opposition to bourgeois elites. As Reich contends, the working classes of the 1940s did not see themselves as the struggling class anymore. They had, he claims, grasped themselves as having 'taken over the forms of living and the attitudes of the middle class' (Reich, 1946: 55).

Today, it would seem that the supporters of right wing populism have become particularly susceptible to differently orientated appeals to the felt experiences of a shifting sense of class identity to those Reich observed. That is, the working classes are now positioned as the disaffected guy in the street. This means they are once again drawn to the appeal of the anti-party since it seems to soak up a desire to disrupt order, but merely produces more repression. Moreover, desires are now shared in the digitally mediated sensory environments of social media; these digital crowds and data assemblages Facebook readily experiments with. Indeed, Obsolete Capitalism's (2015, xx-xxxvii) analysis of the rise of the comedian Beppe Grillo's popularist anti-party, the Five Star Movement in Italy, points to the emergence of a digital populism that acknowledges the central role of the marketer and net strategist in building the anti-party's brand, orientating voters, and disrupting dissidents through social media.

In many parts of Europe, there is a distinct reversal of the fortunes of Reich's imagined upwardly mobile proletariat, which the right wing populists in the UK are readily exploiting by way of joyful encounters. This is again not simply a trick of ideology played out on the ignorant masses. Like Grillo in Italy – the authoritarian hiding behind the rascally face of a showman (*ibid.*: x-xii) – we find that the bourgeois elites, secreted away behind the facade of these anti-parties, are endeavouring to pass themselves off as the guy in the street, or at least some jovial personality compatible with the contrivance of this imagined worldview. The UK Independence Party (UKIP), for example, were led by a privately educated, former stockbroker who is regularly filmed and photographed by the media sharing of a pint of beer in the local pub, creating an appealing impression that he is *one of us.*[1] The production of these political ersatz experiences of joy cannot simply be attributed to an ideological appeal to a rigid sense of the

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1   Since writing this article the UKIP leader resigned after narrowly failing to win a seat in Parliament in the May 7th General Election in 2015. This is despite a significant swell in support for UKIP, which amounts to 13% of the national vote share. By the 11th May, he was back; the party having refused to accept the showman's resignation. In June 2016, Farage's aim to 'take his country back' (to take the UK out of the European Union) was realized with many Brexit supporters saying that immigration was their main concern. Farage has since stood down as leader.

representation of class. The image of Nigel Farage swigging a pint in the local pub works in the insensible degrees between representational illusion and affective states that trigger the desire for mass repression; that is to say, they exist in the *interferences* between the desires and beliefs of a population. To be sure, it is the triggering of the latter affective states that seems to prompt contagious overspills of affect that are as much about joy as they are fear. Although a large percentage of the affective contagion of UKIP can evidently be put down to racist fear mongering over immigration, it is also the case that supporters of the right become vulnerable to joyful encounters with these showman-like leaders, which have been historically satisfied (e.g. in the UK) through right wing inventions like the Royal Family and Saatchi and Saatchi's fabrication of the handbag swinging shopkeeper Margaret Thatcher. The fascist marketer has, like this, continued to perpetuate a sensory environment full of joyful encounters with congenial aesthetic figures: *right wing buffoons*, including the UKIP leader and the current London Mayor, Boris Johnson, whose jester-like performances obscure the inequity of power relations in the UK wherein the many are overwhelmingly dominated by an over privileged and privately educated few. Surely, the point is that the somnambulist needs to wake up! These buffoons are not *one* of us. Following Tarde's microsociology, these global leaders should not be grasped as personifications *collectively born* (Tarde, 2012: 36). They are a monadological accumulation of *facts* (e.g. Farage likes a pint and Boris always says it how it is), which tend to assemble and resonate, not so much by accident, as Tarde contended, but by way of purposefully steered affects that spread through the sensory environments of the mass media and digital populism.

Returning to the earlier focus on neurology, the affective marketing of right wing buffoons can perhaps be seen alongside a more generalized marketing of ersatz experiences in affective capitalism that stimulate a craving for sensory stimulation. Again, this is a regime of control that asks questions of conventional Marxist approaches. As Reich (1946: vii) points out, the ideal of abolishing private property, for example, seems to clash with a mass desire for commodities of all kinds. In the 1940s Reich listed such mundane items as shirts, pants, typewriters, toilet paper, books etc., but today we can add a far more sensorial list of luxury consumer items, including the much ridiculed working class obsession with wide screen TVs and access to social media entertainment systems that connect populations to an array of further joyful encounters. These are more than ideological weapons of mass distraction. Indeed, following Bruce E. Wexler's brain and culture thesis (2008), the desire for joyful sensory stimulations of this kind can be conceived of as an addiction that exceeds the commodity fetish; the satisfying of which reduces the anxieties and depressions caused by sensory deprivation (*ibid.*: 83). Turning Wexler's thesis on its head, it might even be argued that given the overwhelming control of sensory

stimulation by affective capitalism some level of deprivation might actually be a good thing.

The brain is already free?

> We are living at the hour of neuronal liberation, and we do not know it. An agency within us gives sense to the code, and we do not know it. The difference between the brain and psychism is shrinking considerably, and we do not know it (Malabou, 2009: 8).

In order to explore the potential of the joyful encounter as an expression of puissance this discussion now moves on to the second question of *what can a brain do*. To some extent then, we can begin by following Malabou's endeavour to free the brain; that is to say, in this context, liberate the brain-somatic relation from its coincidence with the passive joyful encounters of affective capitalism. Like this, the discussion will now fleetingly follow Malabou's effort to draw on theories from the emotional turn in the neurosciences concerning the emergence of a plastic protosubjectivity, which suggest that although we might not know it, our brain is *already* free; we just need to 'free this freedom' (*ibid*.: 11).

What can we learn from Malabou's appeal to the neurosciences so that we might better understand how to free the masses from this desire for repression? Firstly, Malabou draws attention to the emergence of a neuronal sense of self, which is, according to LeDoux, a unity, but not *unitary* (LeDoux, 2003: 31). Significantly then, the plasticity of the synaptic self is not regarded as a mere personality formed out of a genetic building block. It is rather 'added to and subtracted from'; it is, like this, a plasticity of 'genetic maturation, learning, forgetting, stress, aging, and disease' (*ibid*.: 29). This plasticity is what Malabou importantly draws attention when she asks the question of what we should do with our brains. For this reason, we should not, she contends, be overly concerned about a genetically determined brain because the plastic brain provides a 'possible margin of improvisation' between the synapse and the biological encoding of genetic necessity (*ibid*.: 8). Secondly, the question of what can a brain do will also not be answered, Malabou argues, by yielding to a model of plasticity redefined as flexible; i.e. the flexible *ergo* docile consumers and workers of affective capitalism. Whereas the emotional brain is made from a liberated plasticity that can know and modify itself, flexibility is the avatar that masks and diverts attention away from the affordances of freedom that plasticity might offer. 'This means asking not "to what point are we flexible?" but rather "To what extent are we plastic?"' (*ibid*.: 14). The problem, for Malabou, is that in its coincidence with capitalism the brain is 'entirely ignorant of plasticity but not at all of flexibility' (*ibid*.: 12).

Where this article subtly deviates from Malabou's use of the emotional brain is in her contention that our brain is us; that is, 'We' coincide with 'our brain' (*ibid*.: 8). To be sure, the search for a liberated protosubjectivity does not begin, I contend, with an 'organic personality' (*ibid*.). This is neither a quest for a stable sense of self-identity or individual freedom. Indeed, despite the emotional brain having a diachronic temporality, the improvisation between gene power and plastic variability is disappointingly grasped as a dialectical movement by Malabou; that is to say, it is a 'synthesis of all the plastic processes at work in the brain', allowing the organism to 'hold together and unify the cartography of networks' (*ibid*.: 58). The emergence of stable thoughts, emotions and motivations becomes, like this, necessary for the survival of a coherent and rational neuronal personality; otherwise irrationality would cast these thoughts out into the wilderness, and emotions and motivations would be scattered in all directions like some 'unruly mob' (*ibid*.). This *scattering* is, nonetheless, where we might begin to confront the neoliberal production of flexible individuals; in the animal-like collectivities of what we might call the *crowd-brain*, which as Tarde argued, has a potential for revolution rather than joyful repression.

Furthermore, the aim here is not simply a matter of uncovering particular hidden brain regions or plastic processes so as to establish the sum total of who we are, but rather, primarily, about awakening a collective political consciousness from its somnolent coincidence with the spirit of capitalism. As follows, the crowd-brain never becomes a sum total. Arguably, it is a collective freedom that will not be achieved by looking *inside* the brain to establish the relation the 'I' has to an external world. The crowd-brain is a multiplicity of relational patterns. All too often in phenomenological tendencies in psychology and brain science the outside becomes nothing more than a model represented in the inner world. Boundary lines are produced between self, others and the environments in which they relate. In contrast, the intention here is to open up sense making process to the borderless outside forces of pattern and relationality. Indeed, if we are to progress to 'free this freedom' (Malabou 2009: 11), then it is perhaps better to ask how brains relate to sensory environments in which self and other become indistinguishable instead of looking inside the synapse to find out how a brain.

To even begin to free this freedom, it is important to move on from the tendency to conceptualize subjectivity (or the emergence of self) as a readymade Being in the world. The enlightenment concept of an emergent selfhood – Descartes' essence of human subjectivity – and the theoretical structures that support the model of a synaptic self have a lot in common in this sense (Bennett and Hacker, 2013). Indeed, both seem to be in service of neoliberal subjectification. Rather than stay focused then on the inner world of subjective perception and opinion, I want to grasp subjectification in the multiple processes of becoming. As Deleuze

and Guattari (1994) contend, the *brain-becoming-subject* is to be found in its encounter with infinity, not in a readymade personality, soul or self-identity on the *inside*, but by plunging into the chaos *outside*.

Radical relationality

Before concluding this paper, I want to bring together two theoretical approaches that tease out the affective politics of this notion of an outside. The first works to erode the border between self, other and sensory environment, allowing for a potential education of the senses alert to the affective appeals to joy that occur in relations to exteriority. The second places the temporal rhythms of Tarde's imitation-repetition as the base of all social relationality; that is to say, it is a desire to imitate, and not the sharing of meaning or ideology, that brings the crowd-brain together.

To begin with, and following Protevi's (2010) reading of Wexler's book *Brain and culture* (2008), we see how the inside/outside relation established in the emotional brain model is substituted for a 'radical relationality'(*ibid.*: 174-76), which helps us to theorize relations to exteriority in a number of significant ways. Firstly, Wexler notes how neuroplasticity becomes open to varying degrees of change, over time, occurring in a neuro-environmental emergentism; that is, the intricate connections and patterns established between neurons are 'determined by sensory stimulation and other aspects of environmentally induced neural activity' (Wexler, 2008: 22). Importantly, this notion of emergence not only differs from the model of the inner world presented in the emotional brain model, but also significantly contrasts with other models of a centred self-identity, conceived of by, for example, the phenomenological neurophilosopher, Thomas Metzinger (2009). Like this, Metzinger argues that evolutionary pressures have introduced a further level of duality between an illusory inner dream state that hallucinates an objective reality far too complex to contemplate.

Secondly, and relatedly, radical relationality subtly reverses the notion of a selfhood trapped in the cranium, making the essence of subjective experience, not objective reality, illusory. In other words, the sense of self (the assumed substantive part of who *we* are) is the *imagined* outcome of the speed of sensory processing being too slow to perceive anything more than the self as an individuated substance embedded in the brain. So, rather than rendering the brain an individuated substance, bequeathed with fixed properties (real or imagined), Protevi (2010: 176) contends that subjectivity is made in the tendency to partake in a pattern of social interaction. It is not, therefore, the virtuality of the individuated self that determines how the social field is perceived, but rather

'the interaction of intensive individuation processes that forms the contours of the virtual field' (*ibid.*: 73). Thirdly, Wexler's radical relationality shifts this substance viewpoint (seeing the outside world from the inside) to a novel perspective in which what is internalized becomes a 'pattern of interaction'. This is a radical relationality because as Wexler writes:

> The relationship between the individual and the environment is so extensive that it almost overstates the distinction between the two to speak of a relation at all (Wexler, 2008: 39).

Brains and bodies are thusly in constant processual exchanges with their sensory environments, which, although appearing to be masked by an individual's 'exaggerated sense of independence' (carried in a fleeting memory that considers our uniqueness to be a property of who we are), nevertheless, makes us little more than an effect of the milieu (*ibid.*: 39-40). Therefore, what Protevi significantly extracts from Wexler's plastic brain thesis is an emergent subjectivity; not understood as the outcome of complex malleable brain functions, but from a 'differentiated system in which brain, body, and world are linked in interactive loops' (Protevi, 2010: 173). Wexler's entire project is consequently underlined by his intention to

> ...minimize the boundary between the brain and its sensory environment, and establish a view of human beings as inextricably linked to their worlds by nearly incessant multimodal processing of sensory information. (Protevi, 2010: 173; Wexler, 2008: 9)

Lastly, and in addition to Protevi's reading, Wexler foregrounds the ubiquity and automaticity of imitative processes as key to understanding subjectivity in the making as an effect of the sensory environment (Wexler, 2008: 113-21). As Wexler puts it, imitation is 'consistently operative throughout the moment-to-moment unfolding of everyday life' (*ibid.*: 115). It is, for example, through the close bonds a child makes with a range of caregivers that the imitation of example persists through social relations. The extent to which the imitation of example occupies the interactive loops that compose subjectivity in the making suggests a distinctive Tardean aspect to Wexler's sensory environment that needs to be unpacked.

The imitative rhythms of radical relationality

The significant imitative quality of radical relationality can be usefully mapped onto Christian Borch's (2005) observation of how the rhythmic intensity of Tarde's imitation-suggestibility situates a population. There are indeed two aspects to Borch's rhythmanalysis that can be taken forward in the context of this

discussion. That is, firstly, what comes together through imitation-repetition is not the unity of the One, but rather rhythm produces the harmony of the many; a harmonious relation between repetition and difference (*ibid.*: 93-94). The rhythm of imitative contagion does not therefore produce the stability of a self-contained spatial identity; a self fixed in a sum total, or systematic emergence of a whole self from which the materiality of the brain emerges on the outside (a soul, mind, a person, a model), but rather, secondly, denotes materiality in rhythmic movement. Importantly, I think, this is not an emergence of subjectivity that climbs a flight of steps leading from a neuronal micro level to a macro level of consciousness, but an unfolding rhythmic movement of relations passing through a sensory environment.

Adding a neurological dimension to Borch's rhythmanalysis we get to see the significant role imitation might play in the political positioning of the brain-becoming-subject. That is to say, the situating of brain-somatic relations in the spatiotemporal flows of the sensory environments they inhabit. As Borch puts it:

> [T]he individual does not exist prior to the rhythms but, on the contrary, is produced by them and their momentarily stabilized junctions, and since the subjectification of the individual therefore changes as the rhythms and their junctions change, rhythmanalysis is not merely a perspective on imitations per se, but equally a tool to demonstrate a society's dominant ways of promoting subject positions. (*ibid.*: 94-95)

Like this, Borch also draws specific attention to Tarde's contention that environments, like rural communities and newly industrialized cities, acquire a 'very significant importance in what is actually...imitated' (*ibid.*: 82). In Tarde's era, cities produced new social formations, like the urban crowd, which unlike rural family communities, become powerful vectors for imitative flows of the inventions of fashion, crime, and potentially nonconformity and riotous assembly, for example. Here we find the apparent traces of the conservatism of a nineteenth century crowd theory, which feared the revolutionary contagions of the working classes. But it is also in these disruptive social fields that fascist contagions thrive. Indeed, Obsolete Capitalism (2015: xiii) makes a very useful connection here between the spread of the kind of microfascism Deleuze and Guattari linked to the rural, the city, the neighbourhood, the couple, the family, school and office, and Tarde's microsociology. It is, within these Tardean microsociologies that we would, Deleuze and Guattari contend, answer the question of why desire longs for its own repression.

The differences between the joyful encounters of 1930s fascism and today's swing toward right wing populism may also be traced back to Tarde's microsociologies of imitation. In times of rampant capitalist industrialization,

the brain-becoming-subject was transformed into a revolutionary crowd. This was also the kind of molecular sensory environment in which Brownshirts and Blackshirts of the anti-party thrived (Obsolete Capitalism, 2015: viii). Indeed, following Tarde we have to note the intensification of mediated relations in urban environments, beginning with rise of the press and telegraph networks. As follows the crowd, Tarde contends, become increasingly 'disconnected from [the] physical co-presence' of the urban environment (Borch, 2005: 96). Here we encounter the origins of a Tardean media theory in action. He would indeed upgrade the crowd-brain's rhythmic encounter with the city to incorporate the introduction of mediated communications that create new *publics*, anticipating, in many ways, the progressive onset of the sensory environments of the mass media age. Newspapers, cinema, radio and television become component parts in the emergence of subsequent new media publics. To be sure, these newly mediated publics can be extended to contemporary post-industrial sensory environments, which play a significant role in once again rupturing harmony and repositioning subjects in the rhythmic flows of social media, for example. Although seemingly deterritorializing the co-presence of the crowd-brain and its urban environment, the ubiquitous Facebook brings together (reterritorializes) bodies and brains into nascent sensory terrains (data assemblages), which are, it would seem, ripe for the repressions of affective capitalism.

The insensible degrees between representational illusion and affective encounter

To better grasp affective capitalism one has to arguably invest in a theory of affect which, on one hand, leans to a certain extent on the sciences of the brain, and on the other, tries to find answers to the uncanniness of social relationality in concepts like imitation, crowd contagion, desiring assemblages, hypnosis etc. This double commitment does not, evidently, sit well with those in the humanities and social sciences who are, it seems, growing increasingly hostile to the positioning of affective states by nonrepresentational theorists as an alternative to discourse analysis and phenomenologically constructed subjectivities. No longer consigned to an incomprehensible fascination with the uncanny, nonrepresentational theory is accused of 'draw[ing] a thick line between bodily movements or forces and social sense making' (Wetherall, 2012: 19-21). What is essentially driving this altercation with those who are 'rubbishing discourse' is an endeavour to claim back affect theory as something that is 'inextricably linked' to guiding forces of human meaning-making, the semiotic and the discursive (*ibid.*: 20), as well as the embodied essence of self forwarded by phenomenological accounts of affect (e.g. Blackman, 2012).

What would seem to be a more productive course of action in times of rampant affective capitalism and contagions of right wing populism is to rethink the relation established between belief and desire. In other words, get to grips with the tensions that exist between ideological illusions and desiring assemblages. Following Bergson (1911: 52-53), for example, (a nonrepresentational theorist who nevertheless grasped the insensible degrees between the *unextended* affective state of things and the ideas and images that represent and occupy them in space), we can begin to rethink the relation between affect and desire, on one hand, and ideological illusion and belief, on the other. Indeed, the interference between the brain sciences and the seemingly opposing philosophies behind representational and nonrepresentational theory are not as disparate as it might seem. When trying to make the implicit experiences of capitalism become explicit both demonstrate a commitment to neurology albeit with very different brain models and outcomes. On one hand, the interaction between capitalist visual cultures and a false consciousness rooted in representation requires a distinctly cognitive model of the brain. We might call it a locationist's brain with special access to a secret photographic album. The ideology of capitalism is thus exposed by semiotic technologies like the sunglasses Žižek's adopts in his film *The perverts guide to ideology* (2012). The revealing of implicit ideologies has a distinct violence to it. It involves the pealing back of ideological layers of myth making to make explicit the referent. This uncovering process might be achieved by staring directly into the light of the spectacle until it makes our eyes bleed or it requires these special shades that Žižek dons to expose the real by routing around the illusory.

Nonrepresentational theory, on the other hand, is concerned with a different aspect of the brain-body chemistry's response to the same mirage. This is an interaction with the smoke and mirrors that may not necessarily be seen, or indeed thought of, in the cognitive sense (located *inside* a brain that thinks in images). It relates instead to sensations, feelings, affect and imitative processes that do not have a location, as such, and get passed on in the ever-moving externality of affective atmospheres. However, it is important to consider that what is felt in the atmosphere of affect is crucially related to what we think, and in turn, what we believe. This may prove to be an altogether differently oriented kind of thinking that requires a very different brain model: an *antilocationist* brain. Perhaps these various manifestations of affective capitalism we encounter bypass belief altogether, appealing to desires that have a mind of their own.

Finally then, whereas the representational theorist seems to have a clear sense of a relation between hidden symbols and conscious visible forms, as established in discursive language and semiotic regimes, affect theory needs to grasp what is often unimaginable. The nonrepresentational power of affective capitalism

becomes manifest in asignifying and prediscursive forces, like those grasped in the radical, imitative relationality established between brains, bodies and sensory environment, which, like signification and discourse, suggest, persuade and subjectify, but there is an indiscernibility that requires a subtler kind of violent disclosure. Žižek's Sunglasses will not protect us from the imitative radiation of affective capitalism. Conceivably a more effective mode of protection from the joyful encounters that work on desire, infect belief and lead to repression, might be a sun blocker of some kind.
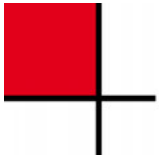
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'Cause I wuv you!' Pet dog fashion and emotional consumption

Annamari Vänskä

abstract

Researchers have analysed how pets fuel marketing and consumption and what kind of role emotions play in these areas. Yet there is no research on how commodities are used in negotiating the emotional relationship between humans and pet dogs. This article contributes a new perspective to the discussion on pet consumerism by focusing on the role of emotions. It examines how pet dog commodities define and materialise the ideal emotional bond between the human and the pet dog: how consumption is justified and rationalised by appealing to emotions, how emotions are mobilised in pet markets, and how value is ascribed to the human–pet dog bond through material objects. As a tangible example of affective capitalism, pet dog fashions indicate how the need to establish a relationship between a human and a dog is transformed into material goods and services.

> I love and treat my puppies as if they were my own children. I have to admit, I may have spoiled them a little too much. But how can I not? Just look at those sweet lil' faces, they deserve to be treated like my lil' prince and princesses ☺ I love my babies. (Daily Mail Reporter, 2009)

This excerpt is from an on-line article about Paris Hilton. It reports about Hilton's 'Mini Doggie Mansion', a miniature version of her own Beverly Hills mansion, which she has constructed for her lap dogs, the now deceased Tinkerbell, Marilyn Monroe, Dolce, Prada and two other pooches. The double storey pink chateau, estimated to be worth $325 000 in a biography about Paris Hilton (Gurvis, 2011: 67), covers about 300 square feet, boasts miniature Philip Starck furniture, heating and air-conditioning, as well as a crystal chandelier and ceiling mouldings. Downstairs it has a living room and in the upstairs bedroom

it has a car-shaped 'Furcedes' bed with luxurious 'Chewy Vuitton' bedding. The dogs also have a closet: it is filled with haute-couture outfits for them, including, for example, a pink angora sweater, 'gaudy pink high-heeled Louis Vuitton dog booties' and other accessories 'that cost probably more than your car' (Hilton and Resin, 2004).

The *Daily Mail* article is one of many articles that have reported on the socialite's conspicuous spending habits on her lap dogs. While Paris Hilton and her fashionably dressed pooches may be among the most followed celebrities in the world of entertainment, they are by no means the only ones. Throughout the 2000s, a growing number of female celebrities have been photographed carrying a fashionably dressed and extravagantly accessorised little lap dog (e.g. Bettany and Daly, 2008: 409). A Google-search 'fashionable celebrity lap dogs' produces almost 1 000 000 hits in 0,8 seconds, and features sites such as 'dog fashion spa', 'Cindy Crawford dressing her dogs' and 'Pugs and Kisses Celebrity Dog Fashion Show'. Celebrities and their fashionably dressed lap dogs are visible in entertainment media but they have also successfully marketed certain dog breeds and luxurious dog fashions to ordinary people: while spending on other areas of life has decreased, spending on pet dogs has steadily increased in the 2000s.[1] This is evident in statistics. In the United States, for example, pet dog consumerism has increased by over 70 % from 2004-2014; from 34 billion dollars to 58 billion dollars (Bettany and Daly, 2008: 409; *APPA National Pet Owners Survey*, 2013/2014: webpage). The same applies to Finland. Spending on pet paraphernalia has increased more than spending on any other area of leisure from 2006–2012 (Nurmela, 2014). At the beginning of 2014, the Finnish journal of economics, *Talouselämä*, reported that in the previous year, the biggest Finnish pet shop chain *Musti ja Mirri* had doubled its profit and grown the popularity of the company's customer loyalty program by 20%. For this reason, the magazine gave the company the title 'gainer of the year' (Talouselämä, 2014).

Researchers have analysed how pets fuel marketing and consumption and what kind of role emotions play in these areas (e.g. Brockman et al., 2008: 397-405; Holbrook, 2008: 546-552; Kennedy and McGarvey, 2008: 424-430; Hsee and Kunreuthner, 2000; 141-159; Aylesworth et al., 1999: 385-391). Yet there is no research on how commodities are used in negotiating the emotional relationship

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1   As David Redmalm (2014: 93-94) has pointed out, Tinkerbell's – and other celebrity lap dogs' – fame increased the demand for small laps dogs, especially Chihuahuas. This has resulted in a large amount of abandoned lap dogs, and even created a diagnosis called 'the Paris Hilton syndrome'. The term refers to people who take a lap dog without properly understanding what acquiring a dog means. When the pet turns out not to be only a cute little accessory, but a dog with a will of its own, it is abandoned.

between humans and pet dogs. This article contributes a new perspective to the discussion on pet consumerism by focusing on the role of emotions. I examine how pet dog commodities define and materialise the ideal emotional bond between the human and the pet dog: how consumption is justified and rationalised by appealing to emotions, how emotions are mobilised in pet markets, and how value is ascribed to the human–pet dog bond through material objects. As a tangible example of affective capitalism, pet dog fashions indicate how the need to establish a relationship between a human and a dog is transformed into material goods and services.

The wider theoretical framework of this article is posthumanism. I use it to explain how pet dogs have been included in the history of humans and how consumer culture is built on and how it capitalises on this inclusion. I find posthumanist theory particularly useful for this task, because it helps to explicate how pet consumerism and pet commodities materialise a change in humanity's status. I contend that pet commodities and services display how emotions not only fuel capitalism, but how they also transform the pet, the human and the market itself. An important frame of reference in this sense is *emotional capitalism*. Eva Illouz (2007: 5) has used it to describe capitalism as a culture where emotional and economic discourses and practices shape each other. This is noticeable in the human–pet discourse, for example, in the language of emotional attachment and humanisation, and in the pet commodities themselves.

The article is structured as follows: I first outline the posthumanist theoretical framework. Second, I trace the cultural history of the pet dog as a 'love machine'; as a source and mediator of positive emotions. Third, I discuss how the emotional bond between dogs and humans has been intertwined with capitalism from the beginning and how it materialises in pet fashions in contemporary culture. In doing so, I use detailed examples of marketing approaches by a British (*Love My Dog*) and a Finnish (*Musti ja Mirri*) company to demonstrate how emotions are utilised in the language of marketing and how they are rationalised and transformed into commodities. In the final section, I discuss how pet consumerism and pet fashions deconstruct the dichotomy between humans and animals and how affective capitalism capitalises on this deconstruction.

Framing pet dogs and humans: Posthumanism

Paris Hilton regularly states in interviews that she 'spoils' her pet dogs because they are her 'babies'. In her biography, Hilton claims that 'Tink doesn't even like

other dogs – she acts just like a human!' (Hilton, 2006: 166). Pet shops, on the other hand, market dog fashions by appealing to the customer's sentiments by claiming to offer tools for 'caring', 'loving' and promoting the dog's overall 'well-being'. The focus on positive feelings and the promotion of a warm affectionate bond between the human and the pet dog constructs an ideal view of pet ownership. It also opens up a viewpoint to the wider theoretical framework of this article: posthumanist theory that re-conceptualises the relationship between humans and non-human animals (e.g. Haraway, 2003; 2008; Derrida, 2008; Wolfe, 2003; 2009) and acknowledges non-human animals as an integral part of human history, experience, and, in the framework of this article, consumerism.

Posthumanism is an umbrella term for studies that re-configure the relationship between humans and non-humans, humans and technology, and humans and the environment (Hassan, 1977: 201-217). Posthumanist approaches aim to challenge classical humanist anthropocentrism and its dichotomies – such as human / animal and nature / culture – the uniqueness of 'the human' as the crown of the creation, and the position of the human as an autonomous, rational being in contrast to irrational, instinctual 'animals' (Wolfe, 2009). In this article, posthumanism is understood as a set of questions and as a tool for dealing with those questions, when 'the human' is not the only autonomous, rational being who knows or consumes.

Of course, a discourse on pet dogs is not the same as a discourse on animals. Animals and pets are conceptualised contradictorily, and they occupy different social positions and conceptual categories. Some argue that pets are *privileged animals*: that they are favoured, remain close to humans and occupy a hierarchically higher status than other non-human animals (Thomas, 1983: 100-120). Others see pets as *degraded animals*: while an 'animal' is conceptualised as wild and self-sufficient, the 'pet' lacks these qualities (Fudge, 2008). A pet is literally a *tamed animal* – it is by definition *not* an animal. A pet's animality has been removed through domestication and breeding (Fudge, 2008; Haraway 2003; 2008). Still, a pet it is not a human either. It is a grey area or a category in-between humans and animals. A pet is an *ambiguous category* as it crosses and challenges the categorical boundaries between 'human' and 'animal' (Leach, 1966: 45). But it is also ambiguous because it invites us to see the continuity of these categories instead of their opposition.[2] As I see it, the human and the animal merge in the pet: the pet is a mediating category between the human and the animal. The ambiguity of the pet materialises in pet commodities, and concretely so in pet clothes. They are situated in the in-between space of the

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2   David Redmalm (2014, 93-109) underlines the ambiguousness of the Chihuahua and
     defines it as 'a holy anomaly'.

human-animal continuum that brings together human and animals traits. This is why I propose that pet fashions are an instance of *posthumanist fashion*. But how are they linked to emotions and to emotional capitalism?

The making of the pet dog: Well-dressed love machines

One essential feature of a pet lies in its assumed and desired capacity of raising strong (positive) emotions in humans. The ideal of the 'unnecessary dog', 'toy breed', and 'the lady's lap dog', i.e. a dog that does not have any other function than to accompany and please the human, has a long cultural and emotional history. Already in the Middle Ages and at the beginning of Modernity, the lap dog was connected to positive affects and bodily sensuality. It was defined as the essential ingredient for constructing the identity of the erotic and fashionable noble woman (Thomas, 1983: 107-108).

In the 19th century, the habit of keeping lap dogs had trickled down from the upper to the middle classes. This process also thoroughly sentimentalised the dog. The pet dog was defined as an important symbol of ideal love and a love-fulfilled family life. The pet dog was linked with a new sensibility, a modern secular ethic of kindness to animals. Pet keeping was justified as a means to teach compassion towards others and to children (Grier, 2006: 24; Smith, 2012: 24), which also granted the pet dog a position as a sentient being entitled to care and devotion.

Caring for the pet dog and caring for children went hand in hand: both were civilised through education. The newly established industries of child and pet pedagogies produced educational books on how to raise children and puppies to become decent adult beings by controlling their sexuality, behaviour, and obedience. In other words, through education, children became decent middle-class humans and dogs became human-like pets. The aim of pedagogy was to remove the animal-like features in the child's and in the pet's behaviour, and to replace them with signs of humanness. To be more precise, the aim was to attribute signs of middle-class propriety to the child and the dog (Kete, 1994: 82). The process also transformed the child and the pet dog into sources and mediators of positive emotions of love, loyalty, and care within the family. By the early 20th century, the child had become 'economically useless and emotionally priceless' (Zelizer, 1985) and the family pet dog a 'love machine': an affective end in itself (Kete, 1994: 46, 48-55).

The first scientific steps towards understanding the emotional relationship between people and pets were taken by Charles Darwin in 1872 in *The expression*

of the emotions in man and animal. While René Descartes had argued that nonhuman animals are machines, devoid of mind and consciousness, and hence lacking in sentience, Darwin proposed that emotional expressions serve an important communicative function in the welfare of any species, including dogs. More recently, scholars have recognised that companion animals such as pet dogs share in-depth emotional relationships with humans (Sanders and Arluke, 1993), and that the ways in which humans and their canine companions interact are very similar (e.g. Müller et al., 2014: 601-605).

The civilising process of the dog and the recognition of an emotional relationship between humans and dogs have been thoroughly intertwined with capitalism from the beginning. Already in the 1860s, dog biscuits were marketed to pet dog owners, and fashionable outfits were sold in separate pet fashion stores in Paris. Pet foods and clothing became important tools in 'embourgeoising the beast' (Kete 1994: 84). They also became important tools in constructing, communicating, and negotiating the emotional bond between the pet and the human.

Pet–human relationship: A total consumer experience

Pet consumption is a popularised and commercialised version of the findings made by biologists and animal studies scholars about emotions and their function. The pet market builds on and fortifies the idea that a certain amount of commodities and services are required in order to be a caring pet owner. Relating with pets has become a total consumer experience, providing such ordinary amenities as veterinary care, and more advanced services such as doggy day care, dog hotels with Skyping possibilities, spas, gyms, funeral services, fashionable clothes, and specialised diets (e.g. Coote, 2012; Winter and Harris, 2013; Grimm, 2014). Many of these human-like services for dogs are beginning to be a norm.

Pet dogs have also become important targets of marketing. Pet marketing experts constantly use the language of care in normalising and rationalising the use of commodities and services. They construct the pet dog as an individual and as a family member who has the right to consume and whose wellbeing is dependent on commodities. This is strengthened by statistics: over 92 % of American pet owners say that they see their pets as family members and as providers of love, companionship, company, and affection (*APPA National Pet Owners Survey*, 2013/2014: webpage). The relationship and the love pets provide are nurtured with commodities.

Marketers who increasingly address consumers through pets have also recognised these characteristics. Advertisements that associate a brand with dogs are known to favourably influence consumers' attitudes towards the brand (Lancendorfer et al., 2008: 384-391). Currently, so-called *neuromarketing* and *sensory marketing* increasingly use different kinds of brain-tracking tools in determining why consumers prefer some advertisements and products over others, and how they respond to marketing cognitively and affectively (e.g. Georges et al., 2014; Hultén et al., 2009). Researchers have been able to indicate that the human brain activates more when there is a dog in an advertisement than when there is an inanimate doll in it, for example (Looser et al., 2013: 799-805). The use of dogs in advertising thus follows ideas set forth by Vance Packard (1977/1957) already in the late-1950s: advertisers use psychological methods to tap into the unconscious desires of consumers in order to persuade them to buy products.

Current marketing trends utilise the idea of the dog as a 'love machine' effectively. Although the mechanical quality of the pet as a 'love machine' may invoke negative Cartesian interpretations about animals as machines, this was not the intention when the term was launched at the turn of the 20th century. The metaphor was connected to positive expectations about a better future that the newly industrialised society represented. In this discourse, the mechanical quality of the pet symbolised the ways in which new technological advancements, humans, and nature worked together to produce a better future. In contemporary marketing, the idea of creating a better future has shifted. The aim is now to find increasingly effective ways to convince consumers that buying into the world of dog commodities and services guarantees a better relationship with the dog.

