The Tactics of the Trinket: Spaces and Operations of the £1 Commodity Chain Within the Context of Contemporary Capitalism

Alison Hulme

Centre for Cultural Studies
Goldsmiths College
University of London

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This thesis is the result of my own investigations. Sources are acknowledged by footnotes and a bibliography.

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Abstract

The Tactics of the Trinket presents a material geography of the £1 commodity, following the trinket's journey from its beginning as raw material on a Chinese rubbish dump, to factories, international trade hubs, state-of-the-art distribution networks, over-flowing high street stores, and finally the homes of the consumer. This trajectory is used to uncover the places and operations of the typical £1 commodity and the ways in which it utilizes and creates a complicated array of tactics.

Each of these tactics is explored in turn; from the embedding of a culture of immediacy, to the intrinsic necessity of disposability, to the creation of agglomerative logic, to the over-powering presence of abundance. Immediacy is explored in relation to the consumer and traditional notions of desire and mystification unpicked. Disposability is questioned in the context of the possibilities of entanglement with objects rather than possession of them. Agglomeration is analysed as a practice both contributing to, but in some ways hors de, capitalism, as well as a phenomenon carving out new types of spaces. Abundance is picked apart as one half of a double-edged relationship with scarcity and a way of understanding current rhetoric on fast capitalism.

The trinket is considered as part of both micro situations (for example, the solidarity of manufacturers in China's 'commodity city' of Yiwu) and macro geo-political movements (the impact of China's growth on the relationship between China and the EU). Its tactics are considered in the light of current capitalism and some initial principles for a new material manifesto are discussed.

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Introduction

i) Trajectories.

The story of the £1 trinket is the story of how the simplest and cheapest of commodities creates and changes cultures, enforces specific ways of surviving, and affects geo-political relations across the globe. Its journey uncovers places ranging from global show-pieces of capitalism to the hidden raw edges of it; players ranging from global entrepreneurs to dump-dwellers. Uncovering these places and people brings to light new ways of operating and surviving through new *tactical* maneuvers.

What defines the £1 trinket? It is frequently ornamental, although sometimes combines this with a functional everyday use in way that tends to play down the original gravity of any attached symbolism (e.g. Jesus' face on a clock). Often, it is an inexpensive version of a well-known cultural 'treasure' and this usually requires it to be a miniaturization of that treasure (e.g. the £1 Buddhas). If not an attempt to exactly recreate famous effigies, it tends to pick up on well-established symbolism, traditions and legends (e.g. pirates, 'tribal' Africans, Rastafarians), often turning these into caricatures. Most crucially, it is *united* with its sibling 'one pound items' and its myth lies in the cultural potency of its price. It is part of a system of objects that is at one and the same time democratic and totalitarian - it can be anything on the planet as long as it can retail for £1. Yet, within this system, there are of course distinctions between £1 commodities, which cause some to be considered better purchases than others. Georg Simmel describes these differences within a sameness, as levelling and uniformity due to the environment of the same on one hand, and the accentuation of the individual as an independent whole on the other (1991: 122). As Ben Highmore points out, Simmel uses this description to describe not only commodities, but also the modern individual in society (2002: 41).

It is the 'how' of the £1 commodity's genus, its ability to exist for the necessary price, is what is at stake here, and this involves a journey crucial to understanding new modes of capitalist relations. Briefly, and by way of grounding what is to come, this journey of the £1 commodity is as follows. It begins, and indeed often ends, in places of waste. Places such as the peddlers quarters within large Chinese cities, or the so-called 'dump towns' which have emerged along the main manufacturing areas of the Pearl and Yangtze River deltas. It is here that private individuals or small recycling 'factories' collect and sort through mountains of rubbish,

separating according to material and classifying according to value, in preparation for sale to manufacturers. This waste is melted down and formed into small pellets, which in their turn, and in a moment conjured well by Roland Barthes, are melted and molded to form the basis of the commodity:

> '..plastic… is in essence the stuff of alchemy. ..the magical operation par excellence: the transmutation of matter. An ideally-shaped machine, tubulated and oblong… effortlessly draws…. At one end, raw telluric matter, at the other, the finished, human object; and between these two extremes, nothing…' (1973[1957]:97)

From here, the journey takes us into the heart of the Yangtze River delta, to Yiwu – a 'commodities city' and the place with the highest concentration of the world's small commodities on the planet. Our trinket is displayed alongside others in a two metre square stall, situated on an aisle of identical stalls on the second floor of an immense wholesale market. Sometimes its virtual counterpart is simultaneously being displayed on *alibaba.com* - a business-to-business website which directly connects wholesale buyers to Chinese manufacturers and which is the highly successful brain-child of celebrity businessman Jack Ma.

These techniques of display lead to the purchase of the £1 trinket and the long journey from Yiwu to the port of Felixstowe, UK, begins. It will involve the implementation of highly sophisticated software to plan packing, loading, unloading and storing, as well as the risks (still) associated with container shipping. Eventually, the trinket will arrive in a pound store and quickly be purchased by a consumer. Its life once consumed may be long, but most probably will not be. It will find itself temporarily enjoyed before being jettisoned. It may even find itself on a ship full of waste heading back to China to begin its process all over again.

Along its journey the £1 commodity has typically left the factory in China at the price of 22p, travelled 'free-on-board' a shipping container (with shipping, customs duty, insurance, and unloading paid for by the buyer), so has a gained a 'cost landed' price in the UK of around 31.5p. The wholesaler who bought it from the factory has sold it to a retailer for 45p, making a profit of around 15p per unit. After Value Added Tax has been subtracted, the retailer has sold it for around 82.5p in net terms. The retailer's share is therefore the largest, the manufacturers share generally the smallest, but all fall between 10p and 40p profit margins per unit sold.

The journey is mapped, its key sites identified, yet the stories attached to that trajectory are multiple and contain a plurality of perspectives. There are the micro stories, laid before us in a kind of Perecquian[1] inventory; simultaneous events in distanced places, as the enactment of chaos theory par excellence:

A peddler pushes his rickety cart, piled high with cardboard boxes, through a partially demolished quarter of Shanghai.

A port employee checks the coloured rectangles on the computer screen in front of him before moving a giant crane into action to unload another container from a ship.

A store owner arranges a bulk-load of plastic vases on a shelf, under a sign that says '£1 your choice'.

A woman smiles as she decides upon a home for 'Gerald', the garden gnome, by the heather on her rockery.

A wholesale buyer taps figures into his calculator whilst agitatedly fingering the sample mobile phone cover he has been handed.

Viewed in this way, the commodity's journey becomes heroic, romantic, imbued with a sense of its own pioneering spirit. As Georges Perec himself said of such inventories, they are somehow idealized, and therefore reassuring and even comforting. This remains true, almost regardless of the nature of their content; it is the form that makes them romantic, not the substance; there is something small-world and cosy about being told of other humdrum lives running counter to one's own (2003) [1978].

In truth of course the commodity chain in question is harsh and unforgiving, fraught with risks and claustrophobically relentless in its pursuit of survival. To fully appreciate this, a macro view is needed alongside the micro: China as the great manufacturing dragon, the heroic factory of the world, a nation behind the impetus for the fastest ever industrial revolution, a nation insisting on doing capitalism differently, struggling with individualism whilst wholly embracing Deng's call

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[1] Georges Perec was a notable influence upon Henri Lefebvre. In particular his 1978 work *Life: A Users' Manual* which was to most effectively use the inventory as literary technique in describing the daily lives of various characters within a Parisian block of flats. Meanwhile *Things: A Story of the Sixties*, shows a nuanced understanding of the (false) promises of commodities along similar lines to Lefebvre.

that 'to get rich is glorious'[2]; the West as a conceptual entity, heavy-handedly playing the voice of reason role, pressurising China to 'clean up', 'behave ethically' and adopt capitalism as *we* know it, whilst proving itself desperately reliant upon 'China Price' commodities; the mass flows of people, commodities, waste, pollution, money, and ideas. These differing macro and micro stories, weave in and out, around and over each other, sometimes travelling side by side, sometimes avoiding each other, sometimes colliding. As John Law suggests, such conflicting narratives and ambiguities may require the making of a fair amount of 'mess' with method (2004).

ii) Influences

During the course of this research, as I tread my own path through material culture, I have been informed by certain key areas of thought. The most fundamental of these is the body of theory on the everyday, especially the thinking of Henri Lefebvre, which is tackled in detail in chapter one. The latter's personal and philosophical journey through life, and indeed through various political movements (Dada-ism, Surrealism, Communism, Situationism, etc.), provided prisms through which to view the work of various others who have engaged with material things. For me this engagement with the theory of the everyday began with Louis Aragon's gas-lit forays (1994 [1926]), Benjamin's loyalty to the fragmented, disregarded mundane, and Baudelaire's dalliances as poet of the everyday. It continued, thanks largely to Lefebvre, to unceremoniously topple the Surrealists along with Baudelaire as their inspiration, and to embed itself firmly within the everyday as and for itself.

Others are worth mentioning briefly here too. Siegfried Kracauer's (1995) assertion that boredom ought to be seen as a critical refusal of banality, rather than its outcome, was useful; specially when applied to consumers' enjoyment of kitsch in the realm of £1 commodities. For Kracauer, those who do not experience boredom are 'pushed deeper and deeper into the hustle and bustle until eventually they no longer now where their head is, and the extraordinary, radical

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[2] This refers to a line in Deng Ziao Ping's 1978 speech in which he said socialism should not be equated with poverty, and that 'to get rich is glorious', calling it 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. The phrase 'to get rich is glorious' has become synonymous with Deng's general ethos and specific opening-up policies.

boredom that might be able to reunite them with their heads remains eternally distant for them' (1995: 331). That said, the extent to which boredom can truly be seen as critical refusal, rather than post-modern apathy, remains highly debatable, and here Debord and Lefebvre's 'colonisation of everyday life'[3] was key. Kracauer's emphasis on the 'tiny catastrophes' that make up daily life was arguably the starting point for an interaction with the concept of 'flow' which reformulated it as made up of constant small ruptures, and necessarily (for the survival of capitalism) bound up with risk.

Erving Goffman's (1959) classic study of life on the Shetland Islands and his understanding of self as a collection of performances given in 'back' and 'front' spaces of the everyday enabled a much-needed escape from the cul-de-sac of the authentic/inauthentic dichotomy. In fact Goffman can be likened to Lefebvre as the latter was also concerned with dramaturgy[4] as method and the idea of life as an acting-out, a play. This sits alongside Lefebvre's ideas on the ludic as a way of living and his thoughts on festival as life earlier in his career; these were to be somewhat reformed and down-played later. It also compliments de Certeau's notion of tactics as the creation of different disguises to enable evasion. Goffman's emphasis on micro interactions was perhaps the inspiration for my 'shadowing' of wholesale buyers in Yiwu and my analysis of conversation snippets in Deptford's pound stores. De Certeau himself, was inevitably a huge influence, not only in relation to his thinking on tactics in everyday life, but also his emphasis on the trajectories of the everyday and his understanding of spaces as mapped by everyday routines and coloured by memories and emotions, most specifically in 'Walking in the City' (1984).

My own choice of 'thing' was no doubt influenced not only by a personal commitment to studying complicated social relations through the ephemeral and mundane, and a determination not to simply translate anthropology's fetishism of people to a fetishism of 'classic' (read exotic)

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[3] I attribute this notion to both Debord *and* Lefebvre here as Lefebvre's claim to it was later to be a point of contention between the two. It was originally coined by Debord during a talk he gave in 1961 to the Research Group on Everyday Life which Lefebvre had set up. Lefebvre quoted and expanded upon it in volume two of *Critique of Everyday Life*. Habermas later adopted the term as the title of a chapter on that theme in his Theory of Communicative Action, although for him the culprit of oppression was language and communication rather than the (Marxist) focus on economics and alienated labour.

[4] The plays of Alfred de Musset were a great influence on Lefebvre, who wrote a book on the author. Of specific interest to Lefebvre was the way de Musset wrote characters who struggled with which versions of themselves to be in which contexts. De Musset tended also to play himself out in his writing, tackling questions of personal 'authenticity', often by writing characters struggling with their sexuality – he himself was gay. This was perhaps most famously the case in the play Lorrenzacio, based in De Medici Florence.

things, but also by John Hutnyk's growing body of work on trinketization (see Hutnyk 1996, 1998, 2005). Hutnyk's thinking began with a frustration at the poverty of theorizing on commodities (as he says, 'grinning at the shiny trinkets ain't enough'), as much as with the desire to find a term that could describe the desiccation of all life to the commodity form. For him, the concept can be applied far more widely than the material thing; encompassing virtual things, ideas, whole countries and people - i.e. Madonna's use of 'Indian' dress (see *Postcolonial Studies,* Sharma and Hutnyk, Vol 1 No 3, 1998:355) and Crispin Mills' use of South Asian 'sounds' (see *Travel Worlds: Journeys in Contemporary Cultural Politics,* eds Kaur and Hutnyk, 1999).

Hutnyk's first use of the term appears in reference to James Clifford's use of anthropological detail (see Hutnyk in *Critique of Anthropology*, 1998, 18 (4) p.364). However, the concept had been even earlier worked out in his *Rumour of Calcutta* (1996). Perhaps most influential for my own study of the trinket form was the idea of 'going native' by taking pieces of a culture in the most mundane form possible, i.e. tourist paraphernalia (see *Diaspora and Hybridity,* eds Kalra and Hutnyk, 2005). This latter was the trinketizing of cultures through low-value objects in such a way that it allowed global wanderers to feel themselves immersed and somehow different from their 'normal' selves simply by having in their possession a material thing from the 'other'. This is also, perhaps strangely, what many £1 trinkets attempt to satiate the consumer with.

More importantly, the belief in this (apparent) satiation is precisely Lefebvre's concern throughout *The Critique of Everyday Life* (CEL) - that escape from the everyday cannot lead to its recapture as an arena for the social. Trinketization, perhaps, works in the opposite way to surrealism, but with the same result. Rather than making mundane items strange as surrealism did, trinketization makes 'strange' items unthreatening, pocket-able and cute enough for consumers of the global (at home and abroad) to feel life is briefly more exciting. Both aim to up-end the everyday by using novelty against it. Both fail to realise the flaw in attempting to enliven the everyday by singling out apparently external novelties. As Lefebvre argues throughout his oeuvre, the attempt to change everyday life cannot look to solutions outside of itself; the battle must be fought *through* the everyday itself.

The second area was the anthropological thought stemming from Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff's (1986) classic work on the life-cycles of things. More specifically, it was the

alternative to value-based Global Commodity Chain analysis (GCC) arising in the work of a small groups of scholars inspired more by classic commodity studies such as Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1986) than by Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory (1974, 1993), and who were beginning to call themselves 'thing followers.'

My entry into thing-following was, effectively, born out of a nagging discontent with existing GCC analysis. My concerns about the latter fell into two camps, one structural the other more to do with my own motivation for being interested. In the structural camp sat the issue of polarising production and consumption. It was not that I did not agree that certain places along the chain were chiefly consuming or producing, it was just that the operations of the chain as a whole meant that what we understood as 'consumption' and 'production' was changing in nature and required a far more nuanced understanding. Consumption was creating the raw materials for production, by way of disposing of what was consumed soon after purchase. Production was cheapening and quickening itself in order to make smaller the gap between consumption and disposal/re-consumption and so allow for increased growth, in order to feed itself. Furthermore, this production/consumption binary tended to sit alongside others, such as 'core' and 'periphery'. Core/peripheral to what, who, when?

GCC's reliance upon the paradigms set up by World Systems Theory bothered me. The assumptions regarding 'core' and 'periphery' seemed increasingly problematic as part of a skewed Western discourse, which the emergence of new non-Western hub cities - Sao Paolo, Mumbai, Shanghai - belies. I felt that the simplistic equating of profit with power missed many of the crucial nuances and tactics of the £1 commodity chain; GCC had often been utilised as a way of berating the West for scooping off excess profit along the commodity chain, creating huge disparities between 'periphery' and 'core' / 'producing nation' and 'consuming nation', but it had begun to simplistically cast 'producers' as the geographically peripheral binary opposite of consumers.

In the motivational camp sat the issue of charting value across the chain. Certainly, value was added, as would be expected, as the commodity went from its place of manufacture to its place of consumption. But why re-make this (already established) point when the entire chain was operating under a logic which attempted to *keep the price down*? And what was the point in charting economic value *per unit* without taking into account the wider picture? When China has

such a monopoly on maintaining cheapness that the biggest economies in the world buy its products, giving it billions of foreign reserves whilst they fall further into debt, there is something else happening to profit above and beyond a simple flow from 'periphery' to 'core'. Besides, classic GCC analysis had little to say about the on-the-ground effects of these profits and how they may have drastically different influences in different places irrespective of their financial value.

What I was more concerned with was a kind of anthropology of the £1 commodity; a tracing of the commodity chain in order to stop at its key sites and dig into what was going on there and find out how (and if) these sites related to, impacted upon, or were even aware of each other. I started to engage with material geographies, such as sugar (Mintz, 2007), garments (Prentice, 2008), flip-flops (Knowles, 2009), T-shirts (Rivoli, 2006) and fruit (Cook and Harrison, 2007), writers who had taken Appadurai's call to 'follow the thing' head on.

> 'Even if our own approach to things is conditioned necessarily by the view that things have no meanings apart from those that human transactions, attributions, and motivations endow them with, the anthropological problem is that this formal truth does not illuminate the concrete, historical circulation of things. For that we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories.' (Appadurai, 1986: 5)

Teamed with George Marcus's (1995) call to engage in multi-sited fieldwork, involving oneself in ethnographies in which commodities and their biographies are the organizing principles, this made for a vibrant new governing principle of 'doing Anthropology'. It also had the added benefit of tackling Anthropology's age-old guilt in regard to its colonialist past, as allowing the commodity's trajectory to determine 'sites' broke with more 'traditional' modes of anthropological enquiry in which 'communities' were studied as bounded entities. Finally, the method was given a political imperative by taking on David Harvey's (1990) concern with allowing the thing to reveal everyday exploitations and reliance upon unseen others across the globe. This was part of a broad attempt to 'de-fetishize' the product by exposing its making, and had refreshingly little to do with the thorny and increasingly irrelevant issue of added (financial) value.

The last of the material geographers mentioned above, Ian Cook, had for a few years been gathering around him a group of people – scholars, students, colleagues, artists, – whose research

involved following an object. He called this collective (of which I am part) 'Ian Cook et al' and used it as a vehicle to experiment with collective writing methods. Throughout 2008-2009 Ian Cook et al authored three key pieces on thing-following in *Progress in Human Geography* and cemented their micro-discipline with a panel entitled 'Following the Thing' at the Royal Geographical Society conference in Manchester, 2009.

Yet despite the obvious common nature of our projects, the things I was following seemed to be part of commodity chains that did not display the same classic followability as my fellow thing-followers. The more I followed, the more I found that the chains, just like the objects they produced, were highly disposable. Not to confuse matters, what I mean to say is that the key *places* of the chains were firmly ensconced (the manufacturing cities, the areas for collection of raw materials, the neighbourhoods containing unusually high numbers of pound stores), as were the infrastructural elements (freight trains, container shipping ports, etc.), but many of the *players* along the chain were highly spontaneous, moving in and out of different chains (waste peddlers who returned to rural provinces, factory owners who switched production, pound store owners who became 'bargain' stores as they could not compete with the large £1 chain that had just arrived on their street). In other words rupture was playing a key part in 'flow'; the 'career' of the commodity was an unreliable and fretful journey in which breakages occurred, re-positionings were *forced*, and collateral damage was integral. The £1 chain's 'flow' was made up of numerous micro psycho-social, geographical, economic ruptures for the person. Globalization as highlighted by the £1 commodity chain was far from the slowly-spreading homogenous ink-stain that 'flat world-ers'[5] would have us believe, but rather a phenomenon strengthened by constant rupture.

However, this understanding of flow as constant rupture must not be read as a suggestion that the commodity chains in question were somehow therefore necessarily challenging to the systems they existed in. As Zygmunt Bauman argues in *Liquid Modernity* (2007a), flows do not challenge capitalism, but rather are the breaking down of a previous order to form one in which capitalism simply operates *differently*. For Bauman, for example, whilst liquid flows may have

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[5] I use the term 'flat world-ers' here in a derogatory sense in reference to Thomas Friedman's book *The World is Flat.* This is not to dispute Marx's idea that the bourgeoisie would spread across the face of the earth, but rather to critique Friedman's false reading of Marx, which tends to result in a re-interpretation that supports a neo-liberal celebration of globalization as an un-problematic democratic process.

melted Weber's 'iron cage', they came as a result of deregulation, liberalization, and a 'releasing of the brakes' so should not be seen as synonymous with radical opposition to older capitalistic state 'solids'(2007: 5).

This said it did seem that due to the constant rupture, the more specific my thing-following attempted to be, the less the specific elements seemed to matter. So what if I could find the actual factory that made the £1 plastic Buddhas? (Incidentally, I did). By next month they will be making something else and a neighbouring factory will have bought their equipment, so now *they* will be making the plastic Buddhas. It became clear that not only did it not matter which factory made the product at any one time, as it did not change the story, but that indeed a more telling story was the one which explained *why* it did not matter. In other words, what was it about the £1 commodity chain that made it so changeable, so spontaneous, (or perhaps volatile?), so fundamentally un-followable? What were the *characteristic features* of the chain? This story had much more to say.

I began to 'do' my thing-following as an exercise in tracing the 'typical' £1 commodity chain - the global path which sees the greatest flow of these items - as a way of examining its features as *paradigmatic* of certain forms of capitalism. Thing-following, for me, had suddenly got bigger, and yet had attached itself more determinedly to the micro-mechanisms of everyday life. I toyed with words to describe the chain's features and how they operated and considered how these related to everyday life in the places along the chain - shop signs that read '£1 your choice', consumers who enjoyed 'not having to worry about it [the commodity] lasting', wholesale buyers frustrated by manufacturers 'sharing the wealth', global internet entrepreneurs boasting they could raise profits simply by 'adding another server'.[6] I began to find real links - cultures within cultures that were creative of, and created by, this chain and its paradigmatic features. I also began to realise that what all these features had in common was that they operated *tactically*.

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[6] This refers to Jack Ma's comments during an interview published in the Guardian newspaper in 2006 in which he extols the virtues of the Internet, saying 'alibaba is more powerful than Yiwu. We don't have to buy land to build; nobody has to travel. If we want to add 1,000 new companies, we simply add another server'. Ma is the founder of *alibaba.com* - the largest business-to-business website in the world for small commodities.

iii) Tactics

The characteristics of the chain are *tactics* because they operate in ways which wilfully play upon the existing operations of capitalism, sometimes smoothing their progress, sometimes creating stumbling blocks. Tactics thus became an essential concept in attempting to understand people and places along the £1 chain and the daily activities of those for whom there remain small choices to be made and windows of opportunity.

These were usefully understood by the ways in which they use what Michel de Certeau called 'la perruque' (the wig), as a way of pursuing their own interests whilst appearing to comply with another agenda (1984:29), or, similarly, by the ways in which speakers within the chain make use of language in ways fitting to their personal needs, as de Certeau outlines in *The Capture of Speech* (1998). Both recognize the conscious will to innovate, an ability to put imagination into action, and a desire to avoid pitfalls and exploit availabilities. On a macro level, as Brenner (2003) argues, the long-term squeeze on profits has meant that new practices are being forced by a certain kind of desperation. Especially in the wake of the global financial crisis this desperation has meant that such practices become increasingly tactical. Furthermore, in taking tactics as a prism, it is possible to carve out a kind of anthropological commodity chain analysis whose concern is the specific characteristics of the chain, the frictions they cause, and the potential for change these frictions create; this stands in contrast to the more traditional aim of charting value, in the form of profit seen as directly representative of and equal to power.

The tactics of the £1 commodity chain feed into one another in a cyclical manner. Thus the structure of all that follows is designed to explore life in the specific sites along the £1 commodity chain, whilst drawing from those sites a *characteristic* of the chain without which it could not operate. This structure is unusual in that effectively it could be written in any order due to the way in which the tactics interrelate; hence an intentional use of allowing 'fragments' of ethnography to be juxtaposed with the theoretical arguments throughout as a way of moving from micro to macro and back.

As a literary technique, this draws upon a reading of Michel Serres' *The Parasite* (1982), in which he describes the 'quasi-object' which allows us to swoop from micro to macro yet without necessarily making the former representative of the latter, thus enabling a description and

understanding of the commodity chain as contemporaneously micro and macro. The specific can be viewed *alongside* an awareness of the entirety, *through* the object, or as Serres explains, the quasi object can unlock the truths of the collective nature of the chain, whilst giving us specific information about the places it settles (1982). To clarify how this operates, Serres uses a description of the game of 'passing the furet' (similar to pass-the-parcel):-

> 'He who is not discovered with the furet in his hand is anonymous, part of a monotonous chain where he remains indistinguished. He is not an individual; he is not recognized, discovered, cut; he is of the chain and in the chain…The moving furet weaves the 'we', 'the collective'; if it stops, it marks the 'I' (1982: 225).

Interestingly, the word 'furet' translates as both a noun- ferret, and as a verb- fureter, to seek out or investigate. This is therefore to see the object not only as exposing cultural relations, but as ferreting them out, and in the process weaving together both collectivities and individualities. The furet therefore can be imagined as a conceptual tool which allows us to seek out information in the places it lands, much like when the music stops all attention is focused on the un-wrapper in a game of pass-the-parcel. The furet acts as the parcel, landing with individuals, and acting as a kind of view-finder; but also being passed through the air and enabling a birds-eye perspective. It can be used to see things from above, a birds-eye view, or from very close up. It is simply passed around the journey, and around the places and people, becoming a tool to enable what Holmes and Marcus call 'para-ethnography'- the using of the anecdotal from strategically positioned informants. (2005)

I have appropriated this concept as a literary tool, one which allows the text to switch from micro to macro descriptions, as the 'furet passes' through the stories on that particular version of the £1 commodity's journey- this emerges in the text as scattered vignettes. This is to juxtapose the survival mechanisms of individuals and groups of individuals, with those of the global commodity chain and the supra-national systems through which it operates. It is to understand that the tactics of people and places are constantly interacting with societal systems - usually with a certain degree of friction and fall-out.

In fact, these discrepancies between the tactics of individuals and the movements of larger 'systems' leads one to consider the distinction between strategy and tactics – a question whose origins will be further explored in the following chapter. The distinction allows us to differentiate between a longer-term view and that of day-to-day survival, as well as between the

activities of groups working together with a plan for future gains and individuals. However, these neat delineations become more problematic when applied to the £1 commodity chain. At first glance, it seems obvious to suggest that the operations of individual waste peddlers, manufacturers, or consumers along the chain should be defined as tactics, whilst the ways in which these are drawn out as characteristics of the chain should be seen as strategy. However, this makes a number of false assumptions.

Firstly, the defining criteria of a tactic ought be the extent to which those using it have power in the context of their actions, as well as the extent to which they are acting 'together' and 'consciously'. It cannot be argued that one person's struggle for survival disenables them from working towards a joint outcome with others; the two are not mutually exclusive. The inherent suggestion that tacticians are lacking knowledge of the bigger picture quickly becomes patronizing; the issue is rather that they understand the bigger picture but are powerless to engage in anything other than tactics.

Secondly, defining the characteristics I have drawn out of the chain as strategy, suggests that the entire chain acts as one organism, always in agreement with what its next move ought to be. This would be to paint over the highly specialized and localized parts of the chain, and more importantly to fail to acknowledge the way in which it is precisely the ruptures between different tactics which give the chain its character and increase its strength. Whilst, it is certainly the case that the characteristics identified enable us to understand the nature of the chain *in general*, it is not the case that these characteristics are equally as powerful as each other at all times, or in all parts of the chain; rather they are constantly changing and coming to the fore or falling back.

Finally, the characteristics I have identified are sometimes those of less powerful localized cultures (e.g. the agglomeration of Yiwu), and sometimes those of established, embedded cultures (e.g. the expectation of immediacy from consumers). In other words, they are sometimes operations of the weak(er) within the chain, and sometimes those of the strong(er). Therefore, the question of power must be considered differently in the light of each characteristic. This is to acknowledge the way in which capitalism continuously re-appropriates operations to its own ends.

For all the above reasons, one cannot posit these characteristics as strategies; instead they must be understood as tactics (the tactics of the trinket) which are constantly battling to carve a path through capitalism, sometimes being appropriated by it, sometimes finding alternative ways through it.

iv)   A Brief Note on the Fieldwork and Methodology

This research has involved fieldwork in four key sites – the waste peddlers' quarter in Shanghai, the 'small commodities city' of Yiwu, the main shopping street in Deptford, London, and the docks in Felixstowe, Suffolk. Each of these came with its own advantages and challenges, and the fieldwork carried out in each followed slightly different methodological lines. The work in Shanghai and Yiwu was carried out over the course of three months from September to December 2008. The Felixstowe research was the result of three short trips from 2007 to 2009, each lasting three to four days. The work with consumers and store owners in Deptford was continuous from 2006 to 2009 and involved on average two days a month spent in the site and numerous online exchanges.

Researching the waste peddlers in Shanghai was the most problematic in the traditional sense – it was tiring, dirty, confusing and potentially risky. Local authorities do not deem peddlers quarters the kind of places that 'tourists' ought to be seeing, and whilst I was never told to leave by anyone in authority I did receive many questioning looks from local people throughout my time there. Furthermore, many would not talk to me for fear of being seen encouraging my presence and getting into trouble themselves. Yet others were convinced I was a Western journalist and it was only after my continued presence over three weeks or so, and my consequent reappearances, that they began to believe I was not writing a derogatory article. It undoubtedly helped that during the second week I returned with a local Chinese student who could explain to people that I was not a journalist and that I was here because I was interested in the way they were carving a living out of waste. Although sometimes incredulous that a 'tourist' would find this interesting, people tended to accept it - perhaps due to the historical connotations of 'hard work' and 'respect' that peddling has in China.

Whilst I could never hope to become accepted in such circumstances, it did become the case that certain familiar faces began to regard me with what I would describe as friendly bemusement and would wave to me or say hello and engage with me when they saw I had my student translator with me. However, I quickly learned that any sign of a recording device or camera would cause them to completely close up, so I had to rely on taking notes immediately after interactions and recording more general observations at the end of the day. My reporting of interactions with the peddlers is based on the translation of my student helper and my own memory.

Many of those I spoke to in the peddlers' quarter were far more interested in asking me about David Beckham, Big Ben, red buses and 'Lady Di' than they were in answering my questions about their own lives. Perhaps this was not surprising as my fieldwork came directly after the Olympic handing-over ceremony from Beijing to London. On the other hand, this 'handover' also inspired much warmth towards me as 'English' (as opposed to American or any other 'Westerner') - people were feeling a connection to England due to the Olympics and the way in which they perceived England had praised their hosting of it and was aspiring to be as good as them. My Mandarin being only basic was of course limiting, but my attempts to engage with them were all the more appreciated because of it, which often meant people opened up to me more readily because they put a high value on my linguistic efforts.

In Yiwu things were easier in practical terms - it was smaller, cleaner, safer - although in other ways it seemed harder to get through 'layers' of what people were saying and try to understand situations. As an 'international market' Yiwu was far more used to seeing Westerners and my presence did not attract the attention it had in the peddlers' quarters. Furthermore, Yiwu is a place authorities want Westerners to visit as they are proud of its success.

I was able to shadow various international wholesale buyers (Westerners), so the stall-holders they spoke to assumed I was a buyer as well and I did not have to qualify my presence. On the other hand, I had to be careful not to visit the same market areas too many times with different buyers. The interactions were often brief, as once a stall-holder and buyer think there is no deal to be made, they very quickly close up and move on. It would have been unethical for me to pretend to want to do a deal in order to talk to the holders for longer, and fortunately this was out of my hands anyway as I was simply watching the 'real' interactions of buyers who were

potentially interested in doing deals. This said, sometimes the briefest of interactions were as telling as the longer ones. As in Shanghai, no sign of a recording device was tolerated, and even cameras were viewed with suspicion by some sellers anxious about industrial espionage *from outside* Yiwu. However, at least here I could walk around the markets with a notebook and pen (as many of the wholesale buyers did) so my reporting of interactions with the stall-holders is based on the written notes I took at the time and at the end of each day. I had also chatted in online wholesale forums before leaving the UK for China in order to glean information on the attitudes of wholesale buyers.

On the whole in Yiwu, whilst it was easier to witness daily lives and walk around casually, it was in many ways harder to penetrate that community as their only interest in talking to me was connected to financial gain - having become used to international visitors, they did not ask where I was from nor have a fascination with all things London/English. I also felt that I was awkwardly placed between two worlds. When shadowing, I was a 'business' person who could penetrate 'business' relations far more easily than everyday relations of the stall-holders. Yet, to the buyers I was an 'academic'- something many of them had little respect for - and they could not understand why I would find what they did interesting. Ironically, like the peddlers, many of them initially suspected that I was a journalist and would write a derogatory piece about their lack of ethics. I did not fit anywhere.

The story was, of course, much different in the UK field sites. Felixstowe workers were keen to tell me about how the docks had changed and pound shoppers were often delighted that someone thought they were an interesting subject for study. In both London and Felixstowe I also had the added advantage of being able to speak with the local accent (as I am originally from Norfolk - the neighbouring county to Suffolk, but have lived in London for over ten years). This reassured people and made them feel I was not just an academic 'looking down my nose' at them.

The Felixstowe work consisted of around twenty informal interviews, most of them conducted spontaneously in whatever environment the respondents happened to be. Some were done with groups, some with individuals. All were unstructured. When people seemed confident in front of a recording device and were happy for me to record them I did so; on other occasions my intuition told me not even to attempt to raise the subject, so I made key notes immediately afterwards. The same was true in Deptford, although here I also employed a methodology that I

termed 'binaural walks'. This involves using binaural microphones, which look exactly the same as small headphones and pick up sound according to the direction in which one turns. This results in a recording which displays the movements of the wearer as much as it does the surrounding activity. These soundscapes, as I wandered around pound stores over-hearing peoples' comments to each other, were effectively a kind of aural *One Way Street*. (Benjamin, 1997) Finally, I conducted online chats with consumers I had sourced from chat rooms and consumer review websites.

In many ways my shadowing of wholesale buyers, observation of peddlers, and 'binaural walks' have a common root in the tradition of the flaneur. This said, it is unfortunate that the connotations of the flaneur are to some extent those of dandyism, pleasure-seeking and a post-modernism nonchalance towards on-the-ground actions. Such connotations lead to derogatory contemporary descriptions of the method as that of the 'intellectual tourist', especially in circumstances where one does not speak the language fluently. This is problematic as it posits the 'intellectual tourist' as the direct contrast to the 'participant observer', yet views both with a cynical disdain – the former for wandering on the outskirts of understanding; the latter for assuming that being within guarantees the understanding of a 'native'. Furthermore there are implicit assumptions here about the nature of tourism as something done by someone 'outside' a culture, to people and places presented in contrast to the outside and as a homogenous whole. A more useful view acknowledges that places themselves are made up of people who feel both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' or a hybrid of the two. (Ien Ang's 2001 work *On not Speaking Chinese*, is instrumental in exploring this quandary). This was particularly true in Yiwu, a place built to accommodate visitors from the global and workers from other provinces; in fact it could be argued that as someone who understood the extent to which the products made there were part of everyday life in the West, I was wandering through familiar territory, whilst the workers were eyeing international visitors rather as a tourist would eye 'natives'.

v) Synopsis

Chapter one provides an overview of Lefebvre's oeuvre, outlining his thinking on tactics and his relevance to a study of material culture. Major themes, such as alienation, mystification and

entanglement are tackled and placed within the context of current established material culture theories.

Chapter two centres on *the tactic of immediacy* and the ways in which the desire for 'spontaneity' leads to the dissemination of the concept of the bargain and operates to induce certain behaviours. The 'bargain' commodity is considered as part of practices which serve to (re)create the schizophrenia of the Western consumer, and in the light of theories of the object and its fetishization.

Chapter three analyzes *the tactic of disposability* and explores the livelihoods of waste peddlers in Shanghai. It attempts to pick apart the twin paradigms of waste and profit, placing them within the context of the notion of thrift as both a cultural influence on the personal level and a macro-economic movement. It explores the tactics and spaces of Shanghai's waste and the ways in which these are being utilised by various forces in the furious race for economic growth.

Chapter four focuses on *the tactic of agglomeration*, examining practices of solidarity in the 'commodity city' of Yiwu. Wealth-sharing is then compared to risk-sharing, 'flow' is re-posited as numerous micro-catastrophes, and the £1 commodity chain is seen as characterised by constant rupture which works to strengthen its fabric by increasing the efficiency of its coping mechanisms. The nature of Yiwu as a transportable spatial and social model is also discussed.

In chapter five Felixstowe harbour provides a case study for the analysis of 'fullness' and *the tactic of abundance* is discussed. Rhetorics of 'speed' are contrasted with Lefebvre's notion of rhythms and the theory of moments is explored in relation to time/space along the £1 commodity chain. Finally, abundance is considered in the light of quantitative versus qualitative growth and the impacts on development.

Chapter One
A Manifesto of the Mundane: Things in a Levebvrian framework

Just under a century ago, a young Henri Lefebvre had taken summer walks in the French countryside, encountering ancient Gallic hilltop crosses featuring a circle centred on the cross, Celtic-style. To him this was not a scene of the crucifixion of Christ, but one of 'le soleil crucifié' – the crucifixion of the sun. His mother's fervent Catholicism and father's bourgeois aspirations had eventually caused him to revolt[7] and this symbol of a circle cut through with a cross was to be the defining image of that rebellion. For the young Lefebvre the circle was sun; sun was life - passion, adventure and liberty; life was himself; and therefore le soleil crucifié was a crucifixion of himself and all that he desired. Those hilltop crosses can be seen as a constant reference point in Lefebvre's life-long attempts to understand the alienation of everyday life; an alienation increasingly heightened by the presence of things. They are perhaps the material objects at once most responsible for, and most representative of, his thinking as a whole.

What follows is a rationale as to how Lefebvre's work relates to a study of the £1 commodity chain and why it provides particularly valuable insights. This falls into two sections; the first explores his thinking on tactics and strategy, the second explains how his work relates to material culture, how each of the themes he struggled with throughout his life has an impact on how we think about things. This is, unapologetically, fairly biographical, as it is impossible to explore such themes without putting them in the context of the national and international events which occurred throughout Lefebvre's life. Furthermore, as Lefebvre himself was to denounce the written word (see chapter one of *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, 1968), and quote Plato as suggesting anyone who put down thoughts in such an immutable form was a fool, it seems likely that he would not have wanted his thinking to be interpreted solely through his books, but also within the context of his life and the wider political climate. This is also only a beginning; each theme will of course be further explored throughout the chapters that follow.

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[7] This revolt is of course apparent in all his work which followed, but it is worth specifically noting his studies at the time under Maurice Blondel (1918), a Catholic heretic who, in Lefebvre's opinion later, did not go far enough in rejecting Catholicism.

i) Lefebvre and Tactics

Lefebvre had first decided to apply himself to a study of tactics and strategies during his military service from 1926 to 1927. Determined to make strategies positive, realistic and revolutionary, he had covered his notebooks with information on strategy theories and had started to read Carl von Clauswitz (*On War,* 1976; *Historical and Political Writings*, 1992). However, it was not until 1938 that the influence and guidance of a French colleague, Charles Hainchlin, would cause him to re-take up Clauswitz and read him with academic rigour. This later reading of Clauswitz caused Lefebvre to argue that the concept of strategy had become obscured, taken over by mathematicians and subsequently, therefore, by game theoreticians (including Guy Debord), and removed from its original military concept. For Debord, the use of strategy in the context of the theory of games centred too heavily on the idea of 'stakes' (enjeu), alongside winning and losing (partly through luck), and had therefore become banal (banalisé) (see Hess, 1988: 70 and Lefebvre, 1989). Debord's retort was to criticize Lefebvre's thinking for allowing tactics to fall too much to chance. Specifically he cited Lefebvre's 'theory of moments' as 'romantic' in that it made no attempt to contrive the moment or to create the situation, but spoke of moments almost as if they would arise 'naturally'. Despite this Debord's own version of strategy was one arguably built far more on chance than on a positive control of events, as reflected in his use of the dérive – the exploration of everyday life in the built environment through allowing oneself to wander aimlessly through the flow of acts, gestures and encounters.

Debord's critique of Lefebvre's take on tactics and strategy was one which painted the latter as merely reformist, hoping to abolish certain elements whilst retaining and bringing to the fore others. However, this evaluation of Lefebvre's stance may be somewhat simplistic. Lefebvre's insistence on the non-destruction of everything that exists, was probably part of what he had advocated around twenty five years earlier when writing *La Conscience Mystifiee* (1936), namely the destruction of certain things in order to save others as part of a dialectical approach to revolution. This approach may also have had great personal resonance for him as he had effectively gone through a similar process in order to come to terms with his own upbringing. As he explains in *La Somme et le Reste* (1989), because of his mother's fanatical religion, he had to reject the qualities and ideas that came to him from one side in order to keep that which came to him from the other - his father's irony and passion. Arguably, his was simply a more subtle strategy than that of Debord and the *Situationsts*.

It is worth briefly mentioning Debord's take on tactics here as he and Lefebvre were to enter into a series of philosophical projects, which are often seen, in hindsight, as part of the run up to the events of Paris 1968. Debord's notion of the tactical was based on 'detournement', which translates directly as 'diversion', but which the *Situationists* defined also as a negation of what had previously existed in order to search for the new. Detournement was therefore diversion/play that negated in order to create, and so sat in contrast to Lefebvre's desire to dispose of some in order to keep other parts. The best example of detournement is the very first line of Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* in which he plays on Marx's opening words in Capital, saying: 'The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles'* (Debord 1995: 12, original emphasis). Debord and the *Situationists* were to employ detournement throughout their texts, films and imagery.

Debord's strategy, defined by detournement, provides a clear link between the much earlier tactics of the Surrealists and those of the Situationists - the Situationists' notion of the 'constructed situation' owing much to Dada and Surrealism. Lefebvre provides a connecting line between the two, albeit perhaps a reluctant one. In fact it is tempting to argue that Lefebvre's eventual discrepancies with the Situationists were born out of the same frustrations he had had almost forty years earlier with the Surrealists. Debord was still, fundamentally, attempting to turn the everyday on its head, to re-shape it through detournement, rather than reclaim the mundane as Lefebvre believed was necessary. Perhaps it was always the case that when Debord spoke of the 'colonisation of the everyday' he had in mind pre-conceived binary opposites, that is, boredom overcome by excitement. For him, colonisation meant that the everyday had overcome more 'spontaneous' and 'unusual' moments as part of a strategy of capitalism; there was for him, no distinction between everyday*ness* (boredom) and the everyday, as there was for Lefebvre. Furthermore, excitement, for Decord, was to be lived on a personal level, the situation was to be a moment of life designed and lived as art, shaped according to the experiencing subject's own wishes. This therefore constituted a return to the romantic revolution Lefebvre had shunned in favour of a public one. In fact it becomes clear from un-picking Debord's tactics, as detournements lived out through 'situations', that the apparent similarities between 'situations' and Lefebvre's 'moments' were and are merely surface.

Lefebvre's own use of the concept of tactics is first properly outlined in volume two of *Critique of Everyday Life* (CEL). Here he points out that the social unity and consciousness of any group of people is never more than 'intermediary states, mediations or means to an end'. And crucial, for Lefebvre, is that it is tactics and strategy which determine (and are determined by) these ever-shifting states (2008[1961]: 109) Furthermore, it is the phases with the most intermediary nature which Lefebvre believes it is most important to study, because in phases of turmoil and extreme tension the existence of a group becomes historical and everyday life is suspended or shattered, while in phases of relaxation and stagnation everyday life shows only its most banal and trivial side. Intermediary phases however, provide 'privileged testimony'(2008[1961]:109).

For Lefebvre this intermediary phase provides just such a privileged window to analysis because it represents times when a group is neither completely penetrable, nor completely impenetrable. Therefore there are some choices open to people, but the choices made during these times must involve tactical decisions as they do not have complete ability to choose. Alongside this, and key to an understanding of Lefebvre's concept of tactics, is the extent to which a person can make these tactical choices from a position of seeing or knowing. If a person cannot see into a space and the space is impenetrable, 'aléa' is complete; if a person can see into a space and the space is penetrable, 'agon' is complete. Between these two extremes 'stretches a vast mixed region where the agon and the aléa, opaqueness and transparency, fear and daring, risk and chance, combine in a variety of ways' (2008[1961]:131). This is the intermediary. It contains a kind of chiaroscuro; and furthermore one can witness how various individuals and groups utilize that chiaroscuro to satisfy their own agenda of hiding and display.

For Lefebvre the fact that we have tactics and strategies and that they do not fail to enter all aspects of everyday life, is explained by the fact that we face uncertain futures of one sort or another, futures which will be impacted upon by processes, forces and events. And because we have uncertain choices, there will always be individuals within any group who show the group, through their actions, what is possible. Thus, for Lefebvre strategy gives a sense to groups and their lives. That said, Lefebvre was careful not to be utopian about the possibilities afforded by strategy and tactics, aware of the difficulty in separating strategy from idealism.[8] For Lefebvre,

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[8] The Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys' plans for 'La Nouvelle Babylon' were perhaps one of the more idealist creations of the Situationist movement. They can be seen today in the Musee National de la Haye.

the realm of the everyday is that of tactics, as it lies between the level where there are no more actions and triviality dominates, and the level of decision, drama and upheaval where strategy reigns. The ways in which groups tend to minimize the chances of maximal gains for their adversaries, or maximize their own minimal game is, however, strategy (2002[1961]:133-135).

A clear link can be seen between Lefebvre's thoughts on tactics and strategy in *The Survival of Capitalism* (1976) and those expressed in *La Production d'Espace* (1991)*,* on the ability of actors with agency to create social space through conquering physical space. Furthermore, according to Lefebvre, the occupation of social space, crucially, allowed for (capitalistic) growth.

> '… what has happened is that Capitalism has found itself able to attenuate (if not resolve) its internal contradictions for a century, and consequently, in the hundred years since the writing of Capital, it has succeeded in achieving 'growth'. We cannot calculate at what price, but we do know the means: *by occupying space, by producing a space* [original emphasis]' (1976: 21).

Occupying space (and thus producing social relations) began to be posited by Lefebvre as the ultimate tactic of capitalistic systems, because whilst it enabled growth (and had been born out of the desire for growth), it also enabled *power* in the form of *control.* In fact, Lefebvre argued that with space occupation came a profound qualitative alteration in social relations, as now they were not only the basis of exploitation, but essential to its' existence (1976: 85).

Thus power and tactics became symbiotically reliant within Lefebvre's thinking. For him there was no total system uniting sub-systems; rather, their cohesion was the object of strategy. As he says, '…*there is no logic of reproduction* in social and political practice, nor is there a 'logic of power'. There is a *strategy*, and this strategy applies general (formal) logic to certain objects, to an end, a perspective' (1976: 28). However, this strategy was not to be understood as a master-plan - 'strategy does not reside in the conceptions held by some genius… nor is it the application in detail of some pre-existing doctrinal system' – but rather to spring from 'an interconnection of chances and necessities which are always particular ones: confrontations between diverse and unequal forces…' (1976: 79). Here, the influence of Clauswitz is most evident; the vision of the total, inaccessible to each participant separately, but potentially visible to the whole, defines his notion of strategy. For Lefebvre, this inability of each individual to see the whole results in the 'actions of the participating 'agents' oscillating between, on the one hand, empiricism and

opportunism in the immediate, and, on the other, a so-called strategic conception which never amounts to an exhaustive knowledge of the ensemble…' (1976: 79).

Lefebvre's (via Clauswitz) positing of strategy as a confluence of times and places and peoples was of course taken up by Michel de Certeau, for whom any given player could only have tactics at her disposal due to her inability to see the entire picture. Indeed, my application of the idea of tactics as personal ability, whilst leaning most heavily on Lefebvre, also takes much from the development of his ideas by de Certeau, specifically the latter's concern in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) with the inventiveness of the everyday, or *ways of using.* (The original French title *'L'Invention* du Quotidien' and its translation into 'The *Practice* of Everyday Life' in fact gives away the extent to which for De Certeau 'practising' *was* inventing).

Like Clauswitz, and Lefebvre, de Certeau distinguishes between strategy and tactics, as perhaps most classically documented in 'Walking in the City' (1984). Here however, de Certeau differs subtly from Lefebvre's conviction that strategy is not born from an all-knowing master-plan, using the city as seen from a god-like position above the streets as an analogy for strategy, whilst the same city from the walker's point of view is analogous to tactics. For de Certeau, whilst strategies describe the operations of institutions and structures of power, tactics are the domain of less empowered, and therefore always involve a process of poaching on the territory of others. The tactician, for de Certeau, is something of a figure of hope, for, while she cannot escape the dominant cultural economy, she can adapt it to her own ends. This interpretation of the tactician as personally potent can be related to Francois Jullien's (1995) attribution of practices of efficacy in China to the strategic use of 'shi' - meaning power or potential. By tracing the historical appearance of shi from military strategy, to aesthetics, to literature, to politics, Jullien underlines the way in which Chinese culture attempts to perceive every situation or deployment of things as something to be worked to one's advantage.

To clarify, there are two crucial defining characteristics of tactics according to de Certeau, both of which are useful in explaining their use in the context of this work. Firstly, unlike strategy, *tactics do not own space.* Strategy 'postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets and threats … can be managed', therefore defining itself in contrast to an 'other' with invisible powers. It is in this

sense Cartesian and typical of modern science, politics and military strategy (1984:36). Meanwhile a tactic is 'a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus; it plays on a terrain imposed upon it by a law which is not its own, unable to withdraw out of enemy sight'. It takes advantage of opportunities and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep.' It makes use of 'cracks' and 'poaches' in them. (1984:36)

For de Certeau tactics are therefore the tool of the placeless, the actions which remain possible for the weak (1984: 34). Admittedly, the word 'weak' here requires scrutiny. The truly weak - those incarcerated unjustly, those trapped in war-torn areas, those trafficked under threat of death - clearly do not have tactics available to them. The problem here could be one of translation at least in part: the French 'faible' translates most directly as 'weak', but also relates to 'disadvantaged' or 'disabled' - words describing sectors which may well still have the option of tactics to some extent. However de Certeau *was* attempting to find revolutionary means outside of revolutionary times, and as such his insistence on the ability of the un-empowered to find tactics, and more importantly the ability of those tactics to forge change ought perhaps to sustain criticism in regard to its naivety. Applied practically, it tends to fall short in many of the same ways that James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) does; hopefully (but foolishly) pitting tactics such as foot-dragging, feigned ignorance, false compliance and petty acts of sabotage against state-sponsored imprisonment, torture and killing.

