

Drawing between solitude and community

an aesthetics of illustration for participatory art practice

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iii. Abstract

My study considers the 'illustrative' within the emergent field of drawing as social engagement. I identify characteristics prevalent across a range of artworks that incorporate an illustrative mode toward making original proposals for future participatory practice that incorporates techniques and concepts of drawing. I apply three interconnected approaches toward this aim: a practice-led system of methods in the form of a series of dialogical encounters as an illustrator and arts facilitator; a case-study analysis of a spectrum of practices from the fields of publishing, participatory culture and engaged arts; and a cross-disciplinary literature review grounded in theoretical frameworks of artistic social engagement. My proposals are relevant across practices which can be considered as addressing the 'aesthetic' and the 'political' in different ways. These include critical artworks whose effectiveness rests in their autonomy from the very community they seek to transform, and activities that correlate aesthetic experience directly with the transformation or production of new communities; including works of grassroots, fan, and non-professional practitioners. From this survey, my results identify three conditions whose consideration has significance for convening new forms of participatory works that incorporate illustrative drawing. The first of these concerns the use of drawing to re-inscribe ideas of selfhood in concert with the use of illustration to re-inscribe the draughter's community. The second concerns an understanding of participatory work that incorporates illustration as constructed from multiple gazes, and the third condition is the re-occurring articulation of the act, artefact or agency of illustrative drawing in terms of an intermediary. The three conditions comprise my response to the call for more social engagement within illustration practices by contributing to a more inclusive definition of participatory public arts and to further expansion of the field of contemporary drawing.

Introduction

0.1 || Motivation

0.1.1 || The Tuesday Drawing Studio

I was motivated to undertake this research by my work on a once-a-week workshop programme called the Tuesday Drawing Studio (the TDS). Situated between social-engagement and an illustrative drawing practice, the TDS is the principal practical work that I apply to my research question. The programme took place between November 2013 and May 2018 in a small re-purposed shop in north Belfast and consisted primarily of unstructured sessions running initially between 11am and 2pm each Tuesday.¹ These were free to attend on a drop-in basis and attracted a handful of regular and semi-regular visitors who returned to the programme over a period of years.² Although the activities were centred on drawing, they were not limited to it, and the participants worked in a variety of media on mostly self-initiated visual art and design projects. Approximately once a year I would organise a more-involved art project that participants were free to contribute to.³

It is hard to typify the participants in the programme although they generally, but not exclusively, lived within a mile of the workshop premises.⁴ They were mostly aged between their late forties and early sixties, nearly all had no third level education but some made a part of their living from craft or creative activities, with one having had a previous career as an illustrator. Most could then be described as ‘non-experts’ in terms of the social and economic scale of their artistic production.⁵ Three participants had attended the initial workshops in a public art project called *Temporary*

¹ I also ran a second weekly workshop on Fridays from July 2015 to September 2016.

² At the time of writing (May 2019) the regular Tuesday meet-up has been resumed by previous TDS participants. This continuation, without myself as facilitator, is addressed in the concluding discussion as a means of evaluating the programme in terms of reproduction and commoning.

³ For instance, the gallery exhibitions at PS² and the publication, *The Tuesday Drawing Studio Colouring-in Book*, are discussed in chapters one and five.

⁴ This was in a traditionally republican working-class area of north Belfast. It is of note that participants often expressed ambivalence toward traditional political alignments relating to the Northern Ireland conflict (c.1968 – 1998), even as many had witnessed political violence or been involved in activities relating to grassroots political activism earlier in their lives.

⁵ For the community arts theorist Kate Crehan, industrial society created expertise and a need for specialism, dividing cultural producers into experts and non-experts. For Crehan, the freedom to shape society in the affluent west is controlled by experts, and community art’s central concern is to hand back some of that control to non-experts. Kate Crehan, *Community Art: An Anthropological Perspective* (Oxford: Berg, 2011).

Places, detailed further below, whilst others attended after seeing the TDS advertised in New Lodge Art's promotional material. Several had also called in through curiosity after passing by the venue. Of all these, a core group of eight attended on a long-term basis and another ten irregular or casual visitors returned sporadically over the programme's duration.

I return to the participants and activities further into this introduction but first I want to connect my experience of the programme with the aims of the study. The precursor to the TDS began during my contribution to *Temporary Places* which was a six-month long participatory art project that supported the transformation of an area of waste-ground into a public space.⁶ During *Temporary Places* I produced an illustrated newssheet and facilitated drawing workshops in a portacabin installed onsite by the organisers. When the commission finished, I relocated the workshops to the Culture Shop, a micro-venue run by the community youth arts organisation New Lodge Arts (one of the *Temporary Places* project partners).⁷

From the point of view of a role in participatory art research, I felt I had identified a gap in provision for open-access adult art-education outside of the time constraints common to state-funded public art projects.⁸ I viewed my intention in terms of providing an ongoing learning space for people who may not have been aware of or had access to the initial fixed-term project, or to other projects I had been employed on. The rolling nature would also encourage participation by those who needed time to develop trust in a new situation, those that, in my experience, were less likely to attend temporary projects that were based on pre-existing groups and communal identities. Alongside these relational aspects, I also considered my objective in terms of a need to re-focus my

⁶ *Temporary Places* was a public art project co-managed by New Lodge Arts, PS² gallery and Skegoneill/Glandore Common Purpose (<http://temporaryplaces.org>). The project comprised staff from each organisation, nine invited artists, local activists and community workers. The waste ground that was the main site of the project is a semi-intentional buffer zone (or 'interface') between what has been generalised as working-class Protestant/Unionist and middle-class Catholic/Nationalist areas. In addition, the timing of the project occurred after a breakdown in relations between communities in North Belfast that had been built up in previous years. Michael Hall, *North Belfast Voices: (2) The need to reconnect* (Belfast: R.E.A.L Good Relations Project, 2013).

⁷ The TDS was hosted and supported by New Lodge Arts but was initially independent of their programme. The Culture Shop is a previously unused small retail unit in Ashton Community Centre which New Lodge Arts rented as a workshop, production room and store for their various youth arts programmes. I facilitated the TDS between November 2013 and September 2016, and the artist Anne-Marie Taggart facilitated, with my support, between September 2016 and March 2018. Between March 2018 and May 2018, the TDS was administered by New Lodge Arts. In April 2018 New Lodge Arts closed The Culture Shop after cuts in their funding from The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI). From November 2018 the Culture Shop re-opened with former TDS participants invited by New Lodge Arts to self-manage their own version of the TDS.

⁸ For instance, participatory public art schemes such as ACNI's Re-imagining Communities programmes operated on a project basis.

practice on drawing and illustration after a period of working with materials that were largely pre-determined by project commissioners and funding strategies.

Additional perspectives were revealed to me when I reflected on the programme in preparation for this study. The long-term friendship group formed by attendees, with its issues of inclusivity and exclusivity, and the inter-dependence on a meshwork of small organisations paralleled my previous experience of illustrating for *The Vacuum*, a local arts newsheet also discussed here. In both situations I had adopted a role within a creative group, as illustrator with *The Vacuum* and as facilitator with the TDS, that reflected a condition of tension between community membership, social connectivity and the solitary experience of drawing. This tension, which takes place across my practice, also reflected critical narratives within participatory arts where the TDS could be considered in terms of artistic strategies where practitioners have turned their backs on art elites,⁹ the result of the artist seeking to be a student again, or of a practice designed to avoid engagement with peers.¹⁰

The presence and personality of the contributors however, created identities for the TDS beyond my underlying motivations and generated unforeseeable outcomes for the programme. For instance, the enthusiasm of participants could lend the sessions a certain theatricality leading to improvised activities outside the workshop space, and contributors would project their personal visions of communal working onto the group, enriching my understanding of the value of the project. In parallel, on occasions when the TDS was temporarily framed in a gallery context, the programme was susceptible to external perceptions relating to discursive frameworks from contemporary art practice. These instances raised the productive conundrum of whether my specific focus on drawing and illustration had any meaningful impact on the programme's socially-engaged or participatory aspects. My premise in this case is that a link can be made between the use of illustrative drawing and the relational aspects of the TDS, and, in turn, that such links occur in a variety of participatory practices that incorporate drawing.

The Tuesday Drawing Studio, *The Vacuum* newsheet, and the activities around the production and dissemination of a comic book called *The Selfish Dream* (2016) together comprise the three

⁹ For Crehan, “[a] view from the shadows can sometimes reveal more than one from the heights of power.” Crehan, *Community Art*, 13.

¹⁰ The first critique was made by Claire Bishop (*Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London: Verso, 2012) and the second by Liam Gillick, (“In Conversation: Simon Critchley and Liam Gillick, 10 May 2012,” Brooklyn Museum, 10 May 2012, video, 1:16:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13I-TP10AWc>).

practical case studies that support my thesis. My rationale for their inclusion is that each present a distinct relational arrangement of producers and contributors that is mediated by the act, artefact or agency of illustrative drawing. Further, the presentation of different viewpoints, including the involvement of others and my changing role within each work, reflects my methodological concern for a diversity of gazes as a necessary consideration in evaluating the impact of each work. My role as an autonomous practitioner can be established here in support of this rationale, as the incorporation of drawn illustration into my visual art practice has entailed a consideration of the circumstances of the medium's production, distribution and exchange and an approach to the illustrative process in terms of both a solitary and community experience.

The variety of outputs during this project reflect my multi-disciplinary and cross-platform approach. As part of the academic rigour applied to my research I presented findings in a number of scholarly contexts. These included a paper for the *Drawing Matters* symposium at York St. John University in 2017, where I forwarded the TDS as a practical case study in a discussion of the drawn line as a conceptual mode within socially-engaged art. In a 2015 paper presented at the *6th Annual International Illustration Research Symposium* I forwarded my premise that a useful contribution to research in illustration and participatory art could be made through a consideration of *The Vacuum* newsheet as public art.¹¹ This paper was then developed into an article for the *Journal of Illustration* which I then applied to the thesis to structure chapter four.¹²

The study outputs also included practical artistic works with a different but no less extensive reach than the scholarly contributions. *The Selfish Dream* comic book is, at the time of writing, sold in over ten independent comic shops in Ireland, the UK and overseas, and as part of my fieldwork was distributed at five self-publishing fairs in the UK. I also installed two public exhibitions connected to the publication at the Black Box, a live arts venue in Belfast. The first of which brought the work to the attention of a diverse venue-going audience whilst the second, a permanent installation in the venue's dressing room, has come to form part of the Black Box's visual profile and appears across their advertising platforms.¹³

¹¹ Duncan Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," paper presentation at the *6th Annual Illustration Research Symposium*, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, November 2015.

¹² Duncan Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*: carnivalesque drawing and the delimitation of communities," *Journal of Illustration* 4, no. 1 (2017): 11-36.

¹³ Information on the launch exhibition is available at the Black Box website: <https://www.blackboxbelfast.com/event/exhibition-the-selfish-dream/> and examples of the green room installation within the venue's marketing material can accessed here: <https://www.facebook.com/blackboxbelfast/videos/1606866302762209/>.

The TDS itself was constituted from numerous practical and public outputs, a selection of which are discussed further in this thesis. One example, *The TDS Colouring-in Book* produced for this study, was launched with an exhibition at PS² Gallery in Belfast in 2015 and was attended by a cross-section of art and non-art audiences. Of the 500 copies printed, half the colouring books were then distributed free to twelve libraries in Northern Ireland as part of their Mindful Colouring programme.¹⁴ Like the TDS, the student participatory study which I designed and facilitated for this research involved a number of published works, each with their own circles of distribution. Taken together, these outputs and publications span diverse audiences and impacted on both scholarly and informal knowledge networks. This impact is ongoing as will be discussed further, with, for instance, the findings in the chapters on drawing, the comic book and the zine forming the basis for continuing scholarly research and, in a grassroots context, I continue to work with former TDS participants supporting their independent projects that emerged from the original programme.

0.1.2 || **Participation and illustration**

To engage with my premise that a link can be made between illustration and the relational aspects of a variety of participatory practices that incorporate drawing, I identified situations of illustrative drawing which could be described as participatory. These were across illustration's production, dissemination and re-use, and where drawing methods or theoretical abstractions from drawing were used within engaged practices. My consideration was then toward how practitioners across a range of practices and professions articulate the socially productive or transformative of the illustrative drawing within their work, and to ascertain whether certain motifs reappear across diverse practices. In my initial development of methods of observing and evaluating the ideological orientation and effectivity of the works, where I asked, how, to what extent, and to what end they are participatory, I realised that my premise could be best addressed from a debate on aesthetics in contemporary socially-engaged art. This then led to the central thesis question: 'what are the aesthetics of illustration within participatory practice?'

Within my premise 'illustration' is used in reference to a subset of drawing. That is: drawn images intended for mechanical reproduction that are made in dialogue with a text, what I describe in short as: 'reproducible intertextual drawings'.¹⁵ In addition, my concern is for works made outside strictly

¹⁴ <https://www.librariesni.org.uk/Pages/Mindful-Colouring.aspx>.

¹⁵ Photography, collage, print and digitally generated imagery can all be considered illustration, but drawing is the over-

commercial or instructional parameters, where a degree of aesthetic autonomy is the principle motivation. As my concern is also with the physical circulation of illustration, I have an additional focus on the ‘book’, that is: printed, hand-held, paginated objects. This does not exclude discussion of digital illustrations, as my argument links their appearance to the conditions of print technology, nor illustrated media such as posters, whose formal, material and historical characteristics overlap with those of the book.

My analysis considers drawing as an act, artefact and action with both ephemeral and material characteristics. This can be observed in the manual drawing processes; for instance in chapter one, I cite a philosophical reading of the artist’s sketch as capturing a moment in flux that acknowledges the perceptibility of truth as itself fleeting. With drawing becoming illustration however, a fixidity is given to the image through the processes of reproduction and distribution. Here the ephemeral is ‘frozen’ by the inking process, what the anthropologist Tim Ingold has described as a fetishization of the sketch,¹⁶ and as the printed image circulates, its materiality becomes a focus for archival practices and collectors. The fixed illustration considered as a commodification of the drawn leads however, to another sense of ephemerality, as the throwaway nature of the comic, zine and newssheet renders fleeting the material life of the printed image, a characteristic mobilised by practitioners in response to the immutability associated with public sculpture.¹⁷

Such unsettledness is reflected in the vocabulary I adopt for this study. Here ‘drawing’ has a conceptual openness compared to the narrower ‘illustration’, whose use to denote a secondary or strictly mimetic function is such that the term is often applied pejoratively within art criticism. Hence, although I argue ‘illustration’ and ‘illustrative’ most accurately describe the strand of drawing practice of concern, I use ‘illustrator’ with caution as this does not always adequately describe the role or activity of my case studies and participants. This paucity of terminology relating to ‘those who draw’ led to me adopting the term ‘draughtsman’ and ‘draughtswoman’ to describe practitioners using drawing, whether as artists, illustrators or otherwise. And although I also adopt the term ‘draughter,’ I retain the male and female versions in several instances as their problematic gendering is itself relevant to particular theories of the image.

arching mode of image-production associated with the field. I found this overwhelmingly evident in journals and symposia organised by Illustration Research, a scholarly body that addresses the form in contemporary contexts. <https://www.illustrationresearch.org>

¹⁶ Tim Ingold, “The sustainability of the sketch,” paper presentation at *SKETCHDAY+*, Glasgow College of Art, April 2017.

¹⁷ As will be discussed in chapter four.

The practical participatory component concerns the re-arrangement of social relations, typically as a transformation in agency made with the promise of some democratic or emancipatory effect, for instance, where consumers or spectators become producers or actors. This can be achieved in collaborative, communal or hierarchised groupings, or can take place in the production, distribution, or reception of the illustration, or within a relational framework influenced by illustrative drawing. I use ‘participatory’ rather than ‘socially-engaged’ as the latter term is linked closely with critical practice whereas the broader term reflects more accurately my consideration of perspectives within, on the hinterlands, and outside of art. In other words, the term is part of the scholarly vocabulary of both engaged art and participatory culture, thereby bridging my case studies which span popular media, fan subcultures, grassroots publishing, and hybrid ethnographic and educational projects.

Considering illustration and participation together, my study is a questioning how the production, publication and distribution of printed drawings are developed by a variety of practitioners toward occupying and organising new communal situations and sets of relations. My address has two key characteristics that distinguish it from available research, and these correspond to my methodological and theoretical approaches. Firstly, practice-led study linking the corporeal experience of drawing, through technological reproduction, to the field of social, and therefore political, organisation is underdeveloped. This is evidenced by calls for further research from within the nascent field of illustration as social-engagement.

For instance, the illustrator and researcher Mitch Miller observes that illustrators are still determining what socially-engaged means for their discipline,¹⁸ and scholar Luise Vormittag challenges the field to look, “beyond its own garden,” positing a future, “expanded practice,” possible if practitioners re-focus on illustration’s core values whilst engaging with other

¹⁸ Mitch Miller, “An unruly parliament of lines: the dialectogram as artefact and process of social engagement” (PhD thesis, Glasgow University, 2016); Miller, “More Than a Pun: The Role of Dialect and Dialects in Shaping Dialectograms,” in *Drawing in The University Today*, eds. Paulo Almeida, Miguel Duarte and José Barbosa (Porto: I2ADS, 2014): 193-200; Miller, “Territories in the Landscape. The Dialectogram.” Paper presented at the 7th Illustration Research Symposium, Edinburgh, November 2016; Luise Vormittag, “Illustrating Alternative Urban Imaginaries.” Paper presented at the 7th Illustration Research Symposium, Edinburgh, November 2016. Miller also asks how an, “engaged illustration,” would do things differently from design and critical art approaches: “We can pretend to be an adjunct of engaged participatory design in this field, talking to them about engaged illustration. Or we could pretend to be a kind of socially engaged art. We've got stuff to learn from both, but I think illustration has got this real ability to... Where it's coming from right now is look at both things and actually decide how it wants to do it. And I don't think we have to do it in the same way as either socially engaged artists or socially engaged designers.” Mitch Miller, in discussion with the author, 2 August 2017.

disciplines.¹⁹ My research contributes to this development by addressing together the fundamental characteristics of illustration (drawing, text and print), considering them in multiple contexts, and submitting them to cross-disciplinary analysis. Combined, these factors distinguish my study from extant scholarship which tends to isolate sub-genres of illustration to explore individual aspects of participation.²⁰

My methodology is also distinguished by the weighting I give to the motivations of non-expert practitioners and artists working outside of institutional knowledge frameworks. This is reflected by the case studies where sub-genres of book practice (comics, zines and satirical newsheets) are developed in conversation with the role of printed drawing in socially-engaged art practices. In the latter instances, drawing can either be central, such as in Ella Gibb's and Amy Plant's community newspaper *Laburnum Pilot*, or peripheral and critically subordinate to more pressing dialogical narratives, as with Tim Rollins's Art and Knowledge Workshop. This characteristic responds to what the theorist Grant Kester describes as a need to expand the disciplinary frame employed by art historians and critics in their attempts to analyse socially engaged art.²¹ Here, my interest in the intersections between seemingly disparate works responds to Kester's specific concern for art's engagement with anthropology.

It is not my intention to elevate or legitimise illustration practices by comparing them with social practice, but to illuminate where illustration praxis independently encroaches on narratives of participation in contemporary art. Conversely, my emphasis on visual forms outside of communication design or contemporary art production is not a rejection of criticality but an investigation into further convergence between these fields and a diffuse participatory culture. Across all these appearances, the authored illustration circulates in the 'phantasmagoric', a term

¹⁹ Luise Vormittag, "Making (the) subject matter: Illustration as interactive, collaborative practice," *Journal of Illustration* 1, no. 1 (2014): 64-65.

²⁰ For instance, illustration scholars Desdemona McCannon and James Walker re-examine specific traditions of illustration in terms of social and inter-subjective interaction (Desdemona McCannon, "A brief history of illustrated street entertainment," *Varoom!* 18 (Spring 2012): 34-37; James Walker, "The vernacular line: Adoption and transposition of the kitsch in illustration," *Journal of Illustration* 1, no. 1 (2014): 29-40), the illustration scholar Catrin Morgan examines the ethical claims of graphic journalism and documentary comics (Catrin Morgan, "Mythical Speech in Reportage Illustration." Paper presented at the 7th Illustration Research Symposium, Edinburgh, November 2016), and recent scholarship in comics addresses the form's materiality as inclusive of human relations, that is, as an assemblage of agencies and relations (Ernesto Ramirez, "The Comic Book in The Age Of Digital Reproduction." PhD thesis, University College London, 2010; Ben Little, "Comic Books, Politics and Readers: The influence of the 2000AD group of comics creators on the formation of Anglo-American comics culture." PhD thesis, Middlesex University, 2010; Scott Jeffery, "Superhuman, Transhuman, Post/Human: Mapping the Production and Reception of the Posthuman Body." PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2013).

²¹ Grant Kester, editorial, *FIELD: A journal of socially-engaged art criticism*, no. 11 (Autumn 2018).

allotted to the stimulating and illusory human-created environment that developed rapidly in the industrialised nations of the nineteenth century. The philosopher Susan Buck-Morss, who I will return to in chapters one and two, applies the term in a theory of cultural production as an anaestheticising response to the shock of the industrial consumer age, one that feeds back into the phantasmagorical environment.²²

This introduces the second distinguishing characteristic as my theoretical approach from a discussion of aesthetics. I have not found a study on engaged illustration that takes a discussion of aesthetics in relation to participation as the central discursive framework. For the political theorist Jacques Rancière participation requires the absence of any representation in favour of direct actioning.²³ This lends my proposal a precariousness in that my address to illustrative drawing is in conjunction with participation, a bringing together of a method of representation with a method of social engagement. In these terms my discussion of participation from the perspective of a technique would appear anomalous to the post-medium status of contemporary critical art within which participation is an ongoing motif.²⁴ This is a productive tension however, as my aim is not to argue for a cohesive field of socially-engaged illustration, but to inquire into the aesthetics of a particular mode of drawing toward outcomes useful in participatory art forms generally.