Love fashion, love dogs! Or, on normalising pet dog consumerism

One area of consumerism where dogs have long been visible as marketers of desirable lifestyles and commodities is fashion. Humanising pets and constructing the emotional bond between dogs and humans has been part of fashion industry marketing since the early days. Dog clothing was and still is marketed to consumers as protection against the cold. Contemporary and historical accounts of dog clothing suggest, however, that most outfits were much more than protection (Kete, 1994: 84-85). Dogs have hardly ever worn underwear, shirts, handkerchiefs, dressing gowns, silk jackets, or rubber boots merely because they need protection. Rather, these and other unnecessary garments have been part of the project of humanising the pet dog. Garments and their marketing have produced the clothed dog as the middle-class family

member, blurred the difference between dogs and humans, and strengthened the emotional bond between the pet and humans.

Fashion media rationalised dog clothing as common sense and the glamorous fashion magazine *Vogue* associated certain dog breeds with certain fashions and luxurious life-styles. The magazine argued, for example, that a dog is an important ingredient in communicating the dog owner's fashion sense.[3] In the 1920s, stylish terriers and greyhounds were agents in constructing the idea of the modern, independent and fashionable 'new woman', but as the century progressed, and ideas about desirable femininity changed, smaller dogs became increasingly popular. In the 1950s fashion images, for example, the decorative qualities of small lap dogs such as pugs, poodles, Pekinese and other Asian breeds, represented the idea of feminine sensuousness, luxuriousness and stylish living (Franklin, 1999: 88). *Vogue* also published several dog fashion advertisements and articles over the course of the 20th century with titles such as 'Love fashion, love her dog' (Watt, 2009), equating love for the dog with love for fashionable commodities.

Vogue also normalised the new inter-species family ideal by publishing sentimental articles and photographs of contemporary fashionable celebrities accompanying by their equally fashionable dogs. These stories regularly celebrate the emotional bond and the closeness between the human and the dog, which is visualised by dressing the human and the dog in matching outfits. Simultaneously, these articles and the accompanied images also enhance the pet owner's star status and desirability. Contemporary celebrity pet dogs are thus part of a longer historical continuum. The pet dog's decorative qualities and cuteness accentuate the celebrity's feminine sensuousness, luxuriousness and stylish living. The dog also enhances the celebrity's desirability and supports a reading of her image as soft and humane while also accentuating her conspicuous consumption habits. Together the celebrity and the dog normalise the practice of dressing one's dog and make it into an emotional endeavour. Dogs and celebrities are thus important marketers and ambassadors of style, fashion, dog breeds and the assumedly unique emotional relationship between humans and pet dogs.

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3   Dog breeding, which had become increasingly popular since the late-19th century, was primarily determined by fashion rather than function (Ghirlanda et al., 2013). The bred and fashionably dressed decorative pet dog showcased the idea of human's godlike capability to mould nature. Breeding dogs and fashioning them was paralleled with creating new species that pleased the human.

Objectification or humanisation?

All this makes a good case for seeing dog fashions as an extreme example of the objectification of non-human animals for commercial purposes. Fancy clothes and dog accessories hide a harsh reality where pet dogs are easily abandoned because they fail to fulfil the idealised bond and present unwanted behaviour: hyperactivity, unwanted chewing, aggressiveness, or separation anxiety (e.g. Patronek et al., 1996: 572-581; Mondelli et al., 2004: 253-266).

Indeed, pet clothes may be seen as evidence of how pets fulfil human intentions, needs and fantasies, and how pets are always constructed for (and by) the human. It is easy to see the clothed pet dog as an extreme example of the 'tamed animal'. A fashioned pet dog is a creature that is not, by definition and in appearance, an animal. It is therefore no wonder that Donna Haraway (2008: 52) has claimed that the whole commodity culture targeting pet dogs has transformed the dog into a valuable commodity that solely serves the purposes of the capitalist market system. Haraway fears that providing pets with human-like services and things may result in forgetting the 'doggish needs' of the pet dog. It is true that a pet's human-like status rests on a paradox. Making pets more human-like by providing them with commodities and services familiar from the human world objectifies them. This, in turn, may make the dog as easily disposable as any other commodity – a matter which is supported by the gloomy statistics of abandoned, sheltered and killed pets (e.g. Fudge, 2008: 107-109).

However, the posthumanist perspective on pet dog commodities provides a thought provoking and perhaps a more positive viewpoint to dog consumerism. As I see it, pet dog commodities such as fashionable clothes are central tools through which humans communicate with, relate to, and negotiate with the pet. They are tools that help humans understand the pet, care for it, and, ultimately, recognise that pets and humans may not be as different as the Western humanist thought has thus far suggested. Dog fashions challenge the traditional hierarchical superiority of the human and highlight the nebulousness and porosity of the categories 'human' and 'animal'. Dog clothes accentuate the dog's petness, not its animality. By doing so they also construct it as a creature that needs to be cared for. The pet clothes make the pet visible in a new way. It is no longer just a silent creature that follows the human, but a being that does similar things as the human: dresses up and consumes. Living with humans in a consumerist culture transforms the pet dog like it has changed the human. The act of dressing the dog and buying into the pet commodity culture also transforms the relationship between the pet and the human. In materialist culture, clothing the pet shows dedication: a desire to make the pet feel at home.

Humanisation may be at the heart of dressing the dog, but it does not have to mean anthropocentrism. Humanisation means recognising the pet and its needs and acknowledging it as a full member of the household. The pet clothes materialise the posthuman idea according to which humans and pet dogs are inextricably entangled with each other. The human no longer is at the centre of the action calling the shots. Pet clothes de-centralise the idea of what it means to be human – and definitely, what it means to be a pet dog.

Posthumanist analysis of pet clothing accentuates the mutuality of the human–dog relationship. A good point of reference is Donna Haraway's (2008) idea of humans and dogs as *companion species*. Companionship means friendship and all the feelings that go with it. Companionship also means that humans and dogs produce each other. Mutuality and companionship materialise in garments. Even though their fabrics, colours, patterns, styles and functions follow largely those of human clothes, the designs, cuts and fits follow the contours and body shape of the dog. The human and the animal intersect in the garments. This poses questions about the very structures of humanness, dogness and their shared identities as parents, children, and families. (Figures 1–2)

The garments are also *love objects* (Moran and O'Brien, 2014), shaped by the feelings constructed between the dog and the human. Dog-things embed the emotional potency of inter-species feelings. They are symbols and active participants in mediating the human–pet dog relationship. In this sense, they are parade examples of *emotional capitalism*: how the fashion industry mobilises the ideal emotional relationship constructed between the human and the pet, and gives it materialised and commodified form.

Figure 1. Dog clothing challenges the categorical boundaries of human–animal. Fashionable winter clothing for dogs, Tokyo, Japan, 2014. Photograph: Annamari Vänskä.

Figure 2. The erected mannequin dolls and a Peanut-outfit underline the dog's humanness. Tokyo, Japan 2014. Photograph: Annamari Vänskä.

Figures 1–2: While the styles, colours, and materials of dog fashions, often modelled on human mannequin dolls, underline the 'humanness' of the clothes (figure 1), the cuts, fits and designs of the clothes construct the garments as dog clothes (figure 2). Photographs: Annamari Vänskä.

'7 tips for a happy dog' – Or, the emotional language of pet consumerism

Emotional capitalism does not only materialise in dog clothes. The entire pet market is consumed by emotional and passionate language. It is the glue that binds humans, pet dogs and commodities together through persuasion. As Paris Hilton puts it, she indulges her doggies because she finds them *sweet*, *loves them*, and because they *deserve the best*. This kind of reasoning is not uncommon to

ordinary dog companies either. They also invite the consumer into the world of dog fashions by using affective and emotional language.

One example thereof is an English dog fashion brand *Love My Dog*. The affectionate relationship is already present in the name of the company and its founding narrative. *Love My Dog* was established in 2003 by the designer Lilly Shahravesh to cater for 'people who want to give their dogs the very best'. The kind of love the company talks about is entirely materialistic: on offer is everything from dog coats and hand-knitted sweaters made of pure new wool to 'dog beds and dog toys in original design in gorgeous fabrics…hand-cut and pinned, individually stitched and hand-finished'(LoveMyDog, 2015: webpage). The 'very best' thus refers to high-quality materials and to a production process, in which every little detail from the selection of fabrics to design and the individually hand-finished outcome has been thoroughly weighed. The message of the company is that it conceptualises the dog as an individual, as a persona with its own right who we, the humans, should cherish and respect. The personal and the affectionate touch materialise in the well-designed and hand-finished dog clothes. Individual garments and the presence of the loving human handiwork become semiotic-material symbols of love, care and affection. They also become the building blocks in constructing and strengthening the emotional bond that ties the human and the pet dog seamlessly together.

To support its brand value as a caring company, *Love My Dog* has also published a manual for dog owners: *7 top tips for a happy dog* (Shahravesh, 2012). According to it, one can recognise a 'happy dog' by looking at its 'body language'. A happy dog stands up straight with bright and shining eyes, and looks the human in the eye. A happy dog wags or sways its tail with 'gently parted lips – as if it were smiling'. The manual also cleverly intertwines happiness with its products that are defined as tools that keep the dog happy and content. These 'top tips' include, for example, giving the dog a specific toy if it suffers from separation anxiety; sprinkling 'a few drops of lavender oil onto a handkerchief and popping it in a cloth bag near his bed'; giving the dog a 'gentle massage' on returning home; creating a 'private territory and sanctuary' where the dog can relax; teaching the dog who is the pack-leader ('a happy dog knows its place') and dressing it 'for success', i.e. in weather-appropriate coats and 'wool or cashmere sweaters' that the company provides (Shahravesh, 2012: 1-9).

The peculiarity of the advice is that it sounds strikingly similar to the advice women's magazines conventionally provide on 'how to please your man'. Only here the pampered and pleased individual is the dog. In this scenario, the human becomes the servant of the dog. It is the human's duty to make the dog feel calm and relaxed, to make it a happy dog. This kind of dedication to making the pet

relaxed is in many ways shocking, but it is also a logical outcome when humans and companion animals are not seen as opposites but as creatures whose needs and wants overlap. It is also the outcome of the insistence on seeing humanity in companion animals, which contains the idea of equality between species.

The idea of equality is of course a problem when thinking about fashionable commodities that are not within every pet owner's reach. *Love My Dog* is not an exception – it is a high-end retailer of dog commodities. This is reflected in the price: A dog carrier bag, for example costs £ 220. However, the marketing language of *Love My Dog* is similar to the language that mainstream and more affordable companies use. The Finnish pet store chain *Musti ja Mirri*, for example, also markets its products by appealing to emotions and rationalising the wellbeing of dogs. *Musti ja Mirri* was established in 1988, and in the mid-1990s, it began expanding. In the new millennium, it franchised its business operations and it is now the largest chain of pet shops in Scandinavia. The company specialises in pet foods and accessories for dogs and other pets – like *Love My Dog*, it does not sell pets. *Musti ja Mirri* has many 'how-to' videos for pet owners on YouTube. The videos market food and clothing but they masquerade as educational videos where a 'dog expert' explains why the goods discussed are necessary for the dog. Some of the videos provide advice on what to feed the dog, others explain how and why to dress it. The videos centre on care and rationalise it by intertwining it with commodities.

For example, dressing a Boxer in a winter coat is justified by referring to the dog's short fur. In the video, the dog expert Annika explains:

> It is a misconception that a large dog would not freeze. Especially, if we talk about shorthaired dogs that are not bred for Finnish weather conditions…It is very important that we, humans, take care of our dog that cannot tell us whether they are freezing or not. A coat is mandatory under -5° Celsius for any dog…and when the weather is -15° Celsius or lower, the paws should definitely be protected with, for example, rubber boots like these. (Musti ja Mirri, 2014: webpage)

Both *Love My Dog* and *Musti ja Mirri* exemplify how taking care of the pet dog is commercialised, and how the inter-species companionship is constructed as affectionate and caring through commodities. The examples also indicate how the emotional tie is measured in cash, how the pet market rests on appealing to the pet owner's affectionate relationship, and how the market is instrumental in commodifying it. The pet commodities and the various marketing strategies tap into emotions and create, circulate and imprint an ideal narrative with a message: the more we spend money on our dogs, the more we love and care for them. This kind of 'dog-talk' reveals something essential about the logic of pet

consumption specifically, but perhaps also about consumption more generally. Consuming is emoting.

Pet fashions as emotional consumption

> Isn't it a fabulous feeling to see your dog looking happy and full of life? As dog owners ourselves here at LoveMyDog we thought it would be great to share some of the special ways that we make our dogs feel contented...Your dog is part of the family, and a happy dog makes for a happy home. Over the years...we've discovered some easy ways to help your dog feel contented and loved. (Shahravesh, 2012: 1)

As dog owners know, a happy dog makes a happy home, and, as the quote above indicates, the pet dog consumer culture is happy to wrap love, commodities, and a happy home together.

The idea of meshing emotions with commodities is by no means new, but pet fashion and its marketing language explicate how consumption builds on, creates, and materialises emotions. Pet consumerism is largely about happy emotions and their materialisation. My thought here follows ideas about emotions and capitalism put forth by Eva Illouz (1997, 2007), who calls the contemporary phase of capitalism as *emotional capitalism*. Illouz points out that what Marx (1990/1867) and his followers have defined as the a-emotionality of capitalism actually refers to negative emotions: anxiety, indifference, and guilt (2007: 2). She emphasises that emotions are not outside the capitalist logic as has been assumed. On the contrary, emotions are deeply ingrained in the language of economics. The making of capitalism went hand in hand with the making of an intensely specialised emotional culture and emotions became an indispensable part of economic conduct.

This is very tangible in the pet fashion industry, as I have shown above. It builds on the assumed and real emotions of pet owners, transforms them into commodities and services, and suggests that emoting is dependent on both. The whole industry builds on and capitalises on ideas about romantic love and the family – themes that Illouz positions at the core of consumerism. In her book *Consuming the romantic utopia* (1997), she argues that commodities have played a central role in the constitution of 'romantic love' between humans. Illouz demonstrates how, since the early-20th century, industries began promoting commodity-centred definitions of romance in furthering their own economic interests.

The key to the rise of romantic love lies in two major changes: in the social change from rigid class-based societies into more flexible, modern, individualist,

and capitalist societies in the aftermath of the French revolution, and in the decrease of human mortality (Illouz, 1997: 25-26). Some researchers (Hunt and Jacob, 2001) have even argued that the French revolution stirred an *affective revolution*, releasing 'a kind of seismic affective energy', which changed the political order of Europe and the ways in which humans conversed with each other. The demise of the feudal society facilitated the rise of 'affective individualism': a less authoritarian and a more companionate relationship between men, women, and children (Hunt and Jacob, 2001: 496-497). Developments in medicine made human life less precarious, and, in effect, stabilised emotional bonds between people and family members.

The pet consumer culture clearly follows this pattern. It taps into the emergence of breeding as a science and a tool for configuring the dog's bodily shape and character to fit human needs. The pet consumer culture was also integral to the formation of the modern middle-class nuclear family in the 19th century. In the 20th century, it also played an important role in the demise of the traditional (monogamous, heterosexual) family structure and in the reduced number of childbirths in the West. In fact, some argued in the 1960s that pets substituted 'real' i.e. human relationships and affected a decline in married life and the (human) family (Serpell, 1986). Interestingly, the critique coincided with great social upheavals and the revolution of social norms: second-wave feminism, gay liberation movement, sexual liberation, the pill, drug and popular culture. They changed the pet dog's function. It was no longer only linked to the middle-class nuclear family, but it was also seen as a symbol of new social relationships outside the traditional heterosexual family unit. It was also suggested that the pet dog resulted from the loss of communal life, anonymisation in the urban environment, from changed relationships between humans, and from increasing insecurity. In a changing social environment, pets are seen to provide comfort and to commit to long-term relationships with humans. Their love is defined as permanent and as unconditional, unlike the commitment and love of humans (Franklin, 1999: 84-85)[4]. In many cases, the lap dog is the new baby (Vänskä, 2014: 263-272): the change in the family structure has also changed the ways in which humans communicate with other species and who they see as being be part of their immediate family.

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4   Donna Haraway (2003: 33-35) disagrees. She argues that the common understanding of a dog's capacity for 'unconditional love' is a misconception that is abusive to both dogs and humans since both have a vast range of ways of relating to each other. She points out that the relationship involves aims to inhabit an inter-subjective world and to meet the other. Sometimes this relationship may earn the name of love. Further, Haraway (2003: 38) argues that dog's life as a pet is a demanding duty. The human may abandon the dog if it fails to deliver the fantasy of 'unconditional love'.

In capitalism, these ideas of the babyfied dog or the posthuman baby receive imaginary materialisations: doggie prams and dog diapers (Figures 3–4). The dog also affects larger purchases. In 2014, one of the main attractions of the annual Finnish housing fair was 'HauHaus', a house where the floor design, material choices and garden design were dictated by the dog's needs (HauHaus, 2014: webpage; Paljakka, 2014). HauHaus is a concrete example of how acknowledging the dog as a full member of the household leads to the transformation of the home to suit the pet dog.

The pet dog challenges conventional humanist assumptions about families, parenting, and childhood. It also redefines the understanding of the consumer. The human is no longer the only consumer in the pet–human relationship, even though she or he may make the monetary transaction. The pet dog and the human are constructed as a unit that co-consumes and that has mutual consumer experiences. The human consumes in order to take the pet dog and its needs into account and the pet dog experiences, for good or for worse, the pleasures and pains of the commodities and services purchased for it.

Pet consumerism is also part of a new kind of consumer ethic described by Colin Campbell (1987: 8, 25). He argues that the ideology of Romanticism in the 19th century facilitated the emergence of the new, highly emotional, modern middle-class consumer. This new type of a consumer was not solely driven by reason, or by the so-called protestant ethic or asceticism. Romantic consumerism was – and it still is, perhaps more now than ever before – a hedonistic activity, legitimated by the search for pleasure and the need to experience imaginary gratification in material form (Campbell, 1987: 99-201). This is clearly an important underlying ideology and a driving force in pet consumerism as well.

Figure 3. A doggie sofa for Christmas? Tokyo, Japan 2014. Photograph: Annamari Vänskä.

Figure 4. In a dog beauty salon. After trimming which takes 3–4 hours, a portrait of the new look is taken. Tokyo, Japan 2014. Photograph: Annamari Vänskä.

To summarise: if the emergence of consumer culture promoted romance and sex that made the (heterosexual) domestic family in the 19th century, the contemporary pet dog consumer culture deconstructs the family and its anthropocentrism. It also challenges the idea of emotion as a human-centred concept and promotes inter-species love by widening and altering the modern concepts of 'family', 'parenting', the 'child' and the 'home'. Pet dog fashions construct dogs as co-consuming love machines and as eternal children who never grow out of their original innocence. Pet dogs function as the promise that the human – the adult in the pet dog relationship – can reach out to this nostalgic, ever-lost original state of natural being, which is common to all inhabitants of this planet. Pet consumerism highlights the nature-culture continuum and capitalises on it. It also helps to shift the focus to thinking about the post-naturalistic order of the world and inter-species relations. In this world, pet dog fashions are not only posthuman commodities; they are also post-romantic commodities that materialise the promise of fulfilling and permanent inter-species love. This makes dog clothing 'positional goods', appreciated precisely for their emotional value (Frank and Cook, 1995). It also makes pet keeping essentially an emotional culture.

Pet consumerism and affective capitalism

But how do pet dog commodities and the marketing language connect to affective capitalism? First, by explaining how emotions are distributed between humans and dogs through material objects and second, by drawing attention to the ways in which the emotional attachment between humans and pet dogs is constructed in marketing speak. Pet commodity culture indicates that emotions

do not reside in commodities, pets or humans, and that emotions are merely expressed. Feelings are produced as material effects, as commodities. As Sarah Ahmed (2004: 120-121) writes, 'feelings appear in objects, or indeed *as* objects'. They are also constituted in and through language, which explains the necessity of these objects for pet owners. Emotions do things. They are powerful performative tools. Pet commodities and the language that defines them are materialised instances of emotions and include the promise of a future happy life.

The fashionable value-added pet dog is central to the history and presence of emotional capitalism. Pet dog commodities are an instance of emotional capitalism in that they transform the emotional and the intimate relationship between the pet dog and the human into an object that can be evaluated, quantified, and measured in economic terms. Following Illouz (2007), pet dog commodities and their marketing language open up a space for analysing the deeply emotional nature of pet consumerism and how feelings are mobilised in emotional capitalism. The human-pet dyad is defined simultaneously as emotional and economic, which means that they define and shape each other. This dual process exemplifies emotional capitalism.

The commodified emotions and dog fashions explain how pets and humans are linked together by capitalism. They undo the categories of human and dog and show, very concretely, how dogs and humans form a continuum and are, thus, not opposites. They also show that humans and dogs share emotions, and suggest that emotionality is not limited to the human. Pet commodity marketers capitalise on the posthumanist idea that humans and dogs are inseparable. Pets and humans are linked in many ways, and under the rules of contemporary global capitalism, they are glued together and transformed into co-consumers by appealing to emotions. Emotions are the driving force of capitalism, but they are also tools that verbalise, rationalise, commodify, and commercialise the intermediate space between humans and pet dogs.

The pet dog commodity culture also draws attention to how fashion deconstructs and reassembles the categories of the human and the pet. Pet clothes are but the latest consumerist example indicating how the human has always co-evolved, co-existed, and collaborated with non-human animals, especially with dogs. They are also tangible reminders of how the human is characterised precisely by this indistinction from the dog (see also Haraway 2003). If pet dogs can open up a space for analysing and undoing the anthropocentric order of humanism, then the co-consuming pet dog opens up a space for analysing and undoing the anthropocentric order of capitalism. It shows their similarity: how both with their emotional bonds are cleverly produced in the well-oiled machinery of the

capitalist system. Their agency is also similarly limited to choosing from a predetermined set of commodities and services that have already been ascribed with value, meaning, and emotion.

Should we then conclude that emotional capitalism has finally deconstructed the dichotomy between human and non-human animals? Does the agency-possessing and co-consuming pedigree pet represent a posthumanist happy ending? Indeed, pet dog commodity culture prompts us to see dogs as creatures that possess human qualities.[5] Personification, which the fashionable pet clothes so well materialise, is one way to overcome the hierarchy between humans and pets. They transform the pet into a fully-fledged family member with an equal right to consume and to lead a happy life. It remains to be seen whether the continuous expansion of the pet market ultimately remodels the pet dog as the new *consumer citizen*.

Of course, the image of a pet dog liberated by capitalism is an ironic fantasy – one that the capitalist system forcefully promotes by appealing to emotions. The truth is much messier; we are faced with new dichotomies and hierarchies that demand critical attention. Nicole Shukin (2009) addresses questions about the complex, historical entanglements of 'animal' and 'capital' and the current anthropocentric order of capitalism with the phrase *animal capital*. According to Shukin, Marxist and post-Marxist accounts of capitalism have largely ignored the multiple ways in which non-human animals relate to capitalist biopower. Shukin points out how modern capitalist societies are literally and symbolically built on animals: on animals as usable flesh and materiality in the meat and fashion industries, and on animals as cultural signs or representations in the marketing of commodities.

The pet commodity business clearly capitalises on animals. But rather than using pet dogs as usable flesh and materiality, it constructs the dog as a capitalist animal. The pampered pedigree pooch embodies the triumph of capitalism: it does not only embody the fantasy of nature as controllable and malleable by the human hand, but also the fantasy of a liberated new consumer, a model posthuman citizen who enjoys its postromantic relationships with humans. The co-consuming pet dog thus also opens up a space for a critique of animal hierarchies. The pet dog, which is conceptually not an animal, is superior to wild and farm animals. The pet is a privileged animal, favoured due to its similarity to humans. The pet's removed animality is materialised in pet dog fashions and the

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5   Personification of the dog is not only a recent development. David Grimm (2014: 179-227) charts the history of the pet dog's personhood and argues that the first signs of dog's subjectivity are to be found in trials against animals in the Middle Ages when it was common to take any (domestic) animal to court for its 'bad deeds'.

clothed pet resembles the human – much like the pigs in Georg Orwell's novel *Animal farm* (1972/1945). The fashioned pet dog summarises Orwell's idea that 'all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others' and encourages further research that gives tools for undoing the unjust dichotomies between pets and other animals.

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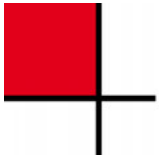Grier, K. C. (2006) *Pets in America: A history*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

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Zen and the art of everything: Governing spirituality in entrepreneurship education

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abstract

In recent discourses on adult education it has become a commonplace to note that adult learning and professional development should touch the 'deeper' or 'higher' recesses of human existence instead of mainly focusing on learning technical skills or attaining preset standards. These higher aspects are often depicted as spiritual experiences. In particular, mindfulness meditation which draws from Zen Buddhism, among other wisdom traditions, is today frequently used to provide conceptual and practical tools for governing spiritual experiences in adult education. By analysing the uses of Zen experience in entrepreneurial adult education and coaching, we advance two key points. First, we analyse spiritual experience as an indicator of the inherent tensions in a so-called general economy in which the highest forms of human existence are used as a means of producing profit. Second, we argue that whereas the notion of spiritual experience can be used as a springboard for criticizing capitalism, it is also assimilated into the management of productive work by the sweeping logic of capitalism.

Introduction

Scholars across different levels and topics of adult education have recently called for addressing spiritual experiences in learning. As learning has become a lifelong task in post-industrial societies, the means of managing learning should allegedly be human-centred, that is, conform to the human capacities of learning to learn and the ability to find meaning and fulfilment in daily learning experiences. It has therefore become a commonplace to note that adult learning and professional development should touch the 'deeper' or 'higher' recesses of human existence instead of mainly learning technical skills or attaining pre-given

standards (see e.g. English, Fenwick and Parsons, 2003; Intrator and Kunzman, 2006; Vella, 2000; Vogel, 2000; Zajonc, 2006).

In the contemporary uses of the term 'spiritual experience', the 'spiritual' is an index for a celebration of authenticity, and self-realization, whereas 'experience' conveys a notion of subjective, private mental phenomena that can be psychologically discerned across cultural time-spaces, without adherence to any particular creed (Jay, 2005: 78-79; Proudfoot, 1985; Sharf, 1998). In the discourses of education across institutional levels, spiritual experience then indicates a grid of intelligibility for a holistic understanding of learning with a special sensitivity to experiences that represent the noblest aspects of all humanity.

In the past decade, mindfulness meditation that is influenced, among other wisdom traditions, by Zen Buddhism, has gained popularity in self-help and management discourses and practices. A Westernized and psychologized form of mindfulness highlights the ability to pay non-judgmental attention to the present moment. This is prominent in recent business magazine articles celebrating its effects on concentration, creativity and efficiency at work (see e.g. Essig, 2013; Schumpeter, 2013). Moreover, large companies such as Google and Apple now utilize mindfulness to enhance physical and mental well-being and productivity among their employees (Hansen, 2012; Schumpeter, 2013). Mindfulness has also spread to training in public sector professions from the military to social work and health care (Ryan, 2012).

In this article, we will analyse the uses of mindfulness in recent entrepreneurial learning discourses as a case in point in discussing the role of spiritual experience in late post-industrial capitalist societies. We argue that such learning discourses find resonance in certain dynamics of production in which the labour force has primarily become a mental category and the discourses of a self-fulfilment and flexibility are commonplace.

We approach the analysis of mindfulness as a 'history of the present' (Foucault, 1978), that is, by tracing how the contemporary truths of spiritual experience in Western Zen Buddhism have been formed and made amenable to integration into entrepreneurial discourses of adult education. This enables an understanding of the 'tactical polyvalence' (Foucault, 2001: 100-102) of spiritual experience, i.e., that it can be used for a multitude of purposes and aims that may even be at odds with each another.

We advance two key arguments. First, we argue that the nexus between entrepreneurial learning and spiritual experience in mindfulness can be

understood in the context of the inherent tensions of post-industrial capitalism. As production focuses on the higher human faculties such as spirituality as the source of profit, the temporal and spatial coordinates of production seem to be vanishing. Following Akseli Virtanen (2004; 2006), we call this the dynamics of 'general economy'. Spiritual experience as depicted in mindfulness discourses can be seen as an attempt to grapple with general economy in the conditions of productivity. Spiritual experience is located neither in the body nor in the soul, nor is the experience of mindfulness traceable in conventional notions of subjectivity and time. Thus it resonates with the abstract quality in the conditions of production.

Second, we see that the uses of Western Zen Buddhism in entrepreneurial learning illustrate how capitalism works as a 'sweeping machine' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984), that continuously assimilates its own critique and broadens its own boundaries, in this case, by taking over the 'emancipatory' strategies of Zen Buddhism and humanistic psychology. We describe how mindfulness seeks to provide a deeply personal and authentic, yet at the same time universal basis for fashioning entrepreneurial lifelong learners. The background mindfulness has in Western Zen Buddhism provides a melange of notions of authenticity, individuality and creativity that have been a part of countercultural movements and a criticism of the Taylorist management of work.

General economy: Governing life itself

Over the past few decades, there have been frequent calls to analyse the new capitalist regime with regard to current changes in modes of production and managerial techniques of work. It has been argued that capitalist societies have experienced transformation from industrial capitalism to post-industrialism and affective and/or cognitive capitalism (see e.g. Hardt & Negri, 2000, 2005; Lazzarato, 1996; Virtanen, 2006). Due to this transformation, it has been argued that the category of labour has become increasingly detached from its determinable physical and biological aspects, and become more and more an abstract mental and affective category (see e.g. Hardt & Negri, 2005: 145; Lazzarato, 1996; Virtanen, 2004; Vähämäki, 2004; cf. Sennett, 2006).

Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) make similar arguments, although from slightly different perspective. They argue that the 'new capitalist spirit' today deals with the strong tie between individual self-fulfilment and corporate productivity (see also Binkley, 2014; Julkunen, 2008: 126). In other words, work is no longer the simple 'production of necessities of life' (Arendt, 1958) but rather that pivot point where the self is constructed (see also Rose, 1998: 160).

Subjectification of work is therefore at the core of the contemporary capitalist regime. Personal, cognitive and emotional competencies and capacities have become essential to the contemporary work ethos (see e.g. Julkunen, 2008; Mäkinen, 2012). In contrast to Taylorist management of work, a worker and an adult learner as an affectual and cognitive being are no longer external in relation to work process. On the contrary, a person's affect, self-regulation in uncertain conditions and, for example, the ability to communicate and to be creative are prerequisites in an increasing number of jobs (see e.g. Virtanen, 2004; Hardt and Negri, 2005: 145). Moreover, work is not seen as a constraint of freedom, but as a realm in which entrepreneurial subjects can express their autonomy and confirm their identities (Rose, 1998: 160).

In this regard, in the contemporary capitalist regime – whether one chooses to call it affective or cognitive capitalism – human life in itself has become a crucial element in managerial techniques of organization as well as in value creation. For illuminating this, Virtanen (2006; 2004) uses the concept of 'general economy'. With this concept, he seeks to rethink economy in the same way that Foucault (2008) sought to problematize political science and philosophy with the notion of biopolitics.

> What defines economy and our experience of it today is that the bare humanness of human beings, that general potentiality and linguistic-relational abilities which distinguish human beings is revealing its self as the essence also of economic production. (Virtanen, 2004: 1)

Thus the concept of a general economy refers to a stage of capitalism where subjectivity has become capital and the bare humanness of human beings reveals itself as the essence of economic production. The term bare humanness does not refer to any specific form of human behavior, but rather the preconditions of human thought and action in general (Virtanen, 2006). This means that 'higher faculties' of human existence, such as mental resilience, flexibility and creativity, have now become objects of contemporary government of work (*ibid*.).

It follows from the logic of general economy that the modes of production and ways of organizing work cannot be unambiguously understood within a certain particular temporal or spatial framework. Instead of being traceable in the standardized behavior of a factory timespace, work is becoming increasingly immaterial: spatially boundless and temporally endless. It is difficult to make a distinction between working time and free time. It is also difficult to say where or when the actual act of production is being carried out, what is work and what is not, and what creates value and what does not (Virtanen, 2004; Virno, 2006; Lazzarato, 2009; Deleuze, 1992).

In a certain sense, the basic problem is quite same as it was before: how to control and organize the labour force. But how, then, to organize and manage human life itself, or those 'highest recesses' of human existence? According to Virtanen (2004: 54; 2006), governing life itself refers to a 'power over mind' which does not so much create physical, biological or spatial boundaries, but rather moods, sentiments and mentalities, 'inscription habits' on the mind:

> The organization of immaterial production is possible only through the management of the general conditions of human action and communication, through organizing the general conditions of organizing. This organization of organization does not operate at the level of actual action or plain intimidation but on that of anxiety and inadequacy; not by confinement or demanding obedience to the rules and being afraid of their violation, but by setting expectations, moods, opinion climates,standards of communication and cooperation. (Virtanen, 2004: 229)

In this sense, Virtanen's notion of a general economy reflects the ways in which theorists of affective capitalism have problematized ways of understanding the organization of human behavior as a source of value in capitalist production. The objects of governing work are becoming more and more general, as it were. As it focuses less on 'actual action', i.e. not regulating work in detail, it seems to give more and more autonomy to working subjects. This leads us to assess, how the criticism of standardized and disciplined work in the Taylorist regime has been assimilated to the current ethos of organizing work in general economy.

Capitalism as a sweeping machine: Humanist psychology and Buddhist spirituality

For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1984), capitalism is not a closed system, but a machine that sweeps new forms of life under its auspices. Capitalism is, therefore, continually broadening its own reach. This means, first, that capitalism does not only repress people, but also deals with the production of the real: it produces flows of desire, autonomy and freedom which are not opposite to individual interests, but rather produce arrangements in which certain kind of subjectivity is made possible (see also Hardt and Negri, 2000). Second, as a productive machine, capitalism assimilates heterogeneous elements from different fields, e.g. religion, humanist psychology and Western forms of Zen Buddhism.

To illustrate the logic of the capitalist machine, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use the terms deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Deterritorialization functions as a withdrawal or expansion from the current system. Reterritorialization functions in the opposite way. Where deterritorialization

withdraws from the system or expands it, reterritorialization seeks to return these expansions to a new territory. Therefore capitalism is an inventive and productive system which 'progressively leaves the factory and invades, like a parasite, all spheres of life and the life-world itself. In the end, as we shall see, it is producing and consuming life itself', as Vandenberghe (2008: 878) puts it.

Since the 1960s, Europe and North America have witnessed an emergence of critical challenges to the nexus of positivist psychology of work and Taylorist management practices. This also entailed a demand that the public forms of human interaction be managed so as to make individual self-fulfilment and even spiritual experience possible at work (Binkley, 2014; Carrette and King, 2005). Abraham Maslow, a prominent proponent of humanist psychology, helped to legitimize religious experience as an object of psychological knowledge and praxis, and as irreducible to any particular religion. For Maslow, religious experiences were 'peak experiences' of creative, individualist minds that shunned organized and hierarchical forms of work and religion (Maslow, 1970). Maslowian ideas on spiritual experiences were quickly mobilized not only in the new psychology of work, but also in the countercultural movements of the 1960s (Carrette, 2007: 147-148; Herman, 1995: 269-275).