The second defining characteristic of tactics for de Certeau is that unlike strategies they are not able to be productive, only to manipulate what is already there. Where 'strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose …Tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert …' (1984:30). Again, this requires some scrutiny. Whilst it can be accepted that tactics, unless employed in a united manner on a mass scale, cannot 'overthrow' strategies enforced from above, de Certeau's assertion that tacticians are disempowered by their inability to see the whole (being the 'walker' in the city as opposed to the 'viewer' from above) needs questioning. Firstly, this view of the tactician as unable to see the whole, must not be confused with the suggestion that there is a 'lack' of knowledge at play - the type of thinking which 'Circuits of Culture' theorists have attempted to undo, by arguing that what is seen as a 'lack' from one angle, is specific expert

knowledge from another. Du Gay et al[9] suggest that 'taken together, representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation complete a sort of circuit … through which any analysis of a cultural text ... must pass if it is to be adequately studied' (1997). Secondly, positing the 'walker' as tactician, does not automatically confer strategist status upon the 'viewer'. Indeed, to follow Lefebvre's thinking, whilst an over-view may be useful to the strategist, strategy itself arises from a confluence of places, people and ideas – and so we are returned to the notion of the 'moment'.

ii) Lefebvre: the uncelebrated material culturalist

Although more known for his work on 'space', or on 'the everyday' in more general terms, Lefebvre's oeuvre and the questions it raises are precisely those which contemporary material culture theorists are attempting to tackle. What kind of entanglement do we, and ought we, to have with things? How do things force us to change the rhythms of our lives? What role can things play in the attempt to banish alienation and live life as fully as possible? As Highmore writes, Lefebvre's everyday 'is one orchestrated by the logic of the commodity, where life is lived according to the rhythm of capital' (2002: 113). Throughout the course of his life's work Lefebvre returns to these issues time and again, each time from a slightly new angle. As Rob Shields says, he is a theorist who conducts ideas like an electric wire from movement to movement, generation to generation[10] (1999: 29). Yet this conduction is not straight forward; rather appropriately, considering Lefebvre's belief in dialectics, his life should be seen as a criss-crossing of paths – that of a boat tacking from one side of the river to the other whilst charting its course.

Let us begin with a little-quoted but absolutely formative paragraph from Lefebvre, taken from volume one of CEL:

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[9] Du Gay et al were the group of theorists who in 1997 devised 'Circuits of Culture' whilst studying the Sony Walkman. The theory suggests any study of a cultural text or artefact must examine its representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. Gerard Goggin (2006) openly uses this framework in 'Cell Phone Culture: Mobile Technology in Everyday Life' by splitting his book into five parts based on the above terms.

[10] His work influenced movements as wide-ranging as the Situationists, the UK Punk activities of the 1980's, and the Green Party in Germany.

'Only man and his activity exist. And yet everything happens as though men had to deal with external powers which oppress them from outside and drag them along. Human reality - what men themselves have made - eludes not only their will but also their consciousness. They do not know that they are alone, and that the 'world' is their work' (2008 [1947]: 167).

They do not know that they are alone, and that the 'world' is their work. In this one sentence Lefebvre effectively posits not only his understanding of the totality of objects as an integral part of human reality, but places this within an un-compromising vision of the world as a place of our own making. The statement appears bleak – man is alone. It appears frustrated – everything happens *as though there were* external powers. Yet it is also incredibly hopeful. Lefebvre is acknowledging oppression, whilst placing it firmly as the creation of man, therefore positing social man as responsible for that which surrounds him and fundamentally able to change it. It is an expression of social-ism (the social), atheism, and deep philosophical belief in the potential for change. In placing this potential for change in the context of 'work' (and here I believe him to be using the word in the French sense of 'oeuvre', rather than the Anglo sense of 'job'/wage labour), Lefebvre glues social transformation to the object. The world is our work; by producing we are creating the human – 'they think they are moulding an object, a series of objects - and it is man himself they are creating' (2008 [1947]: 167). For Lefebvre, the human world takes shape around us in what we do - in humble objects - and man's approach to the object *is* man's relationship with reality. It is for this reason that I have used his work throughout as key to understanding the impact of the everyday £1 trinket, and that I believe him to be not only the philosopher of everyday life as he is currently celebrated, but also an as yet un- (or at least under-) celebrated philosopher of material culture.

It must here also be emphasized that Lefebvre's was a quintessentially Heraclitean line in which the reality of objects was understood as one of constant flux and transformation. It was therefore in direct contrast to the Parmenidian vision of change as an illusion and objects as existing outside of time and change, being, at some level, fixed and perfect forms. For Hereclites objects were processes defined by their potentials and this understanding can be seen to have led to the dialectics of Hegel and Marx, and thus to Lefebvre.

iii) The everyday, Alienation and Mystification

Following the outbreak of the First World War, Lefebvre was moved from Brittany to the relative safety of occupied Paris. Here he was influenced by the work of Nietzsche, Spinoza and Schopenhauer and his idea of 'vécu' (the lived) was formulated: it was to remain with him until his death. His growing dislike for Bergsonsim and its emphasis on linear time, rather than time as experienced, cemented this interest in 'vécu'. (Later this was to flourish into the 'theory of moments' – arguably a direct opposite of Bergson's 'durée'.) Alongside this his early work on 'young Marx' (pre- *Capital*) was to form his thinking as decidedly un-economic and his framework as that of a 'humanist Marxist' whose main concern was with enabling people to live life fully. For Lefebvre this ability was connected to the idea of 'poesis' – a sense of creating a 'work' (oeuvre) and living life as a work of art – but had its roots in Marx's notion of the total person as described in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1988).

Marx had, in turn, built his total person based on both the Hegelian version of alienation and, to some extent, Feuerbach's concept of the unalienated person; a vision of 'humanity proper' made up of three aspects – reason, will and heart (Feuerbach, 1987). As Zawar Hanfi argues, Feuerbach's was a quintessentially anthropological materialism (Hanfi, 1972), although one which was to come under critique from Marx for not realising that these human qualities were either mere abstractions, or the collection of actual living situations in which humans find themselves. For Marx, humans and their self-alienation had to be understood in concrete social, political terms; the reasons for self-alienation – such as oppression – had to be understood and tackled.

Here the 'total person' is in direct contrast to the idea of man as 'partial' – for example Adam Smith's idea of man as a solely 'economic animal'. I would argue that this early determination to explore needs as beyond the economic represents a continuing engagement with Marx's statement at the beginning of *Capital* regarding needs of the stomach and needs of the imagination. It is almost as if, for Lefebvre, this first line closes a door on the 'humanist Marx' and begins an era of concentrating on the economic (or 'stomach'), as the imagination is not mentioned by Marx beyond this initial acknowledgement.

Lefebvre was to hone in on the needs of the imagination initially, aligning himself with ideas such as 'constant festival', which suggested a form of 'spiritual' revolution. It was an engagement which was to inform his struggle with both the Surrealists and later the Situationists, to shape his political activism, and perhaps even to enable him to understand his ambivalence to (yet undeniable position within) his own middle class up-bringing. For him, despite a strong (perhaps over-powering) inclination to the needs of the imagination, the needs of the stomach could not be ignored if he was to be able to face himself as a Marxist and social activist. This on-going quandary was perhaps most agonisingly realised during the Paris 1968 uprising when, having been an ideological father, Lefebvre stepped back from proceedings, perhaps not quite knowing how to negotiate a way through the ideological revolution of the students vis-à-vis the pragmatic one of the workers.

The imagination versus stomach question can also be seen to influence his attitudes towards objects. During his earlier life and the period of alignment with the Surrealists, Lefebvre seemed at least to tolerate the idea of objects having revolutionary potential. Whilst he disagreed with the idea that everyday life should be turned upside down rather than changed from the inside, he had no particular qualms about the use of objects to do so – although this was by no means along the lines of conceiving of them as Benjaminian 'ur-phenomena'[11]. Later, as France became a 'consumer society', he increasingly saw (commercially marketed) objects as part of the mystification and colonisation of everyday life. By the end of volume three of CEL Lefebvre is returning to the seeds of an argument first sown in volume one which attempts to propose 'entanglement' with objects, rather than possession. It may well have been these thoughts which inspired his assistant, a young(er) Jean Baudrillard to expand on the false freedoms offered by credit arrangements (see *Le System des Objects,*2005).

This period was one of 'immense fermentation' following the First World War; one that was not only to impact upon the entirety of Lefebvre's future intellectual life, but which was also perhaps

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[11] For Benjamin, although he never specified how, objects could possess revolutionary powers. Benjamin called these objects ur-phenomena – a term he borrowed from Geothe's writings on the morphology of nature. The symbolist, Ludwig Klages, who Benjamin came into contact with as part of the 'George Circle', was instrumental to Benjamin's thoughts on the object. Klages believed the object could actively contribute to how people perceived it; in other words it was semiotically active. His was a philosophy of sensory attributes as opposed to linguistic formulations, senses not intellect, aesthetic empiricism over the rational. Key here is the idea of anamnesis, (that 'triggers' can enable us to 'remember' a truth that is always 'out there') originally found in the work of Plato but arguably most commonly (and crudely) understood through Freud.

typical of post-war France's desire to rebuild from the ground up, erasing the conformism of the past. It was the formation of the Philosophes[12] which was to see 'the lived' formulated as 'the everyday'. The concept of the everyday, as understood by the Philosophes, drew upon Heidegger's notion of 'alltaglichkeit', and their reading of Heidegger probably owes much to the translation of one of their members - Norbert Guterman[13]. That said, Heidegger had in turn been influenced by Lukacs' writing on the triviality of life in *Metaphysik der Tragodie* (1911). For Lefebvre however, the everyday was not only a concept in its own right, but one which he saw as forcing a new path between classic anthropology and what could perhaps be called high philosophy. He sees the everyday as having either been 'filed away' under headings such as 'family', 'sociology', 'consumption', or been ignored completely as part of a philosophical scorn for the mundane (1971:26-27)[14].

Lefebvre portrays this divide as a crossroads, saying, 'behind us ... are the way of philosophy and the road of everyday life. They are divided by a mountain range, but the path of philosophy keeps to the heights, thus overlooking that of everyday life; ahead the track winds, barely visible, through thickets, thornbushes and swamps' (1971:17). For Lefebvre this crossroads depicts an erroneous isolation of philosophy from what is falsely perceived as the 'contamination' of everyday life; it wrongly suggests that the quotidian is an obstacle to the revelation of truth. In contrast he posits the everyday as crucial to the transformation of non-philosophical reality and the solution as 'a philosophical inventory and analysis of everyday life that will expose its ambiguities – its baseness and exuberance, its poverty and fruitlessness – and by these unorthodox means release the creative energies that are an integral part of it' (1971: 13).

Quintessentially, for Lefebvre, studying the everyday was not simply about acknowledging it as an object of study, or even providing a diagnosis of it, but was also about reclaiming its critical

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[12] The Philosophes were made up of those Lefebvre had met at the Sorbonne in Paris around 1917-1919. Core members were Pierre Morhange, Georges Politzer, Georges Friedmann and Norbert Guterman, who was to prove a life-long close friend and confident of Lefebvre. Paul Nizan and a young Jean-Paul Sartre formed a peripheral circle.

[13] Guterman came from Poland and was to become Lefebvre's closest confidant and intellectual ally of all those involved in the Philosophes. He was, according to Lefebvre in *La Somme et le Reste*, the most 'finement intelligent' and became the moderator of the group.

[14] Of those whom Lefebvre felt to have isolated the everyday were the authors Don H Zimmerman and Melvin Pollner, who had written 'The Everyday World as a Phenomenon', published in Pepinsky's *People and Information*, Pegamon Press, 1970.

potential. With Lefebvre, the everyday was not simply analysed as an immovable constitution, but also drawn up as a manifesto for change; the 'rehabilitation' of the everyday could not happen without a battle against capitalism, as it was capitalism which caused alienation and thus the degradation of the everyday and along with it the degradation of social beings:

> 'Homo sapiens, homo faber and homo ludens end up as homo quotidianus, but on the way they have lost the very quality of homo; can the quotidianus properly be called a man? It is virtually an automaton, and to recover the quality and the properties of a human being it must outstrip the quotidian in the quotidian and in quotidian terms' (1971:193).

His project was simply, but no less than, to transform everyday life, which was for him, at its core, *the* stuff of potential, and the only arena in which life could be lived. He said, 'Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all' (2008 [1947]:127). This was also of course, an early pledge of firm allegiance to Marxism[15] as it supported Marx's cry in the *Thesis on Feuerback*, that philosophers must not only interpret the world, but must transform it (Marx, 1998).

It was perhaps inevitable that having placed such great revolutionary potential on the everyday, Lefebvre would later be criticised (largely in the rift between him and the Situationists*)* for not explaining exactly how this potential would live out. However, in volume two of CEL he gives as clear an idea as he was ever likely to as to precisely what the great change to the everyday would look like. Here he says 'the idea of a possible transformation of the everyday and consequently of a radical critique of everyday life is the equivalent of opting for a *decentralized socialism which would subordinate production to social needs* [my italics] which have been recognized and detected preferentially, thus placing knowledge and the recognition of other people, desires, creative freedom and the poetics inherent in social practice at the top of the hierarchy …' (2008[1961]: 130) This is the 'south American' style socialism that Shields argues Lefebvre is a proponent of, as opposed to the centralized communist socialisms of Europe and the then USSR of course.

However, the concept of the everyday evolved throughout Lefebvre's work. As Rob Shields points out, in the early works such as *La Conscience Mystifiée*, it is merely the 'tedious and banal reality of daily living' (1998: 66)*,* but during and certainly by the end of CEL it had emerged as

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[15] It must be remembered that Marxism had come late to France, perhaps due to a strong national culture with its own philosophers and perhaps due to lack of translations.

the ground of resistance and renewal, essentially to potentially revolutionary 'moments'. This was in no small part because Lefebvre differentiated 'everyday life' from the 'everyday' or 'everydayness'. This distinction was partly lost due to a less than perfect translation into English: 'everyday life' (in English) is the standard translation of 'la vie quotidienne', but it is not a perfect translation as 'quotidian' refers to the repetitive nature of daily life. Many years after his concept of everyday life had found its way into discourse Lefebvre explained the distinction between the terms by making the following separation: 'The word 'everyday' [quotidian] designates the entry of everyday life [la vie quotidienne] into modernity … the concept of 'everydayness' [quotidiennete] stresses the homogeneous, the repetitive, the fragmentary in everyday life' (1988: 87). It is in this way that Lefebvre could be *against* the repetitive nature of everyday*ness*, which he blamed on the nature of capitalism's operations; but *for* the every*day* as the ground of renewal and revolution. It is important to note, however, that Lefebvre does not make a Cartesian division however between the two categories, making one always alienated and the other always full of 'moments' and potential – rather he portrays them as two overlapping sets. (This was also to inform his stance on 'leisure time' as potentially further alienating, due to its being defined *in contrast to* work.)

What was to drive Lefebvre's insistence upon the importance of the everyday was his conviction that alienation stemmed from it (rather than emphasising alienation in the workplace as Marx had). As Shields says 'By transposing the philosophical critique of alienation into a sociological critique of the arrangements of daily life, he allowed Marx's notion of alienation to be brought to the forefront of a distinctive political project: no longer simply a demand for economic change but a demand for meaningful lives for all' (1998: 99) – again the needs of the imagination were fighting for space amongst the needs of the stomach. Much as Marx had[16], Lefebvre talked of alienation as being estranged from work and activities, other people, and our own human-ness and saw it as all-pervasive in everyday life. However, Lefebvre (along with Norbert Guterman) saw alienation as to do with mystification; the covering over of life with myths in order to

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[16] It is important to note that in *La Conscience Mystifiée* (1999[1936]) Lefebvre uses only the French 'alienation', ignoring Marx's various terms – Entfremdung, Verwirklichung, Verselbstandigen, Entausserung, Verganglichung. With Guterman translating Marx's German for him, this can hardly be attributed to a lack of linguistic understanding or indeed a lack of motivation to understand the subtle differences between Marx's various terms; rather it ought perhaps to be seen as part of Lefebvre's attempt to write alienation as penetrating all realms in all ways and perhaps as an indicator of his refusal to accept structuralism.

convince people they were living 'the good life'. (In fact Lefebvre seems melancholic about the appropriation by the mainstream of the phrase 'changer la vie'.)[17]

The concept of mystification, which will arise in the following chapters in relation to £1 shopping and the desire for the 'bargain', ought perhaps to be given context within Lefebvre's life. The concept was first formulated between 1933 and 1935 in *La Conscience Mystifiée* (1999[1936]), a book jointly credited to Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman and partly written in New York where Guterman was exiled. Due to the nature of its contents, the book was refused publication by the PCF as the Soviet censure deemed the problems it posed in regard to the inability of a collective conscience to grasp the real, irrelevant to the interests of the movement (and perhaps too negative in regard to the achieving of a pragmatic creation of socialist States). Furthermore, at the time, the party did not see the rise of Fascism as something that would last. A few years later it was to be destroyed by the Nazis and form part of Lefebvre's oeuvre (not least *Hitler au Pouvoir*, 1938, of course) which would force him into hiding during the occupation of France.   Therefore, partly because it not actually receive publication until 1979, when the sociologist Reginaldo Di Piero re-edited it, and partly because it is still only available in the original French, the concept of mystification is often better known through volumes one and three of CEL, and in volume three as specifically applied to consumer society.

The book and its ideas were formative for Lefebvre, both intellectually and personally. It was in many ways the beginning of his disillusionment with the PCF, which he identifies as pursuing a crass form of Marxism, whose dogma could not provide the answers and which was too aligned with - 'la planification Sovietique' (1999: 21). For him revolutionary thought must not be brutal and dogmatic, but all-encompassing (1999: 38). This means that the incompatibility of creative forces and capitalistic forms must not result in the destruction of everything, but rather in the destruction of the forces in order to save the forms (1999: 29). What is required for this task is a process of abolishing and conserving; a 'dialectique materialist'; a 'marche en spirale' (1999: 36). This was not only an acknowledgement of change as taking in elements of the past and tripping back upon itself in a spiral, which was by its nature reflective of Lefebvre's deep

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[17] 'Changer la vie' (change life) was originally an expression used by those seeking mass political and social upheaval and a reclamation of non-capitalist (or at least non-consumerist) modes. However, by the mid-1970s it had become a casual figure of speech often used in connection to a change in 'lifestyle', such as a move to the country. The de-politicised, individualistic use of the phrase remains today – 'change life' simply means 'change *some elements* in *my* life'.

antipathy to Bergson's duree, but can also be interpreted as an early conceptualisation of what was to become the theory of moments. In discussing the spiral movements, Lefebvre argues that each 'moment' is at one and the same time, condition, cause, antecedent, element, and aspect of ulterior moments of development (1999: 36). Perhaps most telling though, is his phrase 'le moment, reste enveloppé dans le devenir' – the moment remains enveloped in that which is to become. Thus the concept of the moment as full of revolutionary potential is born.

Lefebvre and Guterman's summing up of the book in hindsight in the preface captures well the frustration and hope of the young(er) Lefebvre and perhaps also a certain climate of the times in a France re-building itself but with a nagging fear that the threat (of Fascism) was far from banished. They argue that the book represents a sad contradiction – a tenacious confidence in the truth finally unveiled, and an enormous power, terribly efficient, of the non-truth (1999: 23). As part of this they see their younger selves as perhaps still a little naive in viewing Stalin as a 'bouffon plutôt qu'un criminal' (a buffoon rather than a criminal) (1999: 20). Yet they also admit the text is utopian and see it as one of the first cries of distress and appeals to truth, both in the context of Facism and philosophy in general (1999: 21). It is deemed an incredibly optimistic text in that it is not limited by politics or ideology, but goes 'jusqu'aux racines' (to the roots).

The concept of mystification does of course bare striking resemblance to the Marxist concept of 'false consciousness'[18], which in turn was to provoke Sartre's 'mauvaise foi'[19] (bad faith) (1993). However, mystification emphasizes a process more than false consciousness does; it is the reassuring overlay of what was previously deemed 'the worst', in order that it may be adapted and gradually accepted as 'the best'.[20] Podgorecki (1986) calls this state of being entangled in that which we had found disgusting, 'dirty togetherness'. It differs importantly from

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[18] There is no evidence that Marx himself actually ever used the phrase 'false consciousness'. It appears to have been used - at least in print - only by Engels, as documented in the 'letter to Mehring' (1893) in *Marx and Engels Correspondence*, International Publishers (1968).

[19] The concept finds voice in Sartre's *Essays in Existentialism* (1993). Here he explains 'bad faith' as the ways in which people make 'free decisions' to deny themselves 'freedoms', thus pretending that possibilities are denied to them. Sartre gives the example of a café waiter, whose movements and conversation are a little too 'waiter-esque' and whose exaggerated behaviour illustrates that he is play acting, whilst obviously aware that he is not (merely) a waiter. Thus mauvaise foi differs from false consciousness or mystification in that the subject *consciously* deceives *himself*.

[20] In fact Lefebvre attempted to argue that the mystified consciousness was a pre-condition of Facism. See *Nationalisme Contre la Nation*, 1937 and *Hitler au Pouvoir,* 1938.

'false consciousness' in that it is not pegged to ideas of class and domination, but rather to concerns about possessive individualism and the tendency of people to define themselves by things. (Benjamin cites the concept of mystification in relation to the primitive and profane nature of the collector in Passagenwerk.) Mystification is in fact a concept far more informed by material things than false consciousness ever was; here we see the way in which alienation was a constant theme throughout Lefebvre's work and can be seen as tying together his various positions on everyday objects. In fact his differentiation between 'entanglement' with objects and 'possession' of them has everything to do with extricating them from the process of mystification and allowing them to potentially conquer alienation and re-invigorate the everyday.

iv) Surrealism, Adventure and Romantic Revolution

It is perhaps not at all surprising that Lefebvre's first philosophical 'home' was that created by the Surrealists. His already brewing conviction of the importance of the everyday, alongside his relentless desire to break away from the conventions and limits of his parents (and indeed for society to do the same), provided a potent combination for which to engage with their agenda of poetic adventure through everyday objects and forms. Following the end of war in 1918 communism grew in France as did industrialization – and by the mid 1920's the two were inevitably clashing. Where Taylorism caused an emphasis on repetition and dullness, surrealism (which had undergone a rapprochement with communism around this time) attempted to challenge this by making the everyday ridiculous. In addition surrealism had captured a feeling of the era, its restless political questioning teamed with its penchant for the banal proving an attractive mix for a post-war France yearning for frivolity. For Lefebvre, who had written in the first editions of the Philosophes journal - *Philosophies* (1924) - that to live one's life as a work of art was to live a philosophy and was therefore related to the idea of praxis, the attraction to the Surrealists was almost inevitable. (In fact the 'pranks' and agitating of the Philosophes were in many ways a prequel to the 'scandals' of the Surrealists.)

For Lefebvre, living life as art meant 'adventure'. This saw him embark upon a series of torrid love affairs which pre-empted the sexual liberation of the 1960s and linked lust and philosophy in a way which was perhaps so formative for him it was never truly undone. As his official biographer Remi Hess argues, this lusting after women as linkers between the world and ideas,

as much as purely physically, may well have created the template for his later typist-muses (Hess, 1998). This period certainly saw him create a framework which could be interpreted as privileging 'adventure' and seeing it as the domain of the masculine.

However, adventure for Lefebvre, was also linked to the idea of the constant revolution in the form of carnivalesque challenges to everydayness; the Bacchanalian 'revolution' often promoted by the Surrealists. Note the use of everyday*ness* not everyday here, as Lefebvre saw festival and everyday life as two parts of the same whole, rather than opposed opposites – it was everydayness which was opposite to carnival. He describes festivals as 'like everyday life, but more intense; and moments of life – in the practical community, food, the relation with nature – in other words work – were reunited, magnified in the festival' (2008 [1947]: 221). For Lefebvre, festival declined the more everydayness took over.

As Highmore points out, this emphasis on 'la fête' seems difficult to reconcile with Lefebvre's equal emphasis at the time on the emergence of total man. However, 'it is the articulation of these ideas together that allows Lefebvre to navigate a path that avoids a simple nostalgic and romantic celebration of la fête on the one hand, and a dogmatic assertion of social homogeneity … on the other (2002: 119). Thus, as Highmore argues, the total man is re-posited as festive and la fête is placed at the Hegelian 'end of history' (2002: 119). Furthermore, Lefebvre's version of carnival neatly avoids the usual arguments between those who interpret carnival in the pure Bakhtinian sense of turning the world upside down, and those who see this inversion as simply re-enforcing the dominant and mainstream. For Lefebvre, la fête itself does neither; rather it provides a moment of potential for societal change, and in order to transform life, must precisely become the whole, rather than being simply a few moments of escape (2008 [1947]: 251). (This idea was to find further form in his writings on 'permanent cultural revolution' in *An Introduction to Modernity*, 1995).

This view of a creative, carnivalesque end of history lent itself far more to the anarchism of Tristan Tzara (generally thought of as the father of the Dada movement), who had brought surrealism from Zurich to Paris, than the faith in the ridiculous of Andre Breton, who had become its chief proponent in France. The Theatre of the Absurd, the notorious Cabaret Voltaire and artists such as Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp held firmly to a belief in the transformative power of the ridiculous, whereas Lefebvre's inheritance was to do with surrealism's challenge to

authority and old hierarchies. As Shields suggests, Lefebvre, whose primary interest was in the way surrealism may unleash the un-alienated, un-rule-bound person, found himself disagreeing with Breton's desire to create a new dogma, preferring Tzara's inclination towards anarchy[21]. His sympathy tended to lie more with Dada culture than the staged 'scandals' of the Surrealists (such as inciting bar brawls and denouncing celebrities at their press conferences) (1999: 55).

This was problematic considering the Surrealists and the Philosophes had by this time written a joint manifesto entitled 'Revolution d'Abord et Toujours' (commonly translated as 'Revolution Today and Always') which was published in *Clarté*. At the time Lefebvre interpreted the Surrealist's stance as seeking to transcend the alienation of the everyday, in contrast to his own desire to banish it completely, and this formed the crux of his difference with them. From his point of view, they were attempting to liberate the magical and strange from the everyday and therefore make the everyday marvellous, whilst he himself was a vehement celebrator of everyday life's mundane fabric and sought only to eliminate everyday-*ness* in order to be able to celebrate the everyday.

Later in life, in his autobiographical work *La Somme et le Reste* (1989), Lefebvre admitted he had perhaps misunderstood the Surrealist project and that their celebration of the marvellous was more a questioning of reality. This misunderstanding had perhaps come about as Lefebvre's relationship with the Surrealists was largely conducted through Clarté and it was not until relatively late on in the surrealist movement that the Philosophes were invited to join them. However, at the time, these differences in the appreciation of the everyday unwound gradually as part of a broader rift between the Marxists of Clarté and those within surrealism[22], and as it became clearer to Lefebvre himself that despite having revolutionary aspirations and a concern

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[21] In number 4 of *The Philosophes* journal Lefebvre had written a piece which prophetically announced that Dada had broken the world, but that the broken pieces were good. As Shields relates, in Lefebvre's *Le Temps de Meprises* he tells how every time he had encountered Tzara, the former had asked, 'So, you're collecting the pieces … to stick them back together …?', to which Lefebvre had always replied, 'No, to finish smashing them' (Shields, 1999: 57).

[22] The rift between Marxists and Surrealists was triggered by differing takes on the Soviet film, 'Road to Life', based on a book by Anton Makarenko called the Pedagogical Poem. Makarenko's work was a fictionalised account of his most famous self-governing child collective, the Gorky Colony, whose ideals were as much respect for the person as possible, the use of positive peer pressure on the individual by the collective, and the rejection of physical punishment. The Soviet establishment came to hail his colonies as great successes in communist education.

with the everyday in common, his project and that of the Surrealists were fundamentally opposed[23].

This difference between Lefebvre and the Surrealists can be seen in his praise and yet disdain for the poet Charles Baudelaire. While he is very much in favour of Baudelaire's immersion in the everyday as a position for writing from, he despises the way in which Baudelaire attacks the very substance of it from within:-

> 'With Baudelaire alone does the marvellous take on a life and intensity which were totally original: this is because he abandons the metaphysical and moral plane to immerse himself in the everyday, which from that moment on he will deprecate, corrode and attack, but *on its own level* and as if from within' (2008 [1947]: 106).

For Lefebvre, Baudelaire's desire to tear through the everyday in order to liberate the strange, is not only ill-conceived as there is no 'strange' to liberate, but also displays an excess of intellectualism, a cerebralism, and an attempt to think the everyday instead of perceiving it. Lefebvre sees Baudelaire's 'modern marvellous' as no more than 'a bit of metaphysics and a few myths in the last stages of decay ... some psychoanalysis, some Bergson-izing ... an eclecticism, an impenetrable doctrinal confusion, together with a remorseless Parisianism ...' (2008 [1947]: 119). He goes on to describe him viciously as a 'dandy', a 'buffoon', and a 'cabotin[24] bourgeois du deuxieme republique', who whilst denouncing the forms his class were imposing upon life, was himself an 'important dealer in narcotics' (2008 [1947]: 122), by which he meant through the themes and motivations of his poetry he made people seek the bizarre like a drug. The fundamental fraud of Baudelaire for Lefebvre was that, unlike metaphysicians and mystics, he promised 'this life', but was only seduced by its (fake) lining.

According to Lefebvre, this attempt by Baudelaire to *think* the everyday, rather than living it, brought the 'hinterland' of Platonic 'ideas' into the world- 'In other words, he has put the cat amongst the pigeons, the maggot in the fruit, disgust in desire, filth in purity ...' (2008 [1947]:

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[23] Arguably this opposition did not 'develop', or 'emerge', but was inherent in Lefebvre's thinking from the start and apparent from his initial re-appropriation of Lukacs' concept of *alltaglichkeit* (everydayness) (see Lukacs *Soul and Form*). Everydayness for Lefebvre was far from the trivial existence, devoid of meaning, which stood in contrast to authentic existence, as Romanticism saw it.

[24] The word 'cabotin' is translated in the English edition as 'ham' in the sense of ham actor. In French, the word certainly has theatrical connotations, but also emphasizes the element of 'posing' or 'showing off' in a pretentious manner, in a similar way to the expression 'arrête ton cinéma'- literally stop your cinema/theatre.

123). In the process of putting too much mind into the matter, Baudelaire had, under the pretence of 'pure' beauty, smuggled in ugliness and impurity, and for Lefebvre this meant things could only now fascinate if given a (fake) magical lining: 'Since Baudelaire, the world turned inside out has been deemed better than the world the right way up' (2008 [1947]: 123).

Whilst Lefebvre was crystallizing his belief in the everyday as marvellous in and for itself; as an entity that did not require turning upside down or making magical, but simply relieving of the alienating 'everydayness' resulting from capitalism, the Surrealists were holding fast to André Breton's original assertion in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) that only the marvellous could be beautiful. It was this belittling of the real in favour of the 'magical' which Lefebvre rallied against. For him surrealism marked the end of the long methodological disparagement with real life and the stubborn attack on it which nineteenth century literature had initiated. What Lefebvre could not accept was the way in which surrealism, in emphasizing the weird and marvellous, had become so far removed from the lived reality of everyday life and the very practical and real issues (lack of warmth, food, etc.) that people faced. (Again, his empathy for the needs of the stomach began to turn him against the pure pursuit of needs of the imagination.) For him the bizarre and exotic was no more than a 'game for aesthetes' which provided a clumsy, dangerous and thoroughly negative critique of everyday life (2008 [1947]: 119-120).

> 'Our search for the human takes us too far, too 'deep', we seek it in the clouds or in mysteries, where it is waiting for us, besieging us on all sides. We will not find it in myths… all we need do is simply open our eyes, to leave the dark world of metaphysics and the false depths of the 'inner life' behind, and we will discover the immense human wealth that the humblest facts of everyday life contain' (2008 [1947]:132).

Furthermore, in their attempt to transcend alienation the Surrealists put forward an intensely private experience of individual poesis which was effectively personal, romantic revolution, as opposed to the mutual, public one that Lefebvre advocated. What Lefebvre was attempting was a radical form of pluralism, later using the Situationist slogan 'the personal *is* the political.'[25] In fact at the time Lefebvre was arguing for the public festival as a form of joyous revolution along the lines of a Nietzschean or Bakhtinian celebration. (In an interview with Hess in 1988 he said

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[25] One of Lefebvre's more obscure works is a short book on Alfred de Musset. Lefebvre was interested in de Musset, and in particular his work on Lorenzaccio, as de Musset presented the latter as having a double interior and also wrote Lorenzaccio in such a way as he appeared to represent de Musset's own life struggles. Thus, he showed how individuals experience an internal conflict between themselves and society and how the individual and the social play out.

that at the time of his involvement with the Surrealists he had seen revolution as never-ending popular festival the aim of which was the end of work.) Lefebvre was perhaps essentially a Marxist with romantic urges in regard to repressed spontaneity; in fact, in *La Somme et le Reste* (1989), he declared 'I adhere to Marxism in the name of a revolutionary romanticism'. But whilst adventurism may fulfil some more 'spiritual' needs, it did not change material circumstances. Perhaps as Shields suggests, Lefebvre was 'not so much a romantic revolutionary, as a Marxist without the reassurance of a future revolution' (Shields, 1998: 93).

What resulted from Lefebvre's falling out with the Surrealists was a re-considering of his early adventurism, which he recognised was not about the collective (at least not in its Surrealist form), and fell too easily into the realm of individual liberation and self-exploration. This was everything he was to distrust about Sartre and Existentialism in years to come - that it was inward-looking, emotional, individual and led only to romantic protest (2008 [1947]:82). In fact when Lefebvre attacked Sartre in 1945 it was only partly because he felt the Philosophes had already communicated those ideas between 1925 and 1928; his other motivation was that he felt individual anarchism to be idealist and even dangerous. Perhaps there was also an element of Lefebvre struggling with his own bourgeois tendency to pursue private adventure, a recognition of himself as one of those middle-class individualists trying to find his own version of living life as a hybrid of the Nietzschian 'total man'(1969) and Marx's 'complete person'[26] (1988).

Furthermore, Lefebvre, along with other members of the Philosophes, had joined the Communist Party of France (PCF) in 1928[27]; a move which would see him embark upon a prolific period of 'worker sociologies' in factories and telephone exchanges and to some extent sacrifice his romanticism for the party line. However, he remained 'humanist' and continued to separate Marx

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[26] The 'complete person' is understood in contrast to the alienated person and was identified by Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 (also referred to as *The Paris Manuscripts*), a series of notes written in 1844 but not published until 1932. Here Marx posits communism as the transcendence of *private property* as *human self-estrangement,* and therefore as the real *appropriation* of the *human* essence by and for man. Communism is therefore seen as the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e. human) being - a 'complete person'. The 'complete person' thus represents the entire wealth of previous development and the resolution of the conflict between man and nature, objectification and self-confirmation, freedom and necessity, and the individual and the species.

[27] Lefebvre's decision to join the PCF must also be seen in the light of his being ferociously against the war in Morocco – as were the PCF. Having recently completed his military service, this issue must have been very much alive for him.

from Stalinism – thinking which went against the predominant philosophy of the PCF and which it seems likely was the reason behind the disappearance of many of his texts from this time, thought to have been destroyed by the PCF.

Lefebvre's personal circumstances (and, ironically, his own needs of the stomach) may also have been an influence at this time. His youthful 'adventure' had resulted in various children from various liaisons, all of whom needed supporting and had meant him working as a taxi-driver and college (lyceé) teacher up to his enforced hiding during the Second World War, when all members of the PCF were ordered to be arrested. (And Lefebvre was no ordinary member, having written on Facism and Hitler in the past.) Lefebvre had escaped to Aix-en-Provence and joined the Resistance, but his clandestine life had caused him considerable concern and heart-ache over not being able to see his children. He now recognised that 'adventure'[28] did not provide a firm enough plan of action and ethics for revolutionary change. The novelty of surrealist objects now, in the wake of yet another devastating war, seemed an immature, paltry form of revolution.

v) Rhythms, Moments and Situations

Following the war, during which he had been dismissed from the teaching profession by the Vichy administration, Lefebvre was briefly reinstated as a teacher in Toulouse before being seconded to the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) – set up by the staunchly socialist George Gurvitch. It was an awkward transition. Despite having been the 'official' communist party philosopher, Lefebvre's disagreements with the party and fierce battles with other communists while working for the resistance displeased the PCF, yet simultaneously he was deemed 'too communist to teach'. He attempted to re-think Marxism, publishing two articles in the short-lived *Arguments* journal which pondered 'alienation' vis-a-vis the young Marx, Lukacs, Roland Barthes' Mythologies (1973), and Lucien Goldman's *Hidden God* (1964).

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[28] The word 'adventure' is however difficult to analyse and Lefebvre's changing relation to it throughout his life is perhaps best understood by exploring linguistic nuances. The word in Italian, means 'those who adventure', which re-translated into French suggests 'those who invent'. Perhaps Lefebvre's relationship with 'adventure' went from pure (more literal) 'adventure' in his youth, to a belief in 'invention' and revolutionary potential later on.

This re-engagement with the on-going theme of alienation in the context of a much changed France was perhaps a decisive shift in his thinking on material things. If objects had been seen as potential vehicles for inciting revolution in the preceding years, with the post-war recovery and 'les trentes glorieuses'[29] era's emphasis on household consumer goods fuelling an increasing commercialisation of French life, Lefebvre began to talk of objects in terms of their alienating potential. Material culture had become imbued with consumerist messages and thus was materialistic on the whole. By volume three of CEL Lefebvre's rallying against this had almost become the raison d'être of the book – he spoke of taglines from adverts and the subliminal damage they did, the detrimental affect apparently labour-saving devices had on non-linear rhythms, and the false promises of modernity. Objects, in many ways, had become the enemy.

For Lefebvre, things had become part of mystification, alienation and the colonisation of the everyday. They enforced linear rhythms on people and reinforced the moral corruption of capitalism's insistence on money. In 1960 Lefebvre set up the Research Group on Everyday Life, and it was through this that he began to work with Guy Debord. As Hess relates in his biography of Lefebvre (1988), Debord, thirty years Lefebvre's junior, was to spend long periods at Lefebvre's house in Navarrenx discussing their theories of everyday life, before setting up the *Situationist International* – a publication whose twelve issues would become increasingly antagonistic towards Lefebvre's thought.

In many ways it is easy to see how the Situationists, with their surrealist-inspired tactics but emphasis on everyday life as potentially interesting and euphoric, were both a result of Lefebvre's influence, and the perfect combination through which Levebvre could express his political philosophy for a relatively long time. In fact Debord served to re-ignite Lefebvre's vision of the everyday as a site for the reclamation of the total person – Debord's 'colonising' suggesting alienation of everyday life was not intrinsic, but surmountable, as it was effectively an external influence which could be rallied against. However, it was precisely the 'situation' as opposed to the 'moment' which was to be the crux of their falling out.

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[29] 'Les trentes glorieuses' are the thirty years from 1945 to 1975 following the Second World War in France. The term was first used by French demographer Jean Fourastie and is derived from Les Trois Glorieuses – the three days of the French Revolution from 27th to 29th July 1830. During les trentes glorieuses the French dirigiste economy grew rapidly and the standard of living became one of the world's highest. This explosive economic growth slowed under Mitterrand and Chirac, bringing an end to the period.

Whilst the 'situation' was by its very nature a creation, consciously brought into action by an individual or group of individuals; the 'moment' occurred as a result of various historical un-ravellings, and only became consciously acknowledged by people once they could see it was an opportunity to act. It was, if you like, a 'natural' occurrence, and crucially for Lefebvre's public revolution, it was only recognised once a large-scale group had become aware it. A moment is perhaps best understood as an

> '… instance of intense experience in everyday life that provides an immanent critique of the everyday; they are moments of vivid sensations of disgust, of shock, of delight and so on, which although fleeting, provide a promise of the possibility of a different daily life, while at the same time puncturing the continuum of the present' (Highmore, 2002: 116).

Lefebvre never explicitly linked his thinking on the moment with that on rhythms, but it is my contention that moments were effectively unusual occurrences of arrythmia or eurythmia in which it became apparent to society that there was an opportunity to act. I say this partly as it is the only way one can understand moments within the body of Lefebvre's other work, but also as 'le vécu' remained crucial within rhythmanalyses, and linking the latter to the theory of moments allows that too to contain Lefebvre's beloved 'lived' experience. This contention in not without compelling evidence: witness the following description of the rhythmanalyst and his drawing upon the lived.

> 'The rhythmanalyst calls on all his senses. He draws on his breathing, the circulation of his blood, the beatings of his heart, and the delivery of his speech as landmarks. Without privileging any one of these sensations, raised by him in the perception of rhythms, to the detriment of any other. He thinks with his body, not in the abstract, but lived in temporality. He does not neglect…. Smell, scents ... Smells are part of rhythms, reveal them; odours of the morning and evening, hours of sunlight or darkness, of rain or fine weather' (2004: 21).

This depiction of the rhythmanalyst as a type of sensorially-heightened flaneur, tuned to movements rather than visuals alone, works well alongside more recent attempts to escape the primacy of the visual (see Bull, 2004; Back, 2007). Furthermore, the rhythmanalyst is by definition more engaged with her surroundings than the flaneur for 'to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it; one must let oneself go, give oneself over. Abandon oneself to its duration' (Lefebvre, 2004: 27). Importantly, and as Lefebvre acknowledges, this means that the rhythmanalyst not only changes that which she observes (as could be said of any physical presence), but she is aware of this fact - aware that she has 'set it in motion' but simultaneously 'recognising its power' (2004: 27).

The above description of the rhythmanalyst remains remarkably close to an image first promulgated by George Perec who, it can be argued, here again had a large influence on Lefebvre, despite being his junior[30]. In Perec's *Species of Space* (1997 [1974]), and especially in the pages on 'The Apartment Building', we see how Perec links space to activities, and therefore to time, through an itinerary of everyday events happening contemporaneously in each apartment (1997: 40 -45). Similarly, in the section on 'The Street' it is hard not to recognise the original inspiration for Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis when Perec suggests we should 'decipher a bit of the town. Its circuits: why do the buses go from this place to that? Who chooses the routes, and by what criteria? … 'The people in the streets: where are they coming from? Where are they going to? Who are they? People in a hurry. People going slowly' (1997: 52).

Perec's emphasis on movements through space form part of a wider rhetoric which asserts time as peoples' positions in space and can thus be seen as informing Lefebvre's work on social space. Contrary to simplistic interpretations, Lefebvre's idea of social space is not a 'spatial turn' as such, but a rather more nuanced concept in which space is integrated with time as part of an attempt to escape theories (such as Henri Bergson's) in which time is paramount. For example, Perec suggests, '… interrogate yourself at some precise moment of the day about the positions occupied by some of your friends, in relation both to one another and to yourself ...' (1997: 83). In the current day this has of course been made possible by satellite technology, one sees oneself moving along as a red blob on a satellite navigation application on a mobile phone; there are dating applications in which one can see when a potential 'match' is close by.

Gaston Bachelard's influence cannot be underplayed here either. His *Dialectics of Duration* (2000 [1936]) introduced Lefebvre to the concept of rhythm, and the critique of Bergson contained within it fuelled Lefebvre's dislike of the latter's notion of the 'long durée'. For Bachelard, time could only be understood in instants and duration is experienced through these instants, which are both momentary and discrete, having no extension and being isolated from each other instant. Thus, for Bachelard, time has neither extension not flow, but rather is made

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[30] Although Perec perhaps had more influence on Lefebvre than vice versa, there was undoubtedly a healthy amount of cross-pollination of ideas between the two in a more general sense, as Perec was a member of the group Ou-Li-Po (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*). Founded in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais, the groups also took Lefebvre as one of their guiding influences.

up of an infinite succession of discrete instants. Bachelard's theory will be further explored in the final chapter.

Admittedly, despite inspiring a small cottage-industry of literature, rhythmanalysis has never found great prevalence or success as a methodology, perhaps because whilst Lefebvre theorised about it at great length, he avoided setting out any 'guidelines' as to how one might practically go about doing it. In *Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean cities*, Lefebvre and Catherine Regulier[31] explain how they have chosen not to 'painstakingly describe a privileged place', because they wanted to 'introduce concepts and a general idea' (2004: 100). Whilst at that stage of the project this was perhaps acceptable, Lefebvre's desire to see rhythmanalysis as a 'science' is not aided by his non-development of the 'general idea' into a description of method. What would a rhythmanalsysis look like or read like? Would there be a framework by which to always consider certain cyclical and linear features and map the clashings of rhythms? (This is perhaps what de Certeau got closest to in 'Walking in the City'.)

vi) Commodities, Property and Entanglement

Lefebvre is (perhaps wrongly) not generally considered to be a material culture theorist (and indeed he himself believed the project of the everyday to be a larger one, perhaps encompassing aspects of material culture) yet his work was punctuated and informed by his relationship with things and his belief (or not) in the role they had to play in changing and reclaiming the everyday.

Essentially, Lefebvre toed a fairly classic Marxist line when it came to the commodity thing, explaining and agreeing with Marx that it tended to turn man into a thing himself, 'just another commodity, an object to be bought and sold', and saying, 'in short, individual and social man's relation to objects is one of otherness and alienation, self-realization and loss of self' (1972: 9). However, his attitude as to what the non-commodity thing could achieve was informed and influenced by those he engaged with politically and the times he lived in throughout his life.

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[31] Catherine Regulier was Lefebvre's last wife, now his widow, and co-authored *Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities* with him.

He had begun his early career surrounded by the absurd objects of Dada-ism – the now iconic lobster telephone and lip-shaped sofa. Whilst he had never specifically written of those objects or professed a belief in them as revolutionary, he was, at the time, wholly engaged with the Surrealist Manifesto and had not yet formulated his dissatisfaction with the idea that the ridiculous could revolutionise the realm of the everyday. He had at this point, at the very least, an open mind as to the significance and potential of the thing within society.

This tolerance only became tested as France gradually emerged from the shadow of the Second World War and began to enjoy the success of Les Trentes Glorieuses and a new spirit of consumerism. Partly, this was because he felt he witnessed a schism of sorts in these years, later saying that at the time of volume one of CEL (1947), 'there was as yet no rupture between objects and people' (2008 [1947]:14). Partly, it may have been that despite a concern with 'mystification' and his acknowledgement of that concept's similarities to Marx's alienation, his tendency to concentrate on the young Marx meant mystification had not yet been applied to the powers of things (as it would be later), but only to the powers of ideas and patterns that governed daily life. With the onset of fully-fledged consumer society Lefebvre found himself at odds with, and yet nostalgic for the post-war era's relationships between people and things. In volume three of CEL he attempts to explain this ambiguous position by acknowledging that in time past 'The slightest object could be considered precious, to be preserved or offered up. These narrow values *simultaneously hemmed people in and protected them*. [my italics] There was no need for a sense of security imparted from on high or from without' (2008 [1962]: 8). What Lefebvre may have been struggling with was the appealing idea of simple, mundane things being precious, rather than disposable, alongside the far less appealing idea that having these things made people feel safe, respectable and perhaps most poignantly, gave them a fixed identity.

In fact this quandary can be seen to inform his thinking on the difference between possession (a psychological 'necessity' – erroneously) and *entanglement* (a coming together and *be*coming of object and person through lived experience). For Lefebvre entanglement meant enjoying an object, in the total, human meaning of the word enjoyment; it meant having a rich relationship with the object and knowing that through it one was moving into complex networks of human relations (2008 [1947]: 158). Entanglement, for Lefebvre, sat in contrast to possession and was to be strived for.

However, importantly it was not a banishing of the commodity, as many authors at the time were engaging in (see Vance Packard's *The Waste Makers* for example), but rather an attempt to fundamentally change our engagement with it. Thus the idealist notion of non-possession of property misunderstood the issue according to Lefebvre as 'objects are not simply important in so far as they are goods, but also as a shell for man's objective being'- their human relations to other people, their social behaviour, etc. (2008 [1947]: 155). Therefore, to argue non-possession as superior to possession, situates 'profound' human reality within the absence of human relations.

Yet Lefebvre was certainly not pro-possession either, arguing that engaging in the debate on possession results in the argument for equal possession for all - a bourgeois form of socialism. Within this system each person would own a miniscule part of socially important things, instead of social wealth being increased for everyone; that is, not to own part of a plot in the mountains, but that the mountains be open to all (2008 [1947]: 158). Lefebvre's concern here was privatization (and privation); he was seeking an end to the retreat of the individual – a retreat into the bourgeois family, into the longing for a lifestyle as opposed to 'changer la vie' and therefore into romantic individualist revolution, and into the comfort of the object as protection. He said:

> 'To be attached to objects, to privilege them affectively, is today, as in the past, to create a shell or a bubble – that is to say, a protective layer against the assaults of a hostile world. This protection is simultaneously apparent and real, lived and valued as such. The more threatening the outside world becomes, the greater the importance and continuity of the interior – that which surrounds or protects subjective interiority.' (2008 [1962]: 60)

This view is one of objects as compensation, as false security and, within the context of his oeuvre, of a disengagement with the social. When Lefebvre speaks of the 'shell' surrounding people, it is with a disquiet, rather than the broadly celebratory acceptance we see in Daniel Miller's *The Comfort of Things* (2008). Entanglement was not to be understood as simply a greater love or respect for the object. Lefebvre's thought is therefore not as aligned as it may at first appear to the concept of 'enchantment' proposed by Jane Bennett (2001). For her, the defining narrative of modernity is disenchantment, alienation and dearth, leading to the discouraging of 'affective attachment to the world' (2001: 3). Therefore, her call is for a greater enchantment with life's experience which may breed a greater concern for human and non-

human others. Enchantment, for her, entails a sense of wonder mixed with fear and 'is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar' (2001:3).

Whilst this desire to see the extraordinary in the everyday looks very Lefebvrian at first glance, Bennett's concern is with fostering a greater sense of being *in love* with things, whereas Lefebvre's entanglement could be better described as a learning to love. Importantly, entanglement therefore includes a sense of necessity, of engaging with things due to life's necessities. This means that, unlike enchantment, entanglement posits a far more grounded relationship with things, one rooted in their use in our lives rather than our attraction to them, and therefore one that can never become merged with fetishism – after all, where does 'enchantment' end and fetishizing begin? Entanglement is not the lustful 'enchantment' of the visual, or the desire solicited by the 'look but don't touch' object; rather it is the love that creeps up on and grows on until one suddenly realizes one's love for that object. In short, entanglement cannot be love at first sight, as enchantment can; it insists upon having been *lived* (vecu) in the Lefebvrian sense.

What Lefebvre sought was an engagement that made the person's own sense of themselves and their lived experience indeterminable from the object. Nick Thomas' understanding of objects as 'not what they were made to be, but what they have become' (1991: 4), is therefore far closer to the Lefebvrian concept of entanglement, acknowledging that a thing is not stable, but rather open to our interaction with it and part of a lived experience involving the slow un-winding of self with object, the creeping up/rubbing off/entering in of things.

Boris Arvatov's (1997) position is not dissimilar to Lefebvre's in that Lefebvre strongly emphasizes the need to escape from a lexicon in which the standard arguments are between those against possession and those in favour of possession for all. Arvatov cites the 'socialist objects' of his study as constituting a fundamentally changed relationship between object and subject in which possession becomes an irrelevant concept. For Arvatov, this changed relationship is nothing less than a complete psychological upheaval in how one interacts with and perceives the object, above and beyond the fact that one may have attached sentiment to it. Arvatov's concern is the deep rupture he sees between things and people, which according to him, is brought on because the kind of potency things have is not of a variety that causes people to respect them or feel responsible for them, but simply one which breeds fetishism. He maintains that by making

things more animate and people therefore more connected to them, a new kind of rapprochement between subject and object could replace the fetishized relationship.

What emerges as a constant here is the way in which building a positive relationship with the object is specifically not about possession, but rather about a deep entanglement in which object and subject become part of one another, neither possessing the other. Lefebvre's position is best summed up by his words, 'A human being only is (only exists) through what he *has*; but the present form of 'having', the possession of money, is merely an inferior, narrow, limited one. Conversely, a human being only completely has what he *is*' (2008 [1947]:159).[32] This entanglement is achieved by our consciousness of these things being transformed by a deep understanding of them and their relationship to us, through which they lose their banality and triviality (2008 [1947]: 134). Therefore, in order to 'be' at our fullest we should 'have' things in an entangled way – we should 'have' what we are. For Lefebvre this was a quintessentially Marxist standpoint as it was key to ridding subject-object relationships of mystification, and therefore crucial to achieving a life of alienation[33].