0.1.3 || **Aesthetics and politics**

My approach from aesthetic theory led to the identification of themes that are underdeveloped by illustration scholarship yet reveal a novel connectivity to expressions of participation. These are: the necessity to view the work as constituted by multiple gazes; the apprehension of community and solitude as conditions formed through re-inscription; and the consideration of the components of participatory illustration in terms of the intermedial, that is, as interfaces or in-between conditions. The themes reflect the interrelatedness of the aesthetic and the political which has been a central conversation in critical art and co-determinate with the issue of participation.²⁵ Although specific thinkers are brought to bear on these throughout the thesis, the motifs, as themes and discursive

²² Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62, (1992): 3-41, 23-24.

²³ Jacques Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art," *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods* 2, no. 1 (Summer 2000), 5-7.

²⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*.

²⁵ Bishop; Crehan, *Community Art*; Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Suzanne Lacy, *Leaving Art. Writings on Performance, Politics and Publics 1974 – 2007* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, (London: Continuum, 2011), Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in *The Return of The Real: The Avant-garde at The End of The Century* (London and Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996): 171-204.

frameworks, are best established in reference to overarching considerations of aesthetics as co-determinate with a question of political arrangements and effects. The work of a range of theorists are also applied to this end, but Walter Benjamin exerts an influence on them in most cases.

I will begin with the two theorists that I return to for my concluding remarks, Rancière, as cited above, and the art theorist and filmmaker Ariella Azoulay. These have both sought to extricate aesthetics and politics from the polarisation established in Benjamin's 1935 essay, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Production," but have reached different conclusions as to how this affects contemporary art practice. In *The Work of Art*, the mechanically reproduced images that emerged from the technological innovation of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in particular cinema, are presented as breaking from a cultism previously attached to the unique art object. Benjamin is initially affirmative regarding these new media, posing the break as an emancipation of the work of art from a "parasitical dependence" on ritual, one that leads to potential new mass political assemblies for those previously denied participation by the rarefaction of art.²⁶ Benjamin's optimism then shifts in the closing sections,²⁷ where the author warns of the fascist deployment of mass media spectacles and their aim to satiate the desire of citizens in lieu of truly liberating political action.²⁸ Famously, this is articulated as a rendering aesthetic of politics which inevitably culminates in war.²⁹

The closing words that Benjamin offers in return: "Communism responds by politicising art,"³⁰ encapsulate the essay's influence on the development of contemporary art as an autonomous, de-alienated activity concerned with exposing the mechanics of the spectacle. Coextensively however, Benjamin's conclusion also instated a bi-polar regime of aesthetic judgement that trapped critical theory between two co-ordinates: whether art works politicise aesthetics or aestheticise politics. This was such that for Azoulay, when a work is judged along this formation, as either "too aesthetic," or "too political," the, "expressing the being-together of humans, their political existence," paradoxically becomes side-lined.³¹

²⁶ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction," trans. Harry Zohn. In *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968): IV.

²⁷ Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics," 3.

²⁸ "Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves." Benjamin, "The Work of Art," Epilogue.

²⁹ "Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicising art." Benjamin, Epilogue.

³⁰ Benjamin, Epilogue.

³¹ Ariella Azoulay, "Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political," *Theory, Culture & Society*

In Azoulay's essay, "Getting Rid of the Distinction between the Aesthetic and the Political," the dichotomy is disassembled toward a description of a civil view, that incorporates multiple gazes on the work, re-introducing the subjectivities of the participants and the wider social context of the work's production and future presentation.³² Azoulay's framework has additional application to works which take as their subject any degree of human interaction, and is helpful here for considering my own methodological approach. In the essay, aesthetics and politics are re-appraised, not as polar opposites, but as distinct planes which the artwork can bring into interaction across multiple registers. For Azoulay, the Marxist 'political' image (Benjamin's communist response to fascism) denies the presence of subjects within the art works that address not just the spectator's gaze. The 'aesthetic' view in contrast, that which has been posed in opposition to the political, is to consider the work as, "the space of appearance in which an encounter has been recorded between human beings."³³ This includes the before and after of the work that is not considered by the strictly political but is essential to the civil view.

To approach the civil view Azoulay then re-addresses the political not as a trait but as a possibility of people assembled together in a space, a possibility that in turn gives space political potential. This builds on the definition in the philosopher Hannah Arendt's *The Promise of Politics* (2005) but diverges from Arendt's position that such assemblies are split into the political and the social. This view is not diverse enough for Azoulay, as the social assembly also has political potential, and the split into the political and the not political is one that still entails an aesthetic judgement. Azoulay diverges again from Arendt in the latter's separation of the gaze from *vita activa*, the "space of activity," or the idea of a politically engaged life which is itself reliant on the presence of different gazes. *Vita activa* is comprised of three realms, each of which are comprised of different modes of action, speech and gaze. The realm of labour is that of activity necessary to basic survival; the realm of work is professionalised activity (Arendt places art production here); and the realm of action, which Azoulay renames the 'civil', is the daring to create something new from act or speech.

27, no. 7-8 (2010): 248.

³² The essay focuses on the Israeli photographer Micha Kirshner's series on Palestinian victims of violence during the 1988 First Intifada. It is important to acknowledge here, that Azoulay's original commitment in the text is toward justice and emancipation and concerns a documentary photography which takes as its subject the victims of state violence. The civil view in this context is one that considers all the activities involved in the photograph, including the reason the subject became "exposed to photography." This is to see, "the disaster," for Azoulay, as the regime disaster it is. Azoulay, "Getting Rid of The Distinction," 259-260.

³³ Azoulay, 252.

The sharing and open-ness required for the civil realm is linked with the creation of a gaze, as to be civil, human relations need to take place publicly, that is, in a space that is exposed to a multitude of gazes. As stated previously the art work itself is considered as a space of encounter, a political space which Azoulay expands upon as a field of action that cannot be subjugated to external authority.³⁴ As a space of encounter, the photograph is open to the several components of *vita activa*, indeed the image itself is brought into existence by them. Here, the work is identified as a mediator or carrier for the multiple formations of action, speech and gaze that in turn present the complexity of human interactions as not reducible to politics or aesthetics. Even if the image's spectator sees only the artist in this instance, traces of the subject remain in the civil view, as do the political spaces between them and the photographer and them as the viewer.³⁵

The civil view then, is a third domain that presents the possibility for transcending the professional gaze (the one which collapses along critical lines of being too aesthetic or too political) whilst continuing to participate with the political and aesthetic planes.³⁶ The framework provides a theoretical contextualisation for my own methodology which considers the multiple gazes surrounding participatory works that incorporate illustration. However, Azoulay's identification of the work as mediator or carrier and the gazes that re-constitute the political spaces before, during and after the work, will also be returned to within the thesis in conversation with specific works as Azoulay's position offers a theoretical argument for my research ethos and a theory for considering effectivity of illustration in participatory works. The discussion in these instances concerns the apprehension of a socially transformative function to the image, its production or its dissemination, and to this end I introduce the thinking of Rancière as he also instantiates a circumvention of what Azoulay names: the Benjaminian dichotomy.

In *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004) Rancière outlines politics and aesthetics as both concerning a, "distribution of the sensible,"³⁷ introduced as,

³⁴ Azoulay, 256-257.

³⁵ In contrast, if a 'political' view were taken, no room would be left for the civil view as the photograph and the suffering of the subject would be fused into one critical object.

³⁶ Azoulay, 258-259.

³⁷ The philosopher Gabriel Rockhill identifies Rancière using at least three definitions of both politics and aesthetics, but the distribution of the sensible is the shared capacity. Gabriel Rockhill, "Rancière's Productive Contradictions: From The Politics Of Aesthetics to The Social Polity of Artistic Practice," *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy* 15, no. 2, (Autumn 2011): 28-56.

“the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it.”³⁸

In other words: the capacity to be seen and heard in public alongside the policing of that capacity by its own participants; the political order; and the order's administrative structure (here “the political order,” and its, “administrative structure” can be any material or relational form). This conceptualisation addresses on equal terms the public situation of the production and spectatorship of any given form and the material qualities of that form.³⁹ Aesthetics and politics therefore overlap in their concern for the distribution and sharing out of ideas, abilities and experiences to particular subjects,⁴⁰ leading to a description of art works, or “aesthetic acts,” as, “configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity.”⁴¹

Rancière substantiates the distribution of the sensible in reference to close examinations of the effects of print proliferation in the nineteenth century, affording the theory an additional relevance as my definition of illustration is bound into the processes of print reproduction.⁴² This proliferation, enabled by the spread of literacy and the faster, cheaper process of lithography, created new distributions of the sensible by bringing the previously unseen to new readerships.⁴³

³⁸ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12.

³⁹ “Rancière suggests that art or aesthetic practices (for example, the novel, photography, film, painting...) can be political to the extent that they play a key function in this ‘distribution of the sensible’.” Porter, “Distribution of the Sensible,” 17.

⁴⁰ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 27. A paradox is involved in making this discussion, as Rancière does make a distinction between the two in order to arrive at their interchangeability, what Rockhill articulates as two theses: that aesthetics and politics are consanguineous, only insofar as they never mingle in any way (Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 29-30). When he does detail the two separately, aesthetics is, “a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience.” Whereas politics, “revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time” (13). Rockhill further condenses Rancière’s aesthetics as of, “this and I,” and his definition of politics as of, “we.” (Rockhill, “Rancière’s Productive Contradictions,” 36).

⁴¹ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 9. Communication scholar Robert Porter summarises the argumentation in *The Politics of Aesthetics* as traversing, “the fields of ‘aesthetics’ and ‘political theory’ in ways that frustrate the possibility of [...] maintaining any sharp distinction between them (“Distribution of the Sensible,” *Variant*, no. 30 (Winter, 2007), 17). For Claire Bishop, *The Politics of Aesthetics* presents a framework within which, “it is not possible to conceive of an aesthetic judgement that is not the same as a political judgement.” *Artificial Hells*, 27.

⁴² Here, my focus on illustration is not to indulge any nostalgic desire for a return to a pre-modern age, or to promote the polyglot visual surface as inherently egalitarian (which would be a mis-reading of Rancière’s analysis of his nineteenth century case studies) but to investigate illustration as a co-conspirator, or antagonist, amongst the diverse elements of the page and the wider material and relational environment.

⁴³ This intertwining upset previous aesthetic and social hierarchies, “the elevation of artisan’s art to the status of great art, and the new claim to bring art into the décor of each and every life, an entire well-ordered distribution of sensory experience was overturned.” Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 17.

The new printed page is here an “interface” between two previously disconnected regimes of sense, demonstrable in its susceptibility to being assigned to contradictory political paradigms. For instance, although the realist novel produced new “communities of readers,” that is, readers connected by their shared sensory experience of the text, the “indifference” of the new prose form, that is both the physical appearance of words on the page and the consistent tone of literary realism, simultaneously delimited, or restricted, what was then sensorially available to the reader. In comparison, the publishing works of the Arts and Crafts movement saw the page occupied with multiple semantic elements including illustrations, ornamentation and text, which for Rancière created a productive “dissensus,” or disjunction between sensible regimes which corresponded to the movement’s aim to disrupt the political status quo toward the creation of a new socialist community.⁴⁴

In the 2006 essay, “Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community,” Rancière further interrogates pivotal works of nineteenth century art to build criteria for an ‘effectivity’ in contemporary art. It is through this discursive freedom of movement between art and non-art forms, that a distinct space is created for an effective, “engaged art” to re-emerge.⁴⁵ This is particularly pertinent to an area of tension affecting contemporary art criticism that is also relevant to the practices discussed here. The art historian Claire Bishop details a concern for the independence of contemporary participatory art from critical frameworks that posit aesthetic effectiveness as driven by ethics.⁴⁶ Rancière is useful for Bishop’s position as he deems this independence, described as an autonomy of art from the actual site of political change it references, as necessary for the aesthetics at play in the work to be perceived and therefore for the future “community of sense” described by the work to be made comprehensible.⁴⁷ My interest is to establish a dialogue between the works I review and Rancière’s analytical approach. This is not because I wish to argue for them as contemporary art, but because they all concern a relation between community and solitude which are also pivotal concepts within Rancière’s analysis.

⁴⁴ Rancière, 14.

⁴⁵ Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 5-6.

⁴⁶ Bishop argues for the autonomy of art in relation to ethically driven modes, such as dialogical aesthetics and new-genre public art, proposed respectively by the American artist-theorists Grant Kester and Suzanne Lacy. Bishop views these as damaging to works that take risks, for instance works in the more rupturing narrative-driven European mode of participation, such as those of Jeremy Deller, Thomas Hirschhorn and Santiago Sierra. For Bishop, Rancière presents an argument for the autonomy of such works: “Good art, implies Rancière, must negotiate the tension that (on the one hand) pushes art towards ‘life’ and that (on the other) separates aesthetic sensoriality from other forms of sensible experience. This friction ideally produces the formation of elements ‘capable of speaking twice: from their readability and from their unreadability’.” Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 29.

⁴⁷ For Bishop, Rancière’s thinking in contradiction is also a characteristic of participatory art. “The aesthetic for Rancière therefore signals an ability to think contradiction: the productive contradiction of art’s relationship to social change, which is characterised by the paradox of belief in art’s autonomy and in it being inextricably bound to the promise of a better world to come.” Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 29.

In “Aesthetic Separation,” political efficacy is described as being achieved through the separation of the artwork from the community that it seeks to transform. This is the sense of solitude that Rancière invokes: as a removed ‘aesthetic’ place that is a necessary construction for art to be politically ‘engaged’.⁴⁸ In addressing autonomy this way, Rancière does not mean a literal detachment from all possible external influence, as the solitude of the artwork is described as a false solitude.⁴⁹ Instead, the aesthetic works are defined as Deleuzian-Guattarian knots or twists of sensation and thus inextricably as much part of the world as the human body and the human collective. It is worth establishing here that Rancière’s definition of aesthetic appears in concordance with that of Susan Buck-Morss, who I will refer to in the next two chapters. Buck-Morss’ definition itself follows Benjamin’s, in that aesthetics is, “that which is ‘perceptive by feeling’,” a discourse, for the literary theorist Terry Eagleton, that is born of the body.⁵⁰

The separation of the artwork in this instance is in terms of a separation from a community, which itself is not in reference to an ethnicity but, for Rancière, community in terms of a shared sensory experience.⁵¹ Rancière compares different combinations of regimes of sense as they are discerned in art works as “senses of sense,” that is, where one sense stands for another. His entry point is an analysis of Stéphane Mallarmé’s prose poem *The White Water Lily* (1885) the protagonist of which overhears the presence of a woman, a neighbouring landowner, while out rowing. Although he has an interest in the woman, he avoids meeting her, considering the sensory awareness of her partial presence the purer form of encounter. This is the “being together apart,” that Rancière seeks to rescue from romantic gesture and posit as a condition for politically effective art. I will return to this in the conclusion.

Another sense of sense is the superimposition of one sensorium on another as Rancière articulates in *Politics* as occurring in the monotonal prose of the realist novel and in the polyglot pages of Arts and Crafts publications. These stage a conflict between two sensory worlds; thus, the superimposition articulates a dissensus, the work functioning as an interface between different

⁴⁸ Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 2.

⁴⁹ Rancière, 4.

⁵⁰ Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics,” 6.

⁵¹ Kant’s community of sense, *sensus communis*, is defined in similar terms by the philosopher Iain Hamilton Grant as an, “affective community.” Iain Hamilton Grant, “LA 2019: Demopathy and Xenogenesis: Some Realist Notes on Bladerunner and the Postmodern Condition,” in *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader*, Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian eds. (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017): 297.

regimes of sense. An “aesthetic regime of art” is then created by this rupturing of one sense to another.⁵² As with the workers at leisure depicted in Georges Seurat’s oil painting *Bathers at Asnières* (1884), Rancière sees the spectator torn from their original destination, from any specific community, to become a dissensual figure, a subject only of an aesthetic community.

Here, there can be no, “private paradise for amateurs or for aesthetes,” as there are no longer any boundaries separating, “what belongs to the realm of art to what belongs to the realm of everyday life.”⁵³ In turn, this loss of destination is what marks the aesthetic sensorium. The new loss of roles is a form of emancipation as dis-identification, where access is gained to the community of dis-identified persons.⁵⁴ However, at the same moment, as with the reader of the realist novel in *Politics*, it becomes apparent that the new communities of sense are bound by the same order of restrictions as the original destination, which then leads to a neutralisation of the newly attained dis-identification.

The relation between these two separations is the aesthetic effect, one which Rancière applies to our own position, where we, as dis-identified persons, gaze at critical art and become members of the aesthetic community.⁵⁵ The concern is then for how critical art can acknowledge this gaze toward making further understanding of the distribution of the sensible. To this end, Rancière first questions the direct use of critical art to frame a certain sense of community. These are works which maintain the conflation of representational sense with lived experience whilst purportedly seeking to include what is termed as a break from mimetic correspondence. Here Rancière cites works of various media, including contemporary sculpture and photomontage, which seek to expose the deceptions of the capitalist spectacle through techniques of clash and rupture. For Rancière, these are attempts at a, “straight way from intellectual awareness to political action,” of which there is none, as this would necessitate another ‘break’, this time in the spectator’s behaviour, which is an

⁵² Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 8. For Rockhill it is in the “Aesthetic Separation” essay that Rancière, “explicitly emphasises the political efficacy of aesthetics as a force of dissensus.” (Rockhill, “Rancière’s productive contradictions,” 35). For the scholar of politics Neala Schleuning, Rancière’s “dissensus” redefined art’s political potential in terms of rupturing the status quo towards a change in consciousness. Neala Schleuning, *ARTPOLITIK: Social Anarchist Aesthetics in an Age of Fragmentation* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 220-221.

⁵³ For Schiller, critiquing Kant, there is no “happy dream of a community united and civilised by the contemplation of eternal beauty.” Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 9.

⁵⁴ Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 11. For clarity I use “dis-identification,” from the updated translation in *The Emancipated Spectator* (trans. Gregory Elliott. London And New York: Verso, 2011) rather than “des-identification,” as it appeared in the original essay.

⁵⁵ In this way, Rancière suggests the newly literate working-class readers of the nineteenth century related more to the protagonists of romantic novels, who better represented their dislocation, than to the consciousness-raising narratives of more socialist writing. Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 10.

incalculable proposition in the case of critical art. Instead, the simple transplantation of one sensory world to the other results in the self-neutralisation of the work.⁵⁶

“Engaged art,” those works that Rancière considers as attaining some effectivity, acknowledge the necessary separation of aesthetics from lived reality, rather than attempt to represent the required “political action” necessary for the new community of sense to come into being. Any possible new being together is enunciated by siting the artistic production outside the gallery, in “real life,” then re-framing these processes within a separate aesthetic work. This gives rise to the formula: “apart we are together,” which has two interpretations. Firstly, in works that in being apart from the community, tentatively show a new community. Secondly, in works that explore the terms “apart” and “together” by questioning how the new community is produced; or, ascertain, “the potentials of community entailed in separation itself.”⁵⁷ This is art that reveals the conflation of aesthetics and politics by disjunctively re-presenting a situation where this takes place (real-life) using another sensorium.⁵⁸

None of these works avoid the “aesthetic cut” that separates the outcome and the intentions of aesthetic works. The cut forbids the, “straight way,” mentioned above, “toward an ‘other side’ of the words and images,” and institutes the necessary tensions and contradictions that prevent aesthetic efficiency ever, “fusing in one and the same community of sense.”⁵⁹ This effective art (the more efficient and engaged work), does not then sidestep, “the incalculable tension between political dissensuality and aesthetic difference,” but recognises and mobilises it within the work as a revealing of the disruption between different regimes of sense that take place across political and artistic activity.⁶⁰

Rancière’s conclusion, whilst providing substance for the call to protect the independence of critical art from ethically driven frameworks, at the same time disarms broader cultural practices whose

⁵⁶ Rancière, 12.

⁵⁷ Rancière, 13.

⁵⁸ A clear example is the artist Anri Sala’s 2003 film, *Danmi colori*, which documents a public art project by Edi Rama, the then mayor of Tirana, Albania. The work depicted was a mass social project involving painting public housing in bright colours, in order, in Rancière’s words, “to bring about a new sense of aesthetic community among the citizens.” Rancière’s interest is in Sala’s documentary as much as the original public art project, as the film accepts the inevitable separation between its own aesthetic condition, unlike Rama’s, “direct attempt to fuse life and art in one process.” Rancière, 13.

⁵⁹ Rancière, 14.

⁶⁰ Rancière, 14. In *The Politics of Aesthetics* this was articulated as aesthetic works being forms of visibility that themselves disclose artistic practice. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 13.

aims include the establishment of communities of sense using aesthetic techniques. In Rancière's framework these would either fail to see 'community' as comprised only of shared dis-identification, or, if aware of this condition, would continue regardless in a conscious manipulation of the spectator's ignorance. Many of the works and practices which I address can be said to take place in this diffuse zone of activity.⁶¹ Therefore, it is the more specific instances Rancière develops in support of his findings that inform my theoretical approach, as much as the final proposal for effective art. Most notably, the paradigm of the printed page as an intermedial space, or interface, that negotiates between different communities of sense, thereby offering a view of social organisation as an aesthetic as much as political experience.