In the 1950s and 1960s, humanist and existential psychologies also encountered the wisdom traditions of the East, most prominently including Japanese Zen Buddhism. Carl Jung and Erich Fromm were among the leading psychoanalytic theorists using Zen Buddhist influences in their work. Fromm, for example, referred to Zen Buddhism as a model of finding abundance in the present moment as well as a liberation from the greed and illusion cultivated by capitalist societies (see e.g. Fromm, 1997; Fromm, Suzuki and De Martino, 1960). Moreover, popular philosopher Alan Watts and poets Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder made Zen an index of creative, counter-intuitive experiences that seemed to withhold forces able to challenge the cultural and political status quo (Goldberg, 2006: 290-291; Williams, 2011; Weir, 2011: 234, 236-246).

Yet the interest in spiritual experiences and Buddhism did not remain the property of the countercultural movement alone. From the 1970s, both humanist psychology and Buddhist wisdom traditions drew attention to theories and practices of work, learning, and psychotherapy to account for the higher human faculties of creativity, reflexivity and spirituality. These aspects were an index of essential skills and competences needed especially in white collar work. Thus, what used to be subversive and countercultural, now became a part and parcel of the pact between the human sciences and an emerging post-industrial economy (Carrette, 2007; Carrette and King, 2005; Herman, 1995; Obadia, 2011; Williams, 2011).

The 'sweeping' nature of spiritual experience illustrates the inventiveness of capitalism in assimilating elements outside itself and even critical to it. In a similar fashion, Boltanski and Chiapello (2007: 241-90) have demonstrated how capitalism swept the postmodernizing critique of the 1960s and 1970s and used it as a way to reorganize itself and expand infinitely. The critical challenges to the nexus of positivist psychology and Taylorist management of work since the 1960s have offered styles of reasoning and new kinds of governmental practices for managing the labour force in a contemporary capitalist regime.

As we will see, especially the use of Buddhism is indicative of the inherent problems of management of work in general economy. It is an attempt to harness the most general and flexible human capacities for production. It also represents the sweeping gesture whereupon critical movements aimed at an emancipation from the narrow forms of knowing are reappropriated. What seems to enable this overcoding is spiritual experience as a loose signifier of the highest faculties of human beings (cf. Žižek, 2001: 12-13).

'Beat Zen' and mindfulness: Spiritual experience in Western Zen Buddhism

A central figure of the Westernization of Zen at the turn of the twentieth century was D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966). He was profoundly influenced by William James's *The Varieties of religious experience* (1902), which characterized the core of religion residing in a subjective experience of transcendence that can be psychologically described across cultural and religious differences. Thus Suzuki saw Zen as a universal practice of cultivating spiritual experiences. For him, the essential part of Zen is the practice of meditation (*zazen*), in which a person can witness his/her own sensations, emotions and thoughts without judgment. The ultimate aim of this practice is a spiritual enlightenment experience (*satori*), in which one realizes the impermanence or 'emptiness' of all existence, including one's own self (Suzuki, 1962).

Suzuki argues that Buddhism materializes clear-headed rationality more than any other religion as it is not reducible to ritualistic or supernatural aspects of religion (Suzuki, 1908: 81). Yet this does not mean credence to mere intellect, for enlightenment is an ineffable personal experience of bare existence beyond any dichotomies produced by thought and language (Suzuki, 1957: 36-37; Suzuki, 1962: 5-7; Suzuki, 1969: 21-27). Having this experience is also to slip beyond time as a measurable, chronological succession of events (Suzuki, 1957: 98-99; Suzuki, 1969: 57). This resulted in Zen being understood as an individualistic way of life outside formal religious institutions or dogma. Moreover, as it was

based on subjective experience beyond language and culture, it could be discerned in other cultures and religions as well. Thus it is no wonder that Suzuki's Zen could be quickly assimilated into American intellectual and popular culture (Borup, 2004; McMahan, 2008; Sharf, 1995).

Coextensive with Suzuki's academic Zen, a trans-Pacific movement was established, whereupon Zen monks started frequenting the United States (especially Hawaii and California) and American pilgrims were visiting Japanese Zen monasteries. As Robert Sharf (1995) notes, it wasn't the Zen of the most notable Japanese schools of *Rinzai* or *Sōtō* that was mediated, but a marginalized, maverick Zen of *Sanbôkyôdan* established in the 1950s. It accentuated non-religious aspects of Zen as well as intensive meditation which would quickly bring about enlightenment experiences. This was not restricted to monastic life, but to be proliferated among lay people. This is the Zen that was to be aggressively proliferated in American Zen Buddhist communities from the 1960s onwards (Sharf, 1995; cf. Prebish, 1999: 8-26).

Alan Watts aided in making Suzuki's Zen popular in the Anglo-American world. For Watts, the core of Zen lies in the fact that wisdom can be found in the most ordinary aspects of living, without a life spent in pilgrimage or a monastery (Watts, 1958: 47-48). Zen is based on an experience which is so quotidian and universal that it can also be mapped in thinkers in European and American culture as well (*ibid.*; see also Ames, 1962).

Like Suzuki, Watts also refers to a universal, 'astonishing moment of insight', which escapes any labels or dualisms one might attach to it. In meditative experience all existence seems to be focused into the present moment: 'the immediate *now*...is the goal and fulfillment of all living' (Watts, 1960: 18). This experience also conveys ultimate satisfaction and disappearance of personal problems and fears of future events, which result only from language and a false sense of temporality. Reality confronted in the now is the ineffable experience of existence as perfect, as lacking nothing (Watts, 1960: 17-30; see also Suzuki, 1969: 57-60).

This provides a basis for world-affirming action in everyday life. Acting in the Zen way in quotidian life is always effortless and flexible, which follows from not being in opposition with one's outer and inner reality (Watts, 1960: 67). A human being expressing Zen

> is likened to a ball in a mountain stream, which is to say that he cannot be blocked, stopped, or embarrassed in any situation. He never wobbles or dithers in his mind, for though he may pause in overt action to think a problem out, the stream of his consciousness always moves straight ahead without being caught in the

vicious circles of of anxiety or indecisive doubt, wherein thought whirls wildly around without issue. (Watts, 1960: 68)

Such a flexible and creative person expresses the aforementioned emptiness or void (*sunyata*), which means the utter impermanence of existence. No thoughts or outer obstacles 'stick' in the person who acts effortlessly: they float by without friction, without clinging to conceptions of good or evil, possible or impossible (Watts, 1960: 68, 83-91). Watts claims that this attitude is discernible in 'Beat Zen', in which the younger generation of the 1950s was expressing passive resistance to the 'American way of life'. Such resistance opts for a highly individualistic, easygoing lifestyle in which one 'does not seek to change the existing order but simply turns away from it to find the significance of life in subjective experience rather than objective achievement' (Watts, 1960: 91). This is opposed to what Watts rather pejoratively calls 'Square Zen', organized Buddhism obsessed with rituals and hierarchies that restrains the free flow of spiritual experiences (Watts, 1960: 103-105).

The aforementioned elements of ineffable experience, world affirmation, and effortless and flexible action in the present moment are still discernible in contemporary popular Zen literature. Books on humanist psychology, self-help and management celebrate the ability to say 'yes' to the world without distorting dualisms and frictions. In management literature, the Zen experience gained popularity in the 1980s with the remarkable success of Japanese management theories and practices. Companies such as Toyota and Honda seemed to embody a holistic, intuitive and flexible management ideology that was conveyed to the Western hemisphere with such works as the all-time bestseller management book *In Search of Excellence*. In the 1990s, Zen received further attention as the tech gurus of the Silicon Valley (such as Steve Jobs) advocated Zen meditation as a resource of focus and creativity (Williams, 2011: 44-49).

Western Zen experience also plays a part in Jon Kabat-Zinn's idea of mindfulness. Trained in Korean Zen Buddhism, Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as a meditative practice of non-judgmental focus on the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Kabat-Zinnian mindfulness is a therapeutic practice for treating experiences of stress, anxiety and pain that admits a Buddhist influence while being completely secular and resting on a Western scientific foundation. Kabat-Zinn also gives detailed accounts on how to assume meditation postures, how to observe one's own breathing and how to relate to one's own emotions and thoughts without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

Today, spiritual experiences in meditation are also being made an object of an emerging discipline called contemplative studies. It uses Buddhist wisdom traditions along with cognitivist theories of mind and neuroscientific studies of the human brain. These aim at a scientific mapping of the aspects of spiritual experience and developing holistic teaching and learning practices (Roth, 2006; Siegel, 2007; Miller, 2014; Zajonc, 2006).

In sum, the following cultural trajectories were aligned to designate spiritual experience in Western Zen. First of all, the core of spiritual experience is expressed as Zen Buddhist meditation (instead of anything related to rituals, scriptures or beliefs). Although rooted in a particular wisdom tradition, this experience is allegedly characteristic of all humanity and irreducible to any creed, language or culture. This means that spiritual experiences can be studied in modern psychology and the neurosciences, as well as annexed to their theories of mind and learning. Zen experience also elevates the bare consciousness of the present moment to a deep insight that allegedly deconstructs Western notions of stable selfhood. This is supposed to overcome a subject's temporal attachments to past and future and frees her to act intuitively and flexibly in the present moment.

Although not all forms of spirituality are currently marketized (see e.g. King, 2009), lifting Zen meditation to a level of universal spiritual experience also made it easy to assimilate it into discourses varying from countercultural movements to the management of work and learning in post-industrial timespaces. It also easily became an object of the sweeping gestures of the general economy described above. However, this does not mean that all uses of holistic discourses and practices are immediately brought under the sweeping logic of capitalism. For instance, there are forms of 'engaged Buddhism' which intentionally counteract many facets of global capitalism. They entail various forms of mindfulness in their practices and ideals. (King, 2009; Queen, 2012.)

Governing the spirituality of an entrepreneurial learner

Turning to the case of entrepreneurship education, we argue first that many of the values and ways of characterizing the entrepreneurial self and entrepreneurial behavior are commensurable with those depicted in the spiritual experience of Western Zen. Second, we show how Zen ideas and practices are explicitly mobilized in entrepreneurship education as techniques to fabricate a resilient, flexible and creative adult learner. It can thus be understood as an instance of the sweeping logic of general economy. Furthermore, this indicates

the aspects of general economy in which the space-times of production are impossible to locate.

In a broad sense, entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial education carries two different meanings. First, it has become one of the most essential educational reforms in the field of formal education since the turn of the millennium. For example, in most European countries, it is now offered at all levels of schooling from kindergarten through university programmes. Second, it can also be understood as informal adult education, e.g. as entrepreneurship coaching or entrepreneurial self-education, more particularly by means of self-help literature. There is a large amount of self-help literature, websites, courses and self-evaluation measurement tools in which entrepreneurs and those who strive for an entrepreneurial mindset in their everyday lives are encouraged to develop themselves as persons, to seize the day, to learn to rule their thoughts and to cope with increasing uncertainty. Here, we refer to entrepreneurship education in both registers. As data for illustrating what styles of reasoning lie in entrepreneurship education discourse and how they correlate with the Zen-Buddhist spiritual experience and tensions of a general economy, we use scientific articles about entrepreneurial behavior and descriptions and advertisements from the field of entrepreneurship coaching. Thereby we do not seek to locate entrepreneurship education discourses in any specific institutional context. Instead, we analyze them as highly mobile discourses that can be linked to personal experience in a legion of different contexts in work and private life (cf. Miller & Rose, 2008: 215).

Alan Gibb (2005), one of the most well-known entrepreneurship education scholars, argues that the growing interest in entrepreneurialism reflects fundamental changes in society. He sees that the increasing uncertainty and complexity in contemporary societies has created a demand for entrepreneurial and enterprising behavior at global, individual, societal and organizational levels (Gibb, 2005). Thus, rather than entrepreneurs as persons starting a business, contemporary entrepreneurship education discourse deals with 'personal entrepreneurs' or 'intrapreneurs' who act as if they were entrepreneurs in every area of their lives (see e.g Olsson and Frödin, 2007; for an analysis of personal entrepreneurship, see Rose, 1998: 150-169; Peters, 2001).

> Entrepreneurship is no longer just a business term anymore – it's a way of life. You don't need to be an entrepreneur to be entrepreneurial. You just need to cultivate the entrepreneurial attitude. This is exactly what people feel in their gut every day and why they desire the direction to enable their entrepreneurial spirit. (Lopis, 2013)

At the core of entrepreneurship education is a psychological idea of entrepreneurship as a behavioral process or as an entrepreneurial mindset which is not innate or pre-given, but something that can be learned or achieved, yet something that lies in a person's general potentiality (Chell, 2013; Gartner, 2008; on potentiality see Mäkinen, 2013). Thus, it has been argued that 'there is an entrepreneur that exists deep-down inside of each of us' (Lopis, 2013).

Entrepreneurial behaviour is not simply a rational and economical means-end calculation, but, rather, a way of living in which a person renounces his/her old self and becomes a new person who can be called an entrepreneurial self (Gartner, 2008: 361-368; Hägg, 2011: 16). Therefore, it interestingly deals with personal development, as well as self-renouncement. In a fashion similar to Western Zen's ontology of the self, the entrepreneurial person engages in a twin project of subjectification and desubjectification, i.e. deconstructing an illusionary understanding of the self and making room for a more flexible and even foundationless identity (cf. Binkley, 2011: 12).

A manifesto in the self-improvement site Createapreneur mentions mindfulness as a possible way to find one's true, creative and flexible identity through transforming the relationship a person has to his/her own body and emotions:

> Clean The Mind, Clear The body and Connect With Your Inner ENTREPRENEUR. How? Through yoga, healthy habits and mindfulness techniques. Trust me, the world needs you, creating! (Createapreneur, 2014)

The entrepreneurial self therefore renounces her former understanding of stable identity, and these kind of personal entrepreneurs denote a new era of mankind 'comprising all those people who make things happen and who discover how they can create new energy by discovering that much of what they previously believed in was not true' (Berglund, 2013: 5). Under the rubric of entrepreneurship education, children as well as adult learners and self-employees are taught how to work on improving themselves, how to emphasize positive thinking, joy of creating and an awareness of the value of their own interests and passions (*ibid.*).

In studies of entrepreneurial learning (see e.g Kyrö, Seikkula-Leino and Mylläri, 2011) it has been noted that the dynamics of cognitive, conative and affective constructs and meta-level self-regulating abilities are crucial in achieving entrepreneurial behavior and an entrepreneurial mindset. Kyrö et al. (2011) note that 'self-regulation refers to an individual's active participation in his or her own learning process'. Moreover, 'it is the process through which self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions are planned and systematically adapted as necessary to affect one's learning.' These entrepreneurial meta-abilities can be

seen as techniques of self-regulation, but also as helpful in coping with an increasing uncertainty and complexity of society. They offer tools to increase person's resilience and flexibility (cf. Rerup, 2005). In this regard, the entrepreneurial self is a figure who is perfectly liquid and flexible in relation to the turbulence of his/her surrounding environment.

This resonates well with the aforementioned ontological ramifications of spirituality in Western Zen Buddhism, where the self is decidedly empty, i.e. not fixed in its delusions of stable identity. As Watts described above, the person focused on the present only is flexible and creative, and not prone to hesitation or rigid beliefs concerning one's internal of external reality.

Entrepreneurial mindfulness discourses entail meticulous descriptions on how to calm the mind by focusing on the present moment. One can first learn to train one's focus on the movement of one's own breath, by counting exhalations and inhalations.

> **Follow your breath and observe your thoughts.** When you are sitting in a secluded spot, close your eyes. Begin to take slow, deep breaths. As you continue, simply follow your breath – allow your mind, your thoughts and your feelings to lead you. Do not try to force your thoughts, but rather observe them. (Jacobs, 2014)

One should remain in a state of alert passivity. When thoughts or feelings spring to mind, they are recognized and then set free. One should even let go of the very notion of trying to achieve something through mindfulness practice. Slowly but surely, the mind becomes more and more relaxed and calm, and one learns not to attach to and identify with one's own emotions and thoughts. (See e.g. Simmons, 2014.) This is how the notion of 'emptiness' of the self acquires a concrete and practical form. A practitioner of mindfulness notices that one's own self is not something stable, but a stream of darting thoughts and emotions. To attach to them and to consider them as one's own identity is to fall prey to a harmful illusion (Gunatillake, 2014).

This practice can then be broadened to cover all aspects of a person's daily life, from home routines to a day at the office. By practicing mindfulness, one supposedly learns not to falter into emotional reactions to surprising adversities, but retain clear-headedness and self-control (Dewalt, 2013; Simmons, 2014; Toren, 2014). This is how mindfulness resonates with the government of work typical of general economy. As mindfulness is a decidedly personal practice, it is seemingly abstracted from the limitations of space and time. Thereby mindfulness practice is a suitable and flexible tool for governing just those aspects of mental work which are not reducible to a certain time and space. Instead of presenting a fixed set of skills and information particular to a certain

type of work, it governs those sentiments and mentalities conducive to creative, autonomous and spiritually rewarding work.

Terry Hyland (2010) advocates the use of mindfulness as serving the humanistic and therapeutic goals of adult education: self-esteem, authenticity and self-realization. Moreover, he sees that the ideas of emptiness and no-self are commensurable with the contemporary social constructionist understanding of subjectivity (Hyland, 2010: 527-528). Thus it is no wonder that mindfulness is often presented as compatible with 'transformative' adult learning, through which one can radically change one's self and acquire stress resilience as well as mental flexibility and creativity (Altobello, 2007; Hyland, 2010: 527-528; Langer, 1998: 4; cf. Siegel, 2007; Shapiro, Brown and Astin, 2008). In entrepreneurial education, Rerup (2005: 2) has argued that mindfulness can enable entrepreneurs to minimize errors and remain vigilant. Furthermore, she stresses that mindfulness can 'enable habitual entrepreneurs to better anticipate and respond to unexpected events and opportunities and to use their prior entrepreneurial experience to successfully exploit opportunities' (*ibid*.: 2).

The individualistic ethos in entrepreneurship education is also articulated as a holistic view of human behavior that entails bodily as well as emotional and spiritual aspects of human existence (see e.g Jensen, 2014). It has become a commonplace, for example, to say that if a person thinks positively, he/she actually becomes positive, happy person. Entrepreneurial ethos, therefore, deals with idea of a person who is self-satisfied, and more specific, someone who produces her own satisfaction and happiness (Pyykkönen, 2014: 95-97; see also Foucault, 2008: 215-239). Furthermore, this holistic tendency also indicates that entrepreneurial self is inseparable from a person's life as a whole. As it has been framed in the field of entrepreneurship coaching:

> Being a holistic entrepreneur means there is no separation between your love, life, work and spirituality. It's a way of life that lends to serving in whatever capacity you're living in that very moment. It's diving into that path that makes your heart sing; your Divine calling. (Swiha, 2014)

Through learning to control one's self through mindfulness meditation, an entrepreneurial person can have a deeper, healthier relation to her own affects and bodily well-being:

> Don't let your thoughts rule you – learn to rule your thoughts. A restless mind has many effects that can include trouble sleeping, poor decision-making, anxiety and even depression when left to run a muck. Learning to foster a calm mind will help you become a better entrepreneur. (Toren, 2014)

This self-control also reflects the ability to take responsibility for one's own life. As Nikolas Rose (1998; see also Miller and Rose, 2008; Brunila, 2012) has noted, therapeutic ethos operates with an aim of 'autonomisation' and 'responsibilization of the self', whereupon the 'whole' of human existence is annexed to work in an emancipatory fashion that frees the worker to take control and responsibility for his/her own work. This is clearly apparent in entrepreneurship education and its uses of mindfulness. It seeks emancipation from standardizing external conduct, and organizing the creative powers of the human mind (Virtanen, 2004; 2006).

This holistic ethos has its roots in the above mentioned discourses of humanistic psychology that have been mobilized to depict and manage the working subject in a post-industrial economy. To this amalgam, elements from Western Zen Buddhism have also been added to limn the contours of the spiritual aspects of work. It is used to account for the characteristics of creativity and intuitiveness which do not seem fit into the Western binaries of body and mind, reason and affect.

In sum, one can understand the position that the Zen-Buddhist notion of spiritual experience has acquired in entrepreneurial education through an analysis of how they share similar assumptions about the self. We have argued that the Western form of Zen experience correlates well at several levels with the styles of reasoning in entrepreneurship education. Both indicate crucial governmental technologies in the tensions of a general economy consisting of discourses of self-fulfilment, authenticity and self-development. Moreover, they share a similar emancipatory promise of cultivating positive thinking, the joy of creating, and consciousness of the present moment.

The aforementioned character of spiritual experience as being universal and a quotidian aspect of the psyche buttresses Zen as something that can be easily mobilized in both countercultural and entrepreneurial education discourses. In addition, both Zen and entrepreneurial discourse in general can be traced back to a tradition of criticism of the nexus of positivist psychology and Taylorist management practices which lends them both a seemingly holistic, emancipatory edge.

Conclusion

In his classic essay *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism,* Max Weber examined how Protestantism and especially Calvinist doctrines influenced large numbers of people to engage in work in the secular world, and especially in

developing their own business enterprises. Weber described a subjective interiority as a private space for moulding religious virtues which would then also make up the foundation of a work ethic of effectiveness and profit responsibility (Weber, 1930). One can find consistency with the Weberian account in the way subjective interiority and spirituality have become the focal point of the entrepreneurial work ethic. However, the very notion of subjectivity now assumes a liquidity or 'emptiness', as there is seemingly nothing stable and unchanging in the ideal entrepreneur. Arguably, Zen discourse also destabilizes ontological categories and the binaries of mind and body and rationality and affects, in favour of the affective and intuitive aspect of productive action. This also has a different temporal orientation, as a person practicing mindfulness is not attached to the future nor the past, but focuses stringently on the present moment only.

Holistic characterizations of spirituality in mindfulness discourses also resonate well with the notion of general economy, in which the most general aspects of what makes us human, are governed as sources of profit. Drawing from Zen Buddhism, the entrepreneurial celebration of mindfulness highlights its ability to cultivate creativity, intuitive and flexible action and learning to learn. It does not specify exactly how and where entrepreneurial spirit should be manifest, but instead, focuses on these meta-level conditions of entrepreneurial behavior. This can be understood as an attempt to grasp the nature of productive work as irreducible to spatial or temporal exigencies.

Moreover, the way Zen spirituality is used in entrepreneurship education shows the inventive sweeping logic of capitalism: it broadens its own boundaries by assimilating criticism that seems to come from outside it. In this case, the countercultural and at times decidedly anti-capitalist ethos of Zen Buddhism was deterritorialized and annexed to the very conditions of productive work in general economy. This also highlights the way capitalism does not only 'repress' in the sense of suffocating human life, but creates human reality and cultivates it productive forces.

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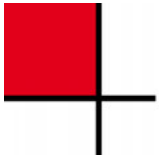
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Somatic pedagogies: Critiquing and resisting the affective discourse of the neoliberal state from an embodied anarchist perspective[*]

Rhiannon Firth

abstract

This paper takes as its context widespread feelings of anxiety within neoliberal society caused by a combination of material and discursive factors including precarious access to work and resources. It is argued that the state uses 'discourses of affect' to produce compliant subjects able to deal with (and unable to desire beyond) neoliberal precarity and anxiety. Critical education theorists have argued that discourses of 'well-being', emotional support and self-help have gained increasing purchase in mainstream education and in popular culture. These discourses are dangerous because they are individualized and depoliticized, and undermine collective political struggle. At the same time there has been a 'turn to affect' in critical academia, producing critical pedagogies that resist state affective discourse. I argue that these practices are essential for problematizing neoliberal discourse, yet existing literature tends to elide the role of the body in effective resistance, emphasising intellectual aspects of critique. The paper sketches an alternative, drawing on psychoanalytic and practiced pedagogies that aim to transgress the mind-body dualism and hierarchy, in particular Roberto Freire's work on Somatherapy

Introduction

This paper emerges from the 'turn to affect' in the humanities and social sciences. Explicit use of the terminology of 'affect' generally comes from critical paradigms, yet I argue that this response is situated within a wider context of neoliberal state discourse that harnesses affect to produce compliant subjects. In particular, the paper targets the public discourses and educational policies of what Kathryn Ecclestone and Dennis Hayes (2008) call 'therapeutic education', and the limitations of existing critical debate on this topic. In summary, I argue that the current epoch of neoliberal globalization has led to more precarious forms of life and work, and an increase in indebtedness. This emergent social structure causes widespread anxiety throughout society, which is harnessed by the state using discourse and policy ostensibly designed to reduce fear, by promoting 'well-being', resilience, therapeutic practices and 'security'. Critical responses quite rightly argue that such policies actually (re-)produce anxiety by placing responsibility for both the causes and the consequences of good/bad well-being on the individual, creating narcissistic, vulnerable and compliant subjects. This creates a de-politicized culture and undermines capacity for collective social action.

The response from radical approaches has been to posit critical pedagogies that problematize and critically explore affective states, raising the political consciousness of students or learners. I argue that while these approaches are important – indeed essential – strategies of resistance, they also maintain certain assumptions: the conflation of affect with subjective emotions, a separation between mind and body, and that education is essentially discursive. In order to think beyond these assumptions, I draw on examples of utopian practices that involve learning through movement, play and physical activity. The examples I have chosen incorporate elements of 'somatic' theory that takes an holistic approach to the relationships between body, mind and (human and non-human) others. My hope is to approach the conditions for a non-hierarchical and non-vanguardist pedagogy able to resist state structurations of affect – the social reproduction of oppressive emotional regimes – without reproducing some of its key assumptions.

Neoliberal anxiety

Theorizing affect has been an important concern of recent research in the social sciences and humanities, to the extent that that many have referred to a 'turn to affect' (e.g. Clough and Halley, 2007; Lather, 2009; Hemmings, 2005). These engagements draw on a broadly post-structural tradition. Spinoza (1994: 157-

159), and later Nietzsche (1968: 354) then Deleuze (1986: 36-37), are careful to distinguish affect from conventional understandings of subjective emotion insofar as they give affective states a material foundation in the body: thoughts and feelings are ultimately inseparable from physical states, which incorporate relations with human and non-human bodies. Nonetheless, I will argue later, many recent take-ups of the concept sidestep the issue of the body entirely, or render it in highly abstract terms. At this point I would like to provide some context as to why affect has recently re-emerged as a key conceptual category, and briefly explore the nature and dynamics of affect in contemporary society.

In an important and timely article, the Institute for Precarious Consciousness argues that we are entering a new era of affective sensibility. The early industrial period, as famously portrayed by Marx (1867: Chapter 25) was characterized by *misery*. The Fordist period was characterized by *boredom* in secure but monotonous jobs and an anxiety relieving but bureaucratic welfare infrastructure (Institute for Precarious Consciousness, 2014: 247). The contemporary neoliberal period, by contrast, is characterised by *anxiety* as the dominant affect, and this is closely associated with precarity (*ibid.*: 275).

The idea of precarity arose from Italian autonomism before spreading more widely through critical discourse (Federici, 2006), frequently defined in contrast to Fordism, as 'the labour conditions that arose after the transition from life-long, stable jobs common in industrial capitalist and welfare-state economies, to temporary, insecure, low-paying jobs emerging with the globalization of the service and financial economy' (Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias, 2007: 115). Precarity leads to anxiety in a variety of ways. Temporary and zero-hour contracts cause feelings of uncertainty about access to resources needed for a stable life and personal development (Precarias a la Deriva, 2004). Endless cycles of debt trap people in perpetual toil and deferred pleasure (Escalate Collective, 2012). Casualised contracts, unpaid internships, intermittent work and labour migration impact on sociality as maintaining close friendships and starting a family become increasingly difficult (Tarì and Vanni, 2005). People are expected to be always on-call and communicable by employers, family, friends and lovers through mobile phones and the internet without real social contact, whilst working from home dissolves the boundaries between work, family and leisure (Taylor, 2012; O'Carroll, 2008).

Time is cut into commodified packets that can no longer be enjoyed at the slow pace required by creative and pleasurable emotions (Berardi, 2009: 91). Precarity produces feelings of guilt and inadequacy as workers compare their achievements unfavourably to the full-time permanent positions that comprised the 'post-war imaginary' (Tari and Vanni, 2005). Anxiety is associated with

physical affects: Berardi argues that the speed of information flows combined with the fragmentation of life leads to a constant bodily excitation without release (Berardi, 2009: 91). The assumption of this paper is that anxiety is a real affective force that acts on individual and collective bodies and is created by global material and economic conditions. I do not wish to suggest that anxiety is a discursive construct, but rather that states can alter structures of affect through policy and discourse, and they do so to suit the needs of neoliberal capital. I argue that any viable resistance to state structurations of affect needs to critically reveal existing structures of affect, and resist these through a reconceived understanding and the creation of new affects at an embodied level.

How states harness affect

Affect, as theorized by Spinoza, Deleuze, Nietzsche and others, is an holistic concept that draws together bodies and their environment and relations with other bodies through 'forces of encounter' (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010: 3). Affect is concerned with a body's *becoming*, and how it transforms in interaction with the world. This requires a de-individualised understanding of what constitutes a body: 'with affect, a body is as much outside itself as in itself – webbed in its relations – until ultimately such firm distinctions cease to matter' (*ibid.*: 3). Nonetheless, this paper contends, states are able to exploit affect in order to fragment and individualise affect, alienating people from their relationships and environments, to suit a neoliberal agenda. They do this through 'discourses of affect' that harness bio-power to produce compliant subjects able to deal with (or, unable to look beyond) neoliberal precarity and anxiety.

The example I draw on to illustrate this phenomenon is what Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) call 'therapeutic education'. In the education system there has been a 'deluge of interventions [to] assess the emotional needs and perceived emotional vulnerability of children, young people and adults and…develop their emotional literacy and well-being' (Eccleston and Hayes, 2008: ix). Examples derive from all levels including primary, secondary, colleges and universities and the workplace. Furthermore, these interventions are not limited to formal institutions but are part of what Furedi (2004) calls 'therapy culture'. This ethos is seen to have emerged in Anglo-American culture and politics over the last 40 years (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008: x). Examples include discourses of 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' learners, interventions intended to foster higher 'self-esteem', 'confidence', 'emotional literacy' and 'positive attitudes' in schools and other institutions (*ibid.*: xi); provision of services for young people with perceived behavioral and emotional problems; therapeutic support for emotional

difficulties and stress; and academic subjects designed to develop resilience and flexibility (*ibid.*: 374).

Taking the UK as an example, one might be inclined to question whether discourses and debates surrounding well-being, therapy and resilience are historically situated within the previous New Labour government's agenda, and that the current Conservative government conversely appears to be placing more emphasis on discipline and securitization and even militarization, which have become key in the government's attempts to create compliant subjects (Chadderton, 2013). Nonetheless, recent speeches and policies by former Education Secretary Michael Gove and government initiatives continue to place emphasis on 'emotional intelligence' and 'resilience' (see Walker, 2013; Williams, 2010). Discourses of well-being are explicitly linked to the need to create compliant subjects in the UK research agenda. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Delivery Plan 2011–2015 places emphasis on 'Influencing behaviour and informing interventions' as one of three strategic priorities for the time period. This is explicitly linked to a discourse of well-being: 'How can interventions to improve health and wellbeing draw upon advances in social science?' and potentially coercive elements are made explicit: 'What is the appropriate role of public policy in terms of coercion through legislation, persuasion via incentives or social marketing, or coherent combinations of approaches?' (ESRC, 2011: 6). Well-being is linked in the document to willingness/ability to work, meeting corporate interests, and the desire to reduce welfare expenditure (*ibid.*: 7). Furthermore, emergent discourses of discipline and securitisation also mobilize affect in the form of *fear*. They rest on similar assumptions of vulnerable subjects in need of state protection, and the desire to restrain and control bodies (DeLeon, working paper). Aside from governmental standpoint and policy, a culture has become deeply embedded whereby happiness and wellness are assumed to be moral imperatives, rather than matters of choice or privilege (Cederström and Spicer, 2015).

Critique of state discourse of affect

Such discourse and interventions are problematic for many reasons. They individualize responsibility for economic problems and re-cast social problems as emotional ones (Furedi, 2004: 24). This enables policy makers to evade discussion of material causes and effects (Eccleston and Hayes, 2008: 12). The discourse promotes a particular kind of subject: one that is introspective and narcissistic (*ibid.*: 136). It erodes social ties as personal relationships are increasingly feared as potentially dysfunctional, abusive and dependent (*ibid.*: 136; Furedi, 2004: 61), whilst discourses of 'parenting skills' and 'social skills'

presume homogenous desires and expert knowledge that colonise personal relationships (Furedi, 2004: 98). This fragments the informal networks that people might previously have drawn on for support, which in turn undermines the potential for collective political struggle (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008: 141). It also leads to increased dependence on professionals who are implicated in practices of surveillance as people are expected to reveal more and more of their private and inner lives (*ibid*.: xiii). Staff appraisals and personal development expectations in the workplace integrate therapeutic terms with performance targets (*ibid*.: 18) and student satisfaction surveys are used to discipline academic staff (Amsler, 2011: 51). They promote a particular limited and limiting account of what it means to be human: a 'diminished self' (Eccleston and Hayes, 2008: xi), who is lacking something essential (Cruikshank, 1999: 3) which undermines the radical and transformative power of education and of human beings (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008: 161).

This lays the ground for the production of conformist neoliberal subjects with truncated hopes, dreams and desires (Cruikshank, 1999: 2; Amsler, 2011: 50-51). Those who do not fit this image are shaped and excluded through diagnoses and medication (Furedi, 2004: 99). Political interest in emotional skills is integral to the demands of the market, particularly in the emerging service economy and public sector jobs: 'the education system plays a key role in socialising the "right" forms of emotional labour for different jobs' (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008: 18). Therapeutic education is therefore a normative and dangerous combination of discourses and policy. It has real effects on people's bodies, which are subject to surveillance, fragmented from social relationships, medicalised, and trained to conform to particular types of labour. This is all ostensibly a response to – but actually reproduces – neoliberal anxiety and precarity. So the key questions become: How can we 'unlearn' dominant notions of well-being and resist neoliberal structurations of affect without inputting another normative notion of physical and mental 'good'? If subjects are trained to accept, adapt to and ultimately desire precarious life in neoliberal societies, how might we persuade them otherwise without also assuming a 'diminished subject' or attempting to *impose* revolutionary desires?

Critical pedagogy and affective resistance

The works by Ecclestone and Hayes and Furedi are largely critical-deconstructive and leave the alternatives to therapeutic education largely implicit. Nonetheless, they rely on a liberal-humanist view of the subject, and call for a return to progressivist forms of education based on 'rational philosophy that focuses on the ability of humans to transform the world by making scientific and social

progress through reason' (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008: 161). As such, they bypass poststructural critiques of privileged knowledge, exclusion of marginal knowledges, representation, misrecognition, social hierarchies and violence, and the ways in which discourses of 'progress' and 'reason' have tended to reify dominant and hierarchical ways of knowing and learning such as Western, masculine, heteronormative, able-ist (Burdick and Sandlin, 2010, 351). This omission can be deeply problematic, for example Furedi's critique of state intervention in private relationships evades the gendered nature of unequal power in the domestic sphere (e.g. Furedi, 2004: 80-81) with the dubious implication that domestic violence and oppression ought to remain a 'private' matter.