It is tempting to speculate on what Lefebvre would have made of engagement with immaterial things in the twenty first century – YouTube and myspace content, e-cards, ringtones, wallpaper. Would he have seen this as a way of escaping the issues of disposability and possession? Would he have considered it possible to be appropriately entangled with digital things? Or would he have maintained his inclination that there is no guarantee that non-material things can dispel the commodity? (2008 [1947]: 158) Despite it being 'social content' (as we call it) would he have felt that the 'socialization' brought by digital things was not 'socialist' but individualist? This latter notion is hinted at in volume one of CEL as he refers us back to the problem of 'socialism' now not being social (2008 [1947]: 158).

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[32] This notion of *having* as *being,* appears in volume one of CEL, yet was perhaps either a purely abstract point, or more a prediction of the future or premonition than statement of the way things are, as in volume three Lefebvre states that at the time of writing volume one (1946) 'there was as yet no rupture between objects and people…' (1981:14).

[33] Notwithstanding the link between entanglement and dis-alienation as a way of understanding how Lefebvre's argument can be interpreted as Marxist; let us not forget that Lefebvre was still inclined towards the work of the young 'humanist' Marx, who had in fact written his doctoral thesis on Epicurus. Perhaps Lefebvre's thinking on things, in terms of its respect for the beauty of everyday simplicity, could be described as partly Marxist-Epicurean!

During his lifetime Lefebvre had moved from rural to urban studies, in and out of communism[34], and from an emphasis on individual spiritual revolution to a vehement determination towards mutual social action. This emphasis on the mutual was, I would argue, always likely to emerge in Lefebvre's thought due to his determinedly culturalist outlook. His policy by his own admission was one of 'cultural revolution with economic and political implications' (1972: 197); its objective – to create a culture that would be a style of life rather than an institution (1972: 203). His own emphasis on the cultural fundamentally coloured his reading of Marx. He argues that Marx was never an economic determinist as he has often been interpreted, but rather saw capitalism as a form of production where economics prevailed and therefore felt it was economics that had to be tackled. Explaining his own project in the light of Marx, he was clear that everyday life had taken over from economics – was imbued with it and served it – so it was now everyday life itself which must be addressed (1972: 197).

By the end of his life, Lefebvre had engaged in the century's key debates and been present at its key events. He died in 1991 at the age of 90 in the Haut-Pyrénées. He was living in his mother's ancestral home, amongst the Celtic crosses which had provided the initial fervour for his engagement with living everyday life to the full. They were perhaps the things that had most formed him.

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[34] His suspension from the PCF in 1957 was long due. He had always disagreed with Stalinist policies and regime. Key to this was his belief in Lenin's (and indeed Marx's) argument that revolution would bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat and the withering away of the State. Many have asked why Lefebvre even remained with the party. Remi Hess's answer is a good one in my opinion. He argues that Lefebvre enjoyed playing his engagement as a heretic; as a 'sorte de funambule qui traverse le ravin en utilisant l'oeuvre de Marx pour balancier' (1988: 129). This depiction of Lefebvre as a tight-rope walker who uses Marx as a balancing pole, describes well the difficult paths along which his thought took him.

Chapter Two

The Tactic of Immediacy: Shopping for the Ubiquitous to the Exotic in £1 Stores.

'In Capitalism, the <u>definition</u> of the 'proper price' is a <u>discount</u> price.' (Slavoj Zizek, 2001: 44)

'Bargains never go out of fashion ... and once you realise you can save money you'll never go back.' Hussein Leilani, (Owner of 99p Stores), You and Yours, Radio 4, 8th May 2009

'Oh, they've got my dress, for only thirty cents! I paid 99 cents. I'd better take three!' (Marge Simpson, in episode of *The Simpsons*)

A pedestrian crossing bleeps out its signal and six or so people on either side of New Cross Road move to step off the curb, hesitating only to check that a nearby siren will not imminently be followed by the emergency vehicle emitting it. I round the corner onto Deptford High Street. Despite the on-going regeneration of this area of south-east London, which has seen the creation of semi-glamourous apartment blocks around the canals and docks, the High Street continues to reflect the multifarious minorities who have settled here and the low level of income. Its shops are Halal butchers, African beauty outlets, small vegetable stalls, and pound stores. The latter are crammed and sprawling, their contents spilling out onto the street; a vast and often bizarre array of artifacts, from feather dusters to garden gnomes, washing baskets to model Tibetan monasteries. Chinoiserie, islamery, household drudgery; the exotic and ubiquitous are held together in these places, levelled by the £1 price tag that causes them to be classified as equals.

As I make my way along the left hand side of the street, past the market stall piled high with off-cuts of material, a woman laughs to her friend in front of me, 'He must've got a job-lot of those Buddhas! Who's gonna buy all them!' I turn to where she is looking and there, amongst piles of tea-towels and plastic bowls, a two metre stretch of shelf is devoted entirely to an array of buddhas. They are Sakyamuni, cross-legged in his classic mudra, adorned with a bright yellow £1 price tag which peels up at the edges where it will not stick to the fake-aged gold spray underneath.

Squeezing past huge buckets of dishcloths, jars of spices, and flip-flops, a woman stops to examine the decorative plastic bonsai trees which sit in a line in front of the mock-china vases.

She looks intrigued as she peers at one in the form of a miniature fir tree; it has an over-sized white plastic bird perched in its branches and its scale is further confused by a tiny blue plastic teddy bear at its trunk. She turns to me sheepishly saying, 'I'm hopeless with plants… I couldn't go wrong with this one could I!'

Passing further down the street a shop-front is piled high with pillows and duvets, sheets and table-cloths, topped by a large fluorescent cardboard sign upon which is written in black marker pen, 'Duck-feather pillows only £2.99. Must end today.' From just inside the door, the owner shouts, 'Nice linen, natural fibres, very nice, you will sleep well'. Inside an elderly man shuffles his way down the narrow aisle towards the gloves, his trolley behind him. A woman grabs cleaning fluid and bubble bath and beats a hasty path to the till. A child points up to a high shelf where two clocks sit side by side, identical apart from the image on their faces, and asks 'Can we get that Mickey Mouse clock Mum - next to the one with Jesus on?'

Here on Deptford High Street, unlike in neighbouring areas, the pound stores are generally family run; small narrow spaces which require careful negotiation, unlike those of the larger pound chain stores whose owners have knocked through walls, widened aisles and put in bright strip lighting (Figure 1). The effect is not dissimilar, in microcosmic form, to the Hausmanization of Paris. Just like the opening up and widening of streets, the Hausmanization of pound stores can be seen as part of a process which quickly reveals its allegiances with the aspirations of 'modernism', and that 'modernism' in turn can be easily pinned to the aspirations of market economics. Chains such as Poundland and 99p Stores are expanding at an astounding rate, especially following the onset of the global recession. 99p Stores, founded in 2001, now has 108 stores across the UK and aims to increase this number to 200 during 2010. Its bright, easily navigable spaces are designed to allow as many people as possible within the store at any one time, and to enable those people to see products easily.

This chapter tackles the way in which the tactic of immediacy and its emphasis on 'spontaneity' has cemented the notion of the 'bargain' as crucial to the operations of the £1 commodity chain. It explores how the idea of the bargain has in turn attached itself to other notions and become embedded in consumer mentality, how it uses display and its position amongst other things to gain potency, and finally how it operates as part of a wider rhetoric specific to the West and to consumptive market economies. The importance of the consumption-disposal cycle will then be

discussed, and some conclusions drawn about the schizophrenic nature of shopping for 'bargains'.

i) 'Impatience is a Virtue'.

I walk with Linda, dodging the market stalls, the prams, and once, an apple that toppled from its precarious pile only to be scooped up and thrust to the ground by a trader whose movements spoke of the many years his body had known this work. Linda fluctuates between a nervous concern that what she says is of use to me and an animated pleasure that she can share her thoughts with someone. 'I've been doing this for years', she says, 'years and years. Sometimes I hate it and sometimes I love it, but it's so familiar to me. I feel like I know every crack on the pavement. I do all my shopping on this street. I only go to a supermarket once a month. Everything else I need is here, on this one street.' Turning sharply she heads through a narrow opening between piles of plastic buckets and children's stools. The strings of plastic flowers above waft gently in the breeze created by her passing. Inside, she's looking for plastic cups, plates and cutlery for her young niece's birthday party which she has agreed to host. She spots a pack of ten plastic jumping frogs and takes those too saying 'that'll keep them occupied for another ten minutes, won't it! There's no point spending lots of money; people think you have to, but kids are happy with the simplest of things, and it'll all get ruined anyway, so it's best to buy stuff you don't mind throwing away. After all, it's only stuff isn't it.' 'Do you only feel like that about it because it's cheap though?' I ask. 'Well, I guess if it was worth a fortune I wouldn't say that, but I *choose* not to care about stuff. I mean, it's not that the stuff makes me feel I don't have to care about it, it's that my feeling towards stuff means I only buy things I don't have to worry about. It's my attitude that determines it, not the stuff!

The above phrase 'impatience is a virtue', adapted from the original 'patience is a virtue', was used by Samsung throughout 2009 to highlight the efficiency of its technology and encourage the consumer to demand more, and faster. It perfectly captures the way in which immediacy, and the ability to do what one wants, when one wants – immediate gratification – is seen as one of the pleasures, even rights, of the late twentieth/early twenty-first century. It is also a prime example not only of exactly the kind of consumerism that has come under critique from those theorists

about to be explored, but also of the way in which current capitalism has re-appropriated immediacy (originally born out of rebellion against an older type of capitalism) to its own ends.

John Tomlinson (2007) highlights various aspects of immediacy, from the blurring of the distinction between home and work life, to the international resource that is the Internet, shopping hours, news coverage, 'the shift in consumer demand from mere possession towards speed in delivery', just-in-time manufacturing, etc. He underlines the way in which there has been a shift from sheer speed to effortless delivery - '… there is a broad assumption underlying contemporary consumer culture that, whatever else may be taking place in our personal biographies and in the turbulence of global modernity, stuff arrives …' (2007: 81).

Furthermore, as he argues, immediacy is a *cultural* principle; one not simply concerned with 'mechanical velocity' (although technology enters into the discussion, of course), but rather connected to a culture of instantaneity, rapid delivery, *ubiquitous* availability and the *instant gratification* of desires [my emphasis] (2007: 74.) Crucial, for Tomlinson, to this culture of the instantaneous, is proximity, the sheer 'connectedness' of people, and the ability to be in constant communication with others through various technologies – telepresence[35].

Immediacy is of course crucial in positing impatience as a virtue. It closes the gap between now and later, and thus between desire and satisfaction. In fact, as Tomlinson asserts, 'the culture of immediacy ... involves as its core feature the imagination that *the gap is already closed* [original emphasis] … the sense of being without the intervening middle term. Immediacy – closure of the gap – is therefore most generally *the redundancy or the abolition of the middle term'* [original emphasis] (2007: 91). The important factor for the consumer now, is not how many possessions she can amass, but the speed with which she can do so – in other words how *immediately* available commodities are (2007: 125).

One could add that contemporaneously, (and consequently) the requisite immediacy has rendered the quality of manufacture of these items, whilst not necessarily inferior, less important, as they

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[35] Tomlinson's use of telepresence relates solely to the interactions between people. My own feeling is that the concept could be usefully extended to those between people and things. In fact these two types of 'gap' are, precisely, becoming less distinguishable from each other as people are encouraged to become 'friends' and 'fans' of brands online for example.

are not required to last as long. In fact the consumer desire is for them *not* to last a lifetime, in order that they may be replaced with the latest fashion relatively frequently and the 'pleasure' of purchasing may be relived ad infinitum. Gilles Lipovetsky describes this as a 'second generation presentism' which is not pure hedonism (like its Sixties' forefathers whose desire was to break away from the traditionality of their parents), but rather 'hyperconsumption' – a modernity in which 'the politics of a radiant future have been replaced by consumption as the promise of a euphoric present' (2005: 35-37). Thus immediacy can be read as a rebellion against waiting, which was re-appropriated by capitalism for its own purposes.

In theory, immediacy can also be seen as move against labour (as opposed to credit), or at least a shift in emphasis from productivist to consumerist. However, as Tomlinson points out, this shift must not be viewed simplistically because for most the necessity to work still exists. (Credit culture only *attempts* to create the feeling that spending is removed from labour.) What has changed, he maintains, is the belief in progress and betterment through industry, the dignity of labour and the virtues of providence and accumulation. In contrast, values are now consistent with the need for consumers to spend freely in the interests of avoiding systemic crises (2007: 126).

The danger in this argument is that it tends to lead to a moralizing discourse on the perils of consumer society, which berates consumption for its own sake, rather than seeing it as indicative of another feature – such as the enforced reliance upon credit and/or possession, for example. Despite affective description and explanations of capitalistic modernity, this is what Bauman tends to accomplish:

> 'The consumerist syndrome consists above all in an emphatic denial of the virtue of procrastination and of the propriety and desirability of delay of satisfaction . [the] consumerist syndrome has degraded duration and elevated transience. It has put the value of novelty above that of lastingness. It has sharply shortened the timespan separating not just the wanting from the getting … but also the birth of wanting from its demise … Amongst the objects of human desire, it has put appropriation, quickly followed by waste disposal, in the place of possessions and enjoyment that last … *the consumerist syndrome is all about speed, excess and waste'* [original emphasis] (2005: 83-84).

That said, it is difficult to remove the concept of immediacy, in terms of spending behaviour, from the kind of rhetoric Bauman extolls. To some extent, a change in the culture of consumption inevitably requires an ability to compromise immediacy every so often; the point is

not to allow immediacy to become inextricably linked to a moralizing discourse which berates immediacy *for its own sake.* As Tomlinson says,

> 'The value of anticipation has always been a subtle and an ambiguous one, somewhere at the border between a piquant pleasure and a virtue made of necessity. And so it is not unreasonable to think that it may quietly slip away if not reinforced by conditions of general scarcity, let alone being routinely undermined in our interfaces with impatient and immoderate technologies' (2007: 133).

This highlights precisely the problem with making waiting, in itself, a moral crusade. Waiting became moral largely out of necessity; there is nothing intrinsically 'wrong' with not waiting. It is the link between immediacy and the ability to buy (and therefore possess) which is the issue - the way in which 'contemporary consumption is characterised by the expectation of *delivery* rather than of satisfaction' (Tomlinson, 2007: 128). The culture of the bargain, and its embedded culture of immediacy, rests not upon the immediate gratification of the desire for an object which satiates a need or want, but upon the immediate gratification of the desire simply to possess it. The pleasure in bargain culture is one step removed from traditional consumer desire - the object itself is not expected to satisfy (at least not for long); satisfaction comes instead from the ability to *have* in a care-free manner. The failed promise of the commodity is an irrelevancy in bargain culture – the consumer realized long ago that commodities lie. What rules now is the false promise of the spending thrill.

I try to get to what lies behind the spending thrill as Linda and I move on to another pound store. 'Have you been planning your niece's party for long?', I ask. 'Well, I s'pose I had a rough plan', she says, 'Why?' 'You don't have a shopping list', I reply, 'is it all in your head or are you making it up as you go along?' Linda laughs and says it's all in her head, and that she knew she'd be able to buy things cheaply to entertain her niece's friends. 'Do you think the fact you knew you'd be able to buy them cheaply meant you could be more last-minute about the party?' 'Well yes, I s'pose it did… yes… 'cos I didn't have to think about putting money to one side, I knew I'd find stuff. That's the same with most of what I buy though, I mean, it's only really big things that I think of in advance… and I don't particularly have much money you know… but, well, everyone can afford pound shop stuff can't they.. even when you're really skint you can buy a little something in the pound shop'. We pause. 'Is it nice to be able to buy something for yourself in the pound shop?' I ask. 'Well… that's a strange question… it's always nice to be able

to buy yourself something, isn't it…? Guess I'd rather buy myself something in Selfridges yes, but you're still treating yourself aren't you… even in a pound shop… *even if it's crap* [my italics]… it's still nice to buy a little something…'

Here, Linda shows that she is aware of the lie of the commodity, but still takes pleasure in the ability to buy it – pleasure is transferred to the moment of exchange, rather than the thing *in itself*. On another occasion Tracey eyes some cushions and ponders. 'They'd make a nice change', she says. 'I get bored with how the house looks sometimes… you know… I want to change it in a little way… cushions are good for that… 'cos I can't afford a new sofa. My mum and dad wanted to give me theirs, 'cos they want a new one, but I feel weird about it 'cos they've had that all my life, you know, since I was a baby'. She smiles fondly, 'We were constantly being told not to put our feet on it and not to muck it up… 'cos it had been expensive for them to buy, you know… but it's too much part of my childhood for me to have it in my house now…'

Tracey's sentiments here provide a good demonstration of the way in which both *steady* accumulation (such as that of her parents) and *continued* accumulation and disposal (such as her own) were and are practices which emphasize possession, albeit the case that in the latter practice that possession is more momentary. Neither practice is embedded in an alternative to possession; thus a culture of non-immediacy is not per se any less detrimental than one of immediacy. The key difference is that immediacy has closed the gap, creating the ability for the consumer to buy without having to save first and therefore becoming attached to the notion of 'consumer freedom'. (Indeed, immediacy is classically linked to 'fluidity': see Castells, 2000; Bauman, 2005, 2007a; Urry, 2000, 2003.) These notions of 'freedom' and 'fluidity' are often used in conjunction with that of immediacy, by theorists keen to overcome the classic criticisms of positing the consumer as a duped subject. Under immediacy, the consumer can be portrayed as *knowingly* buying things that will not last. Whilst this is a valid point, it fails to acknowledge the way in which immediacy brings with it a requirement for constant consumption and thus promotes the pervasive spread of consumption into all walks of life whilst creating the necessity for a reserve army of consumers (as well as one of labour). Patience, in contrast, means 'deliberately leaving the gap open' (Tomlinson, 2007: 151), but is the antithesis of the driving spirit of immediacy.

For Lefebvre, this emphasis on the apparent necessity (practical and psychological) to buy is a defining quality of the 'society of bureaucratically controlled consumption', as outlined in *Everyday Life and the Modern World* (1971). This is specifically not 'consumer society' which according to Lefebvre is simply born out of statistics whose raison d'être is to show that the purchase of consumer 'durables' has increased. For Lefebvre this is correct, but trivial, as it can easily be agreed that there has been a transition from penury to affluence, and from the man of few needs, to the man of many. Rather, what concerns him:

> '… is the transition from a culture based on the curbing of desires, thriftiness and the necessity of eking out goods in short supply, to a new culture resulting from production and consumption at their highest ebb, but against a background of general crisis. Such is the predicament in which the ideology of production and the significance of creative activity have become an *ideology of consumption* [original emphasis], an ideology that bereft the working classes of their former ideals and values while maintaining the status and the initiative of the bourgeoisie. It has substituted for the image of active man that of the consumer as the possessor of happiness…' (1971: 54-55)

Thus, in the society of bureaucratically controlled consumption, it is not 'the consumer nor even that which is consumed that is important in this image, but the vision of consumer and consuming as art of consumption.' Therefore, as part of this process, man's awareness of his own alienation is repressed by the addition of a new alienation to the old (1971: 54-55). This is precisely the case with pound shop shopping – it is the ability to buy and to gain the sensation of spending which is key, rather than what is actually bought. £1 stores thus redefine poverty as freedom, telling even the £1 shopping 'underclass' that they are 'free' and others that they are enjoying 'novelty' forms of consumption as they marvel at the price and enjoy the pretence of being poor. For Lefebvre, this sensation of consumption will always be disappointing as it is as much an act of the imagination (fictitious) as it is a real act; it is therefore metaphorical – containing 'joy in every mouthful, in every perusal of the object' (1971: 90). Crucially, this does not matter in its own right, but because consumption is accepted as something reliable and devoid of deception (1971: 90).

Importantly, the society of bureaucratically controlled consumption sees needs as clearly defined gaps,

> '… neatly outlined hollows to be stopped up and filled in by consumption and the consumer until satiety is achieved, when the need is promptly solicited by devices identical to those that led to satiety; needs are thus incessantly re-stimulated by well-tried methods until they begin to become rentable once again, oscillating between satisfaction and dissatisfaction, both states being produced by similar manipulations' (1971: 79).

This incessant re-stimulation of needs is intricately connected to the de-longation of the consumption-re-consumption gap. As a result of, and in order to create, this gap, obsolescence becomes the norm (as the following chapter will explore in more detail), and not simply in literal terms, but in deeper psycho-cultural ones. Lefebvre explains this by describing how consumption is on the one hand material, and on the other theoretical - ideological and made up of signs and images etc). Thus, he says, it is complete (tends towards the rationalized organization of daily life) and incomplete (the system is forever unfinished and unclosed); it is satisfaction (of needs and therefore saturation) and it is frustration ('only air was consumed so the desire re-emerges'); it is constructive (we choose objects) and destructive ('it vanishes in the centre of things, slides down the slopes of piled-up objects accumulated without love and for no purpose') (1971:142).

This cycle is de-longated via obsolescence; and here we use the term both literally and conceptually. As Lefebvre argues, obsolescence not only became a carefully calculated science on the part of manufacturers, but this also caused the 'obsolescence of needs', as those who manipulated objects to make them less durable also manipulate motivations, creating a 'strategy of desire' in which new needs constantly take the place of old ones. Furthermore this strategy of desire creates a 'cult of the transitory' which, rather than creating a fluidity of existence which could allow the everyday not to stagnate, is in total contradiction to the cult of, and the demand for, stability and permanence (1971: 82). It is this psycho-cultural side of obsolescence which is most crucial as part of the tactic of immediacy; the understanding that things (in themselves) are not to blame – the inclination here is not Luddite - but rather the terror of feeling one has constantly to seek out new things.

> 'The so-called society of consumption is both a society of affluence and a society of want, of squandering and of asceticism (of intellectuality, exactitude, coldness). The ambiguities proliferate, each term reflecting its opposite … signifying it and being signified by it, they stand surety for and substitute each other while each one reflects all the others. It is a pseudo-system, a system of substitutes, the system of non-systems, cohesion of incoherence. The breaking point may be approached but never quite attained: that is the limit' (1971: 142).

For Levebvre this seeking out of new things is intrinsically linked to a logic of accumulation which runs contrary to everyday life, as the latter is not cumulative. He argues that the number of objects a person can actually use in a lifetime cannot increase indefinitely. Therefore, the effects of accumulation on everyday life are superficial despite the fact they cannot be completely

eliminated - 'accumulation and non-accumulation is resolved in the methodical subordination of the latter and its organized destruction by a rationality bordering on the absurd but excelling in the manipulation of people and things' (1971: 61-62). What is being suggested here is that the non-cumulative nature of the everyday is being over-run by a culture of accumulation, but that precisely because this culture is not natural to the everyday, the latter emerges as the crack through which the process of cultural revolution needed can be begun. By Lefebvre's own admission, this idea of cultural revolution is utopian, but necessarily so.

ii) Bargaining for the Bargain

£1 commodities represent a kind of underclass of commodity which cannot be advertised, but which are part of an ever more pervasive culture - the culture of the bargain. To some extent, this culture can be interpreted as an example of Adam Podgorecki's 'dirty togetherness' (1986) as, initially at least, it required the presence of cliques and close-knit networks within the context of scarcity. However, unlike Podgorecki's notion which is hinged on distrust of the State, bargain culture was and is effectively a State-backed project designed to maintain the economic health of consumer nations. Never-the-less, the success of this culture is in some ways surprising, as it hinges upon a pride in the cheap, something which even thirty years ago may well have struggled to take hold. Whilst searching for bargains would previously have been the sole prerogative of the poor and associated with a certain level of stress, it is now celebrated as a national pass-time for all. The ability to spend is all-important and the truth of the spend is covered over with the myth of the bargain as providing 'freedom'. In fact bargain culture could be better understood as providing a kind of grimy glue (to draw upon Podgorecki's notion), which allows for the entanglement of social relations in things previously found disgusting. Thus people become attached to things in a relationship which constitutes a lie about the positions of both within capitalism.

Public behaviour around the openings of new £1 stores prove how pervasive this culture has become and how deeply embedded the notion of the bargain is for the consumer. The following section from a newspaper article reports on the opening of a new 99p Store on the 25th September 2009 in Halesowen, near Birmingham:

'POLICE are to be drafted in to control the crowds of bargain hungry shoppers expected to flock to the opening of a new discount store in Halesowen…. Bosses said they have requested a 'friendly police presence' for 'crowd control' purposes as shoppers desperate to get hold of bargains including 17-piece tea sets and freeview boxes turn up.' (2009, Halesowen News)

(See figure 2)

Similar scenes were reported following the opening of the ninety-ninth 99p Store in Ashford, Kent and the opening of a pound store in Catford, South East London. Both caused a queue half a mile long, with some people having waited since seven in the morning. Jean had set her alarm early especially to get up and join the queue in Catford. 'My husband was appalled', she told me. 'He just could not understand why I would get up so early to go and stand in a queue outside a shop. He said he could almost understand if it was the new year sales and there were designer labels and stuff, but that this was ridiculous … and embarrassing … he said it was embarrassing!' I ask her why he thinks it would be embarrassing. 'Well, I s'pose he was brought up to feel that looking too needy for things is shameful you know… almost like being seen to accept charity. He doesn't want our neighbours to see me queuing here. He thinks it looks desperate'. 'And you don't see yourself as needy or desperate', I say. 'No I don't. I just like a bargain… and I don't really care how it looks to other people … anyway, it's normal, look how many people there are in this queue, and all sorts too.'

If Jean's sentiments showed how behaviour her husband still found 'shameful', had become perfectly acceptable and normal' for her – part of an accepted culture - Sue's attitude seemed to go even further. 'I think it's great that people can queue like this outside a pound shop. I remember back in the eighties it wasn't as acceptable to buy cheap stuff, you know, it was all about having money wasn't it. But now, everyone wants cheap stuff, I mean everyone, not just people who can't afford expensive stuff. I would've put my pound shop carrier bag inside another carrier bag to hide it back then. Not now.' For Sue, finding a bargain has become something everyone does, rather than remaining an activity limited to those with less money. She epitomizes the main-streaming of bargain culture and does not question the logic it asserts that the consumer is getting a 'fairer deal'.

This logic of bargain culture often requires additional pieces of information to surround the commodity, usually in the form of information or tag-lines. In the case of the £1 commodity

these are to be found in the form of signs outside pound stores which point not to the actual commodities themselves, but to how easily one's general concerns could be solved for only a pound. For example, 'warm and dry for £1', or 'personal alarms - be safe for £1.' Others target even wider ideas such as 'choice'- 'something for everyone' and '£1 - your choice' - the culture surrounding the commodity becomes its mouth-piece. To put it another way, we have to become addicted to the *idea* of the bargain, in order for the pound commodity to be addictive … and we are. It is an *idea* because the bargain itself is indefinable: what we tend to mean is that we bought something at a cost lower than we feel we would 'normally' have paid for it. However, as we are unaware of how much that commodity cost to manufacture, ship, etc., we cannot say whether what we paid was under the odds or not - 'getting a bargain' is based on social context rather than the commodity's inherent truths. Pound store commodities are priced cheaply because they are made from cheap materials and do not last, or they are in fact over-priced but their context within the pound store convinces us that they must be cheaper than elsewhere. In reality, if the bargain commodity was as omnipresent as its idea, all pound stores would be out of business! It is the *idea* of the bargain that is all-powerful.

Sometimes bargain culture relates itself in casual ways to other ideas, partnering with deeply embedded social histories. For example, each year, in the run-up to Christmas, 99p stores begin to use a seasonal carrier bag with the slogan '99p stores – the spirit of Christmas' (Figure 3). Here, semantics play the role of causal factors in the psycho-cultural construction of the bargain by fixing together a notion with strong emotive connotations such as the 'spirit of Christmas' and that of '99p'. In this context, the bargain emerges as a way to return to a romantic vision of the past in which Christmas was less commercialized, and gifts were about considered thought rather than grand gestures or price. In actuality the slogan, and quite possibly the feelings of consumers, have little to do with not needing to spend, and everything to do with spending in a way that makes people feel the gift they give is worth financially more than what they paid for it. The bargain was insolently masquerading as 'spirit', and in doing so increasing its potency as a concept.

Of course the culture of the bargain is a global phenomenon; it can be applied on a macro scale from one part of the world to another, as well as on the level of the individual consumer; it can seep into the global rhetoric of East versus West in new and pernicious ways. This is particularly

relevant when looking at the Western consumer who is caught between the necessity to economize, pressure from media sources to spend in order to keep the economy healthy, and the expectation that products made elsewhere will reach us at very low prices. For this strange combination of reasons, the Western consumer is used to the bargain, in fact even expects it – as Slavoj Žižek says, 'In Capitalism, the *definition* of the 'proper price' is a *discount* price.' (2002:43-44. Original emphasis.)

This syndrome has been further analyzed by Victor Alneng in his work on backpackers and Vietnamese traders (2007). He argues that backpackers seeking and expecting the 'right price' (a low price) are part of a north-to-south tourism 'which cannot be truly sustainable if the monstrous global geopolitical and economic inequalities that pave its travel routes are not sustained too' (2007: 4). According to Alneng the quest for this bargain price is not driven solely by pure economic concerns, but also by a desire for authenticity, and 'a commodity can only have high value (authentically) if it has a low value (monetarily); it is only emancipated as a global souvenir if it is confined to the local in terms of price rate' (2007: 9). Thus 'the souvenir cannot be authentic if the local who sells it is inauthentic, and an authentic local is a poor local' (2007: 9).

Within the £1 commodity chain, the equivalent of the 'right price' is the 'China price'. I first heard the phrase from a UK wholesale buyer who was explaining to me how he negotiated with Chinese manufacturers. He said it usually started with a manufacturer saying they could do a 'good price'; with some shaking of heads and imploring on his part 'good price' then became 'best price'; a few sums tapped into a calculator, maybe a quick phone call (sometimes faked, a lot more shaking of heads from both parties, and if you were lucky the wholesaler would look stoic and say, 'Ok, I'll do you a very special price - China price'. There is an implicit hierarchy at play here. Unlike a 'good price', which was nearly always followed by the phrase 'good for you, good for me', 'China price' seemed to contain more of a recognition on the part of the manufacturer, of the labour-rich industriousness of China and its juxtaposition with the addiction to cheap in the West. China price was 'good for you', but not so 'good for me'.

The embedding of the bargain concept into capitalistic relations is certainly pervasive, and can be interpreted, as Žižek does, as a set of assumptions on the part of the West as to their 'right' to discount price. There is here a general truth regarding the expectations of consumers in the West

to purchase commodities at little more than it cost to produce them. This is as a result of the huge disparities between the price of labour power in different parts of the world, and the increasing ability of Western countries, since the late 1960s, to import goods in bulk at much lesser cost per unit than they could produce them for themselves. The boom in container shipping is no small factor in the unfolding of this situation, as Mark Levinson's *The Box* (2006) clearly demonstrates.

However, the pragmatic truth of this situation, whilst certainly instrumental in fostering an expectation of the 'bargain' among Western consumers, should not be used to easily characterize non-Western consumption as unconcerned with the 'bargain'. Žižek's phrasing rather suggests that whilst the West believes it has a 'right' to the bargain, the rest of the world is not labouring (metaphorically and literally) under any such illusion. This results in the 'rest of the world' only being able to be defined in contrast to the West (rather than in its own right), and denies a plurality of relationships and strategic uses of the bargain by geographically, economically and culturally diverse players. Interpreted in this manner, relationships with the bargain can be used to explain away the structural injustices of global commodity markets. The danger here is that an assumption on the psycho-cultural nature of non-Western consumption becomes embodied by structural features created by government and market policy, which serve to maintain exploitative relationships. If the non-West is perceived as not expecting to be able to purchase a 'bargain', only to be given the opportunity to manufacture and sell 'bargains', it becomes all too easy to type-cast non-Western countries as 'producers' unconcerned with their own ability to consume the kinds of things Western countries want to consume.

This leads to a plethora of policies largely concerned with finding ways to keep prices low for western consumers, *apparently* with the additional concern that their consumption is needed in order to maintain mass demand for commodities, which in turn allows for large companies to employ cheap labour on a mass scale. Such policies maintain and strengthen exploitative structural relationships as they reinforce the dependency of 'producing nations' on 'consuming nations', in the process ignoring the issue of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). A 'bargain price' is, after all, defined only by the purchasing power of consumers. I emphasize the word 'apparently' as such policies are immediately hypocritical in nature, facilitating the import of large quantities of cheap commodities *up to a point*, but severely penalizing any exporting nation which becomes

too adept at reaching or surpassing this point, and therefore threatening domestic industries. For example, figures from the United States Trade Commission illustrate that the number of petitions against so-called 'dumping' of cheap commodities has risen steadily each year, especially from 2000 to 2006, (www.usitc.gov) in line with the increase in cheap imports. (Not surprisingly China makes an increasingly frequent appearance.)

This 'balance' expected of 'producing nations' by 'consuming nations', is mirrored by the policies of 'consuming nations' towards their own consumption, creating what Bauman calls the 'walking contradiction' consumer who must spend, but not over-spend, in order to be a good citizen (Bauman, 2007b). This balancing act on the individual's level reflects a macro phenomenon which Lefebvre (unsuccessfully) attempted to define as a 'bureaucratic society of managed consumption' (1971). (It is a shame that this title was not embraced, but rather ignored in favour of the more generalized notion of 'consumer society', as it emphasizes well the ways in which consumption is required *up to a point*, i.e. is managed).

The same set of rationales that creates the 'walking contradiction' consumer, also creates a convenient set of pretend enemies which allow consumerism to extol itself as the purveyor of all things good and reasonable - hence strange conflations of consumerism with democracy. For example, news reports during the cold war often showed USSR citizens queuing for bread and portrayed them as deprived of *buying power,* due (apparently) to their communist regime. According to these reports, they were not deprived of basic sustenance and resources; they were deprived of *consumer choice* and their *right to buy.* Consumerism became democracy and vice versa. Thus anything other than consumerism is totalitarian, which perfectly covers the totalizing (and pathological) nature of consumerism. For Lefebvre, this kind of myth-making is best understood as part of *mystification.*

iii) Mystification and the 'Bouleversement' of the Real.

It is worth exploring this (false) idea of freedom as the freedom to consume further, specifically within the context of Lefebvre's work on mystification (as outlined in the introduction). Initially, mystification was born from Lefebvre's witnessing of the rise of Fascism and the events leading up to the Second World War. However, he was later to also employ it to describe the rampant

onset of consumer culture and its impact. In fact the 'neo-Marxism', for which he is often said to have been the inspiration, focuses on concepts such as 'false consciousness' in a new light; one which emphasizes consumerist features of the 'modern' age and the effect of marketing. Importantly, Lefebvre's emphasis in understanding alienation is on the lack of control experienced by the proletariat, rather than their position as part of the labour market or as (non)owners of capital. Consumerism, for Lefebvre, played a huge role in decreasing their freedom, as it gave them a false sense of freedom whilst further disenfranchising them. This is precisely the role of bargain culture – a false bringer of 'freedom' to indulge in 'leisure' activities and/or spend less time on drudgery.

In volume one of CEL Lefebvre sets out his views on the way in which leisure serves capitalism, explaining how leisure must be seen to break with the everyday, to offer distraction, and liberation from worry and necessity – 'liberation and pleasure – such are the essential characteristics of leisure…' (2008 [1947]: 31). As leisure was therefore, to be as far removed from what felt like 'work' as possible, it is perhaps not surprising that consumption (namely shopping) has become the leisure activity par excellence since the latter end of the twentieth century.

On one occasion, I spend time with Sarah and Mark. It is a Saturday morning, and Sarah informs me that coming to the High Street, wandering round the pound stores and then going for lunch in the café has become a casual tradition of theirs. 'I dunno', says Sarah, 'it just chills me out. I like the simplicity of it, you know, it's no big deal, it's not like I'm off down Selfridges or something. We have fun looking at the nick-nacks and stuff. It's part of local life isn't it. It's something I like to do in my free time. I s'pose I like it 'cos it's easy… kind of mindless. I feel carefree when I know I can buy stuff.

Tracey had expressed similar feelings, saying: 'Wandering round here, you know, it's relaxing isn't it. No big decisions to make. No rush. I s'pose I feel like when I'm pottering round the pound shop, it's a bit of 'me time' you know. This is how I relax. [she laughs]. That's kind of sad in a way isn't it!'

For both Sarah and Tracey, this acceptance of shopping as leisure fails to recognize the ways in which spending is precisely tied up with the necessity for work and monotony. Her responses are

perhaps typical of society realizing only momentarily, if at all, that leisure too has been recruited to serve the purposes of capitalism. As Lefebvre argues, this is of course, as a result of the fact that leisure time (ironically sometimes referred to as 'free time') is a capitalistic construct, designed to reassure the worker that she is not alienated.

For Lefebvre, this notion of consumption as freedom is of course a myth (mystified), and one which not only attempts to displace alienation, but which also arises from the fetishization of merchandise, ideas, laws and rites (1999: 161). (In fact, Lefebvre is deeply sceptical of any notion of freedom throughout his oeuvre, as he sees it as inextricably linked to *the individual's* right to property and freedom to 'have', rather than society's. This is neatly summed up when he says that the rights of man were the rights of the idea of man, not man himself (1999: 51). However, this myth in itself is part of a greater one – that of Capitalism as 'ordre naturel' and therefore objective and eternal. For Lefebvre this absolutely must be questioned, not least because, as he expresses it, 'how can the so obvious disorder of the Bourgeoisie be indentified with Reason and Order?' (1999: 166)

Fetishization and the myth of freedom (including freedom through consumption) is part of the wider process of mystification for Lefebvre. Mystification is aided by fetishization and alienation (not simply of the worker but of the conscience itself) and is therefore definitively not able to be reduced to an economic rhetoric but insists on being interpreted as also political and ideological. Hence, discussing the ideological power of the bargain and the ability to consume is not limited to an account of economic outcomes for society, but is a cultural and political discourse. Consumption portrayed as freedom is part of the mystification of everyday life (a vast mystification according to Lefebvre); it is part of the contradiction between desire and fact; an apparently bounteous existence which hides its unkindness - 'une immense bonte douce à sa *conscience* [my italics] couvre sa mechancete' (1999: 118).

Mystification is a concept fundamentally hinged upon the idea of consciousness. For Lefebvre it is more than a lie as a lie is given to one or many individuals, whereas this lie is generalised – a social lie expanding across the whole of society. It is also more than a manoeuvre, as manoeuvres are calculated in advance, whereas with mystification reality finds a mask as it unfolds (1999: 78). Mystification is when the real is substituted by an abstract representation, and when that representation inverts the real and 'bouleverse' (turns upside down) the possible

(1999: 22). It is therefore that moment of the social conscience where its form hides its ancient contents; the moment when the social conscience itself becomes a liar (1999:79). Thus for Lefebvre, neither the private conscience, nor the collective conscience could criticise properly the truth as the conscience in all its forms is manipulated. Succinctly it is put thus: 'La clarté ment. La raison cache les forces absurdes. Notion presque tragique' - reason hides the absurd forces (of capital); it allows capitalism's disorder to appear rational and just.

What fuels this ability? For Lefebvre it is 'les valeurs' of capitalism – its 'values' – which appear in various guises such as nationalism, individualism, rationalism. These present themselves as the opposite of what they are; being purportedly supportive of the individual, the nation and Reason, but turning them against themselves. For example, whilst Capitalism projects itself as the defender of the individual, it exults only the form of the individual – individualism – rather than the ability of that individual to be 'total' in the sense of being her own person. For Lefebvre the person ought to be enabled to be individual and social – independent but *mutual* (1999: 100). It is precisely this misunderstanding of what it is to be individual (this mystification of the concept) which for Lefebvre means all people have become solitary whilst never being able to escape the mass: we are all part of individualism and so 'solitary', yet we cannot escape mass mystified culture, which disallows us to be individuals (1999: 119).

This hypocritical process is continually carried out by capitalism according to Lefebvre: when capital makes slaves of men, liberty becomes a value; when life becomes ugly, beauty is exulted; when the world is saturated and has been explored, adventure becomes the only choice. Even regret is presented as hope, as destroyed, tortured, crucified man becomes increasingly divine[36] (1999: 119). Importantly, these ideologies are lead by people who are not aware that they are lying; who do not intend necessarily to be part of mystification – the best liars are those who do not know they are lying (1999: 132). Furthermore, their real destructive and totalising nature lies in the fact that they do not simply mystify the present but give an image for the future, thus disallowing alternative images and proving themselves to be 'doubly mystifying' (1999: 120).

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[36] This is undoubtedly a (not so) veiled reference to Lefebvre's struggle with his religious up-bringing and the Celtic crosses and crucifixes of his childhood. His frustration appears to come from an incredulity that the events preceding Jesus' death have been turned into a promise for the future, rather than acknowledged as a devastating image of what humankind are capable of – the ultimate mystification perhaps. For Lefebvre, the cross mystifies, re-telling the story to suit its own ends and disavowing us of the hideous truth of human actions.

Suffice to say in current capitalistic society (globally) there is little alternative to the logic of consumption as necessary for a healthy economy; little challenge to the idea of spending as a type of freedom; little space to consider the possibility of a future not carved out by consumptive economic capitalism.

In fact, it is often the case that even those purportedly against capitalistic mechanisms attempt to see the potential for change *within* its limits, citing purchasing choices as 'working class freedoms' and suggesting 'ethical' consumption as a means to reverse uneven development. This is perhaps an example of the most pervasive form of mystification in current times, coming as it often does, precisely from those who situate themselves in theoretical opposition to capitalism. Daniel Miller's take on consumption is perhaps typical here (See Miller, 2008, 1998a, 1998b.) For him, consumption brings us closer to realising our own link with materiality; it is the point at which goods are returned to the domain of personal relationships and taken out of situations of alienation (2006: 347). Miller in many ways espouses the opposite to the rhetoric typical of many 60s authors including, famously, Vance Packard, who were stoically 'anti-consumption', and in doing so creates a strange breed of argument which fluctuates from acknowledging the market does not contain personal relationships, to suggesting that we can talk in terms of the 'responsibilities' we have to consume for others well-being.

At first glance, this can be read as a valid attempt to re-cast consumption as a concern with gaining greater entanglement with the object. Yet, Miller places this dis-alienation and agency within a rhetoric in which Western consumerism *unproblematically* 'solves' the problems of unseen others by providing a path out of poverty or representing the desire for development (2006:341). He gives little, if any, consideration to the argument that seeing consumption as the answer only embeds relations further within the market, allowing for the continuation of uneven development. Furthermore, he seems content to allow countries to develop in our wake and therefore under our control; in doing so he inherently assumes that 'development' looks a certain way (capitalist) and can only happen along the same paths we in the West developed.

He goes on to berate the way in which theories of consumption have largely concentrated on mass consumption as a negative trend, charting a path of 'anti-consumption studies' through Veblen (1994), Lasch (1979), Marcuse (1964), all of whom he says are influenced by an 'ascetic version of Western Marxism' (2006: 342-343). By confusing the consumer's awareness of

materiality with the ability to mass consume, Miller simplistically casts asceticism as the enemy – a logic which would provide no choice but to conceive of entanglement as a form of asceticism also. Thus Miller succeeds in mystifying entanglement, by portraying it as an out-moded and unrealistic wholesale rejection of consumption, and by attaching it to neo-liberal policies on 'ethical' consumption.

This is to entirely mis-understand (and therefore distort and mystify) the ways in which 'our' consumption bears upon the poverty or development of others. Whilst it may be the case that consumption in the West enables the survival of certain pockets of activity elsewhere across the globe, it is by no means a sustainable strategy as a whole. It is fundamentally reformist, requiring no great change on the part of the West or capitalism itself. Whilst fair-trade movements have added the proviso that the 'lifting' can only be achieved if the price on the commodity reflects the needs of the producer and, to some extent, denies the 'right' of the consumer to a bargain, they are fundamentally in agreement with the concept of the West buying the 'rest' out of poverty. The Western consumer is not asked to relinquish their 'right' to the bargain whole-heartedly, merely to re-prioritize their spending patterns in return for a warm feeling of having behaved 'ethically', whilst the non-Western consumer has been able *to bargain* ('bargaignier') with greater sway, but is still denied 'the bargain'.

Why the continuation of this denial of the bargain to some? Because, bargaignier (to bargain/haggle/trade) is fundamentally at odds with 'the bargain' *unless* relationships remain unequal. The seller can only earn a 'fair price' for the commodity, *at the same time* as the consumer pays a discount price for the commodity if the bargain buyer's money is worth more than the bargain seller's. The familiar call of Chinese traders, 'good price - good for you, good for me', captures this structure, whilst exposing the way in which bargaignier and bargain are caught in a set of structural inequities. Furthermore, this Western logic of spending our way out of trouble is applied to other nations who have chosen other economic paths. Hence the 'saver nations' are blamed for financial downtowns, China comes under increasing pressure to spend some of its foreign reserves (or appreciate the value of the Yuan), and 'Asian thrift' becomes a de rigeour term for economists attempting to make populist claims on who the bad guys are. It becomes increasingly ironic that the 'thrift' carried out by Western consumers is seen as enabling everyone to do their duty and continue spending, whilst the 'thrift' at the Chinese end is

apparently to blame for the global financial crisis. Being 'thrifty' to spend is fine; being thrifty to save is not. Hypocrisy is served by mystification.

iv) The Pound Store as Trinketorium: Elements of the Beguiling Display of Ephemera.

If the first element of the bargain as tactic is to attach itself to other concepts, such as 'spirit', 'thrift' and 'duty to spend', the second element is more bound up with its physical display. This has become all the more crucial in the light of the single price store as commodities have had to find ways other than their price tag to assert their 'good value'.

Just as the department store established fixed price and so eliminated the human interaction of bargaining, restricting the act of consumption to a relation between consumer and merchandise, so now the single-price store eradicates even the need to seek out price and consider it, further emaciating the role of dialogue so that it is required neither interpersonally, nor intra-personally. One seeks a price, with an object conjoined. Sometimes one fails. The object we seek is not conjoined to that price, on that day, in that place. A customer asks the assistant the price of first one object, then another, then another, smirking to his friend. He does it to annoy, to play the fool, to call the bluff of the ghost of interaction, whilst knowing to do so is futile. It has become such an established joke, that the 99p stores have re-appropriated it for their own marketing, placing banners around the stores which read 'Yes, everything is 99p'.

Yet this democracy of price does not mean that all £1 commodities are equal – far from it. Firstly, some create greater savings for the consumer than others, secondly (and less pragmatically) cultural connotations as to 'value' come into play. Let us tackle these two points separately. The issue of some £1 commodities being greater 'bargains' than others is best explained by the concept of the 'market mavern[37]' or 'price vigilante': individuals who scour the market for the 'best deal'. Helen is a self-confessed price vigilante. She admits to taking great pleasure in seeking out the best price and not falling for a 'false bargain':-

'When I was regularly shopping in pound stores it was for certain things. I mean, I loved looking round them anyway, but I didn't necessarily buy just any old thing in there. I would say that I either bought certain things that really were cheaper in them than in other shops, or I bought funny little novelty things

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[37] Mavern is an old Yiddish word meaning 'collector of knowledge'.

now and again…. Like, I'd buy cleaning products and bathroom stuff, and then I'd buy little ornaments and things like that, but I never bought kitchen stuff, saucepans and that, because they normally break and then you have to buy another and then you've spent as much if not more than you would have done if you'd bought a more expensive saucepan somewhere else. And I never bought socks or tea-towels because although they look cheap, you can actually get them much cheaper from supermarkets or other large stores.'

In this way Helen probably managed to buy the commodities that made the pound stores the least profit. Her behaviour, and that of other maverns, may mean the making of profit becomes harder, but in the bigger picture it very much aids the survival of the concept of the bargain as by accentuating the importance of price comparison it promotes the thrill and pride of being a wise bargain-hunter. It makes bargain-hunting something one can 'be successful' at and therefore encourages consumers to involve themselves with bargain hunting almost as a past-time. The culture of price comparison may enable people to avoid bad deals, but it also encourages the gaining of pleasure from so-called 'playing the market'.

As mentioned above, the second reason £1 commodities are not equal is that cultural connotations as to 'value' come into play. Many logics apply to ensure that the consumer can still be beguiled by the feeling that she captured a greater bargain by choosing that particular £1 commodity rather than the next. As Baudrillard recognised in *The System of Objects* (2005), the factors that differentiate commodities lie outside of a structural-technical analysis as this is insufficient for everyday objects whose safety and basic ability to work is easily satisfied. What emerges as important and defining are their cultural connotations:- 'Each of our practical objects is related to one or more structural elements, but at the same time they are all in perpetual flight from technical structure towards their secondary meanings, from the technological system towards a cultural system' (2005:6).

What Baudrillard goes on to identify as key features of the display of objects describes well the inconsistency of the system within which the bargain operates. On the one hand, it often relies upon cultural connotations linked to the 'exotic' and time; on the other its objects are serial objects not designed to last - part of a system in which abundance increases under the constraints of calculated *scarcity* (2005: 162). (This theme of abundance being defined by scarcity will be the major discussion in chapter four.) One must 'snap up' a bargain: it is an entity that despite

being attached to ubiquitous objects, can become 'unavailable' at any moment, and so must be searched out by the consumer faced with the possibility of finding it has become obsolete.

Yet contemporaneous to being highly disposable, many bargains are particularly successful because they embody 'time''. It is worth briefly exploring in more detail the ways in which the object can take on the appearance of time and how this operates to elevate its status in comparison with other objects. As Baudrillard points out, it is the antique which most obviously embodies time:

> 'The antique object no longer has any practical application, its role being merely to signify. It is astructural, it refuses structure, it is the extreme case of disavowal of the primary functions. Yet it is not afunctional, nor purely 'decorative', for it has a very specific function within the system, namely the signifying of time.' (2005: 77-78)

Yet, for Baudrillard, there is something false about an antique, as it 'puts itself forward as authentic within a system whose basic principle is by no means authenticity, but, rather, the calculation of relationships and the abstractness of signs' (2005:78). For him, the antique object (and indeed the exotic object) is a myth of origins (2005:80). What Baudrillard is questioning here is the *idea* of origins; the assumption that there is a fundamental 'authenticity', apparently unproblematic as a concept, of the type Walter Benjamin relied upon when theorising upon the destruction of the 'aura'.

In reading the £1 commodity, it is crucial to pick apart this assumption without simply failing to acknowledge the potency of the ideas of 'authenticity', 'time', and 'original', as many £1 commodity are copies of antiques, or even copies of *fake* antiques. However, whilst absolutely proving the unhelpfulness of the notion of authentic, they also work to heighten it somehow by being superb at creating and portraying what I will call insta-history – instantaneous senses of cultural knowledge, yearning, or belonging which can be conjured instantly from the presence of the object. They are tools that create time that never happened - at least not to the individual consumer. Or, in the same way that Baudrillard described antiques, 'they are a way of escaping everyday life, and no escape is more radical than escape in time' (2005:85).

Time is key here, and particularly useful in (re)understanding how the pull of the 'authentic' can work. It runs parallel to an emphasis on Benjamin's description of the aura as 'a strange weave

of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be' (1997:250), rather than an emphasis on his more perspicuous and virulent argument concerning the 'original'. If we accept that the 'authentic' (or rather the appearance of what we think of as at least symbolizing 'authenticity') is connected to the *semblance of distance* through time we escape the problematic nature of Benjamin's assertion that copying an 'original' 'smashed' the aura. (The important feature for objects such as the £1 Buddhas is the way they embody a feeling of distance for the consumer; a feeling of being from *somewhere else*, somewhere with a substance 'deeper' than that of the place occupied by the consumer.