0.2 || **Structure and procedures**

0.2.1 || **Practice-led methodology**

Rancière's articulation of a dis-identified subject, a concept of community as shared sensory experience, and of the printed page as an interface between such community, are not the exclusive points of departure for my study. My theoretical base was also developed in dialogue with a practice-led system of methods which themselves arose from my concern for a number of gazes, or views, on the work. The civil view proposed by Azoulay is therefore particularly descriptive of my methodological orientation regarding the instances of drawing under review. That is, in a manner similar to Azoulay's address to her photographic case studies, where the subjects and the conditions that led to them being subjects constitute the work, I see the commissioners, collaborators, participants and readers, as much as the illustrator or artist, as constituting the works under review.

Here, the civil view would appear to present a counter-position to Rancière's conclusion that effective works address only the spectator, and only then as a dis-identified member of an aesthetic community. Seemingly in opposition to this, the civil view re-introduces the presence of multiple subjects as they gaze through the work in ways that are uncontrollable by the artist or spectator. Yet, as Azoulay states, the civil view does not deny the critical view: the gaze on the work which sees only the "political" or the "aesthetic," but accommodates these planes within the multiplicity of

⁶¹ My case studies include different relationships and proximities to the parameters of Rancière's effective art, which must always critique the aesthetic-political from a necessary distance. Some of the less central works cited can be considered fully as 'effective' in these terms and are addressed as such when cited.

gazes which together bring the work into existence.⁶² Azoulay's conclusion then, best describes my own approach to the works under review, as I address them not as 'too political', or 'too aesthetic', or indeed, too unlike art, but as phenomena whose own civic potential can only be recognised by attending to the multiple gazes across their phases of production, distribution and consumption. The inclusion of my practice in this study is therefore also due to the access it has offered me to the views, or gazes, of the participants who themselves constitute the work.

The three works I have selected involve interaction and encounter with specific groups and individuals that were mediated or enabled by an act of drawing. They have different temporal relations, spatial proximities and conceptual affinities to the study. However, each is dependent on the close involvement of others and can be viewed as a set of relations in which I also assumed different roles. In addition, the individual instances of illustration within them are not presented as art works in themselves but advanced in order to ascertain their function within the wider aesthetic project. As with the civil gaze, the usefulness to the study rests in the access the works afford to people and organisations who see some value in illustration within their own practice.

For clarity I introduce them here in terms of the chronological date of their production but in the text, they are cited according to their relation to the media under discussion.

⁶² This is not to dismiss that both Rancière and Azoulay's theoretical positions are toward a greater apprehension of the politics of the regime as fostering conditions of poverty, disenfranchisement and exposure to violence.



Figure 1. Factotum editors with various artists, *The Vacuum* issues 1 to 30, 2003 – 2006, newsprint.

The earliest work is *The Vacuum* newsheet (2003 - 2014). This was a publishing project that encompassed various theatrical and interventionist off-shoots and to which I contributed approximately three hundred illustrations (Figure 1).⁶³ As the paper was not produced during the research timeframe it combines the categories of case study and historical practical work. However, my reflective analysis correlates with my approach to the other practical works, where I balance critical distance with subjective insight. Here I can emphasise that my inclusion of *The Vacuum* is not to argue for the publication and its satellite activities to be considered as a distinct work of ‘public art’ but rather to frame *The Vacuum* within that field in order to draw out the particular qualities of illustration that relate to community formulation and participation.⁶⁴

The Vacuum itself reflected, through humorous cultural commentary, the economic and political transitions taking place in its host city of Belfast, and I evaluate the paper’s distribution in public space in the context of contemporary Northern Irish art and grassroots political spectacles. *The Vacuum* is therefore important to the analysis in terms of the context of its production, where art in public space has developed with particular resonances and lineages that distinguish it from similar practices in the rest of Ireland and the UK.

⁶³ Although *The Vacuum* has not been officially retired, 2014 is the last date of issue as of the time of writing.

⁶⁴ In fact, *The Vacuum* and the work of Factotum have previously been contextualised as ‘participatory’, ‘public’ and ‘critical’ art through their inclusion in The Northern Irish Pavilion at the 2005 Venice Biennale, and their nominations for The Paul Hamlyn Foundation prize for visual artists (2005) and the Irish Curated Visual Arts Award (2007).

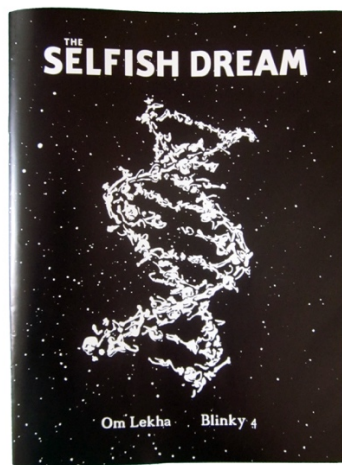


Figure 2. Om Lekha and Blinky 4, *The Selfish Dream*, 2016, sixteen-page comic book, 216mm by 279mm.

The second practical work stems from one of the artistic collaborations emerging from *The Vacuum*. The twenty-page comic book *The Selfish Dream* (2016) is a folk horror speculative fiction that imagines a post-human existence beyond the confines of the body (Figure 2). The project afforded material for a close analysis of what makers and readers ascribe to comics and other works of illustrated self-publishing. The narrative and format were largely pre-decided by the writer, the sometime *Vacuum* contributor Om Lekha, and I volunteered to illustrate his concept under the *nom de plume* Blinky 4.⁶⁵ The initial production process took place between 2012 and 2016 and was made at a remove from the research aims. This was important to my study as the separation of the comic's origins from my experience of illustrating it provides a vantage point for the analysis in terms of its author as an excessive reader, and the comic itself as a fan work.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Om Lekha was an assumed name of the author, 'Lekha', meaning the art of writing in Pali, a Buddhist scriptural language closely related to Sanskrit. The complimentary, 'inky', within Blinky 4, was not noticed until after I adopted the pseudonym. Rather, Blinky 4 was chosen in reference to a character in *The Numskulls*, a cartoon strip appearing in the D.C. Thompson published children's comics, *The Beano*, *The Beezer* and *The Dandy*. This was intended as a humorous foil to what I considered as the rather euphuistic tone of 'Om Lekha'.

⁶⁶ An "excessive reader" is the media scholar John Fiske's definition of a committed fan of a particular mass media and popular cultural phenomenon. "The Cultural economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992).

The series of activities in the post-production stage were made entirely in response to the study aims. Although conceived as a comic, I re-appraised the publication in terms of illustrated zines and the broader category of do-it-yourself (DIY) self-publishing and developed the illustrations and material as a research instrument. As an intermediary in the study process the work was then re-orientated toward the research concerns and contributed toward structuring and guiding the thesis. For example, the publication enabled my participation in various self-publishing fairs where I encountered further case studies and situations relevant to the theoretical discussion. *The Selfish Dream* can then be viewed as a project that included the printed object, related events and installations, and the relational transactions of distribution.⁶⁷



Figure 3. Scenes from the TDS taking place in (from left) PS² Gallery, The Culture Shop and PeasPark, 2014 – 2016.

As introduced earlier the third work is the collection of outcomes and activities that included and resulted from the Tuesday Drawing Studio. The TDS can also be considered as a relational assemblage, in that it gathered various activities, outcomes and actors under a single title. Of the three projects, the TDS is the most fully self-initiated, yet was reliant on a wider meshwork of supportive organisations. These included the youth arts organisation New Lodge Arts, who ran the workshop venue; PS², a gallery and arts commissioning organisation; and PeasPark, the informal, open-access community garden that was another enduring outcome from *Temporary Places* (Figure 3). PeasPark is the site of various architectural and artistic interventions to which TDS participants

⁶⁷ For comics scholar Ernesto Ramírez comics materiality is the sum of relationships and settings involved in production, encompassing not only the publication, but their production processes and interactions with readers. Ramírez, “Digital Reproduction,” 14-15.

have contributed. Together with one-off projects at PS² I refer to these interventions to frame the TDS in terms of the temporary repurposing or re-inhabiting of social space, and to propose a more conceptual definition of drawing as an approach within participatory practice.⁶⁸

0.2.2 || **Methods**

To determine correlations and contradictions between participant experiences, case studies, my practical works and the theory, I developed a number of procedures and techniques within the practical methodology, the potential messiness of which was of concern during the initial research process. With the TDS for instance, several outcomes, situations and interactions are brought into discussion, including an address to the programme itself as an aesthetic work. In addition, the practical studies risked certain shortcomings that the anthropologists Aina Azevedo and Manuel Ramos identify within two types of visual investigation in anthropological research. That is, researching the visual and producing the visual as instruments and analytical compositions can be undermined by the necessity of other methods to explicate them and lead to epistemological or practical muddles.⁶⁹

Although acknowledging the shortfalls of such a broad inclusion and the need to translate each experience, I feel the plurality of methods deployed is justified as it is itself indicative of the subject under review. For example, the social sciences scholar John Law views mess as arising from methods that actively participate in a sphere of practice. These methods are, “a continuing process of *crafting and enacting necessary boundaries between presence, manifest absence and Otherness*,” [authors italics] which he considers more constructively as a ‘method assemblage’.⁷⁰ For Law, mess is where the researcher applies multiple procedures and techniques, including acceptance of their

⁶⁸ The TDS held two exhibitions at PS² gallery which each framed the programme differently in relation to modes of participatory art. The first of these (August 2015) was in the form of a residency within the year-long “Community as Artist” programme and positioned the TDS within contemporary participatory art practice. (http://www.pssquared.org/community_as_artist_TDS.php). The second (June 2016) was arranged around the promotion of a publication and the TDS appeared more conventionally as an art club or community arts initiative (<http://www.pssquared.org/TDS.php>).

⁶⁹ Aina Azevedo and Manuel Ramos, “Drawing Close - On Visual Engagements in Fieldwork, Drawing Workshops and The Anthropological Imagination,” *Visual ethnography* 5, no.1 (2016): 137.

⁷⁰ For Law, “The argument is no longer that methods discover and depict realities. Instead, it is that they participate in the enactment of those realities.” (John Law, *After Method: Mess in Social Science* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 45). The approach offers an alternative to western traditions of rationality, “method assemblage can be understood as resonance. This is because it works by *detecting and creating periodicities in the world*. The picture of reality that lies behind this removes us from the most common version of Euro-American metaphysics – the sense that the real is relatively stable, determinate, and therefore knowable and predictable. The alternative metaphysics assumes otherness to be overwhelming, excessive, energetic, a set of undecided potentialities, and an ultimately undecidable flux.” Law, *After Method*, 144.

own subjectivity, to mediate a necessary engagement with lived experiences which are themselves messy.

This approach was most prominent in the two participatory studies that I coordinated within the overall research project.⁷¹ The studies provided a structure around which to discuss the influence and importance of drawing to participants. The first of these took place within the TDS and included an initial interview with participants while they continued their own art activities, followed by a second interview during a publishing project I had set specifically for the research. The second study incorporated a twelve-week project with students at the Belfast School of Art.⁷² This was more structured than the TDS study, with more integration between practical and research activities.⁷³ The student study was intended for participants with a particular interest in print, self-publishing, drawing and illustration and reflected the development of the research scope. Within it I arranged group activities in order to gather participants around the production of particular illustrated print works.

From an initial enrolment of twelve in the student study, a core group of six returned throughout, with another six partially involved at different stages.⁷⁴ In comparison to the TDS study, I had not worked previously with any of the students. Participation required self-motivation and for students to bring their own themes and interests to the project. As attendance was voluntary, I was attentive to the provision of an enjoyable and constructive learning environment and I worked equally with

⁷¹ In practice-led research terms, I set up a dialogic relationship essential for, “self-reflexive mapping of the emergent work as enquiry,” (Estelle Barrett, “Foucault’s ‘What is an Author’: Towards a critical discourse of practice as research” in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Inquiry*, Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds. (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), 143). The studies could also be described as makeshift, “communities of practice,” defined by Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner as, “formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour.” Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, “Communities of practice: a brief introduction,” (2015), 1. <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

⁷² This was open to BA and Masters students from the faculty of Art, Design and The Built Environment within Ulster University. The twelve weeks took place during the Autumn/Winter semester 2016/17 academic year and the study was independent from the curriculum and the students’ work was not assessed.

⁷³ My intention was to offset the older group with younger students and to compare experiences of non-professionals with those embarking on a career in visual arts. Putting questions to people from a different demographic, those in education with expectations of pursuing visual arts professionally to some extent, was intended as a contribution to triangulating the research and to return information with different expectations and experiences of drawing, illustration and collaboration. The student study was also a more controlled environment than the pilot study. As this was nested in the ongoing TDS programme, I had a concern for any expectancy effects as participants knew me and were sympathetic to my efforts. The student study timeframe and the restriction to more specific research outcomes however, left less room for the experimental and unexpected and, I initially believed, would provide less material for evaluation. When incorporating the student study into this write-up however, I found the material was as valuable and productive as the TDS in returning experiences and generating new lines of enquiry.

⁷⁴ I scheduled for two three-hour time slots each week where I would be available to accommodate student timetables. My suggested attendance for participants was average of only six sessions out of the twelve. My recommendation was that most of their work would take place outside of the sessions.

attendees who wished to take part only in the practical activities rather than the research activities.⁷⁵ There were several outputs, pre-meditated or unpredictable, that were valuable. The unpredictable included contributors' self-initiated works, activities and artmaking outside the studies.⁷⁶ In the student study, this could be their college studio work, history and theory interests or extra-curricular pursuits. Within the TDS, these included sculptural installations at PeasPark and individual contributions to PS² exhibitions. The TDS was open to unforeseen development and the contingencies that come with participatory work, including subversion of the project by contributors.

The interviews played a key role in developing my research focus and identifying my particular concern for the printed drawing. Although I brought my own influences and conceptions into the study environments, my aim was not to impose a pre-conceived definition of illustration, drawing or publishing onto participants,⁷⁷ and I sought to avoid imposition of my ideas by following up on areas raised by subjects, even when outside the study scope.⁷⁸ A re-occurring motif was the tendency for discussion toward a variety of activities. For instance, participants in both studies spoke of 'drawing' and 'painting' rather than the more design-focussed and formal 'illustration'. Combinations such as 'drawing and illustration' and 'drawing and painting' were often used interchangeably and 'drawing', on occasion, was substituted for many sorts of art or craft-making, often resulting in a discussion of experiences without an immediate connection to the research area.

⁷⁵ In both studies there were participants who took part in the activities but not in the interviews. Their work appears in various outputs (e.g. the zine and the colouring book) but I have not used their material as evidence or to present arguments within the thesis. That access to the project was open regardless of students' participation in research activities was an important aspect of the programme.

⁷⁶ The participant input opened up new possibilities for thinking drawing in social space, introduced in the first chapter and developed throughout the thesis. For instance, Andrew Patterson's library drawing, Mary Gilfillen's plans for using drawing in a theory seminar, and student study participant Patrick McMillan's cosplay. This latter activity, along with McMillan's descriptions of his studio work as a temporary augmenting of his body to treat it as a "drawing machine," was formative in guided me toward literature on fan studies. Interview with Patrick McMillan, 20 October 2016.

⁷⁷ In promotional material I described the student study as a 'printed drawing project' for students interested in "drawing/illustration and self-publishing" and where possible outcomes could include making a "zine, poster, comic or artist book." In TDS promotional material, which had a longer run and broader remit, I either suggested a range of possible applications for attendees, "drawing for watercolour, comic books, digital arts and design," or, on later fliers, left out a description of activities entirely (see Appendix, p.304 for examples of promotional fliers from both projects).

⁷⁸ The first interview included questions on taking part in group learning and participatory art workshops. The first set of interview questions for the TDS looked at broader instances of drawing in public, whereas the first set of questions for the student study had a more specific focus on print and published drawing. As the student study had been advertised as a printed drawing project the group were more specifically concerned with print and drawing than those attending the TDS. This reflected the refinement of the research scope during the six-month period between interviewing TDS participants and the student study. The second set of questions for each study group bore more similarity being tailored questions seeking to expand on particular aspects of drawing. The two-interview format allowed analysis of the first interview to take place and guide the second. I could then apply the second conversation within the student group to a discussion of the specific artworks produced during the study.

It was perhaps precisely because of this slippage that our conversations raised many lines of enquiry that influenced and enriched the theoretical concerns.

Fourteen participants took part in the interviews, six from the TDS and eight in the student study. I conducted two interviews with each participant; with the TDS these were approximately twelve weeks apart.⁷⁹ The first interview comprised a set of open-ended questions covering what I knew of participants' own work, how they had been influenced by illustration, and their experience of group artistic activities. The questions in the second interview were tailored to themes that individual participants had raised in the first. Three of the TDS participants were interviewed on their own, as this was their preference, and three sets of interviews took place during workshops with other participants present.⁸⁰ The student study followed the two-interview format but in a more controlled timeframe that corresponded with the academic term.⁸¹ The first interview was entirely general questions as I did not know the students' backgrounds and the second interview was held near the end of the project so that I could construct lines of enquiry based on the work they had produced and our conversations during the sessions.⁸²

A university ethics approval process was completed for each study and participants received an information sheet and consent form. Within the information sheet I stated that the work produced for the studies may be reproduced in the thesis and participants who consented to this did not express concern with the work leading to their identification. In all but one instance, the participant works I have reproduced have been previously published, presented to an audience or situated publicly in some form. For the one drawing that had not been presented, I obtained verbal consent to publish from the participant. Unnecessarily anonymising participants in these cases would contribute to maintaining a hierarchy between non-expert practitioners and my 'expert' case studies who are named. Therefore, in the instances where I have reproduced participant works, I have credited them to the names as supplied to me. Otherwise, where I have only quoted a participant's

⁷⁹ Eleven of the twelve TDS interviews took place between September 2015 and February 2016 with one follow-up interview in August 2016.

⁸⁰ This could result in occasional lapses into group conversation, or the interviewee performing to the other participants to a certain degree, but I view this as further enrichment of the interviews rather than being detrimental.

⁸¹ The student study interviews took place between October and December 2016. The first set took place in the first three weeks and the second interviews took place in the final three weeks. Two of the eight participants were only available for one interview.

⁸² The students had all been encouraged to work on their own printed works and staggering the interviews allowed me to record impressions of what students wanted from their works and how they felt they had turned out. The second interview also allowed me to discuss the group activities which included designing a poster, contributing to a communal zine and taking part in book-making demonstrations.

comments, but not used their work, I have anonymised interview sources following the baseline data protection protocol.⁸³

The design of the participatory studies with a degree of reflexivity and flexibility was not made with any claim to objectivity in regards to my position, nor to overly valorise the experience of particular individuals.⁸⁴ The communications scholar Ioana Literat, who has used drawing as a participatory research method, warns of the danger of over-interpretation of participant work, highlighting that drawing needs to be seen in its context of production under the instigation of a teacher. Considering this, the drawings resulting from my participatory studies are seen better as, “a departure point for apprehending something of [participants] worlds and world-making” rather than a “mimetic or complete” depiction of their knowledge or perceptions.⁸⁵ This is echoed in feminist critique of qualitative research where the status of researcher as antidote to scientific objectivity is questioned.⁸⁶ For instance, education scholar Patti Lather appeals for a research that rejects a notion of the authentic voice for one that resides, “in messy ‘spaces in between’ where centres and margins are both situated and yet constantly changing intersections of interpretation, interruption and mutuality.”⁸⁷

This was an appropriate stance for my objective to gather a spectrum of conceptualisations that would enrich and influence the concurrent theoretical and case study analysis, rather than present an

⁸³ For internal validity I recorded demographic aspects using questionnaires. This information is in the Appendices.

⁸⁴ In the first instance I considered Barrett’s application of Michel Foucault’s conception of the author function to practice-based research. Therein, the researcher is considered as a function rather than an individual, a position that acknowledges the institutional contexts within which a study takes place. Although useful, for Barrett the author function is not wholly adequate in terms of the relational aspects of practice as it does not give an account of lived experience. The latter instance above, reflects Barrett’s addition of Donna Haraway’s situated knowledge which involves an active awareness of a range of subjective viewpoints, including the researcher’s gaze, as necessary to accessing the richness and plurality. For Barrett, “[a]n innovative dimension of this subjective approach to research lies in its capacity to bring into view, particularities of lived experience that reflect alternative realities that are either marginalised or not yet recognised in established theory and practice.” Barrett, “Foucault’s ‘What is an Author’,” 137; 143.

⁸⁵ Ioana Literat, “A Pencil for Your Thoughts: Participatory Drawing as a Visual Research Method with Children and Youth,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, no.12 (2013): 93.

⁸⁶ For Barrett the embodied vision detailed by Haraway, “involves seeing something from somewhere. It links experience, practice and theory to produce situated knowledge, that operates *in relation* to established knowledge and thus has the capacity to extend or alter what is known.” (145). For the socially-engaged artist Ailbhe Murphy, this is a cautioning against the romance of the speaking subject and against, “ploys which privilege the authority of the voice, confessional tales, personal narrative [...] which are meant to move ethnography away from scientism and the appropriation of others.” Ailbhe Murphy, “Should I Stay Or Should I Go Now? Temporal Economies in socially engaged arts practice,” *Fugitive Papers*, no. 5 (2013): 16-19.