Amsler however takes up this challenge in the context of Higher Education, arguing that 'affect is central to both learning and to any viable conception of socially responsive education' (Amsler, 2011: 52) and that 'transitions from therapeutic to political education in neoliberal societies cannot be accomplished without recognition of the affective conditions of critique and non-essentialized subjectivity' (*ibid.*: 56). In a society where people are affectively trained to conform to neoliberal desires, the prospect of critique can be challenging and even frightening, whilst the affective sensibilities which might motivate political action to change their conditions are likely to expose them to feelings of alienation that they might not otherwise have felt or recognized (*ibid.*: 55-56). Contrary to the assumptions of Freire and other critical pedagogues one can no longer assume an essentially critical subject that desires transcendence and an end to oppression. Critical educators in existing institutions like universities are likely to face resistance (Motta, 2012), whilst radical pedagogical projects face the problem that neoliberal anxiety and its submersion within dominant discourses is a 'public secret' (Institute for Precarious Consciousness, 2014: 275).

Responses to this problematic involve developing critical awareness of the role of emotions and affect, problematizing emotional responses to critique. Amsler argues that we should 'establish affect as a site and resource of both learning and political struggle' (Amsler, 2011: 58). This can begin in non-hierarchical spaces for discussion and engagement with otherness, both within and outside existing institutions (Motta, 2012). In the university, discussions can evoke multiple perspectives and epistemologies (Andreotti, Ahenakew and Cooper, 2011) and encourage 'embodying and practicing other forms of politics' (Motta, 2012: 93) by 'fostering discussion [and] enabling active listening and respect between all members of the classroom space' (*ibid.*: 92). This can initiate a polyphonic dialogue to prevent ideas from becoming stagnant, or fixed, at an epistemological level (Bakhtin, 1984: 21). Opening up ambiguity and complexity in the classroom can mean acknowledging an important pedagogical role for *unpleasant* affects

and emotions such as discomfort (Burdick and Sandlin, 2010; Zembylas, 2006; Boler, 1999). The aim of discomfort is not to prescribe any single course of action, but rather 'for each person, myself included, to explore beliefs and values ... and to identify when and how our habits harm ourselves and others' (Boler, 1999: 185). In radical spaces and social movement practice, the Institute for Precarious Consciousness (2014: 278-283) argues for a revival of the feminist practice of consciousness-raising in radical social movement spaces, which involves speaking from experience, validating submerged realities and constructing voice within safe space as a basis for affective transformation.

Suggestions for radical praxis within and outside formal institutions tend to locate resistance to affective oppresion in critical thought, discussion and dialogue (e.g. Cruikshank, 1999: 2). There is an assumption that emotions are discursive, arising from cultural processes and meanings, rather than physical in origin and effect, and that resistance resides in raising critical consciousness rather than constructing new affects. Zembylas and Boler (2002: 9) define emotions as 'discursive practices that constitute one's subjectivities'. By situating both emotion *and* resistance in discursive practice these critical pedagogies inadvertently maintain an alienating mind/body dualism and hierarchy. The tradition of sitting down and talking in academic – and even in radical – spaces maintains separation: 'we don't need proximity or contact to participate in a debate' (Goia, 2008: 56).

Motta develops a role for bodily movement, encouraging students to move around the space, and work outside, in order to transgress 'the rigidity of fixity and stillness of normal classrooms' and bring 'physical fluidity to the space' (Motta, 2012: 92-93). This is an important point yet remains under-theorized in existing literatures. Existing theory offers pointers for opening up discussion of ways in which emotions and the body are sites where oppression, inequality and affective control are played out, felt and embodied. Yet there is little consideration of how the body and its affects are always-already a utopian site: 'a locus of freedom, pleasure, connection and creativity' (Shapiro, 1999: xx). Ignoring the body's capacity for agency leaves it 'paradoxically, in a peculiarly objectified state' (Shapiro, 1999: 20). Shapiro therefore calls for a 'critical pedagogy of the body' that begins from an understanding of 'not only how it is socialized into heteronomous relations of control and conformity, but is also a site of struggle and possibility for a more liberated and erotic way of being in the world' (*ibid.*: xx). Understanding the body as a utopian site of resistance involves coming to understand the Cartesian mind/body distinction as a cultural construction. This creates possibilities for a critical discourse that expands our understanding of the body and practices that foster bodily creativity, connections and compassion (*ibid.*: 18-19).

As discussed, the philosophical tradition from which the concept of affect is drawn already constructs it as an holistic concept, involving proximity and interaction of the body with other bodies and the environment. Where neoliberal state discourse has tended to individualize affect and limit desires, turning subjects inwards, critical responses have perpetuated the exclusion of physical interaction by relying on a discursive framework for praxis. In the following sections I will explore theories and practices that take a radically different, and expanded understanding of what constitutes the human body, and practices involving movement and touch that work with this understanding, therefore transgressing the mind/body dualism founds the basic assumptions of both mainstream and radical pedagogies. My wish is not to supplant existing critical pedagogies, nor to posit an alternative essentialist understanding of being or affect. Rather, I seek to explore alternatives that might supplement them, by transgressing the fixed binary of 'mind/body' therefore triggering new affects and creative resistances. Aspects of the theory and practices that I draw upon are self-avowedly utopian, and therefore may not be suitable to transpose exactly as described to formal and restricted institutional spaces such as the school or university. Nonetheless it is my hope that ideas might be adapted to inspire further somatic praxis in a range of spaces including universities, schools, social movements and radical spaces.

The body unconscious

In order to further elucidate the relationship between emotions, affect and the (reconceived) body or 'Soma', it is worth spending a moment to reflect upon the tradition of psychoanalysis and in particular theories of the unconscious. While much educational work on affect tends to elide psychoanalytic thought, it often forms the starting point for political philosophies of affect (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a: 188; Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b: 286-289). In this section I define the psychoanalytic tradition broadly, to include the debates and critiques of Carl Gustav Jung and Wilhelm Reich who began working within, but were expelled from the Psychoanalytic Movement. I also include contemporary theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who claim to deviate entirely from the basic premises of psychoanalytic theory, developing a new theory of 'schizoanalysis', yet engage with psychoanalytic subject matter and debates.

Throughout psychoanalytic theory, the 'mind' is split into 'conscious' and 'unconscious'. In various ways throughout different theories, the unconscious is perceived to be within, to affect, or be affected by the body. For Sigmund Freud for example, an unconscious blockage can cause symptoms such as 'hysterical paralysis' (Freud and Breuer, 2004). Jung (1968) views the unconscious as a

collective, quasi-spiritual phenomenon that manifests through various individuated personality types and narrative archetypes. Wilhelm Reich inverts these theories to produce the idea of 'character armour' – rigidity within certain parts of the body – as well as neurotic symptoms, caused by a combination of the inability to achieve full orgasm (Reich, 1972: 16-17) and authoritarian social structures with an investment in the suppression of sexuality (*ibid.*: 281). Because of the unconscious, however conceived, emotions can arise without apparent conscious cause and emotions can manifest in bodily states or sensations when they are not otherwise consciously apparent. The problem is not simply a technical one of addressing the body and not the mind: the blockages in the body occur with an underpinning in what Lacan terms 'the Imaginary' (Lacan, 1988: 74), or within the realm of archetypes in Jung (1968). They are blocked because of meanings or images which shut them off or exile particular energies or parts of the self, whilst separating 'inside' from 'outside' through processes of alienation (Lacan, 1988: 294).

If one agrees with Reich that unconscious blockages can manifest as character-armour and bodily states, then practices I will describe might compose acts of resistance, involving processes of unblocking similar to Deleuze and Guattari's negative or deconstructive stage of schizoanalysis (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a: 325-354). Whilst Freud and Lacan view neurosis as essential to humans with origins in the triadic (Mother-Father-Me) familial assemblage (e.g. Lacan, 1977: 205; Freud, 1956), Reich and later Deleuze and Guattari propose that neurosis is actually the product of wider neurotic and authoritarian social structures, of which the family is one manifestation (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a: 303-304). Resolution of psychic conflict therefore necessitates critique of the social system (Reich, 1972: 233). Such a process involves 'untying knots' or undoing social codes, such as taken-for-granted assumptions about the Oedipal family, and the participation of such institutions in 'a pedagogical social machine in general' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b: 327). This negative/critical phase sets the scene for further positive tasks that construct new 'desiring machines' (*ibid.*: 354).

'Affect' therefore has a broader meaning than usually understood. Spinoza refers to impacts on bodies by other bodies, which increase or decrease their powers by combining to form different bodies (Spinoza, 1994: 154) through affective connections between 'lines, planes, and bodies' (*ibid.*: 153). 'Bodies' in this sense transgresses the individualized (neo-)liberal human and refers to immanent affective connections with natural causes and phenomena (*ibid.*: 157, 202), yet no distinction should be made between mental and physical life: 'An idea that excludes the existence of our body cannot be in our mind, but is contrary to it' (*ibid.*: 160). Deleuze and Guattari use the term 'affect' in relation to bodily postures and movements and related 'discharge of emotion' (Deleuze and

Guattari, 2004b: 441) implying that an 'affect' is a point of contact between bioenergy inside and outside the body; a flow which goes across the boundary of the body. A 'reactive' affect is one which is turned inside or displaced (*ibid.*: 441) and causes 'blockages' in Reich's terminology (Reich, 1972: 17). This is useful in distinguishing 'affect' from 'emotion'. In everyday language, emotion usually refers to an individuated physical feeling (not mental or intellectual) that is passive (not active) and has a more-or-less irrational relationship to the world and outer life. In contrast, affect, as constructed by these thinkers is a necessary part of social and ecological assemblages, which passes through the unconscious field. Thinking beyond discursive pedagogies requires a reconceived understanding of the body, and indeed what it is to be human. To avoid confusion, some theorists and practitioners working with this approach have introduced a new term, 'Soma', to describe an understanding that both transgresses and encompasses the mental/discursive and the physical.

Possibilities for somatic pedagogy

The word 'Soma' is derived from Greek, meaning 'body', but tends to be used as an alternative terminology to describe a much wider understanding of embodiment: 'it incorporates the body's extensions, such as its desires and ideals, thoughts and attitudes, ideology and love, profession and social life. A human 'Soma' is everything that a person is, including how and with whom she or he has relationships' (Freire and da Mata, 1997: 3). The works of somatic theorists can be traced back to the thoughts of Wilhelm Reich, discussed above. Reich's work is important because it transgresses the Cartesian mind/body dualism, illustrating the possibility of a neurophysiological basis of repression (Hanna, 1970: 125) and a somatic understanding of the human body extending to relationships and social and economic environment. Affective discourse of 'therapeutic' education that attempts to homogenise desires by creating compliant subjects would for Reich be complicit in perpetuating bodily repression. This offers a starting point for thinking through ways in which working within a certain economic and social structure means 'to be inserted into a way of life that appropriates one's productive energies for specific purposes' (Shapiro, 1999: 58). This opens the doors for a range of somatic pedagogies exploring the ways in which our bodies absorb, embody and can potentially resist their social constructions: 'When people can't be themselves nor live out their ideas and desires, they enter into a defensive neurotic state. The neuromuscular armour is, therefore, a direct consequence of an authoritarian pedagogical game that teaches us to accept standards that are not our own' (Freire and da Mata, 1997: 7).

The primary example I would like to draw on in this paper is Somatherapy. The first time I encountered Somatherapy was in 2007 during my doctoral studies, when I helped to co-organize a KnowledgeLab event,[1] during which I chose to attend a workshop entitled 'SOMA – an experiment in anarchism – Consensus decision making without the mind/body split', with very little idea of what to expect. The workshop was facilitated by Jorge Goia, whose subsequent writing I have cited in this paper (Goia, 2008).[2] The workshop consisted of an opening talk on the history and ideas behind Soma, which I will touch on later in this paper, a series of group physical exercises designed to build body-awareness and solidarity, and a 'sharing' discussion afterwards. I left the workshop feeling deeply connected to the other participants, and with a profound sense of euphoria, apparently a common response (Ogo and Dejerk, 2008: 44). The workshop was intended as a 'taster' of what Somatherapy can be like. To engage in a full course of Somatherapy one would have to commit to a year or more of monthly meetings (Freire and da Mata, 1997: 13-14). To my knowledge there are no full-term workshops in the UK. This is my only personal experience with practising Soma. My sources are therefore based on the limited work of Roberto Freire published in English (most of Freire's original work is written in Portuguese and remains untranslated), a conversation with Jorge Goia, an experienced Somatherapist who trained under Freire, and on secondary writings by Goia and others. In what follows I explore Somatherapy as a potential source of inspiration for somatic pedagogies. In particular, I will focus on the questions: How does it resist state structurations of affect? How does it transgress existing critical pedagogies, assumptions of mind/body dualism and discursive/dialogical modes of practice? After considering this example, I will signal other potential sources of inspiration, and attempt to consider ways in which these might inform and shape existing critical praxis.

Somatherapy combines therapy and pedagogy, arts and science, politics and emotions (Goia, 2011a). It was created by the Brazilian psychiatrist and anarchist activist Roberto Freire (who bears no relation to Paulo Freire) in the 1970s in the hope of providing a therapeutic pedagogy that could support people resisting the

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1   KnowledgeLab is a networked collective dedicated to providing space for anti-capitalist reflection. More information on the group can be found at its Wiki: https://www.knowledgelab.org.uk/Main_Page. The specific event that I helped to organize was hosted at the University of Nottingham, with information on the event archived here: https://www.knowledgelab.org.uk/FourthKnowledgeLab.

2   When I decided, several years later, to write this paper I discovered that Goia was living in London, and I met with him to discuss this paper and am extremely grateful for the ideas he contributed.

dictatorship (Goia, 2011b). In developing Somatherapy, Freire explicitly drew on a wide range of influences, including theories of the body, emotions and the unconscious drawn from Wilhelm Reich, combined with insights from Frederick Perls, Gregory Bateson, Thomas Hanna, Max Stirner, anarchist politics and organization; anti-psychiatry, Gestalt psychotherapy and the Brazillian martial art Capoeira Angola (Goia, 2008: 57; Freire and da Mata, 1997; Goia, 2011a; Goia, 2011b; Ogo and Dejerk, 2008). A 'course' of Soma has about 30 sessions facilitated by an experienced practitioner in a non-hierarchical manner inspired by anarchist politics and organization. The aim is through enjoyable play, games, sound and co-operative movement exercises to 'salvage spontaneity, playfulness, creativity, and awareness of anarchist organization where no one is boss' (Goia, 2011a). The purpose is to challenge authoritarian politics and competitive capitalist social relationships at a personal level, by cultivating bodily awareness and producing non-authoritarian social relationships (*ibid.*). An accessible introduction and fuller description of the process can be found in the article by Ogo and Dejerk (2008).

Soma works to break down divisions and hierarchies not only at the social level but also at physical, unconscious and affective levels: 'When the body is in articulation, it is in transformation. The more articulations we make, the more we are affected, the more we become sensitive to difference, and the more we can refine our senses to perceive, opening possibilities of new engagements' (Goia, 2008: 60). Soma is explicitly political, beginning from the body and the politics of everyday life: 'we raise awareness and bring out the physical reality of our bodies educated in the capitalist culture of fear and security' (Goia, 2011a). Somatherapy transgresses the construction of mind and body as separate: 'The politics of everyday life does not happen only through arguments, discussions and critiques in the search for rational ideas about life and relationships. We are concerned with the politics of the body, to break down cultural prejudices against the forgotten body' (Goia, 2008: 58).

Nonetheless Somatherapy does involve discussion, which takes place after the games, where participants discuss the feelings and physical sensations that they experienced (Ogo and Dejerk, 2008: 44). There is an orientation towards avoiding interpretation, analysis, 'why' questions, or general claims in favour of describing physical and emotional sensations, 'how' questions and building solidarity and sincerity across differences (Goia, 2008: 57-58; Ogo and Dejerk, 2008: 46). Soma participants are also encouraged to undertake independent and group readings, and practice in Capoeira Angola, leading to a learning experience that transgresses traditional 'therapy' and encompasses 'a skill share, and an experiment in anarchism applied to personal dynamics' (Ogo and Dejerk, 2008: 47).

The theme of celebrating rather than suppressing bodily differences speaks directly to the key theme of this paper: resisting the state homogenization of affect and production of compliant subjects through a non-vanguardist approach to pedagogy. Freire argues that 'driven by the economic power of the state, authoritarian societies need to standardise human behaviour in order to facilitate control and domination' (Freire and da Mata, 1997: 3). Thus, a core purpose of the games and exercises is to identify and eliminate the effects of homogenizing discourses on our bodies in order to 'encounter the originality in the lives of each one of us' (*ibid*.: 3). Rather than seeking to impose psychological diagnoses and 'truths' on the body, Soma aims to 'create singular experiences' and 'perceive more contrasts' (Goia, 2008: 60-61). The process of producing and celebrating individual difference seeks to politicize personal and everyday life and the ways these are permeated by state authoritarianism and capitalist values such as private property, competition, profit and exploitation:

It is impossible to deny the influence of [state and capitalist] values in vital areas of social relations, where feelings (jealousy, posessiveness, insecurity) and situations (competition, betrayal and lies) seem to reproduce on the micro-social level, the authoritarianism of states and corporations. The political starts in the personal, and this is where the mechanisms that maintain social order are born. (Goia, 2008: 58)

Soma seeks to explore micro-political dynamics starting form the body and to resist them by challenging participants to 'reinvent relationships' (Goia, 2008: 60) using games to foster trust, co-operation and sharing, and mechanisms for dealing constructively with conflict (Goia, 2008: 56).

Soma thus seeks to recreate politics at a fundamentally dis-alienated level, treating the moving, sensing, relating body as a utopian site where new relations can be configured. It resists dominant discourses without recourse to counter-discourse: 'a rebel body needs to articulate differences to challenge paralysing definitions...we give voice to the body to express doubts; questions, where often one prays for certainty. Soma doesn't try to define one's body, the process attempts to keep one's *soma* moving' (Goia, 2008: 60). This is an anarchist practice, seeking to inspire 'skills to build horizontal relationships' that can 'transform the way we perceive the world, re-building the body, its dwelling and livelihood' (Goia, 2008: 61).

Further body-focused pedagogies can be found elsewhere. Augusto Boal's work on *theatre of the oppressed* begins from a somatic assumption that bodies become alienated through labour; for example one who sits at a computer all day becomes 'a kind of pedestal, while fingers and arms are active' (Boal, 1979: 127)

while someone who stands or walks all day will develop different muscular structures. Boal develops a range of theatrical techniques to explore the limitations and social distortions of the body, and starting from this to learn once more to make the body expressive, affirming rather than denying one's own physical differences (Boal, 1979: 126). Sherry Shapiro (1999) argues for a critical pedagogy based on dance and movement, which begins from a critique of the commodification of dancers' bodies yet celebrates and brings to critical awareness the function of dance in producing pleasure, agency and freedom (Shapiro, 1999: 72). Jeremy Gilbert (2013) argues for a pedagogical technique in university lectures and seminars inspired by DJing in dance clubs that aims to mobilize affect to assemble a collective and empowered body. Bell and Sinclair (2014) argue for a reclamation of the 'erotic' in higher education in ways that refuse commodified sexual norms. This might involve exploring the relationship between knowledge and bodies, and recognizing love and nurturance in collegial and pedagogic relations.

Examples might also be drawn from practices at a range of international communities that draw on body-work and reconceived relations between the body and world. ZEGG Community (*Zentrum für Experimentelle Gesellschafts-Gestaltung*) in Germany uses a technique based on both words and movement to reveal parts of oneself to the community, and defines itself as a sex-positive community that embraces multiple different kinds of relationships (ZEGG, 2015). Findhorn in the UK similarly encourages healing techniques based on dance and movement, and embraces ontology that transgresses fixed assumptions about the relationship between body and environment. Several courses and workshops at Findhorn explicitly drawn on the work of Wilhelm Reich and other radical psychologists (e.g. Findhorn Foundation, 2015). Tamera in Portugal places focus on cooperation between human being, animal and nature and focuses on interpersonal intimacy as a means of freeing the individual (Tamera, 2015). Network for a New Culture in the US was originally inspired by ZEGG. Whilst this is not an ongoing populated community it offers summer camps, retreats and other experiences designed to build community and intimacy, encourage challenging oneself, and practice new ways of interacting (New Culture Institute, 2015).

Such communities often avoid some of the drawbacks of more typical self-help approaches in that they link personal growth and interpersonal connection to larger community and societal structures. Some of these ideas in the context of intentional communities in the UK are explored in Lucy Sargisson's book, which provides an exegesis of radical ecological ontologies that transgress dominant assumptions about oppositional Self-Other Relations (Sargisson, 2000: 117-151) as well as my own book, which examines holistic views of subjectivity (Firth,

2012: 131-135). Also relevant are groups such as the Centre for Nonviolent Communication (2015) and the Human Awareness Institute (2015). These organizations offer workshops examining ways in which cultural norms can alienate people from their ability to understand and communicate bodily needs and sensations, resulting in verbal and physical violence, and offer skills training to promote alternative, compassionate forms of communication and relationships.

Conclusion: Spaces of somatic becoming

In this paper I have critiqued and transgressed the assumptions of a specific area of pedagogic theory – in particular the uncritical conflation of education and learning with normative discourses of therapy and well-being. Rather than following existing literature by taking a critical standpoint yet retaining assumptions concerning the mind-body split and the discursive nature of pedagogy, I have attempted to adopt a utopian methodology (Firth, 2013), taking the reconceived body or soma as a starting point to think through ways of opening up this field of thought and practice to difference.

The question remains: where might somatic pedagogies take place? If, as the introductory sections argued, 'therapeutic' pedagogies are prevalent throughout many levels of society, both within educational establishments and outwith institutions through a wider cultural discourse, effective resistance also ought to take place both within and outside existing institutions. Since 'therapeutic' pedagogies begin from the earliest stages of school, pioneering teachers may be able to think through ways these might be resisted, within institutional constraints. Finding time outside curriculum activity, health and safety constrictions and rules on physical contact may make the school environment particularly prohibitive for Somatic pedagogies. Nonetheless, taking a critical approach within aspects of the curriculum imbued with 'therapeutic' discourse may be possible.

My own pedagogic experience derives from academic teaching and lecturing in universities at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, presenting at conferences, and from facilitating and taking part in grassroots popular education work in autonomous social spaces and with social movements. The first time I presented this paper at a university, a member of the audience quite poignantly pointed out that universities are perhaps the place where this kind of activity is *least* likely to be taken up, referring to the fact that when any participatory element is introduced in a lecture or conference paper, academic audience members – from undergraduates to staff – often shirk from joining in. The physical environment

of classrooms and lecture theatres is designed to facilitate sitting in rows facing the 'expert'. Academics are arguably the section of society most alienated from their own bodies due to the emphasis placed on intellectual power and 'the mind' (Bell and King, 2010). At the same time, implicit and commodified sexual economy and other embodied hierarchies (Bell and Sinclair, 2014) undermine possibilities for creating requisite conditions of equality and solidarity. However, it is important to note that cracks and spaces for radical activities do appear in universities and other institutions. The first time I encountered Somatherapy was at a university, albeit at an autonomously organized event. Many universities now encourage the use of innovative and critical pedagogies, albeit often in a de-politicized attempt at introducing 'novelty value' to enhance 'student satisfaction', which opens possibilities for more critical and interesting activities (Motta, 2012).

Somatic pedagogies might also take place outside formal institutions, in autonomous spaces such as autonomous social centres, squats, occupied protest camps, housing co-operatives and intentional communities. Activist social spaces already often host a variety of pedagogical activities with physical elements such as skill-shares and martial arts workshops. However, I have only occasionally encountered workshops that take the body itself as a starting point for critique and resistance. Somatic pedagogies might be of use to social movements since a widely acknowledged source of dissonance and conflict is the verbal dominance of more confident or educated people in meetings and discussions (Firth, 2012: 109). Somatherapy is designed to build solidarity through movement and the emphasis on physical difference rather than discussion and may ameliorate some of these problems. To end this paper, I would like to distil from the above some important themes that an interested pedagogue might consider when planning a workshop. I do not wish to offer a single concrete 'set of instructions', nor to recommend that a pre-existent practice, such as Somatherapy, be taken up in its entirety. The aptness of different techniques will vary according to the space, participants and context.

First, a facilitator might consider the approach that they would take towards critique and knowledge production. An underlying argument of this paper has been that in order to avoid (paradoxically) imposing anti-authoritarian values and desires, knowledge production ought to be non-vanguardist. Rather than taking as given any particular values and desires, one promotes epistemological practice that problematises the status quo, using concrete experiences of the body and its immediate relationships as a site of critique and resistance. The approach takes to its limit the feminist slogan that 'the personal is the political'. This involves processes similar to consensus decision-making combined with physical movement, producing new knowledge by bringing bodies into motion. Second,

the paper has argued that a genuinely non-vanguardist pedagogy ought to involve critiquing state structurations of affect and definitions of 'well-being' beginning from re-thinking the body as inseparable from the mind, other bodies and the environment and constructed through relationships. I have not argued for a closed definition of the body because this should be politicized and open to negotiation during classes or workshops. My hope is that definitions remain open to constant differentiation as bodies and understandings of bodies continually undergo change. Third, I have argued that such a pedagogy would celebrate rather than suppress or homogenize different bodies and desires. This would involve accounting for both physical and psychological difference, for example some participants may not like to be touched or may find different levels of closeness comfortable during workshops. Therefore processes for articulating and respecting personal boundaries should be incorporated.

Finally, resistance should be fun, joyous and playful. This last point is perhaps the most difficult to achieve in practice: how can we construct joy in a society where consumerism is central to enjoyment? Where activism is too frequently characterised by notions of selfishness, suffering and sacrifice? (Graeber, 2014). Somatic pedagogies should not lose their political, critical and resistant facets. In discussion with Goia, I was informed that in Brazil, Somatherapy has in some places become a recuperated practice, 'just another group therapy' widely used by people with spare time and money rather than radical activists. On the other hand, many radical social movements already embrace aspects of Somatic pedagogies, in the form of performance art and carnivalesque activities, for example the *Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army* (see Routledge, 2010). Such practices might benefit from engaging in Somatic critique, raising the issue of the body as a site of resistance in further pedagogical activity.

The nanopolitics handbook (The Nanopolitics Group, 2014a) explores recent political engagements with bodywork and social movement practice, showing how such practices can and do avoid recuperation into the mainstream. In particular it is important to note that whilst there is always a possibility that somatic practices might be recuperated back into the capitalist mainstream, this does not invalidate the necessity of critical practices of the body for radical politics. Indeed, politics must not reside only in voting or making statements, but 'politics can be a tangible experiment of feeling and acting that's based in our bodies and their ways of relating' (The Nanopolitics Group, 2014b: 19). A politics of the body can be a politics of joy, pleasure and immanent revolution (*ibid.*: 23) to be experienced in the present, rather than deferred to the future.

This paper is intended as a preliminary introduction of the concept of Somatic pedagogy into debates on education and pedagogy and it is beyond its scope to

offer extended ideas for practice. Nonetheless I have argued for the political significance of the body. Whatever concept of radical change we embrace, be it revolutionary, reformist, or through creation of utopian alternatives in the here-and-now, one cannot deny the importance of the body in radical praxis. Critical social change is unlikely to occur whilst we are sitting in front of a computer but will involve our collective hearts, minds and bodies.

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The work of humour in affective capitalism: A case study of celebrity gossip blogs[*]

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abstract

Humour has long been investigated for its power to reinforce and/or disrupt cultural norms and values but is has less often been explored from the perspective of political economy. This article addresses this research gap and explores through three examples from celebrity gossip blogs how humour is put to work in affective capitalism. Each example delineates a different way in which humour is linked to capitalism: The first instance shows that humour valorises and masks the tiresome and precarious working conditions of bloggers. The second case illustrates that humour serves to accrete value for capital by creating a buzz or conversation about a celebrity story. In the third example humour works to conceal how the ridiculing and shaming of seemingly 'trashy' celebrities functions to weave people deeper into economic circuits that create the very conditions under which celebrity is first made manifest. Each example combines the affective and material aspects of labour that create a particular value and relation to the economy. Overall, this paper argues that humour – far from being personal, unique and outside of economic considerations – can be an important and cynical ingredient of affective capitalism.

Introduction

In 2004 Mario Lavandeira started blogging 'because it seemed easy' (Stevens, 2013). Free blogging software and an abundance of online paparazzi photos inspired a blog that offered a different approach to celebrity: rather than

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promoting these public figures through flattering texts and images, the blog ridiculed and mocked them through snarky comments and image manipulations. This cynical turn seemed to pay off: in 2015 Perezhilton.com is worth $3,7 million and the daily income generated through online advertising is estimated at $1,153 (Mustat, 2014, see also appendix 1). Stories of such well-trafficked blogs are rare, yet those who are successful make their revenues mainly through online advertising. As I am writing this introduction, advertising banners and pop-ups for Vodafone frame Perezhilton.com and at the bottom of each celebrity photo appears an advert that Google's advertising software chose for me by tracking my prior online activities. Celebrity gossip blogs are cluttered with advertising because they are arguably 'eye ball magnets' for hard to pin down target groups such as millennials. These mostly female 14–30 year olds revisit gossip blogs several times a day, 'not just for the latest on Britney Spears, but also for what Perez and other bloggers have to say about it' (Meyers, 2012: 1025). This illustrates the central role of humour for the economic success of the blog: Only the amused user will return to the website. And only the entertained millennial will click, comment and 'share', thereby generating vast amounts of usable data that can be sold to advertisers. The economic value produced by gossip blogs is therefore based on their capacity to affect users. Yet not all value is reducible to monetary income for stakeholders. Gossip blogs are valuable to their users in ways that exceed value's economic definitions because they accrue cultural, symbolic, and social values to them (Karppi, 2015: 222). With their irreverent humour these blogs allow users to produce themselves as 'subjects of value' (Skeggs, 2004) that are different to those celebs who deserve social derision. In this sense, it can be argued that the pleasures that users gain through online interaction, is the affective/social value which drives the capitalist circuits of these blogs (Pybus, 2015).

This paper assesses how humour is put to work in affective capitalism. The idea to base this investigation on celebrity gossip blogs, was inspired by my PhD research for which I analysed U.S. gossip blogs such as Perezhilton.com and Dlisted.com. Here I explored the affective power of humour to push us into critical directions thereby enabling new ideas about femininity, queerness and whiteness. Such an affirmative reading of online humour was difficult to follow through, because it was continuously tampered by the commercialised nature of these blogs which diminished humour to the status of a commodified exchange. In this sense, this article can be seen as a necessary extension of my prior work. Another reason for the case study of celebrity gossip blogs is that they provide a

particular example of the kind of cultural and creative industry that appears to be flourishing in times of affective capitalism[1].

Affective capitalism describes an economic system in which the production and modulation of emotions, feelings and gut-reactions is vital for the creation of profit.[2] This kind of capitalism taps into and mobilises the emotional resources of workers and customers because it recognises that these 'inner' sentiments are not action *per se*, but they are the inner energy that propels us towards an act which can be economically exploited (Hochschild, 1983; Illouz, 2007). Celebrity gossip blogs are manifestations of this kind of capitalism because they profit from the modulation and organisation of affect. They represent an industry in which mobile, autonomous freelancers undertake creative, self-organised work while carrying all responsibility and risk in order to produce cultural signs and symbols that aim to effect blog readers in pleasurable ways. These affective jolts, in turn, interpellate readers, that is, consumers, to eagerly participate in the production of the experiences that they later consume. Celebrity gossip blogs provide, as such, ideal sites to map out how humour is put to work in affective capitalism in different ways.

The article begins by providing an overview of how humour has been studied so far and how it can be understood as an affective-discursive tool. It then describes three ways in which humour is put to work: It explores firstly how humour can function to mask the tiresome and precarious conditions of work for bloggers. Secondly, it shows how humour can help to accrete monetary value through the creation of a buzz or conversation about a celebrity story. And thirdly, the article demonstrates how humour conceals here the fact that the shaming of 'tasteless' female celebrities is not a rebellious act but a reactionary move that functions to weave people deeper into economic circuits that are already fully invested in affect. In conclusion, this paper argues for an extended understanding of the economic that allows us to study these affective forms of transaction in their cultural context. In other words, humour is used in these blogs to motivate different forms of labour but what is the content of this labour and how does it create value? Answering these questions will serve to illustrate that humour is not outside of considerations about work, economy and the productive aspects of the social but deeply embedded within them.

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1   Creative (or cultural) industries are those companies and professions primarily responsible for the industrial production and circulation of culture (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

2   I do not regard affect and emotion as interchangeable and synonymous but for this specific topic I am using affect in a more elastic and composite way so that it can encompass also emotional states.

Making humour work

Humour has long been theorised in the social science for its relationship with power. Some argue that humour can provide spaces for rebellion against normative hierarchies by binding people together against formal power structures of authority (Bakhtin, 1984; Stallybrass and White, 1986) or by providing new, irreverent and unusual perspectives on a subject (Kotthoff, 2006; Gray, 2006, Graefer 2014). Other scholars, however, are critical of the subversive power of humour and illustrate in their work how – mainly as a discursive practice – it functions to cement social inequalities and mechanisms of exclusion (Billig, 2005; Lockyer and Pickering, 2008; Chambers, 2009; Weaver, 2011). Challenging the idea that humour is outside of economic considerations, research in sociology, managerial literature and organisational studies has also highlighted how humour can be used to generate value in the workplace. This research stresses, for example, that humour can improve productivity by facilitating teamwork, boosting intellectual and creative thinking by releasing stress and tension (Holmes, 2007). It has also been identified as a form of 'emotion work' (Hochschild, 1983) which is necessary to perform stressful and/or dangerous jobs (Sanders, 2004). Management literature has discovered how humour can be a useful tool for effective leadership by promoting adaptability, decision making and problem solving (Consalvo, 1989; Holmes and Marra, 2006). In media and cultural studies scholars have investigated how interactive online media turn internet users into value creators, often by making work seem humourous or like play or fun (Terranova, 2000; Yee, 2006; Coté and Pybus, 2007; Andrejevic, 2008; 2009).[3] Notwithstanding their differences, all these scholars share a concern about how pleasurable feelings, engendered through humour or fun, dissolve the boundary between work and non-work thereby feeding into an advanced capitalism that seeks to commodify all aspects of interpersonal life.

This article contributes to this body of work by exploring how humour and capitalism are connected in three different ways: by masking work as fun, by encouraging user engagement, and by concealing how shaming feeds into an economic system that blogs seem ostensibly to critique. Yet rather than conceiving humour merely as a discursive practice, locating the various possible functions of humour first and foremost in texts and/or images, this paper approaches humour as an affective-discursive tool. This means that humour is recognised as a matter of language and text while also drawing attention to the sensuous and somatic component of humour.

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3   Christian Fuchs even argues that the obfuscation of labour as play and fun is one marker of contemporary capitalism (Fuchs, 2014: 122).