In the Buddhas, this is harnessed by their falsely aged appearance, artificially created patches and rubbings-away as if they have experienced the eons of time, the depths of religious significance. Such ageing attempts to provide the commodity with its own memories (faded jeans or scrubbed leather sofas are similar examples) and is now a potent weapon in the commodity's fight to get noticed. As Peter Stallybrass points out, gone are the days when '…from the perspective of commercial exchange, every wrinkle or 'memory' was a devaluation of the commodity' (1998:196). The search for the authentic (or at least fake authentic) is now critical, in line with Susan Stewart's assertion that experience is mediated and abstracted and the lived relationship of the body to the world is replaced by 'a nostalgic myth of contact and presence' (1993:133). It is almost as if the aura has become hyper-real and only its presence as a signifier matters to the consumer demanding a piece of fake distance - a quick-fix for the commodity's lack of 'real' experience.

So the semblance of distance can be seen as part of the consumer's desire to tap into time and perhaps to feel that memories they do not have or cannot have are accessible to them. It is also increasingly the case that memories must increasingly be shown through objects rather than through the physical appearance of our bodies - the more being wrinkled as a person is seen as unattractive and to be guarded against by various creams and potions, the more we want our things to tell stories through their wrinkles. Whereas for people, as the Juvederm cream advert says, 'just because every wrinkle tells a story, doesn't mean you want everyone to read them', for certain types of things the opposite logic is true. And yet, just as the un-ageing of faces is supposed to instant, so the ageing of objects must be instant; both processes are united by their mutual quest for immediate gratification. Perhaps this hypocrisy can be seen as part of the

'conflict' Lefebvre mentions when talking of the everyday as the realm in which the authentic and inauthentic (neither of which he sees as existing as neat entities) attempt to justify themselves.

By way of example: in one pound store, a woman is asking the owner about a plastic model bonsai tree which has caught her eye. She refers to it as a 'plant', despite its being man-made and non-living, as she curiously fingers its plastic-fringed branches. She explains to me that keeping houseplants is not her strong point, but she likes to have 'something green' around and goes on to say how she knows a bonsai takes years to grow normally and requires a lot of patience which she, she says, does not have. What she articulates is a desire to have things that embody age and time, immediately and without being required to put any ingredient of her own into her interaction with the commodity, whether that be physical (water, soil, nutrients), or non-physical (care, patience). She may grow attached to the bonsai as an object, but she will not have invested material or time into it: despite being symbolically hinged upon taking time, it has come to her 'fully formed'.

Similarly, on a different occasion, a woman is gingerly fingering a small wooden box painted in 'shabby-chic' style with faux-weathered white paint. 'They're nice', I comment. 'Yeah, they look like they're made from driftwood or something don't they. They make me think of summer'. She pauses, picking up the box and turning it over in her hands. 'Plus with this style you can't tell whether something was cheap or not can you', she laughs. Here, the object has satisfied the criteria of instant age, whilst also over-coming any remnants of reticence or stigma over price. Here, it is worth mentioning kitsch, as the kitsch object seems to have a unique ability to dispel issues of signification and connotation, almost acting as a crutch to lessen any embarrassment felt due to shopping for the cheap. It allows people to dismiss something as kitsch as and when it does not live up to any other category, but to do so in a knowing, post-modern way.

Much of what characterizes things as kitsch has to do with the creation of the 'ancient-looking' from cheap, plentiful and immediately available materials. As Lefebvre says:

> 'These memory-objects, these palpable, immediate traces of the past, seem to say in daily life that the past is never past. Not explicitly but implicitly, it signifies the reversibility of time. In this fractured, fragmented time, we can return to the past, since it is there. More so than others, the kitsch object possesses these strange properties: a blending of memory, recollection, the imaginary, the real' (2008 [1981]: 133).

For Celeste Olalquiaga this relationship between the 'ancient' and the readily-available 'modern' is conceptualised by reading kitsch as the fragments of Benjamin's aura; that debris which survived the aura's shattering caused by the proliferation of the 'copy' under mechanical reproduction (2000:19). Thus Olalquiga links the immediacy of kitsch to Benjaminian thinking on the ease of reproduction and its concomitant (apparent) lack of aura. Whilst Olalquiga does not suggest in any way that these pieces of debris from the aura are in any way lesser than the 'original' (and by original we must include manifestations of 'high art'), her theorizing does rely upon understanding kitsch *purely* as imitation - as the objects that can be quickly produced to copy and/or replace those original auratic objects (2000).

In contrast Sam Binkley argues for 'the uniqueness of kitsch as a distinct style, one which celebrates repetition and conventionality as a value *in itself*' [my italics] (2000: 133). His is a nuanced argument which, while it celebrates the toppling of old assumptions in regard to cultural hierarchies based on the supremacy of 'high culture', and agrees with those theorists within cultural studies who posited consumers as intrinsically creative and critical in their choices (Grossberg, 1992, Fiske, 1989, Hall, 1996), wishes to assert kitsch as a distinct category which deflects creativity and innovation whilst celebrating routine, sentiment and banality. For Binkley, 'mass culture theorists had it right when they identified the repetitive conventionality of kitsch, but got it wrong when they failed to recognize the social meanings that a repetitive, derivative style might hold' (2000: 134). They had correctly dismantled the hierarchy of taste which put kitsch at the bottom, but had created a regime in which 'creativity' now marked out a culture's worth. Kitsch, Binkley argues, spurns creativity per se, revelling in a repetition of the familiar and a resounding affirmation of the everyday.

For Binkley, this affirmation of the everyday is akin to Pierre Bourdieu's 'taste of necessity', in that it expresses the conventionality of everyday forms and their embeddedness in everyday life (Bourdieu, 1984:371). However, for Bourdieu it is precisely kitsch's embeddedness in the everyday, this uniformity with past aesthetics, which categorizes its consumers as those whose economic lives are governed by scarcity: kitsch is aesthetics for those who cannot (financially) afford to make mistakes or experiment with their decorative choices. Meanwhile for Binkley, consumer choices in regards to kitsch are *knowingly* spurning creativity, rather than simply relying upon safe choices. I would go further to add that kitsch does not only affirm the everyday, but celebrates it. Furthermore, this celebration is done with a knowing nod to the past

and to its reinterpretation in the present. Kitsch is self-referential. Therefore, whilst it does indeed spurn creativity as Binkley argues, it is, on a subtle psycho-social level creative in itself as it exists to encourage enjoyment in recreating the past in the present. With kitsch, whilst of course the market decides which pieces of 'high art' to copy, it cannot 'brand' them in the same way it would other objects as they must be presented as 'copies' of the 'original'.

This interpretation of the choices consumers make is useful in un-picking their relationship with £1 commodities. A consumer's reasoning for choosing a certain sofa is based on its shape and colour and what the consumer feels that says about her; but these aspects are exactly those carefully pondered by designers and marketing teams whose remit is to create a product which 'says' certain things. For example, a rounded, pastel-coloured, low-slung sofa, says 'retro fifties style'. As Bourdieu says, 'we no longer even have the option of *not* choosing, of buying an object on the sole grounds of its utility, for no object these days is offered for sale on such a 'zero-level' basis … It follows that the choice in question is a specious one: to experience it as freedom is simply to be less sensible of the fact that it is imposed upon us as such, and that through it society as a whole is likewise imposed upon us' (1984:151). Thus the sofa is typical of the ways in which '…objects work as categories of objects which, in the most tyrannical fashion, define categories of people…' (1984: 209). Despite this it remains the case that objects are often described as allowing a person to creatively define themselves with *pure* agency. Lefebvre's analysis points to the balance between emphasis placed on consumer choice versus coercion and structure. He says, '…although they are manipulated, they still have a small margin of freedom: they will choose. 'Choosing' is represented in daily life as a value that manipulation does not destroy, but *exalts*' [my italics] (2008: [1981]: 72).

In contrast, £1 trinkets have not gone through this marketing process (they cannot, due precisely to the necessity for them to provide a continuity with the past as Binkley argues); consumers are not being appealed to in the same way as they are with specifically marketed goods. A garden gnome cannot have his shape changed to give him a 'retro' look; a plastic Buddha cannot be made in a different position to 'update' him; these changes would render the objects unrecognisable as what they are. This is the nature of their 'embeddedness' in the everyday. £1 trinkets do not define their consumers in the same way as marketed commodities. This is reflected in the fact that there are no market research categories used by marketers for £1 store

consumers, which cannot simply be explained by the argument that information on £1 consumers is not worth enough to marketers for them to conduct research as the £1 sector is the fastest growing area in retail.

Kitsch is at once destructive and creative in this sense – it destroys (or rather disallows) both old hierarchies of culture and marketers' ability to make the object define the person. Yet it creates and strengthens connections to the everyday. It places high culture imagery within the most mundane of contexts – 'images socially marked as unique and exceptional… are subordinated to the practical everyday problems of the household' (Binkley, 2000: 143). Yet, relations to kitsch have moved on since Bourdieu wrote *Distinction* and it can no longer be argued that a taste for 'trinkets and knick-knacks' is altogether about a working class attempt to gain 'maximum effects at minimum cost'(1984: 379).

As Richard Peterson (1992) argues, the terms 'elite' and 'mass' have been replaced by multiple usages and readings of objects which can no longer be simplistically placed along a class hierarchy as they have become 'omnivore' and 'univore' due to consumers mixing objects from all parts of the taste hierarchy. This 'mixing' was clear in my audio walks through £1 stores, during which consumers of various class backgrounds expressed various reasons for buying £1 ornaments. For example, Judith enjoyed mixing the good quality furniture she had saved up for with kitsch ornaments in order to remain 'down to earth' and so that her lounge didn't 'look stuffy'. In an almost reverse logic, Sarah hoped that by buying 'one or two quality vases', her old, faded sofa would look 'chic' rather than 'clapped out'. For Tracey, having 'a few bits of kitsch around the place' gave it a slightly bohemian look, which reassured her she had not completely given up on the lifestyle of her youth.

Where does this leave us in our analysis of the tactic of immediacy and its use of the bargain? The bargain plays upon notions of time and distance, but simultaneously plays upon an acknowledgement of the lack of time involved in the creation of certain commodities and the ways in which they are entirely replaceable and disposable. It plays upon the ways in which kitsch operates as knowingly embedded within the everyday. In many ways the concept of the bargain is therefore also implicit in breaking down old hierarchies of taste – bargain objects are often those which allow consumers to rely upon old categories of 'taste' in order to destroy and/or recreate them within the present context.

The bargain is also all-encompassing. Yet, whilst the pound store shouts its single price policy from every available wall and shelf, demanding us to see all its commodities as equal bargains, it cannot undo other social categories whose potency and embeddedness in our attitudes give us other criteria and other hierarchies upon which to judge £1 commodities. £1 commodities may be equal in price, but they are far from equal psycho-socially. Certain types of materials are deemed to be of better 'quality' than others - a polyresin vase coated and glazed has a far more 'quality' feel to it than a plastic one, despite the fact it may not have been cheaper to produce. Although both objects are £1, the glazed vase will be considered more of a 'bargain' than the plastic one. There are also genre classifications which come into play. An object that must carry out a physical task, for example, a tea-towel or a plate, is expected to wear-out due to its usage - one expects to have to replace it so it ought to be cheap. An ornament however, will not get worn out, so will not need replacing, and is therefore deemed to be a greater bargain than a plate.

The opening of the new pound store in Catford provides a good example of how these social connotations operate by singling out certain £1 commodities as being 'worth more' than others. About three weeks after the opening of the store both the local Indian restaurant and the local Chinese restaurant had bought bulk-loads of ming-style £1 vases to put on their tables. What is it about the Ming vase that suggested to both restaurant owners that this was a suitable 'object' to put on the table? The Ming vase, even though an inexpensive plasticized version of a 'real' Ming vase, held enough connotations of luxury, style and 'good taste' to have become a symbol of 'civilisation' and 'sophistication'. Those connotations were so strong that it was perfectly acceptable to have a version of the vase that was very clearly an inexpensive 'fake'.

This philosophical awareness of regimes of value is reflected in the historical conflict between two great entrepreneurs of low-end retail in France: Bernard Trujillo and Eduard Leclerc. Trujillo, originally from Columbia, promoted self-service in America and Japan before heavily influencing French commerce by stressing the importance of piling high and lowering prices. In his view this piling high must however be carried out alongside the creation of 'islands of losses' (loss leaders) amid 'oceans of profit', and stores which were 'a permanent circus' rather than having long-term window displays which he saw as 'coffins' of merchandise. (Quoted in Bowlby, 2000: 166) Trujillo is credited with creating Modern Marketing Methods – MMM. In contrast, Leclerc has opened his first store in his home town of Brest; he had bought directly

from manufacturers and placed goods on shelves in unpacked boxes with little regard for 'display' of any kind. His model proved successful and Leclerc became a household name in France.

Both Trujillo and Leclerc were united in their contempt for small shopkeepers who refused to adapt, but their reasons differed vastly. For Trujillo the key issue was 'display' and updating selling techniques. He believed the shop ought to be a piece of showmanship in which loss leaders encouraged the consumer to buy more profitable commodities. Leclerc believed in delivering the lowest price for the consumer *throughout,* and was prepared to make less profit on each unit than anyone else. (In fact his strategy is much aligned to Jack Ma's 'shrimps not whales' strategy). Leclerc spurned the use of marketing as being against the interests of consumers, a conviction which earned him the mocking title 'L'epicier' (The Grocer) from Trujillo.

With hindsight, whilst Trujillo's emphasis on display and creation of MMM has clearly been a tour de force in the development of consumptive practices in general, Leclerc's philosophy has certainly triumphed when it comes to low-end stores who have little if any concern for loss-leaders' or 'display'. Indeed with the rise of agglomerative manufacturing and the current huge exponential increase in low-end stores it could be argued that the battle between these two great entrepreneurs is yet to be settled. Furthermore, as Bowlby points out, it may be that the argument about price versus display (or access versus aesthetics to put it another way) has almost eradicated itself in many contexts. Firstly, this is due to the way in which the aesthetic and the accessible are presented as options equally available in the same place, i.e. by supermarkets with both 'luxury' and 'basic' brands (2000:166). Secondly, the shop that disregards methods of display, and is therefore *perceived* as disregarding commercial considerations, 'acquires a kind of counter-prestige from the very fact of being seen not to participate in them' (2000:72).

This was certainly true for many £1 store consumers I came into contact with who expressed the pleasure they gained in 'a shop that calls a spade a spade', 'the honesty of the pound store', or 'the way it's so functional and unsophisticated'. For example, Helen explained how she enjoyed the temporary ability not to have think – to 'put her head on hold'- that she felt the pound store gave her:

'Once you're in, you're in, and you can't get out until you've gone up and down all the aisles, so you can't wander and take your own direction. It's kind of a relief because you have no decision-making to do, you have to do as the shop's layout tells you… and also, everyone's in the same boat as you... none of you can choose where to go, you just go up and down the aisles and stop when you see something that interests you. Funny really, because normally I would hate things that told me what to do- you know, like I hate to see people behaving like sheep - but for some reason I enjoy it in the pound stores, it's like a kind of relinquishing of responsibility. I enjoy the dumbness of the pound store… I guess it's like allowing yourself to be a sheep sometimes, but without the guilt trip (laughs)… yeah, knowing that you're not really a sheep because when you leave the shop you're thinking and making decisions again.'

This disregard for display is most poignantly illustrated by the typical pound store window, which is quite frequently almost totally obscured by piles of products; in the pound store the window is about as far removed as it is possible to be from the idea of the shop window as glamourous cinema screen (see Freidberg, 1993). However, these overly 'stocky' (a retail expression meaning full of stock) windows do not simply prove a disregard for display (although they are certainly indicative of that), but are also powerful signifiers of the presence of inexpensive products – the stocky window can immediately be read by the consumer as a guarantor of 'bargains' within. Thus the lure of the pound shop is in direct contradiction to the pursuit of luxury in other shops - its lure is not that of the rare, or hard-to-own, but purely and simply that of the bargain. It follows therefore, that this lure has an aesthetic of its own which is specifically concerned with fullness and sprawl, because the bargain relies upon the abundance of its units, (even though as previously mentioned the idea of scarcity is necessary to cause the consumer to be in a hurry to 'snap it up'). Benjamin's description befits well: '…the commodities are suspended and shoved together in such boundless confusion, that [they appear] like images out of the most incoherent dreams' (2002:56).

At first glance this lure of the chaotic, sprawling, (non)display and its attempt (and relative success) to ignore the ways in which social connotations add 'distinction' to some objects, can be seen as practical proof that the Saussurean[38] models of Barthes (1967) Sahlins (1976), and even Baudrillard to some extent, are irrelevant in the face of the single price store. However, whilst symbolic distinction is certainly to a large extent camouflaged and logically (apparently)

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[38] Saussure's Semiology argued that all systems of meaning are organized on the same principles as language. (So, for him, linguistics was a sub-field of semiology). His ideas about how objects are divided up based on their differences with other objects had a large impact on the rise of structuralism,

eradicated due to the single price in the £1 store, it is not the case that all £1 commodities are seen as equal – as mentioned above, some have more social prestige than others. In fact the £1 store is almost the reverse of Sahlins' depiction of the department store. Whereas, for Sahlins', marketing creates symbolic distinction between products that are often almost identical, the £1 store (almost) dispels financial distinction between products that vary randomly from each other (as their only remit is to comply to the £1 profit margins). A £1 commodity is unique *despite* the mono-price.

v) Frippery and its Discontents: The Fetishing of the Appropriate and the Appropriation of the Fetish.

Helen describes herself as a 'devout' pound store shopper and by way of example, begins to relate to me how her enjoyment of pound stores took on added meaning…

'I got married last year and my mum made my dress and all that. She'd been working on it for months and had ordered some flowers that would go well with it from the local florist. But they're so expensive, real flowers, and we were determined not to spend more on the flowers than the dress! So I said, well, just order a few real ones and we'll make up the bouquet with plastic ones from the pound shop. My mum thought I was mad. I spent about two months collecting really nice plastic flowers- you know, subtle ones not the horrible big bright ones. Each time I went out shopping I'd scour the pound shops to see what they had in. And on the day it looked really fantastic. Everyone commented on how unusual and beautiful it was. I didn't want to throw it over my shoulder!… although I did, of course… I wanted to keep it! I was so proud of it, and I was even more proud because I had made it out of nothing - I mean it had cost hardly anything. Also, I felt like it really represented me, because I love pound shops and also I suppose if I'm honest because I had gone through quite a few years of being quite poor and that's not much fun on your own, and now I was putting those years behind me. I was getting married and I wouldn't have to cope with being poor on my own any more- but it had become a part of me, and although I hadn't enjoyed being poor I had a kind of pride in how I'd survived it.'

For Helen, both pound stores themselves and some of the items they typically stock, particularly of course the plastic flowers, hold special import due to the role they have played in her life – they have gained more meaning due to becoming imbued with emotion. The plastic flowers are no longer simply objects for her, but things that have meaning as part of her own life-story; they were key players in what she considers to be the most important day of her life so far.

This type of change in relationship between subject and object is often held up as the solution to the impersonality of commercial transaction and therefore the extent to which market relations have come to govern all relations. It could therefore, also be seen as a counter-tactic to the culture of the bargain. However, in unpacking it further, it becomes clear that not only is it increasingly difficult to draw the correct line between having a deep connection to an object and fetishizing it, but that also this 'appropriate' relationship is itself becoming marketed and fetishized, whilst on the other hand fetish behavior is becoming re-appropriated in a self-aware 'post-modern' way. Let us attempt to pick this apart.

This kind of 'appropriate entanglement' is what Mrs Lucas describes when talking about her £1 garden gnome, 'Gerald.' Gerald is just under a foot high, with a painted-on red pointed hat, green trousers and yellow shirt. He comes complete with his own fishing line and cross-legged pose. Mrs Lucas saw Gerald one sunny afternoon in late June a couple of years ago and decided he would make a nice addition to her patio garden. 'It's quite a dull garden for lots of the day as it's north-facing and I thought he'd cheer it up ... now, sometimes, you know, when I'm pottering around, I just start nattering to him about something that's happened or something that annoyed me. It's like, you know, he can just listen 'cos that's all he can do and even though I know he's just a gnome it doesn't really make any difference 'cos you still feel you've told someone - I mean, it could be anyone or anything really, it's just about getting it out of your system… yeah, he knows a lot about me that gnome.'

Similarly, Jackie relates to me how a few years back she had bought a £1 gravestone to put at the spot in her garden where she and her children had buried the family cat. When they had moved house two years ago, they decided to take the gravestone with them, partly as 'it felt strange to leave it there for the new people moving in', and partly to remind them of their departed pet. The gravestone was then later used to mark the spot of a goldfish her youngest child had won and which had not survived long in its tank. Although the children had become mature enough to respond very level-headedly to the death of the gold-fish, they had liked the idea that any family pet (regardless of how loved or how substantial a part of their lives it had been) should be buried with the gravestone marking the spot. Thus the £1 stone had become linked to a history of the family's pets, and indeed its future pets.

This being part of the object is also what Helen describes when she explains how she felt the plastic flowers had 'really represented me' and how they were symbolic of her poverty at the time and that poverty (and therefore the cheap pound store flowers) had become 'part of her'. Certainly she has attached an idea and sentiment to the flowers – they have become a 'thing' for her, but she has not fetishized them; rather she has with them exactly the kind of entanglement with the everyday that Lefebvre describes. Similarly, Gell's (1998) notion of the 'distributed mind'[39], in which people act through objects by distributing parts of their personhood in them, is useful here, as is Strathern's (1999) similar notion of the 'partible person', divisible into things along certain exchange trajectories.

The above two notions could certainly be applied to the way in which Helen saw 'parts' of her old life and her old self as embodied in pound commodities. Helen's relationship with these commodities would also stand to disprove Edgar Morin[40]'s (2001) distinction between the 'biographical object' and the 'protocol object' or standardized commodity. For Morin, the biographical object has unity with its user and their identity and the owner develops their personality through it, whereas the protocol object is not used as self-definition and causes its owner to be de-centred and fragmented by their acquisition of things. As Helen's case shows, it is absolutely possible for standardized commodities to become biographical objects, partly due to the manner in which they can become 'things' for that individual due to being imbued with personal ideas, and partly due to the way individuals can find alternative uses for mass-produced commodities.

Therefore, along with the recognition that things can become part of a life-story is a concurrent recognition which sees things as moving in and out of thinghood. This acknowledgement

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[39] In his celebrated work Art and Agency (1998), Gell replaces a purely aesthetic theory of art, with one that emphasizes the effects art has achieved as a 'distributed agency'. Central to this is the theory of abduction, which states that things do not necessarily happen as a result of causal inference, but rather due to inferred intentionality. His is therefore a theory of the people behind objects, and those peoples' intentionality. Thus the creative products of a person become his `distributed mind', which has agency as it influences the minds of others.

[40] In many ways Morin had much in common with Lefebvre. He too began a military career, leaving it in order to join the French Communist party. He too fought for the Resistance during the Second World War. He too experienced a difficult relationships with the French communists and was eventually expelled from the party in 195. Morin also founded and directed the magazine *Arguments* (1954–1962). Appropriately perhaps, he replaced Lefebvre at the University of Nanterre, where he became involved in the student revolts of 68.

challenges Bill Brown's (2001) argument which, despite citing the 'object/thing dialectic' (2001:5), remains faithful to Derrida's notion that the thing is not an object and cannot become one, because it is a sign, whereas an object is not (2001:126).

For Brown an object becomes a thing on the occasions it begins to have an idea attached to it as well as simply being tangible - 'things' are perhaps 'what is excessive in objects... what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects…' (Brown, 2001: 4-5). A thing is an object plus an idea, and those objects which assert themselves as things, constitute a 'changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation' (2001: 4-5). However, Brown's 'things' whilst indicative of the subject having imbued the thing with sentiment, are perhaps not as indicative of a fundamentally changed relationship between subject and object (or 'thing') as he would like to think. As he goes on to say, the magic by which objects become 'things' is ultimately inextricably woven with their becoming values, fetishes, idols, and totems' (Brown, 2001: 4-5). Brown therefore suggests that it is the thingness of an object, its status as sign or idea, which creates its fetishistic nature. For Brown the thing is the fetish.

Igor Kopytoff's famous biographical approach shows that things move in and out of the *commodity* state and that these movements can be fast/slow, reversible/terminal, normative/deviant - the same is true of the *thing* state.[41] Furthermore, Appadurai's explanation of 'regimes of value' can be applied to 'value' in the sense of whether or not something is an object or a thing. Appadurai argues that 'value coherence may be highly variable from situation to situation' (1986:15). In other words there may be a 'minimum fit' between cultural and social dimensions of commodity exchange. In the same way we could argue that in certain settings along its trajectory, there is a minimum fit between object status and thing status in the life of any given object/thing. There are situations in which everyone would agree on the status of an object/thing, and situations when the agreement would be minimal leading to much confusion over its status. This is why moving from thing-hood back to object-hood, contrary to what Brown suggests, *is* possible on both an individual and a societal level. Indeed many marketed 'things' failed the test of time and returned to objecthood; only 'classic' items still have thing-

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[41] Incidentally, Appadurai differentiates between Kopytoff's cultural biography, and the social history of things, arguing that cultural biography is useful for specific things, but a social history of things is needed to look at classes or types of thing (1986 :34).

hood decades later. These 'classics' are somehow so representative of the time they were fashionable that their thing-hood remains intact – for example, the original apple computer, space hoppers, acid-house smiley faces.

vi) Thing or Fetish?

We return however to the original conundrum – that question of how a subject-object relationship can exist in the sense Lefebvre desired, without the object becoming fetishized. There are two syndromes to be on guard against; the fetishizing of a more knowing/thinking relationship with the object, and the (re)appropriating of the fetish. By the former, I am referring to the types of consumer campaigns which, in attempting to bring proximity between consumer and producer by making apparent the 'ethical conditions' under which a product was manufactured, end by creating a brand from that relationship itself - the fair trade movement unfortunately has the secondary result of fetishizing itself.

The latter - (re)appropriating the fetish – involves a type of 'knowing' relationship with the fetishized object in which buying it or wearing it *in acknowledgement* of its fake/fetishized nature is deemed a form of anti-fetishism. It is a kind of self-referential relationship with the fetish, in which the consumer plays with his or her own identity as a consumer, but seems to be saying 'I am removed from all this though because I know the thing I have bought is fetishized.' It is rather like Žižek's example of the Hopi's masks (1991: 247). The unmasking ceremony of the Hopi tribe causes those being initiated to realise for the first time that what they thought was sacred and magic is actually their fathers and uncles behind masks. However, after the initial shock has worn off the mask itself somehow becomes the holder of magical meaning, or, as Žižek puts it:

> '...we know the mask is only a mask - the mask is only a signifier which expresses an internal, invisible spirit, a mystical preserve. However, we must not forget that this mystical spirit, invisible Beyond, *is not what is hidden behind the mask* - behind the mask is the everyday image in which there is nothing holy or magic. All the magic, all the invisible mystical spirit, *is in the mask as such*...' (original emphasis) (1991:247)

To apply this to the commodity thing - removing the mask is the equivalent of removing the fetishization from an object. It is the moment of knowing and potentially of de-fetishizing. However, if the mask itself, or the fetish itself (the branding, image, etc. of an object), is then deemed to contain the magic, this de-fetishization simply becomes a re-appropriation of the

fetish; a celebration of having understood the way it works, but a respect for it none-the-less. It allows the subject to feel in control of their relationship with the commodity, un-addicted as it were, and as Žižek points out, if the individual can feel they are not addicted to the commodity thing they can believe they are not part of a totalitarian regime, yet knowing that they really are. Žižek refers to this syndrome as one in which the (il)logic is constantly one of 'I know it to be true, but nevertheless it's not true'- a pathological state of constant denial through agreement (1991: 244). With certain types of knowing or 'un-addicted' enjoyment of the £1 commodity, this amounts to a form of postmodernism which in acknowledging the fetish, feels it is trampling it down, when in actuality it is celebrating it, albeit in a nonchalant manner.

vii) Conclusion

Where does this leave us with regard to the tactics of immediacy? To recap, these tactics involve the attaching of the bargain to other pernicious concepts, including those to do with 'distance', exoticism and cultural potency/capital. The bargain displays itself as readily abundant through 'stocky' displays and apparent availability, yet retains the tease that it may disappear abruptly and must therefore be snatched up. On a global level, the bargain convinces us in the West that we have somehow earned the right to it, and even that we can help the non-West by seeking it at every opportunity. Even campaigns to expose the unethical origins of the bargain become twisted by capitalism and succeed in creating 'brands' of themselves: this is in itself a secondary tactic of the bargain as although such products do not present themselves as bargains, they do suggest that *through them* ethics, a clear conscience and peace of mind can be bought relatively cheaply. The result remains that at a deep level a subsidiary concept of the bargain is convincing us that consuming slightly differently provides an answer to exploitation, in order that world order may remain unaltered. The bargain is unequivocally on the side of both micro and macro capitalisms.

Perhaps the bargain's deepest impact however, is the way in which it instills a sense of the importance of immediacy in our relation with consumption. The bargain must be grabbed while it is available. This is possible even for those with few funds, as of course it is low in cost. Fundamentally this firmly guards against a sense of bonding between subject and object as even if the bargain (especially one with a price tag as low as the £1 commodity) becomes part of the subject, the subject knows that there must be limits to the hurt they will feel if separated from the

object as it only cost £1. It makes the kind of appropriate entanglements that Arvatov and Lefebvre extol harder, whilst simultaneously encouraging the kind of emphasis on possession as the (apparent) issue they wished to guard against.

This difference between entanglement and possession is crucial as it creates a way out of traditional lines of argument often regarded as 'anti'-possession versus 'equal' possession, and thus muddies the neat historical lines often drawn between Aristotle, Aquinas and Marx on the one hand, and Hirschman, Smith and market economists on the other. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry outline these two strands in their introduction to *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (1989). The first begins with Aristotle's thoughts on self-sufficiency and how profit-oriented exchange was unnatural and destructive of the bonds between people and households, and manifests itself as a general condemnation of money. Aristotle's ideas were taken up, in the thirteenth century, by Thomas Aquinas and the church authorities who saw many evils in material acquisition, and it is due to this that Marx's 'labour theory of value' is often viewed as the place Aristotle has got to. The second tradition begins with Augustine's differentiation between the love of glory and the purely private pursuit of riches – the passions and the 'interests' – and continues through to Montesquieu's argument that avarice unwittingly conspired towards the public good, the precursor of Smith and a view of money as a force for good.

For Lefebvre, these arguments miss the point, since they are focussing on possession only and provide an erroneous account of Marx as in some sense 'moralising' about money in the same way Aristotle did. As mentioned in chapter one, Lefebvre recognizes neither the moralizing discourse of non-possession nor the 'petty-bourgeois socialism' which suggests equal possession for all and so places the concept of 'possession' on high rather than linking it to relationships with others (2008 [1947]: 156).

As the bargain, in particular the £1 commodity, denies entanglement most of the time, it leads us to become caught up in (irrelevant) cultures concerned with possession and with fomenting the idea of possession as moral. The bargain's tactic is to ignore true engagement with the object in order to promote morality either through a post-modern acknowledgement of the fetish (the 'fun'

of 'going wild' in a pound store), or through the legitimizing myth of the 'good consumer'. Within this latter, the bargain becomes salvation for the financially poor consumer; the pound store a temple in which even they can fulfill their duty to capitalism. It promises eternal abundance provided we continue to shop and so create jobs, demand, growth and wealth. The bargain subtly instils a pride in the ability-to-purchase for those usually unable to do so, causing them to remain participants in a capitalistic ideal rather than exploring alternative cultures. The pound store is a means of commodity worship for the economic underclass.

Chapter Three

The Tactic of Disposability: 'Poaching in Cracks' in Shanghai's Spaces of Waste.

'Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away ... he catalogues and collects. He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously: he collects like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry' (Walter Benjamin, 2002:87).

*'...our whole economy has become a waste economy, in which things must be almost as quickly devoured and discarded as they have appeared in the world, if the process [of production and consumption] is not to come to a sudden catastrophic end' (*Hannah Arendt, *1998:134).*

A small footbridge, perhaps four metres wide and no longer than ten, crosses the Suzhou river creek just before the point at which it flows into the great Huangpu river that cuts through the centre of Shanghai. On one side of it lie the famous Bund with its restored colonial grandeur, and further into town the French quarter, where international bright young things seek out European wines and bemoan the lack of 'café life'. 'How can you people-watch when everyone moves so fast?' one of them asks. On the other side lie four blocks of crumbling low-rise dwellings, some of them half-demolished and forced to display their innards with a somehow disconcerting nonchalance. This is Zhabei, home to small-time traders and waste peddlers. Ahead, in the distance, is the iconic telecom tower, the finance building with its 'bottle opener' top-piece (created during its construction to maintain its now defunct status as the world's tallest building), and the exhibition centre with its two futuristic globes sandwiching neo-Georgian splendour. Directly ahead is the reverse side of the immense Nestlé sign, a landmark clearly visible to the tourists on their river cruises. From this angle though, it is far from the same sparkling affirmation of corporate success, but rather, a dense bedraggled mass of rusting wires, desperately and pathetically securing its letters, lest they fall to a less than graceful end. It looks outwards to the profit of the Pudong. It ignores the waste of the peddlers. It fails to connect the two. (Figure 4)

It is just gone five thirty in the evening. The weak rays of Shanghai's November sun are beginning to fade. Turning left across the small footbridge, away from the Bund, a narrow street heads into the peddlers' quarter of Zhabei. The dank smell of the river is never far away. The air is heavy with dust from houses falling down and apartment blocks going up. As the dust falls it

collects in swathes along the sides of streets and in the troughs of their uneven surfaces. Ahead, a line of construction workers, about a quarter of a mile long, wends its way along Dong Changzhi road towards the docks, to start the night shift. Now and again a street vendor cries his wares. The animated chatter of sellers and workers is momentarily silenced by a loud cracking sound, as one of the food vendor's coal-fired canisters explodes. He swears, and tries to rescue the blackened remains, as the chatter returns.

Turning left off the main drag, the road becomes a dust path, on either side of which are numerous crumbling, half-derelict houses. Some stand, half-demolished, cut down the middle, their insides rudely exposed, faded bits of paintwork revealing where a shelf or a picture once hung. There are no cars here, only the odd bicycle, and the carts of the peddlers bringing back a day's haul to be sorted and stored: aluminium from iron, plastic from paper, wood from cardboard, dust from dust. A small man, perhaps in his mid fifties, steers his teetering cart across the pot-holes. Its load although seemingly precarious, is actually ingeniously packed and perfectly balanced, so as not to risk losing even one precious piece of waste. He says today has been a good day, rich pickings, and laughs when I smile and say 'hao gonzuo ma?' (Good job eh?) It is not what people would call a 'good job', but, he says, it is considered useful and respectable.

He heads off across the stretch of open ground that separates the derelict quarter from the main road, and disappears between two crumbling buildings. A group of boys crouch in the mud and play cards. A young woman tires of attempting to ride her bicycle over such uneven terrain, lazily flicking one leg over the seat to continue on foot. Six school-children chase each other up an alleyway filled with rubble and disappear. I marvel at how spotless their uniforms look, when life here is built on and around waste. (Figure 5)

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This chapter in many ways can be seen as the flip-side of the chapter on the tactic of immediacy. Effectively it is looking at the results of the way the bargain operates, focusing on the necessity of the waste created by the disposability of the bargain. To this end, it begins by exploring the spaces of waste in Shanghai and how the city attempts to hide them whilst simultaneously

showcasing others. These places are then analysed as 'failures' crucial to related successes and as part of a system of binary oppositions which operates to deny the use of waste in gaining profit. Finally disposability is examined as key to enabling this profit, as having an uneasy relationship with the concept of thrift (and thriftiness), and as a tactic inextricably aligned to the £1 commodity chain's propensity, and increasing requirement, for a shorter gap between consumption and disposal.

i) Finding Cracks to Poach In

For Michel de Certeau the tactician has no choice but to make use of opportunities or 'cracks', and 'poach' in them, because, unlike the strategist, he does not have a 'proper locus'. Furthermore, owing to this lack of locus, the tactic 'takes advantage of opportunities and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep' (1984: 36-37). These two principles - the first of operating in the un-noticed chinks of life, the second of constantly having to purge oneself of 'winnings' - emerged consistently in Shanghai's spaces of waste.

The spaces were 'cracks' (and also opportunities in de Certeau's sense) largely due to their positioning outside of the main thrust of society, either geographically or socially and economically. They could be compared to what Susan Strasser (1999) calls 'liminal spaces' in relation to the house – marginal places such as lofts and basements – in that they sat on the edges of Shanghai, or in the case of Zhabei, despite being central, were areas largely deserted and abandoned. They also had their own economies which operated outside of the main economic system. The peddlers in Zhabei, and indeed across Shanghai, were not part of any formal taxation or employment mechanisms; what they earned was theirs to spend or send home.

They were also spaces in which, true to de Certeau's definition, the tactician had to purge himself of winnings due to lack of territory, and this factor emerged as key to understanding the operations of the peddlers. One peddler, 'Mr C', told me how he would collect whatever was going now that he had secured a small space in a derelict building in which to store things. This meant instead of having to cycle out to the markets in the suburbs every evening to sell his waste in order to clear his cart for the next day, he could decide which market to go to and when, based

on what he knew was selling well that week. Despite this advantage, the storage space was still not large or secure enough for him to be able to stockpile and he had to purge himself of his waste and convert it into cash every couple of days. When I asked him whether I could see the place he stored his waste, he seemed disinclined, smiling awkwardly and pointing vaguely back towards a derelict building.

Another peddler, a farmer from Hebei province, had added side walls to his cycle-cart fashioned from thick bits of cardboard and secured by bending them under weighty objects at their base and tying them around with nylon tape. Thanks to the enclosure these walls provided, he was able to pile his findings higher than if he simply had to balance them, and could collect more. However, when I commented on the effectiveness of his contraption he smiled and shook his head, explaining that it was only useful today: 'Tomorrow' he said, 'the rain will come down and wash it all away - so I will start again.' Sure enough, the next day provided a constant heavy drizzle which turned cardboard to papier maché and certainly would have seen the walls of his cart crumple into sogginess. It was not only his collections which could not be stockpiled, but even the 'tool' of his trade - his cart - which was effectively a constantly evolving bricolage object, requiring daily repair as various parts wore out or it became necessary to sell them. (Figure 6)

This practice of bricolage relates directly to de Certeau's use of the term when describing how tactics, unlike strategies, take what is available and make use of it in alternative ways (1984: 30-37). Similarly, Levi Strauss' classic distinction between the bricoleur and the engineer does something similar, suggesting that the bricoleur must make do with what is at hand: 'a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project …' (1966:17). The engineer, by contrast, has tools and materials specifically conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. Crucially for Levi-Strauss, what this means is that the bricoleur's projects cannot be counted by counting his 'instrumental sets' (1966:17). However, he also suggests that, due to his narrow set of tools, effectively a 'collection of oddments left over from human endeavours' (1966:19), the bricoleur is inclined to remain within the constraints imposed by his civilization; whereas the engineer 'questions the universe' and 'is always trying to … go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization …' (1966:19). This is simultaneously to de-accentuate both the

affect a lack of material goods can have on action, and the bricoleur's demonstration of how he precisely *is* attempting to 'go beyond' by engaging in bricolage in the first place. Whether he manages this within the constraints experienced, and with such limited resources, is an issue separate to that of their intention and one which will be picked up on in the conclusion.

To return to the issue of stockpiling: there were other reasons for not stockpiling which had more to do with social relations than ownership of space. For example family or clan groups from other provinces, especially those who worked on foot, often operated as groups and shared out their findings equally. Fights could sometimes break out if a member would not redistribute his findings amongst the others when asked to – stockpiling for oneself was unacceptable in these situations. I witnessed this on Nanjing road, the main shopping street of Shanghai, when a young peddler was harangued into handing over three soft drinks bottles he had just found in a bin, by the older members of his group. He had seemed driven, angry at his situation, less resigned than the others, and when he moved off to forage in another bin they had stared after him, one woman gently shaking her head. (Figures 7 and 8)

Similarly, in Hangzhou I had wandered through the outskirts with a group of five women, three of whom had lost their husbands in the last year, and two of whose husbands were too ill to work. They had explained to me how they shared everything they found. It was the only way they felt they could all stay afloat. They had formed a system of communal support, which not only meant no one person had a worse day than any other, but that also they were a stronger force when bargaining for higher prices per bottle at the waste markets. These tactics of the peddlers and the 'cracks' they found to operate in, were however coming under increasing threat from the ambitions of politicians and planners determined to display that which represented the 'new' China, and hide anything reminiscent of the 'chaotic' old days, in the run up to the 2010 Shanghai Expo. Cracks were being papered over at tremendous speed and Zhabei found itself caught in the midst of a determined desire to clean up and Westernize.

The Expo has guaranteed millions of dollars of foreign direct investment (FDI) and provoked an ambitious plan on the part of the Shanghai authorities, keen to prove themselves following the success of the Beijing Olympics. As a result the whole of central Shanghai is undergoing massive regeneration and artists' impressions of this redevelopment show Western-style mock-Tudor family homes, surrounded by trees and green areas. (Figure 9) Standing watching the boys

playing cards in front of the gaping, half-demolished facades of the houses behind, it is hard to imagine this quarter, or indeed any of Shanghai's sprawling inner-city areas, becoming visions of mock-Tudor plenty.

So, in the run up to this regeneration much of Zhabei is simply being allowed to crumble. Furthermore, the peddlers are largely 'illegal' internal migrants from rural Chinese provinces, so do not technically exist as far as the authorities are concerned. Under the Household Registration System, Chinese citizens are registered according to their home province and given rural or urban 'hukou'. The roots of hukou stem back to Ancient China, to 2100BC, when the Huji system was in place. However, in its present form, it was introduced by the communist party in 1958, as an attempt to control the movements of workers. This became especially important during the 1980s, following the opening up of the Special Economic Zones by Deng Xiao Ping.

The opening up policies created the necessity for a fine balance in maintaining the required population mobility in order that enough, but not too much, cheap rural labour could migrate to the cities. As Michael Dutton explains, this was achieved by introducing the notion of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' travel, in order that the authorities could recreate the semblance of order without jeopardizing the necessary flow of labour (2005: 274). A two-pronged policy during the early eighties saw the Household Registration system loosened to allow the resident identity card system, and a contemporaneous re-investment in shelter and Investigation Centres to crack down on transients. By the 1990's, these centres had come under scrutiny from Western human rights groups who successfully lobbied for their abolition, which occurred in 1996 (Dutton, 2005: 274-289). However, a form of the Household Registration System (albeit one far more concerned with the economic needs for certain groups of workers) exists today and renders many rural migrants 'illegal', creating a tier of society with no rights to formal employment, housing, or social security. Recently there have been widespread reforms to loosen the restrictions on internal migration in order to open up the spending power of rural populations, but their affect remains largely to be seen.)

At first glance, the Expo appears to be concerned with a cleaner, greener Shanghai, placing emphasis on speed and efficiency - fast infrastructural links, rapid information and the potential this brings for more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the desired shift from manufacturing to service and information industries. However, it also has cultural ambitions. The Expo slogan

'better city, better life', is becoming increasingly prevalent across Shanghai's billboards, and comes complete with cartoon mascot 'Haibao' (derived from si hai zhi bao – 'treasure of the sea': hai = 'sea', as in Shang-*hai*.) Haibao's message to the Shanghainese is one of promoting the quality of urban existence and improving and enhancing 'wenming'. Wenming has been a problematic word in Chinese culture as it translates as 'western/civilized', from old Japanese. After 1949 its meaning shifted to denote general 'manners' rather than 'western' behaviour, although its usage in the Expo campaign seems to have re-gained some of the old connotations. Haibao enhances wenming by teaching the Shanghainese to avoid doing things the 'international community' (by which is meant Europe and the US) may find uncouth, such as spitting, slurping food, or not queueing. He can frequently be found on screens in the back of taxis conducting a quiz with questions such as 'Which European country does spaghetti traditionally come from?' (Figure 10)

Haibao is part of a literal and cultural 'clean-up' which will see certain spaces in Shanghai temporarily banished or permanently erased, to be smoothed and covered over with newly created spaces. The peddlers, with their barrows, are seen as the image of old China - antiquated, trundling, festering, and subsumed in intricate networks of allegiances based on clan and favours rather than merit. Just as the Beijing peddlers were banished to the suburbs during the Olympics, so their Shanghai counterparts will undergo the same restrictions during the Expo, although because the authorities recognise that their presence is actually crucial to the cleanliness and efficacy of the city, some will be given uniforms, temporary state contracts and equipment for the duration of the Expo. In the longer term, following the razing of their derelict quarters, their expulsion from central Shanghai will of course be permanent. Some may return home, others will simply be pushed further out and make the long cycle-ride in, in order to collect waste.

What is of particular interest here is the way that the peddlers' roles are acknowledged as useful, but their appearance and the spaces they occupy are unacceptable to the authorities in their attempts to prove Shanghai's 'world city' status. This often means that spaces with specific practical uses give way to spaces that connote strong *impressions* of success but as yet have little practical use. In other words, these symbols of success - such as green spaces, family homes, fountains - are deemed to have greater 'use value' than places which handle material things.

'Production' in the run up to the Expo is the production of spaces which provide the necessary images for the West; it is production in the sense furthest removed from actual labour.

This sense of a 'visual' with little reality behind it is picked up on by Huang Yaseng, who argues that the 'Shanghai Miracle' is largely 'assumed' and based on the visual rather than actual living conditions and quality of life (2008:176). He blames this mirage of a miracle on the 'Shanghai model', formulated between 1985 and 1990, and in particular the development programme of 1987, which established key mechanisms intended to leapfrog Shanghai to global city status. These were, firstly, the internationalization of the economy, based on advanced technology and global brands, and secondly, the elimination of all features considered to be 'backward' (2008: 213-214).

Although it may not have been directly intended as such, the 1987 programme was a precursor to the anti-rural bias and small-scale entrepreneurship of the 1990's. Attempts to internationalize saw all urban planning decisions centralized, and the government, as a monopoly buyer, requisition vast tracts of the Pudong area (then farm land) from rural households, compensating them at below-market prices. The land-use rights were then sold to commercial property developers at market prices, and the futuristic skyscrapers of the Pudong, representing global finance, emerged, creating Shanghai's iconic skyline and securing its place as a global player. Attempts to eliminate the 'backward', saw the closure of small and informal market activities: again the concern was with how such places 'looked', as opposed to how healthy they were for the economic or social life of the city.

> '… to the urban technocrats eager to project their city as an ultra-modern metropolis, these messy marketplaces represented not income-earning opportunities for rural merchants but rather unorganized, unlicensed, and unsightly activities to be stamped out' (Huang, 2008:214).

According to Huang, what lay behind the (in his view, false) 'Shanghai miracle', were features a-typical of what was happening in the rest of China: a heavy-handed state intervention, a blatant anti-rural bias, and a liberalization which privileged FDI whilst discriminating against indigenous capitalists. This meant that whilst GDP per capita in Shanghai made it look rich in comparison with other large cities and rural provinces, the wealth was siphoned off in the form of government taxes, and tended to be in the hands of large foreign companies or state-owned

enterprises (2008: 177-178). It is telling that the now highly successful *alibaba.com*[42], whose business model is based on *agglomeration* rather than vertical integration, left Shanghai in the late 1990s, preferring to base itself in neighbouring Zhejiang province. This said, there may be some truth in an argument which suggests that certain features of Shanghai's development, such as the privileging of FDI in the face of indigenous capitalists, is simply a legacy of colonial relations which split Shanghai into its 'concessions', and created its present business ties.

Despite the politics of hiding and display, Shanghai is a city of antithetical spaces, which, it likes to suggest, bear no relevance to each other, but which in reality, although problematic for each other at times, are locked into a mutually parasitical relationship. What the foreign investment will effectively do is remove the signs of both decay and surplus waste from the inner city areas, allowing them to function as 'showcases' for profitable enterprise in Shanghai, and attract more direct foreign investment (DFI) into China-based companies. The acceptable excess, in the form of profit, will be able to be viewed without being obscured by the unacceptable excess – waste - as the waste-excess will have been geographically removed. Peddlers will have been evicted to the 'invisible' suburbs; those who remain in central Shanghai will be state employees, with uniforms, hourly wages and tax receipts. Waste will officially be state property as soon as it comes into existence (i.e. is trashed), rather than being a free resource. Effectively, it will have been privatised in a manner not dissimilar to that which Dominique Laporte (1993) depicts as happening in seventeenth century Paris, viz. the extensive re-arranging of the urban environment and efforts by the authorities to remove waste from the city in order to purify it and return it as gold (1993: 28-31).

In many ways Shanghai's ability to continue to develop its infrastructure, despite its spaces of waste, presents a contrast to Mike Davis's case study of the Hyperion sewerage system in Los Angeles, in *City of Quartz* (1992). As Davis reveals, when the Hyperion system broke down in May 1987, causing millions of gallons of waste to flood into Santa Monica Bay, it was due to 'growth wars between homeowners and developers' being 'fought within the limits of a collapsing infrastructure' (1992: 198). Population growth brought the entire system to the brink

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[42] *alibaba.com* is the brain child of celebrity businessman Jack Ma. The ali group comprises of alibaba.com (a business-to-business website linking wholesale buyers to Chinese manufacturers), alipay (an online payment service necessary in China where credit and debit cards are still not widespread), taobao.com (a Chinese version of e-bay, where, in keeping with cultural norms, buyers and sellers haggle the price down), and alitrust (a scheme under which trusted third parties verify the reliability and credentials of buyers and sellers on alibaba.com.)

of collapse; even the flood capacity basin could not be used as the increase in ground area covered over with tarmac had heightened the risk of flood, with the result that the facility was needed for its original purpose. Therefore, the mayor had no choice but to relinquish his usual pro-growth stance and join slow-growth activists by accepting an environmental review of all major developments. This resulted in a monthly cap being put on all new construction due to the lack of sewer capacity. The cap applied not only to LA, but also to the other thirty municipalities contracting its sewer treatment facilities. Anyone pumping more sewerage than their quota allowed into the LA system, was faced with a total growth freeze (1992: 200). Far from returning waste in the form of gold as Shanghai does, LA was forced to live amongst the very waste that itself was hindering, if not curtailing completely, the flow of gold.

In Shanghai, the removal of material waste corresponds to the desired shift from manufacturing to service and information industries - the manufacturing sector being moved further out of city centres. However, with the manufacturing sector being the guarantor of China's success for the middle-term, and the necessity therefore of raw materials, the unacceptable waste-excess will remain indispensible. So too, in fact increasingly so, will the consumption that creates it. Profit will continue to be built on waste; the 'success' of the new China on the so-called 'failures' of the spaces that represent an older China. The cord that ties the two will simply have been planted over with the green turf and evergreen shrubs of an Anglo-American suburban dream.

ii) The Function of 'Failures'

If Zhabei is a place struggling to continue its operations in the face of imminent visibility, and 'visitability' to use Bella Dicks' (2003) term, then the Shanghai municipal dump is one strictly out of bounds to the visitor. The taxi driver says he will not go any closer and he cannot wait long. It would be difficult for him to explain to anyone official why he was showing a Western visitor something as tourist-unfriendly as Shanghai's municipal dump. He has told me strictly 'no photo', and he still thinks I am a journalist. I stare out through the dusty car window. At first there is nothing to see but a vast expanse of half-rotting matter; a decay-scape that refuses to decay. I am reminded of the strangeness of scenes in which human-made matter takes on the appearance of 'natural' phenomena, as in Jennifer Baichwal's film *Manufactured Landscapes*[43]

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[43] Baichwal's film documents the work of the photographer Ed Burtynsky whose photographs feature landscapes of areas transformed by human activity.