⁸⁷ Lather’s rejection of the authentic voice in research is a riposte to pandering to ethical criteria for validity by proposing participant voices as ethical authenticity. Patti Lather, “Against empathy voice and authenticity,” *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, no. 4 (2000): 16-25, 16. Lather quotes the phrase ‘spaces in between’ from Jennifer Robinson, “White women researching/ representing ‘others’: From antiapartheid to postcolonialism?” in *Writing women and space*, A. Blunt and G. Rose, eds. (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1994): 197-226

objective account of any individual's personal life. This was not research as participation, but an application of participatory methods toward the thesis aims, wherein participants are a collective source for knowledge and provide new interpretation on topics that, as a lone researcher, were beyond my experience. Although I applied participant works and comments to material developed outside the participatory studies, I took care to retain the integrity of these conceptualisations as they were communicated to me. This was reflected in a dual approach to analysis, where I deployed structured coding methods using qualitative data software alongside multiple read-throughs and note-taking. This I deemed necessary for what was conversational and often anecdotal material, where participants worked through and refined ideas during our conversations, presented contradictions and had multiple views on a given topic.

0.2.3 || **Document outline**

I have applied certain structural principles in writing-up the research programme in order to give some clarity to what constitutes a diverse collection of sources and ideas. That I have strived to give equal weighting to the practical works (including the participatory studies), the theoretical analysis and the case studies, is indicative of the dialogical ethos underpinning the area of practice to which the research contributes. In a further consideration of the conversational as an approach to structuring the text, each chapter emphasises the experience of a practitioner, or practitioners, by referring to interviews I recorded for the study. In the first chapter, these are with the study participants, in the second, with *The Selfish Dream* author Om Lekha, in the third, with the zine producer Steve Larder, in the fourth, with *Vacuum* editor Richard West and Pilot Publishing artist Amy Plant, and in the final chapter, with the illustrator and researcher Mitch Miller.

The chapters are also arranged to describe a trajectory expressible as a movement from individual to group, from pictorial space to social space, or from the production of images to the production of communities. The chapters can be further grouped as a beginning sequence (this introduction and chapter one); a middle evidencing sequence (chapters two, three and four); and a concluding sequence (chapter five and the conclusion). In the introductory sequence illustration is defined as printed drawing intended for reproduction that is in dialogue with an external text. In the evidencing chapters, three book forms: the comic, zine and newsheet, are presented as material assemblages that include contexts of production and distribution. The concluding sequence then reflects on art practices that, although escaping the printed drawing as a material outcome, retain the characteristics of illustration within philosophical conceptualisations of social interaction and

becoming. The dematerialisation of illustration in these instances is articulated in reference to the drawing, the illustrator themselves and to production processes within small groups.

In more detail, chapter one establishes the philosophical grounds for a theory of illustration through an introductory review of key literature that is integrated with participant responses and my reflections on their work. The three characteristics that commonly define illustration: drawing, its relationship with text, and its purposing toward mechanical reproduction, set the structure of the chapter. The analysis begins with an integrated drawing/writing as a primary act for the infant's separation of self and world, a mediation of self and world which is then applied to the adult world of intersubjective relations where an initial analysis of a disruptive potential is established.

With the comic book as an exemplar, the second chapter addresses troubling representational traditions concerning race, gender and sexuality whilst proposing the relationship between author and reader as a prototypical mode of illustrational social engagement. The case studies delineate the comic book at an interface of author and audience, then fan and community. For example, Alison Bechdel addresses her graphic memoirs as transitional objects that negotiate childhood psychological damage, the writer Grant Morrison perceives the comic as an omnidirectional cybernetic relay between him and his readers, and in the yaoi dōjinshi genre of self-published pornographic manga the comic is a tool of practice that brokers fan gatherings. *The Selfish Dream* is then subjected to an analysis derived from the case studies and, considered as a form in-between a comic book and a fanzine, provides a bridge to the third chapter.

Chapter three is a discussion of illustrated zines as mediating a tension between individual practice and community membership. The work of two contemporary self-publishers are applied toward critical positions on self-publishing as challenging established print media. Two self-publishing markets, Comiket and DIY Cultures, present contrasting social gatherings as spaces of exchange, where I argue illustrative drawing is bestowed a currency-like property. The zine fair is considered in terms of its politically progressive or regressive potential using the political theorist Chantal Mouffe's articulation of antagonistic art. The chapter is concluded in a discussion of the re-working of *The Selfish Dream* as a research instrument and how the subsequent fieldwork influenced the design of the student study. The student study itself is also subject to analysis in terms of the zine's association with 'alternative' education.

Chapter four is a consideration of drawing in newssheet publishing and public art practices. Although only a small part of *The Vacuum*'s multi-platform strategy, illustration is presented as an embodiment of the values of the publisher. As a language of mediation between the newssheet's community of production and public space, illustrative drawing is at the interface of a pictorial and performative practice and is compared with distinctly socially-engaged public works where drawing is allotted an iconographic role that signifies a rejection of elitist art values. The focus on *The Vacuum* incorporates a view on experimental publishing programmes as dialogical practices through *Laburnum Pilot* street magazine (2004), a comparative case study contemporaneous to *The Vacuum*. The chapter concludes on the formation of the Tuesday Drawing Studio in relation to *The Vacuum* and the more performative modes of drawing used by the *Laburnum Pilot* editors.

Like *The Vacuum*, the cases in chapter five explicitly engage with the characteristics of a particular place. Illustration is untethered from the material boundaries established in the earlier chapters and set into conversation with engaged-art by examining diverse approaches within socially transformative group-work. Tim Rollins's Art and Knowledge Workshop (1982 -) has an educational focus whilst Mitch Miller's dialectograms (2009 -) are an ethnographic variation of participatory work that incorporates illustration. Illustrative drawing is considered as a methodological framework through further discussion of the TDS, for example, a notion of reproduction is translated from the material of print to the maintenance of a commons. In all cases, the intermediary can be a role played by the illustrator or projected onto participants.

In the three sections of my conclusion I summarise how my research question has been addressed. The sections correspond to the three areas of the aesthetical-political identified in the text as prevalent in the convening of new forms of participatory works that incorporate illustrative drawing. These are: the dual re-inscriptions of the draughter through their drawing of the community through the reproduction and distribution of that drawing; the necessity to acknowledge that participatory works that incorporate illustration are constructed from multiple gazes; and the re-occurring articulation in such works of the image, illustrator, or relational situation in terms of an intermediary.

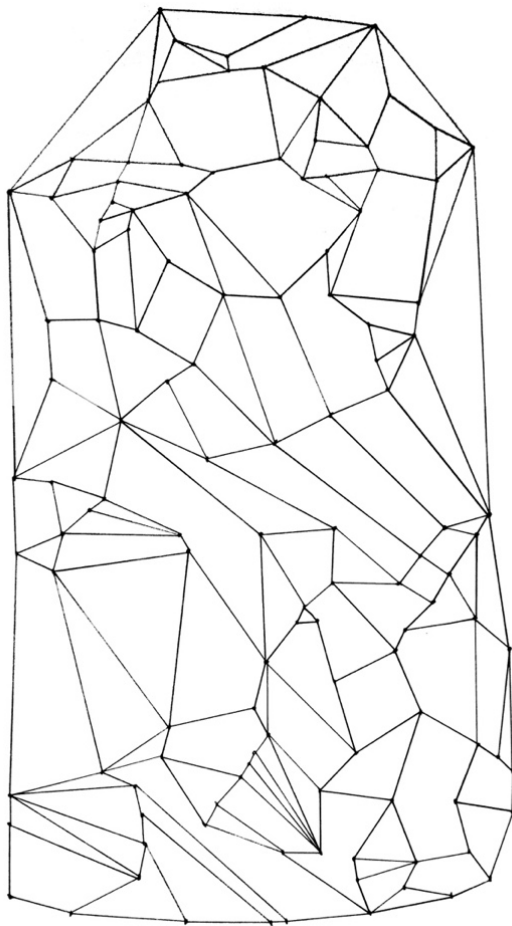


Figure 4. Lightbox Willie, *Untitled* (drawing based on Tarot card 0: The Fool),
2016, pen on paper, 594mm x 840mm (approx.)

Chapter One || **Illustration: reproducible intertextual drawings**

This opening discussion establishes my philosophical and practical grounds for an aesthetics of illustration within participatory artforms. The chapter is characterised by a review of theory alongside observations from study participants and comments on their work. From these resources, I plot a definition of illustration around three axioms: drawing; text; and reproduction. In the first of these, I cite the psychoanalyst Serge Tisseron to establish drawing as a manual activity, that is: *of the hand*; and as a primary act differentiating self from other. I then develop Tisseron's conceptualisation of the page as a skin-like extension of the self by applying the philosopher Susan Buck-Morss's articulation of the body surface as the centre of a synaesthetic system, a porous intermedial zone where inner and outer sensation meet. The first section is concluded with reference to the philosophers Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous, who ally the performance of the body of the draughtswoman/man to epistemological treatises on truth in language.

In the second section I continue to focus on illustration's dialogue with writing and text, developing the relationship in terms of troublesome and hidden tendencies through contributors' descriptions of the form as undermining or critiquing a more authoritative aspect of their practice. I compare these experiences with Rancière's theoretical reading on the upheaval of the representative paradigm, within which the printed drawing played a subversive role. And in terms of the hidden I apply the paleoanthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan's thinking on the origin of the written in a lost pre-historic manual language. The third section connects illustration to publishing and explores print in terms of both a limiting and emancipating capacity. As with Leroi-Gourhan, the media theorist Marshall McLuhan posits a lost radial and pre-linguistic progenitor to alphabetised writing; however, in McLuhan's thesis this disappearance was brought about by the constraining technology of print. For Rancière the proliferation of print further extended the human sensorium while simultaneously delimiting the sensory possibilities of the new communities of readers it established. I then read illustration as a, "phantasmagoric technology," which Buck-Morss delineates as a self-anaesthetising of the subject from the shocks of capitalist society. Finally, I approach the social agency of illustration by comparing a printed outcome from the TDS with political sociology scholar Nicholas Thoburn's concept of the anti-book.

1.1 || Drawing

1.1.1 || Extending into the world

“If you look at film, if you look at any of the other visual art forms, they generally depend on the camera, or something that shoots something for you. Whereas the simple act of drawing doesn't do that, it's just through your head, down your hand.”⁸⁸

In this observation by Andrew Patterson, a mature student who participated in the student study, drawing has a unique unmediated directness within the visual arts in which the hand is given prominence as part of a system leading out from mind to environment. When considering the significance of the hand in this framework of drawing, the findings of two scholars from separate fields are particularly open to application and adaptation. For the psychoanalyst and cartoonist Serge Tisseron, drawing is an integral activity in the psychological development of the infant, one which continues in the manuscripting processes of the adult. In a broader theorisation by the philosopher Susan Buck-Morss, the conceptualisation of a synaesthetic system comprising body and environment can then be applied toward articulating drawing as part of a malleable boundary between self and world.

For Tisseron, the infant's hand is the source of a primary gesture that locates drawing as a tactile activity.⁸⁹ In the infant stage, elements of the body become privileged in terms of the pleasure obtained from them, and writing, which is indiscernible from drawing at this point, enacts this process.⁹⁰ In this framework, drawing is a fundamental physiological and psychological process

⁸⁸ Interview with Andrew Patterson, 13 October 2016. The inclusion of the draughter's own body in their articulation of drawing links the experiences of practitioners throughout the thesis.

⁸⁹ Serge Tisseron, “All Writing is Drawing: The Spatial Development of the Manuscript,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 84 (1994): 29-42. Tisseron's approach can be situated within object relations analysis, the branch of child psychology where the psychic period prior to and underlying the Oedipus complex was given a new theoretical and clinical importance. One of the key developments of object relations by the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, was to work directly with infants with a “play technique.” Klein provided pens, paper, simple toys and other material to gather, “insights into the earliest preverbal ways of communication” and led to “her account of the phantasies and psychic contents of the neonatal and infantile mind.” Juliet Mitchell (ed.) *The Selected Melanie Klein* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), 18.

⁹⁰ One of the initial slippages in definition mentioned in the introduction occurred in participant responses to a set of open questions on their personal experience of drawing. For Lightbox Willie, a long-term attendee of the TDS, drawing and writing were described in terms of a family of languages, “one vocabulary amongst many to access parts of the brain,” a process that was even enacted during interviews as Lightbox Willie doodled to stimulate his responses. Making a distinction between drawing and writing was also less important for Grace O'Neill from the TDS. For her, the important act was to put things down on paper, to find a way of communicating in relation to her shyness and sense of lack of outlets for creative expression earlier in life. Like most of the TDS participants, O'Neill

where the individual comes to terms with separation from the mother and begins to conceive of their body as a whole.⁹¹ Drawing originates as a manual pleasure and becomes an action within the child's separation wherein the infant's hands, "play a critical role in this achievement... slowly [replacing] the adult's hands in bringing the pleasure which the child originally received from them." The act of drawing sees the child roleplay the mother separating, the completed drawing then representing the mother, allowing the child to safely reject her. Here, "the trace is the reified symbol of separation," a fundamental component that stitches the text built from drawing/writing to the formation of the psyche.⁹²

These early childhood experiences, where a seeking pleasure in the world becomes an extending into the world, continue to be enacted in the adult writing process. For Tisseron this takes place in the physical action of creating a manuscript where scripting, annotating and doodling form a holistic graphic language that precedes the formal split into writing and drawing in the finished document. The adult hand's drawing gesture is a movement by which, "thought learns how to think itself through," a gesture akin to the infant's hand newly exploring and ascribing meaning to the autoerotic investigation of their body. The hand plays the part of the mother and child and the manual drawing processes, to paraphrase Tisseron, parallel those that smooth over the surface of the bodily shell in the infant, regrouping the work into a continuous whole. The resultant work comprises both the drawing/writing and the page, which in Tisseron's schema, is a dynamic surrogate to the artist's skin.⁹³

In the marginalia and authorial doodles left in written manuscripts a connection takes place between muscular and cutaneous movements of hand and unfinished fragments of the writing process. The process of manuscript notation releases threatening stimuli leaving a trace which itself explores the

had no art education beyond secondary school, "I just wish I'd have had something like [the TDS] when I was younger, giving me the confidence and maybe finding out about taking it further and maybe getting a job in the arts or something." O'Neill considered this early experience detrimental for her development, "I find it hard to speak out in company. You can't speak out to people but writing things down, I can write some things down when I couldn't speak them out..." In the follow up interview, O'Neill posited drawing as a more effective method of communication than the speech denied to her by her low confidence. "I think one of the things too was that all my life growing up I found it very hard to speak out or explain myself and I could never speak out in school or anything. But drawing something down was sort of different. I think that then you could put down in a piece of artwork what you meant." O'Neill's experience, along with Lightbox Willie's emphasis on a scribal language incorporating drawing, frames the story for illustration as an attempt to solve an inadequacy in other forms of communication. Lightbox Willie, 2015; O'Neill, 2016.

⁹¹ In accord with Melanie Klein's usage, the descriptor 'mother' in Tisseron's reading should be construed as the infant's principle caretaker; prototypically, but not necessarily, the biological mother. Mitchell, *The Selected Melanie Klein*, 16.

⁹² Tisseron, "All Writing is Drawing," 34-39.

⁹³ Tisseron, 36-39.

gap between mother and child, a trace which, for Tisseron, both binds and breaks away. It is after this reperformance that the signifying process of the text occurs in accordance to syntactical and grammatical rules of the language. Meanwhile, the containing form, the page, becomes analogous to the primal containing form of the mother's body and a metaphor for the author's own body: the realm of narcissistic and sexual investments. Adult drawing here is, "[t]he movement by which the author disinvests himself from the self and transfers it to the text," which for Tisseron, "turns the text into the primitive mother to whom the child tries to stand closer as she represents for him the spring of life." This conception positions drawing, and particularly drawing considered alongside a text, as a containing movement and transition between self, 'mother' and other. All of which occurs solely through the manual process, independent of the content of the work.⁹⁴

I observed ongoing processes of several study participants, particularly those with their own families, where perceptions of identity were negotiated through the activity and artefact of drawing and drawing was used to mediate between their family members and themselves. Marty Byrne, a long term participant in the TDS, used drawing in a domestic setting, as a shared activity that enabled time to connect with his children, and for both Grace O'Neill from the TDS and Melanie Ward from the student study, their developing status as draughters led to shifts in their family members' perceptions of their role within the home. But where Byrne stated in the interviews that he sought more connection with his young children through drawing and art activities, O'Neill and Ward, whose children were older or grown-up, were seeking more autonomy from the families they had raised.⁹⁵ For O'Neill, drawing (along with her other craft activities) played a part in establishing a social role for her beyond that of housewife and for Ward the act of drawing provided her with time with herself, whilst the drawings themselves aided in establishing a more independent identity.⁹⁶ In the latter case, Ward described leaving her drawings around her home to be seen by her

⁹⁴ Tisseron, 40-41. Doodles and marginalia then, "are a way for the sriptor to make sure the page and his gesture are fulfilling their roles, and that the process of bringing meaning upon thought may enjoy further the support of the more archaic production of meaning which is represented by the investment of the page as a metaphoric container of one's own body and the mother's body."

⁹⁵ Byrne had used his living space, the top rooms of a house shared with his mother, as a studio which turned into an art workshop when he was looking after his two primary-school age children. The space itself became a page when he was drawing with his daughter, "[s]he comes up with strange suggestions when writing on paper... So, Daddy goes and gets the biggest black marker that he can find and proceeds to write it on the ceiling." Interview with Marty Byrne, 9 October 2015.

⁹⁶ O'Neill stated, "My sister works in a school. And she needs anything for the wall there she'll come to me. I'm the one that's always approached to do the artwork. I love it... People can see you're not just an ordinary woman just sitting in the house, you do other things, you're not just a housewife... [J]ust being a housewife, they kind of look down on you. There's nothing else in your life, you've no purpose to it. But when people see you doing something like that they maybe look up to you a bit more." Interview with Grace O'Neill, 16 October 2015.

children as lending her a visibility as an artist that challenged the limited role of provider ascribed to her by family members.⁹⁷

In a further use of drawing in relation to childhood and family, Niamh Clarke from the student group commissioned her primary school-age daughter to respond verbally to a series of drawings developed from polaroid photographs. In a self-printed artist book made for the study, Clarke then combined her own written responses with those of her daughter, anonymised the text by typewriting it, and placed it adjacent to the drawings (Figure 5).⁹⁸ The photographs from which her drawings were derived were ‘translated’ through a manual process, the involvement of her daughter was another translation and the texts and drawings were translated again through print reproduction. Taken together Clarke considered these processes as a productive relinquishing of control in the creation of the work, an experimentation with the parameters of drawing which identified the agency she termed conveyance.⁹⁹ I view these processes of conveyance and translation, and the re-occurrence of them for Clarke in the manual mediation of drawing, the technological mediation of print and the relations between her and her daughter, as foundational to the field of engaged illustration under review here.

⁹⁷ Ward’s drawing was both private and an escape, “I don’t mind people seeing my drawing exactly but it’s actually quite a private experience, just the production of a drawing. I like escaping... I suppose it just takes my mind off everything. It’s like a mindful state where, it’s [...] just my personal thought, my personal vision.” It was this attention to her solitude that was transformative in terms of giving her a new status within her family, “my experience being back to art college now after all these years on my family. I think they are looking at me in a different light. I think they have, they’re looking at me now as if I have some sort of talent and I’m not just there to make food and meals and care about people and that sort of thing. I am actually out doing something that they appreciate.” Interview with Melanie Ward, October 2016.

⁹⁸ Clarke described her process, “I’m taking the first wee sentence, ‘There’s a girl standing straight’, or something like that, and then going on to [my daughter] thinking and I’m going to add wee parts in between. And then sort of make it more about what I wanted because I wanted it to be a bit [...] related to the domestic and the landscape, like the female kind of thing. And quite a claustrophobic kind of feeling.” Interview with Niamh Clarke, 19 October 2016.

⁹⁹ “[I] t’s like you convey an emotion through drawing or you convey yourself through it.” Clarke, 2016.