Humour is often defined as a discursive practice that violates or disrupts what is socially or culturally expected and agreed to be normal (Morreall, 1987; Meyer, 2000). Yet not all disruptions are necessarily funny. Indeed, what makes humour happen or fail in a particular situation is often difficult to discern and cannot be reduced to the discursive only (Bruns, 2000). Humour can be slippery but it is tied to embodied beings, those who perform it and feel it. Thus, humour often leaves traces that are felt in and between bodies: It can, for example, create feelings of intimacy and closeness or distance between bodies (Kuipers, 2009). Or it can be felt in the body in the form of pain and anger but also in physical reactions like laughter and smiles. These contradictory feelings may even coexist as Katariina Kyrölä points out: 'humour that has potential to "hit close" and hurt us the most may also be the kind that makes us laugh the hardest' (Kyrölä, 2010: 76). Humour in gossip blogs might work differently, in the sense, that it cannot 'hit close' because it is usually not aimed to hurt us/the reader but the other/the female celebrity 'trash'. And yet, what feelings and affective reactions a funny post engenders cannot necessarily be predicted.

When we approach humour as an affective-discursive tool then we recognise that humour travels along already defined lines of cultural investments while highlighting that humour can move us in emotional and physical ways. This is not to argue that humour is a free agent that wanders freely without its relation to embodied beings who actively click, link and post contents on the blog. Blog users are wilful subjects who both reinforce but also challenge this kind of online humour, thereby building a sentimental public sphere where dominant ideas and values are negotiated. This article takes these considerations as a starting point in order to explore how humour's capacity to move and touch us is economically exploited in celebrity gossip blogs.

The work of being funny

With their jokes, irreverent skits, pastiches and amateurish doodles, celebrity gossip blogs seem like the product of effortless fun. And yet, it is important to note that humour is not simply *there* but the result of the affective and material labour of the celebrity blogger. This section draws attention to these often overlooked forms of labour and argues that humour functions here as a tool that masks the hard work that goes into the production of a funny post. Through this obfuscation, humour creates a product that is seemingly more spontaneous, unique, authentic and innovative than 'mainstream' commercially produced gossip outlets. By revealing the tiresome work of being funny it becomes clear how humour is central, not peripheral, to self-exploitative forms of work in affective capitalism.

As is well-known, humour ceases to be funny when the joke is explained or its inner workings are made visible (Palmer, 1994; Meyer, 2000). Humour needs to seem effortless in order to fulfil its aim of being funny. Thus, gossip bloggers must hide the hard work that goes into the production of a funny blog post. This is done by convincing audiences that blogging comes naturally, as the result of an innate wit, spontaneity and talent (rather than hard work) and through *simply being true to oneself*. Blogger Michael K., for instance, explains his writing as an internal impulse or urge:

> I think it's unhealthy how obsessed I am. I have dreams about celebrities every night. ...I think I've always been into it, TV, movies, celebrities. It's just the way I was born. I was always into gossip and talking shit. It's been the biggest part of me I think. (Michael K. in Sachon, 2009)

With this statement the blogger suggests that his blog is the result of genuine interest and innate passion rather than simply a laborious task undertaken for instrumental reasons (Paasonen, 2010). It also seeks to emphasise the pleasurable, productive aspects of work – those qualities that might make it a compelling and attractive activity, beyond economic necessity. This, in turn, sets the blog apart from mainstream entertainment news media such as people.com or hellomagzine.com that cannot profess a similar claim, given their obvious corporate backing and 'depersonalised' institutional structures.

The amount of labour that goes into the production of a funny post is further concealed by blurring the boundary between private persona and product. As the above quote shows, no difference between professional worker and private persona is obvious. The funny blog and the humorous gossip lover are one and the same. Such forms of fusion are typical for the creative industries because they seem necessary in order to create a product which is original and authentic that is marketable. Mark Banks argues in this context that

> in the cultural, media and creative industries – organised worlds of symbolic production – the total integration of the creative person and the creative work has long been standard. ...The worker and the object of cultural work have often been regarded as two sides of the same coin; synonymous, even – the perfect fusion of human intent and material expression. Investing one's person into the act of creative production is merely the asking price and guarantee of an authentic art. (2014: 241)

The fusion of product and producer is especially important for celebrity gossip blogs because they gain their affective appeal and branding potential by being closely related to the figure of the blogger. Some have a picture of the blogger on the website or banner, whereas others show through their writing style and by sharing private stories that the blogger is creating a funny diary with private thoughts about celebrities rather than a marketable text.

Whereas in nearly all other aspects of contemporary life hard work is a sign of the successful entrepreneurial self and needs to be made visible, in regards to these humorous online representations the producer is not 'allowed' to undergo hard work in order to create the blog post. Hard work would dampen the fun. Thus, whereas Banks highlights the concentrated nature of this 'being in the zone – where persona and product become one', writing gossip blogs is often framed as fun rather than concentration:

> I don't see blogging as a real job. And people don't either, people are like, oh when are you going to get a real job? It's like, good question. It just doesn't seem like a real job. I think because it's still fun, and I feel like I'm just messing around. (Michael K. in Sachon, 2009)

Such a rhetoric of fun might be good for the marketing of the blog as it presents it as the product of an individual personality, engaged in autonomous and unfettered work motivated by pure enjoyment. Yet it obscures the fact the blogger is also, at least partly, 'in it for the money' and so hides the affective and material labour that she/he undertakes in order to produce and maintain the blog[4].

Analysing humorous celebrity gossip blogs through the lens of labour shows that the blogger is under constant pressure to keep the blog up to date, to keep readers engaged and amused even if he or she feels exhausted. Blogger Brendon from the gossip blog WhatWouldTylerDurdenDo.com describes this situation in the following words:

> ...if I go three hours without checking my email I start freaking out. Because you never know what's going to happen. I remember the day that Britney shaved her head. My girlfriend and I took off a night and a morning. Got home at like 11 at night, you know, and I had thousands of emails just saying — Britney shaved her head! Britney shaved her head! And so you don't ever want to miss...you don't ever want to be last. I mean...if something big happens...you just have to be on it all the time. And, you know, on a lot of days when I don't feel like writing, like I'm not in a funny mood, or I had a fight with my girlfriend or whatever, I don't want to do this. No one cares. No one cares if it's a holiday. No one cares if I'm depressed. They just want the website. And I'm the only one here. It's just me. (Brandon interview in Meyers, 2010)

This section of an interview shows that bloggers are pushed continually to the limits of their mental and physical capacities (Hewlett and Luce, 2006). The body and the mind of the blogger are geared towards efficiency and diligence with the assistance of new communication platforms. Furthermore, in order to produce funny blog posts, the blogger needs to perform emotions independent of how

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4   Please see appendix 1 for a list of celebrity gossip blogs.

she/he really feels. This reminds us of Arlie Hochschilds's (1983) classical text *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, in which she argues that feelings themselves are the subject to 'management' in both private and public contexts, and that such 'emotion work' could be commercially exploited as 'emotional labour'. Brendon performs emotional labour when he picks himself up after a fight with his girlfriend and writes a humorous post, he motivates himself when he feels exhausted and overworked in order to stay productive. This shows that humour is not necessarily a natural or spontaneous matter but carefully crafted and often created under demanding conditions.

It can be argued that the entertainment industry has always been part of an economy in which affects and emotions are manipulated and modulated for the sake of profit (Hardt, 1999). And yet, the affective labour performed by 'funny' bloggers is different because their online workplace is available 24/7 and condemns them – at least theoretically – to a constant compulsive productivity. Consciousness of the ever-present potential for working is a new form of affective labour that must be constantly regulated. As the interview above demonstrates, the fear of missing out on explosive stories, and thereby losing readers or clicks, motivates the blogger to be attentive and productive around the clock. Michael K. from Dlisted.com is also aware of this commitment and confesses in an interview that 'blogging is so time consuming it takes up your whole life'. He claims to be blogging seven days a week and does not dare to go on vacation because his work is so invested in constantly monitoring a set of 'current' celebrities and unfolding events that must rapidly be responded to through blog posts engrained with his own personality and humour. This is work that cannot easily be done by someone else:

> A couple of years ago I decided to go on vacation and I had some guests post, and it was a disaster. I came back and I had so many emails that were like, don't ever leave again, they were total idiots, and the people who did it were like, don't ever ask me to do that again, those people are crazy. But I might have to do it again. It would be nice to have a Saturday. (Michael K. in Sachon, 2009)

Rosalind Gill and Andrew Pratt (2008) argue that professional workers in the cultural industries are involved in forms of labour that are characterised by high degrees of autonomy, creativity and 'play', but also by overwork, casualisation and precariousness. This ambiguity is also visible in interviews with gossip bloggers. Yet Gill and Pratt are quick to stress the costs of these informal and insecure forms of work in which all risks and responsibilities are borne by the individual (see also Sennett, 1998). In this sense, it can be argued that the 'funny work' of bloggers fits into the larger body of work in recent years which has examined the lives of artists, fashion designers, television creatives and new media workers (Ross, 2003; Lovink and Rossiter, 2007; Gregg, 2011;

Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). This research has raised critical questions about the much vaunted flexibility, autonomy and informality of these domains and has highlighted how this work is characterised by:

> long hours and bulimic patterns of working; the collapse or erasure of the boundaries between work and play; poor pay…and profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, earning enough money and 'keeping up' in rapidly changing fields. (Gill and Pratt, 2008: 14)

Celebrity gossip bloggers might be seen as independent and creative labourers that only follow their prolific nature and the humorous, irreverent blog content is as such merely an effortless representation of the 'real' person behind the blog. Yet, I argue that humour – which is deliberate and crafted – appears here as a kind of fetish that masks the tedious and time-consuming work of trying to be always alert and always funny. The work of blogging is in this sense the precarious, thankless and mostly unpaid creative labour of the kind identified by many in the cultural industries. Often it is laughter and recognition – rather than a reliable monthly income that are the payment or compensation of this work. This shows that humour is *central*, not peripheral to self-exploitative work which marks affective capitalism.

The work of value creation and extraction

Many scholars have critically investigated how 'participatory' online media in the form of blogs and social networking sites interpellate consumers to 'work'. These affected consumers increasingly participate in the process of making and circulating media content and experiences (Terranova, 2000; Deuze 2007; Andrejevic, 2008; Banks and Deuze, 2009; Wilson and Chivers Yochim, 2013). In such environments, according to the argument, value is created through the 'free' or 'click' labour of the consumer or Internet user. This section explores the click labour of blog readers and argues that these animated consumers create value by building the affective and emotional complexity of the blog and its attendant interactions.

In celebrity gossip blogs, readers work through clicking and commenting or by sharing online content on other social networking sites. These online practices can be seen as forms of immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1996) that produce economic value for website owners and marketers: Clicking on an image or link creates page impressions which are one important metric which advertisers look at when considering advertising on a blog. Through commenting, readers inadvertently produce new online content for free. Sharing a funny blog post on any other social networking site potentially shepherds new readers to the original

blog and the more users a platform has, the higher the advertising rates can be. All these practices are carefully sought after also by the design of the website: Blogs invite readers to comment under a new post, icons next to each gossip story encourage readers to share this post on other social networking sites, and permanent buttons in the menu ask readers to send in their own gossip story particularly celebrity pictures or videos that they have taken with their own cell phones (McNamara, 2011). Through these techniques the time that readers spend on blogs is transformed into labour time because 'all activities are monitored and result in data commodities, so users produce commodities online during their online time' (Fuchs, 2014: 116). In this sense, it can be argued that any kind of user engagement can be translated into monetary value for the blog owner and marketers.

It is, however, important to understand these contributions also as forms of affective labour because they ultimately build the affective complexity of the blog which can be monetised. Thus, readers are here not only participating in the process of making and circulating media content but they also produce and circulate its attendant feelings and emotions through their online interaction. The affective investments that consumers put into a brand or company have long been recognised as an important intangible resource for value creation but it has been difficult to measure and quantify them. Adam Arvidsson and Nicolai Peitersen (2013) argue that social media networks and new data mining algorithms provide the possibility to measure social affective investments which in turn can function to create a common value horizon. They write:

> the proliferation of social buttons on social media sites like Facebook suggest that these devices are already becoming important channels by means of which affective investment by publics can be translated into objectified forms of affect that support consumer decisions and, increasingly, financial valuations. (Arvidsson and Peitersen, 2013: 128)

Arvidsson and Peitersen term this objectified form of affect 'General Sentiment'. General Sentiment is a bottom-up, peer-based measurement that translates individual expressions of affective attachment into objectified flows of 'potential' value which are then realised in the financial markets. As Alison Hearn notes, General Sentiment illustrates that value comes increasingly to depend on the ability of an object to induce flows of public affect (Hearn, 2010: 429). In other words, monetary value is by now clearly linked to the public display and mediation of personal emotion, and gossip blogs invite these performances through their humour. Humour works here like a lubricant for social online interaction: The funnier or the more scabrous a story is, the stronger readers might be affected by it and so impelled to act. This is clearly not an automated and therefore inevitable result. Users still have agency to resist or redirect such

an intensity, but as Paasonen suggests, 'the stickiness, or the "grab" (Senft, 2008: 46) of a discussion thread...depends on the intensities it affords' (Paasonen, 2015: 30). In other words, the higher the emotions, the higher the click labour which readers undertake and this click labour, in turn, determines the revenue that can be gained through targeted advertising. Gossip blogs represent as such a concrete social media space where the affective flows deriving from attention and consumer input are organised and controlled for value extraction. They illustrate the increased importance of affective investments as sources of value.

But how do readers build this affective and emotional complexity of a blog and add affective value? In order to answer this question I draw on Jodie Dean's notion of 'communicative capitalism' (Dean, 2010) and Sara Ahmed's notion of 'affective economies' (Ahmed, 2004). Dean argues that communicative capitalism relies increasingly on contributions for value production, for it is user contribution that keeps communication flowing and networks pulsing with new data to mine and exploit. Moreover, from her perspective, social media does not only spread content and attendant ideologies but also affect. She argues convincingly that it is online interaction which circulates and intensifies affect:

> Blogs, social networks, Twitter, YouTube: they produce and circulate affect as a binding technique. Affect...is what accrues from reflexive communicating...from endless circular movements of commenting, adding notes and links, bringing in new friends and followers, layering and interconnecting myriad communications platforms and devices. Every little tweet or comment, every forwarded image or petition, accrues a tiny affective nugget, a little surplus enjoyment, a smidgen of attention that attaches to it, making it stand out from the larger flow before it blends back in. (Dean, 2010: 95)

For Dean, tweets or comments are not only texts but they are also tiny affective nuggets which cohere and fuel communicative capitalism. Thus, by commenting on a funny blog post about a celebrity figure, readers undertake not only the immaterial labour of creating new online content but they also add to affective value of the blog.

The accumulation of affective value through user interaction can also be explained through Sara Ahmed's concept of 'affective economies'. Here Ahmed draws on Marx's theory of capital to develop a framework that illustrates the way in which affect 'travels' and accumulates value through circulation. She writes:

> Affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs (= the accumulation of affective value). Signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become. (Ahmed, 2004: 45)

In the context of a humorous blog post we could say that a funny post accrues affective value when many users interact with it and touch it virtually through their commenting and re-posting. The more interaction there is, the 'stickier' with affect the post becomes.

Dean and Ahmed illustrate how affect and action combine to make a layering or accumulation of density that allows value extraction. As Ahmed reminds us, affect travels but it also comes to stick to certain bodies and signs through repetition and constant interaction. This section has illustrated that humour functions here as a catalyst for online interaction, thereby contributing to the affective layering of the website which, in turn, can be monetised. Humour fuels the constant shared interaction about essentially 'unimportant' or 'trivial' celebrity issues and is, as such, value creating. Similar to the previous example, humour is not regarded as being outside of work, economy or the productive aspects of the social but deeply embedded within them.

The work of distinction

So far, this article has elaborated how humour can be understood as a form of affective and material labour and a source for value accumulation. This section adds a third way in which humour is put to work in affective capitalism by drawing attention to the content of these blogs. A focus on the content invites us to critically question what this free and affective work of bloggers and blog readers is used for. I follow here Chris Rojek (2010) and Mark Banks (2014) who argue that we should not automatically associate creative, autonomous and freely chosen work with positivity, change and empowerment but that we need to situate this work morally and ethically, by evaluating its context and content. Analysing the humorous content of these blogs brings to the fore that humour functions as an affective-discursive tool for social distinction, while simultaneously concealing the violent and reactionary character of this 'distinction work'.

The violent humour that both blogger and blog readers use and circulate in order to make fun of celebrities might seem at first sight both subversive and democratic: rather than applauding 'talentless' celebrities these gossip blogs provide a public sphere that seems to undermine the often carefully-crafted images that the entertainment industry works tirelessly to cultivate and maintain (Fairclough, 2008). The bitchy humour of these blogs seems to expose the 'true' nature of these (usually) female celebrities thereby challenging the fake or false ideals of talent, youth and beauty circulated by the commercialised celebrity industry. In a wider picture, gossip blogs can therefore be read as a populist

critique of an economic system in which wealth is not often the result of hard work or talent but of ego-driven personality, high visibility, and manipulation.

Such an affirmative reading of humour is complicated when we take into account that its targeting is not evenly distributed across all classes of celebrity but it is mainly directed towards female celebrities that violate traditional ideals of white, middle-class femininity. Celebrities like 'trailer trash' Britney Spears are regularly ridiculed because they are lacking the right cultural capital to manage their wealth and public visibly with prudence. Reality television stars such as Kim Kardashian are dismissed as 'improper' celebrities because their fame is not achieved through labour (hard work, education, training or the application of talent and ability) but through luck, manipulation or proximity to other celebrities (Allen and Mendick, 2013: 3). In an increasingly hierarchized celebrity culture, these female celebrities are judged as working-class femininities because 'they do not have the supposedly innate cultural tastes and decorum that wealthy middle-class people should have' (Cobb, 2008: n.p.). Regardless of their financial circumstances, they represent the undeserving and the undesirable and blogs provide the ideal environment to expel them through derision and laughter so that the knowing reader can position herself as different and superior. This can be seen in a recent blog post on Dlisted.com which contains paparazzi photos of Spears in a casual blue T-Shirt walking down the street (Michael K., 2014). Readers draw in their comments on a violent history of classist discourses about the 'dirty poor' in order to make fun of Spears:

> 'Brit. Girl, go check the mirror - you've got some white trash on your face.' Candypants

> 'Brit is in a desperate need of a good wash!' Seira67

> '... And a good bra.' Dog

These humorous comments are packed full with classist discourses which continually represent working-class femininities as marked by their excessive and troublesome bodies and lifestyles (Lawler, 2005; Tyler, 2013). Moreover, through deriding and shaming Spears as 'dirty' and 'trashy' readers can produce themselves as superior, or as Beverley Skeggs (2004) terms it, as 'subjects of value'. This dovetails nicely with the superiority theory of humour which states that 'humor results...from seeing oneself as superior, right, or triumphant in contrast to one who is inferior, wrong, or defeated' (Meyer, 2000: 314-315). Humour is here not amicable but hostile and serves to mark the boundary between those who are lacking 'symbolic capital' (status, reputation, the right to be listened to) and 'cultural capital' (education, competencies, skills, taste) and those who seemingly possess these resources and can mobilise them through

humour. Through deriding celebrity 'chavs' (Tyler and Bennett, 2010) they can produce themselves as superior and more valuable because they demonstrate that they have the right cultural knowledge to know who is worth of social derision. As Giselinde Kuipers explains:

> From Bourdieu ([1984]2010) we know that knowledge is needed to appreciate particular cultural forms, and that such knowledge is unevenly distributed within society. But knowledge is also required to understand humour. You have to understand a joke to appreciate it. This is one of the mechanisms by which humour marks symbolic boundaries: its appreciation relies on knowledge that some people have, and others do not. Only people familiar with a specific culture, code, language, group, field, or social setting, may be able to 'decode' a joke. (2009: 225)

Thus, knowing that someone lacks symbolic and/or cultural capital is value producing because it demonstrates that you have this knowledge – how else would you recognise that someone else is missing it? From this perspective it becomes clear how humour can be a convenient tool for the culturally privileged to activate their cultural capital (Friedman, 2011) and distinguish themselves from those who are arguably lacking them.

It is, however, noteworthy that this process of boundary making through humour/derision is not only a discursive matter but it is also highly affective. Derision is – like disgust – a bodily affective reaction that aims to expel the improper, the polluted and that what threaten the sense of the proper self (Tyler, 2008). As discussed earlier, the subject of value is produced in opposition to 'the trashy' and yet the trashy cannot do anything but repulse the subject of value. Humour intensifies these feelings of repulse, disgust and contempt which propel affective boundary making because it allows bloggers and readers alike to portray these femininities in excessive, distorted and caricatured ways. This can be seen in a comment which appeared under a blog post which ridiculed Kim Kardashian's swollen feet during her pregnancy:

> Ugh this bitch is so gross. I bet Kanye is going to drop her ass for being a fat piggy bitch. Those cankle looking feet are not sexy. She's just so fucking gross. I can't wait for her and her whole family to just go away. (user comment in Dlisted.com, Michael K., 2013)

Notions of disgust and contempt pervade the comment. It illustrates as such that ridiculing a celebrity is not only affective in the sense that it engenders laughter and smiles but it also elicits negative, visceral feelings: The commentator finds her appearance gross and wishes for them 'to just go away' – physically getting out of her space, distancing themselves from her.

So humour works here as a tool for social stratification by encouraging a derogatory class discourse. But to what extend is this linked to current forms of capitalism? It can be argued that this mediated hatred against the 'chav' celebrity is suggestive of a heightened class antagonism that marks an economic climate of austerity with harsh cuts on public services. In such a climate of deepening economic inequality and stagnating social mobility middle-class interests and values must be protected through symbolic boundary making and humour is a useful tool for doing so. The wealth and fame of those 'undeserving' female celebrities become judged as 'unfair' (Tyler and Bennett, 2010; Tyler, 2008; Jensen and Ringrose, 2014). This dovetails nicely with Jo Littler's and Steve Cross' analysis of Schadenfreude in celebrity consumption. They argue that Schadenfreude 'overwhelmingly works to express irritation at inequalities but not to change the wider rules of the current social system, and its political economy often actually entails it fuelling inequalities of wealth' (Cross and Littler, 2010: 395).

Thus, the Schadenfreude which often finds expression in cynic blog posts and comments, is does not challenge the privileged position for the rich celebrity. Rather this click labour boosts the celebrity industry that depends on the constant rise and fall of their protagonists. For instance, laughing at Kardshian's feet during her pregnancy adds to her marketability because it both actually helps to generate further stories about her while enabling her later 're-invention' as the 'young mother who tries to get back into shape'.

In *The Critique of Cynical Reason*, Peter Sloterdijk (1988) posits that the cynic is no longer an outsider position, but the default point of view in advanced capitalism, whereby cynicism and irony allow space for those who laugh to collude with the ideology they mock. This section follows his argument by illustrating how the 'funny' representations of gossip blogs might seem radical, irreverent and 'democratic' but are indeed very conservative. This is not only because they continue to police women for the physical appearance but also because humour taps here into feelings such as envy, contempt, disgust and anxiety that have always propelled social shaming and justified social inequality (Lawler, 2005; Tyler, 2013). It seems as if celebrity gossip blogs have found a productive way to capitalise in different ways from these 'ugly' feelings while appearing to provide clever entertainment for an elevated audience. Humour is here used to shame celebrities whom we want to shame because we can *see through* their fake star image. Simultaneously humour glosses over how this shaming through derision compels us to undertake click labour which keeps a capitalist system alive.

Conclusion

This article set out to show how humour is put to work in affective capitalism in three different ways. It has shown that humour feeds into affective capitalism because it encourages the kind of creative, precarious, and self-exploitative working conditions that are necessary for value extraction. It argued further that humour is central for the creation of economic profit in social media because humour has the capacity to stimulate online interactions of an affectively 'sticky', and therefore potentially profitable nature. Finally, it showed that humour can create symbolic and cultural value for those who participate in the blog's humour and deride femininities that cannot pass as legitimate. Here it was shown that humour is vital for the workings of affective capitalism because it enables the continuity of reactionary social stratifying and segmentation, under the cover of appearing to be 'just a bit of fun' or even culturally 'subversive'.

The work of humour in affective capitalism is therefore not only a question of identifying the precarious working conditions of professionals within the creative industries and of recognising how affect and action combine to a layering of interactional density that allows for value extraction. Rather, we also need to look at what socially stratifying and segmenting work humour might actually be doing in representational terms. The latter is necessary because representations are generating rather than merely re-presenting the ideas, norms and values that underpin affective capitalism. The role of humour in affective capitalism might therefore be quite a cynical one: Humour can give us the impression that we 'see through' an issue from an elevated position while simultaneously compelling us to engage in practices that only reinforce it. This compulsion to act in conformity with the system even though we 'see through' it is the force that makes affective capitalism so powerful and humour such an ideal partner in crime.

Appendix 1

Gossip Blog	Earnings per day in advertising revenue
Perezhilton.com	$1,153 USD
Egotastic.com	$1,046 USD
JustJared.com	$1,008 USD
Thesuperficial.com	$708 USD
Wwtdd.com	$471 USD
Dlisted.com	$412 USD
Laineygossip.com	$182 USD
Hollywoodtuna.com	$179 USD
Celebitchy.com	$177 USD

Drunkenstepfather.com	$173 USD
Theybf.com	$159 USD
Realitytea.com	$140 USD
Pinkisthenewblog.com	$33 USD
Icydk.com	$15 USD
IDontLikeYouInThatWay.com	$5 USD
Celebslam.com	$5 USD
Defamer.com	$4 USD

All data is retrieved from http://www.mustat.com/ on January 7th 2015

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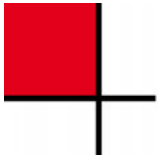
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Doing good reality, masculine care, and affective capitalism

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abstract

In recent years reality television has increasingly been preoccupied with various forms of charity and humanitarian work. This article explores the question of affective capitalism in the emergence of 'doing good' reality by focusing on particular masculine representations of care. It is argued that the 'doing good' television (also referred to as ethical entertainment, charity TV and makeover humanitarianism) exemplifies affective capitalism and resonates with at least two larger shifts: the increased commercialization of the humanitarian field and the increased convergent strategies in digitalized media environment. While much of the work on affective economies of reality TV has focused on women's work, this article explores what happens when men perform care in popular television. By focusing on two case studies (*Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset, Duudsonit tuli taloon*), this article points out how emotions and affectivity work across gender and appear as significant part of masculine representations of humanitarianism and care work. The masculine humanitarians of reality TV propose new kind of authenticity to humanitarian work through self-made expertise and down-to-earth sentimentality. Moreover these shows use the convergent strategies of online participation to monetize the sentiments of compassion to humanitarian organizations as well as the brand of the celebrities. By acknowledging the popularity and enthusiasm evoked by these reality shows, the article critically discusses the contradictory implications of doing good reality for solidarity and care work at large.

Introduction

On the popular Finnish reality show *Duudsonit tuli talon* (*DTT*), four men[1] who were previously known for their live stunt performances on the television show *Extreme Duudesonit* now help to solve different families' various problems. These problems include family members' feelings of marginalization in their community due to disability, poverty, or their ethnic background as well as problems inside the family due to divorce, loss of a family member, or other hardships. In each episode, the 'Dudesons' arrive at the family home to help by using their straightforward style, which involves pushing the boundaries of everyday life with pranks, extreme stunts, and public performances. In this format, the tough guys of entertainment television have found a social mission – they use their fame for doing good. This shift from reality stunts to care work depicts the emergence of a larger trend of 'doing good' (Ouellette and Murray, 2009: 2-3) or 'ethical entertainment' (Hawkins, 2001) in television culture. It involves 'examinations of ways to live: information about the care and management of the self, [and] explorations of the tensions between collective versus self-interest' (Hawkins, 2001: 412-413). Television industries have realized that philanthropist perspectives can be profitable and add value to shows (Driessens et al., 2012). This kind of 'charity TV' illustrates an amalgam of television entertainment and aid organizations that require publicity and attention[2]. Examples of such shows include *Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset* (*AKK*) (Finland 2014, Channel Jim), funded by Plan Finland, where reality TV host Arman Alizad searches for the child he sponsored in Cameroon; *Go back to where you came from* (Australia 2010 to present, SBS), an Australian series created in co-operation with UNHCR, which uses the reality format to depict refugees' journeys as experienced by ordinary Australians; and *Extreme makeover: home edition* (USA 2003-2012, ABC), where new homes are built for families that have experienced unusual hardships (Douglas and Graham, 2013; Ouellette, 2012). *DTT*, *AKK*, and *Go back* have also won national television prizes for their social address[3]. The 'doing good' reality concept has gained some foothold in

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1   The members of the Dudesons are as follows: Jarppi Leppälä, Jukka Hildén, Jarno Laasala, and Hannu-Pekka Parviainen. *Extreme Duudsonit* (Finland, 2001 to present) was produced by their production company, Rabbit Films. That was followed by *Dudesons in America* (Finland-USA, 2010), a series filmed in the US in co-operation with Johnny Knoxville and Jeff Tremaine from the equivalent American show, *Jackass*. The Dudesons' homepage is located at http://dudesons.com/.

2   Also defined as makeover humanitarianism (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015).

3   *DTT* awards: *Formaatti-Finlandia*: The best domestic TV format 2012, and Golden Venla: The best TV programme 2012, The best reality TV programme 2013 and 2014. *AKK* awards: Golden Venla: The rift of the year 2014, Arman Alizad the best performer 2013. *Go back* awards: Australian teachers award 2011, International

global television markets. The format used in *Go back* has been sold to at least nine countries, while the *DTT* format has been sold to four other countries[4]. Laurie Ouellette and James Hay (2008: 36, 55) connect this emergence of 'charity TV' with liberal governance that draws on a promise of empowerment through self-help and fosters citizenship through the practices of volunteerism and philanthropy. While this is identified particularly in the context of the United States, the concept has also gained popularity in Europe with a similar promise of empowerment through entrepreneurism (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015).

I argue that the phenomenon of 'doing good' television is connected with broader structural shifts in media production and humanitarianism due to increased commercialization and digitalization. In this article I discuss these changes through the notion of affective capitalism. The article explores how affective capitalism works in two 'doing good' reality progammes, *Duudsonit tuli taloon* (*DTT*) and *Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset* (*AKK*). First, the article explores 'doing good' reality particularly from a gendered point of view. In their seminal work on reality TV as a technology of affect, Beverly Skeggs and Helen Wood (2008; Wood et al., 2009) argue that the management of intimate relationships and the visualization of women's domestic work in reality television display the ways in which 'capital is engaged with socialization of affective capacities' (Skeggs and Wood, 2008: 560). By sensationalizing intimate relationships, reality television also educates on normal and ideal (gendered) versions of care and relationships. This article extends that focus on the construction of *masculine* care in the context of humanitarian communication by showing how masculine authority is reclaimed and extended to the areas of help and care work. Second, the article explores online participation of the digital television culture to examine how the sentiments of compassion, evoked through 'doing good' reality television, are monetized. Before going into the case studies, I will introduce the theoretical concept of affective capitalism and the ways in which it connects with reality television.

Affective capitalism

For some time now, scholars in media and cultural studies have pointed out how capital has extended into new spaces, 'creating new markets by harnessing affect and intervening in intimate, domestic relationships' (Skeggs, 2010: 30). This is

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Emmy award, an Australian ACCTA, and a Logie award 2012 (for more on *Go back* see Nikunen, 2015).

4   *DTT* has been sold to France, Germany, Denmark and Norway with the title *Rockstar home invasion*; however, the show has not been realized in any of these countries by 2016.

part of a longer development that is connected with the emergence of service economies in areas of care and help (Hochschild, 1983/2003, 2012; Reber, 2012). The marketization of intimate life, feelings, and care work has been discussed in terms of emotional capitalism (Illouz, 2007) and affective economy (Skeggs, 2010; Skeggs and Wood, 2008). These concepts describe the extension of capital into the intimate domain, such as relationships, in the post-Fordist era. This means that private spaces (such as the home) and activities connected with privacy (caring, helping, and nurturing) are increasingly subsumed within capitalism. These developments coincide with the development of digital technologies through which knowledge and information are used increasingly as areas of continuous self-improvement and self-promotion. Personal and voluntary digital participation becomes part of professional productions (Staples, 2007).

In this sense, affective capitalism refers to structural shifts in the production processes of cultural industries with blurred borderlines between public and private, increased time-flexibility, individualization, and entrepreneurialism (Hearn, 2011; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; Hochschild, 2012; Terranova, 2000). These changes characterize the lives of many self-employed bloggers, writers, and performers whose work and private lives are entangled. These changes are also present in the ways in which audiences are increasingly invited to voluntarily engage in the production processes.

At the core of the scholarly discussion on affective capitalism is the attempt to understand the changing conditions of cultural production and the ways in which value is generated from immaterial actions, such as affect, knowledge, care, and emotions (Hochschild, 1983/2003; 2012; Skeggs, 2010; Terranova, 2000)[5]. In the literature concerning affective capitalism, affect seems to refer to feelings, emotions, communication, cognition, relationships, or even participation in general, or anything that creates hidden or indirect value in digital media[6]. Such broadness sometimes makes it difficult to assess what is

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5   The debate on affective or immaterial labour responds largely to work by autonomist Marxists (particularly Hardt and Negri, 2000); however, this is not in the center of argumentation here.

6   Even the so-called affective turn includes various definitions and understandings of affect (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010; see also discussion on affect in feminist theory, Liljeström and Paasonen, 2009). While Sara Ahmed and Beverley Skeggs tend to use affect and emotions interchangeably and connected with the meaning-making process, Nigel Thrift (2008), among others, discusses affect as emergent, becoming, and unattainable – and ultimately separate from consciousness and representation (see Wetherell, 2012).

meant by affective or emotional capitalism. To clarify, I define, in line with Skeggs (2010) and Ahmed (2004), affect in this paper as an emotional dimension as represented and evoked by media. I do not consider affect to be something 'uncanny' and beyond the meaning-making process, but an essential part of it (see Wetherell, 2012); the focus in this article is how emotions are mobilised in humanitarian reality television on the levels of representation and participation.

In terms of affective capitalism, I identify two areas of investigation that bear relevance for the purposes of this article. First, I explore affective capitalism in terms of the commodification of emotionally saturated activities that often concern relationships and take place in the private sphere (care, help, mourning, love, and affection). In the context of reality television, commodification is realized through representations and visualizations of emotional activity and relationships (such as care, compassion, and mourning). The reality television genre is preoccupied with the care and help of others, such as finding a better diet, house, wardrobe, or education. By dealing with care, help, sharing, and emotions, these programmes are part of an economy that makes value of emotional and affective activity of different kinds. As argued by Skeggs and Wood (2008: 560), the affective and emotional labour that is embedded in entertainment and lifestyle programmes makes caring an explicit responsibility to be performed. At the same time, it is a marketable essence of television shows. Thus humanitarian reality shows that focus on doing good, both market and propose claims of ideal forms of care and help (Illouz, 2007; Skeggs and Wood, 2008: 560). Much of the research in this area focuses on representations of women's care work, maintaining that women's lives in particular become commodified through affective capitalism (Skeggs, 2010). This article however demonstrates the value of masculine care in television entertainment.