(2007). The sea-gulls are un-ignorable even from here; up close they must be deafening. Then, as my eyes begin to focus, a small line appears in the mid-distance; a line of carefully balanced pieces of corrugated iron, attached to wooden posts with matted bits of rope, the gaps filled by bits of crate or plastic. Assemblages of waste: homes to migrant waste collectors. I roll down the window a tiny bit, just enough to know how bad the stench would be if one were in amongst it. It would be suffocating. In the far distance, a digger moves into action, sending the seagulls temporarily into the air, before they eagerly re-settle to pick apart the new offerings.

The Shanghai dump is officially managed by the French company Onyx and, due to China's draft 'circular economy' law (often wrongly translated as 'recycling economy' or 'sustainable economy'), it is legally obliged to separate recyclable waste from landfill. Therefore, 'employees' from 'recycling factories' (often with uniforms and some sort of official 'front') are tolerated by the official contractors, as they are easily visible and aid Onyx in reaching their quota of recycled waste. However, relations with the informal, unstructured and un-measurable independent waste collectors are fraught. These groups live on the dump itself, are frequently hostile to each other due to their differing clans and, having no uniform, are difficult to see. Onyx openly admits injuries have arisen from large machinery suddenly moving into action unaware of the presence of waste collectors.

Back in central Shanghai, a peddler had explained how when he first came to Shanghai he had lived on the dump for a few weeks, but it was too dangerous for him on his own. The machinery did not see him and the other peddler groups viewed him with suspicion. He explains though, that working there had taught him how to sort waste very quickly, and how to know how valuable it is. He says he can tell by feeling a plastic bottle between his fingers for a few seconds, whether or not it is 'virgin plastic' – the most valuable type – or whether it is already second or third grade.

<p style="text-align:center">***********</p>

Theory has, on the whole, written out the function of places such as these, defining them solely as rabellais-esque chaos, hellish examples of end-games. Indeed, anthropological writers often have a tendency to dwell on the fascinating vileness of dump sites – Gunter Grass's *Show Your Tongue* being a typical example. As Hutnyk suggests, Grass's writing seems to be almost

cathartic, as if he is putting himself through an ordeal in order to release something within himself (1996:104). It bothers Hutnyk that Grass posits himself as narrator in the position of being the first-ever western visitor, describing the city (in this case Calcutta) as a 'crumbling, scabby, swarming city, this city which eats its own excrement (Grass, 1977: 181). My concern is not only with the representation of such places as fascinating hells, but also with the lack of analysis as to the role they play as hellish failures – both economically and symbolically.

Whilst their material conditions are of course hellish, to accept them as 'failures', without understanding how their presence feeds other successes, is to misunderstand the necessity of escape-valves in capitalistic chains. Such 'failures' are crucial, because they allow the fall-out to fall out. Their existence is critical to the success of the city and indeed the wider manufacturing industry. Peddler's waste allows factories to gain access to cheap raw materials which they would otherwise have to buy from China's waste importers at much greater cost. As Lefebvre argues, 'dysfunctions … are remarkable in that they stimulate functions and functionaries alike' (2008[1961]: 65) For him it is the combination of failure and what has been won prior to failure that is important; this is the onward movement of an event 'through the murky thickness of everyday life', and it is the quality of the failure that that is more significant than having failed. 'Could not successes sometimes be the worst failures?' he asks (2008[1961]: 66) Or, as John Urry argues in *Global Complexity,* 'what is in the network is useful and necessary for its existence' (2003:9) and in this he includes the existence of so-called 'failures'.

The idea of there being function in aberration has arguably been touched upon by the idea of unintended consequences. However, this stops short of explaining how side-effects could be *systematic* to the network. What Urry sets out towards, through his theory of complexity, is a way of perceiving networks in which success and failure are intrinsically linked. Complexity, for Urry, is a system that is neither perpetually anarchic, nor well-ordered and moving towards equilibrium, but one in which the global is simply not a single centre of power (2003: x). It emphasizes diverse time-space paths, unpredictable patterns, and disproportionalities between causes and effects (2003: 7-8). Viewed in this way '… complexity can illuminate how social life is always a significant mixture of achievement and failure' (2003: 13).

What is key to this understanding of failure however - an aspect that Urry does not mention - is the way in which this relationship between success and failure requires *collateral damage* to be

written in to the fabric of commodity chains. Collateral damage has been conceptualized as 'externalities', or overflows, and whilst sociologists have tended to see these as the norm, economists have been concerned with 'framing' and have therefore seen externalities as simply a rare and expensive outcome. The emphasis for economists is not one of moral grounds, but of efficiency and resource allocation. This has strange similarities with Lefebvre's thought on uneven development: the key difference is not (as is often supposed) that one is a moral project, the other economic, but rather that the resource allocation for economists is structured by quantitative growth, whereas for Lefebvre the determining factor ought to be the need for resources in order to create qualitative growth.

Whilst for Callon, analyzing in purely financial economic terms, the only issue behind externalities is that, whether positive or negative, they render the market (at least partially) inefficient, because they are responsible for a gap between private marginal income and marginal social costs (1998: 247). Externalities mean the market as a whole is not able to operate at its maximum as somewhere costs must be picked up, disabling certain players. Furthermore, in order to be framed, overflows must be made measurable, thus, according to Callon, by allowing each agent to calculate interests and express them, transactions can take place, resulting in a 'robust and legitimate' re-allocation of resources (1998: 256). Of course what this assumes is that those agents express their interests honestly and/or that those in positions of decision-making, make decisions fairly – one can hardly leap to the conclusion that the resulting resource allocation will be robust and legitimate!

Collateral damage, and its historical variants, is specifically capitalist in the context of commodity chains and can be traced back to Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* and Adam Smith's core argument that the success of the few would improve life for the many; or to phrase it more pertinently for our argument here, whilst the success of the few created collateral damage for some, the whole would be lifted. So, whilst it is necessary to recognise how failures work to enable capitalistic chains, it is equally necessary to understand that this collateral damage is a phenomenon specific and *essential* to capitalism.

What an understanding of the necessity of 'failures' does, is to question a whole range of simplistic binary oppositions which become bound up in the same dialogue. In the case of the £1 chain (and indeed the wider discourse regarding Europe and China), along with 'success' and

'failure', comes cleanliness/dirt, visible (visitable)/hidden, organisation/chaos, and lastly, use/waste.

These binary oppositions are held in place across a surprising range of academic thinkers from differing perspectives. The idea of the remainder has been imbued with a sinister, negative edge, returning in all its horrific Freudian reality. For Georges Bataille (1991), this constant remainder or 'accursed share', could only be successfully re-invested on a small scale and therefore on a global scale must be 'squandered'(1991: 10). This global view required Bataille's notion of a 'general economy' within which waste excess can only be turned to profit-excess in specific small scenarios, because systems can only grow up to a point and cannot completely absorb all the excess in that growth. So, for Bataille, excess energy, or 'wealth', must eventually be lost without profit, or as he puts it, 'spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically' (1991: 21).

According to Bataille therefore, it is this inability of mankind to 'increase equipment' and the impossibility of continuing growth that makes way for squander. This impossibility is related to lack of space: as pressure on space increases, extension (expansion) results, but this new space is immediately filled. 'The limit of growth being reached, life, without being in a closed container, at least enters into ebullition: without exploding, its extreme exuberance pours out in a movement always bordering on explosion' (1991: 30). Because space-making cannot continue ad infinitum, it is the short-termism of space-making which results in catastrophe: 'Humanity exploits given material resources, but by restricting them as it does to a resolution of the *immediate* (my italics) difficulties it encounters … it assigns to the forces it employs an end which they cannot have' (1991: 21). Thus Bataille sees waste as unavoidable, the question is how to spend this excess in positive ways, and how to even up the pressures of waste so that there are not areas of the world striving for growth, whilst others are struggling with the products of growth.

> 'A typical problem of the general economy emerges from this situation. On the one hand, there appears the need for an exudation; on the other hand, the need for growth. The present state of the world is defined by the unevenness of the (quantitative and qualitative) pressure exerted by human life.' (1991: 39)

Whilst Bataille[44] insists waste, finally, once at the point of ebullition, can only be squandered, the classical economic view is that we do not reach ebullition, as waste is turned into profit. Both, in very different ways, are strangely emotional accounts, one wallowing in the glorious filth of waste, the other in a dogmatic, zealous mission to be the hero that cleans it up and makes it useful. Both conceive of waste and non-waste as fundamentally different entities which, for the classic economists, must be linked together if efficiency is to be gained. Neither account chooses to see waste and non-waste as simply different sides of the same coin.

So the separation of waste from non-waste is written deeply into the fabric of political and academic theory (and across a range of perspectives) which has operated largely out of a concern with sifting through the 'waste' in order to find the 'truth' or the most useful bits. John Scanlon's (2005) thoughts on western philosophy and his support of a philosophy of fragments and detritus such as that practiced by Walter Benjamin is useful in further explaining this argument. He argues that modern philosophy from around the seventeenth century onwards, is a history of the disposal and tidying away of waste, a 'sweeping away the debris that lies on the territory of reason' (2005: 61). He cites this as stemming from the break between Plato's order and that of the pre-Socratics, in particular Heraclitus's[45] ideas of flux and the world as a beautiful heap of rubbish. This break is further sealed by Kant, for whom, according to Scanlon, it is from a kind of disposal that meaning, or value, emerged as the part retained (2005: 8). Following Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the human is further separated from nature; therefore knowledge is separated from garbage and decay is no longer part of existence as Heraclitus would have us believe (2005: 75).

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[44] Despite coming into only indirect contact with Lefebvre, both Bataille and Benjamin were influenced by his work. In the case of Bataille, what quite possibly kept them apart was the former's critique of the Surrealists (although later on Lefebvre may have agreed with him). Furthermore, whilst Lefebvre always leaned more towards Tzara, Bataille, despite going through a critical period, became a firm comrade of Breton. Benjamin was a member of Bataille's informal 'College de Sociologie' and at points was much closer to Lefebvre's Marxist allegiences; indeed the Frankfurt School's Marxism was much closer to that of Lefebvre's. Benjamin enthusiastically read Lefebvre's *La Conscience Mystifiee,* probably enjoying its mix of mysticism and materialism. However, this same mysticism meant that at points Bataille was very much more 'Marxist' than Benjamin.

[45] Heraclitus wrote one single book - *On Nature* - which largely consisted of aphorisms, including the most famous 'everything flows', 'you cannot step into the same river twice' and 'the fairest cosmos is a rubbish heap piled up haphazardly.' These were typical of his view of existence as constant flux, in constant creation and constant decay, and earned him a reputation as the philosopher of 'becoming' rather than 'being'. Heraclitus renounced the binary law of Milesian philosophy which posited objects as either in full existence or not existing at all, and proposed a state of existing that could be both 'on' and 'off'.

In contrast, what Scanlon advocates is a return to seeing waste as part of knowledge, or at least as providing an insight into existing knowledge, in order to follow a Benjaminian method where letters and fragments are examined in order to reveal the waste of knowledge- the parts thrown away (2005: 79). For him, knowledge is actually recycled debris, rather than the 'cleaned' part of a whole, the other half of which has been disposed of (2005: 69). The suggestion here is that waste has a part in the present - pure history is hell, but so is no history. Perhaps Benjamin recognised this with his concept of the historical in the present as necessary to wake us; the 'out-moded' commodities of the arcades contained the ability to wake Europe from her 'dream sleep' (2002). Certainly the notion of the discarded fragment as useful for the bringing into consciousness of necessary ideas is particularly potent here: the philosopher/rag-picker as described in Irving Wohlfarth's essay on Benjamin - 'The Historian as Chiffonier'. The image of the rag-picker became, of course, an extended metaphor for poetic method and reflected what Benjamin saw himself and Siegfried Kracauer as engaged in - the Arcades Project sought to pick up the refuse of history. His description of the character, however, could equally describe a scavenger on the Shanghai municipal dump.

I would also argue that Benjamin's idea of the rag-picker as history-in-the-present was linked to his concept of the 'Angelus Novus'[46] – the character blown backward into the future with the wake of history's debris stretching away from him. And in many ways the treatment of the waste peddler in current Chinese culture suggests a similar understanding of a character somehow from, or working with the remnants from, a past age. The figure is understood as somehow out-moded, out of place in the technocratic present; part of an older, dirtier, poorer, less developed China.

John Frow makes a point allied to Scanlon's, arguing that waste is the 'degree zero of value, or it is the opposite of value, or it is whatever stands in excess of value systems grounded in use', yet it is something from which money can still be made (2003: 21). This potential value can, however, only be gained by the movement of that waste (2003: 29). Here Frow is drawing upon Michael Thompson's concept of value as an effect of the circulation of objects between regimes

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[46] Interestingly, in his book on Lefebvre, Rob Shields questions whether Lefebvre might be a Angelus Novus figure, 'condemned to be a powerless bystander at key historical moments, at which he is caught off-guard and to which he has no adequate response and too slow a reaction time to intervene in' (1999: 4). Personally, my feeling is that he recognised the power available to one who always remained not quite the leader or figurehead and that his preference was to create momentum before passing the baton.

of value; a circulation which can be driven either by wastefulness (valuable matter being turned into waste), or by the reverse process (Thomson, 1979). Clearly, it is the movement, the ability to mutate, that gives a value to waste, but what factors determine and motivate this transformation?

For Stephen Gudeman the answer is innovation. In his *Anthropology of Economy*, waste is given a kind of innate creativity, the ability to be turned into profit, to gain value, not through squander, or privatisation (necessarily), but through the ability of humans to innovate. Gudeman sees this is as an argument against classic economic accounts which, in his view, do not explain imperfect competition, monopolies or accumulation. For him, it is not simply the balancing of endowments and satisfactions, in other words efficiency, which creates growth, but the turning of accumulated stuff, or 'waste', into profit, through innovation (2001: 95). There are some useful points to be gleaned from Gudeman's thinking when considering the £1 commodity chain and its reliance upon waste and disposability.

Firstly, seeing growth as emerging from the transformation of waste-excess, joins waste and profit as two sides of the same entity, or as two results and potentials of linked processes. This thinking provides a distinct alternative to the 'periphery' versus 'core' models mentioned in the introduction. This enables us to better understand disposability by taking waste out of the purely economic and begin to pick apart how it operates within social contexts. For example, within the £1 commodity chain, the £1 object confers upon its owner the ability to easily dispose of what is no longer wanted or needed without guilt, due to its 'low value'. The £1 object carries a desire to squander on the part of the consumer, to feel that one can afford to squander, a feeling perhaps not dissimilar to the 'prestations' Mauss speaks of. To be able to squander, enables a feeling of wealth. The awareness of the £1 commodity as almost-already-waste, creates a feeling of 'wealth' (or at least spending-ability within that context) for the consumer, precisely because to be able to waste signifies wealth. So, for the individual consumer, the £1 commodity operates to increase a feeling of wealth. But, on a theoretical level, it seeps into the way we perceive a link between waste and profit. We can waste as we have spending power, we have spending power because we waste.

Secondly, Gudeman sees the innovator as part of a 'thick historical stream' through which he 'draws together traces and leavings from others … and from himself … [and] makes up an historical trajectory or personal 'style'… Through the use of traces of himself, the innovator

creates a way of doing, indexed in an object or service, that becomes a model for others' (2001: 147). This is to perceive the peddler not only as an innovator, but also as having more awareness of his or her position in the chain than purely economic accounts would give. (And certainly we can see how this is the case for the peddler in China, where peddling has a long legacy, connotations of honesty and hard work, and even some famous success stories – peddlers such as Wang Jinglian who have become CEO's of large steel companies. However, Gudeman bases his argument on a Schumpetarian notion of innovation and, despite twisting it to his own purposes, does not seem wholly to repudiate Schumpeter's classical liberal model in which *only* capitalism, and in particular institutions of credit, can form the backdrop for innovation (Schumpeter, 1954).[47]

For Gudeman, (as for Schumpeter), capitalism creates innovation, even if it is acknowledged that this innovation sometimes comes about as a result of hardship: this hardship is seen quintessentially as an opportunity rather than an injustice. Gudeman does not tackle unevenness in wealth or development; indeed for him an uneven terrain breeds the creativity necessary for innovation. Capitalism is therefore inextricably linked to creativity, siphoning it off as an exclusive territory of the market, and uneven development is excused as a necessary prerequisite. Although certainly a more anthropological form of economics, Gudeman's remains fundamentally concerned with the (economic) efficacy of the market; his thinking revolves entirely around understanding how people make sense of and cope with what the market throws at them, rather than how it impacts unfairly upon them.

Lefebvre too is concerned with inventiveness, but states clearly that it is a product of the everyday, *not* of the market. For him inventiveness is born of the everyday and confirmed within it, largely due the way in which it involves a wager and a risk of setback (2008 [1961]:240) – again, we see here Lefebvre's vision of tactics themselves linked to making (possibly the wrong) choices. However, his use of the word 'échec' for setback, simply (and perhaps unsubtly) translated as 'loss' in the English version, is telling. 'Echec' is set-back or defeat and is

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[47] Schumpeter's belief, as outlined in his most famous work *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1954), is that the success of capitalism will lead to a form of corporatism and a fostering of values hostile to capitalism, especially among intellectuals. His primary concern was to point out the flawed project of socialism, but fearing that socialists would not read it and therefore not realize the futility of their aims if it appeared to favour capitalism, Schumpeter wrote it in a way that appears sympathetic to socialism.

connected to its secondary meaning which is the game of chess (les échecs) or to be in check-mate (être en échec). This is important as for Lefebvre choices do not lead to 'loss' pure and simple, but rather to failures from which successes arise or dialectical relationships between areas of success and failure emerge. So 'invention', whilst risky, at worst sets one back a while.

iii) Consumptive Thrift: The Link Between Waste and Profit

So far, this chapter has attempted to argue for a theoretical paradigm in which waste is not seen as the binary opposite of non-waste, both in terms of thought processes and material situations. I have argued this in the case of the £1 commodity chain as on the ground scenarios make it clear that not only is waste turned to profit (products are made from waste materials), but that to a large extent, witnessed literally and in national policies, this is a cyclical process. Waste creates raw materials used to create profit; but profit must be spent on consuming things in order to create more waste. Thus, non-waste is already ear-marked as waste before it is trashed; its raison d'etre is, increasingly, that it will be consumed and expire, so as to be consumed again: consumption suddenly emerges now as the key element in understanding the tactic of disposability. Yet the patterns of this consumption are not straightforward; they have differing cultural ways of operating, meanings and implications. The following section attempts to explain the complicated ways in which consumption operates differently at different points along the £1 commodity chain, making the chain as a whole schizoid in its attitude. Whilst some parts of the chain accumulate money, others accumulate things; some parts save to spend, others spend to save. The notion that, strangely, unites the two and serves to unpack consumption along the £1 chain, is thrift.

Saving to spend…

As the plane takes off the girl next to me gently rustles the bag nestled between her feet, eager to explore its contents. She looks about twenty, but it is difficult to tell. She wears some fashionably distressed jeans and a sports top. This is the flight from Shanghai to Kunming, the provincial capital of rural Yunnan province in South-West China. I am the only non-Chinese face on board. Once we have reached our cruising height the girl leans down and pulls the bag onto her lap, opening it and taking out a blue Adidas zip-up top, a pale pink t-shirt with the

words 'cool life' scrawled on it in glittery silver, and a Hello Kitty pencil case. She holds each of the things in front of her, examining them from different angles, turning them over in her hands, and feeling their insides and edges. Her face is at times tense, as if fearing potential regret at her own error of judgement or taste in buying them, and at times serene. Finally, seeming pleased with her purchases, she turns to me and smiles, asking where I am from: 'Meiguo?' I reply that I am not American, but Yinguo – English. 'Ah, Yinguo! David Beckham, Big Ben, Red Bus', she reels off gleefully, referring to the UK's Olympic hand-over ceremony celebrations.

She informs me that nearly everyone on the flight is returning from shopping trips to Shanghai. I look around. It certainly looks as though most people have at least one glossy carrier bag. 'It's expensive to fly though isn't it?' I ask. 'Yes. Quite expensive, but they don't have much holiday, so the train takes too long'. Here, as elsewhere across the globe, time has come to mean money. 'What do they buy?' I ask. She says it's mainly clothes and presents, things they cannot find as easily in Yunnan, such as Western designer labels. She explains that this is probably a rare trip to Shanghai for most of them and they would have saved money especially for it. As we disembark from the plane at Kunming, I watch the long line of Chinese make their way across the tarmac, clutching their shiny bags, and shielding their faces against the driving drizzle. At the terminal building, they seem to suddenly and quietly disperse, getting into dusty, patched-up cars, strangely at odds with the glossy commercialism of their purchases.

These are the rural inhabitants that the Chinese government is so keen to encourage to spend, hoping it can unlock their spending power in order to create new demand for China's products and so maintain economic growth. Its attempts to do this involve a wide group of policy changes, the aim of which is to remove urban discrimination against rural migrants in the areas of employment, welfare, and social security, giving the one-third plus of China's population who are rural migrants equal rights to urban residents. While this will not involve the disbandment of the Household Registration System, which has traditionally been and continues to be blamed for the inequality between rural and urban Chinese, it will see it substantially relaxed in various situations. The intention is to create a burgeoning wealth amongst a migratory group of rural Chinese; effectively a reserve army of consumers, who can soak up the over-production necessary if China is to continue developing at such a pace, especially since EU and US demand has fallen following the global recession.

Due to this vigorous campaign on the part of the authorities, it is in rural provinces such as Yunnan that the iron rice bowl[48] most incongruously meets the plastic credit card. Unsurprisingly, the reserve army of consumers are not as easily mobilized as might have been hoped. Firstly, there is no guarantee that unlocking rural populations' spending power will mean they buy Chinese goods (as is anecdotally evidenced by the numbers of Western labels on display amongst the consumers on the plane). Secondly, the cultural attitudes of generations of Chinese in regard to the necessity to save cannot be undone overnight or without evidence of serious welfare reform. Despite the demise of the iron rice bowl, it is far from the case that a credit culture has been able to pervade. In fact, what reigns is a rather awkward transition, a kind of power-sharing arrangement between Maoist and capitalist dreams, in which the lack of iron rice bowl causes careful saving, rather than reliance upon credit. Consumption becomes the careful spending of careful saving.

This preoccupation with saving on the part of individuals is mirrored by state policy towards foreign reserves and in each case has become known as 'Asian thrift'. The term is one often used in a derogatory way by Western economic commentators; indeed following the global financial crisis many even suggested it was to blame. The (il)logic went something as follows: China's inclination to save, on both a governmental and individual level, has led to a global savings glut. This in turn, led to the US national current account deficit, which meant the US had to find new and 'innovative' ways to lend domestically. This came in the form of sub-prime mortgages, which led to the credit crunch. If China had not saved as much, the US would not be in so much debt, and would not have been 'forced' to make mistakes. 'Made in China' is not only to be found stamped on the side of washing machines, but also firmly embossed on the rear-end of the global financial crisis. It is therefore China's responsibility to spend, in order to save us all.

… and spending to save

Passing through the doorway of the pound store a woman who looks to be in her late twenties slowly intakes her breath and exclaims to her friend, 'Oh I could go mad in here!' The friend replies that she only has 'a tenner' (a ten pound note), to which she responds, 'Yes, but that's all

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[48] 'Iron rice bowl' (*tiefanwan*) is a colloquial term for the Maoist notion of the social guarantee (*baoxialai*), which saw workers placed within a unit which provided them with all that was necessary for daily survival, including food. The phrase was meant in the sense that we would use the expression 'cast iron guarantee'.

I need to go mad in here isn't it!' Later, I speak to Tracey, who tells me she sometimes goes to a particular pound store with her children on a 'mini-spree'. 'I tell them we have fifteen pounds between us all, so we can each pick five whole things and put them in the basket. It's such fun because you feel you can throw caution to the wind a little and that you are choosing little treats for yourself in a quite extravagant way, only it's not extravagant 'cos we're only spending fifteen quid. And the kids love it, I think they feel it's so exciting to be able to choose five different things – five!' I ask why she thinks that feeling of being able to spend without having to think about the money too much is so pleasurable. 'I dunno, I s'pose it's just 'cos you feel in control. It's about power I s'pose, and you know, everyone likes spending, and people talk about what they buy and where they got it. And also, lots of the things I save money on, or they're two for one [meaning two items for the price of one] so I'm saving money when I shop in there.'

There are two interesting things about what Tracey says here. Firstly, she is fulfilling a now-classic marketing line of capitalism, which is that by spending, or even by spending more than you intended, you will save money. She believes herself to have made a saving if she makes purchasing choices she wouldn't normally make, based on the offers available, but even if she has made a genuine saving, she uses it to buy something else. In other words, Tracey is never really 'saving' money, she is simply finding ways to make it go further. She is spending to save in the more recent capitalistic sense; that is, she is a 'good capitalist' because she spends, not because she accrues what she saves in the form of capital.

Secondly, Tracey uses the pound store to give herself and her children a sense of being able to 'choose' things they desire as individuals – things that 'take their fancy' and that they therefore feel they are somehow attracted to or represented by. Accounts such as Tracey's can easily be interpreted as fitting neatly within the parameters laid out most recently by Daniel Miller's oeuvre which emphasizes the ways in which individuals feel they are expressing their self-identity through their consumptive choices. (As mentioned before, Miller posits his argument as one which fights for the individual to be perceived as having agency, in contrast to the 'out-dated' argument in which the consumer is seen to be at the behest of powerful market sirens.) However, in taking this stance he dismisses the way in which the market can only offer pre-determined choice to the consumer, so his or her 'self-identity' is only being expressed in ways pre-ordained by capitalism. Unfortunately this makes Miller's thinking easily hijack-able by neo-

liberal thinkers keen to team the words 'market' and 'choice' with others such as 'expression' and 'freedom'. If we followed this kind of argument to its logical end, we would paint Tracey as 'liberated', 'free from constraint', a person who's choice to create a 'treat' out of spending money in a pound store is a pure one, to no extent governed by necessity or struggle or simply the lack of other types of 'treat' that do not revolve around market relations.

iv) Conclusion

We have seen how the tactic of disposability relies upon a culture of hiding and display which belies the ways in which areas deemed to be 'failures' are intrinsic to the operations of the £1 commodity chain. This runs parallel to a general separation of waste and non-waste on the practical and theoretical level, which constitutes a tearing apart of reality and the images provided of 'reality' and thus denies the Hereclitian nature of the chain. Furthermore, we have seen how the speed with which something is disposed of after being consumed is crucial to the survival of the chain and how this curtailed existence of the object denies the ability to 'make do and mend', creating an enemy out of certain types of thrift. In fact the tactic of disposability uncovers how disposal denies bricolage in the same way that the tactic of immediacy revealed how possession denies entanglement: these two pairs are linked diametrically.

In many ways this quasi moralistic attitude towards thrift represents a subtle yet fundamental turn in capitalism's relationship with itself. Whilst our most recent economic history – that of allowing market logic to prevail (whether that be with the firm hand of the State or through laissez-faire policies) – stems from Augustine's idea that avarice could be commandeered to guard against other more detrimental passions; avarice and saving in some contexts has now returned to the original Aristotelian notion of the miser and come to be seen as unhelpful and selfish. Far from keeping other passions in check and therefore enabling the pursuit of wealth and an improvement in conditions for all, thrift is now seen as the sin of the miser on both global and individual levels. This is shown through complaints about China's foreign reserves and on the domestic level, through offers of 'two for the price of one' – economizing by spending, *not* saving. As Zizek says, '… the capitalist is no longer the lone Miser who clings to his hidden treasure, taking a secret peek at it when he is alone, behind securely locked doors, but the subject who accepts the basic paradox that the only way to preserve and multiply one's treasure is to

spend it' (2002: 43). 'Being thrifty' is now about spending, not saving, and consumption is put forward as its opposite – thrift: hence the disjuncture between the use of the word thrift to mean making inexpensive *purchases* and economizing (as in 'thrift store'), and the newer use of the word to mean precisely *not purchasing*, not spending (as in 'Asian thrift').

Consumption is emphasized in order to provide on-going economic growth, and due to its low price the £1 commodity must speed the gap between the satisfaction of needs (at the point of exchange) and desire (at the point of disposal). In the context of the £1 chain the importance of being wasteful in the presence of thrift cannot be over-emphasized: firstly to secure the continued increase in the number of exchange interactions and thus maintain economic growth, and secondly to create the waste materials necessary for manufacturing. A fast turn-around, that is, a high level of disposability, is crucial. Therefore a £1 commodity is not built to last, and this non-lasting is not only a physical property of the nature of the 'built-in obsolescence', as described by Packard in *The Waste Makers*, (1960) but a more psychologically-rooted property, conferred upon the commodity by its price-tag, which allows it to be trashed even when it continues to function. Function is reduced to fad in the case of the £1 commodity.

This reduction is related to what Bernard Stiegler calls 'the proletarianization of the consumer' (Crogan, 2010: 161). In an interview with Patrick Crogan, Stiegler interprets Marx's definition of the proletariat as not being about pauperization, but rather as resting upon the de-skilling of the worker – Marx describes the proletariat as a worker who had skills and savoir faire, but who has been dispossessed of them by the introduction of machines. Stiegler points out that this is also precisely what Adam Smith had said almost a century earlier in *The Wealth of Nations* (1991), but he had not made a political theory out of it. Similarly, Gilbert Simondon has called this de-skilling disindividuation, based on the logic that when individuation comes through the singular knowledge a person possesses, if this is taken away from them they are disindividualized (1954). For Stiegler, the same process of proletarianization that the worker experienced, has also now rendered the consumer less capable of knowing how to live (savoir vivre[49]):

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[49]The concept of 'savoir vivre' was first developed by Stiegler in the three volumes of his *Mécréance et Discrédit* (2004, 2006). These volumes outlined the way in which the industrial organisation of production and then consumption has had destructive consequences for the modes of life of human beings, in particular with the way in which the loss of *savoir-faire* and *savoir-vivre* (that is, the loss of the knowledge of how to do and how to live), has resulted in what Stiegler calls 'generalised proletarianisation'.

'…from the moment when marketing invents the service society…we see how the consumer is himself deprived of his savoir vivre. The producer was deprived of his skills or abilities (savoir faire), the consumer is deprived of his savoir vivre' (2010: 161).

Thus, according to Stiegler, the proletariat consumer is left with nothing but his purchasing power, just as the proletariat producer was left with nothing but his labour power - 'so he will work to earn the little bit of money he uses to be able to buy what he produces, having lost everything; he has no knowledge in work anymore and no knowledge in life. So he is unhappy (2010: 162). In the context of the £1 commodity chain, Stiegler's argument here is useful in explaining the way in which the consumer knows not how to repair (or cannot as the object's design will not allow for repair) and therefore has no choice but to re-buy. This in itself is part of the decrease in savoir vivre. Furthermore, Stiegler's vision of the disempowered consumer is instrumental in placing the (already dispossessed) worker as a (now dispossessed) consumer, who can do nothing but attempt to gain pleasure in spending on the most ephemeral and inexpensive of commodities[50].

This spending on the ephemeral, due to the proletarianization of the consumer, further serves to ingrain the importance of disposability. The resulting (covert) emphasis on waste has seen the figure of the peddler emerge as the embodiment of the quandary between thrift and waste. He enables the transition from waste to product (and therefore profit), so is inextricably involved in capitalistic practices. Yet, simultaneously, he defies the logic of the wider chain and that of capitalism in general by operating as a bricoleur who is the ultimate example of 'thrift'. He is in many ways the 'reverse image' that Lefebvre saw as represented by Charlie Chaplin - a character who reflects the image of everyday, but who is simultaneously 'exceptional, deviant, abnormal' (2008 [1947]: 12). Through him, and him alone, the tactic of disposability is challenged, but how long this challenge can withstand the increasing pressure on places to show themselves as images of success remains to be seen.

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[50] What Stiegler posits as a replacement to this, is a world in which rather than there being consumers on one side and producers on the other, there are simply 'contributors' who '*participate* in the creation of the world in which they live' – a world which could be described as 'open source' (2010: 162).

Furthermore, the changing of these spaces of waste has an impact on individual and national psyche. As Hawkins and Muecke point out 'changing relations to waste mean changing relations to self' (2003: xiii – xiv). In buying and disposing of and therefore creating her own waste, the Chinese subject is made a 'consumer' in the eyes of the world, which in turn reflect back to her the image of China as a now 'successful' nation in which thrift is no longer necessary. By portraying consumption as success and removing it from the idea of waste, the tactic of disposability ingeniously hides itself under the illusory concept of purchasing power.

Chapter Four

The Tactic of Agglomeration: Solidarity, Reciprocity and Transportability in Yiwu.

It is a Thursday afternoon in mid-November. The train is busy. Nearly every seat is taken up by a neatly dressed businessman, overnight bag in one hand, Blackberry in the other. There is a polite low rumble of business-like chatter. We speed through Shanghai's sprawling outskirts and on through the rural grasslands of Zhejiang province, the route offering fleeting glances of small agricultural villages and emerging light-industry towns. The scenery becomes more mountainous as we enter the Eastern part of the Jin Qu basin, before finally and abruptly giving way to a grey urban expanse. This is Yiwu, the 'sea of commodities', a promised land for the international wholesale buyer, and a place which boasts the highest concentration on the planet of all existing products.

I disembark at the small grey station building along with around just thirty others, all Chinese. If 200,000 international business people arrive in this city every day, as the official publicity suggests, then very few of them were on my train. We make our way through the scruffy underpass and out into the station forecourt, to be greeted by the usual ticket-hunters and a small row of official taxis. No signs to the markets, no business or translation services advertised, no wholesale agents waiting to meet foreign buyers; only immense, straight roads and austere grey high-rises. Yiwu is far from the glossy international hub promotional sources would have us believe.

Yiwu's existence stretches back to the Tang dynasty (AD 6244) and, keen to prove historical credentials, promotional websites point to its famous residents from the Tang, Song and Yuan dynasties, as well as more recent prodigies, including educationalist Chen Wangdao, literary theorist Feng Xuefeng and historian Wu Han. However, there are few signs of this history today. Yiwu has re-branded itself exclusively around its 'fame' as the world's 'small commodity city', an official status bestowed by the Chinese government in 1982. In fact, since the 'reform and opening' policies of the 1980s, Yiwu has used the small commodity industry to go from being a traditional agricultural town to the key driver of a huge regional economy, not only in Zhejiang province, but in the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) economic area as a whole. The YRD constitutes

less than one per cent of China's land area and only 5.8 per cent of its population, yet creates approximately 20 per cent of its GDP (2005 Chinese government figures) and contains more than 800,000 private companies, most of which are small family-owned enterprises organised in networks. The area manufactures predominantly small, inexpensive commodities such as socks, toothbrushes, plastic cups, and in certain types of manufacturing has usurped the established industrial success of the Pearl River Delta.

Yiwu's prime location in the YRD has made it an important transport hub, with express trains to and from Shanghai as well as eight inland flight routes. Since 1982 ground area has increased from 2.8 km square, to 18 km square and now consists of Huangyuan Market (established in 1992), Binwang Market (established in 1995), and China Yiwu International Trade City (first established in 2002) which includes Futian Market. Each market contains around five smaller markets, specialising in specific product areas, and together they cover an area of approximately 2 million square metres, containing around 58,000 company booths displaying around 400,000 products. Local word has it that more than 1000 containers leave Yiwu every day, largely bound for Europe and the US and, according to China's *People's Daily* newspaper, the city creates a daily cash flow of 287 million Yuan (around US$34.5 million). Furthermore, these figures have remained buoyant despite the global recession, as it is luxury goods rather than 'necessities' which have experienced a drop in demand. Yiwu is the ultimate 'one-stop-shop' for wholesale buyers; a manufacturing and distribution leviathan, presenting itself as an immense ark of all that the new, 'open', efficient China has to offer; a place rooted in Deng's ethos of opportunity and innovation. Yet, apart from a few conspicuously parked Mercedes, it remains curiously down-at-heel, stoically immersed in its own methods of operation, and almost entirely impenetrable to the outsider.

This chapter will discuss the defining characteristics of Yiwu - its 'history', agglomerative nature, and alternative modes of solidarity - and analyse how they are used tactically. It will begin by explaining the ways in which Yiwu has attempted to promote itself as 'place' due to national concerns with both appearing to be 'green' and maintaining a continuity between communism and market economics. This will be followed by a discussion of Yiwu as agglomerative space and more specifically as a model unique to, and emerging from, China's

history. The ways in which this agglomerative space leads to new modes of solidarity will then be explored by drawing upon the experiences of international wholesale buyers in Yiwu.

i) Yiwu as 'Historical' Space: The Making of Place from Non-Place.

Let us pick up where we left off on that Thursday in mid-November. A thin drizzle has begun, as mountain mists descend on the city of Yiwu, obscuring the tops of the grey high-rises in the distance. I am standing in the middle of Xiuhu park, an entirely human-made creation which accounts for most of the 'eleven square metres of public garden per inhabitant' that the official websites triumphantly announce. Xiuhu Park is an anomaly, a strangely self-conscious attempt at naturalism within an environment exclusively designed and built for its main purpose of manufacturing. Having wandered through the underground shopping mall, with its numerous small stalls and Western-style pizza restaurant, I stop by the concrete-bottomed lake, with its artificial islands and reproduction Ming archways, bridges and gazebos.

Ahead of me stands the only part of this built environment which dates further back than the late seventies - the leaning Da'ansi pagoda. Incongruously juxtaposed between the faux gateways its ancient weathered bricks are set against a backdrop of smooth grey-pink eighties high-rises. It is the only remnant from Yiwu's dynastic days; days when, as a small village, Yiwu spawned poets and authors, educationalists and thinkers, rather than the legions of small-business entrepreneurs that it teems with today. Squinting, I can almost remove the tower block from view, framing the pagoda against the sky. Seen alone like this, it symbolizes an older China and the Yiwu of Tang days. Un-squinting brings back into frame once again the modern high-rise beyond, and the pagoda gains its more recent layer of symbolic value: a layer gifted it by the Yiwu of current times, the Yiwu keen to embellish its trading reputation with a cultural-historical tradition; the Yiwu determined to epitomize successful capitalism whilst insisting on its continuity with both Confucian and Maoist legacy; the Yiwu determined to be someplace, rather than non-place. (see figures 11, 12 and 13)

This determination began in earnest following the defining events of 1984. The year was a pivotal one for Yiwu due to the famous 'no 4 document', entitling private Town and Village Enterprises (TVEs) to the same tax incentives as collectively-owned TVEs. More importantly,

the document also granted TVEs the same policy treatment as State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), therefore effectively equating private firms with SOEs. Its impact on potential private entrepreneurs was huge. According to Huang (2008: 97), within one month of its announcement rural residents in the county of Yiwu raised 10 million Yuan and established 500 businesses. It is not surprising therefore, that within the next two years the city of Yiwu's ground area increased at its fastest ever rate. Alongside this physical growth, Yiwu's new-found reputation as the latest economic power-house of the new China was creating official concerns with regard to the necessity to enhance its credentials as both an environmentally responsible entity and an historical one.

The environmental concern was a complicated mix of the necessity to portray Yiwu as 'responsible' and 'green' to international corporations who were considering using it as a production base, subject to general 'ethical' standards, and a popular re-appropriation of Confucian principles of 'harmony' and 'balance'. This re-popularisation of Confucian thought has been occurring in business circles over the last two decades, and has most recently found form in the idea of 'the better life' explored in the chapter on Shanghai. Meanwhile, the historical element was not simply a desire to acknowledge Yiwu's existence back in China's dynastic past; the fact that the Yiwu of the late eighties was barely the same place as the Yiwu of those dynastic times was clearly understood. No, there was also a concern, mirrored ideologically at State level across all policy areas, that this shining example of Deng Xiao Ping's 'to get rich is glorious' ethos, should be situated within, and reminded of, its communist allegiance. Hence, statues celebrating the commitment and industry of the Maoist worker were erected, such as the one shown in Figure 14.

This careful recreation of 'history' and 'culture' thus had a strong political agenda; an inherent objective to create a sense of the relationship between market economics and communist socialism in and through the built environment. The aim was to present Yiwu as a place with communist history, which had chosen to indulge in a spot of market capitalism - a kind of communist bedrock upon which capitalism had been allowed to pitch its tent. This can be seen as part of what Kevin Hetherington (2008) identifies as a preoccupation with shaping the past:

> 'If in the past concerns existed within capitalist societies to shape the future and to attain some degree of control over the image of it, in our culture of simultaneous time it is shaping the past that has become our preoccupation' (2008: 281).

Thus the Maoist worker monument is perhaps part of an attempt to balance/counter/excuse (?!) the present and future, that is, the market economy. It is an example of what Hetherington calls 'an image of the past that provides a sense of authentic origin and justification for present hopes' (2008: 283), proving the way that heritage in its providing of the story of the present, has become a characteristic of the entrepreneurial city.

In reality, it was the introduction of market economics which gave birth to Yiwu as we know it. And yet, as will be explored later in this chapter, Yiwu displays many genuine legacies of a communist past in its planning and operations; legacies far more effective than tokenistic Maoist statues in branding it capitalism 'Chinese-style'. But assuring Yiwu would be seen as arising from, and connected to communism, was only one part of the necessity for such insta-history; the other part had to do with securing Yiwu's placeship.

In many ways Yiwu is a classic example of non-place in the way that Mark Auge (1995) conceptualised it. It could be argued that it sits in direct opposition to the anthropological/sociological notion of place concerned with specific cultures localised in time and space (1995:34). It does not have the requisite characteristics of identity, relations and history common to anthropological places; hence the desire on the part of the authorities to create these elements, or drag irrelevant versions of them from Yiwu's past. Arguably, its inhabitants have a lived environment in which history consists of *replicas* of ancient China, which can only serve to show people what Yiwu *never was*. History is an abstraction in Yiwu, and not simply in Auge's sense of being absent. When monuments are faux-history, that history becomes an abstraction of a different sort. The monuments reference a 'real' history that is clear in the minds of people, so they potentially bring forth a historical awareness, but they do not convey history within the location they stand. They convey only the *idea* of history, not history itself; they are the holograms of the monument world. Furthermore, this faux history is juxtaposed with the parading of Yiwu's attributes in what Yi Fu Tuan considers to be more 'abstract' ways – the promotion of it as a place of great efficiency and an exciting hub of activity. As Tuan argues, these methods often tend to belong to cities which are either literally newly built, or 'new' in their current form:

'A city does not become historic merely because it has occupied the same site for a long time. Past events make no impact on the present unless they are memorialized in history books, monuments, pageants … An old city has a rich store of facts on which successive generations of citizens can draw to sustain and re-create their image of place … New cities, such as the frontier settlements of North America, lacked a venerable past; to attract business and gain pride their civic leaders were obliged to speak with a loud voice. Strident boosterism was the technique to create an impressive image, and to a lesser extent it still is. The boosters could rarely vaunt their city's past or culture; hence the emphasis tended to be on abstract and geometrical excellences such as 'the most central', 'the biggest', 'the fastest', and 'the tallest' (2005:175).

Also concurrent with Auge's definition of non-place, Yiwu owes much to temporal elements: 'what reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment. Since non-places are there to be passed through, they are measured in units of time' (1995: 104). While the authorities are keen to promote Yiwu as space, they also cannot help promote it as time, referring to the 1000 containers a day that leave its environs, or the tens of thousands of commodities produced each hour by its factories, or the sheer number of exchanges that take place inside its markets. Yiwu may well be promoted as a nice *place* to live, but it is also promoted as an astounding *temporal* phenomenon. One lives the *speed* of commodity exchange as part of one's place; the impressiveness of that speed *is* the place.

Finally, in accordance with Auge's definition, Yiwu allows the visitor a certain anonymity which can be experienced as a liberation from identity. A business person in Yiwu is purely that; momentarily they can say 'I am not 40. I am not a father. I am not English. I am not an amateur cyclist. I am not an owner of a thatched cottage. I simply = business'. In Yiwu, a person *is* (primarily) exchange.

However, the above features of history, temporality and anonymity are not sufficiently convincing as an attempt to map Yiwu as non-place. Although Yiwu's monuments can be seen as a false history, irrelevant to anything (physical) that ever existed there, it is not a-historical. Whilst its history may not come from a dubious connection with the dynastic village of 'Yiwu' - this link was and is entirely severed – it can be seen to emerge from the ways in which the Yiwu we know today (the Yiwu just prior to and following 1984), was built almost unwittingly referencing Confucian and Maoist traditions. (As the section on agglomeration will show, building layout in Yiwu owes much to both these historical movements.) The history that makes Yiwu place is not to be found in its monuments but in the fabric of its everyday spaces; in the

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unintended aspects of both Confucianism and Maoism that entered into its creation and being. This runs in accordance with Auge's argument, that place has history as a day-to-day creation; it is 'historical' for its inhabitants since their own pasts are captured there and they have built up memories there (1995:55).

The desire to create this day-to-day history can even be witnessed in the behaviour of many of the wholesale buyers who visit Yiwu. Despite never staying long enough to find a sense of place in the same way an inhabitant would, the buyers still wanted a sense of familiarity and community. They therefore chose to stay in the large Western chain hotels rather than the ex state-run hotels, despite the fact these hotels did not necessarily have better facilities and were far further form the markets. Many told me they enjoyed the kind of ad-hoc community that briefly built up in and around these hotels, especially around busy trading times of the year.

Furthermore, it is plausible, if not likely, that Yiwu will increasingly gain place-ship as its monuments start to become seen as typical of a time in China's history when it was attempting to marry market economics and communist socialism. As Auge points out, markets too can gain history: 'whether they are shrinking or expanding, the space in which they grow or regress is a historical space' (Auge, 1995: 59). It may be that in the future Yiwu's markets are hailed as the instigators of new forms of capitalist relations, in a manner not dissimilar to the way Venice's markets are regarded as the birthplace of older capitalisms. Visiting Yiwu will then become part of what Auge calls the 'experience of non-place as a turning back on the self' (1995: 92); an awareness of oneself in a position that itself is spectacle due to myth-making which has created an image of a place stronger than the actual place.

This awareness of the place Yiwu is likely to occupy in future histories is certainly true for some of the traders I come into contact with when following 'L' round the markets. Coming to Yiwu for four days nearly every month, L has become a familiar face to the traders he regularly buys from. He describes how they often take to selling their products, by selling the fact they come from Yiwu:

'Not so much now, because now they just know what I want and they know my reactions well enough to know whether I'm going to buy or not, so they don't try to convince me as much as they used to, you know… they don't give me the hard sell. But before, before they knew me, if they thought they were losing me, you know, if they thought I was about to walk away, they would start to tell me how this was

Yiwu and I wouldn't do any better anywhere than this. They would say how efficient and fast it was, and how cheap, and how this was world-famous Yiwu… you know… YIWU!'

Similarly, a young French couple who have made Yiwu their home, tell me how they struggled to feel anything towards it at first, but found the idea they would be part of world history comforting. Genevieve tells me:

'When we came here, me and Marc, I was quite depressed for a while, and I guess a little shocked, because I knew it would not be beautiful you know, but I thought I would be able to make it my home even then… and I was not… I could not feel like that about it. And the business was hard you know, it took a long time to have any success. But, I mean, we came here before Yiwu was really known about and when I started to hear about it, you know, I felt different. I realized it was becoming famous, you know, globally, and all of a sudden, I felt proud. I was amazed! This place I could not make my home… and suddenly I was proud of it. It was completely illogical, my reaction…'

Finally, there is an added twist to positing Yiwu as place. Auge's concern with non-place is essentially a political one: it is that their 'contracts' may become the most common way of interacting with location and their (fake) features of place may gain total legitimacy. This is not to mourn the loss of 'history' or 'culture' or 'organic relations' in a way that quickly leads to questionable notions of the fake/real, the original/copy, the social/non-social, but to acknowledge that non-place is primarily economic and therefore cannot be separated from the proliference of corporate control and profit-logic, and of the systematic destruction of the means to escape, refuse, and re-appropriate the two latter (Auge, 1995: 103). This is to re-codify non-place not as a bland location, but as a *political* location, whose apparently non-political brandings and bland spaces serve to hide its potency as a corporate player. Therefore, if Yiwu has place-ship, it is hiding its primary economic function less effectively, allowing for a greater potential to challenge corporate logic. In fact, as the next section will explain, Yiwu has a market logic unique to itself.

ii) Yiwu as a Transportable Model: Agglomerative Space and the Re-Appropriation of Confucian and Maoist Legacy

If Yiwu has place-ship, as I argue, due to the ways in which past historical, cultural and political legacies can be witnessed in its built environment, how do these legacies manifest themselves? How is it that space itself is representative of social movements? The follow section will attempt to explain this by drawing upon the notion of the 'danwei' and explaining how the impact this notion has had on space in Yiwu has allowed the latter to become a globally transportable entity. Danwei was the principal method of implementing party policy in Maoist China. Although the word is most commonly translated as 'work unit', the danwei was actually far more than that, binding workers to it for life, providing housing, food, clinics, childcare, schools, and therefore identity and social respectability or 'face' (miazi) too. Furthermore, because it provided all that was necessary for daily survival, it is often connected to the notion of the 'baoxialai' or social guarantee, colloquially referred to as the 'iron rice bowl' (tiefanwan).

Yiwu's manufacturing raison d'être can most evidently be seen in its lay-out, which centres around the immense wholesale markets, housed in giant warehouses and zoned according to commodity. All main roads head towards a commodity market, supporting an interpretation of Yiwu as a Hausmannized city, promoting the 'natural flow' of goods and people through urban space. Yet housing and production areas in Yiwu follow a different logic, one which appears unable to escape an older spatial repertoire, and which is bound up with past cultural movements and historical change in China.

Like many 'new towns' in China, Yiwu was built based on the concept of xiaoqu or 'small districts'- planned neighbourhoods in which housing is integrated with communal facilities such as nurseries, clinics, restaurants, shops, and sports facilities. In accordance with David Bray (2005), I would argue that these xiaoqu bear a strong resemblance to the socialist danwei in their layout and provision of services. Although a result of the necessity for the socialist collective at the beginning of the Mao era, the layout of danwei can also be traced back to the traditional courtyard house designed to complement the ethical codes of Confucianism. Thus, it re-employed a familiar spatial repertoire to the service of socialism (Bray, 2005: 35). Lu Feng also makes this argument, saying the danwei has a close kinship with traditional lineage group arrangements, but that this kinship within the work unit is politically, rather than family, based

(1998: 54-58). The danwei of course was not only a way of producing products, but acted as a dual production system also maintaining a steady supply of political intensity and therefore activists who could be mobilised for party campaigns (Dutton, 2005: 164). (The products of danwei were thus perhaps 'socialist' objects in much the same way as Arvatov's (1997) were, containing ideologies within them.)

In Yiwu, the same repertoire is again employed, this time in the service of manufacturing, but this re-employment, of course, brings with it both Confucianism and Maoism, continuing them into the new xiaoqu spaces. In fact the commercial developers of these areas even focus on creating spaces for 'linli guanxi' (neighbourhood guanxi[51]), such as the danwei used to provide, proving just how deeply the ideological remnants of the danwei are ingrained in current practice - the 'mimetic effect' Bray mentions (2005:156). The danwei, born of Confucianism, and appropriated for political ends, finds itself now, in the post-reform period, re-appropriated for economic ends as part of the general dominance of economic logic, as Michael Dutton asserts:

> 'The once all encompassing work unit that took care of all aspects of a worker's life is being transformed into an economic enterprise, while peasants, once tethered to the land by a castelike system of household registration, are being transformed into 'free' workers and drawn into the city in ever-increasing numbers' (2005: 268).