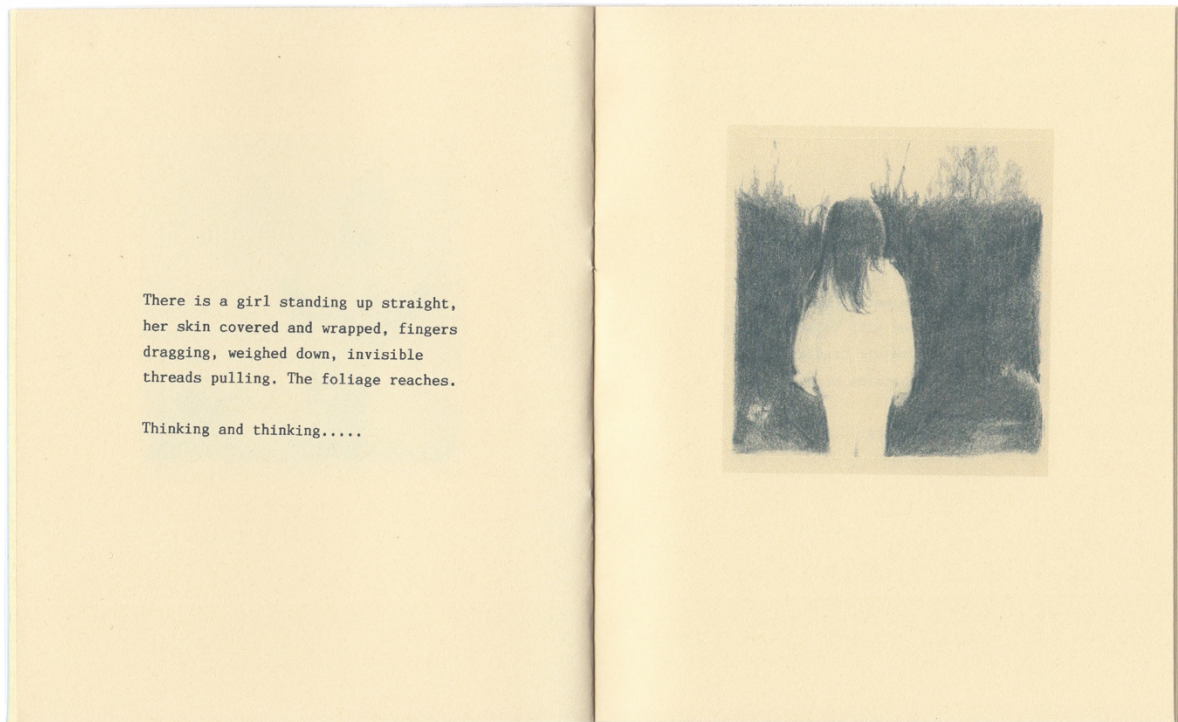


Figure 5. Niamh Clarke, *Untitled* (a collaboration between my daughter and I), 2016, photocopied booklet, 145mm x 180mm.

The tendency among participants to posit drawing, its reproduction and its distribution as a process or object that mediated between self and others resonates with Tisseron’s location of drawing/writing as a physical, tactile activity that assists in constructing self, other and world; and of the page as a dynamic surrogate to the artist’s skin. The latter aspect, the process of drawing as extension of the skin, can be augmented and further considered by applying Susan Buck-Morss’s articulation of the human nervous system as itself, “not contained within the body’s limits.”¹⁰⁰ Buck-Morss names the human-centred sense-consciousness the “synaesthetic system,” with its locus on the body’s surface not the brain, as a porous field where inner and outer sensations meet and where the environment forms part of the experience as much as the inner world.¹⁰¹ In this

¹⁰⁰ Buck-Morss’s conception resides in a broader explication of aesthetics taken from a reading of Walter Benjamin’s 1935 essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Her aim is to, “trace the development, not of the meaning of [aesthetics], but of the human sensorium itself,” by repositioning a modern experience of aesthetics as sensorial, concerning shock to the senses, in contrast to prevailing associations of the concept with the development of a rational consciousness. Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics.”

¹⁰¹ Senses are effects of the nervous system, which yield, “to philosophical reflection a sense of the uncanny.” Yet the brain itself seems remote from our experience of reality, a tendency Buck-Morss traces to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* (1806) with its pronounced examination of what the mind does over the material of the brain. Thus, philosophy was turned away from natural science to study of human culture and history, “the two discourses going separate ways.” The brain can then be addressed as, “...part of a system that passes through the person and her or his (culturally specific, historically transient) environment.” Buck-Morss, 10-12.

scenario, the nervous system is not contained within the body's limits, the human is not isolated but part of a formation that, "passes through the person and her (culturally specific, historically transient) environment." The external world must therefore be included in any conception of the individual human sensorium, and in attendance to the completion of this sensory circuit, the skin then plays, "the role of mediator between inner and outer sensations."¹⁰²

Here the illustrative practices of my concern can be seen not only as extensions of the bodies of their producers but also as incorporating aspects of the environment of their distribution. That is, as much as Ward's drawings can be seen as an extension of herself into the world, deposited, as they were, around her house, they can be viewed as an extension of the boundaries of her synaesthetic system, through the skin of the drawn page, into the environment and hence achieving a re-orientation in her family's conception of her domestic role.

This communicative possibility for drawing as part of Buck-Morss's mediating boundary between inner and outer aligns it with the theorist's reading of the body as the locus of the sensory mode of 'aesthetics'. The definition of this can be viewed as an experience prior to logic and meaning which, "encounters the world prelinguistically," and is "out-front" of the mind.¹⁰³

"Written on the body's surface as a convergence between the impress of the external world and the express of subjective feeling, the language of this system threatens to betray the language of reason, undermining its philosophical sovereignty."¹⁰⁴

In this application, drawing is both an aspect of the extension of the boundaries of the body's synaesthetic system into the environment and an agent of Buck Morss's prelinguistic, "unruly communication," that takes place at the mediating boundary between exterior and interior, body and the world. It is in looking for evidence of this in participant works, such as Ward's contribution to the student communal zine (Figure 6, right), that figuration, in terms of a figuring of the drawer themselves, can be seen as itself representing that potential for drawing to mediate as part of the overall synaesthetic system.

¹⁰² The surface of the body is further articulated as, "a convergence between the impress of the external world and the express of subjective feeling." Buck-Morss, 12-15.

¹⁰³ Buck-Morss, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Buck-Morss, 14.

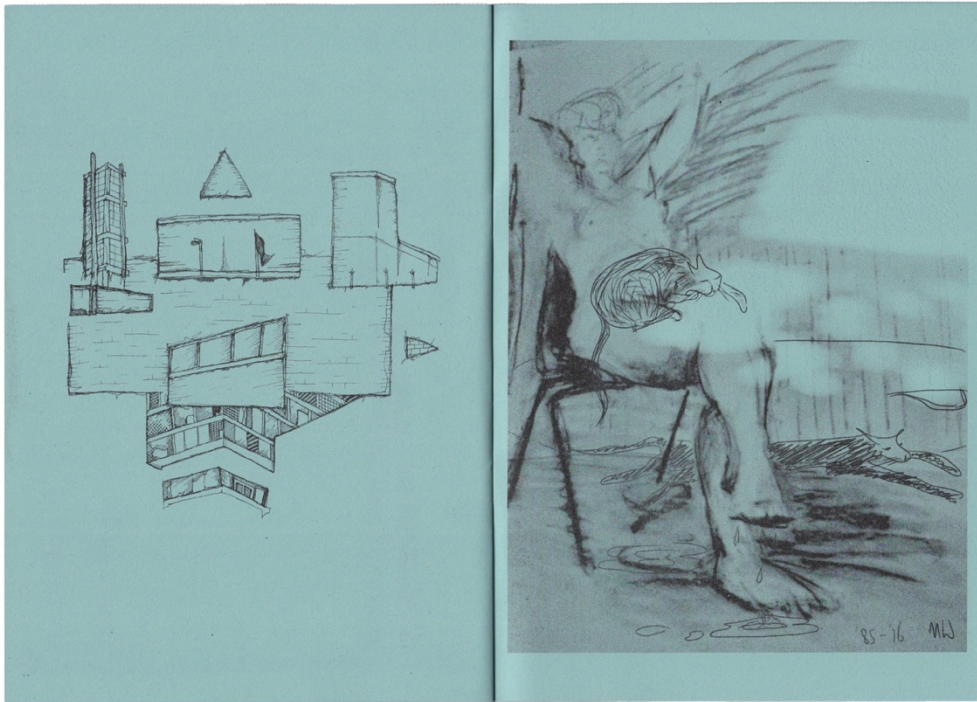


Figure 6. Adam McIlwane (left); Melanie Ward (right), two-page spread from communal student zine, 2016, ink on paper, 148mm by 210mm.

1.1.2 || **Extracting truth**

Light shines through ‘illustration’ onto a particular matter or concern. In an etymological sense, illustration ‘illuminates’. A question then arises concerning how illumination, a vision of truth, can be extracted from a drawing described above as an unruly form of communication. A range of positions relating drawing to truth are articulated by scholars amongst the varied fields of comic book, illustration, drawing and fan studies, but what consistently recurs as a defining characteristic is drawing as an authentic performance of its creator and self-revealing in terms of its own coming into being. Forms of contemporary illustration, such as graphic journalism, mobilise print technology’s bestowing of a folk naïveté, or authenticity, upon certain lines where a trace of the scribe can be observed.¹⁰⁵ Here, the truth claims of drawing are rooted in its tracing of the draughter’s presence, authenticity and viability as a witness, an ethical framing that has correspondence with the engaged practices developed in chapters four and five.

¹⁰⁵ Walker, “The Vernacular line,” 29-40.

Prior to this, it is first necessary to my definition of illustration to provide philosophical evidence for the association of concepts of truth to the self-referential aspect of drawing (that is, drawing that reveals the conditions of its own production as a form of auto-portraiture).

“Drawing is more personal... Because you can maybe just see the line and you know that the hand has drawn it, that the pen has been held. You can maybe see even the artist through it...”¹⁰⁶

This remark by Mary Gilfillen from the student study was in response to a question on how participants differentiate between drawing and other modes of expression, such as photography, music or writing. Within Gilfillen’s response, a conflation is made between drawing as representative of both the draughter and the act of drawing itself. Jacques Derrida's extended catalogue essay *Memoirs of The Blind: The Self Portrait and Other Ruins* (1993), although specifically exploring the depiction of blindness and the self-portrait, nonetheless provides an important general conceptualisation in relation to the drawing as a portrait of the act of drawing. Drawing is the work of a draughtsperson who, according to Derrida, represents a power (*puissance*) at work as opposed to performing it. In *Memoirs* the drawn portrayals of the blind are the artist projecting theory into their work, Derrida reasoning that a drawing of a blind subject also concerns the potency of drawing itself:

“Every time a draftsman [...] makes the blind a theme of his drawing, he projects, dreams, or hallucinates a figure of a draftsman, or sometimes, more precisely, some draftsman [...] he begins to represent a drawing potency at work, the very act of drawing. He invents drawing.”¹⁰⁷

The libidinal bearing of the French term *puissance* over that of the English, ‘power’, foregrounds a capacity of drawing that interests several scholars of the field. Ernst van Alphen writes further on the nature of drawing's *puissance*, citing the German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer's development of the mythical status ascribed to the trajectory of the artist’s hand.¹⁰⁸ A concurrence is

¹⁰⁶ “...maybe an emotion through it which is really the thing that most artists try to portray as well, the emotion of their work.” Interview with Mary Gilfillen, 22 October 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs Of The Blind: The Self Portrait and Other Ruins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993), 2.

¹⁰⁸ The, “quasi-magical power of the artist that manifests itself most particularly in drawing.” Ernst van Alphen, “Looking at Drawing: Theoretical Distinctions and Their Usefulness,” in *Writing on Drawing: Essays on Drawing Practice and Research*, ed. Steve Garner (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008), 61.

made with scholarship that situates Dürer at the cusp of a modern idea of authenticity, a cultural shift in prominence from God to the life-force of the individual, manifested most completely, for Dürer, in drawing.¹⁰⁹ For the historian Martin Jay, the artist self-consciously places themselves into such drawings which themselves document the work of representation, that is: make explicit the relationship of desire to drawing. However, it is the very moment of Renaissance adoption of Cartesian perspective that precipitates a splitting off of this sexual energy of drawing from the manual activity of drawing. This is evidenced in the print, *Artist Drawing a Nude with Perspective Device* (1525), where Dürer's, "marmoreal nude [is] drained of its capacity to arouse desire and the human subjects... 'radiate no erotic energy in the other direction'." (Figure 7)¹¹⁰

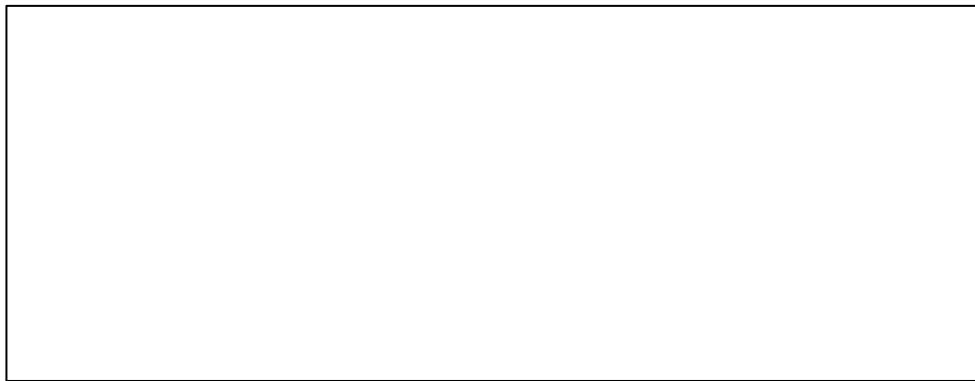


Figure 7. Albrecht Dürer, *Artist Drawing a Nude with Perspective Device*, 1525, woodcut print, published in *The Painter's Manual*, 1525.

There are further implications for drawing in relation to truth when considering the manual pleasure within which Jay locates an original erotic energy. The media scholar Ben Little, upon comparing illustration with the relationship of text to image in the comic book, remarks that, "in illustration pictures supplement a narrative but are not essential to it."¹¹¹ If this notion of the illustrative drawing as supplementary to the text is conflated with the libidinal charge of drawing, and 'drawing', as Tisseron's infantile drawing/writing, is considered as a primal form of written text, then drawing can be further articulated as a supplementary sexual activity and correlated with philosophical discussion that concerns text as a supplement to the spoken. The historical position on

¹⁰⁹ Van Alphen, "Looking at Drawing," 61.

¹¹⁰ Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988): 8. By identifying the use of perspective in this way Jay addresses the activity of drawing in this period as a controlling of knowledge, another power."

¹¹¹ Little, "Comic Books," 75.

writing as an unnatural supplement to oratory, markedly in the conflation of writing with erotic auto-affection by the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was redeemed by Derrida in *Of Grammatology*.¹¹² Latent in Rousseau's conflation, where the supplemental as something neither needed or not needed, an excess or lack, was an unruliness productive to Derrida's restorative invocation of writing as outwith the logocentrism of Western thought.¹¹³

The excess of drawing/writing, in terms of the drawn gesture as "the surplus of an action," was also considered as productively troublesome to knowledge by the semiotician Roland Barthes. In his analysis of Cy Twombly, the visible action of the artist's drawings relate to a force: the urges of the body manifest in the line which exhibits a sexual power and a play of release and delay.¹¹⁴ Barthes articulates this making visible of a pulsion as a denying of the, "important body,"¹¹⁵ interpreted by Van Alphen as an undermining of the morality of the body,¹¹⁶ a morality, which for the literary critic J. Hillis Miller, is also particularly intertwined with the illustrated line. Whether crooked or straight, the intermixing of "error and recovery," in the line replicates for Miller the intricacies of moral life,¹¹⁷ an association for which the opportunistic graphic journalist, as will be discussed presently, can mobilise when in need of a 'truth claim'. However, there is a potential for drawing to portray truth that escapes a dialogue of morality yet is also bound, through figuration, to the body, whose unruly nature threatens to undermine the authority of the word.

Hélène Cixous presents an interchangeability of drawing and writing within this critical framework in the 1993 essay, "Without End, No, State of Drawingness, No, Rather: The Executioner's Taking Off." Within, a mode of performative and self-reflexive writing is practised that acknowledges the subjectivity of the author and the political evolution of the instrument of language as a form of criticality that is no less concerned with approaching a deeper truth than scientific prose.¹¹⁸ Drawing

¹¹² In the work, Derrida aims to redeem writing as a restating of what is lost in speech. Rousseau's position on writing as a derivative and threatening supplement of speech is considered as a conflation of the imaginary with masturbation. Rousseau's argument against masturbation as a supplement beyond nature, and hence the written as an unnatural threat to the vitality of speech, hence, "The supplement that 'cheats' maternal 'nature' operates as writing, and as writing it is dangerous to life." Derrida views Rousseau's concern for the image, as writing, as creating a crisis for the spoken word and thus announcing, "the ruin of vitality in terms of imaginary seductions." Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 152.

¹¹³ Summarised by the philosophy scholar Christopher Johnson as a critique of the sublimation of the written to the spoken in the western philosophical canon common to all complex systems involving the recording, storage and communication of information. Christopher Johnson, *Derrida: The Scene of Writing* (London: Phoenix, 1997).

¹¹⁴ Roland Barthes, "Cy Twombly: Works on Paper," in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on music, Art and Representation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986): 160.

¹¹⁵ Barthes, "Cy Twombly," 170.

¹¹⁶ Van Alphen, "Looking at Drawing," 59-70.

¹¹⁷ J. Hillis Miller, *Illustration* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 76.

¹¹⁸ In her earlier essay, "The Laugh of The Medusa," Cixous calls for women to communicate in a writing of their own,

and writing are of concern, not only as the two are, “often twin adventures,”¹¹⁹ but also, to the scholar of French literature Mairéad Hanrahan, because they re-inscribe the relationship of the writer as between the plastic arts and literature.¹²⁰ Further, the deployment of Cixous’s pictorial references in “Without End,” can be understood as a practice of countersignature, Derrida’s formulation for how we can ascertain or pronounce a truth of a given document through a dialogical relationship between two or more texts, each countersigning the other to both affirm and betray the countersigned.¹²¹

The illustrations Cixous deploys, sketches by Leonardo, Rembrandt and Picasso, are self-portraits of drawing in a Derridean mode. In da Vinci’s, *Vierge à l’Enfant*, (c.1478) the artist is describing as wanting, “to draw what is invisible to the naked eye.” Embodied in the relation between the figures of Madonna and child is an agency or quality, “the precious in a person” not the person, and this relation, for Cixous, is what is being grasped in the drawing through the relationship with her countersigning text. The act, the live working-out or erroring within the sketch, is critical to identifying a particular agency of drawing that pre-figures the rationalising word. In Cixous’s examples, “the body expresses itself before the word. First the cry, then the words,” an articulation of drawing as combat, where the figures drawn by Rembrandt’s *Décollation de Saint Jean Baptiste* (c.1640) have fought one another for the paper and the result is a rapid transfer, an explosion, “instantaneously transforming the two adversaries.”¹²² Here countersigning takes place within the drawings themselves, which set up two figures in order to visualise a relationship, and in Cixous’s text on the drawings, which ascribes meaning to the images as much as acknowledging the subjectivity of the text.

“We awake with a start, quick, a pencil, and take down the ultimate glimmer of illumination”¹²³

one which is inextricably connected to body and libido. The work is a call to take on writing, to upturn a tradition of male writing by actively using a poetic voice alongside a recognisable analytical method. Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of The Medusa,” *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer, 1976): 875-893.

¹¹⁹ Hélène Cixous. “Without End, No, State of Drawingness, No, Rather: The Executioner’s Taking Off,” *New Literary History* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 90–103, 17.

¹²⁰ Mairéad Hanrahan, “Countersigning Painting: Hélène Cixous’s Art of Writing about Painting,” *The European Legacy* 14, no. 1 (2009): 5-17.

¹²¹ Jacques Derrida, “Countersignature,” trans. Mairéad Hanrahan, *Paragraph* 27, no. 2 (July 2004): 7-24. The canonical example being Derrida’s *Glas* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1976).

¹²² Cixous, “Without End,” 23-25.

¹²³ Cixous, 26.

Truth is further invoked as an experience in motion. For Cixous, to portray the passing of truth is more accurate than the idea of a static object or finality which are opposing forms that attempt to portray truth as closure or completion. Unfinished drawings were selected as they show errors, where the momentary glimpse of truth or, “the trace of the quick of life hidden between the rounded appearances of life,” can be perceived. Drawing is then positioned as the “passing” that is necessary in an approach to truth, and as the true drawing doesn’t stay put as it is “still running,” a description of drawing as a phase in a continuum emerges. Again, the drawings countersign the writing process, the unfinished quality of the sketches is a reflection of writing as ongoing process.

In, “Without End,” Cixous refuses to settle on established compartmentalisations of drawing and writing, her words not representing discrete forms, nor identifying either an object or process, artefact or act. In the essay the aspect of drawing that relates to truth is linked again to its relationship with a text. Illustration fulfils its capacity to illuminate, to convey knowledge, by countersigning a text, and drawing becomes both a graphic image and an extracting process. The following section develops further the characteristic appearance of illustration in relation to writing, one which holds the potential to subvert writing’s own truth claims. Drawing here, is an activity that takes place in the borderland between body and world and performs its power best as an unruly image, as Susan Buck-Morss’s ‘unruly communication’.

1.2 || **Writing and text**

1.2.1 || **A troublesome relationship**

The discussion of the appearance of illustration in combination with writing is continued here to provide further theoretical underpinnings to the notion of the practice yielding some political potential. This section posits that illustrative drawing can be ascribed an aesthetic (and therefore political) efficacy only in consideration with an accompanying text. Firstly, the relationship of illustration to text can be considered with Rancière’s ideas on aesthetic dissensus where I propose that the representational aspect typifying the field of drawing under review retains a critical value. Then I reference the study participants who ascribe to their drawings a subversive power only when the technique is connected to a matrix of sense regimes including writing or social situations.

Illustrative drawing in these contexts is distinguishable from drawing within critical art where the disruptive relationships take place within the autonomous space of the work.¹²⁴

Rancière provides a view of the surface of the printed page as an alternative to the modernist reading of abstraction as an overturning of a regime of resemblance. Here, the transformation to abstraction is viewed not in terms of a polar shift from figuration, but a response to the proliferation of the heterogeneous surface of the printed page and the collapse of stylistic hierarchies initiated by the realist novel.¹²⁵ In this way, the page of mass literature, spread by the industrialised lithographic printing emerging in the nineteenth century, prepared the way for the anti-representation of the early twentieth century in what Rancière posits as the visual replacing the spoken.