Second, I discuss affective capitalism in terms of immaterial aspects of (voluntary) labour or participatory activities of maintenance, caretaking, supporting, and sharing in digital environments. Voluntary work and unpaid contributions are seen as characteristics of affective capitalism in the digital media industry (Andrejevic, 2011; Arvidsson and Colleoni, 2012; Terranova, 2000: 37-8)[7]. Terranova argues that digital economy makes use of activities that are often difficult to recognize as forms of labor, such as participation in chat rooms, mailing lists, and amateur online productions. Voluntary participation by

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7   The participatory cultures and free labour within digital media industries have been discussed in terms of exploitation; however, this view has been criticized for simplified value-creation models, unprecise notion of work, and failure to take into account the sense of agency or pleasure included in voluntary labour and activities (Hesmondhalgh, 2010; see also Jarrett, 2014).

users adds credibility and weight to online sites: the more vibrant discussions and activities online sites have, the more likely they are to strive for and attract advertising. The recognition of the value of such voluntary work for media industries marks the shift in value creation from the factory to the social networks (Terranova, 2000).

The quality and relevance of this kind of voluntary 'work' by audiences has also been discussed in terms of gender. Kylie Jarrett (2014), drawing on Leopoldina Fortunati (1995), uses the term 'women's work' to describe value-creation in digital media. This refers to social, reproductive work as 'differentiated from production economics of industrial workplace' (*ibid.*: 15). Jarrett argues that, for example, Facebook 'likes' and the sharing of news and images represent forms of participation that share the characteristics of social maintenance and reproduction of women's work that the economics of digital media industry relies on.

The link between women and care work appears to be relevant in the discussion of affective capitalism. First, there is an empirical connection between women and care work. This is important from the perspective of this article particularly in the context of humanitarianism. Humanitarian work and philanthropy have historically formed an avenue for (middle class) women in Western societies to enter public life and realize their role in civil societies (Jordansson and Vammen, 1998; Martin, 2008; Roberts, 2013; Saarinen, 1994). This historically gendered formation of humanitarianism bears relevance for the ways in which the humanitarian field is understood even today; for example, more 'natural' for women. It is therefore also an essential starting point for the construction of masculine representations of care work. It is the foundation on which the new set of meanings and value for 'doing good' reality TV are created. By focusing on representations of masculine care, this paper exposes and explores the gendered understanding of emotions and care work in the context of humanitarianism.

Second, as discussed above, Jarrett has made the connection between the characteristics of digital participation and the characteristics of women's work as reproductive, voluntary, and adaptable. While I understand this in principle, I find it problematic to theorize digital participation through such a narrow understanding of women's work as it entails the risk of universalizing and essentializing understandings of gender and work[8]. Therefore, my purpose here

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8   I do agree with the feminist critique of the gendered division of labour that is based on reliance on unpaid domestic work by women and not addressed enough in theorizations of immaterial labour (see McRobbie, 2011). Here, however, I am concerned with the adaptation of the idea of women's (domestic) work directly to the digital environment. Such appropriation of the term might lead to an understanding

is not to interpret digital participation through gendered notions of care but rather to show that a gendered understanding of care itself acquires different meanings in different contexts and across time. Thus, this paper investigates how 'doing good' attaches value to particular masculine reality performances and how these performances might be applied to ensure affective responses in digital participation. Relevant here are the ways in which audience participation is channelled: who benefits from it and what are the structures of humanitarianism that digital participation supports.I understand that the value of affect and emotion is created beyond commodity logic, not only as a matter of calculation, but also as a matter of morality and justice. Therefore, the ways in which these reality programmes address audiences connects with questions of social justice, the good life, and moral education.

The affective technology of humanitarianism

Since many humanitarian reality programmes are created in co-operation with aid organizations, it is useful to understand the ways in which affective capitalism connects with humanitarian organizations. Like most areas of culture and the economy today, humanitarian organizations are challenged by neo-liberalist structures of individualization and marketization (Barnett and Snyder, 2008). These changes have affected humanitarian organization across the globe. In Finland, ever scarcer resources and an increasingly competitive market have led aid organizations to adopt commercialized forms to address the public while simultaneously reflecting on the ways in which these changes shape and alter the core values of humanitarian work (Johansson, 2014). Traditional forms of humanitarian action have been accompanied by more non-governmental organizations – the so-called new humanitarianism – with a variety of actors from the military to commercial corporations and online technology firms (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012; Redfield, 2008; Schloms, 2003). In addition, transformations in the media environment with individualization, digitalization, and multiplication of media platforms have made it challenging to reach the public (Orgad and Seu, 2014). The fragmentation of audiences into smaller groups is accompanied by a diversity of interpretations (Höijer, 2004; Seu, 2010; Tester, 2001) and a growing cynicism towards aid campaigns (Chouliaraki, 2010). The audience practices of participation and the emergence of post-deferential culture (Andrejevic, 2013: 10-13) seem to have added reflexivity and access to information in ways that question traditional, emotionally-oriented aid

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of women as naturally more caring than men, a stereotype that underlines justifications of segregation in labour markets, also in the cultural industries (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008).

campaigns (Chouliaraki, 2013: 74). In this media environment, in which audiences are able to reshape, circulate, and manipulate news and images, programmes that aim to teach and educate people on how to feel towards others' suffering can easily appear patronizing.

To tackle these challenges, humanitarian organizations increasingly use affective technologies of digital media to reach the public. With affective technologies, I refer to the capacity of new media technologies to incorporate the moral imperative to act through participatory forms of digital media, such as tweets and online donations. In the humanitarian field, this has become a vital area of action. In technologized environments, care becomes quantified and measured by clicks, site visits, and 'likes'. Indeed, relying on and attracting audience participation, quantified online presence, and voluntary donations follows the logic of affective capitalism (Jarrett, 2014: 23). Lilie Chouliaraki (2010; 2013) describes this with the notion of post-humanitarianism. Post-humanitarianism involves a shift in humanitarian communication from grand emotions to playful self-expression, enhanced by new media technology and audience participation, also described as selfie humanitarianism (Koffman et al. 2015).

In a digital media environment, reality television provides an avenue for aid organizations to reach audiences by addressing the two areas discussed above: authenticity and participation. Authenticity is vital for getting the message through, while participation is needed to acquire donations. Both aspects are connected with doing good reality TV in specific ways. The technologized participation of reality television strives to make use of the audiences' affective responses, while visualizing the sentiments of care and compassion propose a sense of authenticity. I will move on to discuss in detail these dimensions of affective capitalism in the humanitarian reality television shows *Arman ja Kamerunin kummilapset* (AKK) and *Duudsonit tuli taloon* (DTT).

Self-made masculine care work

AKK (Arman and the children of Cameroon) is a Finnish television programme produced by Arman Alizad's production company, Armanin Maailma, and sponsored by the Finnish branch of the children's development charity, Plan Finland. The programme was broadcast in Finland on 14 April 2014 and rerun on Christmas Eve 2014. In the show, reality TV presenter and producer Arman Alizad travels to Cameroon to meet the child that he sponsored (so called godchild). The host, Iranian-born Arman Alizad, is famous in Finland for his streetwise and outspoken extreme reality show *Kill Arman* (2009-2010, Channel Jim) and his adventure television series *Arman and the last crusade* (2013-2014,

Channel Jim). This series followed Arman's experiences in extreme and dangerous situations in different parts of the globe, including living in a slum in Manila, Philippines and begging for money with the street children in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

In *AKK*, Arman travels to Eastern Cameroon to meet Assanga, who belongs to the vulnerable Baka tribe. Arman's quest is to find his godchild and, at the same time, inform audiences about the vulnerability of the Baka people and encourage donations for Plan Finland's child sponsor project. Arman appears as a streetwise expert who interacts and jokes with people, performing as their peer rather than as a distant helper. The sense of real, unscripted scenes is underlined by the ways in which Arman speaks to the camera and to his Finnish audience. Contrary to typical mediation of humanitarian projects, he uses colloquial language and ironic expressions.

This street-wise attitude also forms the core of the address in the other case study in this article, *Duudsonit tuli taloon (Rockstar home invasion)*. *DTT* follows the reality TV genre of helping 'ordinary' people in need through charitable interventions (Ouellette and Hay, 2008). In each episode, the four members of the Dudesons enter the home of those being helped. During the first season (2012), the problems were related to the internal dynamics of the families, whereas the second and third seasons (2013/2014) focused more on social issues, such as school bullying or marginalization due to racism or disabilities. The Dudesons enter the homes of the troubled children and youth to solve these problems using common sense and a 'badass'. For example, episode five on 'Marginalized refugees' (2014) focused on a Vietnamese refugee family that had settled in a small town in Eastern Finland called Punkalaidun. The Dudesons' task was to fight racism and help the family to be accepted in the community. To do this, the group organized various events including pranks, explosives and local games and a music event. The solutions in each episode of *DTT* are enacted and embodied through spectacles where people are expected to transform and exceed their limitations concerning fears or prejudices. *DTT* has gained popularity and garnered national attention for topics such as school bullying and marginalization. In addition to television performances, the group has participated in several events and toured Finnish schools with their 'We don't bully' campaign in 2014.

Both programmes appropriate reality TV aesthetics that merge the theatrical and the everyday to create a sense of engaging immediacy (Raphael, 2009) and authenticity (McCarthy, 2009). The underlining message of both programmes is the possibility of a better life through transformation. Thus the programmes propose a narrative of what constitutes valuable life and how it can be achieved.

Both programmes introduce masculine expertise as a response to problems in relationships and, in this way, extend masculine expertise in areas of care and intimacy. The hosts acquire self-made expertise that is typical of reality TV (Ouellette and Hay, 2008: 3). The expertise is built on problem-solving techniques, step-by-step demonstrations, and intimate feedback, all of which creates a sense of a grassroots education and real-life lessons. Through the show, the Dudesons have acquired a role as experts in areas of domesticity, family relationships, raising children, and social marginalization, whereas Arman appears as the expert voice of care for distant suffering. In this way, reality television constructs new forms of education or pedagogy where experts teach 'ordinary' people how to eat, dress, cook, decorate, fall in love, raise children, or solve personal problems (Ouellette and Murray, 2009; Redden, 2007). Through these representations, care work becomes commodified as something that educates on how to have a good life with a new marketable package for television audiences (Deller, 2014; Skeggs and Wood, 2008). Yet, these two programmes propose self-made expertise in distinctly different ways. Arman appropriates a cosmopolitan dimension of aid work through the scope of the programme as well as through his persona and Iranian origins. As a representative of the new immigrant population of Finland, he negotiates and bridges the different social contexts and the distance between the wealthy North and the global South. Arman's role as a mediator between these different worlds is underlined in his recent shows, created by his own production company, that build on his experiences and travels in the global South. As for DTT, starring four blond Nordic men, expertise of care is proposed in a national context. The star image of the Dudesons capitalises on the outlaw masculinity of the rural area of Ostrobothnia, famous for its history of knife fighters and troublemakers. Having been able to achieve an international television career with their boyish pranks and stunts, the group has become an object of national pride. Thus, while Arman proposes humanitarian work in the cosmopolitan frame, the Dudesons address transformation towards better life in the national context of Finland.

Both programmes appropriate streetwise expertise that bears particular significance in the context of humanitarianism. Replacing the traditional educational tone with a more adventurous approach creates a sense that the message is credible and produces the effect of an accentuated reality, taking place here and now. *DTT* and *AKK* represent television culture, where things appear to be shown 'as they are' rather than as they should be. Foul language, conflicts, unscripted events, and strong emotions remove aid work from noble properness to a grassroots approach with a sexy twist of excitement. On-camera addresses and straightforward attitudes offer a sense of no-nonsense pedagogy that appears useful for everyday life.

For example, Arman educates audiences in a straight forward way by visualizing his own experiences with the Baka. He shows concretely, step-by-step, by searching for food, fishing, and visiting a local school, that life in the jungle is hard and therefore donations are needed to get school books for children who can acquire a better life through education (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015). The Dudesons' expertise is likewise concrete. In the episode where the Dudesons help the refugee family to integrate, they organize a community event of 'Finnish games' such as the 'wife carrying competition'. Locals and refugees are 'mixed' in pairs in a competition where men carry women through a rough racetrack. The aim is to enhance a sense of community through spectacular events that force people to encounter and appreciate each other. This tone departs drastically from what is usually associated with humanitarian messages and care work. The gendered and class-bound dimensions of the shift are fundamental: the image of masculine humanitarian draws on toughness and practicality rather than softness and literal education.

These grass root approaches emphasize bodily dimensions of help and connect care to physical labour, which in turn attaches material value to humanitarian and care work. This becomes emblematic in scenes where Arman is shown carrying wood (12:24), climbing a tree (23:00), catching fish with the Baka (37:20), and carrying sacks of rice (41:40) to their village. This is also the case in *DTT* in scenes where the Dudesons wrestle, play sports, and create spectacles with explosives. Care and aid work appear as hard physical work and fun that is exemplified through the masculine body. Illustratively, in one of the final scenes, Arman concludes that the connection between him and his god-daughter Assanga was not found through words, it was found by *doing*. Thus humanitarian work is material and concrete; it is doing rather than talking. The new pedagogy of reality TV refashions care work with 'masculine' meanings in a genre that is often seen as a women's genre (i.e. *How clean is your house, What not to wear, Wife swap,* see Skeggs, 2010: 43). These men arrive in the scene as rescuing heroes who are able to solve a range of problems, but they do not necessarily appear to be morally superior to the individuals who they are helping. In the humanitarian context, this imagery of the masculine helper-hero proposes a transformation from educated femininity to ordinary masculinity and exemplifies a demotive turn in pedagogy (Turner, 2011). The masculinization of expertise is crucial to the ways in which help and care are performed as applicable, common sense solutions.

Both Arman and the Dudesons apply playfulness and humor in their streetwise acts. At the same time, they emphasize dangerous travels (*AKK*) and destructive stunts (*DTT*) as an essential part of their care work. By combining humor and danger, they perform help with heroic manhood acts (Schrock and Schwalbe,

2009) that draw on the imagery of adventurous men conquering new territories. This time the territory is that of care work, intimacy, and humanitarian help. Indeed, these shows demonstrate not only the transformation in humanitarian communication but the ways in which this transformation involves a restoration of masculine authority by extending and claiming expertise in private life, care and aid work.

Tears of solidarity

The self-made expertise described above is importantly accompanied, and authenticated, with emotionality. For example, in the final scene in the *DTT* episode concerning the Vietnamese refugee family, the locals, gathered in a dance hall, cheer as the daughter of the family sings in Finnish. This final scene is cross-edited with comments by the Dudesons who describe their emotions in the moment: 'Shivers went down my spine when the crowd started to dance together and the place practically melted. I felt a bit puzzled myself, is this really happening?' recounts Jarno Laasala (Season 3, episode 5, 37:10). In another episode concerning divorce, Jukka Hilden explains the situation to the camera in a broken voice and with tears in his eyes: 'We didn't believe in this when we started this... but their life actually changed, the children's lives changed.' (Season 3, episode 3, 39-40:00.) These emotional reactions follow the realization that, they, the Dudesons, have made a difference in someone's life.

Figure 1: The Dudesons' Jukka Hildén emotional in episode 3, season 3. Image still by Kaarina Nikunen, under fair use.

These emotional moments form a standard element of each episode of *DTT* and they are what Laura Grindstaff (2002) describes as the 'money shots' of the

reality format. The emotional is visualized through scenes where the men explain their inner feelings directly to the camera, in tears, and with a cracking voice. These tearful moments operate to prove that the mission is genuine and add an affective value to their star image.

In a similar way, though less tearfully, Arman shows an emotional bond with the locals in scenes where his godchild finally takes his hand (39:40), or in scenes where he, upset about injustice and vulnerability of the Baka people (26:40, 28:50), addresses the camera to the accompaniment of dramatic music (30:40). Arman expresses anger and frustration towards the logging companies that are destroying the surrounding forests (36:00), as well as concern over the future of the Baka people who move from the jungle to the city (42:30). Arman's intensive and emotional address, which reminds audiences of global injustices, has become a recognizable trademark. It is something that his earlier series are remembered for.

Figure 2: Arman explains the struggles of Baka-people. Image still by Kaarina Nikunen, under fair use.

The *feel* of solidarity is visualized in close-ups where men narrate the personal involvement and emotional effect of their work. Such affective moments of confession 'shore up semblances of authenticity' (Davis et al., 2014; see also Biressi and Nunn, 2005). They operate to reveal the true emotion that helping others engenders: the emotional reward of doing good. The combination of adventure and care proposes a tough masculinity that is accentuated by a sensitivity, which in turn constructs a particular form of acceptable citizenship (Deller, 2014). Such sentimentality resonates with the reality TV representations of national heroes, the police and the firemen that humbly labour for the safety and security of the community and the nation (Carroll, 2008; Kirby, 2013). Thus,

the emotions, resulting from labour of care, become aligned with social responsibility and collective good. This is citizenry built with the intimacy and appropriated through the trope of the sentimental soldier-hero (Koivunen, 2012). As argued by Hamilton Carroll (2008) in her research on working-class masculinity, the combination of steel and tears, valor and sacrifice, are essential characteristics of sentimental masculinity that is proposed on reality TV in response to post-industrialist economy and the collapse of the division between public and private. The sweat and tears of solidarity in *DTT* and *AKK* propose similar sentimental citizenry of neoliberal times.

This sentimentality is essentially connected with post-humanitarianism. By circulating the feel of solidarity, these shows illustrate the post-humanitarian ethos of self-expression and privileging the Western self, through whose eyes and emotions we learn about the troubles and suffering of others (Chouliakraki, 2013). The emotional responses of the hosts, Arman and the Dudesons, operate as affective facts (Massumi, 2010: 54) and as moral education, showing viewers how to react and what to feel in those situations. This is how post-humanitarianism collides with affective capitalism. Building on individuality and entrepreneurship with elements of self-made expertise and sentimentality, the programmes propose humanitarianism in a marketable package.

Importantly, both Arman and the Dudesons are entrepreneurs with their own production companies through which this emotional labour of helping others is made and marketed. Clearly, the masculine tears of doing good hold market value in the contemporary television industry. Similarly to how misery has become a marketable commodity in the genre of talk television (Illouz, 2003), tears of solidarity carry (moral and monetary) value for humanitarian reality television. Here, the moral value being generated from care and emotions benefits particularly, but not solely, the media image of the hosts, Arman and the Dudesons. Both the Dudesons' and Arman's public images have grown from being reality entertainers to caring citizens who use their fame to alleviate the suffering of others. Through affective performances on TV, related campaigns, and images circulating on Facebook and Twitter, Arman and the Dudesons have achieved a star image with social responsibility, thus following the trend of Hollywood stars in doing good (Kapoor, 2013; Littler, 2008; Mustafanezhad, 2013; Repo and Yrjölä, 2011). Humanitarian organizations gain value through the visibility and through the refashioning of humanitarian work: it appears to be fun, adventurous, uncomplicated, and down-to-earth (Orgad and Nikunen, 2015). Yet, there is more value to be collected through online participation.

Volunteering citizens

As argued in the beginning of this article, reality TV, as a popular and immersive genre, offers an interesting avenue for humanitarian organizations to garner the attention of wide audiences and turn audience participation into humanitarian action. Audience participation forms an important dimension of the shows and it is essential in their multiplatform strategies (Andrejevic, 2013; Jenkins, 2006). Instead of creating one programme, the message is distributed in multiple platforms, including TV advertising, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube channels. *AKK*, for example, was aired as a must-see event that was promoted through multi-platform advertising through television, radio, and the internet. The real-time viewing of the show was particularly relevant for Plan Finland, which ran direct donation bids during each commercial break of the show. As the host, Arman's role was extended into the commercials, and he also made a special appearance in a live episode of a comedy series the following evening. Finnish television channel Nelonen and Plan Finland applied convergent media strategies to create an event that would carry on beyond the programme. Social media provided another platform for potential donations. According to Plan Finland, this strategy was highly successful and increased their visibility and donations (Laiho, 2014). For humanitarian organizations in particular, the way in which television programmes build avenues for donations – through narratives, advertisements, and social media – creates opportunities to reach audiences and obtain donations on multiple levels. They use the emotional response engendered by the series to garner attention and donations for the organization. These donations are also relevant for the media company as a sign of success that can attract other funders, and therefore they form an important *promise* for the economic structure of production. The ways in which digital platforms and convergent media strategies are used to harness the sentiment of care and compassion among audiences appear as a model case of affective technologies of humanitarianism.

While *DTT* follows similar convergent logics of multiple platforms and adaptations, the direction of action is quite different from AKK. *DTT* is recycled as video-clips on multiple platforms including the TV channels' website, the Dudesons' own website, and Youtube, and sold separately as DVDs. Audiences can take a look at the most moving moments of the series, bloopers, or extras. Although different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social agents have helped the group in the series, no connections are made with NGOs on the website. The case of the Vietnamese refugee family was introduced by a local refugee worker from the Red Cross; however, the Red Cross is not mentioned in the programme. This may of course be at their own request; however, all the online material concerns only the Dudesons and their own productions. Thus,

the 'doing good' dimension evoked by the series is directed at building the star image of the Dudesons rather than towards the organizations that are responsible for care and aid work on a permanent basis. Indeed, the development of the Dudesons' brand from pranksters to prominent social figures has been recognized by various corporations and the state. Besides a TV presence, the Dudesons now have their own jewellery and stamp collections that are advertised on their website. Their success has also been recognized with a highly valued invitation by the President of Finland to an Independence Day gala (2013), where they appeared in tailor-made national costumes of Ostrobothnia.[9] Their star image is strongly connected with national branding: they are considered one of the most successful cultural imports of the Finnish television industry.

In these two cases, audience participation operates in different ways. In the case of *AKK*, audience participation is geared to benefit the NGO, Plan Finland, through volunteer donations advertised through multiple platforms. In the case of *DTT*, audience engagement is geared towards building the Dudesons' own brand and production. The actual financial profits from the audience participation are difficult to detect. However, Plan Finland is satisfied with the donations geared through *AKK*. Plan continues co-operation with Arman and a new programme (focusing on Aymara children in Bolivia) has been created as a result of the success of *AKK*. For the Dudesons, audience engagement results in profits through DVDs and merchandise as well as in possibilities to realize new productions. After *DTT*, the Dudesons have created one new TV series (*Posse*) and continued with their original prankster series (*Duudsonit*). The value of audience participation for both shows is that of a promise of funding for future productions. However, the ways in which audiences are addressed and invited to participate in 'doing good' speaks of a broader and a more significant structural shift, namely the privatization of aid, humanitarianism, and welfare. Both cases propose participation in the frame of voluntary work and entrepreneurialism. As such, the programmes invite audiences to realize their citizenship in the structure of privatized humanitarianism and selective philanthropy (Ouellette and Hay, 2008: 55). The problems presented in the reality shows are solved through self-made expertise. The help is offered for chosen and worthy individuals, and further aid is geared through private donations, advertised through the programmes.

While such privatized humanitarianism and welfare may be a familiar phenomenon in the USA, in the Nordic context the role of the state has

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9   Their outfits also made reference to the history of *häjyt* (i.e. troublemakers or knife fighters) from around the mid-nineteenth century in Ostrobothnia, which is the source of many folk legends (see Ylikangas, 1998).

traditionally been strong in terms of providing and distributing help for the marginalized (Christensen and Petersen, 2001). However, as the foundations of the welfare state have been restructured with increased privatization and out-sourcing during the past decades, these new forms of humanitarianism have also found more support and foothold as alternatives for the state-structured development aid and welfare (Julkunen, 2006). Private donations for aid organizations have increased at the same time as public funding for development has decreased (Punainen Risti, 2010, 2012, 2014; Plan, 2014; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Volunteer work has become increasingly visible in the public as a way to maximize citizenry (Nykänen, 2014). For example, in September 2015, the leading national newspaper organized a 'do good' event where citizens could find volunteer work suitable for them. Volunteer work abroad has also become a new business model that attracts young adults from Western countries (Berner, 2014; Höckert, 2015). Both *DTT* and *AKK* are part of this development. They address audiences as individuals who can grow together with the performers on their journey to help others in need. By donating and consuming goods offered by these programmes audiences also support the branding of entrepreneurial solidarities. In this way, the visualization of care proposes particular forms of action connected with larger structural shifts in society.

Conclusions

This article set out to explore the question of affective capitalism in the context of 'doing good' reality. By focusing on men performing care work on popular television, this article wishes to point out how the masculinization of care in the context of humanitarianism operates as part of broader structural transformation in the humanitarian field and in cultural industries. Following the demotive turn in cultural production, the masculinization of care asserts a particular kind of authenticity in the post-deferential world: it offers expertise and emotionality with a sense of reality, efficiency, and common sense. In this way, care work becomes commodified and sold to reality TV audiences. This kind of marketability of care is relevant for humanitarian organizations that suffer from criticisms of elitism and struggle with how to reach audiences. In the digitalized media environment, the participatory dimension of reality TV can be used to gear the sentiment of help to encourage private donations, branding, and entrepreneurialization of philanthropic celebrity (Chouliaraki, 2013:100-101).

How should we then understand the social impact or meaning of these programmes? Surely the fact that helping others in need has become a popular, valued asset and exemplary behaviour in public life is not meaningless. As argued by Beverley Skeggs (2010: 49), 'by manipulating affect, reality television

engages the audience in "feeling" about the things that matter to them'. These performances touch and move thousands of people, who by watching the shows may evaluate their relationships to care and to other people. In these television shows, helping others appears accessible, fun, and even useful. The visualization of men performing care work may encourage and expand the gendered understanding of *who* can perform care work in general. The programmes make the need of help visible and call people to action – to maximize their citizenship. As such, these programmes construct understandings of how to perform care and fight injustice. The question that arises here concerns not whether people should help or care about others but rather *how* they should do that: what are *the conditions of action* that these programmes propose.

Care work, in this televisualized context, happens through voluntary work, by helping individuals fast and efficiently. In line with post-humanitarianism, it offers individualized solutions and emotionally strong televisual moments. Such focus is both based on and strengthens the commercialization and individualization of humanitarianism. Here, the elements of affective capitalism come together: emotions are geared for showing solidarity and caring for others within an individualistic frame that appears as the one efficient and common sense way to act in the contemporary world of injustice. In this sense, it is easy to agree with Ouellette and Hay (2008: 40), who contend that 'doing good' reality neo-liberalizes (and privatizes) social welfare.

An affective response to media representations should not, however, be seen as a matter that can be completely directed or predicted. Affective imageries carry an excess that may induce unexpected responses and social action. They may produce responses that also work beyond their original inspirations and sometimes beyond their limitations. However, reality television operates in the realm of symbolic power and the ways in which understandings of care and opportunities for actions are constructed, matter. These television shows propose horizons for action and avenues for contemplating what is useful, relevant and possible in humanitarian work. More importantly, these reality TV shows are an integral part of the privatization of cultural production with entrepreneurship at the heart of it. While they represent heart-breaking moments of care, they do so by celebrating individualized volunteerism as the efficient form of citizenship that shadows more permanent and sustainable structures of care work. This mobilization of self-made sentimentality exemplifies affective capitalism: although it *feels* good, it works against the structural foundations of equality.

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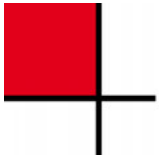
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Understanding affective labor online: a depth-hermeneutic reading of the My 22nd of July webpage

Steffen Krüger

abstract

The article contributes to the theory and study of affective labor with a reading of the Norwegian online memorial page *min 22. juli* (*My 22nd of July*) from a depth-hermeneutic perspective. The *min 22. juli* platform was introduced in July 2012, in the run-up to the first anniversary of the mass-murderous attacks in south-eastern Norway on July 22, 2011, the deadliest in Norwegian history since World War II. In an effort of public commemoration, the platform asked participants to recall and report on their spontaneous personal reactions to the news of the attacks. The article will focus on the emerging forms of interaction between users and platform. Reading both published and censored posts to the platform as symptomatic of the conflicts in user-platform relations, I will locate the main conflict between platform and users in the theme of affectedness itself. Since *min 22. juli* gave participants the double task of *reporting affectively* about their *having been affected*, affect itself became a constitutive, a-priori requirement for participating on the platform; consequently, a lack of affectedness in user responses became the platform's central taboo.

Introduction

On July 22 2011, Anders Behring Breivik, a right-extremist single perpetrator, detonated a car bomb in the Norwegian administrative district in Oslo, killing eight people and injuring over 200. Next, he drove to the youth summer camp of the labor/social-democratic party (Arbeiderpartiet, AP) on the island of Utøya and opened fire on the organizers and participants, killing 69 people and injuring another 110, mostly teenagers, before police forces were able to detain him.

In a country as small as Norway (ca. 5 million), the attacks felt very close to many. A survey conducted by the newspaper *Klassekampen* in August 2011 found 'one out of four people' knew somebody who was 'affected by the terror of the 22nd of July' (Skjeseth, 2011). As the then-prime minister Jens Stoltenberg rightly commented on the findings, 'affected' in this case took on a range of meanings: 'It is those who have lost their closest ones, those who were injured, those who survived horrible things, and all their next of kin and friends across the country. A great many were also affected in a more indirect way.' (Stoltenberg in Skjeseth, 2011)

One year later, in early July 2012 and in the run up to the first anniversary of the attacks, *VG Nett*, the online platform of the biggest Norwegian tabloid daily, *Verdens Gang* (VG), launched the *min 22. juli* (*My 22nd of July*)[1] internet page (www.min22juli.no). Conceived as part of the public commemorations of the tragic events, the page was to give Norwegians a platform for individually articulating the ways in which they had been affected. With this function it positioned itself within the tradition of online commemoration and memorial pages (see Refslund Christensen and Gotved, 2015; Walter, 2015, for an overview and historical contextualization). However, while I acknowledge the page's potential for healing and support inherent in the possibility to share one's experiences with others online (see e.g. Neubaum et al., 2014; Döveling, 2015), my interest here is in the limitations and conflicts that result from the transposition of public mourning into a corporate frame (for the case at hand: VG Nett as platform host), threatening to turn affective work into affective labor. Furthermore, while commodification of mourning (e.g. Engle, 2007), as well as shifts in self-other relations in online mourning (Hjorth and Kim, 2011; Lagerkvist, 2014; Gibbs et al., 2015) have already been taken up in academic research, I will pay specific attention to the emerging forms of interaction (Lorenzer, 1986) that symptomatically point to these shifts and their effects.

Approaching the study of online interaction with a focus on (the distribution of) affect in user-platform relations has implications for the ways in which the field has predominantly been theorized. While research inspired by Erving Goffmann's (1959) dramaturgical approach has often taken a strongly cognitive view on online identity work (e.g. Liu, 2007; Hogan, 2010), giving prevalence to aspects of interest, taste and prestige and to acts such as selecting, curating and exhibiting (Hogan, 2010), this article makes a case for a more relational and conflict-oriented way of understanding that which Goffman calls 'performances'.

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1   In this paper I will use the original title, *min 22. juli*, as well as the English translation *My 22nd of July* indiscriminately. All quotations from posts and other platform-related sources are translated by the author.

The min 22. juli page

The platform's layout already hints at the direction VG Nett wished the affectedness of the platform's users to take. A banner in black, white, and red – in keeping with a modernist-propagandistic color convention, signaling utmost contrast, immediate relevance, and impending action – with a red rose[2] as icon advertised the site, which invited users to contribute an account of their own experience of this fateful day.

Figure 1: Banner, min 22. juli, VG Nett 2012

Users were asked to answer three interrelated, matter-of-fact questions: *Where were you? What did you do? How did you react?* The website suggested logging on via one's Facebook account; in this way, it advised, participants would become instantly enabled to share their story with friends and would in turn be referred to friends' stories. Thus it was not on the *min 22. juli* page itself that one could comment on each other's stories, but on the related Facebook pages. Furthermore, every contributor was requested to indicate the place where the news of the attacks reached them on an embedded Google world map, where the respective account would henceforth be retrievable.
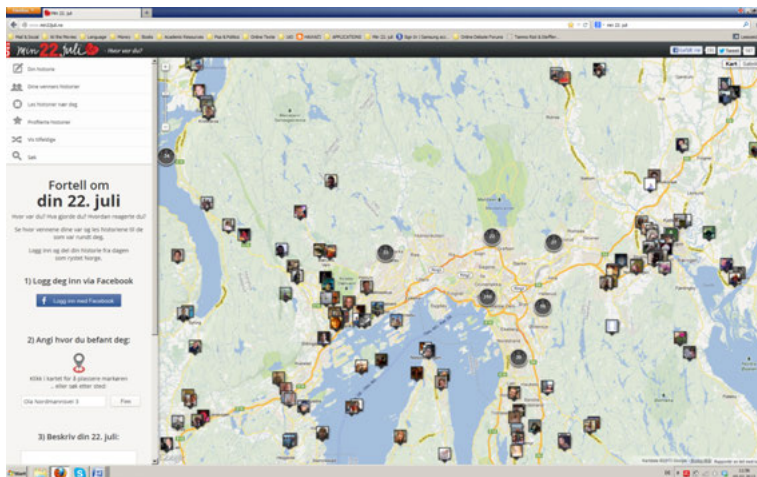

Figure 2: screenshot www.min22juli.no

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2   The red rose is the icon of *Arbeiderpartiet*, the labor party in power which was the main target of Breivik's attacks. Furthermore, flowers had also become the symbol of national unity and peaceful mourning in the wake of the attacks.

Within the first few days after the forum's launch, VG Nett could report that more than 800 people had given their recollections of the experience (Bordvik, 2012a). With more and more vignettes accumulating on the page, the world map soon gave the overall impression of a social eruption with its epicenter in the south-east of Norway causing repercussions all over the globe. The easily available, everyday online tools with which the page facilitated public engagement with tragedy endowed the whole project with characteristics of grassroots 'maptivism' (see Reed, 2014, 133; Elwood and Leszczynski, 2013; Elwood, 2010; Kreutz, 2009). People were given the opportunity not only to engage in and contribute to a collective process of working through but to experience themselves as one such contribution amongst many – part of a movement and a community (see Baym, 2010: 75ff).

With this initiative, VG captured what had been *the* commonplace in Norwegians' private conversations ever since the attacks, transposing a private practice of 'emotional work' (Hochschild, 2012 [1983]) into a public and, to a decisive degree, a consumptive frame. As of today (autumn 2016), the site counts ca. 3.500 submissions – not an insubstantial number in view of *min 22. juli* addressing a Norwegian/ Scandinavian-speaking audience only.

The concept of 'affective labor'

In this paper I want to use the *min 22. juli* platform as an 'object to think with' (Turkle, 1996: 185); and I want to use this object to think about the concept of 'affective labor', as it was introduced by Hardt and Negri (Hardt, 1999; Hardt and Negri, 2000; 2004) and consecutively discussed and elaborated by others (e.g. Dyer-Witheford, 2001a, 2001b; Virno, 2004). In tracing affective labor and its implications for the individual and the sociocultural in the concrete case of an online platform, this paper follows Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2008) critique of immaterial and affective labor in rendering concrete the concept 'with the specificity of culture' (2008: 99).