Furthermore, unlike in other Chinese cities where, as Bray attests, the replacement of danwei by xiaoqu has meant the removal of labour as the determinant of social space, in Yiwu xiaoqu remain linked to workplaces. For example, Yangguang xiaoqu is close to Binwang market, and is therefore home to mainly small craft and jewellery manufacturers. Thus, if your father is a craft-ware manufacturer, you are most likely to live in the residential area next to Binwang market and attend school with the children of other craft-ware manufacturers. Space, in this sense, is strictly divided according to manufacturing style, and the whereabouts of everyday life is dictated by what type of article a person makes. This is because of the way in which Yiwu did not *become* a manufacturing city like most, neither was it built from the profits of manufacturing, but rather it

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[51] Guanxi is often translated as 'relationship' or 'connection', but is best explained as a combination of 'ganqing' (depth of feeling within an interpersonal relationship), and 'renqing' (moral obligation and 'face' or social prestige). It describes personal relationships in which one is able and obliged to perform and receive favours - a long-term, obligated and heartfelt connection in which individuals have the right to demand fair return, benefits sharing and reciprocity (See Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958, Hwang, 1987; Lin, 1999; Luo, 1997). It is generally accepted that the principles of guanxi come from Confucian thought. Guanxi's emphasis on interpersonal connections caused it to attract the interest of network analysts from the late 1970's onwards.

was created as a place *in which to manufacture*, meaning departmentalisation was ordered by labour *from the onset.* In Yiwu, labour relations continue to determine residential organisation and therefore identity. In fact Yiwu provides a good example of the more complicated subjectivities existing in current-day China; its spatial relations force a nuanced analysis of the often unquestioned assumption that the shift from 'danwei ren' (danwei person) to 'shehui ren' (social person) corresponds un-problematically to the rise of the market and the privileging of individual interest. (See Cao Jinqing and Chen Zhongya who put forward a relatively straight-forward connection between market economics and non-collective identities, 1997.) In reality subjectivities are created by a constant re-appropriation of deeply ingrained features from the 'old China' and the subsequent re-arrangement of them as part of the 'new China'.

This re-arrangement must not only be seen within the context of long historical movements such as Confucianism and Maoism, but also in the light of the original inspiration for Yiwu and the ways in which it has gone on to inspire copycat versions of itself elsewhere. The Yiwu model was inspired by 'Zhejiang Village' (Zhejiangcun), a migrant clothing manufacturing area in the Fengtai district of Beijing, named after the province its migrants came from. According to Li Zhang (2001: 67-68), Zhejiangcun was created in stages. The first, from 1980 to 1984, saw 1000 migrants arrive and live in local households without creating a community of their own. During the second stage, from 1985 1990, it expanded rapidly due to the greater demand for clothing, new social networks and relaxed migration policies, attracting around 30,000 migrants. During this stage, and due largely to the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the Asian Games in 1990, the government mobilised several 'clean-up' drives to force out migrants. However, around two months after each drive, migrants would resume their former activities. The third stage, from 1990-1998, saw the complete razing of Zhejiangcun in 1995 causing a mass exodus of around 40,000 migrants, and its subsequent re-building as an enormous modern plaza - the realisation of the authorities plans and a 'suitable' representation of the new China.

However, regardless of the differences in its appearance during these stages, Zhejiangcun continued to be characterised by four key features attributed to its basing itself on the migrants' former practices in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province. These were: (1) that it consisted of numerous small-scale private enterprises; (2) that it specialized in wholesale petty commodity markets; (3) that it was built on tens of thousands of mobile traders who facilitate the flow of materials; (4)

that it was made possible by various forms of non-governmental financial arrangements. These characteristics had become known as the 'Wenzhou model', a phrase which was officially announced as a new economic paradigm for China in 1986 (Zhang, 2001: 52-53). (This was of course the same time that Yiwu began to flourish and those four characteristics are clearly evident there.)

The fact that Wenzhou had created the model was not simply coincidence, but also as a result of its historical ties with the Yongjia school of thought - a movement from Yongjia county in the Wenzhou region whose roots lie in the Southern Song Dynasty. The school contested mainstream Confucianism's belief that only farmers were the backbone and true value of the nation, arguing in contrast that scholars, farmers, artisans and traders were all equally important. So, unlike in other provinces where under Confucianism land was valorized and peoples' attachment to it revered, in Wenzhou commercialism had been celebrated historically. In the light of this historical legacy of part of Zhejiang province it becomes less surprising that it was Zhejiang migrants who created a model which was successful enough not only to return to its province of birth and make its way into official experiments with commercialism, but also which has proved robust enough to be recreated internationally and promoted as defining a specifically Chinese way of operating.

By the time the model was used in the creation of Yiwu, it had become a state-endorsed project rather than an unofficial migrant enclave such as Zhejiangcun. It also had the advantage of an excellent strategic position along the burgeoning Yangtze river delta, with geographical proximity to Shanghai's ports and infrastructure, and the accumulated expertise of Zhejiang residents. Not surprisingly therefore, there were attempts to recreate the model elsewhere in China, and in 1995 an entrepreneur from Yiwu tried to set up a copycat market in Zhenzhou. According to KelleeTsai (2002), around 300 vendors paid 1000 Yuan up front in cash to lease their 12 by 15 metre retail lots for five years. But when she visited in 1996 and 1997 Tsai found the market 'looked sluggish' and contained more vendors than customers (2002:175). By 2001 most of the migrant vendors who had been persuaded by the entrepreneur to come to Zhengzhou from Yiwu had returned home due to poor profits (if any), and only those migrants from less developed provinces and consequently with lower expectations, remained. It was clear that the model required strong infrastructural and economic links in order to be successful; therefore the

potential for its continued recreation within China was, at least temporarily, limited. However, potential to recreate it outside of Chinese borders grew, and eventually became irresistible. Yiwu's success had gained it the status of a transportable entity within its own right; a model that could be transplanted wholesale within the boundaries of other countries.

The first of these was opened in Warsaw, Poland, 1992, having been established by the local government of Guangdong, China. Initially it contained 200 Canton firms, but through continuous investment has become an area of 200,000 metres, upon which are built four two-storey halls containing 600 firms. Following this, in 2003 a joint venture between an Austrian and a Chinese businessman saw the opening of the AsiaCenter in Budapest, which covered an area of 125,000 square metres. However, the Chinese partner was unable to fulfill his promises to the booth tenants within the centre; the Austrian partner took 100 percent control and changed the functioning of the centre to make it more a retail outlet than a wholesale market. Then, in 2004, a Chinese government agency – Chinamex - created the 'Dragon Mart' centre in Dubai, which contained 4000 booths. Agreements for a further centre to be situated at Schiphol airport area in Amsterdam were signed in 2007.

Most recently, Chinese company Fanerdun Ltd proposed a copycat market in Kalmar, Sweden. The industrial town has seen extremely high levels of unemployment over the last decade as manufacturing jobs are lost due to large companies moving production to cheaper labour markets. However, being well linked by infrastructure to the rest of Europe, and seen as low risk socio-politically due to its situation in an historically 'neutral' country, Fanderdun thought it an ideal site. The Kalmar complex was due to be opened in September 2008, but opening was stalled due to on-going issues with Chinese construction workers not being paid and safety regulations not being followed. (Fanerdun say the former was due to a slowness on the part of Swedish bureaucracy, combined with a misunderstanding over the agreed minimum wage.) Despite this, the project continues, and is, as yet, the most wholesale transposition of the Yiwu model. Unlike the Warsaw market, which was initiated by the Chinese government, and the Budapest and Dubai markets which are joint investments, Kalmar is wholly owned by Fanerdun Ltd, a family-owned private Chinese company, founded in 2001 by Mr Luo Jinxing. Fanderdun bought the land outright from the Swedish authorities, and the market is being constructed by Chinese workers using materials largely shipped directly from China. Furthermore, unlike the

other Yiwu models, booths in the markets of Kalmar are not rented and then staffed by import agents, but sold directly to manufacturers, thus constituting Direct Foreign Investment (DFI).

The Kalmar 'commodity city', like Yiwu, is designed around commodity markets, defined according to product, with housing, amenities, hotels and recreational and park areas in addition. Interestingly, the 'deal' for anyone purchasing a booth includes permanent rights to stay in Sweden for themselves and two family members (although Swedish authorities have denied this), an apartment in Sweden and another in Hangzhou, China - the home of Fanerdun company headquarters. Luo Jinxing is keen to point out that the project is more a future Chinese community than a commodity market. He is, effectively, offering Chinese manufacturers the chance to 'buy' citizenship, whilst also exporting 'place' as well as a commodity market.

This is just one of many ways in which the export of the Yiwu model differs from traditional forms of internationalisation, as conceptualised by Coase (1937). Yiwu's mode of internationalisation is based on the 'cluster', defined by Michael Porter as '… a geographically proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and complementarities' (2000: 16). Unlike most processes of internationalization, which result from the gradual export of a company or parts of a company, the transportation of the Yiwu model sees the entire cluster move at once and as an entity, a phenomenon Jansson et al (2007) refer to as 'entry clusters'. Furthermore, it is an entry cluster which, due to the strong social connotations of the types of products it manufactures, is strongly associated with China in Western perceptions. In fact, the Yiwu model exports not only itself, as an operational model, but also a culturally potent association.

This association manifests itself in popular cultural imagination in images of China as the world's factory; a full-to-overflowing production fiend, of epic proportions, as witnessed in Baichwal's previously mentioned *Manufactured Landscapes* and referenced in Giovanni Arrighi's assertion of China's 'industr*ious* revolution'(2007). It is through such depictions and imaginings that inexpensive, ubiquitous commodities have carved a place for themselves as 'Made In China' objects. In fact I would like to suggest that, contrary to the beliefs of many economic commentators (e.g. Huang, 2008), China does not lack a global brand as such -'Made In China' *is* a brand. Whilst it of course cannot be assessed economically alongside 'company

brands', its cultural and psycho-social status bears uncanny resemblance to other 'brand identities', providing clear opportunities for consumers to gain awareness of its connotations and even feel a fondness or 'brand affinity'. 'Made In China' has done what 'Made in Spain' in the eighties never managed to do; it is not an embarrassed apology for low-end products, but rather a triumphant announcement of use value at a bargain price. Furthermore it eludes the problematic questions concerning at what point a 'global brand' from a specific country can no longer boast its national credentials due to joint ownership by multi-national stakeholders.

Yiwu is also unusual in that whilst its internationalisation complies with most thinking on clusters, as its efficiency can be attributed to supply chains, labour markets, infrastructure, and sociological factors such as shared local knowledge or increasing social capital, its methods of solidarity challenge the established image of clusters. Furthermore, these methods may come under challenge once attempts are made to continue them within the new host country. It remains to be seen for example, whether the Kalmar Yiwu model will be as successful as it is in China, when attempting to operate within the legal and ethical frameworks of a more developed country- one which will insist upon certain standards in relation to IPR, working hours, minimum wage, materials used, etc. There is a high likelihood that these factors will add cost to the end product, and that along with enforced environmental responsibility creating 'ecoflation' (O'Keefe et al: 2008), commodity prices will also be inflated by higher ethical standards (ethicoflation?!). Either this, or, as the Yiwu model is exported, it will find ways of avoiding governance, perhaps creating islands of alternative governance within foreign systems which go way beyond the special conditions of Export Processing Zones[52].

Finally, whilst processes of internationalisation increasingly involve disaggregation as parts of commodities are produced in various countries (Gereffi:1994), with Yiwu's low-end, simple commodities this is not the case. The Yiwu model sees commodity chains which are neither long (containing many players), dense (containing many different manufacturers for the one product), nor deep (containing many levels, i.e. other firms making only one component of the product). On the contrary, commodities are produced in one place by one manufacturer, and aggregate in

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[52] Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are areas within a country, whose purpose is purely to attract export-oriented industries, sometimes offering them favourable investment and trade conditions compared to the rest of the country. Unlike 'free trade zones' which involve shipment and warehousing, EPZs are set up for actual manufacturing. In China EPZs are called Special Economic Zones (See Philips, D. R. and Yeh, A. G. O.).

that place. The export of the model therefore represents what could be called a patchy spread of the *agglomerative* manufacturing city. This means that, by creating unusual clusters of *low*-value commodities in a few chosen nations, Yiwu runs counter to the trend identified by Appelbaum and Christerson (1992) - that *high*-value commodities show a greater degree of clustering in fewer nations. Yiwu is defined by its agglomerative space and relations. This in turn, as the next section will show, leads to new forms of solidarity.

iii) Yiwu as Reciprocal Space: Sharing the Risk Means Sharing the Wealth

The road from the hotel to Binwang market is straight. Dead straight. It leads me directly from the foyer of the formerly state-run hotel I am staying in, to the market's impressive atrium. (See figure 15.) A direct route from centralised communism to agglomerative capitalism; from the past to the present. Cars drive fast in Yiwu, speeding past me as I walk. And here, people speak loudly and in staccato tones. A waiter had informed me the previous evening that there was an accent specific to Yiwu which was very harsh – 'Even the words of lovers sound angry', he had said. Drawing nearer to the market I pass groups of women sitting by the roadside, knitting. They perch on small stools, their fingers moving deftly and with the practiced habit that can only come from years of repetition. What they knit will be sold inside the market, but the manufacturer they work for attempts to keep overheads down by doing without premises. So, perhaps as part of a desire to feel closer to their own process, or to gain a sense of geographical place in their working lives, they come and sit everyday close to the market entrance. One of them looks up and nods at me as I pass. She recognises me from previous days now. I smile and continue on into the Binwang market building.

Ahead, behind, and to either side of me, as far as the eye can see, are long, perfectly straight corridors, flanked by immaculately arranged stalls, each exactly two metres square, their contents un-forgivingly lit by the industrial strip-lights above. Each stall represents a factory, and contains one example of every commodity, in all its variations, which that factory makes. One blue six inch vase, one yellow six inch vase, one blue ten inch vase, one yellow ten inch vase, and so on and so on. This is Binwang market, Yiwu, a vast, three-tiered wholesale warehouse, around 1 kilometre square and strictly ordered in sections according to the type of commodity on

display; a Noah's Ark of China's small commodities. Should the rains come, and the plains flood, Binwang will provide a prototype for each of the god of industry's creations.

Yiwu's commodity markets are effectively huge agglomerations of small businesses, each with a very high degree of product specificity. Tsai argues these agglomerations of commodity types are not simply due to the way the markets are organised for the buyer, but that they also reflect networks connecting the former workers of particular factories (2002:176-177). According to her, workers made redundant from the same factory, often become private entrepreneurs selling products that reflect the focus of their former employer. Furthermore, their ability to overcome common grievances is frequently enhanced due to collective action which comes about as a result of their shared danwei in the past. In other words, mutuality, based on past experience and present circumstances, creates solidarity. These historical allegiances are another way in which the legacy of the danwei remains alive in Yiwu.

It seems likely that it is also this combination of shared expertise in specific product manufacturing, and the awareness that many private enterprise manufacturers are using skills and ideas from their past employers, which has created a unique culture of solidarity, especially when it comes to issues of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Officially, Yiwu is keen to appear as an arbitrator and follower of international legal and ethical standards on trade practices. As party secretary of Yiwu, Lou Guohua says, 'We know that the prosperity of the market heavily relies on credibility. Quality control and credibility establishment is key for Yiwu to be integrated with the world' (2008: *www.english.peopledaily.com*). Being China's most famous and most prolific city for small commodities, Yiwu is a testing-ground and leading example in the building of new legal frameworks for IPR and has strategic importance at the national level and in the establishment of co-operative international relations.

In 2008, Yiwu released a White Paper entitled 'IPR Protection in Yiwu', which elaborated upon Yiwu's IPR protection in terms of patenting, trade-marking, copyrighting and judicial protection. It stressed how Yiwu has developed a multi-layered network of protection and adopted monitoring and interconnecting mechanisms from various departments, enabling booth-owners' complaints of infringement to be handled immediately through information sharing and mutual supervision. Yiwu is the only county-level city in China to have an IPR protection service centre, and was the first to create an international co-ordination in IPR involving over 200 members

from eight countries, including the USA, France, Germany, Japan and the UK. Yiwu's Trade and Industry Department describe this operational style as 'small network' supervision of 'big market' functions; a practice which has come to be known as the 'Yiwu mode' of IPR protection.

However, this newly-evolved legal framework is largely concerned with protecting higher end 'brand' products, as part of a concern with up-grading and protecting the types of commodities China as a whole makes, and with guarding against the loss of credibility that counterfeit trading brings upon Chinese manufacturing. For the smaller manufacturers who remain ensconced in the low-end sector, new IPR legalities have little relevance, as 'brand' and 'fakes' are non-issues in the realm of mundane and ubiquitous objects. Furthermore, due to the short-termism and volatility of commodity chains for inexpensive commodities, and the simplicity of the products manufactured, companies often switch production very quickly, producing whatever is selling well at that time. Therefore, Yiwu's operations rely upon the kind of spontaneity that requires risk; yet because this risk is a mutually shared experience, it works to build solidarity.

This is evident when I meet 'J', a UK buyer come to Yiwu to purchase commodities for what he describes as 'well-known high-street bargain chains'- he will not reveal which ones. He tells me it quite often happens that a manufacturer wants to switch production, so sells his old moulds in order to purchase different ones, and since he can no longer be part of the commodity chain for that specific product anyway, does not mind if the buyer of those moulds makes more or less the same item he was making. 'Once a manufacturer believes demand for a certain commodity to be on the wane, he doesn't mind someone else taking their chances with the same commodity', says J. 'Nobody wants to be tied to one product for ever anyway, the risk of someone making what you used to make is out-weighed by the ability to switch to the latest hot product.'

The reasoning rang true. A few weeks earlier I had met a logistics manager named Blair, who had told me how his company had wanted plastic light pulls in a certain blue-green colour. He had gone to established companies in the Pearl River area, and they had done sample runs for him, changing the size and shape to his specifications and using a slightly different tone of one of their set colours. They were no good; the colour was not close enough. Then, he had a call from a young factory owner from Yiwu, who had heard from a friend of a friend that a Western businessman was looking for light pulls in an unusual colour. 'I can make them', he said, 'Give

me a week to show you'. Blair had replied that it was not possible to make the colour based on already established formulae and that he did not want to deal with more people who would try to convince him it was a close enough match, when it clearly was not. He put the phone down and thought no more about the conversation. A week later the phone rang again. It was the young factory owner saying he had a sample for Blair to see. Blair said he was leaving in two days and did not have time. 'I am downstairs', said the voice. Blair moved to the office window and sure enough, in the street was a young Chinese man holding some boxes and waving up at him. The boxes contained a sample run of 50 light pulls, in exactly the shape, size, and colour Blair had wanted. He was amazed. He gave the factory owner a contract on the spot.

So, for the great majority of small business owners in Yiwu, making very basic products at low prices, the 'risk' of a product being copied, is a small price to pay for the ability to be able to create spontaneously what is demanded, and, while it sometimes causes problems for specific individuals, it keeps the place as a whole thriving. In Yiwu risk allows for a spontaneity which creates a safety of sorts; a safety that at first glance seems to defeat itself, as its logic runs almost entirely contrary to the logic of large global corporations. 'Risk', in current discourse, and applied to financial or business transactions, is risk as defined by the rationale of big business-Jack Ma's 'whales',[53] as opposed to the rationale of huge agglomerations of 'shrimps' present in Yiwu. In fact, despite its 'big market' status, Yiwu is operationally far more aligned to the 'small networks' part of its own model; risk is effectively reformulated in Yiwu and forces us to reconsider the traditional assumptions of 'rational' normalising risk discourses.

I want to emphasise here that in arguing that Yiwu has found a way to use risk to its own advantage and even gain a form of solidarity from it, I in no way wish to suggest that, left to its own devices, risk 'sorts itself out', as it were, creating vibrant business opportunities for all. The way in which risk operates in Yiwu cannot be generalised to account for or predict other situations and its creation of solidarity is only in response to raw-edge capitalism. Yiwu's risk is bound up in survival. What the Yiwu example can do rather effectively though, is to highlight

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[53] Celebrity businessman Jack Ma (who stars in China's version of the TV show The Apprentice) is the founder of the 'ali' group of companies, which includes the business-to-business website, *alibaba.com*. It is his belief that the future will be based on small to medium-sized enterprises (shrimps), rather than large corporations (whales), and this has informed his highly successful business models.

the ways in which risk analysis continues (wrongly) to see itself as a reasoned category, a scientific domain, based on our normative assumptions. Yiwu exposes the ways in which risk discourses have allowed 'our' capitalism, based on the way we 'do' capitalism in the West, to colonise the practices of other places. Unless challenged these discourses can dictate what is considered to be a risk and therefore how business ought to be executed.

Key to understanding why Western risk discourses are problematic when applied to non-Western contexts, and certainly to Yiwu, is the notion of conflicting risks. Risk is wrongly understood as a definite entity, rather than a perception from a specific viewpoint. Once risks are understood as dependent upon situation, a dilemma is created in which protecting against one category of risk exposes another: a right *to* something, conflicts with another's right *not to* something. For example, preventing the 'stealing' of designs in Yiwu (the right to intellectual property), could heighten the risk of large Western companies only using a handful of producers and the rest not surviving as a result (the right to put oneself forward for work). For Yiwu, it is crucial that wealth (even small parcels of it) is spread, if the whole is to survive. In a commodity chain based on the existence of many small players making many small units for small profits, those profits must fall to the many. If designs are protected, profit starts to fall to the few, the few grow large, and the majority must fall off. Sooner or later this defeats even the western agendas in which copyright was deemed necessary, as the newly grown companies are large enough to start competing head-on with the western companies.

It is because risk discourses have not recognised the nature of conflicting risks that they continue to consider themselves rational, scientific monitors of danger. This manifests in two key ways. Firstly, risk discourses tend to be culturally myopic - based on what would be risky in the West and under a Western agenda. In fact I would go further and suggest that there is a political benefit to this too: seeing culture as only 'out there' allows us to believe and purport that in assessing and defining risk we do not have an agenda, that we are the magnanimous arbitrators of global justice acting only out of care for another people and place. Whilst China is beginning to tackle copyright issues itself in connection with its high-end or information products, much of the process is part of on-going debates with Western arbitrators whose mission is greater economic gain under the guise of bringing a more 'civilised' capitalism into operation. Discourses surrounding this process therefore do not acknowledge that the weakness of

copyright law in China is only an issue if and when it denies Western companies the ability to operate as they are used to doing but with all the benefits of that other place. Bill Gates' (previously mentioned) experiences when he took Microsoft to Beijing are an example of a corporation feeling they have a 'right' to copyright protection whilst contemporaneously exploiting cheap labour.

Secondly, risk discourses are based on the concept of individual rational choice; the (economistic) idea that humans have a kind of in-built 'hedonic calculus' which weighs up losses and gains as a neutral tool, operating for everyone based on the same agenda, rather than being influenced by situation and context, or culture, stigma, status, and mutual aspirations. This means industrial expansion is seen as only possible within the context of an individualist culture, and so this argument assumes there is a single generic way to expand and that newly industrialised countries are effectively clones of earlier industrialised ones. This is to deny the nuanced way in which Yiwu operates as an industrial city: due to its many small players, and possibly due also to the fact it was effectively purpose-built to house such an agglomeration, it experiences itself as a mutuality - sharing the risk, also means sharing the wealth. In order to comprehend the logic of Yiwu classical risk analyses requires the addition of a notion of *agglomerative equality*.

'Sharing the wealth' was a phrase I heard frequently from buyers in Yiwu. It was sometimes used to refer to the tendency of businesses to stay small and remain in areas of similar businesses, so as to be able to share knowledge and resources. If successful, a small business owner tends to start up another small business in a horizontally linked industry, rather than attempting to buy out companies similar to his own in a bid for vertical expansion. These horizontal companies, which are often staffed by members of the same family or close family friends, will then give work to each other by sending clients through each other's companies-thus 'sharing the wealth'.

On other occasions the phrase was used more scathingly. Two young Russian wholesalers in Yiwu were adamant that you had to 'do your sums, make a decision, and do the deal, there and then, on the spot. If you wait, you will find other people get involved and you do not know what is going on. They [Chinese manufacturers] try to share the wealth, so you have to say yes before they can bring someone else in on the deal. There are many layers, you know, many layers that you do not want.' Similarly, back in Shanghai, another wholesale buyer, John, had told me how

he had recently travelled down the coast to Ningbo to meet a factory owner he felt he may well potentially want to do business with. When he arrived, the factory looked as though it could easily cope with his requirements, and the price quoted was a good one. 'But the guy I am dealing with has involved another guy in the deal and I can't work out why', he said. 'I don't really want to deal with both of them even though they still seem to be able to offer a good price. I don't like it. Why is he there? Why do they always have to *share the wealth*?'

Similarly Blair had also encountered similar behavior explaining to me how about eight years ago he had an agent from Singapore who was introducing him to several companies in Asia. 'We were paying a retainer to him, for his services, plus all his expenses', said Blair. 'He introduced me to the owner, Mr W. in Suzhou, and someone I thought worked for Mr W. We did the deal and began purchasing small aluminum tubes. We paid about one dollar for each. About two years into the relationship I received a call from Mr W in which he stated that he could sell me the product for only 55 US cents if I could get those other two guys out of the middle. I told Mr W I had no idea that the other guys were involved and to immediately stop paying them and send me revised pricing. He did and I fired the guy in Singapore.'

'Ben', a UK buyer who has his own business sourcing cheap commodities for various low-end stores, had a slightly different take on the situation, saying 'it's normally that there are more layers involved than you think, not that the manufacturers are literally sharing out the profit between them. When people say 'wholesale' in China, it's often second or even third-hand wholesale. That's why you have to come to Yiwu and make sure you deal with a factory that's actually based in Yiwu- that way you're most likely to get the real wholesale price. If you go to someone in Shanghai, they've probably already got their stuff from here and marked it up a bit- they're just selling it on.' 'So,' I ask, 'are you saying the 'layers' are not acting together, that they are not ever in on the same deals?' Ben pauses for a moment. 'Well yes, sometimes those different layers know each other and are part of the same agreement to supply a certain buyer, sometimes without that buyer knowing - I have heard of that happening. But, you know, it's a way of operating here, someone owes someone a favour, so finds a way they can be useful to a deal they're doing, brings them in on it you know. It doesn't necessarily mean they are charging any less good a price, and I've learnt that you can't just go in there and clear out the dead wood, get rid of those extra guys. You have to say, is the deal right for me? If so, you have to do it, and

not worry about what's going on with them - that's their problem, as long as the price is right for you.' He laughs - 'Yiwu's only a one-stop wonder if you make it work for you.'

What emerges is a portrait of a place that is intrinsically set up to operate as a shared space, on both the micro and macro level. Its very infrastructure is designed in such a way as to cause numerous small enterprises to gain through practising mutuality. Unlike the Guangdong (Canton) market, Yiwu allows buyers to order small quantities and to mix small amounts of various commodities as part of an order. It operates more like a domestic supermarket than a cash and carry. Containers to be shipped can be shared between any number of people. The success of one company, far from being seen as the downfall of another, is simply seen as potentially attracting more money to the area. One simply has to stay ahead of the game, make the next hot product for a hot price. This modus operandi creates forms of solidarity which are at one and the same time 'new' and built upon older forms. It also forces us to consider agglomeration as a tactic of place.

It is due to the embedded-ness of the concept of individual rational choice within risk discourse that the latter considers only the individual and the conglomerate - these are the only terms it knows and it posits them as binary opposites, not considering the *agg*lomerate or the mutual. This is perhaps largely because classical risk analysis is not used to dealing with entities in which there is a high level of equality between players; if Yiwu had a wider range of company sizes, including some which could better withstand problems, risks would be less equal, so the strategy of sharing them would not be successful.

All of this is not to suggest some essentialist vision of Yiwu as a place somehow displaying 'communist' characteristics within a capitalism of its own. I do not mean to make the crass argument that individualistic behaviour does not exist there- of course, it does. However, it is the case that risks are calculated with the whole in mind, simply because the whole is more likely to turn up insurmountable risks to the individual. My intention here is to use Yiwu to expose the mistaken impression of risk analysts that it is *direct* individual choice which determines action. As Mauss emphasised, our sharp division between freedom and obligation, just like that between self-interest and altruism, is an illusion thrown up by the market, whose anonymity allows us to ignore the fact that we constantly rely upon others (1990).

iv) (Tactical) Reciprocity: Entangling Market and Community

These new forms of solidarity based on agglomerative operations, not only bring into serious question Western theories of risk, but also force us to pull apart well established dualisms which have become taken for granted in the history of Western philosophy - market/community, commodity/gift, exchange/use, monetary/non-monetary, modern/traditional, capitalist/non-capitalist, anonymous/associated, reciprocal/non-reciprocal. This last seems to have somehow gained a greater moral undertone than any other opposition, anthropologists and economists across the philosophical spectrum hi-jacking it as a 'moral' term and twisting it to suit their purposes. Put simply, one strand saw reciprocity as fostered by 'community', and so depicted money as demoralising, alienating, and corrupting, whilst the other saw reciprocity as fostered by 'market', and culminated in the view of money as a great force for betterment and 'civilisation'.

Briefly, the first strand begins with Aristotle, and manifests itself as a general condemnation of money and trade, along with a celebration of self-sufficiency and production for use. In *Politics*, Aristotle defines man's wants as naturally finite, and, therefore, trade as only natural in that it restores self-sufficiency as we exchange what we do not need for what we do: 'Interchange of this kind is not contrary to nature and is not a form of money-making; it keeps to its original purpose- to re-establish nature's own equilibrium of self-sufficiency (1962: 42). Self-sufficiency, for Aristotle, required reciprocity, which was natural and therefore good; profit-oriented exchange was deemed unnatural and destructive of the bonds between people and households. The Aristotelian theme that has carried through epistemologically is that of trading 'for the sake of', becoming trading 'for its own sake'; the transition one from to the other being a moral mistake according to Aristotle. Aristotle's ideas were taken up, in the thirteenth century, by Thomas Aquinas and the church authorities who saw many evils in material acquisition. One of their major problems was the idea that merchants did not 'produce' anything, so they did not 'work', yet still earned from the labourer. It is because of their preoccupation with material production, that Marx's 'labour theory of value' is often viewed as the last in a long line from Aristotle.

This first tradition can perhaps be said to continue to the idea of the 'gift' economy being somehow intrinsically 'moral', as opposed to the immorality of the 'commodity' market. More recently, it can be found in Polanyi's (2001) assertion that when kinship is present, reciprocity is

apparent and dominant, but when the market economy prevails, things are better understood by formal economics - presumably a formal economics which assumes a non-reciprocity relationship. For Polanyi, as for Aristotle, this transition from what he called 'embedded' to 'dis-embedded' economies (i.e. land and labour becoming separated from the social fabric of society through money and exchange), was a devastating moral transformation. Again the moral is equated to kinship relations, and the immoral to the market relations. Again there seems to be an unproblematic line separating the two. From the standpoint of this tradition money corrupts reciprocity.

The second tradition is that which concludes that money aids reciprocity. It could be said to begin at the point when the church is using Aquinas' thought to scorn material acquisition, when a few strands of religious and political life broke away from that thinking and attempted to make acquisition morally acceptable by separating the 'interests' from the 'passions'. Hirschman's (1977) well-known account of how money-making became honourable begins with Augustine's differentiation between the love of glory, which he saw as able to have redeeming social value, and the purely private pursuit of riches. For Augustine, it was the State which must be the mechanism for holding back the worst passions and harnessing them in the name of 'interests'. (Perhaps there are premonitions here of Deng's awakening call, that 'to get rich is glorious'; it is the glory that is at stake, rather than the individual riches.) However, Hirschman argues, both repression of the passions, and harnessing 'interests' to overcome them, lacked persuasiveness, so a third solution, to discriminate amongst the passions and use the apparently more innocuous passions to counteract a more dangerous and destructive set, emerged as the answer (1977:20). As 'danger' was seen as embodied in lust more than in any other passion, avarice was left free to emerge as the less frightful passion which could be deployed in the attempt to maintain the calm of the others. So, the scene was already set for Montesquieu to take this strand of thinking one step further, and argue that not only could avarice be used for 'good', but that even when not being 'harnessed' in the name of that project, it could unwittingly conspire towards the public good (2002). This 'invisible hand' meant the role of the state in repressing passions was now far less necessary, if not totally unnecessary.

More or less contemporaneous to Montesquieu, was Bernard Mandeville's Fable of the Bees, in which he argues for the necessity of vice in the running of capitalism: 'every part was full of

vice, yet the whole mass a paradise' (1997: 14). (Not surprisingly, these two works are often deemed to form a precursor to laissez-faire thinking.) Montesquieu's argument went on to suggest that not only could self-interest lead to betterment for all, but that the trade which emerged from this self-interested desire, by necessity, 'polished' and 'softened' barbarian ways due to a mutual dependence (2002:80). By creating a strong web of interdependent relationships, it was thought, domestic trade would create more cohesive communities, and foreign trade would help avoid wars between countries.[54] This 'doux commerce' can be directly compared to Smith's 'many advantages' arising from man's 'natural desire' to barter (1991). So, in this second tradition, far from eating away at reciprocity, money cements and creates reciprocity.

There are of course various positions that fall in between these two strands, namely Simmel's (2004) assertion that money allows the individual to extend their personality, a line of reasoning taken up by Miller (1998), and which arguably can be witnessed in Colin Campbell's (1987) re-interpretation of Weber.[55] However, broadly speaking, two traditions can be traced; one in which money is the purveyor of morals and a force for the improvement of conditions, another where it is the culprit for a loss of morality and a harshness of conditions. Money has therefore been aligned with market, and non-money with community, both sets of terms competing for the right to add 'morality'. Strangely, in both sets, it is the perceived presence of reciprocity which is the argument used for the nature of the set to be 'moral'- reciprocity as that of trading nations versus reciprocity as that of gift-giving communities. The classic anthropological studies of Malinowski and Mauss heightened the attribution of 'reciprocity' to small communities. This, alongside the industrial malaise of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, proving once and for all that trade (at least its capitalist variety) did not bring prosperity to all and peaceful situations. So, with reciprocity attached to community rather than market, morality became the exclusive preserve of non-economic domains, and, due more to antagonisms between the world views of anthropologists and economists than to evidence gathered from their studies, the binary opposition was set.

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[54] Incidentally, this idea of trade as an effective tool against 'barbarism' or war was, until relatively recently, used by McDonalds, who argued that no country with a McDonalds had ever gone to war. After the break-out of war in the former Yugoslavia, they promptly dropped the argument, which was of course, banal and riddled with flaws from the outset.

[55] Campbell's work 'The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism' re-works Weber's argument, by saying it is the romantic desire to have what the brand or product promises which is the spirit of capitalism.

Therefore, what we have arrived at, in terms of our interpretation of reciprocity, is an often schizophrenic position which asks us to embrace individualistic accumulation, but for the good of a mutuality; in affect creating of us Bauman's 'walking contradiction' of the 'good consumer' (2000) who must spend, but must not overspend or spend wrongly. (This same contradiction can be seen in recent statistics of China's development, which show how as poverty in China decreases, so inequality increases, and providing 'evidence' for those who assume as inevitable a Smithian process in which, in order for us all to rise, some must rise far further than others.) Reciprocity has become embedded in consumption by this reasoning, and rendered invisible; to return a 'favour' given to us by 'the market', we must selfishly spend, for the good of everyone. But this is only the case if we allow that 'market' is distinct from 'community'; by disallowing the opposition we can, perhaps, reclaim reciprocity. The city of Yiwu, from the very outset of its modern conception, defied all opposition of 'market' and 'community', being ideologically defined by its 'small commodities city' title, and physically created to house workers above factories. In Yiwu, market relations *are* community relations. Reciprocity, is claimed by the collapsing of the two into each other.

This collapsing is perhaps better understood within the wider cultural context and by referring to the concept of guanxi (for explanation, see earlier footnote 50). Guanxi posits reciprocity as existing throughout all realms of life and therefore automatically dispels the binary oppositions the Western tradition has spent years building up. The reciprocity involved in guanxi, is expected regardless of whether money is part of the interaction or not, and regardless of whether those involved know each other due more to a business or more to a family connection. It is not the realm that is important, but the quality of the interaction and this emphasis on interaction blurs the realms to the point where they are not useful or necessary concepts. In this cultural context, therefore, reciprocity cannot be exclusively attributed to either the market or the community. In fact guanxi exposes the attempt to merge market and community as a quintessentially Western project, as it is Western theory and culture which separated the two in the first place and which has, ever since, engaged in theoretical machinations which push and pull the concept of reciprocity, shaping it to provide supporting evidence for varying political strategies across history.

In fact the struggle of Western business people to understand and accept guanxi has often centred on the 'inappropriate' nature of allowing strong ties and favour-giving to determine how and with whom business is done. Within the Western model this is seen as allowing practices reserved for the family or community realm to enter the market. Furthermore, because of the obligation to return the favour, even if it is at a much later date, Westerners often tend to describe guanxi as a 'using' relationship and therefore as unethical. These misinterpretations have resulted in some quite famous struggles for Western multi-nationals trying to break into the Chinese market. When Lee Kai Fu controversially left his position as Corporate Vice President at Microsoft to work for Yahoo he wrote a report stating that Bill Gates had made various 'guanxi mistakes'. These included boastful public relations campaigns, failure to make long-term commitments, failure to properly nurture local talent, and most importantly, failure to lower the price of Microsoft software so as to make it affordable to Chinese consumers. Gates was seen as benefiting before contributing, and according to Lee, he should have expected the vast amount of pirated software, considering its contextually high price. To mix metaphors rather, the fakes were a kind of guanxi karma.

Blurring distinctions, and arguing for an economy made up of what would traditionally be called 'market' factors and 'anthropological' factors is Stephen Gudeman's project. His analysis sees economy as consisting of two realms: community and market, community being associations, and market being anonymous short-term exchanges (2001: 1). In the community realm, which is localised, material goods are exchanged through relationships kept for their own sake, whereas in the market realm, which is global, short-term relationships exist purely to achieve a project or secure a good (2001: 10). Gudeman's attempt to join market and community in a new conception of economy is inspired by the view he shares with Mark Granovetter (1973), that while anthropologists employ an over-socialised view of human action (embedded communities), economists employ an under-socialised one (disembedded communities)[56]. So, following this logic, in non-market economies there is more instrumental action than anthropologists recognize, and in market economies there is more embedded action than economists concede (2001:19).

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[56] Gudeman is of course borrowing the terms 'embedded' and disembedded' here from Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation.* Polanyi's substantivism embraced a cultural approach to economics, which emphasized the way economies are embedded in society and culture.

So far so good. There are some useful acknowledgements of economic and anthropological type-casting of situations, which seem to be working towards some sort of market-community merger, and an acknowledgement that these realms take on many of each other's features. However, something is amiss. Despite allegedly being pro a dispelling of the market-community duality, what Gudeman seems to have done is to have merged the two in the interests of 'economy'. In other words, despite proclaiming an interest in the anthropology of economy, his argument is economically determinist at its core - it only merges market and community in the interests of re-inserting them into economy. To achieve this, he makes a number of false, or perhaps we should say, potentially murky, distinctions. Association belongs to community, while 'anonymous short-term exchanges' belong to market. While it is difficult to argue association does not belong to community, it is questionable whether market exchanges are necessarily either short-term or anonymous. There is also an assumption that 'exchange' in this context will be between consumer and 'producer', which discounts the many other types of exchanges within intricate modern markets which may be part of long-term trading relationships.

The second problematic distinction is between relationships in the (local) community, which are 'kept for their own sake', and those in the (global) market, which are only a means to an ends. This would suggest community as an unproblematic word and one which can never define something supra-nation or trans-global in its scope, and disallow the possibility of a completely self-sufficient local market. It also tends to posit global and local as separate movements, denying the many small pockets of locally idiosyncratic globalisation, and subtly supporting the idea of a global market as a slowly spreading ink-stain in the simplistic manner of Friedman and other 'flat-worlders' (See Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat*, 2005). However, more interestingly, it suggests the existence of relationships kept for no reason other than their past existence. It may be that historical allegiances cause relationships to continue longer than they otherwise would, but if one or other party enjoys nothing within the relationship, history will not suffice in maintaining it. In other words, relationships are never kept purely 'for their own sake'- there is always 'a project to achieve', albeit obliquely. The suggestion that in a certain realm relationships are somehow purer, more meaningful, because they are not kept to fulfil a desire, brings into play the idea that 'community' is somehow necessarily more wholesome than 'market', and therefore begins to paint 'community' in exactly the way those aforementioned over-socialising anthropologists did.

I mention these points, not so much to form a critique of Gudeman as such, as he does acknowledge that market and community realms can cross through enduring relationships (2001: 11), but to illustrate how difficult it is for us to escape the list of binary oppositions that have formed the basis of Western economic and anthropological theory. My concern differs to Gudeman's: I am concerned with merging market (read economy) and community in order to blur features traditionally consigned to either anthropology or economy. It is not that anthropological and economic elements make up economy, it is that anthropology and economy share elements that have so far only been allowed to reside in one or the other realm. I am not suggesting that there are not, in theory, two usefully separate disciplines, but I am suggesting that almost any on-the-ground example termed 'economy' or 'community' contains aspects of both and deserves to be read as an interwoven mix of the two - neither one nor the other, but its own idiosyncratic mélange of both.

The work of Michel Callon is useful here in further exploring an alternative viewpoint in which market relations are acknowledged as having merged to some extent with those of the community. Callon's mission is to continue Polanyi's work by arguing that economics, rather than being a descriptive tool, actually *performs* the economy (see Callon, 1998, 2007). As Bhaskar Mukhopadhyay says, for Callon, economic ideas achieve their efficacy and durability by *entangling themselves* [my emphasis] with 'materialities' (2010). This use of the notion of entangling arguably adds an extra dimension to Arvatov's objects, which can be seen in this light as not only entangling those subjects who make and use them, but also being materialities which entangle themselves with the economic ideas.

However, as Mukhopadhyay points out, despite Callon's positioning of subjects as agents entangled in a web of relations and connections, he is far from being a proponent of the idea of the network as a mechanism of collective effort. For Callon, networks inherently contain structural asymmetry, agonistic struggle, coercion and violence, and here he is engaging here with Polanyi's concern in regard to the violence entailed in the process of disembedding, or 'making market' as Mukhopadhyay puts it (2010). This latter frequently involves dispossession, exploitation and the destruction of markets structured on other principles. This is largely the case, and indeed was the case in Zhejiangcun and many other areas of China in which 'unofficial' markets were closed down to be replaced by cleaned-up official versions. However,

in Yiwu, built-for-purpose as it was, the making of market did not involve a disembedding in Polanyi or Callon's sense. Rather, it involved the making of a new phenomenon – one we could perhaps call the *market life-world* – in which market and community were instantly-already combined. (In fact the ways in which older systems of reciprocity play out in Yiwu and newer systems of contractualised protection are tacitly ignored, stands testament to the entangling of market and community.)

In comparing classic cases of making-market (such as the colonial relations Mukhopadhyay uses as his example) and more recent (and unusual) cases such as Yiwu, it is difficult not to cast the market life-world as the latest highly successful invention of a capitalism determined to enter into every last vestige of everyday life. If we accept this as the case, where does this leave us with defining how reciprocity works within a merged economy and market? In opposition to both the traditional anthropological view that reciprocal ties are the basis of society, and the neoclassical economist view which sees these ties as evolving from individual interests, Gudeman believes reciprocal ties to be *tactical* acts. As such, they extend the community base to persons outside of its borders as a way of 'groping with uncertainty at the limits of a community' (2001: 80), in order to gain power or maintain independence. Thus, for Gudeman, refusal to reciprocate can be interpreted as a lack of desire to create mutual relations, or an inability to do so, which means it cannot be viewed as a norm of social life (as the anthropological tradition would have it) nor a function of self-interest (as neoclassical economics would argue). For Gudeman anthropologists are still caught in a dialectic with western economists, as both offer essentialist views, the anthropological view being relational, and the economistic view being atomistic; one reinforcing relationships and altruism, the other the individual and egoism.

In contrast to both these positions Gudeman sees reciprocity as 'part of a system of practices in which participants express, conserve, lose, and gain position in the sphere of social value' (2001: 89-90). So, reciprocity as a tactical act is about negotiating the value of one's position; a position with a value which is social, not economic. As he says, 'reciprocity is not the core of society but its expression … neither a primitive isolate nor the atom of society but its badge' (2001: 92). But what determines the social value of a position gained through tactical reciprocity? Surely, the value is defined by the amount of choice the position confers upon its owner? If reciprocity is based on tactics, used to gain greater influence in some way, then the way it is played out is to do

with individual people carving out ways to gain more life choices, or at least be less constricted in life choices. It is about the creation of a feeling of greater freedom in the ways in which to survive, and can be mutual as well as individual. It is not 'maximising' in the classic sense; that is, it is not manifested in attempts to make profit; rather it is concerned with maximising choice through increasing personal potency within the surrounding framework. This is not to say that such tactics on the part of individuals necessarily run against the capitalistic strategy of the market life-world. Indeed, the potency of the market life-world could explain why guanxi, a Confucian tradition, has been reformulated for the purposes of capitalistic enterprise.

v) Agglomeration as a 'Chinese Characteristic' – Counter-Hegemonic Tactics?

What is being tackled once again here is the battle between the grounded tactics of individuals and the strategic movements of larger systems and institutions. The £1 trinket chain is of course caught up in the wider politics of the places through which it passes and indeed, as we shall see in the following section, in the strategic policies and movements of supra-national and global entities. The tactics of the trinket, run contemporaneously to those of China, Europe and the world order at the early stages of the 21st century. At any one stage of its journey, the tactics at play may or may not be those of the wider relationships it finds itself part of, such as that between China and the EU. Let us pick part this particular relationship briefly. What are the key characteristics and agendas at play within the China-EU relationship?

As David Kerr attests, in many ways China and Europe have no fundamental conflict of interests and do not represent a threat to each other, so short term difficulties have so far been more than outweighed by long-term gains 'as their partnership produces a multiplier effect, advancing the positive and mitigating the negative' (2004: 3). The Asia Europe Meeting Process (ASEM) has proved testament to this and in 2003 both the EU and the PRC declared in separate documents their recognition of each other as strategic partners. Similarly David Shambaugh talks of an 'emerging axis' appearing in the international system between China and Europe (2004: 243-248). However, such accounts may represent a glossing-over of sorts (not to mention an emphasis on duree as opposed to moments of disagreement) as there are some broad strategic ways in which China and Europe differ widely. What follows is an attempt to summarize these.

Firstly, it must be recognized that China is a large single state, compared to the multi-state entity that is Europe. China has traditionally found Europe a complicated entity, and has struggled to interact with its multiple member states, each with their individual legal and cultural differences, despite all being bound by EU regulations. In addition, many of Europe's states are former Soviet Block countries who have a communist past and therefore represent a cultural difficulty for China. As Kerr says, this means China has to negotiate between EU institutions and the national interests of member states (2004: 5-6). This has become no less of a problem as China has moved from an international relations model in which politics took clear precedence to one in which economics does; although China's economic turn is largely responsible for the West's tempering of the 'China threat' by the 'China opportunity' since the 1990's.

To compound this heterogeneous picture, not all European member states contribute equally to Europe's relations with China. Whilst the EU's presence as a member of the World Trade Organisation enabled China to join, supporting them against US reticence, only France and the UK have a place on the UN security council, so the 'EU' is not necessarily represented vis-à-vis China. Furthermore, the 'big three' (France, UK and Germany) have more sway and also tend to view their relations with China in the context of their international roles, i.e. in relation to the USA. Thus an invisible EU-China-US triangle colours much of the interaction between China and 'Europe' (as represented by the 'big three').

That said, this triangle perhaps goes some way to creating a shared China-EU agenda, centred on a critique of US mono-lateralism. However, this anti mono-lateralism is sometimes drawn into question by Chinese development policies. Most notably, in the late 1990's the Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party (then led by Hu Jintao and Zheng Bijian), began to use the term 'peaceful rise' to describe bringing Great Power status to China in a non-hegemonistic sense, i.e. alongside rather than instead of the US. However, outside of China, the word rise caused problems as it was interpreted as inevitably suggesting the fall of another – the 'power transition thesis' (See Wang Yiwei, 'The Dimensions of China's Peaceful Rise', Asia Times, 14th May 2004). From spring 2004 Chinese leaders abruptly stopped using the term and during 2005 began using 'heping fazhan' instead – peaceful development. Core here is the idea that China's rise cannot be threatening if China and East Asia rise together through 'mutually embedded regional development' (Kerr, 2004: 293). Although as Kerr is careful to point out, the

process of reducing competitive tensions intra-regionally, may have the effect of increasing competitive tensions inter-regionally - 'thus the political economy – and hence the politics – of regionalism are no longer properly separable from their inter-regional equivalents' (2004: 293).

Secondly, there are structural and cultural differences in the way that China and Europe are organized. Kerr underlines the differences between what he calls 'European structuralism' and 'Asian orgnanicism', saying that whilst 'Europe is a legal-institutional order that reflects the dominant properties and historical traditions of European States', the Chinese world view is based on ethical-communitarian independence. (2004:296). Therefore, whilst Europe is keen to enforce more rigid laws via institutional mechanisms, China appears to attempt to avoid these due to a preference for ways of operating to be grounded in ethico-cultural norms. It is easy to apply this argument to the relations in Yiwu; the ways in which intellectual copyright laws, whilst officially applied, are avoided in favour of older interpersonal loyalties. However, as far as the EU are concerned, China's 'failure' to reach the requisite standards as regards the governmental role in the economy, the accounting system, bankruptcy law, financial reform, etc. is the reason for its continued refusal to grant China full market economy status. (Although as Feng Zhonping points out, many believe the real reason for this is that anti-dumping laws would be harder to enforce should China gain full market economy status.)

What do these broad differences in culture mean in the context of the £1 chain? I'm inclined to agree with Kerr that over the next twenty years China will increasingly move into manufacturing large consumer 'durables' such as cars, planes, etc. (2004: 292). At this point the ability to avoid the legal and institutional formalities that Europe insists upon will rapidly decrease and the tactics of China as a nation will perhaps begin to clash with those of the small commodity chain – where currently they do not. Gaining full market economy status will become even more crucial for China, so IPR frameworks and laws will be brought in which will make the spontaneity the £1 chain requires difficult if not impossible. The nature of the size of company required to make large goods, alongside a (enforced) cultural shift away from ethical organicism and towards legal structuralism, will undermine the agglomerative nature witnessed in small commodity chains and force larger profits into fewer hands.

Furthermore, the insistence upon stricter trading structures and laws will deepen the EU-China relationship not just as strategic trading partners, but also as global responsibility partners. Only,

this is a process made up of competing ideas – 'strategic trading' is not necessarily compatible with 'global responsibility'. So far, as small commodity enterprises have been spread around and unofficial in nature, the £1 chain has managed to avoid over-arching policy enforcement on global responsibility. In future, it may not be able to do so, which may result in the ethico-flation mentioned in chapter four and therefore the end of era of China as the worlds factory for small commodities. However, it is important to underline here that 'global responsibility' is simply part of the rhetoric surrounding strategic trading; having a CSR policy is part of good strategy practice. Therefore to talk of global responsibility in the context of trade relations is usually little more than neo-liberal diatribe. Strategy (globally) is to at least talk-up responsibility; tactics are to ignore it where possible- on the Western side as much as the Chinese side. The only available counter-tactics are therefore to take back the notion of responsibility from corporations.

All this leaves us with a strange quandary. Whilst the £1 chain is capitalism par excellence, it displays certain characteristics (namely agglomeration – which enables small profits to be shared more widely) which could be utilized as counter-tactics against (Western) capitalism as we know it. If China moves away from the small commodity market, its manufacturing is far more likely to become organized in the way Western capitalism operates. Thus, the £1 chain becomes a pawn in the wider geo-politics of capitalism; capitalism has almost succeeded in appropriating its counter tactics.

vi)   Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how Yiwu has developed as an unlikely mix of Confucian, Maoist, and capitalist ideals which together have shaped its spaces and operations. Alongside this a small but potent history of agglomerative trade, whose origins lie in Wenzhou and the Yongjia school of thought and whose principles were played out in Zhejiangcun, has unfolded. Yiwu's spatial relations in many ways represent its intrapersonal operations, in that their uniformity and division into small areas specific to task form the basis of a commercial logic based on the importance of the abundance of small units and the resulting survival of the whole. This tactic of agglomeration involves a relationship to risk in which spontaneity is reformulated as a safety of sorts and therefore runs counter to the logic of most global corporations, manifesting itself in forms of solidarity which belie classic Western risk

analysis. These forms borrow from 'old' solidarities, such as guanxi networks (whose origins lie within Confucianism), as well as more recent ones, such as the communistic practices in place under Mao.