Figurative and abstract do not represent discordant regimes here, but rather share the same distribution of the sensible in terms of their flatness. This particular regime of the surface is, according to Rancière, that of the “equivalent surface of mute signs,” and one that is also shared by writing.¹²⁶ The hierarchical organisation where the speech act’s primacy over depicted images (where ‘images’ are both the written and drawn) were overturned by mass popularisation of the realist novel and decreasing influence of theatre in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In detailing his proposition Rancière deploys his conception of ‘dissensus’, where one regime of sense replaces another, or: “The dissensual operation takes the form of a superimposition that transforms a given form or body into a new one.”¹²⁷

To develop this operation, Rancière then cites Plato’s address to both writing and painting as, “surfaces of mute signs.” Deprived of an animating breath, the dead surface, for Plato, was in opposition to the act of living speech, “which is guided by the speaker towards its appropriate addressee.”¹²⁸ Flat surfaces are not opposed to depth in this schema, they are opposed to the living.

¹²⁴ For instance, in the drawings of art partnership Simona Denicolai and Ivo Provoost, illustrative modes are paraphrased, distorted and clashed together to reveal and subvert the masking function of representational graphics within consumer culture. Drawing in this way appears to me as a para-practice that is permitted to leak into Denicolai and Provoost’s central body of work that is produced in lived space in direct dialogue with a range of participants. http://www.denicolai-provoost.com/work.php?id_artwork=23.

¹²⁵ “The break with representation is not to do with a break from figuration, it is to do with the break from hierarchical order.” Jacques Rancière and Claire Bishop, “Jacques Rancière in conversation with Claire Bishop,” *Tate Events*, 13 June 2013, podcast, 1:33:18, <https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/audio/jacques-ranciere-conversation-claire-bishop>.

¹²⁶ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 15.

¹²⁷ Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 66.

¹²⁸ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 15.

The adoption of a third dimension in Renaissance painting was also a response to this distinction, for Rancière, “the reproduction of optical depth was linked to the privilege accorded to the story.” The rendering of three-dimensional space was held up as evidence of the ability of painting to capture an act of living speech, that is capturing on the mute surface the sensory experience denied it by Plato.¹²⁹

In the nineteenth century, the planarity of the surface of depicted signs stigmatised by Plato intervened, in Rancière’s linkage, with, “art’s ‘formal’ revolution at the same time as the principle behind the political redistribution of shared experience.” In this conceptualisation, the ground was laid for anti-representation by the page of the novel and the interlacing of typography, images and text, in such decorative arts as posters, and in the work of the Arts and Crafts movement. In this schema, abstraction (with painting as the exemplar) is not in opposition to figuration, but rather shares its flatness with the page, whose intermingling of text and ornamentation constituted a new distribution of images; one which challenged, “the twofold politics inherent in the logic of representation.” That is: a separation of the world of imitations from the world of, “vital concerns and politico-social grandeur;” and a hierarchical organisation (with speech given primacy over depicted images), that “formed an analogy with the socio-political order.”¹³⁰

The flatness shared by abstract painting and the page is that of an ‘interface’, a medium allowing disjunctive elements to share space. For Rancière this interface is political, as it revokes the twofold politics of representation as described above: firstly, the mimetic separation of the representation and the real worlds of actions, and secondly, the hierarchising of elements, of speech acts over images, in a mirroring of the socio-political order. Abstraction then, is, “implicated in an overall vision of a new human being lodged in new structures [...] Its flatness linked to the flatness of pages, posters and tapestries.” The flatness of the interface enforces an equality on its components in concordance with the ‘anti-representative’ purity of abstraction.¹³¹ This is inscribed in a context

¹²⁹ “In opposition to the Platonic degradation of mimesis, the classical poetics of representation wanted to endow the ‘flat surface’ with speech or with a ‘scene’ of life, with a specific depth such as the manifestation of an action, the expression of an interiority, or the transmission of meaning. Classical poetics established a relationship of correspondence at a distance between speech and painting, between the sayable and the visible, which gave ‘imitation’ its own specific space.” Rancière, 16.

¹³⁰ Rancière, 17.

¹³¹ For Rancière the dissensus mediated by the interface of the page lends it more affinity with the rupturing of abstract painting than contemporaneous representational art. For mimesis relies on a language of natural signs for concordance for spectators between what is seen on stage and their ethical behaviour afterwards, a concordance between sense and sense. Although critiqued as early as Schiller and Rousseau, whose solution was to call for a collapse between passive audience and active participant (a revitalisation of Plato’s chorus), our ideas of art, for Rancière, still cling to that model of the theatrical stage as, “a being apart” created in order to influence the being

where decorative art and pure art are intertwined, “a context that straightaway gives it political signification,” as it ‘flattens’ the previous hierarchy.¹³² For Rancière this is not a revolutionary de-hierarchisation, nor a theatrical idea of a new human that would seal an, “alliance between revolutionary artists and politics.” Rather, “it is in the interface between different ‘mediums’:”

“[i]n the connections forged between poems and their typography or their illustrations, between the theatre and its set designers or poster designers, between decorative objects and poems - that this ‘newness’ is formed that links the artist who abolishes figurative representation to the revolutionary who invents a new form of life.”¹³³

In this framework, an abolishment of figuration can share a politics with a plane that continues to reproduce figuration. The figuration is dependent on sharing an interface with other forms, creating a dissensus between disparate elements. The context is anti-hierarchical and a redistribution of that available to the senses. For Rancière, dissensus is where two forms interface with one another, such as the theatrical stage and the poster, or of poems and their illustrations. The new interface of which the page was at the foreground, and more democratic distribution where, “with the triumph of the novel’s page over the theatrical stage,”

“the egalitarian intertwining of images and signs on pictorial or typographic surfaces, the elevation of artisans’ art to the status of great art, and the new claim to bring art into the décor of each and every life, an entire well-ordered distribution of sensory experience was overturned.”¹³⁴

Illustration is clearly implicated in this arrangement, its potential residing at the interface, an egalitarian plane shared by forms previously held separate by a social hierarchy. The efficacy of illustration is dependent on this entanglement and as such it cannot be viewed in isolation from adjacent texts.

The study participants also identified a wayward agency of drawing only in relation or proximity to a variety of texts. For some in the student study doodling and marginalia had been developed in

together of the community addressed. “Aesthetics first means that collapse; it first means the rupture of the harmony that allowed the correspondence between the texture of the work and its efficiency.” Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 6.

¹³² Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 16

¹³³ Rancière, 16.

¹³⁴ Rancière, 17.

their school experience into a form of parallel text geared to what was articulated as an exploration of consciousness over coursework.¹³⁵ For Sam Welsh, this doodling as a marginal textual method continued into art college both as a personal rebellion against lectures and as a subversive commentary on his studio work, where drawing provided relief from the burgeoning professionalism of his new sculptural and photographic practices. I viewed Welsh's doodling as a private satire of his new experiences and as intermediating between previous senses of identity and the new subjectivity he was constructing as an artist. His contributions were a homage to drawing within this post adolescent ennui, showing a hesitancy in a moment of transformation where his interest in fantasy art and computer games was meeting the aesthetic refinement of a contemporary sculptural practice (Figure 8, left).¹³⁶

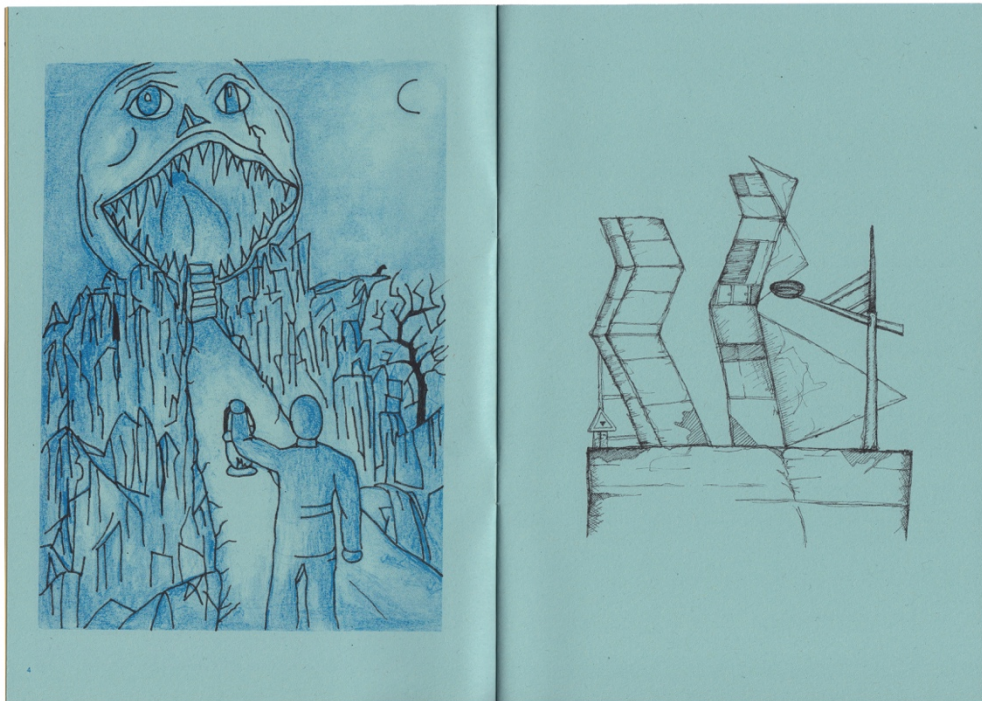


Figure 8. Sam Welsh (left); Adam McIlwane (right), page spread from communal student zine, 2016, ink on paper, 148mm by 210mm.

¹³⁵ Student study participant Sandra Preston used drawing, within what she termed 'journals', toward an "understanding of self." The journals would contain, "a mish-mash of cultural signifiers that are important to me, and then my own creative writings and doodles." Doodling was also important during secondary school, "a big way for me to process information and give myself a bit of freedom of thought" and "to allow the mind to work on the subconscious rather than actually dictating what to draw." Interview with Sandra Preston, 6 October 2016.

¹³⁶ The seriousness of Welsh's studio practice and the humour of his drawings was reminiscent of the abstract expressionist painter Ad Reinhardt's use of illustration as an extra-linguistic and extra-artistic commentary on the artist's, "Art for art's sake" approach to painting. The styling of the editorial funny and the rhetoric of illustration formed a counter-signature to Reinhardt's high Modernism, where art was viewed as utterly distinct from "everything else," an activity that should be given no other task than its own self-exploration. Any other quality, "the notion that art enriches life... 'promotes understanding and love among men'... is mindless." Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992): 807.

Sandra Preston, a participant in the student study, also identified fantasy illustration as an influence. She located the agency of drawing within a broader experience of a nerd or geek community which included particular clothing, such as the protective exaggerated manga-inspired costumes she had worn as an adolescent, and the physical exploration of peripheral urban spaces that constituted part of the Belfast emo scene. In Preston's conceptualisation, fantasy drawing played a role in the establishment of such subcultures (she described fantasy illustration itself as a "drawn subculture") and was therefore a catalyst or constituent of the process of creating social change.¹³⁷ Within this articulation, the viewing or drawing of fantasy illustration was seen as conducive both to a productive "visualisation of the other," which itself permitted, "[b]eing able to see possibilities beyond the now,"¹³⁸ and to showing social possibilities that others may not be able to perceive.¹³⁹

The subversive aspect of illustration was engendered differently in one of Gilfillen's works. She was interested in developing a simple figurative image she had produced prior to the study, a photograph-derived drawing of a close relative in a T-shirt appearing as a limbless and headless torso (Figure 9). Gilfillen had invested personal narratives in the image concerning sexuality and the church dogma she felt at odds with. Yet the drawing had never really found a place in her practice and the right context for the image had remained unresolved.¹⁴⁰ After Gilfillen submitted the T-shirt drawing for printing as a large poster within the study, she developed a possible context for the image as an interactive component within an upcoming seminar. There, Gilfillen proposed

¹³⁷ Subcultures which, as problem solving or compensation for failure, nevertheless articulate a, "struggle over distribution of cultural power." Stuart Hall, ed. *Resistance Through Rituals. Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, (London: Hutchinson, 1976). Or, in the case of fan-studies, are articulated as counter-hegemonic strategies. Henry Jenkins, *Textual poachers: television fans & participatory culture* (New York; London: Routledge, 1992); Fiske, "The Cultural economy of Fandom."

¹³⁸ "Fantasy is just as important as fiction in developing a healthy mindset. You need to have the ability to envisage beyond the now to really analyse the now. And this can be seen in ancient practice like Buddhism or meditation, the placement of self in the present and visualisation of other situations [...] Because the whole idea of fantasy is that you can imagine beyond your current limitations or definitions of self. And that is what people strive for in subcultures, to be different, to stand out, to have a different way of looking at the world." Interview with Sandra Preston, 9 December 2016.

¹³⁹ "And once you're exposed to something that you were previously unable to envisage, it brings up new thinking within the self, so very much so it can implement change in a very broad sense. And it depends on what you're doing but you can channel that then for specific goals." Preston, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ Gilfillen described the production of the drawing thus: "It came from a photograph that I'd taken of [my son] and it was quite an emotional photograph. And as I was taking it he had his back to me... [A]nd it just showed me his separation from me, and I felt that separation. But I also felt, even though he had his back to me, I know that he could just turn around at any time and I could turn to him at any time and we'd be there for each other. But I felt as well, in that moment, that he was his own person. And he is living his own life very successfully at the moment and I was very proud of him as knowing himself and as a moral young man who is very content in his sexuality. And so that photograph is important. I've always done my paintings him in it, but that photograph I started to transcribe it into paint. And then I decided that really, I needed to pin that image down, so I just used it and used it and kept drawing it and kept drawing it to pin it, so that it was not clumsy." Interview with Mary Gilfillen, 12 December 2016.

that the seminar group could respond to her presentation concerning her activism within the church in a communal graffitiing of the poster.

“And it's okay for the poster that's been made, which I quite like, but I would be happy for people to write on it and, just to move away from it... I wanted them to draw in it and even, to draw that image in their style.”¹⁴¹

The intention to invite the seminar students to generate additional text and hence to activate the drawing can be viewed in the context of the unruly illustration. However, for Gilfillen, the potential disruption was deemed too unpredictable, with a possibility of the meaning of the work moving away from the social message intended. Gilfillen instead opted for a verbal presentation using the original photograph, deeming the clarity of her message as paramount. In this instance, perhaps the seminar group's additional text would have made the drawing too self-troubling, sharing this drawn skin with further engendering an unruly body that threatened to betray 'reason', or in this case, the clear position Gilfillen wished to communicate.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Gilfillen, 2016.

¹⁴² The printing of the poster and the proposal to submit it to unknown augmentation released her from the grip of the image. “[N]ow I've decided that I will step away from it a bit now. And I think that's going to release me of a lot of pressure and give me more freedom in my painting because I wanted, as David Hockney did, to get my message across and I was going to do it with this... But now I feel as if that's okay, I have moved away from it.” Gilfillen, 2016.

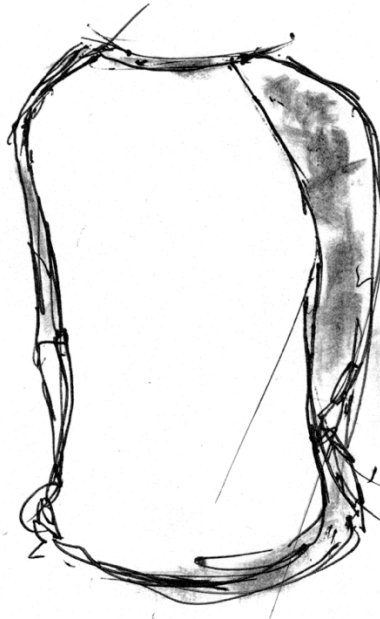


Figure 9. Mary Gilfillen, *Untitled*, 2016, Inkjet printed poster, 594 x 841mm.

1.2.2 || **An absent mythography**

The relation of illustration to writing can be addressed as indicating an absent, lost or hidden language whose presence lies forever elsewhere.¹⁴³ This cryptolectal attribution is developed in a counterpoint to Tisseron's psychoanalytic mode, where originary drawing/writing was hidden by the split into the conventions of drawing and writing. Here a lost language is approached in historical and anthropological terms as a pre-civilised mode obscured by the advent of communication technologies.

Prior to Rancière, the media theorist Marshall McLuhan had also refused a simple reading of the figurative as the pictorial regime of representation that gave way to abstraction, positing that the,

¹⁴³ The artist and writer Deanna Petherbridge articulated drawing as always pointing to somewhere else, as an immanence. Deanna Petherbridge, "Nailing The Liminal: The Difficulties of Defining Drawing," in *Writing on Drawing: Essays on Drawing Practice and Research*, ed. Steve Garner (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008), 27-41. In addition, in reference to drawing, the artist Richard Talbot applies Maurice Merleau-Ponty's view that, "the only visual experience we have that actually tells us anything is occlusion." Richard Talbot, "Drawing Connections," in *Writing on Drawing: Essays on Drawing Practice and Research*, ed. Steve Garner (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008), 43-57. The work cited is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962).

“two-dimensional mosaic,” of “primitive” art, was, in his words, a multidimensional world of interstructural resonance.¹⁴⁴ Consequently Cartesian perspective, “the three-dimensional world of pictorial space,” was the true abstract illusion, built, “on the intense separation of the visual from the other senses.”¹⁴⁵ As with Rancière, it was the coming together of a visual form and a new means of distribution (for McLuhan, the alphabet and its dissemination through the invention of movable type), that generated both the separation of an ordinary drawing from a multi-sensory context and a subsequent reliance on the visual to indicate the fragmented sensorium. The Renaissance, for McLuhan, was the historical site of this separation, an interface between regimes of representation: “the meeting of medieval pluralism and modern homogeneity and mechanism - a formula for blitz and metamorphosis.”¹⁴⁶

For McLuhan another outcome of print proliferation, literacy, “detrribalised” the individual and print became a stable format for representing, or gesturing toward, the previous language of the body, with its potentially destabilising and unruly effect on Enlightenment rationality.¹⁴⁷ This conception is echoed by the paleoanthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan who, in *Gesture and Speech* (1964-65), also troubled the notion of representation as a simple antithesis of abstraction. His term, ‘graphism’, refers to an early expression of thought developing prehistorically from a mark-making that initially expressed rhythms not forms.¹⁴⁸ Articulated as a symbolic transposition of speech patterns rather than a copying of reality, the origin of drawing is posited as much closer to writing than to visual art. Graphism however, is distinguished from writing with the addition of a further spatial dimension, affording what Leroi-Gourhan terms a radial aspect in contrast to the limitation of phonetic language, which, as speech, was expressed in the single dimension of time.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ In *The Gutenberg Galaxy* a story of western print domination is presented as the 500 years between the mid fifteenth century, when Johannes Gutenberg combined movable type with the printing press, to the rise of electronic communication in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. McLuhan posits the dissolution of the reign of print publishing between a technological innovation: the proliferation of the telegraph in the mid nineteenth century, and a theoretical one: the discovery of curved space in 1905 which ended the prevailing notion of space as a “container.” Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: the making of typographic man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 253.

¹⁴⁵ McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 43. McLuhan, like Walter Benjamin writing thirty years earlier, saw in technologies of reproduction, principally cinema, a possibility for a return to a multi-sensory art.

¹⁴⁶ McLuhan, 141. “In modern physics there is, similarly, the concept of “interface” or the meeting and metamorphosis of two structures. Such “interficiality” is the very key to the Renaissance as to our twentieth century.” McLuhan, 149.

¹⁴⁷ McLuhan articulated the visual as becoming a stand-in for other senses in terms of writing as, “a visual enclosure of non-visual spaces and senses.” Further this was, “an abstraction of the visual from the ordinary sense interplay. And whereas speech is an outing (utterance) of all of our senses at once, writing abstracts from speech.” McLuhan, 40.

¹⁴⁸ “If there is one point of which we may be absolutely sure, it is that graphism did not begin with naïve representations of reality but with abstraction.” André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1993): 188-189.

¹⁴⁹ Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 196.

The linear time of speech produced by the human face, together with the corresponding delinearising of time in images produced by the hand, formed a synthesis of drawing/writing with speech and gesture.¹⁵⁰ This holistic physical system of communication Leroi-Gourhan termed ‘mythography:’ a “multidimensional construct based upon the verbal,” which manifested itself physically as well as orally.¹⁵¹ At different points in human social development this mythographic mode of graphism merged with primitive bookkeeping to form writing as it is identified now. Graphism was an aspect of mythography which functioned only when in harmony with oral and physical components. Although the radial dimension of graphism was in addition to speech, without speech the image remained silent. For Leroi-Gourhan, our gaze on early cave drawings had been limited by our representational framework, our interpretations made, “without any descriptive binder, the support medium of an irretrievably lost oral context.”¹⁵²

“The invention of writing, through the device of linearity, completely subordinated graphic to phonetic expression, but even today the relationship between language and graphic expression is one of coordination rather than subordination. An image possesses a dimensional freedom which writing must always lack. It can trigger the verbal process that culminates in the recital of a myth, but it is not attached to that process; its context disappears with the narrator.”¹⁵³

Addressing illustration in terms of this statement, the hierarchy between the graphic (radial) and phonetic (linear) is at once clear and nuanced, where the image is subordinated but at the same time in co-ordination with writing. However, although communicating the possibility of channelling a verbal recitation of a myth, the myth itself remains absent as its accessibility requires an additional “oral context.”¹⁵⁴ The image itself then comes to illustrate the lack of the additional context

¹⁵⁰ Leroi-Gourhan further stresses the central interplay between hand and mind, “manual technology had played a crucial role in the development of human intelligence and the capacity for symbolic representation [...] such a development was only possible through the close and mutually reinforcing interaction of hand and brain over the millennia.” (Leroi-Gourhan, 196). A natural historical account consistent with, “Derrida’s understanding of ‘writing’ as a continuum, extending from the ‘biological’ to the ‘human’ to the ‘technological’.” Johnson, *Derrida*, 47.