Hardt and Negri conceived affective labor as a subcategory of 'immaterial labor' – a concept which they had developed together with other autonomist Marxist thinkers, most importantly Maurizio Lazzarato and Paolo Virno throughout the 1990s (Lazzarato, 1996). As part of immaterial labor, which they defined as 'labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 209), affective labor was conceived to cover the aspects of 'human contact and interaction' (Hardt, 1999: 95), which appeared central to immaterial goods but were nowhere accounted for in the theory.

In setting out to delimit affective labor, Hardt and Negri state that it is 'embedded in the moments of human interaction and communication [...]: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community' (Hardt, 1999: 96; Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293; 2004: 108). The exact wording here is important for the article at hand, since it is indeed rather a 'sense of connectedness and community' that the *min 22. juli* produced and not a community in the full sense of the term. While the five categories that Nancy Baym (2010) lists for communities online, i.e. a shared space (or 'reference to geographical location' (2010: 76), shared practice, shared resources and support, shared identities and interpersonal relations (2010: 75–90), are all relevant in relation to the platform, its affordances make clear that it was to be an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006 [1983]). Participants were not meant to enter into direct contact with each other on the platform itself; rather, the platform sought to accumulate individual recollections of 'moments of human interaction' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293) and present these as stemming from and belonging to a shared identity – an ideal that would give the platform's discreet moments their mutual orientation and 'sense of community'. Ultimately, then, the moving experience intended for the user to have in relation to the platform was that of identifying with and showing oneself as a caring, virtuous and just citizen amongst other such citizens. The wish to belong to the national community and to prove this belonging could thus be indulged by participating on the platform. One can thus say with Jodi Dean (2015: 90) that *min 22. juli* sought to 'produce and circulate affect as a binding technique'. By the same token, however, the choice not to participate, or the possibility that one's contribution might not be 'good enough' – one's recollections not sufficiently or appropriately affective – became fraught with questions of belonging that extend beyond the limits of the platform. Paasonen, Hillis and Petit (2015) bring this aspect of affective labor to the fore when they state that 'it both produces and *manipulates* affects' (2015: 7, emphasis added).

Affective labor and its 'revolutionary potential' from a depth-hermeneutic perspective

The understanding of affective labor that I want to unfold in this paper is framed by depth hermeneutics and its method of 'scenic understanding' (Lorenzer, 1970, 1986). With an academic orientation rooted in Frankfurt School critical theory and Freudian psychoanalysis, the German sociologist and psychoanalyst Alfred Lorenzer developed the 'depth-hermeneutic approach to cultural analysis' (1986) throughout the 1970s and 80s. Its central theoretical precept is the co-constitution and mutual implication of the (individually) psychical and the social:

each sphere is *in-formed* by the other, without it being possible to reduce one to the other (Lorenzer, 1972; Bereswill et al., 2010).

The co-constitution of the psychical and the social suggests relationships between individuals and institutions that are based on ongoing negotiations and interactions. While in the majority of cases these relationships are characterized by a power imbalance in the institution's favor, the interactions of individuals nevertheless have the potential to shape the institution in return. This potential comes to the fore in situations in which conflicts between an individual and an institution arise. Should established interaction forms – i.e. the derivatives of an individual's history of interactions and the blueprints for her/his future actions (Lorenzer, 1986: 42ff) – come into conflict with the shaping forces of a given social institution, this conflict can result in contradictory, compromised interactions on part of the individual. True to his Frankfurt School orientation, Lorenzer's approach homes in on these conflicts and contradictions – conflicts in which the affective, relational dimension of a given form of interaction becomes perceivable. It is in these moments of dissonance that Lorenzer sees ingrained the possibilities for individuals to resist the institution's shaping powers and to shape this institution in return. The depth hermeneutic interpretation of the relations between individuals and institutions departs from these moments.

Interestingly, then, what Hardt and Negri call 'revolutionary potential', i.e. 'the potential of insubordination and revolt through the entire set of laboring practices' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 29), Lorenzer finds in conflicted forms of interaction resulting from contradictory laboring practices. To him, the 'revolutionary potential' does not so much reside in explicit, intentional insubordination, but shows in moments of failure and weakness – in failures to adapt to a situation, to perform adequately, to respond appropriately (Bereswill et al., 2010: 239). Such symptomatic articulations do not necessarily become consciously accessible to the subject (Lorenzer, 1972: 128ff). The individual does not necessarily gain insight into its conflictedness, but merely acts upon it.

Consequently, Lorenzer locates the existence of a 'revolutionary potential' in a *collective unconscious* – 'unconscious', because the potential is seen as an effect of a psychical conflict of which the individual is not fully aware; 'collective' because, despite subjective differences, individual symptomatic responses to the same institutional pressures often prove sufficiently similar so as to appear coherent at a cultural level. About the *collective unconscious* Lorenzer writes:

> It consists of praxis figures that demand to be taken into consciousness; it contains forms of life that were denied access to general consciousness and an open inspection of their 'worth'. These 'not-yet-conscious' praxis figures constitute a utopian potential, as one could call it in drawing upon [Ernst] Bloch. To uncover

these [praxis figures] is the task of a hermeneutic that takes a critical stand against the petrified social relations. (Lorenzer, 1986: 28)

Research objectives

Against this background, the direction of my analysis of affective labor on the *min 22. juli* platform becomes clear. I will approach user-platform relations from their points of conflict, i.e. from those scenes in which both the platform's shaping forces and the utopian potential in the users' interactions show. From this vantage point, I argue, it becomes possible to map and interpret the characteristic forms of interaction on the page. Put in concise form, my research is guided by the following questions:

- What forms of interaction did the *min 22. juli* platform render possible? Which impossible?

- How did these forms of interaction, read as symptomatic of user-platform relations, negotiate the affordances and limitations of the platform?

- And ultimately: What revolutionary/utopian potential can be found in the conflicts arising from users' interactions with the platform?

This approach is echoed by Hillis, Paasonen and Petit, who in the introduction to their edited volume of *Networked Affect* (2015) identify the inquiry into 'what kinds of networked and affect-inducing moves are available' in online settings, and 'what are their implications' (2015: 3) as a particularly fertile approach to the field.

The method of scenic understanding

For the task of tracing the points of conflict in a given cultural material, Lorenzer (1970) advises researchers to steer their attention towards those moments in which understanding becomes interrupted, in which the reader/interpreter is thrown off, taken aback, puzzled, stopped in her/his receptive flow (Bereswill et al., 2010). It is from these fundamentally affective moments – i.e. moments in which affect is experienced first and foremost because its usual flow is interrupted – that a more thorough hermeneutic inquiry departs. Practically, for the case of my work with the *min 22. juli* platform this meant going through the submissions to the platform as well as the articles that VG Nett produced from these submissions. (VG Nett supplied me with the full set of submissions, including the ones that its moderators denied publication on the platform.[3]) Reading and re-reading this material in an attitude of 'evenly hovering attention'

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3   These censored posts were rendered anonymous by VG's staff before they were handed to me. I want to thank VG Nett for their effort that made this article possible.

(Freud, 1912; König, 2008: 36), i.e. with an alertness to my own affective responses, I compared and categorized the material along the lines of these responses. In this way, I isolated significant *scenes* – i.e. reoccurring, typical situations (Lorenzer, 1970: 139 ff.) – that emerged as problematic in user-platform relations based on their affective, relational charge. Interpretation of the material followed a similarly relational procedure. In order to bring out the various possible aspects of meaning, including those lying outside established conventions and patterns of cultural thought and imagination, I approached the accumulated scenes in a mode of 'free association' (Freud, 1912). While both the accumulation and interpretation of the material were intentionally subjective (Lorenzer, 1986: 84ff), I followed Lorenzer's suggestion to use interpretation groups as inter-subjective correctives (*ibid*.: 87).[4] The interpretations I offer in this paper reflect the discussions of the material in these groups.

Scenic understanding and networked affect

For my reading of user-platform relations, the censored posts have been particularly instructive. It is here that conflicts have been most readily traceable and, consequently, these posts have become central to the article's argument. As regards the relation between the method of scenic understanding and the censored posts, one could say that the posts met the method half way. Whereas Lorenzer's original conception relies heavily on traditional Freudian notions of 'repression' (Freud, 1915) and psychic defense, I found the censored posts to the *min 22. juli* platform to display a markedly unrepressed, disinhibited attitude, in this way functioning as opposite poles to the often highly guarded and defensive accounts that were submitted to the platform and became published there. A wider debate about digital culture and the changes in the dynamics of psychic life looms behind these observations (e.g. Suler, 2004; Buckels et al., 2014; Dean, 2015). At this point, however, I will limit myself to pointing to the productive potential of online disinhibition (Suler, 2004) as found in the censored posts. Thus, what is enacted in them approximates the playful attitude that Lorenzer (1970, 1986) advised researchers to take on for the interpretative process: a freely associating, productively regressive stance by virtue of which tabooed forms of life can be brought to the fore and inspected. In other words, the *min 22. juli*

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platform was most poignantly characterized in the posts that it sought to suppress.

Affective labor on the *min 22. juli* platform – central areas of conflict

In the case of *min 22. juli* platform there are three thematic areas that emerged as centrally important to an understanding of conflicts in user-platform relations. These are: (1) the spectacular (Debord, 1999), (2) conventions of remembrance and sympathy and (3) the idea of historiography. In the following, I will present these areas along with constellations of scenes in which their conflicts come to the fore.

Spectacular affects

'Where were you? What did you do? How did you react?' are the questions at the heart of the *min 22. Juli* platform. Step by step they guide the user towards an encounter with the affective core of her/his experience. While *'Where were you?'* serves to assign the individual experience's place, and *'What did you do?'* aims to determine the situation that was ongoing when the news of the attacks reached the individual, it is the question of *'How did you react?'* that aims to enter into the moment of *being moved* itself. This idea is highlighted by Torry Pedersen, VG Nett's editor-in-chief, who is quoted in an editorial comment accompanying the launch of the site, saying: 'With this [page; S.K.] VG wishes to create a snapshot [øyeblikksbildet] of where people were when they heard about what had happened in Oslo and on Utøya – and *what they thought there and then.*' (Pedersen quoted in Bordvik, 2012a; author's emphasis) By directing its focus to the very moment at which the news of the attacks 'hit', the platform aimed to make affect the *reason d'être* of the imagined community itself and extract dramatic, conflictual reports of scenes of suddenness, of experiences of crisis that VG Nett apparently hoped would be possible to put into words, or would at least somehow show in the used language of the submissions. When Jodi Dean writes with a view to blogging culture that Guy Debord's concept of the culture-industrial spectacle as the 'communication of the incommunicable' (Debord, 1999: 133, in Dean, 2013: 142) is exercised there to an inflationary degree, the *min 22. juli* platform is a clear case in point.

That this strategy was not without its risks can be seen from a group of comments, if but small in numbers, which the platform's moderators did not clear for publication on the platform. These censored comments are characterized by a considerably unguarded, undefended attitude – a form of interaction and emotional positioning in which people opened themselves entirely and appeared to 'say it all'. E.g., a woman writing in a strong southern

Norwegian dialect, describing how she was sitting in a south-western Norwegian town, far-away from the places of the attacks, in a pizza restaurant with her three kids, when she quickly checked the news on her mobile phone. Even a year after the experience itself her anxiety level is palpable when she reenacts the run of her thoughts then: 'What if a bomb goes off here... what do I do with my three kids?? I can hold two of them at the hand while I run...but what about the third??'

Another example comes from a young man who submitted a considerably raw and unguarded stream of consciousness, in which fragmented impressions of partying, a complicated relationship with the parents and an apparent lack of peers feed into a clearly troubling experience:

> The next two days were spent on the sofa at home at mum and dad's (did not go home for one reason or other, don't mremeber [sic] whether I had a good reason), they just came in in the morning and disappeared to the cabin later that day, was totally isolated that weekend. Put this out [on Facebook] Saturday. 'I have a big empty space in me right now, an empty space I have not managed to fill with food drink, sweet, salty or pc-gaming. I hope the first person I know that I meet after what happened will not get scared of the hug I will give them. That will be a big one. Not expecting that this hug will fix anything. But probably my heart feels less cold.'

Interestingly, these two comments seem to answer the task put forth by the three questions of the *min 22. juli* platform to the point. Here one finds a high degree of affectedness, a self-disclosing, intimate, in-the-moment, true-to-life confessional attitude, which, arguably, was exactly what the platform's operators had hoped to harvest. And yet, it seems the platform's moderators took these comments out because of those very qualities, i.e. because they literally returned to a moment of crisis so that their recollections took on an undigested, troubling charge – a charge that was the result of their attempt at communicating that which for them was apparently still incommunicable. In short, these posts seemed to directly reproduce the overwhelming charge of affect which their authors had experienced on the day of Behring Breivik's attacks.

The examples thus provoke a strained, conflicted relation between what was desired and expected from the platform and how these expectations could be met by users' posts. While, on the psychological level, the above comments clearly articulate what the commentators felt and 'thought there and then', as VG-Nett editor Pedersen put it (in Bordwick, 2012a, see above), what is relevant on a more relational level is an element of appeal in these articulations that works against their being understood as recollections. The posts do not *recall* a situation in which the commentators needed calming and comforting; rather, they *still* need to be calmed, comforted and be taken care of, and while such communal support

measures would have been the responsibility of the platform and its operators, this was obviously not part of the latter's calculations.

Ironically, then, one can say that the submissions that came closest in responding to the *min 22. juli* platform's request and truly gave a 'lively impression' of their experience were seen as unfit for publication by the website's monitors. When the Norwegian media researchers Karoline Ihlebæk and Espen Ytreberg (2009) state that one major consideration for the moderation of online discussion forums is to 'protect contributors from themselves', as for example in cases where people disclose 'extremely personal information about themselves' (2009: 59, author's translation) this reasoning might also be at the bottom of the censoring of the quoted posts. Yet, one can further suspect that this moderation practice also served to protect the digestibility – consumability – of the affective labor that the platform wanted to harvest.

Tellingly, VG Nett, in a relatively late article based on the posts to the platform introduced the notion of 'stories full of contrast' as a label for the kinds of comments that it welcomed (Bordvik, 2012b). This label appears very much as a qualification of the measure of affect deemed adequate to the platform's frame. It delimited the intensity of the affective charge wished to be vented there to one that could easily be channeled into lightly consumable personal interest stories, such as: 'Sat in her wedding gown and cried all night' (Nilssen, 2012); 'Han Tore (34) was on duty in Afghanistan' (Bordvik, 2012b), 'Nils got embraced by a female cashier in the USA' (Bordvik, 2012a), 'Was in Oslo for the first time' (Jalil, 2012). Common to all is a distance to the events which mutes their affective charge by displacing it: in these instances, it is the wedding, the military service in Afghanistan, the passionate expressions of empathy in far-away countries and the first visit to Oslo that are to occupy the attention of readers and protect them from an unmitigated impact of the realities of the attacks.

Remembrance

In view of the events upon which the *min 22. juli* platform is based – the mass-killing of mostly young adults – it appears as a matter of course that conventions of mourning and remembrance are central to the rules of conduct on the site. Accordingly, the notion of the 'remembrance map' ('minnekart') was used early on as a characterization of the platform (Bordwik, 2012a). Frequently, however, remembering and condoling did not seem to be an obvious fit to the self-referentiality that the *min 22. juli* (My 22nd of July) site carried in its name. Since it catered for those who were not directly hit by the attacks, but more indirectly affected, the invitation to give testimony did not automatically and in every case correspond with unambiguous grieving for the victims. In a way, then, the

platform created conditions inverse to those that Whitney Phillips (2011) observed for the Facebook 'R.I.P. pages'. In the case of the latter, the problematic emotional attitude of the 'grief tourists', which Phillips captures in the paradoxical 'I didn't know you but I am very sorry you are dead' (*ibid.*), can be said to lie in the opportunities that these acts offer for promoting oneself.[5] The *min 22. juli* platform, by contrast, appears to have offered first and foremost this latter opportunity, but tied it to the condition that users also had to express grief. Accordingly, articulations of sympathy frequently appear as poorly integrated, artificially added appendices. Here two examples that amplify the difficulty of combining the interest in the self with the concern for others in the context of the platform:

> 'I was together with good friends. We played and had it nice. Thought a lot of those who lost somebody last year. Warm thoughts go to them.'

> 'I lay and slept, so I woke to full of statusses on facebook about bombing in Oslo and about what happens on Utøya…. Was absolutely unbelievably shocked that something like that happens in Norway of all places… R.I.P. all who died that day <3'

Regardless of the monitoring practices, which deemed the first post acceptable and censored the second, my point here is that also the apparent lack on the emotional plane was built into the very structure of the affective labor that was to be performed on the platform itself; this structure clearly facilitated self-promotional concerns. In other words, while, on the psychological level, I expect that the commentators *did* sympathize, this was sidelined by the contextual frame of the platform; my interpretation at the relational level is thus that, in the case of the second example, the platform practically censored a reflection of its own distractedness and preoccupation with itself.

Historiography

When Alison Hearn (2010a defines what she calls the 'branded self as an entity that works and, at the same time, points to itself working, striving to embody the values of its working environment' (2010a: 427), this definition points to the core of the platform's historiographical dimension. 'We hope this can become a *historical document* to which it will be *interesting* to return in a long time to come', Torry Pedersen, VG Nett editor in chief, is quoted in a related article on VG Nett (Pedersen quoted in Bordvik, 2012a, author's emphasis). Two aspects in this statement are puzzling and provocative. First of all, the notion of 'interest' proves incompatible with grief and mourning, since it affords a kind and degree of mental freedom unobtainable in mourning (see Freud, 1917). However, it is the

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5   See Marwick and Ellison (2012) for a weighed reassessment of RIP trolling.

fantasy of producing something lasting, historical, which is particularly relevant here, as it allows the self-promotional tendency to unfold by legitimizing it in a frame of sociocultural value.[6]

Probably one of the clearest manifestations of the historiographic-cum-self-promotional can be found in Torry Pedersen's own submission to the site. In communiqué style, Pedersen recalls how VG's head editor rang him at '15:29' and 'in a precise and sober way gave information about the situation as far as he had the overview of it', rounding off his report by writing: 'The rest of the evening and long into the night I was at Hotel Bristol [since the VG building had been damaged during the attacks; S.K.] and was witness to the formidable effort of the VG desk in reporting on the dramatic event' (Pedersen, 2012). Attempting to capture Pedersen's recollections at a relational level, I would like to present readers with an association. Reading Pedersen's story, I found that I was metaphorically handed pop-corn and a soft drink, while watching the drama of VG's 'formidable efforts' in averting a national crisis and bringing it to a happy end. However, whereas such mental closure was surely beneficial to participating on the platform, the ending on a positive note that made such closure possible here was nowhere near the realities of the attacks themselves. Indeed, in other, less subtle and elaborated instances, this self-promotional attitude, which the platform implicitly suggested, became censored by its moderators, e.g.:

> I was sitting in my apartment with the balcony door open, about 8-900 meters from the administrative district, when I heard a bang and the building shook a little. 23 seconds after that bang I tweeted what is seen as the first mentioning of the terrorist act in social media.

As in Pedersen's story, a homely scene is interrupted by the attack in the distance; also here the sense of pride in one's achievement is tied to a precise recollection of the events unfurling in time, and also here a sense of excitement and elevation in taking part in something of extraordinary, historic proportions becomes perceivable.

Summing up this initial assessment of platform-user relations and their main areas of conflict, the kind of affective labor that was desirable for the forming of its imagined community resided in the task of relating to tragedy in a mildly spectacular, colorful mode of self-referentiality, the legitimacy of which had to be secured by adhering to conventional gestures of condolence as well as by appraising one's affective experience for its socio-historical relevance. Whereas all these contextual rules bore potential conflicts in relation to each other, failures

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6   Compare this to Derrida's definition of mourning as a 'work working at its own unproductivity' (Derrida, 1996, quoted in Engle, 2007: 62).

in any one or more of the categories due to under- or over-performance could lead to exclusion from the page as well as the community implied by it. Thus, while the above paragraphs already offered some of the symptomatic responses that point to a subjective potential to resist the platform's socialization, I want to bring in the censored posts in a more systematic way now in order to unfold this potential further.

Symptomatic acts of insubordination

Censored poses of unaffectedness

In view of the complex set of rules and the various pitfalls and conflicts these rules held for the participants, breaching all of them in a single, punchline-like response seems nearly impossible. However, in my reading of the platform's submissions I identified a group of comments – clearly the most coherent amongst the censored ones – that managed exactly that. This group of submissions, which I understand as symptomatic of the platform as a whole, can be categorized as the 'insensitive and unaffected ones'. Here are a number of examples:

> 'Sat at home and watched Tour de France';
>
> 'Was home, didn't think so much about it';
>
> 'My 22nd of July was really quite normal';
>
> 'suuuuunbathing , was on holiday';
>
> 'Watched TV and drank beer';
>
> 'Chillin in Mexico with the boys!!!';
>
> 'sat and gamed wa n't surprised no';
>
> 'best day in my whole life, celebrated the first anniversary with my [girl/boy]friend. I didn't let it get to me';
>
> 'Got up, watched tv, thought shitfuck! / went out, thought, sun's shining jo!?';
>
> 'Where was I? In Bodø! What did I do? Drank! How did I react? No reactions, the party continued, the evening/night went fine =)'

Against the shape of posts desired by the platform, it does not take a lot of effort to see why these comments were taken out. The irritations emanating from them were clearly intended, the exclusion from the community anticipated. While the platform aimed at displays of affectedness, the commentators responded with demonstrations of complete impassivity; the platform implicitly required respectfulness and decorum and the commentators responded with colloquialisms; the platform craved representative and lasting contributions, and

the commentators offered throw-away gestures it could not possibly want to associate itself with. Intuitively, these comments thus resisted the affective labor desired by the platform on every level and, moreover, they unambiguously placed this resistance within a consumptive frame, as the frequency of references to branded, standardized convenience goods makes clear:

> 'Sat on my couch and saow something on facebook about explosin in Oslo. , bomb in Oslo or something. So I drank Coke';
>
> 'Sat at home and ate a kebab, and rather watched discover[y] channel';
>
> 'I was sitting and watching TV, suddenly there was just news on all channels. So I switched to discovery';
>
> 'Hi was home a heard of the bomb in Oslo while eating pizza';
>
> 'on the computer gamed LOL';
>
> 'magnets n stuff. then pokemon on DS';
>
> 'enjoyed myself in Copenhagen then, I :) .... And the same I did after the bomb and shooting happened. Nothing should ruin this day ;)';
>
> 'came home from a Kiel trip'[7].

Associating themselves with the cheap and fast, the mindless and ridiculous, the unhealthy and unrefined – in short: with what is popularly marked as *trash* –, they first soiled themselves in order to so soil the platform with their attempt at joining it. In so doing, and as a parallel to Karppi's (2013: 280) observations of Facebook trolling, this group of censored comments brought to the fore in themselves what was integral to the platform, too, and what the latter could not rid itself of: specifically, that the platform and its users were first and foremost at home in a sphere of consumer choices. However, while this was so, the ambivalence in the comments' gesture of participating, i.e. joining the platform's community, yet with an act of utter opposition, made clear that, for these individuals, simple non-participation was not a viable option. Rather, they were driven to somehow inform the platform of its pretense, and the extreme irony in the comments seems to have facilitated a contribution which had otherwise been impossible.

At bottom, then, what seems to be expressed in the act of contributing with a doomed-to-be-censored comment was an opposition against the overly limited scope of what could truly be said on the platform. Following Whitney Phillips' assessment of R.I.P. trolling (2011), I thus argue that the comments that were identified as trolling on the *min 22. juli* page did *not* target the victim's and their

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7   Ferry trips to Kiel and Copenhagen are an established part of Norwegian folk culture; they are connoted with heavy drinking and the unmitigated consumption of tax-free goods.

families; rather, they rejected the overly sterile frame in which users were enabled to assess their reactions to the attacks. Even though their emotional attitude can be placed in extreme opposition to the group of comments which was censored because of its radically undigested affective charge (see above), both groups converge in what amounts to an act of, respectively, over- and underfeeding the platform's consumptive frame. Both were more symptomatic than controlled, more of a reflex than intentionally planned.

'It was too much' – permissible emotional work and affective labor

In order to tease out in more detail what exactly the unaffected comments were symptomatic of, I want to look at another commonplace characteristic of a central group of accepted posts (and in this way antithetical of the censored ones above). E.g.:

> 'A completely normal summer's day was transformed into an unreal and sad day that all remember' (extract);
>
> 'The whole thing was too inconceivable to understand there and then!!!' (extract);
>
> 'I did not know anybody who was on Utøya – but it was and is completely unfathomable that there was somebody who could do something so terrible' (extract);
>
> 'I said: no that's not Oslo, that's Afghanistan. But it said Oslo in the pictures so we remained standing there and watched. It was inconceivable, totally inconceivable'; (extract)
>
> 'Completely unfathomable. For a long time I thought about whether I should fly home earlier'(extract);
>
> 'Completely impossible to understand.' (extract)

'Unreal' (uvirkelig), 'inconceivable' (ufattelig), or 'unfathomable' (ubegripelig) – these and similar words were to state the obvious, namely, that there simply were no thoughts or reactions that could somehow be adequate for, or capture what had happened. As different as these posts are from the unaffected, censored ones, one can perceive a parallel in the defensive moment captured in these extracts, with the choice of words such as 'ubegripelig', 'ufattelig' etc. indicating the *avoidance of personal experience* rather than its disclosing. However, the latter's escape into a commonplace proved to be all but out of line with the requested task.[8] While also these posts participated in the platform's labor exactly by *rejecting* its task as impossible, they did so in a way that was acceptable and

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8   In this respect, these positions within the safe discursive commonplaces have to be seen as much as results of mechanisms of defence as of mechanisms of adaptation. They contribute without making a substantive contribution, i.e. without risking to unclose the concrete quality of their involvement.

welcome. The *min 22. juli* platform asked for spectacle and their response of *'It was inconceivable/ unfathomable/ unimaginable etc.'* was in keeping with this request; it could be understood as *'I've tried, but I can't – it is too much.'* Therefore, even if this answer left the space of the spectacle vacant, it still gestured towards it and thus affirmed its rightfulness as cause.

The gesture towards *'It was too much'* was probably the response most adapted to the platform and the relation that users were enabled to have with it. Submitting this answer, participants were admitted into a community that, by this very process of admission, defined the sheer affirmation of affectedness as the central moment that qualified for community membership. Thus, in a tacit, largely unconscious agreement, this affirmation of *'Yes, I have been heavily affected'* gave participants the status of members of the platform's imagined community and, in turn, gave the platform access to the participants as followers and supporters. For the participants this status held the promise of social prestige which was implied in the platform's design and imagery – i.e. in the Google map, in which each individual user could locate her/himself as part of a social movement and inscribe him/herself in a historiography of the 'common people'. '[M]apping technology has matured into a tool for social justice', (*Economist*, 2009) the *Economist* claimed in trend-spotting mode in 2009, and the *min 22. juli* platform was conceived in full awareness of this trend. First and foremost, it gave participants a tool with which to define themselves as just and virtuous citizens. In return, and since the affirmation of affect as prerequisite for community membership implied a mode of *'I could not but participate'*, this gesturing towards an inner necessity to do good on part of the participants also promised to lift the platform and its brand out of the sphere of everyday consumption. Through this gesture, VG appeared as so intimately in touch with its community that it was able to cater for its inner virtuosity. If this virtuosity was not just a choice, but a *need* that VG could satisfy, the brand as community sponsor was surely more than a simple commodity, but rather a force for good in society. In this way, the social prestige that participants could gain by participating *phatically* (Miller, 2008) reflected back onto the platform and its brand.

The taboo of too-little affect

Against the above interpretation of the socio-affective logic of the *min 22. juli* platform and its community, it seems worth returning to the comments that applied the structure of *'It was too much'* once more and reassess what they defend against. Could it not be that, in a parallel to the unaffected poses in the censored comments, the frequent references to an inability and impossibility to 'imagine', 'conceive', 'fathom' etc. were a defense not against too much, but against too little affect – i.e. a defense against the possibility that they did not care

as much as they felt they should have? – It is the conception of the *min 22. juli* platform itself that suggests this. Since participants were made to understand that a correct and convincing presentation of their having-been-moved was decisive for their being permissible, a lack of affect effectively represented the platform's biggest taboo. As said, there were also those comments, small in number, which had to be taken out due to an excess of affective charge. However, the truly excessive affective charge in relation to the platform and its consumptive orientation was a simple absence of affect. As a taboo, this pose unfolded its own fascination – a point zero at which not only one's own inclusion was relinquished but also the whole sense of community. As psychoanalysis has shown: the stronger the taboo, the stronger the desire to break it, and vice versa (Freud, 1912-13).

Again it is the censored, unaffected comments that bring this taboo to the fore with astonishing clarity so that its existence can be expected to have had a shaping influence on other, uncensored groups of comments, too.[9] One can thus say that, on the *min 22. juli* platform, the presentation of one's self as affected had absolute precedence. It was to serve as proof of the sincerity of one's sympathy, as well as a warrant of the digestibility of one's response. And it was that which was non-debatable on the platform.

This precedence of the affective as proof of authentic and cooperative interaction makes the *min 22. juli* platform characteristic of the wider move towards corporate facilitation of user-generated content (e.g. Arvidsson and Peitersen, 2009; Krüger and Johanssen, 2014). And while corporations such as Facebook claim that the commercial use of these data is but a little price to pay for the self-knowledge and social gain that their services result in,[10] the exemplary case of the *min 22. juli* platform and its implicit requirement of affectedness proves this

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9   However, a question that needs answering with reference to the theory of affective labor is whether this taboo was specific of the platform and its consumer orientation or, rather, characteristic of a more general atmosphere of emotional responsibility in the public. My argument is as follows: there can be little doubt that the majority of people in socio-cultural, geographic proximity to the attacks were affected by them. Even those who might not have registered an impact on their mental lives will have felt an obligation to invest their *face-work* (Goffman, 1955) with a degree of sincerity and emotional consequence – i.e. a degree of what Hochschild calls 'emotional work' (2012 [1983]: 7) – which will not have been entirely containable within the affective labor frame.

10   E.g., *The Economist* (2011) quotes Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook, saying that 'the strength of social media is that it empowers individuals to amplify and broadcast their voices. The truer that voice, the louder it will sound and the farther it will reach.' See also Jose van Dijck (2013: 11ff) for an appreciation of the transition from 'sociability to salability'.

claim wrong. The consumptive frame in which self-reflection took place here did not facilitate deepened self-insight and attunement to the sensitivities of oneself and others – even if such insight might have been the outcome of contributing to it – but rendered taboo those sensitivities that were not compatible with it.

The symptomatic and the revolutionary

With respect to the platform, then, what Hardt and Negri call the 'revolutionary potential' of affective labor (2000: 29) seems to lie in its censored performances of unaffectedness. By pointing to a lack of affectedness as the platform's taboo, the latter's entanglement with consumer interests and the threat of exclusion attached to it, these comments implicitly told the platform that a true assessment of *com-passion* on part of the general public would have needed to reckon also with those emotions that did not comply with a-priori affectedness. Indifference, ambivalence, frustration, aggression – these were not only threats to the platform's community but widely present emotional attitudes the containment of which posed serious challenges to the inclusive and non-violent self-conception of Norwegian society after the attacks. By incorporating and displaying these emotions, the censored comments implicitly challenged the platform to inspect them from inside the community it sought to imagine, instead of splitting them off and/or projecting them onto others.

However, what renders this revolutionary, utopian spark futile is the negative, uncontained form in which it was brought forth. 'Watched TV and drank beer' – this comment is paradigmatic of the inherent problem of resistance as symptomatic. While it brings out the exclusionary logic of the platform, it does so by enacting it itself. The associations it brought forth in the interpretation groups were concerned with a troubling asocial masculinity suggested by the comment, a provocative lack of self-regard that interpreters received from its loneliness, contempt and auto-aggression. In view of these associations, it appeared to us as though the commentator sought to remove himself (we were sure this was a man speaking) from what Charles Taylor calls the 'map of the good' (Taylor, 1989: 42). The platform, in turn, seals and completes the removal through its censoring act. Therefore, in the case of *min 22. juli*, the utopian potential, brought forth as a negative in the comments, was also *realized as a negative* by the platform. It was censored instead of contained. It was not met with dialogue, its rightfulness and critical potential was neither acknowledged nor made possible to discuss there.

Furthermore, the distributed placement of the comments, which was effected by participating on the platform via Facebook (see introduction), will have amplified the split in the social that the platform was complicit in producing. While the

simple censoring of posts to the platform denied these posts access to a wider public there, the appearance of these posts on Facebook might have led to their being celebrated as trophies by the commentator's friends. Therefore, what was created in the exchange of provocations and disciplinary action was not a triggering of the debate, but a splitting of the platform's imagined community into a legitimate and an illegitimate part that did not, however, offer itself to conscious reflection.

In this way, the platform's commercial frame risked exacerbating a more general problem of affect within Norwegian society – specifically, the problem of how to respond to the fact that the aggression of the attacks came from inside this society. Following through on the concept of affective labor and the shaping of the social here, one can suspect that the platform's 'outcasts' will have developed further those affinities and sympathies which the platform had rendered taboo, not least because the platform had done so.

Sitting at home, in front of the television and/or computer, isolating oneself, numbing oneself – these topoi, which are typical of the censored comments, seem to emulate the kind of repressed, aggressive masculinity that came to characterize the perpetrator, Anders Behring Breivik, in the media coverage (see Karlsen and Jørgensen, 2014). However, whereas these comments and troubling reminders of familiarity with Breivik did not make for an easy read, would it not have been the platform's responsibility to engage with them where it found them on site?

Conclusion

What forms of life are being produced, in what kind of community of affective labor, and with what overall effect on the users, the platform and, ultimately, the social? Since the contribution of this paper lies in giving as concrete answers as possible to these questions, I want to use the conclusion to restate the main points of my answers. Labor on the *min 22. juli* platform can be paraphrased thus: *'Present yourself as affected in an affective way, i.e. in a way that is moving and engaging to others.'* In order to get into view the relational dimension of this challenge and its socializing effects, the instructions can be continued as follows: *'By presenting yourself in this way, you make sure to belong to the community of 'good citizens', for: how can one be good and not affected – how can one be affected and not participate?'*

Affectedness thus turned into compulsion, and this compulsion, driven by commoditization, fed into a more general structure of feeling that rendered suspicious any attempt at taking issue with problematic emotions, such as

ambivalence, aggression and indifference. By avoiding these destructive impulses, they leaked into social interactions and were articulated in acts of exclusion and splitting. In this way, the platform's initiative, as part of a bigger social project of bringing people together in mutual care and compassion, was inherently tied to mechanisms of demarcation and expulsion.

In line with Hearn's observations (2010b: 65–66), the *min 22. juli* platform did not seem to have trouble dealing with excessive measures of creativity and/or affect – i.e. measures of which Hardt and Negri predicted that they would become a challenge to the commodifying agency (2004, p. 146). Instead of being overwhelmed, the platform simply censored what did not fit its frame. Nevertheless, there was a possibility for this excess to introduce a liberating potential. This possibility lay in the entanglement of the platform's labor with other corporate structures online, specifically, Facebook. Since the *min 22. juli* platform strongly suggested that submissions be made via users' Facebook accounts, comments that were banned from *min 22. juli* had the chance of an afterlife on Facebook. Potential for excess thus emerged *in-between* the corporate layers of digital affective labor.