The combination of these factors has given Yiwu a market logic unique to itself and one which is proving highly transportable, with implications for citizenship and international law and ethics as well as just trade. However, the anomalistic characteristics of this form will mean that it can frequently only operate as a bounded community within other contexts and it may well find itself increasingly challenged by the ethical and legal frameworks of the countries into which it exports itself. Furthermore, it remains to be seen how 'new' legalised mechanisms, such as the introduction of formal policies on IPR, will impact upon the nature of these solidarities.

Notwithstanding this, it is certainly not the case that Yiwu is experiencing a simplistic shift from communistic to individualistic practices as a result of market industrialisation. The Yiwu model is in itself a Chinese brand of sorts, and one intrinsically bound up with Made In China. Its own self-image as a fantasmagorical utopia of commodities, is as yet mirrored by the West's fascination with the sheer scale, speed and efficiency of China's rise. The exporting of Yiwu pits aggregation against established practices of vertical growth, non-contractual solidarity against commercial legal frameworks, and the imminently defunct national 'global brand' against a new and omnipotent non-brand national brand. Its transportation to new territories is potentially the creation of a space in which these and other key dilemmas of current capitalisms are tackled.

Chapter Five

The Tactic of Abundance: Felixstowe's Fullness of Time and Space and the Virtual Anti-Inventory.

'The critique of the thing and of the process of *thingification* (of reification) in modern thought would fill volumes. It has been led in the name of becoming, of movement, of mobility in general. But has it been seen through to the end? Does it not remain to be taken up again, starting from what is most concrete: rhythm?' (Lefebvre, 1992: 1)

'The commodity prevails over everything. (Social) space and (social) time, dominated by exchanges, become the time and space of markets; although not being *things* but including rhythms, they enter into products. (Lefebvre, 1992: 6)

'… 'freedom' is obtainable at 7-Eleven grocery stores, not in egalitarian social relationships' (Ben Agger, 1989: 17).

It is late November 2006 and a small crowd has gathered along the blustery dock-side viewing area at the port of Felixstowe in Suffolk, England. The port has always been privately owned, despite being requisitioned, along with all other British ports, during both World Wars, before being sold to foreign interests for the first time in the 1970s. Thus it escaped much of the problematic transition from a nationalised to a privatised entity following the Thatcher government's decision in the 1990s to create the Associated British Ports Company: a corporatised entity which would subsequently be sold by stock offer. In 1991 75% of the port was acquired by the Hutchison Whampoa Group, Hong Kong, the world's leading port investor, which has interests in 47 ports across the globe. This move cemented links between the then burgeoning Chinese manufacturing industry and facilitated shipping and trade links. Today those links have resulted in the much anticipated arrival of the largest container ship the world has yet seen.

Those gathered are keen to witness the arrival of the largest container ship the world has ever seen. The vessel is almost a kilometer long and moves eerily into harbour to be greeted by the inevitable flurry of press interest and local curiosity. Its cargo is of toys, household products, gadgets, clothes, decorations and trinkets – as the headlines attest, it is 'bringing Christmas from China'. Down on the dock itself, huge cranes are poised ready to begin lifting the containers from the ship according to a sophisticated, highly computerised, logistics plan which charts to

the inch where each will be placed in readiness for distribution across the UK. The tiny figures of men on the dockside, dwarfed by the enormity of this floating island of merchandise, seem sublimely ridiculous – men out of time and place, running to keep up with things larger and less stoppable than they have ever experienced. The watching crowd appear awestruck. Some ask in low voices how it will stop and how it stays afloat. The scene is a twenty-first century version of such early industrial spectacles as the first great train rides or the churning cogs of giant factories; despite its computerisation it is cumbersome and heavy like those earlier miracles. The small coloured blocks on the futuristic screen translate into heavy, creaking lumps of metal, stained with sea-spray and demanding upkeep. The liquidity of the operation remains curtailed by the dictates of the iron cages. (See figure 16.)

This chapter aims to tackle the question of how things, in this case £1 trinkets, relate to and impact upon certain times and spaces. In recognising how fullness of time and space is characteristic of the £1 chain, it seeks to understand how this abundance is used as a tactic of the chain. In doing so it takes both the port of Felixstowe and the website www.alibaba.com as contrasting examples of times and spaces which are either literally or metaphorically (virtually?) 'full'. The emphasis on abundance here is part of an attempt to understand how it interacts with other times and other spaces to create rhythm. Rhythm is specifically understood *in contrast* to the ever-present assumptions regarding the 'speed' of capitalism and the 'whizzy' rhetoric (Hutnyk: 2004). The chapter goes on to portray how the £1 commodity chain in rhythmical terms (as characterised by abundance in space and time) represents the fruition of the preceding chapters' arguments on immediacy, disposability and agglomeration, as these tactics are what create and determine the rhythm. Finally, the £1 chain and its rhythm is placed within the context of large global trends and analysed in regard to the macro concerns of international relations. The small £1 trinket thus becomes a catalyst for supra-national rhetoric on the global balance of power and the future of capitalism.

i) 'Pleine comme un oeuf': the fullness of time and space

The question of scale in the £1 chain is best understood as abundance. It is the nature of operations which rely upon the small profits made from many small units to make themselves abundant; and this abundance appears not simply in the physical existence of plenty, but in the

sense of time also being full. Put differently, the demand for the instantaneous requires time to be filled up as well as space. Yet this filling up of both should be treated with care. It is not the case that 'full' describes a richness of content, nor is it the case that 'full' refers to speed in the pure sense. As will be revealed, fullness/abundance is neither a value statement nor a reference to the rhetoric of 'fast capitalism' referred to by Ben Agger (1989) (amongst others) and critiqued by John Hutnyk (2004).

Indeed Lefebvre's own notion of fullness, within the context of his works, was that of the paucity of culture under the regime of fullness, the hollowing out of everyday life, the constant insistence on quantitative rather than qualitative growth. Speed too, is treated with care; Lefebvre (importantly, often along with the input of his last wife Catherine Regulier providing a female voice), whilst recognising the conveniences of everyday inventions which have reduced the time necessary for, say, household chores, also acknowledges that this has not come in a way which empowered people/women to take hold of their own time. Rather it has manifested itself in a way which causes them to have to work to pay for such gadgets; in which leisure time became distinct from any other time; in which rhythms in everyday life leant ever more firmly towards the mechanized and linear and were thus off-kilter with cyclical rhythms that may have provided more empowerment.

Lefebvre describes a more nuanced understanding of fullness: 'Le temps est bondé (jam-packed) et la vie parait pleine à craquer. Or elle est vide. Pleine comme un oeuf, vide comme l'abîme' (1961:94 in French version of CEL). Here he is describing modern life as at once crammed full (pleine comme un oeuf) and yet completely empty (vide comme l'abîme). The phrase 'pleine come un oeuf, vide comme l'abîme' literally translates as 'full like an egg, and empty like the abyss', but 'pleine comme un oeuf' is a colloquial French expression in its own right usually used to describe something that is full to the point of bursting. Indeed what is lost in the English translation is the sense of pregnancy; the idea that to be 'full like an egg' is to be, precisely, *full to the point one might crack* - there is an inherent sense of a bursting point, or at the very least of an uncomfortable fullness held together by a fragile membrane. Interestingly, the colloquialism is also used of someone who is inebriated, so holds connotations of debauched behaviour, of excess to the point of eruption. Lefebvre's usage of this expression therefore strongly suggests he did not simply see time (and space) as 'full', but that this fullness was unsustainable, driven by over-abundance or greed, and that when the fullness 'cracked' the consequences would be

messy. In this sense the expression remains far truer to his Marxist-Communist credentials and the idea of the potential for revolution than the English translation would have us believe. It reminds us that through Lefebvre's sometimes ponderous speculations, there remains a more revolutionary bent, and that whilst critiques of his inability to actually describe a plan for revolution are perhaps valid,[57] his oeuvre has tended to be misjudged as a cynical commentary on commodity culture rather than an inspiration for action.

It is not unlikely of course that the Lefebvre's egg analogy emerged as a result of his reading of Marx, in which the latter asserts:

> 'The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production which has flourished alongside and under it. The centralization of the means of production and the socialization of labour reach a point at which they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. The integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated' (1990: 929).

The 'integument bursting asunder' is a theme Hutnyk explores in *Capital and Frame* (forthcoming 2011). He points out that 'integument' is the chosen English translation of the German word 'hulle', which is a kind of seed cover, in the form of a furry husk or membrane which must crack open. For Hutnyk, the integument is therefore analogous to Marx's coat (as explored by Peter Stallybrass, 1998), which had to be pawned frequently, meaning Marx could not enter the library for lack of appropriate dress, and which can be contrasted to Engels' far superior coat (See Tristam Hunt's biographic work *The Frock-Coated Communist*, 2009).

What Lefebvre is positing here, is the idea that life is full in a purely quantitative way; that it has a paucity of quality content, yet is saturated. Furthermore, this saturation has the potential to lead to a revolutionary bursting point. Thus, for Lefebvre, abundance is defined in terms of a lack of meaning, depth and personal choice, but it can also, potentially, be re-appropriated and turned to the cause of deep, cultural change. There are two aspects to be gleaned here. Firstly, that 'speed' should be considered in the light of fullness and space, both literally and virtually. Secondly, that

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[57] For example, the Situationists described Lefebvre's relations with the New Left as 'Argumentist dung' (quoted in Michel Trebitsch's introduction to Volume 2 of CEL), complaining that he gave no plan for a revolution himself, yet accused the Situationists of being little more than a youth movement.

fullness relates to paucity – hence Lefebvre's turn to concepts such as scarcity, false needs, and abundance as lack. The following section explores some of these themes.

ii)   The double-edged sword of Abundance: alibaba.com – the ultimate anti-inventory?

So far abundance has been considered in the context of places where things are gathered - the strange non-places of stock-piled commodities – the markets of Yiwu, the dump sites and recycling factories of Shanghai, the immense container ships at Felixstowe, even the brightly lit £1 chain stores. But what of those places that resist the inventory? What are the tactics of the anti-inventory; virtual spaces created for the display and selling of objects, in which those objects (as yet) do not exist in material form?

It is mid-morning. The mist that earlier had hung above the sparkling surface of the west lake has lifted, revealing the iconic forms of its long, low walkways, with their crenellated sides and half moon gates. The air is clear and moist. Sound does not travel quite like it does elsewhere, rather, it hangs, just briefly, in the dampness, before disintegrating into the urban quagmire. Opposite the lake, a group of older Chinese men and women sit on benches playing traditional instruments and singing. Others, mainly men, are crouched on the pavement playing cards for nearly worthless Fen. A man in his mid twenties shows off his Kung Fu moves to friends, saying 'Jackie Chan, Jackie Chan!' His friends stop a Western tourist and politely ask if they can take a picture of themselves with her, using the cameras on their mobile phones. Above them all, the ever-smiling face of Jack Ma beams down from an immense billboard, surveying the scene with that familiar owl-like glint and irresistible optimism.

This is Hangzhou, about 100 miles out of Shanghai, and birthplace of Jack Ma (or Ma Yun to give him his Chinese name), China's popular and highly successful entrepreneur and role model. It was here that, at the age of 12, Ma cycled miles every morning to wait outside hotels and offer to give guided tours to tourists in an attempt to learn English. It worked. His English is near perfect. Perhaps rather prophetically, this was 1976, the year Mao died, bringing an end to the Cultural Revolution and soon after, a beginning to the reign of Deng XiaoPing, along with its reform and opening up policies.

Twenty-three years later, as much of the world was in a state of pre-millennium fever, concerning itself with era-marking extravagances or panicking about the 'millennium bug', Ma quietly and confidently launched *alibaba.com*. The site is a business-to-business (b2b) marketplace which links wholesale buyers to manufacturers, serving 12 million members from 200 countries, figures that are increasing constantly. It now has offices across China as well as in Europe and Silicon Valley, over 5000 employees, is China's largest e-commerce company and the world's largest and most successful online b2b marketplace for small to medium-sized companies.

'Lee' (his chosen 'English name'- a derivative of his own), is a business graduate from Shanghai, here to attend the Hangzhou Trade Fair, where he hopes to make contacts and gain employment in trade logistics. I point to the Jack Ma billboard: 'He seems very popular …' He is very popular, Lee informs me, a huge national role model. A recent survey found that one in ten school children wanted to be like him. 'What is it about him they like?' I ask. Lee pauses for a second or two, before explaining that Ma came from humble beginnings, the son of hard-working parents in rural Sichuan province, so his rise is inspirational for the huge majority of young workers from rural provinces trying to carve out a better life. 'He is a symbol of what can happen in the new China', says Lee, 'and people want to believe that.' I nod, 'He's been very clever to use the Internet'. Lee agrees. He thinks it was because Ma came from nothing that he dared to take more risks than others - he would go back to nothing if he had to because he knew how to cope with it. So he invested in the Internet even before it had taken off in China, which meant he got there first and cornered that market with hardly any competition. 'Do you think he would have got where is today without the Internet?' I ask. 'No', says Lee, 'He would be successful, but not to the extent he is now'.

According to the China Internet Network Information Centre, in 2006 alone, China's Internet population increased by 24%, to 137 million people - one tenth of the population - compared to a minute coverage five years previous. Without doubt, the sudden and large increase in Internet coverage and usage in China has hugely contributed to Ma's success. Within the £1 commodity chain, the Internet has been, and is, a fast flow, both in terms of the speed with which it was put to use by Chinese manufacturers, and in terms of the extent to which it caused the chain as a whole to operate more quickly. Thousands of small manufacturers signed up to *alibaba.com* and

began receiving orders from Western companies. Because *alibaba.com* did not require buyers to purchase in bulk, these orders tended to be relatively spur-of-the-moment decisions requiring quick turn-around schedules. Just-in-time economics had reached new levels in the £1 chain.

Alibaba.com is in many ways the ultimate just-in-time business; being Internet-based and agglomerative, but also not possessing in itself any material objects. Unlike the container ships themselves, the spaces at Felixstowe port, or even the 'stocky' displays of the £1 stores – all places in which space must be filled – *alibaba.com* is a virtual inventory; an anti-inventory; a menu of things which will only be brought into existence if and when they are purchased. Yet, conceptually *alibaba.com* fills up space and time, making promises of future labour and motivating new desires, new needs, at the click of a mouse.

Comments and forum threads on *www.thewholesaleforums.co.uk* reveal the way in which this virtual inventory creates fullness. A wholesale buyer, relatively new to the business, who had just started using *alibaba.com,* asked advice from others on the forum, saying, 'How do I go about narrowing down my choices? Have you guys eliminated suppliers based on location, rating, or other criteria? Slightly lost as to where to start!' One reply stated, 'I know where you're at. I experienced the same thing two years ago when we switched to *alibaba* from our traditional suppliers. It feels like the whole of China's on there right? The ratings tell you something, but not enough. I would attempt to make contact with about six companies, tell them you have contacted others and that good and honest communication is important to you, and see which one gets back to you quickest and with the best response'. This comment shows not only how 'fullness' can be experienced in the virtual world as an abundance of potential, but also how, in attempting to sift through that fullness, people often create a further level of fullness by demanding fast responses which do not necessarily come with any qualitative guarantee.

Similarly, another user was considering using alibaba.com to buy products made in Yiwu. 'I want to shift my purchasing more to online, but I'm thinking I'd still like it to be Yiwu-based, as I have bought from there for the past five years and believe it to have more integrity than other areas. But I can't tell whether the Yiwu-based firms on *alibaba* are displaying in the markets, or just happen to have a workshop there. I want one that has a regular stall. Any advice?' Amongst the replies was one that said, 'You can ask the supplier for their stall number and check it out on one of the Yiwu websites, but I've found that if someone is on Yiwu they are nearly always

connected to the markets because it's not worth them being based there otherwise. Even if their factory doesn't have a stall, they are making products for another factory that does'.

These comments show how *alibaba.com* reflects the abundance of small manufacturers and the sheer amount of material production, but is also a window onto the fullness of this production, and the difficulties in making choices in the face of an abundance which is rich and yet somehow bewildering and devoid of meaning. It promises an abundance of things whilst emptying out culture and eliminating the need to defer gratification.

This touches on how abundance can be seen as the filling up of time and space as both 'plein' and yet 'vide'. But what is the nature of the contradiction of fullness as far as Lefebvre is concerned? And what insights into the nature of the £1 commodity chain does this provide? To explain this as Lefebvre saw it is to recognize two key concepts – scarcity and colonisation. The former is at the least implicit, and at times almost literally described in Lefebvre's 'theory of needs', which insists upon understanding ''fullness' and 'plenty' in the context of scarcity, deprivation and, most importantly, uneven development. The latter is a concern with the culture of 'fullness' and the ways in which it has created a paucity of enjoyment of everyday life and a loss of control by people over their time and traditions. Key to this is Lefebvre's critique of so-called 'leisure time' (particularly prevalent in volume three of CEL) which he sees as bound up with consumption (and therefore the need to work) and can be seen as part of a long trajectory of theorists ending in the rhetoric of the shopping mall as non-place.

Both Lefebvre and Debord (in fact this was one of the few concepts that united them) saw everyday life in the modern world as governed by scarcity, rather than the then more prevalent view that it was governed by the wealth of consumer society. Both fell interestingly outside classic (over-simplified) late fifties-early sixties rhetoric regarding the evils of consumption. By volume three of CEL Lefebvre was acknowledging that abundance was now an issue, but only in that it created a paucity/scarcity to the richness and culture of everyday life. His was always a line of thought in which it was scarcity, either literal or cultural (again the needs of the stomach were dialectically linked to those of the imagination), which was the governing factor.

The idea of colonisation can be understood as loosely linked to scarcity, by the way in which Lefebvre (along with Debord) interpreted industrialisation and the ensuing (uneven)

accumulation of things and capital as the cause of everyday life becoming disconnected from its own historicity. For Lefebvre this was most evident in the way the linear rhythms of industry and accumulation interfered with cosmic, non-linear cycles. In 1961, Debord summed up this disjointedness with the phrase 'everyday life is colonized', at a talk given to the Research Group on Everyday Life at the Centre des Etudes Sociologiques (CES).

Perhaps in exploring the abundance/scarcity dichotomy it is best to begin with an explanation of Lefebvre's theory of needs. This is first stated in volume one of CEL (2008 [1947]: 96) and is the reason Lefebvre himself and other commentators see his interpretation of Marxist thought as emphasising the (arguably forgotten) sociological aspects, as opposed to the economic ones – processes of production and circulation. What informs this position, is Lefebvre's over-arching concern with alienation, and the way in which he saw everyday life as the sole curative force for alienation. Everyday life was 'in a sense residual, defined by what is left over', so is therefore a form of abundance in itself; a form which can 'pierce through all alienation and establish disalienation' (2008 [1947]:97). Interestingly, although volume one was most directly concerned with alienation in comparison to the other two volumes, Lefebvre explicitly states in it that it will be the following volume which will concern itself specifically with 'an attempt at a theory of needs' (2008 [1947]: 99).

One gets a sense that for Lefebvre these needs are, in a sense, running away with themselves. He describes money as the only way in which the individual can gain contact with the world of objects and says, 'the vaster this world of objects becomes, the greater the need for money' (2008 [1947]: 161). So need is linked to abundance as part of an ever-increasing emphasis on quantity of money available to the individual. For the £1 commodity chain this provides not only a general truism in regard to the ever-increasing amount of things produced and 'needs' created, but also an understanding of the way in which quantity can be interpreted as turn-over as well as sheer amount. To paraphrase: the frequency of the occasion/interactions where money is needed is becoming greater (especially in regard to replacing inexpensive, non-durable items), as well as the amount of money needed more generally. This has the impact of speeding up needs.

However, the speeding up of needs on the consumption side runs parallel to, and is part of a joint process with, the speeding up of needs on the production side. The necessity for an abundance of product units, due to the low profit margins made on each one, means producers need consumers

to re-consume in ever faster cycles. As the chapter on disposability explored, this is why waste is so crucial to the success of the £1 commodity chain. The speeding of the gap between consumption and re-consumption feeds off waste, and as Lefebvre says, 'a social group is characterized just as much by what it rejects as by what it consumes and assimilates. The more economically developed a country is, the more gets thrown away, and *the faster it gets thrown away* …. [my emphasis] In underdeveloped countries, nothing is thrown away. The smallest piece of paper or string, the smallest tin is of use…' (2008 [1962]: 43-44).

This is of course precisely the story of China's development; the creation of waste, through policy-aided consumption, has had to be speeded up. However, as a nation now increasingly developed, but with large pockets of non-development, its relation to waste remains slightly schizoid – on one hand nothing goes to waste still, on the other waste must be created by consumption and vice versa. This schizophrenia has the unusual secondary effect of allowing China to forge a slightly different path through development; because it uses its own waste for manufacturing, it is becoming more 'wasteful' contemporaneously to using every last scrap. Super-fast development has lead to both syndromes being played out at the same time.

However, as well as creating and revolving around the creation of waste, this process of increased exchange interactions also embeds needs with the need for money. And this embedding of needs with money, according to Lefebvre, is part of the process by which 'every other need is adjusted and revised according to the need for money'. This leads to a situation in which 'the need for money is an expression of the needs of money'; the producer endeavours to create a need for his object (2008 [1947]: 161-162) so that this need can be transformed into profit. The £1 stores' products are not advertised; needs are not created in quite the way Lefebvre talks of. In many ways the £1 store is where the expression of the need for money has come to: it operates as a space of hyper-available goods, available to all, all the time (hence its comfort for many shoppers - the 'good old reliable pound store'), but this need for money is not even to satisfy 'needs' created directly by advertising, but to satisfy the more general need of 'spending' – a need which the last three to four decades have instilled in society. Money is needed in the pound store simply in order to be able to buy frequently and give the feeling of freedom *to spend* – precisely 'the need for money is an expression of the needs for money'. It is in this way that the pound store is the epitome of capitalist logic (it is absolutely about money reigning), albeit

one that masquerades very effectively as running contrary to that logic. It is this insipid leakage of money into domains which convince us they are precisely *not* about money, that in the context of the £1 commodity chain constitutes the *moral* alienation that Lefebvre is concerned with.

In volume two Lefebvre admits that the theory of needs as identified in volume one created a programme that proved difficult to achieve. So, here he adds to the theory, beginning with the basic presumption, 'The god-like amazement of seeing the world for the first time and the marvel of first smiles are not enough. If he is to work and to create, man must experience want. Without the experience of want and need, without actual or potential privation and destruction, there can be no being – consciousness, and freedom will never spring forth.' He goes on to say, '… need defined as want is the starting point from which man begins to explore a world of possibilities, creating them, choosing between them and making them real' (1961: 5-6). To interpret this shift historically, is to realise that by volume two of CEL Lefebvre's concept of needs has become entwined with the debates of the time surrounding the creation of 'false needs'[58] and the growing power of marketing. However, on a philosophical level, it is to recognise that man has a need to need (else a sense of freedom cannot be gained as he says), but that the emotions connected to these needs are becoming increasingly influenced by commercial interests.

In fact, this subtle shift in his thought begins a complicated analysis of needs as desires and vice versa. Volume two defines Lefebvre's definition of needs as follows: 1) Desire is different from need - it can even struggle against need until it frees itself. 2) *But,* initially there is no desire without a need as its base/foundation (base/fondement in French). A desire without need is purely artificial and hard to create. 3) Sooner or later desire turns back towards need in order to regain itself. Through these three points Lefebvre explains how the dialectical relationship between desire and need happens in the everyday and is surrounded by complexities of consumer society. Even false needs (desires) are hard to create without genuine need underneath; but perhaps what Lefebvre is hinting at, and what I have argued in the chapter on the bargain, is that there is a need on the part of the individual to have agency and autonomy, which often comes in the form of being able to gain desires. Since the onset of consumer society, this gaining of

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[58] The concept of 'false needs' was at around this time picked up on by members of The Frankfurt School as indicative of the operations of the Culture Industries. However, it was, initially at least, used in reference to Herbert Marcuse's original differentiation of types of needs in *Eros and Civilization*. This was in itself, of course, a synopsis of Freud and Marx, and Marcuse's differentiation can be interpreted as largely springing from Marx's statements regarding the needs of the stomach vis-à-vis those of the imagination.

desires has frequently been interpreted as the ability to buy/spend; the ability to have (consumer) 'freedom'.

It is in this way that Lefebvre's theory of needs relates directly to the £1 shopper who enjoys the 'freedom' of the £1 store – the store satiates the need to feel agency and therefore relates to desire in that it plays upon the need to need (in order for desire to be present), rather than the need for objects to provoke desire. *This is how the mundane £1 object has become an object of desire.* This is perhaps how the process has become 'déformé', continuing 'its journey from 'the vital to the social, from want to fullness, from privation to pleasure …' (1961: 10-11), but with desires no longer conforming to needs, and needs no longer metamorphosing into desire in the same ways. This remains connected to 'the suggestions and the orders given to[the consumer] by advertising, sales agencies, or the demands of social prestige'(1961: 10-11), but in the twenty first century this prestige has become subtly, but inextricably removed from the possession of the object itself. Rather, it is now embedded in the concept of the possession of 'freedom' through spending and the familiar rhetoric of buying power (and what one does with it) as the last great *political* (!) vote.

It is not until volume three however, that Lefebvre takes up the theme of abundance with a commitment to truly dissecting it. Here he says, 'The problem has changed. It derives not from scarcity of material or ignorance of daily life but, on the contrary, from an abundance of material and a kind of excess of positive knowledge' (1981: 41). However, he goes on to explain that this abundance causes uneven development globally and, crucially, the emptiness of boredom, arguing (along Marx's original lines) that '…in their present form the world and planet derive, in the first instance, from the extension of the market and commodities to the entire earth, in an uneven process that has nevertheless swept aside all resistance' (1983: 53). This understanding of abundance as emptiness was clearly linked to Lefebvre's reading of Marx, through which he understands the state of non-having as a 'state of very positive having – the having of hunger, cold, sickness, crime, degradation, stupor, every conceivable inhuman and anti-natural thing' (1972: 84). Thus Lefebvre has taken Marx's idea of not having as having and included the reverse within his thinking – having as not having. In fact in volume three of CEL he was to state explicitly that both having and not having were devoid in different ways and, as previously mentioned, for Lefebvre, to debate this was to miss the point, as it was to be primarily concerned

with possession, rather than entanglement. He goes on to say how life is full yet so empty, and that emptiness comes from boredom and privation: 'On the horizon of the modern world dawns the black sun of boredom, and a critique of everyday life has a sociology of boredom as part of its agenda' (2002[1961]: 75). Privation for Lefebvre, is linked with 'private life' etymologically and philosophically, with the 'world' being there to 'plug up the holes, fill in the cracks, camouflage frustrations, etc.' (2002[1961]: 90)

In many ways Zygmunt Bauman says a similar thing when he states that 'the word 'too' is lying, when it says that were the 'excessive' taken away, the norm would be restored. The truth is that were the excess out of the way, the void would yawn where the norms were supposed to reside …' (2001:86). For both Bauman and Lefebvre excess is more than simply being too much; rather it is a fundamental lack of the ability not to need in capitalistic ways. This is useful in that it aids and clarifies Lefebvre's understanding of needs as abundance – an abundance which has dis-enabled people to utilise and live what is out there readily available. For Lefebvre during the 1970s, and certainly by the time he was writing volume three of CEL, there was therefore a relevance, even a culprit, in the form of consumer society. For Bauman this was certainly the case. He steadfastly attributes the reliance upon excess, to the emergence of consumer society, seeing happiness and survival as fundamentally mis-aligned due to the former resenting limits, and the latter being all about abstention (p.86-87). I would add that this is perhaps only the case in capitalistic systems and is not an on-going truth.

Happiness for Bauman, is (wrongly) kept alive by the dream of excess; it is the 'trademark of modernity', but has no longer a finishing line, 'no more a dream of arrival, but the urge to be forever on the move'. And here he again connects with Lefebvre's interpretation of the void of abundance being caught up with a sociology of boredom, saying: 'The image of happiness is shaped in the likeness of a road movie: a picaresque string of adventures, each new and exciting for its novelty… but each one wearing off quickly, shedding its charm the moment it has been tried and tasted.' (p. 88-89) Whilst happiness used to be 'burdened with delay', reward is now instantaneous. Of course, Baudrillard also talks of this instantaneous culture of consumption in the section on credit in *The System of Objects*, as mentioned in the chapter on disposability. But if disposability is also key to understanding how boredom can be satiated; abundance is key to

understanding how needs have transformed themselves into the need for excess - the excess that creates the boredom.

Heather Hopfl's comments help frame this cyclical relationship. She argues that the supply of the excess is the major concern of late-modern social life and coping with excess passes as individual freedom - 'an oppressive drudgery masquerading as ever-extending choice. Matter fills up all space. Choice is bewildering illusion (1997: 236-237). These tactics – those of filling space and portraying drudgery of freedom, are precisely those of the £1 store and of its form of capitalism, just as they are the tactics of capitalism in general. Which returns us, of course, to Lefebvre's reasons for continuing to pursue alienation as his Marxist theme of choice, but also his insistence that it is a social rather than economic phenomenon – his 'humanist Marxism' (Shields, 1998).

However, there are fundamental differences between Bauman's interpretation of excess and Lefebvre's. Whilst both agree that it is what is thrown out that signifies most about a society and that is now the quintessential sign of an attempt to defy boredom; that it is transience of things that is an asset, for Bauman this transience suggests there is no attachment to things, whereas for Lefebvre it is indicative of inappropriate attachments to things as opposed to 'entanglements'. Surely, to follow Bauman's argument, a dis-attachment from things ought to lead to excess becoming an empty notion, but it does not. So, Lefebvre's notion is in many ways more useful as it does not suggest that the ability to throw away is indicative of a dispassionate relationship with having and excess. For Lefebvre the ability to throw away is more convincingly rooted in an argument which states that disposal is tied up with re-consumption. The jettisoning of a thing already has the promise of new novelty; of boredom momentarily banished once again. For him, the only answer is an appropriate entanglement with the thing.

iii) Lefebvre: Master of the Spatial Turn?

Although often erroneously associated with an emphasis on the spatial, largely due to the success of *La Production d'Espace* (LPE) in the English-speaking world, Lefebvre insisted throughout his work on the intricate link between time and space. In fact only a very un-nuanced reading of his work on rhythm analysis could miss the way in which it he argues it is precisely space and

time which make up rhythm - '…all rhythms imply the relation of a time to a space, a localised time, or, if one prefers, a temporalised space' (1992: 89). Furthermore, LPE was not translated into English until 1991, 17 years after its original publication, so the 'order' sometimes given to the development of Lefebvre's thinking is misleading. Even if we were to accept that LPE was more concerned with space, and previous works more concerned with time, Lefebvre's continuing themes throughout his life prove that he was thinking the two together from an early stage. Indeed in *Les Temps de Méprises* Lefebvre says of his 'spatial turn':

> '… there was great surprise when I started to occupy myself with these questions, speaking of architecture, urbanism, the organization of space … But this research on space started for me in childhood. I could not comprehend the philosophical separation of subject and object, the body and the world. The boundary between them did not seem so clear and clean … In my sinuous line of development … through Marxist thought … I arrived at the questions concerning space (1975: 217).

Furthermore, he himself called his spatial perspective 'transdisciplinary', specifically as a strategy to prevent spatial knowledge being fragmented and re-compartmentalized. For him, the spatiality of human life infused every discipline, largely because the production of space was inextricably linked with the power of globalised capital[59].

Indeed, although Lefebvre does see Marxism as having an inherent over-emphasis on the temporal, his concern is not with re-emphasising the spatial but with forcing the acknowledgement of the spatial and temporal as one. In *La Production D'Espace* Lefebvre contends that there are different levels of space, from crude natural space to 'social space', which is socially produced by human relations playing out in time and space. For Lefebvre, space is a social product; a complex social construction, based on the social production of meanings, which affects spatial practices and perceptions. This social production of urban space is fundamental to the reproduction of society and hence of capitalism itself and this production is controlled by a hegemonic class.

Both David Harvey and Edward Soja have explored the ways in which Lefebvre attempts to think time and space together; in fact they are the two key protagonists of the very few who have

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[59] In fact in *Les Temps de Méprises*, Lefebvre explains that part of the reason he had dismissed the work of Guy Debord at the time, was because the latter seemed unaware of the increasing power of globalised capital. Thus, his encounter with the SI actually became another source of his spatial turn.

attempted to utilise Lefebvre's concept of space. (Perhaps Mark Gottdiener is worth mentioning in passing here too – see in particular his *Social Production of Urban Space,* 1985, a direct reference to Lefebvre's book.) However, even for them, committed as they were to Lefebvre's notion, thinking the two together was not straightforward, although for different reasons.

Soja, possibly because as a geographer essentially he was keen to promote an alternative to the historical view he felt had ruled philosophical thought up to the early 1980s, tends to emphasize the spatial elements of Lefebvre's work. For example, whilst acknowledging Lefebvre's concept of social space as made up of spatial planning and lived time, he interprets the 'bureaucratic society of controlled consumption' as instrumentalised *spatial* planning by the capitalist state, emphasising the layout of shopping malls and town centres without including the ways in which time also came to be defined (Soja, 1989). Perhaps what is missed here is Lefebvre's notion of space as 'second nature': transformed and socially concretised spatiality arising from human labour. Viewed as such, space becomes completely based in time-defined activity as well as spatially-defined activity, proving that space for Lefebvre is interactive and contains both physicality and time - 'moments' and rhythms.

Harvey, on the other hand, although capably resisting the temptation to bring space to the fore, and despite embracing Lefebvre's work on the whole, criticised him for being a 'spatial separatist' and suggested he was fetishising space (1973). Along with Manuel Castells he heavily criticised Lefebvre's theoretical arguments, in many ways echoing the Structuralist school of Louis Althusser, of which Lefebvre was an early critic. Castells and Harvey began to establish certain boundaries beyond which radical spatial analysis must not reach. Whilst Soja himself argued that this lead to an unnecessarily limited conceptualisation of spatial relations, the acceptance of these critiques within the academic world can perhaps be seen as a motive for Lefebvre deferring his retirement in order to complete the long and theoretically dense *La Production D'Espace.*

Understanding properly how Lefebvre was combining time and space in his conceptualising of 'social space', also allows a better interpretation of his work on urbanism. Many have assumed that urbanism for Lefebvre is about cities, and taken his work *The Right to the City* (2009) rather literally. In contrast, when Lefebvre talks about urbanism it is not confined to cities, but rather is a summative metaphor for the spatialisation of modernity and strategic planning of everyday life.

For Lefebvre it is this which allowed capitalism to survive; in fact in *The Survival of Capitalism* (1976) he argues that capitalism's survival is built upon an increasingly embracing, instrumental and socially mystified spatiality. This mystification allows for, indeed creates, uneven development via tendencies towards homogenisation, fragmentation and hierarchisation[60].

iv) Moments and Rhythms

Let us briefly chart the conceptual development of both 'moments and rhythms. A future project of rhythm analysis is first mentioned by Lefebvre in volume two of CEL (1961); then comes LPE (1974), at the end of which Lefebvre notes that an analysis of rhythms would complete that of the production of space. The final volume of CEL follows up on the promise of volume two and provides the beginnings of rhythmanalysis; two short essays co-authored with his last wife Catherine Regulier follow this: The Rhythmanalytical Project' and 'Attempt at the Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities'. Then comes his book, *Elements of Rhythmanalysis*, which he considered to be the fourth volume of CEL in many ways. It is these three works together which now make up the 'book' we call 'Rhythmanalysis'(1992).

Lefebvre began developing this theory of moments as early as the 1920s as a response to the popularity of Bergsonism. In his autobiographical work *La Somme et la Reste* (1989), Lefebvre pits his own notion of 'moments' against Bergson's 'duree', emphasising the spatial as part of these moments, whilst simultaneously underscoring his thinking on time as just as foundational for him as that on space. In fact Lefebvre seems to have connected his dislike for Bergson with that for the surrealists. Despite initially engaging with the surrealists, Lefebvre was to offer a vicious critique of their activities and philosophy as early as volume one of CEL, describing the surrealist project as a 'game for aesthetes' and their idea of the 'modern marvellous' as 'a bit of metaphysics and a few myths in the last stages of decay … some psychoanalysis, some Bergson-izing[61]… an eclecticism, an impenetrable doctrinal confusion, together with a remorseless Parisianism…' (1947: 119). Lefebvre preferred to privilege the instant rather than the duree –

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[60] Foucault said a similar thing about 'heterotopias' and instrumental association of space, knowledge and power.

[61] Lefebvre's dislike of Bergson's 'durée' had been clear from as early as 1924 (in particular in the pages of the self-published journal *Philosophies*) and was to remain with him to be crystalised in his work on the theory of moments – a direct opposite of Bergsonian thought. In fact Lefebvre and Georges Politzer had paraded to class a tortoise they named 'Creative Evolution' in order to ridicule one of Bergson's key theories.

his greatest influence here being Nietzsche's 'augenblick' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1969) - a moment where past and future collide presenting new opportunities. Importantly, this meant that Lefebvre's time/space was quintessentially non-linear. Furthermore, his understanding of time and space as interrelated – time *with* space – relies upon the notion of rhythms: hence 'rhythmanalysis'.

Although the moment was a far earlier concept of Lefebvre's than Rhythmanalysis, the two seems to weave their way throughout his oeuvre, becoming ideologically connected as rhythms in life sometimes collided to create a 'moment'. Whilst Edward Soja and Mark Gottdiener have obliquely mentioned the moment, David Harvey is one of the few current thinkers who have engaged more fully with the concept. For him, Lefebvre's moments are to be understood as 'revelatory of the totality of possibilities contained in daily existence … during their passage all manner of possibilities – often decisive and sometimes revolutionary – stood to be uncovered and achieved' (1991:429). Similarly, Shields describes a moment as 'times when one recognises or has a sudden insight into a situation or an experience … a flash of the wider significance of some 'thing' or event …' (1998: 58).

Importantly, the moment was not defined by clock time. It could be a split second of insight, or a short period in history (Paris 68 being the obvious example) in which opportunities seemed to come to the fore. This rejection of clock time was part of Lefebvre's desire to understand time as experiential rather than linear. (It also has poetic resonance with the French Revolution and the attempt to create a new calendar, as well as Paris 68 and the cry to 'shoot the clocks' in order that the workers would not leave the protests at 5pm.) It was this dislike of linear time that had always perturbed Lefebvre when it came to Bergson and the latter's notion of durée. Lefebvre detested the idea of time as progress along a teleological path; preferring instead the recognition of time as made up of instants, some clear, some blurred, some that pass quickly, others that linger, some lacking in potent, others with a potentially revolutionary clarity.

Additionally, Lefebvre wanted to make time personal, to give it insight and feeling, to allow the experience of it passing to be variable – all of this was part and parcel of his wider Humanist Marxism. Time was lived: Lefebvre in writing the theory of moments in volume two of CEL returned to the notion of the vecu (lived) which had impressed him so many years earlier. (See *La Pensée et l'Esprit*, 1926.) Moments had the power to take one out of the everyday, even if

one must be returned to it. They were not, therefore, in themselves, the solution to the problem of banishing the alienation of the everyday; crucially, this was because Lefebvre did not see the everyday as the thing to banish, but the alienation within it. To see moments as straight-forwardly banishing the everyday would have been un-dialectical for Lefebvre - the everyday must remain, but be transformed. Besides, moments come from the everyday and were inspired by it: a 'bouquet of moments mixed into the banality of everyday life' (1989:235).

It is arguable, therefore, that the 'fullness' of time can be understood as making 'moments' more difficult to experience. For moments to exist there must be a variation in the way time is experienced. When time is 'full', its rhythm is regular, even automated, in order to fit the most in as efficiently as possible. It is therefore simultaneously empty of content and also of rhythm. An inability to have rhythm in time, can be seen, in a Lefebvrian sense, as creating less potential for moments. To relate this to the £1 commodity chain, if it must increasingly rely upon automating the gap between consumption and disposal - automated de-longation - the potential for people to find differing rhythms is lessened. In fact, 'moments' can perhaps only come from situations where the rhythms of different parts of the chain clash, or, potentially, if the chain were to clash with that outside of it. (As mentioned in the introduction this is rare, as the tactics of the chain tend to be influenced by or appropriated by the needs of capitalism, rendering alternatives to capitalism actually useful to its continuation, as classic crisis theory suggests.)

For Lefebvre, therefore, rhythm is specifically about changes in repetition. For there to be rhythm, there must be repetition, but not monotonous repetition – mechanical repetition is not rhythmical – rather 'strong times and weak times', as well as 'stops, silences, resumptions' (1992:26). Thus, rhythm is explained in relation to the concepts of polyrhythmia, eurythmia and arrhythmia; polyrhythmia meaning multiple rhythms, eurythmia meaning united rhythms, and arrhythmia meaning discordant rhythms (1992: 16). Lefebvre explains these further by arguing that everything has a rhythm - trees, people, cities, universes, etc; therefore there is always polyrhythmia which we can listen to 'symphonically' (see 1992: 31). The issue is whether this symphony is harmonious or discordant, that is, arrhythmic or eurhythmic. Rhythm is created by this polyrhythmia, the linear and cyclical times together.

Everyday time is thus the time of work, of watches and clocks, of linearity, but it is shot through with cyclical time – day, night, seasons, biological rhythms. Therefore, the everyday is the

theatre for 'what is at stake in a conflict between great indestructible rhythms and the processes imposed by the socio-economic organisation of production, consumption, circulation and habitat' (1992: 73). The interaction between the cyclical and the linear - domination of one over the other, rebellion of one against the other - is complicated and intricate and causes an 'antagonistic unity' between the two (1992:76). The cyclical and linear are clearly distinct, but 'enter into perpetual interaction' (1992: 90). In fact, if we consider the dual meaning of 'quotidian' in French – that of the mundane and everyday, but also of the repetitive - it is not surprising that a work on repetition and rhythm should naturally follow those on the everyday.

Lefebvre attributes the phrase rhythm analysis to Gaston Bachelard, which may well explain the use of the word 'elements' in the title of his book on rhythmanalysis. Bachelard had of course written on the psychoanalysis of the 'elements' fire, water, dreams, and earth[62] but it was probably his *The Poetics of Space* (1969) and *The Dialectic of Duration* (2000) which most informed Lefebvre's thinking. In the latter, which is essentially a critique of Bergson, Bachelard had contradicted Bergson's view of time in two key ways, both of which were to form Lefebvre's work on moments and rhythms. Firstly, in contrast to Bergson's notion of the 'durée', Bachelard had posited time as fragmented and discontinuous. Secondly, he had insisted upon framing moments and memories within space. Let us explore each of these ideas in turn.

Bachelard intentionally laid out his view of time in direct contrast to that of Bergson. Whereas for Bergson time continued as a flow between events, for Bachelard, it was to be understood as being made up of an infinite succession of momentary and discrete instants, which have no extension and are isolated from each other. As Ann Game asserts, in Bergson's duration 'there is a complete permeation of moments: past, present, future melt into each other … There is, if you like, a process of referral. The present bears traces of the past, such that no element is ever simply present; with each new moment the whole changes, so that everything remains and yet changes – hence the principle of qualitative differentiation and an undoing of sameness' (1995: 194). In other words there are memory traces (much as there are for Freud).

Meanwhile, for Bachelard, duration is experienced through instants and is therefore discontinuous, having neither extension nor flow. Crucially, this means the instant is constantly

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[62] Refers to Bachelard's works, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire, Water and Dreams, Air and Dreams and Earth and Reveries of Will.*

breaking with the past, the new does not have a history, and therefore the present is not inscribed in the past as Bergson suggested. In fact, past and future are empty and time is only the present instant, which never passes as we are constantly moving into a new instantaneous present (2000).

However, Bachelard's presentism provided him with a problem. If, as he suggested, instants were static and there is no flow between them, what mediates between them in order to cause one instant to give way to another? Bachelard's answer was to posit a dialectical relationship between the instant and nothingness, in which being is defined in contrast to its opposite, nothingness, and is therefore seen as a movement to overcome nothingness. Thus, and here we see the alignment with Lefebvre, what remains from the past is what begins again, and only that which starts over again has duration. This starting over again, a series of instants, creates a *rhythm*; thus 'duration' for Bachelard is constructed by rhythms.

Bachelard's insistence upon discrete moments creating rhythms was a clear influence on Lefebvre, as was his determination to situate time within space. For Bergson, time is the time of becoming. We mistakenly think of it in spatial terms, projecting it into space, as a line of time marked by discrete moments. For Bergson, this was abstract, static time, and as Game points out, in critiquing abstract space, he almost exclusively emphasizes time: 'If he does not precisely reduce space to time, Bergson nevertheless privileges time over space' (1995: 195). However, what lay behind Bergson's critique of this spatially oriented, abstract time, was a concern with understanding time as *lived*, sensuous, and characterised by qualitative differentiation (1950). Thus, despite their strong differences, Bachelard and Bergson were perhaps aiming at the same point, albeit from very different places – a conception of time as lived.

Indeed, Bachelard's work can sound remarkably close to that of Bergson or Freud. In T*he Poetics of Space*, he says, 'various dwelling places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of the former days' (1969: 5). This sounds remarkably similar to Freud's 'memory traces' and Bergson's account of the past entering the present, and certainly does not posit time as a sequence of discrete states. However, as Game points out, whereas Freud and Bergson talk of traces in *time*, Bachelard talks of 'dwelling places' and so spatializes the temporal assumptions of Freud and Bergson. For him lived time is dependent upon spatial specificity – space is necessary to give quality to time and duration is dependent upon qualitative, lived space.

Bachelard is exploring space that has been lived in with all the partiality of the imagination[63], rather than attempting to look at space in its positivity (1995: 200 -201). 'Bergson's lived time of duration thus becomes abstract time unless there is space; it is space which quickens memory, gives time life. Otherwise we are merely left with dates' (1995: 201).

The overly-simplistic tendency to posit Bachelard and Bergson as 'opposite' thinkers on time, alongside Lefebvre's very public berating of Bergson and support of Bachelard, may well have fostered the tendency to posit Lefebvre as exclusively concerned with the spatial; even as orchestrating a 'spatial turn'. This said, it is certainly from Bachelard's version of the lived, rather than Bergson's, that Lefebvre began his own thinking on 'le vécu'. In fact, despite Bachelard's *Dialectics of Space* being effectively a critique of Bergson, Lefebvre's oeuvre as a whole sits in far greater opposition to him than Bachelard's theory ever did. Bergson's version of lived experience, because it was bounded in time not space, was existentialist in an individualistic sense: his lived time was that of the individual and her own memory. In contrast, Bachelard's lived time relied upon memories in space: space occupied by others and which may not always be our own. Therefore, Bachelard's memory traces came from past space-bound moments which could be *public*, and so Lefebvre was able to conceive of and posit the moment as potentially *mutually experienced:* a notion which was far more suited to his desire for the moment to be capable of inciting *public* revolution, rather than simply private, existential, 'romantic' revolution.

To return to the context of the £1 commodity chain, what is required is an understanding of 'moments' as the fragmented continuity that Bachelard conceived, and as *micro-catastrophes*: *a multiplicity of fractures* which themselves, by interacting (in time and space) with other fractures, create the 'rhythm' of the places along the £1 commodity chain, as well as the 'rhythm' of the chain as a whole. Placing emphasis on micro-catastrophes, serves to highlight Lefebvre's notion of arrhythmia. For him rhythm was created by different repetitions falling at different points, rather like different time-signatures playing at the same time. If polyrhythmia

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[63] This idea of lived-in space was to provide the inspiration for Yi Fu Tuan's appreciation of space and place (2005). For him, the identity of a place only becomes vividly real through the dramatising of aspirations, needs and functional rhythms of personal and group life' (2005: 178).

and eurythmia signify the multiple and the united respectively, arrhythmia represents clashing beats: arrhythmia is the lived equivalent of musical 'flamming'[64]. The £1 chain's rhythm flams: as global urges come up against local concerns (global ethics versus local developmental ambitions); as human endeavour strikes against the realities of nature (the urge to work versus decomposition of raw material and tiredness); as environmental aspirations are taken over by consumerist ones. The chain is intrinsically arrhythmic due to its schizoid nature.

It must be acknowledged that even ideas as to how the rhythm of a city can be described are affected by differing cultural interpretations. For example, Yiwu is described as 'harmonious', which in the Chinese context means having space and greenery to balance out industry; this balance is entirely different from the Western concept of 'work-life' balance. Yiwu's rhythm can be seen as 'relaxed' due to spatial concepts of harmony and balance; the rhythms of Western cities are more likely to be described as 'relaxed' based on temporal/lifestyle features.

This acknowledgement of the influence of culture, or indeed political tide, on rhythm and its interpretation, relates to what Lefebvre meant when talking about 'dressage'. He defines dressage as the way a person bends and is bent to a group or society and its ways - 'In the course of their being *broken-in*, animals work … The bodies of *broken-in* animals have a use-value. Their bodies modify themselves, are altered' (1992: 40). For him dressage determines the majority of rhythms; the surrounding culture and its ability to bend people (whether forcefully or because we allow ourselves to be bent) is determining. Lefebvre's thought here is perhaps at its most culturally deterministic. He goes on to argue that things are only seen as natural when they happen to conform perfectly to accepted models (1992: 40). Thus, a national aspect of culture could influence the way a behaviour is seen as natural (or not) and consequently the way a rhythm is seen.

However, dressage need not necessarily be on a large cultural scale, such as national; it could also arise in micro situations. This is apparent when I speak to Tom, a young dock worker who says he started working at the dock around five months ago:

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[64] Flamming in music is when two beats are so slightly out of sync that they create a kind of double beat which interrupts the rhythm and is experienced as unbearable to listen to. A DJ who has badly beat-matched will inevitably create a 'flam'.

'Well I was gutted at first… I couldn't handle getting up that early (others around him nod knowingly and smirk)… I was just knackered all the time and I thought, God, how am I gonna get used to this… I've gotta find a different job. But then they put me on shift pattern, so I did like two weeks of earlies and then two weeks of lates, so when you're getting up early you know it's only for two weeks like, then the next two weeks you'll have a lie-in. Even then, at first I kept waking up early even on the weeks I was on lates, but after a while I even got used to that. Now it's like, I can tell my body when to sleep... I'm used to it you know… and it's not so bad'.

Similarly, Joe relates how he felt when the port began to become heavily computerised:

'Lots of operators were laid off, skilled people and all. They just didn't need 'em. The computers could do it, you know, even control the cranes. Lots of people re-trained, or were forced to re-train really. I s'pose in the end some of 'em liked it once they got used to it, you know, being indoors more, and it don't take such a toll on your body like. It's a real change though, some people like being out and about you know, they don't wanna be in front of a screen, they like to see things happening and know that they did it with their own hands – directly. I just couldn't get used to it meself, couldn't get me head round the idea that I didn't need to go anywhere or talk to anyone to work out a problem you know, I just had to sit there and work with the screen. It was a real shock to the system I can tell you.'