¹⁵¹ Graphism was only one aspect of this system, a *mythology* of the hand distinguishable from a *language* of the hand in its extension of the memory outside the body and into social space. Derrida develop this further in *Of Grammatology*, “If the expression ventured by Leroi-Gourhan is accepted, one could speak of a “liberation of memory,” of an exteriorization always already begun but always larger than the trace which, beginning from the elementary programs of so-called “instinctive” behaviour up to the constitution of electronic card-indexes and reading machines, enlarges difference and the possibility of putting in reserve: it at once and in the same movement constitutes and effaces so-called conscious subjectivity, its logos, and its theological attributes.” Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 84.

¹⁵² Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, 190.

¹⁵³ Leroi-Gourhan, 195.

¹⁵⁴ “Behind the symbolic assemblage of figures there must have been an oral context with which the symbolic

required to unlock its meaning. I propose that an equivalence can be made between what Leroi-Gourhan saw as a lost context and what TDS participants often articulated as something hidden within their drawings. The paradox of both showing and hiding was articulated by Philip Patten (the one TDS participant with a previous career in the visual arts) in his description of drawing as, “an obscure form of communication.”¹⁵⁵ Initially intended to suggest drawing was strictly pragmatic with no mythical value and was merely obscure in the sense of marginal or unimportant, Patten added that drawing also always had a hidden narrative, present in everyone’s work, “whether they are aware of it or not.”¹⁵⁶

Lesley Gordon, another contributor to the TDS, ascribed a protective hidden-ness to their own work, a potential for a communicative space outside social judgement and for saying unsayable things. That drawing held potential for articulating a traumatic experience yet could contain and conceal a secret was seen as occurring in the material, where properties of drawing/painting, such as the drip of a wet medium, could hold a hidden symbolism. Here, drawing was like an envelope with the meaning folded in but invisible from the outside; a doorway into a hidden room, a safe place to enter; and as a secret passageway or portal to move around an obstacle or navigate into a new part of a building. In all instances, the drawing was not a depiction of the secret itself, but the secret was signposted by the drawing.¹⁵⁷

Like Patten, Lightbox Willie saw both a pragmatic and an esoteric potential, where drawing was also, “not about what you can see, it's about the hidden.”¹⁵⁸ Willie had a long-standing interest in aspects of the western occult tradition and drawing was one of many vocabularies for accessing obscure knowledge. Within this belief-system, the act of drawing formed a reading or a deciphering of a text and the process of studying and reproducing illustrations was an intermediary to the accumulation of cosmic insight. More practical aspects of drawing took place in compliment to the

assemblage was associated and whose values it reproduced in space.” Leroi-Gourhan, 196.

¹⁵⁵ Patten worked in the advertising industry in New York in the 1970s and 1980s. He described one of his jobs then as a “visualiser,” amongst other things responsible for dressing sets for photographic shoots. He also ran a life drawing class for the gay and lesbian community. Interview with Philip Patten, 27 November 2015.

¹⁵⁶ The discussion within which Patten raised the hidden aspects of illustration concerned the homoerotic and homosocial subtexts identified in many of his mainstream illustrative influences, particularly the pre-modern aestheticisation of the male body in illustrations by J.C. Leyendecker and Angus McBride. Interview with Philip Patten, 18 August 2016.

¹⁵⁷ Gordon was also ambivalent to illustrations gesturing toward and concealing adult themes, wanted their work to both contain and conceal what was expressed as a lost childhood. Gordon was interested in examples of children’s book illustration which had an essential innocence, yet they were concerned and intrigued by works that used the, “innocent medium,” to project an adult message or potentially harmful covert content. Interviews with Lesley Gordon, 20 October 2015 and 29 January 2016.

¹⁵⁸ Lightbox Willie, 2015.

access the activity afforded to the hidden, where Willie wound the influence of the social dynamics of the ‘crew’ into his occult belief-system. Drawing demonstrated his skill in this instance, proving his worth to and ensuring his membership of the group, an outlook influenced by his experience as a young man working within a team of engineers.¹⁵⁹

Lightbox Willie had previous experience with a local Theosophical society where he gave talks on the Tarot, the set of playing cards used for popular divination or psychoanalytic insight. He extensively reworked several of the cards, particularly *The Fool*, during his time in the TDS (Figure 4, p.31). Here drawing was a method for personifying what Willie articulated as different aspects of his psyche and to mediate a conversation between himself and these internal characters which were further described as, “entities within me, whether they are me or totally different to me or whatever.”¹⁶⁰ Willie would suggest this process was possibly dangerous and not to be undertaken without accepting its life-changing potential, but it should be mentioned that he acknowledged the metaphorical sense of this model during our conversations.¹⁶¹

The description of this dialogical zone, comprising manual and verbal elements, bears a similarity to McLuhan’s expression of a lost tribal cosmic space that preceded the compartmentalisation of writing by print,¹⁶² and to Leroi-Gourhan’s proposal that drawing and writing, as remnants, point to the absence of a multi-sensory communication system of mythography. As such, I view Lightbox

¹⁵⁹ Lightbox Willie, 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Willie detailed his model of inner life: “Say the engineers up in heaven are sort of going, ‘Right, we want to get so many personnel into a certain sort of space’. So, they sort of go, ‘Right, we’ll make one vessel, one body, we’ll stick in a brain and we’ll stick in other things. And we’ll stick within that brain, we can put in I would reckon, say, maybe, twelve, we can stick in twelve unique individuals, twelve identities’. Then they can have them running at different times [...] They can do all sorts of things.” Here drawing and artmaking are acts of interpretation, but also intra-community communication, “If you can sort of show whatever personality it is that’s in there [your] drawing, that personality’s impressed by drawing and will talk to you. And it happens. That hasn’t happened so far with me this present period for some reason. I know I’m not good enough but anyway. So, the Tarot cards [project] is one of the things.” Here, Willie’s experiences of working within a team of engineers, where acceptance and participation in the group depended on proving his worth, became material for an internal model, composed of entities that Willie needed to convince of his seriousness, “[I]f I spend a year drawing the tarot cards and being careful and being an artist and being meticulous and detailed about producing this, [they’ll] go, ‘Oh, he is serious, so we’ll start a conversation with him’.” Lightbox Willie, 2015.

¹⁶¹ Art is dangerous due its change-making potential. And although Willie referenced a political change made possible through the consciousness-raising properties of art, he was also thinking of change on a personal level: “When you start into these things, it changes your life. You don’t know where the music’s going to take you.” This is where the potential danger lies, “what’ll happen is, you start drawing and things’ll appear. Doesn’t matter what you do, you start thinking, your brain starts. And [...] the important thing is you make access to the parts of your brain that are really dangerous.” This is a risky but necessary process, as the reason for bringing this material into existence is to kill it off, “to kill your own child.” In this psychotherapeutic or ritualistically charged approach to image-making. Drawing enacts a release, “This is a language to these depths, and this is going to release really dangerous entities into the world.” Lightbox Willie, 2015.

¹⁶² The lost languages of McLuhan’s manuscript illuminators were concerned with light coming through, not on the illustration. McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 105.

Willie's perception of drawing in these instances in terms of a desire to access a more holistic pre-linear language, one that perhaps can only exist as an idea. This notwithstanding, and true to his pragmatic approach to drawing, Willie also hoped his project would result in teaching tools which he could use to earn money giving talks on the Tarot.¹⁶³ But in all these instances of wanting to belong to a real group, 'communicating' with a theatrical vision of inner life, and considering the practicality of earning money, the function of drawing can be viewed as mediating between a draughter's solitude and Willie's membership of a perceived, if not actual, community.

The use of Tarot also links to the third feature of illustration, broached in the discussion of Rancière, which concerns the impact of industrial print reproduction. The Tarot are an example of published drawings that, for their participants, are interwoven with improvised verbal narratives and manual gestures to access an extra-rational, pre-linear experience of knowledge. But Lightbox Willie's manual reproduction can also be seen as a struggle to make these mass-produced illustrations meaningful for him. This was a concern shared with student study participants for whom working back from technological reproductions was as important as producing their own prints. For instance, before the mechanical processing of her drawings through photocopy, the first stage of Clarke's 'translation' was the hand-copying of her photographs. Together with her daughter's input, these different forms of reproduction were perceived in terms of loss, the image moving further away from her at each stage.¹⁶⁴

1.3 || Mechanical reproduction

1.3.1 || Printed antinomy

The experience of loss in relation to reproduction can be seen in Leroi-Gourhan and McLuhan's view of the dissolution of a mythographic language. Considered in this scheme the illustration remains as a visual proxy for an absent or suppressed mode of multi-sensory communication, the lost predecessor being for McLuhan, a medieval process of manuscript illumination.¹⁶⁵ For

¹⁶³ "Plus, it's a money thing. With me it's all, I'm a Capricorn, everything with me is sort of, 'what's the bottom line? How much are we going to turn around on this one?'" Lightbox Willie, 2015.

¹⁶⁴ "[I]t's like reproduced images distilled it down so it's not as precious [...] I suppose it would be interesting if you lost, got rid of the images and you only had the book." Interview with Niamh Clarke, 5 December 2016.

¹⁶⁵ McLuhan's medievalism expresses a sympathy with historical viewpoints that associated western print technology, "with uniformity, quiet privacy, and individualism," and the pre-Gutenberg world, "in terms of diversity, passionate group life, and communal rituals." (McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 118). For McLuhan, and his close contemporary

McLuhan, although linear processes of reading and writing packaged communication into discrete units of meaning, physical illumination had held onto a tactile quality on language until print enacted the final split through the creation of an enclosed space of writing.¹⁶⁶

As a co-inhabitant of this enclosed space of writing illustration signposts the possibility of a more authentic mode of communication that resides outside the limitations of its own pictorial space. To the scholar James Walker this signification is toward an authentic vernacular dialect and rooted in the beginnings of illustration at the shift from hand drawn medieval manuscripts to etchings and woodcuts.¹⁶⁷ Through increased awareness of dominating styles through print dissemination, the unruly or “naïve” line came to identify the vernacular, and certain works could achieve a new connotation of the lowly in contrast to the high art of church and state. This was a positive attribution for Walker, print helping the naïve line continue, behind the back of high art, until its rediscovery in early modernism. For illustrator and scholar Catrin Morgan, contemporary practitioners can then manipulate the reception of the naïve line as authentic, the field of graphic journalism singled out as mobilising drawing’s association with authenticity. Here, illustrations make ‘truth claims’, and the naïve line becomes an ersatz mark, which, when added to digitally added ink splatters and scans of sketchbooks, evoke a language of spontaneous witnessing.¹⁶⁸

In addition to reducing authentic experiences of connectedness to marks, such as the naïve line, that gesture to their existence only elsewhere, an additional reductive effect of print can be ascertained, paradoxically, in print further extending the boundary of the human sensorium in the environment. This is detailed by Rancière in *The Politics of Aesthetics*, where the shared interface of the page, distributed by expansion of print technology in the nineteenth century, constructs a new community

the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, the Renaissance scholar François Rabelais capitalised on the print revolution in Europe, paradoxically to tell the story of this carnivalesque pre-print era. Rabelais indicates to McLuhan the close interplay between the written, the haptic and the aural as upended by the advent of print, where, “...mimesis... is the necessary effect of separating out the visual mode from the ordinary enmeshment with the audile-tactile interplay of senses.” It is this process McLuhan continues, “brought about by the experience of phonetic literacy, that hoicks societies of the world of ‘sacred’ or cosmic space and time into the detribalized or ‘profane’ space and time of civilized and pragmatic man.” (McLuhan, 51). For Van Alphen, Dürer’s *Artist Drawing a Nude*, which coincided with early development of printing press and movable type in Europe, illustrates this shift to a more codified, solitary world where Dürer’s lines document the work of representation, coinciding with a moment of self-consciousness in German art. Van Alphen, “Looking at Drawing.”

¹⁶⁶ McLuhan, 40. For McLuhan, “writing is a visual enclosure of non-visual spaces and senses. It is, therefore, an abstraction of the visual from the ordinary sense interplay. And whereas speech is an outing (utterance) of all of our senses at once, writing abstracts from speech.” (43). Further, “It is not entirely self-evident today that typography should have been the means and occasion of individualism and self-expression in society. That it should have been the means of fostering habits of private property, privacy, and many forms of “enclosure” is, perhaps, more evident.” (131).

¹⁶⁷ James Walker, “The vernacular line,” 29-40.

¹⁶⁸ Morgan, “Mythical Speech.”

of readers. Rancière mobilises Gustave Flaubert's realist novel, *Madame Bovary* (published serially in 1856 and in two volumes in 1857) to detail an operation of the distribution of the sensible that underwrites his shared definition of the political and the aesthetic. Perceived at the time of its first publishing as a “democratic” work of literature, both in terms of content and form,¹⁶⁹ Rancière deepens this thinking in terms of *Madame Bovary*'s “equality” to a point where the work can actually be described as politically indifferent to its readership:

“This equality destroys all of the hierarchies of representation and also establishes a community of readers as a community without legitimacy, a community formed only by the random circulation of the written word.”¹⁷⁰

For Rancière, Flaubert created a community of equals not through any egalitarian agenda but through a blanket limitation of their sensory experience using both the stylistic manner of realism and the emergent structure of writing known as the novel. This new paradigm of the page, although destroying the hierarchies of genre associated with the fine art of the time, and in turn establishing an ostensibly more egalitarian art audience: a community of readers, nonetheless, according to Rancière, created a specific politicized of the page which then limited, and in a sense controlled, the sensory range of that same community. It is in this limiting function that the operation of an aesthetic work equates to a socio-political structure or movement.

From this, Rancière makes a distinction important in identifying an aesthetic development contemporary to Flaubert's novelistic realism. One that for Rancière, re-opened the printed page to the possibility of more progressive form of democracy. This is the published design work of the Arts and Crafts movement which, to Rancière, played, “an important – and generally underestimated role – in the upheaval of the representative paradigm and of its political implications” through what is described as an, “intertwining of graphic and pictorial capabilities.”

“This model disturbs the clear cut roles of representative logic that establish a relationship of correspondence at a distance between the sayable and the visible. It

¹⁶⁹ Democratic *content* in the sense of Flaubert's Realism, treating its material in an equal style: “to depict and portray instead of to discuss,” and democratic *form* in the sense of an appearance as a reproducible written text, accessible to anyone with the ability to read. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Rancière, 14.

also disturbs the clear partition between works of pure art and the ornaments made by the decorative arts.”¹⁷¹

Through this intertwining, the form, although also exceeding the “materiality of a written piece of paper,” contrasts with the “indifferent democracy” of the realist novel, creating an alternative role of the written page, an alternative distribution of the sensible:

“...an idea of furniture – in the broad sense of the term – for a new community, which also inspired a new idea of pictorial surface as a surface of shared writing.”¹⁷²

Rancière's distribution of the sensible can lead to the identification of a regime of the written page and in parallel, creates new communities for whom that regime forms a delimitation of the sensory capacities of its participants. Although the realist novel, by imposing an indifferent equality of literary prose, limited the potential of the new communities of readers, the Arts and Craft movement, by intermixing, text, design and illustrated ornamental elements, presented a new model of democratic living for its consumers. Coupled with the findings derived from Leroi-Gourhan and McLuhan, the picture of illustrative drawing so far is one of a multivalent condition. Within the technologically reproduced page illustration takes part in the formation of new communities, although with the risk of limiting the extent of those communities through new linguistic codifications. Within that world an absence from previous, hidden or latent modes of multi-sensory communication are signified.

Susan Buck-Morss's focus on the psychosomatic effect on the subject provides an additional analysis of nineteenth century technological innovation and its impact in the twentieth. This is developed from Benjamin's understanding of modern experience as neurological. That is, centring on psychic shocks in correspondence to the physical shocks occasioned by the technologically altered society, shocks which had become the norm, the very essence of modern life.¹⁷³ For Buck-Morss, in accord with Benjamin, “machinic switches and jolts” have their psychic counterpoint in a “sectioning of time” into a sequence of repetitive moments without development resulting in the ego using consciousness as a buffer to internal (that is, from memory) and external shocks.

¹⁷¹ Rancière, 15.

¹⁷² Rancière, 15.

¹⁷³ Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics,” 16.

Consciousness then develops to prevent shock impacting on memory and “mimetic capacities,” are then used to shield against the world rather than as forms of empowerment. The cognitive system in this condition becomes one of *anaesthetics*.¹⁷⁴

Whilst the synaesthetic system extends the body into its technological surroundings our behaviour also expresses a traumatic re-performance of that technologically altered modern environment. This dualistic characteristic of technology opens up sensory possibilities while “doubling-back” as protection in the form of illusion, “taking over the role of ego in order to provide defensive insulation.”¹⁷⁵ These mimetic capacities of technology are “phantasmagorical,” acting as narcotics, but alleviating symptoms through sensorial distraction rather than chemical alteration.¹⁷⁶ Most significantly for Benjamin’s political reading of aesthetics, the effects of phantasmagorical technologies are experienced collectively rather than individually, where, “sensory addiction to a compensatory reality becomes a means of social control.”¹⁷⁷

Although cinema was Benjamin’s primary concern in the Work of Art essay, print reproduction can be considered equally as a phantasmagorical technology.¹⁷⁸ The printed illustration can be considered within this technology as both part of the extending of the bodily surface and an intrusion into the nervous system. In adding Buck-Morss’s reading of Benjamin, illustrations can be seen as instigating psychic shock as part of the urban and technological environment. They can be created as an anaesthetic practice to counter that shock, yet by extending through reproduction and distribution drawings re-join the phantasmagoric environment. For practitioners, illustration is caught in a movement incorporating the expansion of sense outwards into printed matter, a further extension of the human sensorium, and inwards through the impact of reading and handling printed material (a bivalency I believe correlates to Rancière’s paradigm of the page as both formative of

¹⁷⁴ These mimetic capacities, “rather than incorporating the outside world as empowerment or ‘innervation’ [Buck-Morss quotes Benjamin here], are used as deflection against it.” The cognitive exploitation of the factory, where memory is replaced by conditioned response, learning by drill, skill by repetition, cheats one out of experience. Here, “the synaesthetic system [is] marshalled to parry technological stimuli [...] to protect body from trauma of accident and psyche from trauma of perceptual shock.” As a result, “the system reverses its role. Its goal is to numb the organism, deaden the senses, repress memory.” For Buck-Morss, this simultaneity of overstimulation and numbness is considered as a dialectical reversal. Buck-Morss, 18.

¹⁷⁵ Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics,” 22 (footnote).

¹⁷⁶ Benjamin’s shopping arcades are a famous example, a phantasmagoria of commodities on display whose sensorial impact is real, but whose social function is compensatory. Their goal then, is to manipulate the synaesthetic system through the control of environmental stimuli. Buck-Morss, 23.

¹⁷⁷ Buck-Morss, 23-24.

¹⁷⁸ McLuhan suggested print is an extension of the human sensorium in two of the aphoristic section sub-headings of *The Gutenberg Galaxy*: “When technology extends one of our senses, a new translation of culture occurs as swiftly as the new technology is interiorized;” and, “A theory of cultural change is impossible without knowledge of the changing sense ratios effected by various externalizations of our senses.” McLuhan, 40; 42.

and delimiting a community of readers). The illustration is a mediator, part of the porous border Buck-Morss describes between self and external reality, negotiating space between within this convergence of symptom and expression.

I interpreted certain student works as attempts to anaesthetise the sensorium by extracting from phantasmagorical technologies. For Patterson, as with Clarke, drawing was a method of conveying sources that had been mechanically reproduced.¹⁷⁹ In his drawings, which were not produced in connection to the study, he copied illustrations from library books into his own journal, creating original and personal combinations of historical material. The directness of drawing was used to re-translate or re-absorb a range of fragmented cultural influences into a cohesive picture, an anaesthetic to the environmental bombardment of images and ideas.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, Adam McIlwane's illustrations for his publication and the communal zine were also derived from his own photocollages of fragmented views of urban space (Figure 6, p.39, left; Figure 8, p.48, right).¹⁸¹ The resultant drawings allowed containment and contemplation of this atomised experience of the city, without repeating its dislocating effects.

McIlwane and Patterson's illustrations can then also be addressed in terms of the diagram. Particularly as their deliberate re-ordering of recognisable elements gleaned from a disorientating phantasmagoric environment echoes the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's conception of the diagrammatic, which for art historian Kamini Vellodi, is linked to the future as, "the agent of the construction of reality." The diagram may reconstruct a whole "body" from dislocating fragments, "as the affirmation of the intensive forces of the 'outside' that eternally exceeds that which thought can represent to itself,"¹⁸² but its futurity raises a quandary that is developed in subsequent

¹⁷⁹ "It's a strange one with the drawings I do because I draw them from images, I draw them from photographs." I point out that the photos are also in books, "Yeah, so you've got the real thing, you've got the drawing and then you've got the mechanical reproduction [of the photo]." Patterson, 2016.