Key to a realistic assessment of the revolutionary in such excess lies in the concept of the symptomatic. Bringing excess into view as subjective suffering from the institutional forming of life, the symptomatic implies that the revolutionary in excess is not readily accessible to the individual bringing it forth. As symptom, it is articulated in a way that effectively bars the individual from it. Therefore, in the comment of 'Chillin' in Mexico with the boys!!!' a utopian potential might be uncovered in an interpretation such as *'I was on holiday in Mexico; I had a good time, while at home people were killed. Does that make me a bad guy? Does it make me complicit in the killings?'* In the form that the comment took, however – with its colloquialisms, its evocation of a boys-only club and the triple exclamation mark – this question of *'does this make me complicit?'* had been answered with a 'yes' even before the platform censored the comment.

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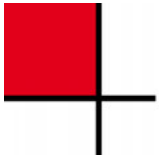
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Sharing as labour and as gift: Couchsurfing as an 'affective enterprise'*

Karolina Mikołajewska-Zając

Introduction

In their widely discussed paper titled 'Bringing work back in', Stephen Barley and Gideon Kunda developed an argument that 'organization theory's effort to make sense of postbureaucratic organizing is hampered by the dearth of detailed studies of work' (Barley and Kunda, 2001: 76). Deep changes in the very nature of work in the postindustrial economy, they argue, call for new empirical studies. Interestingly, the authors pay attention to the changing spatial and temporal dimension of work: 'our language of jobs may no longer adequately represent the world of work and there is mounting evidence that work life may be reacquiring some of its preindustrial parsing' (Barley and Kunda, 2001: 83). It is puzzling that when publishing their text, in the year following the dot-com bubble, they still refer to work in terms of *jobs* and *labour market* only, when notions such as immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1996; Hardt and Negri, 2000), free labour (Terranova, 2004) or affective labour (Hardt, 1999) were already starting to circulate widely. More inspiring – and at the same time only skimmed over – is their second remark that in some way the emerging new labour resembles to some extent the reality of the preindustrial world.

This paper is a work-in-progress in which I present some difficulties in tackling the changing nature of work done in 'sharing economy' (Botsman and Rogers, 2010) based on the example of Couchsurfing.com (CS) – a leading non-payable

hospitality network in terms of its size and popularity across the world. Couchsurfing and other similar platforms provide an institutional framework which enables strangers to plan encounters with each other online and meet offline to *surf* other members' couch at her/his home or to meet up socially, be shown an unknown city, taken for a lunch, to a party or for a bike trip.

By evoking the notion of labour, I follow Fuchs and Sevignani (2013) and employ the classic distinction between 'work' and 'labour' where I define the former in accordance with Middle English word 'woerc', signifying general creative activity which brings about some change; doing something, acting (Weingart, 1997). Such a formulation, close to economic anthropology, dovetails with Marx's understanding of work as productive of use-values, it 'is a condition of human existence which is independent of all forms of society; it is an eternal natural necessity which mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself' (Marx, 1867: 133). Labour, in contrast, 'is necessary alienated form of work, in which humans do not control and own the means and results of production' (Fuchs and Sevignani, 2013: 240) and creates exchange value for the capital. Such a choice resonates with the further theoretical apparatus, especially the reference to affective labour introduced by autonomous Marxism. 'Social factory', a term central to autonomous Marxism, designates productive labour not confined to factory production, but dispersed in different guises of the overall social life, so that 'the whole society is placed at the disposal of profit' (Negri, 1989: 79). The notion aims at denying a clear distinction between production and consumption on the one hand, and between work and labour on the other. In other words, 'the work discipline of the factory is exported far beyond its bounded walls, and a large share of the work of production is subsequently and increasingly performed without remuneration, in our daily social doings' (Ross, 2013: 25). My paper also drafts an empirical evidence of adequacy of framing users' engagement in a sharing economy platform in terms of work, but not without pinpointing to difficulties related to applying terms stemming from autonomous Marxism, such as immaterial or affective labour.

Critical social media approaches (Terranova, 2004; Fuchs, 2008, 2011a, 2014; Scholz, 2013) often refer to 'immaterial labour' while describing the users' activities within these platforms. The term stands for 'labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity' (Lazzarato, 1996: 133). Another definition expands this concept by underlining the affective component: immaterial labour is seen by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt as labour 'that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 108). Such a formulation is in line with the distinction made by Hardt, who sees immaterial labour as performed in 'traditional' industrial production of goods and services,

in analytical and symbolic tasks (Reich, 1992) and in production of affects, which 'requires (virtual or actual) human proximity' (Hardt, 1999: 98). Hardt treats affective labour of human interaction as an element which is equally important as manipulating information. If 'modernization' marked the transformation from the economy dominated by agriculture to industry, a shift towards the postmodern economy is 'informatization', which does not mean that what Alvin Toffler termed 'first' and 'second wave' economies disappear. In this paper, I seek to explore the adequacy of immaterial and affective labour in studying sharing economy. I shall argue that the latter concept is more promising than the former one, but it still calls for refinement and further research.

Couchsurfing has already been a topic of sociological and ethnographic studies whose focus was on affects and affective labour – even if their authors have not made a direct reference to this term. For instance, Paula Bialski investigated the process of becoming an 'intimate tourist' and developed an account of how closeness, intimacy and friendship are mediated by digital technologies of hospitality which are built up by volunteers (Bialski, 2007, 2012). Another sociologist, Jennie Germann Molz (2012), understands this network as a means of communicating beyond market framework and resisting lifestyles propagated by the corporate world (eg. mass tourism). David Pickard and Sonja Buchberger (2013) recognize that studying Couchsurfing involves many notions central to anthropology, such as gift, friendship and kinship, or modernity. Their edited book offers an overview of several case studies whose authors discuss issues related to tensions between cosmopolitanism and locality.

However, these studies call for an introduction of an institutional context, since in 2011 Couchsurfing has changed its legal status from a non-profit to a for-profit organization (between 2011 and 2013 holding the status of a 'Certified B-corporation', an organization that pledges to pursue social goals as well as business ones whose periodic evaluation was performed by an NGO called B-Lab) and is now funded by venture capital. Only in the first year of its operation as a company, Couchsurfing claims to have raised over 22 million dollars from the investors. As yet, no user fees were introduced, and advertisements did not surface prior to 2015. The symptomatic change of Couchsurfing into a corporation leads to thinking about the possibilities for building a network of alternative consumption and the purpose of doing this organizational work. This is the point of departure for my research.

Since summer 2013, I have recorded about 50 interviews with devoted (current or former) Couchsurfers in several locations in Europe and in the US. The interviewees sometimes have been also active in Servas (an 'offline predecessor' of Couchsurfing, founded in the post-WWII years); or HospitalityClub – arguably

the first online hospitality exchange network. In the recent years, some of them have become members of BeWelcome, a hospitality platform which positions itself as the opposite of Couchsurfing (that is, it remains non-profit and is built in a bottom-up manner by a democratic community of volunteers); or have started incorporating accommodation booked *via* Airbnb, the rapidly grown platform enabling short-term rentals of private rooms or flats.

My way to the topic of privatization of Couchsurfing was paved by economic anthropology (Polanyi, 1957; Mauss, 1990; Carrier, 2005) and the classic juxtaposition of gift and market economy; studies in post-socialist transition addressing changing labour regimes with the arrival of the global capitalism (Burawoy & Lucacs, 1992; Verdery, 1996; Dunn, 2004); and studies of 'encounters of intimacy and economy' (Zelizer, 2005). Such background led me to treating ownership change as a possibility to tackle how the *activities* related to organizing this network are understood by its members. The study is not a result of a fascination with the ease of travelling the whole world, or with the possibility engaging in close contact with different cultures and lifestyles mediated by new technologies. Neither does this work result from the acknowledgement of the social salience of 'consuming goods and services which are in some sense unnecessary' (Urry, 2002: 1). Rather, it is motivated by the recognition that researching engagement in various sharing economy platforms is a necessary element in tackling changing regimes of post-Fordist work.

Sharing as labour

In *The Third Wave*, the grand narrative on the global history of the economy based on the notions of production, consumption and prosumption, Alvin Toffler (1980) claimed that the (then) rising new era was about to be marked by 'the emergence of electronic cottage': he saw the household as the most important space of *both* production and consumption. If the 'first wave' was based on agricultural work done around the household and for its members, and the 'second wave' – started by the industrial revolution – was defined by the split of the producer and the consumer, the 'third wave' is the age of prosumption – where the 'production for exchange' typical of labour in the 'second wave' and 'production for use' similar to the one in premodern households are both present in the prosumers' lives on a fifty-fifty basis. The emergence of the 'electronic cottage' that becomes the centre of society once again is both more economically rational and ecological than the functional split between production and consumption: while working from home, more costs are borne with the employee and everyday shuttling becomes obsolete. In his account, the arrival of the 'third wave' does not mean that the market diminishes, but it shrinks

significantly. Even today, when re-reading Toffler, one can be startled by some these insightful predictions about how the today's world will look like, but there is a major slip in his argumentation: he predicted the work day to become shorter and the structural unemployment to reduce due to easier access to tele-jobs. He saw the blurring of the division between production and consumption but he failed to acknowledge the fuzziness of the split between 'production for exchange' and 'production for use'. This is also a major tension found in the narratives of some dedicated CS users.

In the individual in-depth interviews the questions concerning what has happened with Couchsurfing and what meaning it has for the participants has in many cases occurred to be a trigger of a conversation about how they see not only the organizational logic that underpins the network, but also their understanding of their own activity within CS. After laying out the spectrum of discourses which revolve around work, I contrast their narratives with the official value statement published by the portal.

In the first stage of analysing these materials, I have paid attention to narratives of Couchsurfers from both ends of the spectrum when it comes to making judgements concerning the transformation of the business model. Accordingly, they are either those who were convinced that Couchsurfing's transformation into a business was desirable or at least understandable, or just the opposite.

Travelling and spending leisure time showing around town some newly met visitors are not easily termed labour. However, work is the issue around which Couchsurfers' arguments are built. First, what was termed labour was the job done by servers and their maintenance by IT specialists. Within the non-profit framework *their* labour was *free labour* (Terranova, 2004): the platform developers are understood not to have been paid at all or to have been paid very little when CS was not yet a firm. From this perspective, the IT work is in fact seen as exploited:

> People are very against Couchsurfing becoming a corporation. I didn't really understand why. I never got what the problem was. It was a non-profit that people had to put tremendous amounts of time and energy to in order to make it work, and all we did was reap benefits. All I did was get value while giving none back...I programmed no lines of code. I did host people, but I didn't have a stake in how the website actually operated. I didn't pay for servers. I didn't do any of that. – *male, 31 years old, USA.*

Since hosting and travelling relied upon volunteers maintaining the online infrastructure, using it merely for the purpose of socializing without contributing to its technological underpinning is equalled here to freeriding. As the network

has significantly grown within the past few years, responsible leaders cannot merely rely upon volunteers, a further argument goes:

> I understand that probably they need people to do certain jobs, to make it work on the website and, you know, sort of administration of it...They can't expect them to do it all for free. I paid the donation one year...but most people don't do that. Unless people are donating money, which they probably weren't doing that much, then you need...to find ways of making money – *female, 38 years old, UK.*

These Couchsurfers understand coding and maintaining servers as *fair* when treated as 'production for exchange' and not 'production for use', since the amount of work and time put in developing the portal exceeds the 'production for use' of the volunteer IT labour in the early years of Couchsurfing.

Another aspect of securing funds for remuneration for IT development is clarifying the organizational rules not only in the sense of formalizing labour, but also receiving a better service in return:

> For me it's, like, which method is going to provide the best, most authentic service to what people want. ...They did another update [in 2013], before that I couldn't find what I wanted. Couchsurfing is a story of not being able to find what you want, and they keep adding a different way of how they track your guests, or what you see on your homepage, and it's just, they have never, in my opinion, been effective – *male, 31 years old, USA.*

In this type of discourse, the introduction of market exhange enables pinpointing to concrete actors who can be held accountable for their performance in delivering a *service*. Experiencing something genuine is not understood as being possible to achieve only *beyond* the market, but also *through* market exchange.

In the view of many interviewees who are against the marketization of Couchsurfing, however, the argument is inverted: moving CS to the market *obscures* what is happening at the headquarters – reportedly, almost no one knew of the decision to transform into a for-profit before the very day it was announced. Many users share their doubts as to how the organization manages to make profits, if it claims it is financed by optional user-verification fees and advertisements were not present until 2015. It is the users' engagement that is framed here as the *true* labour – for instance, the ambassadors' work to arrange local leisure activities – so they could have been at least consulted before:

> Okay, it's true. It's a system that is managed by people. So there are some people that need to be paid. There are servers that need to be paid, of course. But look at Wikipedia. Wikipedia is much, much bigger, and you don't need to pay. Wikipedia didn't need to change [into] a profitable organization.... They [CS] could always ask for more donations, sponsorships. They could use a little bit of publicity to cover the expense, but why becoming a profitable organization? I totally don't agree with

that. …Until now I could not find anyone that would agree with that, or anyone in favour of that…There was this image that everybody started to put on their profile saying, 'Sold out', or, 'Sold'. Yeah. The ambassador of Paris, he gave up. …Some people just don't agree with that, so they just left – *male, 36 years old, Slovenia*.

Not only is the communication with the headquarters rendered poor, but many interviewees are also worried that their personal data is being sold and that they are under growing surveillance:

I don't trust [that] companies don't abuse the data that you put in there. Facebook itself already knows a lot about you, and also Couchsurfing has the data organized so that they know a lot about you. If you merged these two, and maybe [also] Gmail, they would know more about your life than you remember – *male, 33 years old, Slovenia*.

In these narratives, Couchsurfers also emphasise commercialization of work the volunteers have put into developing the platform:

C$ sold us out! I translated with 2 other volunteers the whole couchsurfing pages into Polish and now it is a corporation making money on our previous voluntary work and on our hosting![1]

They see the change of CS into a for-profit as entailing in transforming what they understood as 'production for use' into 'production for exchange'.

Interestingly, a common thread woven into the interpretations of what is happening with Couchsurfing for both those participants who are strongly against marketization and those who do not connect to the problem, is based on understanding the *real work* in Couchsurfing are all the activities of hosting and being a guest. What is this *real work* comprised of? Among other things, it is preparing a bed, taking visitors on a trip, cooking or cleaning up to reciprocate hospitality, being an instant friend to confide to: talk about difficulties in relationships, troubles at work, or share 'life-hacks'. These activities are located not necessarily in an 'electronic' but a 'brick-and-mortar cottage', to paraphrase Toffler, and the intimacy it allows. For instance, a university lecturer whom I met in Slovenia shared a following story related to her couch-surfing:

I went to Australia and I needed a conformation that the decision to divorce my husband was the right one and…everybody I stayed with were divorced or were going through a divorce or had someone in the family [who got divorced]…so…I got my confirmation and [in some cases] I gave them a confirmation, so it was mutual…[We always talked about intimate issues], they [other CS-ers] felt like my family…[and if] someone lets me in their home, I feel I am part of their family. – *female, 40 years old, Slovenia*.

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1   https://www.couchsurfing.com/groups/1861; retrieved on 17.12.2014, original spelling.

Even though the supposedly separate realities of 'digital' and 'actual' (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004) are a continuum, still the face-to-face interactions in bricks-and-mortar settings are seen as more important:

> In the end, Couchsurfing is a company, it's something that exists online and something that exists outside. I think this is part of the problem. People can't really connect to [it], because for us it's somewhere 'there'. You can't really reach it. There are two realities, one is 'there is Couchsurfing' and the other reality is you hanging out with people, and you will still enjoy being with someone – *female, 28 years old, Slovenia.*

From the worm's-eye view, the essence of Couchsurfing is being re-created each time its members actually meet, and it is difficult to grasp that some distant corporate headquarters put any labour in making this happen. This is the reason why many of the users do not pay attention to the ownership change – 'if the membership is still going to be free, it works for me!', they often say. It is the 'production for use' that actually matters more – charity begins at home, the saying goes.

Inspired by Illouz's 'Cold intimacies' (2007) I began to study the process of 'matching' the hosts with the guests and see it as resembling the functioning of dating portals which are governed by a specific market logic with users striving to build their 'competitive advantage' and 'maximize their chances to succeed' in achieving the goal of meeting 'offline': that is, by choosing cautiously to address only the hosts in the perfect location (and not in some boondocks), by writing to several possible hosts at once to maximize the chance of receiving a response or – by not inviting travellers who seem dull, judging by their profiles. When reading closely into the narratives of 'production' of hospitality, one can easily find stories of its eventual exchange value:

> Every time I went to a Couchsurfing host…I asked them: 'why are you hosting?'. For half of them, it was for the same reason – 'I want references, because afterwards I will go [and travel myself]'. – *female, 54 years old, Belgium.*

And vice-versa, one will find stories of how travelling using hospitality networks enabled access to places and activities that would have been expensive or unreachable otherwise, like listening to a private concert performed by professional musicians or learning a new craft. Another phenomenon worth mentioning is the practice of proving to the potential host living in an extremely popular location that the person is willing to stay at this hosts' place – for instance, by agreeing to fulfil a certain task or challenge, or to listen to sexist or in other ways violent comments – in other words, sacrificing one's comfort for finding a couch. Even though such instances may in fact be rare, this shows us how the non-pecuniary character of exchanges does not contribute *automatically*

to the sociality associated with gift economy, which Couchsurfing is often equated to. And *vice versa* – money exchange can also contribute to sociality and building denser networks. Gift and a 'rational contract', as Pierre Bourdieu put it, can be seen as a continuum, distinguished by their varying temporal dynamics: 'a rational contract would telescope into an instant a transaction which gift exchange disguises, by stretching it out in time' (Bourdieu, 1977: 171).

If one would like to summarize the ownership change of Couchsurfing merely as turning what has functioned as a gift economy (Mauss, 1990) and was marked by *work,* into a market enterprise – with the dominance of *labour,* one risks repeating the sharp distinction drawn by social anthropology which probably over-romanticises non-monetary gift exchange, as Arjun Appadurai (1986) pointed out. A sharp distinction between 'production for use' and 'production for exchange' fails to grasp how the gift and market economy intertwine. We cannot render the ownership change at the macro-level as simply appropriation of a network based on gift economy for the purpose of market exchange (that is, attracting investors, making profit). Ideally, in the online realm there is a trace of each brick-and-mortar hospitality exchange between Couchsurfers – in the form of references mutually given by hosts and guests. They build up the 'digital archive of the self' (Coté and Pybus, 2011). Even if the ownership of the company changes, both the 'value for use' and 'value for exchange' of the interactions between CS-ers at the micro level of one-on-one interactions remain unchanged.

How do we link this discussion with the notions of immaterial and – especially – affective labour? Immaterial labour, which 'creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship or an emotional response' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: XV), causes a significant difficulty with regard to sharing economies. It 'implies that there is material and a non-material – i.e. spiritual – part of the world' (Fuchs, 2008: 103). Michael Hardt's counterargument is that 'this labour is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness and community' (Hardt, 1999: 96). Emotional labour, the way Arlie Hochschild (1983) framed it, seems to be more accurate, for it embraces also the 'management' of anger, sadness, anxiety, or stress – which are easily found in the descriptions of encounters with strangers *via* Couchsurfing. More importantly, Hardt fails to acknowledge that in hospitality networks (which function both online and offline), homes are spaces of mobility and cultural encounters, thus means of production *as well as* means of consumption of travel experiences.

The company managing the platform does not own (all) the means of production. The labour of sharing has a very *material* component: it encompasses preparing food and a place to sleep, cleaning, and driving. This household work has an inherent affective component. It is possible to look at hospitality through the frame provided by Tiziana Terranova, who argues that digital labour is not necessarily confined to advanced (informational) activities:

> These types of cultural and technical labour are not produced by capitalism in any direct, cause-and-effect fashion; that is, they have not developed simply as an answer to the economic needs of capital. However...they are a part of a process of economic experimentation with the creation of monetary value out of knowledge/culture/affect. (Terranova, 2013: 39).

This is how the idea quoted at the beginning of the text – that work in the postindustrial era resembles to a greater extent the labour of the preindustrial era – becomes relevant. A glimpse at the official value statement published at the Couchsurfing webpage will help us further this point.

Sharing as gift

How are the activities that bring the Couchsurfers together rendered in the official statements posted on the portal? The 'value statement' at the webpage says that in Couchsurfing

> we envision a world where everyone can explore and create meaningful connections with the people and places they encounter. Building meaningful connections across cultures enables us to respond to diversity with curiosity, appreciation, and respect. The appreciation of diversity spreads tolerance and creates a global community[2].

The users are encouraged to share their life stories, experiences, homes, some food and beautiful moments. This is the way by which the platform addresses sharing economy: by emphasizing material and non-material gifts both hosts and guests could give each other that in the long run have 'the power to profoundly change the world'[3]. There are few points worth mentioning here.

First, the network is not addressed to any particular type of users selected by any set of qualities apart from the willingness to put effort and time into meaningful interactions with other people in any place in the world. Couchsurfing emphasizes the ethical dimension of participating in the network: hospitality should contribute to transforming social relations and diminishing stereotypes

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2   http://about.couchsurfing.com/values/; retrieved on 17.12.2014.

3   *ibid.*

and ethnocentrism. Affective labour is understood as inherent in the practice of sharing couches. Second, similarly to using dating portals described by Eva Illouz, 'meeting requires a great deal of introspection' (Illouz, 2007: 78) which is a necessary prerequisite to being 'open to giving, receiving and discovering the unexpected'[4]. In an older version of the website, there was a hint to 'be creative, imaginative, wacky if you need to be. Take a look at other profiles if you are not sure what to say here'[5]. One of the founders of the portal has explained that the structure of the profiles 'brings out the essence of people. And when people's essences are visible, it contributes to the building of trust' (Bialski, 2007: 7). Third, while looking for an underpinning of the value statement, we can argue that organizational culture of Couchsurfing can be understood as based on gift economy. There is no trace of rendering the activity of sharing as labour.

The text posted on the website is very general if not vague, and non-controversial. Even if gift exchange is a mode of social integration that can be traced to early human societies, in a hospitality network (and maybe in broader sharing economy as well) it becomes a (re)invented tradition and tends to be 'unspecific and vague to the nature of values, rights and obligations of the group membership [it] inculcate[s]' (Hobsbawm, 1983: 10). An invented practice, says Hobsbawm, reintroduces status into a world of contract and is evoked when a certain practice has lost its social salience. Hosting and sharing may have never lost social salience in the modern world, but got pushed aside in the modern age of mass tourism and hotel chains. The portal does not refer at any point to the marketization, which could be seen as a being just the opposite of what the organisational culture implies. Cultural norms of hospitality, however, help to conceal the *labour of sharing* with its inherent *material* as well as *affective* component.

Sharing and affective labour

One of the first remarks in my text had to do with differentiating between *work* (a broader term, related to any creative activity) and *labour,* which is necessarily exploited by capital. Can they be made separate in sharing economy? Hospitality – hardly a new practice that emerged together with the digital economy – can be understood as 'digitally exploited' (Fuchs, 2011b: 299) with the growth of companies such as Couchsurfing International Inc., but the interpretation of this process by the members of the network is far less straight-forward. As Tiziana

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4   http://about.couchsurfing.com/resource-center/; retrieved on 17.12.2014.

5   https://www.couchsurfing.org/editprofile.html?edit=description, retrieved on 15.05.2013.

Terranova puts it, 'the fruits of collective cultural labour have been not simply appropriated, but voluntarily *channelled* and controversially *structured* within capitalist business practices' (Terranova, 2004: 80). In an inquiry into affective labour in hospitality-exchange we are dealing with a setting in 'it is virtually impossible to distinguish the rationalization and commodification of selfhood from the capacity of the self to shape and help itself and to engage in deliberation and communication with others (Illouz, 2007: 109). What is more, this 'digital archive of self', these textualized identities, which incorporate the chronicles of past interactions related to 'surfing' become at the same time 'private hoarded capital' for future exchanges and building blocks of affective capitalism. They embrace both a material and an immaterial trace of the interaction: the 'stubborn materiality' (Gill and Pratt, 2008: 9) of most work related to hospitality, as well as the overall emotional atmosphere of the encounter. It is the very materiality of everyday interactions which forms the basis of this 'affective enterprise'.
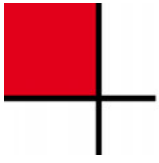
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Putting the inalienable to work: labour and life in contemporary capitalism

Kylie Jarrett

review of

Adkins, L. and M. Dever (eds.) (2016) *The post-Fordist sexual contract: Working and living in contingency.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan (HB, pp. 217, $79.00, 978-1-137-49553-2)

A reviewer's job is made much easier when one of the editors identifies precisely what is valuable about the collection in her introduction. Describing one of the contributions to *The post-Fordist sexual contract*, Lisa Adkins writes that the author 'resists turning to an unnuanced account of the movement of capital into all areas of life' [14]. Instead, the chapter author uses the collapse of boundaries between work and life to generate a study of 'both old and new labour, home and work, production and consumption' [14]. I would suggest that all contributions to this volume, both individually and collectively, perform the same layered analytic. Through a variety of rich empirical studies into arenas of work as diverse as home-based craft industries, paid care work, 'mommy blogging' and academia this collection maps the specificity of gendered and sexed forms of work. Most importantly, the studies here don't take the absorption of the whole of life into capital as the conclusion of their findings. Rather, this is the basic assumption from which their analyses emerge. Taking the intertwining of identity politics and political economy as a given is what distinguishes this collection and is also that which places it firmly in a feminist tradition.

Of course, this link to feminism is obvious from the title of the collection that riffs from Carole Pateman's 1988 study of the gendering and exclusions of the

social contract. This volume is not updating Pateman's work per se, but relies on its insight that underlying all formal contracts, including those of labour, are a range of tacit social and cultural contracts that differentially enact regimes of freedom and subordination, particularly in relation to gender and sex. In this collection, the analysis of these contracts is placed within the dynamics of post-Fordist, neoliberal, advanced capitalism typified by regimes of precarious, unstable and poorly remunerated work. Contingency in the subtitle is here associated with feminised industries, the 'feminisation' of work (Mies et al., 1988; Adkins, 2001; Morini, 2007) and the experience of 'othered' workers in contemporary capitalism. However, the addition of 'living and working' and the refusal to privilege one or the other makes this a powerful critique with lineage drawing from feminist history. While the implications of them are broad, it is no wonder that almost all of the studies focus on gender, sex and/or feminised professions.

The collection is organised into 3 sections exploring different aspects of contemporary work. The first focuses on the role of the inalienable within capitalism. Adkins' introduction is followed by Dan Irving's study of how the processes of transitioning impact on the experience of work for trans women. Underpinning this analysis is the role played by gender performance, particularly normative performances of femininity and masculinity, in the workplace. What Irving does, though, is not only identify the social issues like shaming and social isolation associated with transitioning in the workplace, but to examine these as economic events. Citing the high levels of unemployment in trans* identified populations, Irving's study thus highlights how gender and sex – experienced so intensely as inalienable aspects of self – are implicated in the contemporary economy.

Another form of transitioning is examined by Kori Allen's study of the experiences of work-related bridging programmes for Canadian immigrants. Allen notes that these projects encourage migrants to engage in speculative investment in their own human capital, to develop their potential as workers through volunteering and self-development, rather than identifying labour market gaps and equipping them for labour in those sectors. What is learned in these work transition programmes is not skills, but a particular entrepreneurial subjectivity. She also notes that the extension of micro-credit loans to migrants, particularly migrant women, to start businesses relates the culture of entrepreneurship and the logic of self-investment directly to financial debt. In Allen's study, self-making becomes financialised.

Mona Mannevuo also explores the regulation of work through self-actualisation discourses, this time focussing on women in academia. She analyses

contributions to a Finnish collection, *Tutkimusmatkoja äitiyeen* (Research Journeys to Motherhood), documenting 33 stories of women's experience combining work in academe with parenting. She explores the various affects that circulate in these accounts, using Berlant's idea of 'cruel optimism' (also picked up elsewhere in the collection) to explain the continued attachment to a troublesome form of labour. Mannevuo argues that ambivalence and contradiction abound in women's narratives about their work, including that in the self-assessments made about the quality of their affective and immaterial labour for both family and institution.

The second section picks up on the intersection of love and money identified by Mannevuo and Allen as it focuses more closely on the financialisation of the inalienable in work undertaken in domestic contexts. Beginning with Susan Luckman's exploration of home-based craft micro-enterprises, this section incrementally builds a picture of the complex entanglement of economics and subjectivity. Examining the self-descriptions offered on seller's blogs on the craft website Etsy, Luckman identifies a recurring narrative form that locates a happy resolution to the tensions between work and life, in particular those of parenting, in home-based work. She suggests that micro-enterprises are offered as a 'magical solution' or symbolic reconciliation to the problems of post-Fordism, particularly those faced by women whose assumed role as primary carer remains little challenged in hetero-patriarchal family contexts. That this fantasy does not, in fact, resolve the inequalities and problems of precarity and contingency that abound in contemporary labour contexts is the final, cautionary point.

Jessica Taylor also explores home-based micro-enterprises, this time the phenomenon of mommy blogging. Using the idea of the palimpsest in order to avoid casting such work as new, she explores texts positing blogging as a new opportunity for middle-class women (such as the 2012 'Canadian Digital Mom' report by Mom Central Consulting) with historical texts exploring women's work (such as Marjory MacMurchy's *The Canadian girl at work: A book of vocational guidance* published in 1919). In particular, she notes the importance of home economics and its overlaying of scientific management principles onto domestic work as a precursor of the commercialisation practices of mommy blog authors and communities. She thus suggests that the overlapping of home and work contexts is less novel than is often assumed. She concludes that the monetisation of mommy blogging, 'while clothed in the form of exciting new media, is clearly shaped by long-standing gendered structures of work' [124].

Lisa Adkins and Maryanne Dever's chapter also picks up on the topic of gendered domestic work, highlighting the crisis in social reproduction associated with the post-Fordist condition. They offer a complex documentation of the ways in which

the dynamics of households and the nature and quality of domestic work are entangled with processes of financialisation. From the penetration of financial devices into the household to the privatisation of various reproductive activities previously offered by the state or unpaid housewives, calculative work has become a new form of everyday, domestic labour. Their point, though, is that domestic labour may indeed be 'hardwired' to commerce through models that measure its contribution to the performance of assets such as water and electricity companies on financial markets. It is not merely that domestic work is being monetised but that the reproductive sphere is increasingly entangled in the creation of promissory financial value.

The final section focuses on governance structures of contemporary work. This theme has been a persistent feature of the previous studies but, in the three papers here, both formal and informal regulatory frameworks that shape work are brought to the fore. Orly Benjamin reports on an institutional ethnography of subcontracted Israeli care providers, focusing in particular on the contractual logics understood by high and low-level administrators in private and State bodies as well as individual care workers. Her goal is to understand how the logics of the contracts that are sourced in post-Fordism result in diminished quality of work for carers. Benjamin documents how refusal to recognise the need for training and education or compromising on occupational standards in order to meet budgets, generates the precarity, under-resourcing and low remuneration of contract employees, as well as difficult labour conditions. In doing so, Benjamin offers a useful and complex empirical case study of how post-Fordist economics shape labour.

Lydia Hayes also looks at mostly female care workers in the UK, focussing her attention on the covert surveillance of home-based carers by the families for whom they work. Like Benjamin, Hayes places such work in the context of deregulated and privatised social services, but also in the context of a news media keen to exploit the spectacle of perceived cruelty associated with poor caring labour. These discourses that identify care workers as always potentially self-serving and ruthless are the backdrop for the experiences of the workers interviewed in this study. Hayes describes the disciplining exerted by the threat of hidden CCTV cameras as well as the ways in which they individualise responsibility for mishaps, in effect diverting attention from problems caused by deregulation of the industry.

The final study of the collection by Ayse Akalin also explores discipline in home-based care work, this time engaged with the high turnover in migrant domestic labour in Turkey. In particular, Akalin highlights the use of 'lying' as a tactic of resistance by vulnerable women workers, until recently unprotected by

regulations and set contracts. She explores the deployment of the pejorative figure of the Migrant Domestic Worker (MDW) in the management of relations between employer and employee. Nevertheless, she also notes how the migrant worker must always be more than this stereotype, moving beyond their abjection in order to provide the living labour required of the role. In the absence of clear contractual obligations, 'lying' about, for instance, being called back urgently to the mythic, poverty-stricken family in the home country is used as a safe method for quitting an employer and manifesting autonomy. It also serves, as Akalin notes, as a means of resisting the 'becoming' imposed by the figure of the MDW. It is the agency of living labour.

The evidence of the quality of this collection lies in the thematic coherence around the intersection of the inalienable with capital, in particular the ways in which subjectivity is inextricably entwined into its logics as both cause and effect of exploitation. In the studies presented here, labour contracts, surveillance technology, fantasy, self-help literature, popularly circulated discourses of migrants and even romance novels and films all work as part of the 'mechanisms of becoming' [196] of the contemporary waged or unwaged workplace. This integration of the personal and the political; the formally productive and the reproductive; the social and the economic into studies of work is inherently valuable.

Despite this complexity, there is a tendency throughout the collection to tacitly or overtly describe this integration as something new. This is partly a problem of using the 'post' prefix in the book title. The term 'post-Fordism', as is the problem with all post- modifiers, suggests a break with the organisational logics of Fordism and indeed earlier forms of capitalist accumulation. There is the implication, then, that there is something new about the labour dynamics under investigation in this volume. Such attribution of novelty to the incorporation of subjectivity into capitalism has become a disturbing feature of much recent scholarship on labour, particularly those drawing on Mario Tronti's (1973) idea of the social factory. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Jarrett, 2016), this position is marked by its blindness to the specificity of the experience it describes. When attention is paid to the gendered division of labour and the economics of women's oppression under capitalism, attributions of novelty to the subsumption of immaterial aspects of self and body seem misplaced. Consequently, whenever a distinction between contemporary and precursor labour practices is implied in this volume, it registers as both absolute and internal dissonance. The studies in *The post-Fordist sexual contract*, not least because of their focus on feminised labour arenas, argue for continuity, modification and extension in the capture and regulatory systems of capital

rather than rupture. The post- prefix in the title thus becomes a niggly, but certainly not fatal, issue in the arguments of the collection.

This excellent volume is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature (re-) turning to the sphere of social reproduction and its theorisations in which the reproductive aspects of labour are considered integral to the value chains of capitalism. In doing so, it aligns itself with the current vogue for interrogating labour through the insights of Autonomist Marxism, which is particularly prevalent in my own field of internet research. But the complexity of the approach used in this volume takes it beyond the insights of the Autonomist paradigm, limited as that is by its blinkers in relation to issues of gender, sexuality, embodiment and race. By mapping the actualities of living labour in conditions of precarity, *The post-Fordist sexual contract* generates critical interventions that more adequately address the intersections of a variety of mechanisms of subjugation. It is a rich contribution to our understanding of work, identity and capitalism.

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