Dressage is also capable, according to Lefebvre, of creating total crisis. Here he formulates his argument around the terms 'rhythms of the other' and 'rhythms of the self', positing that when the other's rhythms make those of the self impossible, total crisis breaks out (1992: 99). For him all crises have their origins in rhythms (1992: 44). Certainly, rhythms are key to crises. However, 'the other' is surely a cultural category in itself? Rhythms of the other are only 'other' if we have not adopted them as our own; only biological rhythms are truly rhythms of the self. So, 'other' rhythms, over time, are constantly becoming 'self' rhythms. In fact this is part of the success and survival of capitalism, surely – that it makes 'other' enforced rhythms feel 'natural' to us? (Tom's words above stand testament to this surely?) Unusually, Lefebvre's thinking here is strangely un-dialectical. The kind of crises he is thinking could only emerge if there had been no tactical blending of rhythms between the self and the other; in other words, only if the 'other' was *suddenly* enforced upon the 'self'.

As Lefebvre argued, it is all too easy to confuse rhythm with movement, speed and a sequence of movements or objects. The key to understanding how he saw these as different, lies not only in

his conceptual appraisal of rhythm as 'slow or lively only in relation to other rhythms'(1992: 10), but also, probably in an etymological subtlety. Movement – mouvement in the French – can have more of a sense of gesture than in the English and therefore implies a greater intentionality to act. It would be simplistic to interpret the rhythms of the £1 commodity chain as having to do with speed.

v) Rhythm Versus Speed: Down with the Fetishising of Whizzy Capitalism

The café is small and basic, with plastic chairs which cannot be moved from the iron they are moulded to and formica-topped tables, some of whose edges are beginning to peel off. The walls are painted in a thick gloss paint which appears somehow greasy in the early summer heat. A constant waft of cigarette smoke is blown in through the open door. Nobody seems to mind. A huge blackboard with a vast array of combinations of all things fried adorns the wall, high above the counter. Behind it, a ruddy-faced woman looks at me expectantly. Groups of men sit at each table. I notice how very few of them are sitting up straight. The atmosphere is dour; pleasant enough, but dour. I am being watched by some of the men with curiosity. I order a tea.

Len, a large man in his late forties, with huge hands and a rugged smile tells me 'yes, things have certainly changed'. He says in some ways there have been improvements: the work is not as physically demanding as it used to be. Some of the others disagree, but he waves them off saying they're young and don't know what it used to be like. However, he bemoans the way computerisation has made the job less sociable: 'There's no spark now', he says, 'you know, people don't have a laugh, there's not the old spirit there used to be, it's a job now, not a community.' The man beside him chimes in: 'it's only a community when things go wrong', he says, 'like when Dennis Burman[65] died.' This causes much agreement and rousing of those surrounding us – the man has touched a nerve. 'Things like that ... it's sad, says Len, they're the things that keep us together…. Shouldn't be … but they are.' I ask how, in this day and age, such a thing could have happened. 'That's just it, isn't it? They think 'cos it's all clean 'n that now,

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[65] Dennis Burman was a dock worker who fell 115 feet from a crane on June 17th 2003 and died shortly afterwards in Ipswich hospital, aged 51. He had only been working at the port for a few weeks and was undergoing training. Hutchinson Whampoa who operate Felixstowe port were fined £250,000 for breaching safety rules and failing to ensure workers were not exposed to risks. His death is marked every year with a memorial service by Felixstowe dock workers.

and people sit behind computer screens controlling where all the containers go, that there aren't some of us still out there, all weathers, doing lifting and carrying-type stuff. It looks neat on the screen don't it, but it's still pretty tough down there on the ground… and now it's busier than ever - stuff coming in all the time… we've broken world records at Felixstowe y'know.' I nod. I do know.

'Would you say the work you do at the docks has sped up?' I ask. 'I mean, do you think the whole dock is having to work faster and things are coming in and being unloaded faster?' Len shakes his head. 'There's more coming in. That's a fact. But there are computers to help with that. Sometimes I think we're expected to work faster, but then, you think about the days when they hulked things around without cranes, you know, before big container ships and that - those guys were under much more pressure to work faster than us. It's still big, heavy work, there's a limit to how fast it can get… there's just more of it, that's all, and the port's grown so big.' He pauses. 'Dennis didn't die 'cos he was being rushed - he died 'cos the cranes were in the wrong place.'

In Len's relating of the way the dock works, how it has changed and what it is like to work there, there is clear distinction between the idea of the amount coming in to the port - its ability to process vast amounts due to its sheer scale, and the fact that the actual work on the ground is still slow, heavy and lumbering. In other words, there is a distinction between volume and speed: the filling up of time and space in Felixstowe does not simply translate into a rhetoric on speed as has become so common in discussions of globalisation (for example Robertson, 1992; Castells, 2000; and Friedman, 2006). Speed is often emphasised at the risk of neglecting rupture, stultification, apathy and the cumbersome nature of the labour of unseen others. The rhetoric has been particularly difficult to analyse and critique as it cuts across traditional political divides: speed as both a negative and positive impulse has been used by both the left and the right. In fact, as Tomlinson points out, Gramsci was an early admirer of the Futurists[66] and Lenin enthusiastically embraced the speed-regulation of Taylorism (2007: 9).

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[66] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti announced the *Futurist Manifesto* in 1909, two years before Taylor's *Scientific Management*. The movement was very varied and often internally ruptured due to the differing takes on its aims by its various proponents. Most remembered however is Marinetti's proto-fascist prose which proclaimed the glorification of war and the fight against moralism, feminism, and 'intellectualism'(in the form of libraries,

Paul Virillio's account is perhaps the best example of the speed-as-bad rhetoric. He argues that the speed at which something happens has the ability to change its essential nature and that things which move with speed always quickly come to dominate that which is slower. Therefore, territory is first and foremost a matter of movement and circulation; possession of territory is about speed of contact (1977:47). For Virillio speed is an engine of destruction and it is speed, not class or wealth, which is the primary force shaping society. For example, he argues that Western man has only appeared superior and dominant because he is more rapid; he has survived due to being part of the most powerful dromology, as opposed to being part of either a 'hopeful'[67] population who aspire to finally reach the speed they are accumulating, or a 'despairing population' who are forced to live in a finite world due to the inferiority of their technology (1977:47). Despite this, he does not see speed as a potentially revolutionary factor, perhaps because he sees it as the norm; thus to break from the norm, to create revolution, we must slow down or stop: 'The time has come it seems, to face the facts: revolution is movement, but movement is not a revolution. Politics is only a gear-shift, and revolution only its over-drive: war as continuation of politics by other means would be instead a police pursuit at greater speed, with other vehicles' (1977:18).

Whilst this 'slowing' has its merits as an argument, it does not take into consideration the ways in which we are immovable and apathetic already; it is caught up in its own rhetoric of dromology and assumes all in life is at a pace which guarantees 'slower' as a force to be reckoned with. Virillio's concern with speed, is that it enforces intensive (quantitative) growth; thus he ends up at the same place as Lefebvre, but his journey has been one which largely considers only technology and speed as opposed to culture and the crushing of rhythms as Lefebvre's does. Furthermore, for Virillio speed is problematic as it negates space through the reduction of distances: the '*strategic value of the non-place of speed has definitively supplanted that of place* [original italics] and the question of possession of Time has revived that of territorial appropriation' (1977:133). Thus for Virillio it is time itself being emphasised that is

museums, etc. Surrealism in many ways was the exact opposite to Futurism. Lefebvre was immediately against the blind rationalism of the latter, and in time, deeply sceptical about the existentialism of the former.

[67] In fact Virillio applies this logic to China (way ahead of his time it must be said), arguing that 'it is enough to hear the speeches of today's Chinese leaders about 'consumer goods' to know that the old thinker [Mao] did no more than delay the institution in China of the West's fearsome system of intensive growth ...' (1977:67).

an issue, whereas for Lefebvre it is the crushing of different types of time (namely cyclical rhythms) by other types (linear rhythms) which represents the colonisation of the everyday.

The emphasis on speed detracts from the rhythms genuinely at play and moves us further from counter-tactics. Lefebvre argues that 'everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm' (1992: 15), but that rhythm is not always, in fact rarely, under the control of those most involved in its daily operations. With the imprinting of rhythm comes power and as Lefebvre advocated, '…for there to be change, a social group, a class or caste must intervene by imprinting a rhythm on an era, be it through force or in an insinuating manner' (1992: 14). *Rhythms (and the question as to which ones are dominant) are political. The changing of them is not about speed, but about power.*

Other writers generally berating speed are Thomas Hylland Eriksen in his *Tyranny of the Moment* (2001) and James Gleick's *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything* (1999). Eriksen's concern is that slow time – time when we are able to think without interruption – is becoming extinct as information technology permeates every area of our lives. Thus culture lacks a sense of its past and future and so is essentially static. Similarly Gleick is concerned with our biological, psychological and neurological limits and the extent to which technology pushes these to the extreme.

Ben Agger's writing on 'fast capitalism' is in much the same vein as the above two examples, but provides a more nuanced argument. In its first conception in the book *Fast Capitalism* (1989), Agger concentrated largely on an argument which posited the changed position of writing in society as indicative of an erosion of the mind and the ability to form a serious critique. He attributed this erosion as stemming from the fact we can no longer see how a book is independent from the world, and therefore how its contents could oppose the dominant world. For Agger, people were insufficiently distant from the world, lacked perspective to form critique, and were inculcated with conformist values due to the way in which the world appeared to have no outside and thus no exit. Most crucially, for Agger, fast capitalism was capable of speeding up the rate at which people lived out the historical possibilities presented to them (1989: 17-20).

In his subsequent works (such as *Speeding up Fast Capitalism*, 2004), Agger has broadened his analysis to include the impact of information technologies, namely the Internet, on work,

families, childhood, schooling, food, the body, and fitness. He sees the Internet as having quickened the pace of everyday life and impacted upon consciousness, communication, culture and community, by making everything turn faster. Whilst in some senses this is a return to 'whizzy capitalism' and the idea of information flows necessarily speeding up life somehow in a more general sense, Agger is not attempting to argue for a new era of capitalism or indeed a capitalism with as yet un-seen features. He fully acknowledges that 'there is nothing new about fast capitalism other than the rate at which it happens' (1989: 6-7). His concern is that this faster rate is that of a society characterised by administration and that revolt against this is now subsumed within the everyday and is thus extremely difficult to access. Thus in some ways, Agger arrives at a very Lefebvrian point – that the issue is one of bureaucratisation of everyday life and the battle must be won from within the latter.

In contrast to all the above, Thomas Friedman (2006) is of the ilk of writers who tend to see globalisation as an unproblematically positive force - an incredible, exciting, and most importantly (and erroneously) democratising phenomenon. *The World is Flat* cites countless examples of out-sourcing and flexibility in the tone of one entirely dazzled by the sheer scale and potential of the globalising tendency. It is perhaps typical of what Hutnyk sees as clichéd writing on speed; that which accentuates electronic flows and global linkages as if in a rapture of celebrating some enthralling novelty. For Hutnyk the acceptance that everything is a blur in capitalism bellies the non-happening of reality: '… it is not uncommon to find gee-whizz declarations of hyper-intensity of capital flows that seem only to lead to stasis and quietism' (2004:59). Hutnyk's comments here have much to say when considering the hyper-efficient computerised dock system, yet a system which still requires men of flesh and blood to haul things about slowly and with effort. Speed also tends to intentionally suggest a certain culture of 'clean'; fast things do not get dirty. Yet, in reality, they are supported still by grit and grime, sweat, and now and then, unfortunately, accidents and death.

The problem with both the positive and negative rhetorics on speed is that they take speed as a constant, as an un-changing 'thing' upon which to base a moral judgment, whereas, as Tomlinson (2007) points out, in reality there is ruly speed (regulated) and un-ruly speed. Yet even this acknowledgement does not capture the complicated nature of the myth of speed which comes in many forms, and which behaves differently and is perceived differently, depending

upon the effect it has in any given situation and /or environment. Indeed, ruly or un-ruly speed can be perceived differently *by the same people,* for example, laissez-faire neo-cons are proponents of un-ruly speed- speed which 'clears out dead wood' and forces out those 'not up to the job'. Yet they are frequently also in favour of interfering in the running of other countries, in order to 'regulate' them and stop them developing in certain ways. In other words, one can be in favour of un-ruly speed for oneself, but not for others who are, as yet, un-ready to be trusted with speed of the un-ruly variety. What lies behind these attitudes is the link between perceived speed and *growth.*

vi) Quantitative (Pl)easing: quantitative expansion versus qualitative development

As Stephen Kern points out, speed presents itself in its functional, developmental aspect, as the prime condition for economic growth and the material development of everyday life. Therefore, on the whole, the world has chosen speed time and time again (Kern, 2003: 129). Yet it has not realized that 'speed' in and of itself is often simply an appearance and does not necessarily translate into growth of any sort. The plans for the regeneration of Shanghai in the run-up to the Expo 2010 provide a classic example of the idea of speed being used un-problematically to suggest 'progress', 'efficiency' and even 'quality of life' (See figure 17.)

Furthermore, even when speed translates into quantitative (i.e. financial) growth, it does not necessarily follow that development will occur in socially perceivable ways. As Tomlinson points out, speed is, after all, only linked to capitalism because it is the outcome of the pursuit of the maximization of profit (2007). When speed is normalised as part of a discourse on capitalism, it includes the assumption that being 'speedy' constitutes an even process of quickening, which bears fruit for all. As Tomlinson says, '… there is a fundamental tacit consensus in modern societies that progress should be as swift as possible. If progress is defined as change for the better, then delay is always a matter for either apology or rationalization' (2007: 22). Of course in reality speed is uneven and cumbersome at times, creating disadvantage as well as advantage, and increasing inequality. For Tomlinson, the reason progress is so easily and wrongly melded with that of speed is due to a lack of long-term purpose: '… the continued, gestural use of 'progress' in political or economic discourse in a sense restricted to short-term

demands, agendas and goals. A public discourse which seems in fact … to have largely abandoned the attempt to define long-term collective purpose' (2007: 73).

This long term purpose would inevitably require the addition of the concept of q*ualitative* growth. For Lefebvre, this inability of capitalism to separate economic growth from mathematical growth, measured in barrels of oil or units of cars, goes hand in hand with its inherent need to destroy. If growth is quantitative, it is necessary that objects wear out, in order that more may be produced: 'An obsolescence of objects is organised on all sides, that is to say, the lifespan of objects and industrial products is wilfully curtailed' (1976: 109).

This concern with obsolescence is, however, only half the story, a symptom perhaps, rather than the crux of the issue. In fact, accepting it as the issue in its entirety has led to well-meaning, but largely ineffectual, movements such as the Slow movement and Quakernomics. The former gained strength around the turn of this century and is less a united front, than a patchwork of small movements. Some of them are grassroots, but many spawned from well-established bases within capitalist society such as the food industry and municipal councils; CittaSlow, SlowLondon, Slow Food are examples. As Tomlinson points out, they can therefore be seen as defending enclaves of interests (2007: 147), and tend to be about personal change, rather than battling large forces.

Lefebvre's concern with promoting entanglement rather than possession is mirrored in his concern with qualitative growth rather than quantitative. For him this emphasis on the qualitative is allied to a Marxism which understands Marx to have referred to *economic* growth only as part of the means necessary for man to achieve total-ness. Again, Lefebvre is refusing to see Marx as economically determinist, even in *Das Kapital*, arguing that the clue is in the sub-title: *Kritik der Politschen Oekonomie* – 'a *critique* of political economy (1972: 15-16). Lefebvre argues there two types of growth in Marx: industrial expansion, which is quantitative, and development, which is qualitative. Whilst the former is continuous and therefore easy to predict, the latter is discontinuous, proceeding by leaps and involving unforeseeable accidents and the sudden emergence of new qualities (1972: 29).

 'The two aspects, though never completely separate, do not necessarily go hand in hand. Quantitative growth (the forces of production) may unfold gradually over a certain period and only later be followed

by a qualitative leap forward. Economic growth is possible without the intervention of the working class, social development is not' (1972: 162-163).

In capitalism, quantitative growth is dominant: 'We have seen that this society is undergoing a remarkable *expansion* (economic, quantitative, measured in tons and kilometres) and a limited *development'* [original emphasis] (1968: 80). Therefore, for Lefebvre, there is an inherent tearing which is at its maximum in capitalist society; it comes about due to man's increasing fulfillment on one hand (through qualitative growth), and his increasing alienation on the other. Part of this alienation, as we have already seen, is as a result of mystification, which in turn causes needs and desires to be re-created more quickly. Consequently, the consumption–re-consumption gap is de-longated and objects become pure possessions not even in themselves, but in their symbolic ability *to be bought.*

Quantitative expansion for Lefebvre operates through abundance, denying certain goods and services to some whilst proliferating the, amongst others in a process of uneven development. For Lefebvre therefore, 'political economy is merely the science of scarcity' (1972: 15). Furthermore, expansion for him refers to the process of industrialisation, whilst development refers to that of urbanisation. In fact this is key to understanding his controversial argument put forward in many of his writings throughout the 1960s (*The Right to the City, The Urban Revolution,* etc.) that urbanisation is necessary for revolution and that it is urbanisation which creates industrialisation and not vice versa (1968: 81). This in itself is interesting, as it suggests that Lefebvre sees qualitative growth as triggering quantitative growth not vice versa. Yet, if this is the case, how is it that quantitative growth is dominant?

Hannah Arendt too is sceptical about abundance, saying 'We have almost succeeded in levelling all human activities to securing the necessities of life and making sure they are abundant. Everything we do is supposed to be part of 'making a living' and those who oppose this are becoming fewer and fewer [therefore] all serious activities are called labour and every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or for the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness' (1958: 126-127). Here, as with Lefebvre, we see a recognition of the importance of abundance, alongside dismay at the way in which securing it has become an activity under which men labour, yet which does not improve their lives – a fact they are unable to see: 'The danger is that such a society, dazzled by the abundance of its growing fertility and

caught in the smooth functioning of a never-ending process, would no longer be able to recognize its own futility… (1958: 13).

Labour is key here. Arendt, differentiates between 'the labour of our body' (animal laborans) and 'the work of our hands' (homo faber – the fabricator). Unlike for animal laborans, fabrication, the work of homo faber, consists in reification. Homo faber conducts himself as lord and master of the earth; his production is seen as that of a god; just as the watch-maker creates the inner workings of his watch, homo faber creates a micro-universe (1958: 139). Homo faber therefore has complete confidence in his tools and a conviction that every issue can be solved and every human motivation reduced to the principle of utility. Thus he equates intelligence with ingenuity and holds in contempt all thought which cannot be considered as part of the first step towards the fabrication of an artificial object. This matter-of-fact identification with fabrication and action leads him to reify the labour that went into creating the object. What Arendt questions is not so much homo faber himself, but the elevation of labouring to the highest position - the shift from the thing itself to the fabrication process (1958: 305-306).

It is the fact that labouring is inherently processual that poses the problem here, as it emphasises the production process rather than the thing itself; it means that worldly things become no longer primarily considered in their usefulness but as more or less incidental results of the production process which brought them into being. Therefore the end product of the production process is no longer a true end and the produced thing is valued not for the sake of its predetermined usage but 'for its production of something else'. Use has lost out to utility, in the form of utilitarianism under Bentham's formula 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' (1958: 307-308). What man is now trying to produce is 'happiness', so object things became bound up in the desire for, and pursuit of, happiness.

This relates back to what has been previously said in earlier chapters here in regard to the £1 shopper desiring the *feeling* of consuming, rather than the object itself, and enjoying the 'freedom' to have the ability to consume. This is precisely the consumption of utility as opposed to use; an addiction which is not related to the object, but to the heady quest for the thrill of consuming. It is perhaps, a withering away of the thing. At the same moment as the thing

symbolically (in the economy of libidinal desire) reaches its highest peak yet, the thing itself melts away to nothing; becomes almost utterly disposable, useless, trinketized.

What could counteract this trinketization of the thing - its transformation into a medium for the gaining of short-lived thrills based on novelty and mystified concepts of freedom? Perhaps it is useful to return to Lefebvre's conviction about man and his activity; his surety that, although men cannot see it, they are alone, and the world is their work, so they alone can change how that work is received (1947: 167). This is, in many ways, an incredibly hopeful statement. If man could acknowledge the world as his own creation, he could create desire differently. Currently, man makes desire, but he does not make it as he chooses. What if man could create objects which encourage or enforce a deeper entanglement; objects which will not go away, which have multiple uses, which demand being constructed and interacted with regularly? To speak tactically: man must make desire, but he could make it in a way that smuggled in entanglement by the back door.

In many ways this would be the revolution of qualitative growth that Lefebvre asserts must replace the original notion of revolution. This shift happened because the growth which Marx spoke of as necessary had shown itself to be possible in the capitalist model as well as the socialist one, thus throwing the notion of revolution into crisis. However, this crisis occurred due to growth being interpreted as quantitative; its re-definition as qualitative serves to rescue the notion of revolution according to Lefebvre (1968: 29-30). What this means is that abundance must become qualitative and concerned with development, rather than continuing along its quantitative trajectory of continuous expansive growth.

What lies behind the insistence upon qualitative growth is the reasoning that quantitative growth

> '… uneven development is the hallmark of the geography of capitalism. It is not just that capitalism fails to develop evenly, that due to accidental and random factors the geographical development of capitalism represents some stochastic deviation from a generally even process. The uneven development of capitalism is structural rather than statistical. The resulting geographical patterns are thoroughly determinate (as opposed to 'determinist') and are thus unique to capitalism … uneven development is the systematic geographical expression of the contradictions inherent in the very constitution and structure of capital' (2008: 4).

is linked to uneven development. As Neil Smith makes clear, uneven development is a function of capitalism, rather than vice versa. Therefore, uneven development must not be viewed as in any way inevitable, 'natural', or unavoidable. As he argues,

As Smith acknowledges, this assertion of capitalism as the cause of uneven development is in direct contrast to the traditions of regional geography which were once dominant. This latter accounted for regional development (locally and globally) by the availability of resources and raw materials. However, as Smith points out, the under-development of certain areas cannot simply be explained by nature: 'with the development of the productive forces under capitalism, the logic behind geographic location retreats more and more from such natural considerations' (2008: 141). What makes nature alone insufficient as an explanation is two-fold: previously economic development was tied to natural conditions by a) the difficulty of overcoming distance and b) the necessity of close proximity to raw materials. As Smith argues, 'with the development of the means of transportation, the first natural obstacle (distance) diminishes in importance. With the general increase in the productive forces, the second also becomes less important, since raw materials today are the product of an ever increasing number of previous labour processes (2008: 141). (In fact Smith gives plastic as an example of a material that the rules of regional geography cannot apply to, making his argument particularly relevant to the £1 commodity chain.) Therefore, whilst the explanations of commercial geography may have been suitable for the age in which they were developed, economic and socio-political factors must now be considered.

It is at this point that the spatial element of capitalism truly comes into play. In recognizing socio-political factors, it is impossible not to recognize the way in which under-developed spaces are put to the purposes of more developed ones. As Smith asserts:

'With everything it can muster, this is what capital strives to do: it strives to move from developed to underdeveloped space, then back to developed space which, because of its interim deprivation of capital, is now underdeveloped, and so on' (2008: 199).

Therefore, uneven development within capitalism is the exploitation of geographical unevenness, *but also* creates systemic inequality, as it works not only to find less developed areas, but also to guarantee that those areas always exist. Thus, as Smith says, uneven development is not simply a 'gap' between more and less developed regions, but is the 'systematic product of previous capitalist development and the fundamental premise of the future of capitalism' (2008: 207). Furthermore, this maintaining of the capitalist system requires certain specific myth-making (or mystification to use Lefebvre's term), in that, as David Harvey argues, scarcity must be socially constructed and organized in order to permit the market to function (1973: 114). This fits well with Lefebvre's turn to abundance, rather than scarcity, as being at the base of society's paucity of everyday life. It is also truly a mystification, as it has taken the (formerly abhorrent) idea of scarcity and, by a process of myth-making, managed to transform it into a (positive) 'necessity' for the market.

vii) Assessing quantitative versus qualitative growth in post-revolution China

Growth is of course the key issue geo-politically when it comes to current discourse and policy surrounding China and its global relations. Indeed, China is constantly cited as the example par excellence of hyper-fast quantitative growth, and this assertion is rarely picked apart or questioned. What does 'growth' mean in the Chinese context and which other elements of change have entered as a result? The period of economic growth that China has entered into since 1978 and the reform and opening up policies of Deng, has, of course, impacted in ways other than economic upon the nation. As Michael Dutton describes with rich detail in *Policing Chinese Politics* (2005), one of the main ways in which this has manifested itself is through the introduction of the Western-style 'contract'. This contract has effectively created a new form of 'policing' which constitutes a replacement of the political form of policing that China had in the past – the 'mass line' – thus de-linking politics and policing.

For Dutton, the replacement of mass line with contract equates to the replacement of the friend-enemy binary, by a legal-illegal binary. This friend-enemy binary evaporated quickly with the

beginning of the reform era and in the wake of Deng's extreme pragmatism[68]. This transition transformed the single political question of friend-enemy into 'a multitude of discrete and largely non– or even de-politicizing questions'. Furthermore, 'what slowly came to undergird all these disparate questions of the reform era was the single issue of profit and loss' (2005: 18). Thus, Dutton argues, the logic of profit promoted in the reform era saw political capital replaced with money, and the end of a long period of political intensity (2005: 18).

> 'The desire to replace the Maoist-induced collective dependence upon the politicized state with a notion of rationally calculable individual obligation was central to Deng's reform campaign. It was the contractually based notion of individual obligation that fuelled China's economic reform program and, as a result, the development of a substantive legal code would, by necessity, become an essential component of this process' (2005: 263).

The issue, for Dutton, is one of commitment politics. Whilst prior to reform the either-or choice of class struggle was reiterated in its simplest form, in the post reform period social questions have been condensed into monetary forms ordered around the contract. Therefore, 'in each and every domain … the practices once undertaken out of passionate commitment to a political program were now to be underwritten and disciplined by the dominant economic distinction of profit and loss' (2005: 314-315). Dutton paints this transition as one which has created a 'new, passionless world of the commodity society', in which 'the excitement of revolution gave way to the *faux* [my emphasis] excitement of manufactured commodity desire' (2005: 315). There is a similarity here to Marshall Berman's description in *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (1988):

> 'Old modes of honor and dignity do not die; instead, they get incorporated into the market, take on price tags, gain a new life as commodities. Thus, any imaginable mode of human conduct becomes morally permissible the moment it becomes economically possible, becomes 'valuable'; anything goes if it pays' (1988:111).

Similarly, Xiaobing Tang (2002) suggests there are two distinct responses to everyday life in China. At the height of the Cultural Revolution, it was something to be overcome by a heroic commitment to communal living, whereas, as China moved into the post-revolutionary period, emphasis was placed on transcending the everyday and ameliorating anxiety through the

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[68] Deng made the great political rhetoric of Mao less grandiose and was concerned with functionality and achievable goals. *In theory*, Dengism does not reject Marxism or Mao thought, but seeks to adapt them to the existing socio-economic conditions. One of his famous maxim's, that well illustrates his pragmatism, was 'It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice'.

consumption of lifestyles and commodities. Tang sees these two strands as 'related social discourses: an anxious affirmation of ordinary life and a continuous negotiation with the utopian impulse to reject everyday life' (2002: 129-130). It is difficult not to argue here that the Maoist vision of the everyday as something meaningful and vibrant in its simplicity, corresponds to Lefebvre's desire to celebrate the everyday in and of itself.

Tang describes a revolutionary mass culture as emphasising 'content over form, use value over exchange value, participatory communal action over heterogeneous everyday life… production oriented rather than consumption oriented' (2002:128). Hence, he argues, revolutionary mass culture is profoundly romantic in form and utopian in vision but may become compelling in hindsight:

> 'Only in absentia does this revolutionary mass culture reveal itself to have been a heroic effort to overcome a deep anxiety over everyday life, often at the cost of impoverishing it. When everyday life is affirmed and accepted as the new hegemony, when commodification arrives to put a price tag on human relations and even on private sentiments, participatory communal action may offer itself as an oppositional discourse and expose a vacuity underlying the myriad of commodity forms' (2002: 128)

For Tang, Mao nostalgia[69] in the current era in China is a good sign of the yearning for this past heroic culture and the collective anxiety that the market economy has given rise to. However, consumerism also works to contain and dissolve the anxiety of everyday life, by translating collective concerns into consumer desires (2002: 129). Whilst comfort is sought in past ideas by some, it is sought in things by certain others, and for Tang this typifies the difference between revolutionary mass culture and the new urban culture. Whilst the former needed to project a life that was wholesome but abstract, the latter needs to present a secular existence full of concrete expectations and fulfillments (2002: 130).

Perhaps it is Dutton's use of the word faux that is important here, because the problem with setting up pre-reform politics in opposition to post-reform economism is that the binary does not acknowledge the current sense of 'revolution' and 'excitement'. As Dutton says, 'commitment

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[69] See Wang Yanzhong's argument that Mao Zedong fever reflects a popular longing for the charismatic leader in an age of growing industrialization. (In Zhang Zhanbing and Song Yifu, *Zhongguo: Mao Zedong*. Taiyuan: Beiyue Wenyi, 1991. 275-76 and 280-81.)

produces the ethic of the heroic ...' (2005: 313), but the current 'commitment' on the part of China to play developmental catch-up is also played out heroically by many of its people. These two forms of heroism, the former with its strong political and conceptual base, the latter with its determination to improve lifestyle (note, not 'lives'), are precisely what is shaping current-day China and contemporary commentators tend to emphasise either one or the other.

Thus the economic logic of profit and loss in China has been variously interpreted as either de-politicising completely, or creating a new politics of the market alongside the older socialist allegiances. Whilst radical theorists such as Raymond Lotta[70] are staunchly against the possibility that politics can exist vis-à-vis marketisation, Giovanni Arrighi tends towards the latter view. In *Adam Smith in Beijing*, he makes clear his conviction that 'even if socialism has already lost out in China, capitalism ... has not yet won' (2007:24), saying 'Add as many capitalists as you like to a market economy, but unless the state has been subordinated to their class interest, the market economy remains non-capitalist' (2007:332).

Charting a nuanced path between these two arguments is Wang Hui in the celebrated *The End of the Revolution* (2009). For him, whilst the forces of marketisation are a very real and powerful presence - probably the dominant one in today's China - their potency does not mean that China can be described as following a neo-liberal path in a simplistic or well-trodden sense. The reason for this lies in the historical trajectory of China's relationship with other communist powers. As Wang points out, China began supporting non-aligned movements in the mid-1950s and gradually shed its 'suzerain'[71] relationship with the Soviet Union, establishing its own socialist system and achieving independent status on the international scene. Therefore, China is highly

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[70] Lotta is a Marxist writer, closely affiliated to Bob Avakian, the Chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, USA. He has done extensive work in regard to the socialist revolutions of the 20th century and what he describes as the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union and China. Lotta has attempted to uncover Mao Zedong's actual thinking in guiding the Cultural Revolution, tackling what he sees as distortions of Mao's real views, in *And Mao Makes 5*(1978), a major collection of primary source documents and speeches from forces associated with Mao. His views on to extent to which capitalism has won out in China are most recently and best witnessed in his article, 'China's Rise in the World Economy', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 21, 2009.

[71] The use of the word suzerain is interesting in the context of Chinese communism as previously in China's history it has been used to describe the relationship between the Emporor of China and all other world rulers. Chinese political theory recognized only one emperor and asserted that his authority was paramount throughout the entire world. This system broke down during the 17th century when the ethnically Manchu Qing dynasty justified their rule through theories different to traditional Han Chinese theories of the emperor as universal ruler. The system also broke down as China faced European powers whose theories of sovereignty were based on international law and relations between equal states.

self-reliant and its opening up reforms were self-directed and had an internal logic (2009: xix - xx). In particular, he cites Mao's works *On the Ten Major Relationships* and *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* as providing the foundations for the new state theory (2009: xxv).

That said, Wang is far from romantic about the extent to which marketisation has come to dominate present-day China saying, '… notions such as modernisation, globalisation and growth can be seen as key concepts of a depoliticised or anti-political political ideology, whose widespread usage militates against a popular political understanding of the social and economic shifts at stake in marketisation' (2009: 13). For him this marketisation is linked to a two-fold process of de-politicisation involving the 'de-theorisation' of the ideological sphere and the sole focus of party work becoming economic reform (2009: 7).

> 'In the socialist era, we saw how the strength of the two or many social forces fluctuated in concert with one another, and how the 'far left' and 'far right' were overcome; but as marketization reforms become the predominant trend, the absence of checks and balances from socialist forces between the inner workings of the state, the inner workings of the party and the entire social sphere will quickly shorten the distance between the state and special interest groups' (2009: xxv).

Conclusion

'Speed', in the context of the £1 commodity chain should not be viewed as a simplistic statement on pace, but rather understood as a 'fullness' of time, reflected as a de-longation and automation of the gap between consumption and disposal. This 'filling' of time decreases the opportunities for changing and challenging existing rhythms. This is precisely the way in which 'speed' or fullness is bound up with power. As Lefebvre argued, change comes from the ability of a group to imprint their own rhythm on an area; rhythms are about power, not speed, and so are inherently political (1992: 14).

The other major concern high-lighted by 'speed' is the emphasis on quantitative growth. As Kern says, the world has not realised that speed in and of itself is often simply an appearance (2003: 129). Lefebvre goes much further, positing capitalism's inability to separate economic growth from mathematical growth as tied to an inherent need to destroy: obsolescence is required and capitalism cannot compromise on this. However, as Lefebvre argues, it is important not to begin

treating obsolescence as the crux, rather than simply a symptom of capitalism's insistence on quantitative growth (1976: 109). Qualitative growth is essential to a holistic view of society's needs (rather than one which sees economic success as 'providing' for all). For Lefebvre, this equated to man's potential to achieve total-ness.

Finally, qualitative growth is linked to a more even development. Owing to the way quantitative growth relies upon obsolescence and therefore upon constant consumption, it favours those who have the ability to spend and preys upon those who cannot. Quantitative growth thus requires by its very nature, pockets of under-development and is (and can only be) structurally unjust. It is in this way that entanglement defies its would-be critics who may attempt to accuse it of being simply a 'romantic' or ascetic' movement, and emerges as a political strategy to counter quantitative growth and therefore structural inequalities.

Conclusion: tactics and counter-tactics

Immediacy, disposability, agglomeration, abundance – operating with and through each other, these are the key tactics of the £1 trinket and its commodity chain. They feed into each other to create a way of operating which allows even those commodities at the raw-edge of capitalism the ability to survive the crises thrown at them. They characterise the chain whilst simultaneously emerging as features characterised by it. What emerges through the analysis of them, are a set of wider syndromes, through which to understand contemporary capitalism. What follows is an attempt to explain those syndromes in the light of the £1 commodity chain; in other words, to place the spaces and tactics of the chain back into a description of the everyday as it currently exists.

i) Immediacy and the Negation of Entanglement

The £1 trinket stakes its claim as a bargain par excellence amongst commodities. Its raison d'etre is its buy-ability. It does not exist to last or to be admired as and for itself, but to give pleasure in the ability it gives to be bought, without thought, and hyper-spontaneously. This buy-ability also allows it to be disposed of without thought, of course, but this in itself is a form of possession. The subject controls each part of the subject-object relationship, deciding when to buy and when to dispose of; the object itself usually having little sway. Even in the cases where a £1 trinket becomes a prized possession, it is not one that survives generations or even eras within one person's lifetime, as it has no financial value. In other words, its bargain status over-rides its thing status. It is a possession, not an entanglement. Whilst it may be possible to be (briefly) entangled with a £1 trinket, this entanglement is more frequently with the connotations of bargain shopping. Even Helen's plastic flowers were not precious to her in themselves, as things, but because they represented an era of her life where she had learnt to enjoy her necessity and ability to 'live cheaply' through bargains.

Thus the tactic of immediacy operates to emphasise possession and ignore true engagement with the object in order to promote morals, either through a post-modern acknowledgement of the fetish (the 'fun' of 'going wild' in a pound store), or through the legitimising myth of the 'good consumer'. This emphasis on possession, whilst presented as a deep, historical or even 'natural' human inclination is simply a myth thrown up by the market which requires the consumer to

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desire possession rather than entanglement in order that the object can (and must) be replaced/re-purchased. Possession allows for disposability; entanglement does not as it creates objects which are 'irreplaceable' in the mind of the subject.

Ironically, immediacy is precisely not spontaneous, as it is not breaking out of the repetition of life under capitalism; it does not break from the 'immediacy' that has become the norm. In fact immediacy has become the handmaid of capitalism, allowing it to remain profitable. Baudrillard's point on the philosophy of credit: buying before one has the money and so actually living in reverse due to being forced to work 'after the act of buying', as it were, is apposite here. Not only is the present not ours, but now the future is not either. A change in rhythm, a counter-tactic, would involve re-grasping our own future, giving ourselves the ability to own our future hours and to decide what to do with them.

For Lefebvre this grasping of the future may well involve ridding ourselves of the categories of work and leisure. As he argues, leisure is concerned with creating a break with the everyday, so has become distraction, (apparently) free from worry and necessity. It has enabled itself to appear to be outside of the everyday realm 'and so purely artificial that it borders on the ideal' (2008 [1947]: 33). However, this break only reinforces the categories of work and leisure, causing people to 'buy' leisure time with work time, when what ought to be had is 'living' (2008 [1948]: 33). With the advent of shopping as leisure this binary system gained the ultimate ability to retain itself, as not only had leisure been separated from work and something that must be bought off with work hours, but it had become time in which people spent money they then needed to work for. The way in which the £1 store gives guilt-free shopping to the consumer has enabled this syndrome to extend to even the poorest, colonising even most remnants of the idea of leisure as free, not to mention leisure as simply an integrated part of lived experience; or, as Lefebvre would call it, le vécu.

ii) Disposability, Bricolage and Thrift

The tactic of disposability is concerned with narrowing the gap between purchase and disposal, in order to secure the continued increase in the number of exchange interactions and thus maintain economic growth. A fast turn-around, that is, a high level of disposability, is crucial.

Therefore a £1 commodity is not built to last, and this non-lasting is not only a physical property of the nature of the 'built-in obsolescence', but a more psychologically-rooted one, conferred upon the commodity by its price-tag, which allows it to be trashed even when it continues to function. Function is reduced to fad in the case of the £1 commodity.

This narrowing of the gap between purchase and disposal has implications for use value. Re-consumption is all important, so with the £1 commodity it is not so much that exchange has triumphed over use, but more that use is already embedded within exchange, because at the point of purchase the product is already perceived as leading to the next potential sale soon after it has proved its (brief) usefulness.

The importance of disposability and the resulting (covert) emphasis on waste has seen the figure of the peddler emerge as the embodiment of the quandary between thrift and waste. He enables the transition from waste to product (and therefore profit), so is inextricably involved in capitalistic practices. Yet, simultaneously, he defies the logic of the wider chain and that of capitalism in general by operating as a bricoleur who is the ultimate example of 'thrift'. He is in many ways the 'reverse image' that Lefebvre saw as represented by Charlie Chaplin - a character who reflects the image of everyday, but which is simultaneously 'exceptional, deviant, abnormal' (2008 [1947]: 12) Through him, the tactic of disposability is challenged, but how long this challenge can withstand the increasing pressure on places to show themselves as images of success remains to be seen.

It is perhaps the case that we have become removed from the sense that we refashion things through processes of bricolage; removed from the operational values of the bricoleur. Re-fashioning is all around us for us to consume, but the producer-bricoleur is harder to find. Buying re-fashioning from above, we are told, will enable us all to survive; she who patches and re-styles from below will be to blame for all our downfalls. Meanwhile even the methodological bricoleur comes in for criticism from disciplines whose survival depends on them being neatly defined.

The processes outlined in Chapters One and Two are also linked diametrically through the form of the bricoleur. In Chapter One possession is seen as opposed to entanglement with the object; in Chapter Two disposal (and disposability) is pitted against bricolage. Now we can see that the

conceptual realm in which only possession and non-possession exist is the same one in which disposal and consumption are key – possession and disposal form one cycle. Entanglement however is fundamentally aligned to bricolage – an object that is part of us is one that we repair, adapt, etc. Therefore the bricoleur not only negates disposal, but in doing so insists upon the irrelevance of the possession/non-possession conundrum in favour of everyday entanglement.

The closing of the consumption-disposal gap is characteristic of a capitalism whose primary goal is growth. As Lefebvre says, 'the important thing [for capitalism] is that human beings be profitable, not that their lives be changed'. Therefore, until now 'progress' has really only modified existing social realities as little as possible and according to capitalist profitability. Capitalism only brings about change grudgingly; it is in fact 'en retard' - behind or retarded in the true sense. As Lefebvre says, '… constantly staring us in the face, mundane and therefore generally unnoticed – whereas in the future it will be seen as a characteristic and scandalous trait of our era, the era of the decadent bourgeoisie – is this fact: that life is lagging behind what is possible…' (2008 [1947]: 230).

Applied to the £1 chain (as well as to capitalism more generally),this lagging behind is a more accurate way of interpreting the situation and relates back to Hutnyk's concerns with 'speedy rhetoric' not acknowledging the lack of quick and effective action. The narrowing of the consumption-disposal gap (erroneously, or at least unsubtly, described as a speeding up) has created greater inequality along the chain as development brings wealth to certain pockets, but misery to others. Thus whilst 'progress' in terms of economic growth has occurred, everyday life is lagging behind its potential. This is due to the emphasis on quantitative growth. The growth we speak of today is so embedded in current capitalism that the word itself is assumed to have quantitative meaning – to be quantitative – but it was not ever thus.

Lefebvre argues that it was precisely this hi-jacking of the idea of growth by that of specifically quantitative growth which led to the crisis of the idea of revolution. His reasoning here is that the socialist promise is to provide for all through growth, as is the capitalist promise; but as growth becomes understood as quantitative only capitalism can be seen as successful in providing it. The socialist promise however, was based on qualitative growth (2008) [1947]: 30); a growth which does not have to come hand in hand with alienation.

Quantitative growth has meant the triumphing of the market and in many ways the success of the £1 trinket is most indicative of this. That the least profitable of things, when produced en masse and infiltrating everydayness, can fuel the growth of the largest nation on earth is testament to the dominance of quantitative growth. Market economy has become market society and the £1 trinket is the trinketized (cute-ified) embodiment of this.

iii) Agglomeration and the Ascension of the Image-Space

A combination of historical and cultural factors saw a certain form of agglomerative manufacturing develop contemporaneously to the heightened importance (for capitalism) of the concepts of immediacy and disposability. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the commodity chain for whom these two latter are most important – that of the £1 object – should be pulled towards places such as Yiwu whose operations are suited to high turnover and unpredictable change.

The tactic of agglomeration sees the relationship with risk reformulated in the light of a spontaneity which is itself a result of the low-end product chain's demand for the narrowing of the gap between consumption and disposal. This results precisely in a form of abundance which is not manifested in the standing reserve, but in sites where commodities are constantly being shifted through space. These spaces of agglomeration have, until recently, been un-visitable (in Bella Dicks sense); non-places of removal and storage. However, some of them, such as Yiwu, are now not only visitable as spectacles of the spectacle, but transportable across supra-national boundaries. Both their spectacle and their transportability have come about due to them carving themselves out as portrayals of historical trends and ideas – they have become image spaces.

As highlighted by the chapter on the tactics of disposability, 'failures' and collateral damage are intrinsic to the success of the £1 commodity chain. However, the tactics used within spaces of failure are, and will increasingly be, challenged by the growing importance of showing space. There is now a cycle at play which impacts even upon the least glamourous of commodity chains; this cycle maintains that success looks a certain way; this look then attracts investment, the investment leads to certain types of 'success' (namely financial/business as opposed to social). Success has become bound up with image. This happens partly in the way Bella Dicks

suggests; places, especially large cities, are forced to make themselves 'visitable' in order to compete for 'world city' status. However, the conceptual joining of success and image not only makes existing places 'visitable', through structural changes or promotional campaigns, but also creates new spaces with no function other than offering images to the world.

This image creation is part of a wider set of initiatives which, some intentionally, others almost unwittingly, allow for a strange side-stepping of ethics and awkward global political moments. Rather like carbon off-setting, this collateral damage off-setting allows companies, national governments and international bodies to buy their way out of taking responsibility for collateral damage by investing in spaces deemed to be 'responsible/green/social/innovative/business-generating', etc. Just like carbon off-setting it allows the largest 'polluters' to maintain their usual operations as long as they can afford to create some images (for that is all they are) of responsibility. Hence, while urban bias in Shanghai continues to create problems for millions of rural Chinese, the city authorities can show the world how clean and prosperous it is; and whilst million of debt-ridden consumers feel the need to search in pound stores, the large chains are busy making 'national treasures' of themselves by buying up empty stores and 'bringing high streets back to life.'

iv) Abundance and the Inertia of the Rhetoric on Speed

Abundance for the £1 trinket and its commodity chain must be understood as the full-ness of time and space. Abundance has, however, been wrongly connected to a rhetoric on speed. Certainly what is at stake concerns the need for an elongation of the commodity life-cycle; a stemming of the tide which has begun to show itself as a dangerous answer to questions of local and global economies and cultures. But this stemming cannot realistically be the 'galloping retreat' that Scanlon talks of in the quest to escape 'an undifferentiated mass of things…that could otherwise swamp us.' (2005: 13)

What is suggested here is that, strangely, a methodology of material geography, of following the thing, of concern with the places things occupy and relations embedded in space, has revealed that what is at stake is the rhythm of the thing, longevity, and material relations embedded in

time. Yet this time is not the chronological, rational time of everyday life, but rather the time embodied in people and things – lived time, le vécu.

Abundance has an intrinsic relationship to quantitative and qualitative growth. Growth in itself, as used by economists, is a nonsensical concept as it does not acknowledge regular growth (i.e. growth at a constant same rate) as growth! Only exponential growth is growth; so growth is immediately bound up in the concept of mass expansion. Furthermore, when things grow, but at a lesser rate than they previously grew, this is called 'negative growth'(!), therefore, growth is determined by what went immediately before it and is dictated to by this. It is always-imminent, riding a crest of quantitativity.

The concept of growth must therefore be re-examined and re-defined in order to re-ignite the idea of revolution. The everyday is the realm through which qualitative growth can best come to the fore, thus the change in the culture of consumption must begin with the most mundane of objects. The £1 commodity is the death of use and the champion of (false) desire extended to the poorest in society – 'freedom' to get high on the thrill of consumption embodied in the symbology of the '£' sign.

The £1 chain is a rapacious capitalism; one that eats up and spits out raw materials, that narrows the gap between consumption and disposal to a mere glimmer, and which promotes only the ability to buy. The £1 trinket denies even the need for the object to satisfy (momentarily) desire, satisfaction resulting instead from the act of buying itself, safe in the knowledge that guilt-free disposal can follow. It is a capitalism which, under the name of 'cheap', has smuggled in the permanent necessity to spend. In providing 'spontaneity', it has created ever firmer enslavement to consumption and therefore to labour. The £1 trinket is the epitome of the trinketization of our relationship with things and thus with our own time and our own lives. It has made 'freedom' the ability for all (even the poorest) to accept the logic of consumption.

v) Towards a Manifesto for Entanglement

In Bruno Latour's recent 'Compositionist Manifesto' (2010, see web sources), he asserts that 'the time of manifestos has long passed' because 'the time of *time* has passed' (2010: 2).

According to him we can no longer place the manifesto within the context of the classic vision of a vast army moving forward as this was predicated on the idea that the flow of time had only one '*inevitable* and *irreversible* direction' [original emphasis] (2010: 2). Within this time-heavy vision, the war manifesto's declared would be won, regardless of the number of defeats, as the march forwards was the inevitable one of 'progress'. However, since progress lost its meaning a current day manifesto cannot define itself in terms of time (2010: 2-3).

Whilst the inevitability of a long march forward to a given outcome, such as revolution, is difficult, I do not agree that the manifesto as form relies upon such time and is therefore outmoded. Neither does this ring true to Lefebvre's thought. For him, critique was not a tool to discovering the hidden, but rather part of a dialectical process, in which pieces are thrown away along the way and others picked up and re-shaped. Furthermore, this process was best understood as a cacophony of rhythms which created moments in lived time. It is in these moments that tacticians within the £1 chain can, briefly, see the whole and gain the power of a strategist. Perhaps more importantly, it is also in these moments that ruling strategy can be challenged, as the confluence of people and places forms a new strategic vision.

Currently, in the case of the £1 chain, the tactics of the £1 trinket itself are those of current capitalism par excellence. Therefore, there is homology between its tactics and the greater strategy of both the £1 chain and current facets of capitalism. Despite this, the tactics of those people and places involved in the production (although rarely, if ever, the consumption) of the £1 trinket display features which run contra to capitalistic strategy. However, currently, these contra tactics are in fact strengthening the £1 chain and denying their own potential as 'moments'. Initially, agglomeration may have worked against (Western) capitalism, but it is now proving itself invaluable and even being transported into Western capitalistic spaces. A counter-tactics will require nothing short of breaking the dialectical link between possession and disposal in favour of that between entanglement and (re-) elongation. This alone, in the context of the trinket, can bring a decrease in alienation and an enrichment of everyday life.

For Levebvre the logic of accumulation runs contrary to everyday life, as the latter is not cumulative. Yet the non-cumulative nature of the everyday is being over-run by a culture of accumulation. However, the disparity between the nature of everyday life and the culture of

accumulation, is precisely the crack through which a process of change can be begun. And times of recession perhaps widen that crack and bring out its poignancy in a way that could aid change. A manifesto for entanglement would be no less than the cultural revolution Lefebvre spoke of. Like many manifesto's it is therefore utopian to a small extent – it has to be - although avowedly pragmatic on the whole.

Entanglement is not ascetic, Luddite, or anti-'progress'. It is simply specifically political and concerned with a more even development, a socialist development. It insists that things should be lived *in,* not alongside. Disposability is no longer the anti-establishment statement it was in the sixties. To jettison is no longer representative of empowerment. Similarly, 'making-do' does not have to come with the same cultural connotations it used to, indeed it need not be seen as 'making-do'! There is currently a space for real cultural change, in which things are given different usages, not simply for themselves, but also in recognition of the (working) time they embody.

The implications are far-reaching. Living in things disavows the trinket of its ability to tinket*ize*. Experience has the possibility of emerging as something more satisfying, somehow fuller, and more individual to the person who lives it. The ability of the trinket to homogenise experience through emptying out everyday life is challenged. Life, in all its areas, can be lived more freely, rather than always in chasing the next amount of money for that already spent. Leisure can be re-constituted as a genuine category, not separate from all others in life and not part of consumption. Only with this cultural change can the reign of quantitative growth be challenged and unequal exploitation of every under-developed corner of the world be seen for what it is – a false notion of improvement.

Illustrations

Figure 1: Interior of independent pound store, Deptford, London

Figure 2: Customers at opening of new pound store

Figure 3: 99p Stores Christmas carrier bag

Figure 4: The Nestle sign from Suzhou river creek, Zhabei

Figure 5: Boundary of the peddlers' quarter, Zhabei – boys playing cards in foreground

Figure 6: A typical waste peddlers cart – the limits to stockpiling

Figure 7: Peddler on Nanjing road, Shanghai.

Figure 8: Debating the re-distribution of bottles, Nanjing Road

Figure 9: Housing vision for 2010 Expo regeneration of Zhabei/Shanghai – Suzhou creek running through

Figure 10: Carton mascot 'haibao' and the Expo 2010 catchphrase

Figure 11: Da'ansi pagoda, Xiuhu Park, Yiwu

Figure 12: Faux-aged gateways, Xiuhu Park, Yiwu

Figure 13: Xiuhu Park with Da'ansi pagoda, Yiwu

Figure 14: Monument to Maoist worker, Yiwu.

Figure 15: Atrium of Binwang Market

Figure 16: Container ships at Port of Felixstowe

Figure 17: The Shanghai authorities' vision for regeneration

Appendix i: £1 Trinkets

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