¹⁸⁰ "I'm surrounded by concepts and people that don't want art to be art and have a different idea of art, there's a lot swirling around, of ideas and I find it relaxing sometimes just to get the pen out and go down to the library and get an image and just draw it." For Patterson drawing was a way to achieve solitude in a sense, and an exploratory method for returning to the haptic age of the manuscript, pre-mechanistic copying by hand. Like Lightbox Willie's study of the Tarot, a return to McLuhan's medieval illuminator. "And like two hours will go by just like that. There's no complication to it. I suppose in a way that connects me to the college in a way, or just artists through the generations who've drawn." Patterson, 2016.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Adam McIlwane, 2 December 2016.

¹⁸² Kamini Vellodi, "Diagrammatic Thought: Two Forms of Constructivism in C.S. Peirce And Gilles Deleuze," *Parrhesia*, no. 19 (2014): 79-95, 80. The diagram relates to a key Deleuze-Guattarian conception, the Body without Organs, which, "conveys the notion of matter in a not-yet-formed state, of a body not-yet-represented, or an unrepresentable body in its schizophrenic version. Overcoming organized form, one is introduced to matter as a receptacle of forces." Georges Teyssot, "The Diagram as Abstract Machine," *V!RUS*, no. 7 (2012), 8. <http://www.nomads.usp.br/virus/virus07/?sec=3&item=1&lang=en>.

chapters. If the diagram is made, for Deleuze, “in order for something to emerge from it,” but nothing then emerges, “it fails.”¹⁸³ The art historian Boris Groys's valuing of unrealised projects as visions of possible utopias part-rescues the ‘unrealised’ diagram as an illustration of a possible future).¹⁸⁴ However, if illustration is to be proposed as having some social effect, the question raised by Deleuze remains, that if no action stems from the image it can only be said to represent political failure.¹⁸⁵

1.3.2 || Diagrammatic anti-books

“diagrams are simple drawings or figures that we think with or think through. The idea of thinking through a diagram is crucial not only because a diagram provides order and stability but because it is a vehicle for destabilization and discovery”¹⁸⁶

The above description of the diagram by scholar Kenneth Knoespel contains an additional possibility of political effectiveness through print reproduction. In addressing as a diagram, the origins of ‘illustration’ as that which illuminates can be redeemed in terms of a productive disordering. Considering the hidden as an act occurring on a level of cultural hegemony, an inverse of the previous discussion of illustration as signposting a hidden ‘other’ can be mobilised, where to *show* is the radical action. *Cunt Coloring Book* (1975) produced and illustrated by Tee Corinne, can be seen as an example of this in its presentation of a series of drawings of vulvas (Figure 10). Alongside the author’s stated intention to give pleasure through looking, the author’s collaborative approach to the production of the drawings and the initiation of the book as a project for adults to

¹⁸³ Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 159. Deleuze is referring in particular to the paintings of Francis Bacon, but the statement is equally pertinent to a study of the socially transformative possibilities of illustration practices. The art critic Iwona Blazwick raises this problem in terms of certain instances where drawing is passive, where it can fall short of realising actual change or act as a substitute for, or distraction from, the potential rupture of real change (Iwona Blazwick in conversation with Diana Petherbridge, Jerwood Charitable Foundation 2011). There is a further conundrum for illustration in terms of creating social change in this vein, in terms of only reducing symptoms rather than healing problems. For instance, through humour, as Slavoj Žižek describes left comedy about Donald Trump as, “just symptomatic healing.” <https://qz.com/896463/is-it-ok-to-punch-a-nazi-philosopher-slavoj-zizek-talks-richard-spencer-nazis-and-donald-trump/>. A potential example being the Twitter account Trump Draws: <https://twitter.com/TrumpDraws>.

¹⁸⁴ “For regardless of whether or not a project is actually carried out, it nevertheless stands as a draft for a particular vision of the future and can for this reason be fascinating and informative.” Boris Groys, *Going Public* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010): 70.

¹⁸⁵ Deleuze’s original quandary was re-proposed by Deanna Petherbridge. “Nailing The Liminal,” 35.

¹⁸⁶ Kenneth Knoespel, “Diagrams as piloting devices in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze,” *Théorie – Littérature – Enseignement*, no. 19 (Autumn 2001): 146.

learn about their external anatomy, position the work as an example of illustration incorporated into a participatory artwork.¹⁸⁷

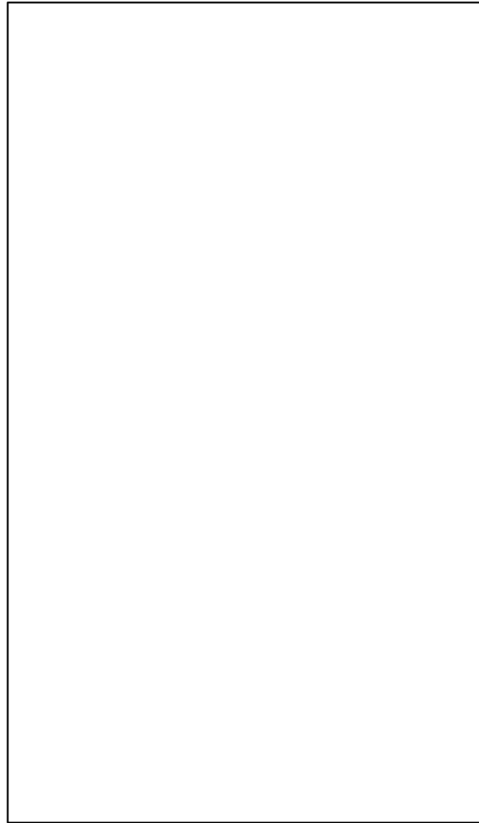


Figure 10. Tee Corinne, *Untitled*, 1975, book illustration, published in *Cunt Coloring Book*, 1975.

The mode of reproduction and presentation is also key to the effectiveness of Corinne’s illustration, enabling a making visible of what has been historically obscured.¹⁸⁸ The effectivity of the work also rests in its disturbance of the impression of the colouring book as safe and childish alongside a radical conformism to pre-existing applications of the format as an educational tool.¹⁸⁹ Coupled

¹⁸⁷ Tee Corinne, *Cunt Coloring Book* (San Francisco: Last Gasp, 1988).

¹⁸⁸ Like the horror movie, another genre coming of age in the 1970s, *Cunt* “made specular” what other examples of its genre sought to cover up. Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995):153. Cited by Jenny Keane, “Between Fear and Fascination: The Horrific in Women’s Contemporary Video Installation,” (PhD thesis, Ulster University, 2012), 131.

¹⁸⁹ This association with both the benign and the educational was used to radical ends by both activists and state in a particular resurgence of the colouring-book in the late 1960s and 1970s. Another key example from the period is the *Black Panther Coloring Book* (unknown authorship but distributed by the FBI’s COINTEL department, c.1968). This caused uproar when its circulation was associated with the educational breakfast programme for black youths that the Panthers had initiated in San Francisco in 1969. It was not until a US select committee in 1975 revealed the book to be an FBI plant, part of the dirty tricks de-stabilisation strategy of COINTELPRO, the FBI’s Counterintelligence Program, that the distribution of the book was officially recognised as designed to undermine

with the diagrammatic possibility of illustration, these conditions align the work with the ‘anti-book’, a concept developed by political sociology scholar Nicholas Thoburn. Anti-books are comprised of a range of printed matter which incorporate the intimacy of self-publishing.¹⁹⁰ Here the perturbing of representational logic afforded by the polyglot printed page developed by Rancière finds a corollary in contemporary book practice. Thoburn addresses discernibly political publications, such as Mao’s *Little Red Book*, as fulfilling the notion of a “root-book,” which in Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s typology is the dominant mode of political book, one that, “internalises the world as the origin and source of truth and authority – a mode of existence as dear to the avant-garde as it is to religious formations.”¹⁹¹ In this schema all canonical texts are root books, for Deleuze and Guattari the gravity of political texts derives from the book’s roots in religion and they foment troubling religious passions regardless of their degree of secularity.¹⁹²

In turn Deleuze and Guattari proposed a counter-figure: the rhizome-book.¹⁹³ However for Thoburn, little insight is given into how that new configuration would affect the formal and material properties of the medium and the philosophers’ own canonical rhizome-book, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), itself becomes a ‘bible’, another root-book whose readability fails to rupture the book as a commodity.¹⁹⁴ The conceptual rhizome-book was thus viewed by sceptics as disconnected from the concrete form of the book, a materiality that Thoburn re-centres in the anti-book. This attribute is detailed in the literary critic N. Katherine Hayles’s *Writing Machines*, where, “materiality is not a fixed property of the book, but a mutable product of its physical, sensory, textual, conceptual, temporal and affective materials and relations.”¹⁹⁵ In this expanded boundary of what the book, as printed matter, can encompass, the anti-book provides another instrument for addressing the aesthetic, or politically-engaged, aspect of illustration.

the Panther’s radical social work. Although the smear contributed to discrediting the organisation and their partners at the time, the breakfast programme model was later adopted in mainstream education. Eugene Boyle, “The Black Panther Party and The New Clerical Activism,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 13, no. 3 (Summer, 1995): 137-158, 151-153; Nadia Kim, “Black Panther Party’s Free Breakfast for Children Program,” *FoundSF*.

http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Black_Panther_Party's_Free_Breakfast_for_Children_Program.

¹⁹⁰ Nicholas Thoburn, “Communist Objects and the Values of Printed Matter,” *Social Text* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2010).

¹⁹¹ Nicholas Thoburn, “The Strangest Cult: Material Forms of the Political Book through Deleuze and Guattari,” *Deleuze Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 53.

¹⁹² “Wagner, Mallarmé, and Joyce, Marx and Freud: still Bibles.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 148.

¹⁹³ “The book loses its root or unity and becomes a ‘rhizome’ of prodigious connection, a ‘little machine’ that plugs into its outside not to reproduce the world in the book’s image, but to construct a discontinuous series of intensive states or plateaus.” Thoburn, “The Strangest Cult,” 62.

¹⁹⁴ “Yet despite [Deleuze and Guattari’s] materialist framing of the book – and, with *A Thousand Plateaus*, their own experiment in the rhizome-book – they pay little attention to the book’s concrete forms and materials.” In turn Thoburn seeks, “. . .to keep the book’s rich materiality at the centre of discussion, so contributing . . . to an understanding of the political book that is fully engaged with its material forms.” Thoburn, 54.

¹⁹⁵ Thoburn, 53.

Although the format of *Cunt Coloring Book* is conventional, the revolutionary nature of the drawings within can be said to engage the publication with the material world of relationships. Further, I propose that the functional, exchangeable aspect of the book is an aspect of the process of reproduction that I posit as fundamental to illustration.¹⁹⁶ The anti-book gives further grounding to the thematisation of my evidencing chapters under the distinct media types of comic, zine and newsheet, and also to the case studies and the several printed works I produced during this project. In these instances, the illustrator or publisher seeks to influence a particular audience and drawing becomes actioned toward altering the social conditions of the anti-book's production. This transformation is activated using the attributes of illustration introduced in this chapter, for instance, the unruly combination of image and text and associations with childishness all undermine the solemnity and religiosity of the root-book.

For this study I also invited TDS attendees to contribute drawings to a publishing project: *The Tuesday Drawing Studio Colouring-in Book*.¹⁹⁷ As the period of the book's production was within the resurgence of adult colouring books in the 2010s I considered this would be an apt vehicle for promoting the programme, for galvanising participants around a group artwork, and to provide new material for analysing the practice of contributors. I also approached the idea with a degree of humour as the format was reaching peak trend, and I was drawn to the image of participants actively making a book rather than being type-cast as passive colourers-in.¹⁹⁸ The colouring book, although far from the radicality of Tee Corinne's and not proposed here as a productively disruptive anti-book, nevertheless provides some insight as a portfolio of diagrams. For contributors the restrictions of illustration imposed by the format (and myself) necessitated constructing complex scenes to signpost a holistic communicative mode which lay, paradoxically, beyond illustration.

Contributing to the book meant participants adopting a clean-line drawing technique regardless of whether that was their usual way of working. Embodied in that temporary imposition was a troublesome aspect which questioned my overall approach. By selecting the format, I was

¹⁹⁶ For James Walker, it is perhaps this exchangeable function that has in the past limited the consideration and study of illustration. Walker, "The Vernacular line."

¹⁹⁷ This was initiated after the first interview with TDS participants. My initial objective was to work with a project during the timeframe of the interviews, but I did not want to interrupt the participant's self-motivated activities that were already underway and of value themselves to the study.

¹⁹⁸ Although its reception was underwritten by a media narrative of mindfulness as aiding mental health, the TDS book was not conceived within the mindfulness trend, neither was any opinion expressed within it on the relative healthiness of colouring-in.

commissioning participants to illustrate my own 'text', and as such I was also involving them in the presentation of my story of the TDS. In reflection this raised a concern that the programme itself was mirrored in the book, and the appearance of participants in general could be critiqued as simply 'illustrating' the TDS as I sought to present it. That risk of ventriloquising the participants was engaged through collaboration and moments of disorder in the other TDS elements that productively and playfully undermined my interests,¹⁹⁹ but in the case of the colouring book contributors did not subvert my text by questioning my decisions.²⁰⁰

O'Neill was one participant that enthusiastically complied with the constraints of the format and although the clean-line style was not her preferred method of working, our discussions revealed her intellectual investments in concepts of the line. O'Neill found a metaphor for the learning process in comparing the painted line with the drawn one, where the restrictions of the latter presented an opportunity to productively disturb the image through a free-flowing drip of wet paint.²⁰¹ Considering this, the linework in O'Neill's contribution can be viewed as indicating a more fluid possibility, outside of the constraints of its own restricted linear language. In the drawing the author is depicted as a dancing girl in an idealised representation of O'Neill's childhood in the streets of a working-class district of 1960s north Belfast (Figure 11).²⁰² The blending of the avatar into the scene through the uniformity of the line is a picturing of the self as extending into the world, an adult repetition of Tisseron's early function of drawing and a representation of Buck-Morss's synaesthetic system as a porous boundary extending beyond the body. The figure is the point of egress for O'Neill to access an alternative temporality,²⁰³ but the image expands beyond nostalgia to diagram the condition of illustration itself as signposting a hidden, absent mythography as

¹⁹⁹ These are discussed in the conclusion (p.288). The concern for "ventriloquising" participants in community work was raised in a presentation by the cultural practitioner Sarah Tuck. Sarah Tuck and Philip Napier, "Instrumental or Radical? – A Panel Discussion on Socially Engaged Arts," PS² Gallery, Belfast, 14 November 2014.

²⁰⁰ There was no prerequisite to become involved in the project and TDS participants with no interest simply did not contribute.

²⁰¹ O'Neill often referred to a 2012 mural by the artist Conor Harrington titled *The Duel of Belfast*. This was painted in a loose photorealism. For O'Neill, "the way the paint is running and nobody's tidied it up. I think it's one of the first things that caught my eye with it was this paint running and nobody had come along: 'Okay, you've to clean that up'." This was unlike the traditional political murals of Northern Ireland, "Yes, to me though more of the ones you see round here now are more like colouring-in books, keeping between the lines, sort of. To me [Harrington's mural] looks as if somebody has just gone in there free hand and done what they wanted." For O'Neill, the wayward line in Harrington's mural made the suggestion to just do your own thing, to let the paint run. "I think it's because of the [representation of] social difference in [Harrington's mural]. And also, the way it's painted. And it's also true I think as well... the way we painted stuff as kids. If you're teaching kids to stay within the lines, they're not going to produce something like that because of the paint running. And that what to me gives it its effect. [...] And I don't like this what people say, they must stay inside the lines. I think kids should go outside the lines and do what they want. And I think staying in the lines inhibits them." Interview with O'Neill, 17 February 2016.

²⁰² In her colouring book image O'Neill reworked and combined drawings from a previous artist book project organised by the Golden Thread Gallery and facilitated by the artist Lisa Malone.

²⁰³ "There's the thing that I like about people moving, go back to dancing from that. I'm floating back in the time with them as well too, if you think about it." O'Neill, 2016.

expounded earlier through Leroi-Gourhan and McLuhan (p.51). In particular, the drawing makes visual the somewhere-else-ness of a mythography, in its picturing of dance and play as the lost multi-sensory mode of communication and its locating of that language in childhood.²⁰⁴



Figure 11. Grace O'Neill, *Untitled*, 2016. Pen on paper, original size 1000mm x 500mm, published in *The Tuesday Drawing Studio Colouring-in Book*, 2016.

As with O'Neill's image, the line in the postmodern arcadias drawn by Lightbox Willie frustrate the clear separation of subjects from background and the sensorium is depicted as extending into the environment (Figure 12). O'Neill's lost mythography was synchronous with a depiction of childhood memories; in Lightbox Willie's illustration the embodiment of self as place draws not from remembered experiences but is assembled through a collage of tracings from Picasso drawings and other colouring-in and how-to-draw books. As a mash-up of influences gleaned from a variety

²⁰⁴ O'Neill saw a connection between dancing and drawing, "I think it's because of the movement of the dancers and then bringing that movement to your pencil or whatever you're using. Because I think if you were painting somebody dancing you would feel as if you were doing that." Dance was an activity that O'Neill equated with drawing in terms of escaping her shyness, "[t]he dancefloor is one of the places where I think I was... I never... I always I had that fear that I was letting myself down or making an exhibition of myself. But now on the dance floor... I will get into the middle where I think nobody else is watching. I wouldn't dance around the edge where you think those people sitting round the edge are watching. I'd be in the middle and just do what I want to do." Her description of dancing further echoed the liberating possibilities of going outside the line in drawing, "cos if they're all dancing one way I'll dance the other way, you know. I think I've got a wee bit of a rebellious thing going on." O'Neill, 2016.

of external sources, the illustration can be seen to picture the impact of phantasmagoric technologies on the psyche and the amalgamations of high and low source material also suggest the dialogical possibilities of illustration occurring in the drawing process as a countersigning of (seemingly disparate) texts (in this case, pictorial).²⁰⁵ However, this dialogical process does not end with the completion of the drawing as, like Willie's work with the Tarot, his colouring book image is just one iteration of a long-standing preoccupation and not intended as an end in-itself.²⁰⁶



Figure 12. Lightbox Willie, *Untitled*, 2016. Pen on paper, original size 594mm x 420mm, published in *The Tuesday Drawing Studio Colouring-in Book*, 2016.

For Knoespel, the diagram is also understood to be temporary, part of a relay and therefore always being redrawn.²⁰⁷ With Willie this repetition occurred in his use of illustration within an ongoing process of extracting knowledge, continually drawing reality into existence through schematic views of future engagement with the world.²⁰⁸ In modelling possible new realities the work of both

²⁰⁵ For instance, Willie would refer often to the public library and television as sources for his interest in art and philosophy.

²⁰⁶ Both participants hand-traced their drawings from montages of previous material, O'Neill from photocopies of her drawings and Willie from appropriated printed images (hence the 'Lightbox' nickname).

²⁰⁷ Knoespel, "Diagram as piloting devices," 147.

²⁰⁸ "I can draw reality into existence. I may not be able to make the sort of robotic arm. But what I can maybe do is draw the cartoon, draw the comic that tells the story of the professor that does this. And some young kid will go, 'Aah, I'm going to do that'." Lightbox Willie, 2015.

Willie and O'Neill can be considered diagrammatic, although O'Neill's imaging of an alternative reality, picturing her potential as a dancer as locked in the past, could be ascribed the failure of the Deleuzian diagram from which nothing will emerge.²⁰⁹ It would be inaccurate to do so however, as the TDS was a 'long-game' whose value for participants was not apparent till some time had passed. I posit illustrations such as those of O'Neill and Willie as escaping the failure of the unrealised diagram when considered in concert with additional activities within and outside the TDS. In these contexts, their illustrations function as intermediaries in transitional movements between the solitude of drawing and these future 'communities'.²¹⁰

Summary

In this chapter I posited illustration as composed of: drawing; a relationship with a text; and a purposing toward mechanical reproduction. Through these characteristics I plotted a trajectory from the interior of the draughter to the exterior social world using a range of theoretical conceptions alongside participant responses. From these I established a view of drawing as an extension of the human sensorium into the world and as a mediation between self and world (introduced by participants as a translation or conveyance). Illustration was then articulated as having an ambivalent relationship with the accompanying text, equally countersigning the text in order to reveal a fleeting truth and challenging or undermining the authority of the word. The printed drawing was then described as signposting a lost tactility of language, providing grounds for my proposition that illustration is used to re-inscribe an absent community just as drawing re-inscribes the solitude of the draughtsperson. Finally, the concept of the anti-book, an assemblage that takes in the relational circumstances of its production and dissemination, was evoked to illustrate the political possibilities brought about by print.

²⁰⁹ "I've given up dancing. So maybe I'm drawing dancers because I want to dance. [...] You hear a bit of music that you think you'd like to dance to, but you can't because you're just in the house or something. But then you can sketch what you feel, what you'd like to be doing, the movements..." I asked why we don't just do the thing that we want to do rather than representing it. "But then there's times cos of life when you just can't." Can drawing help you accept that? "Sometimes it does." O'Neill, 2016.

²¹⁰ The format restricted the possibilities for each individual's work, but, as a book with a functional, exchangeable aspect, it created new social possibilities by entering the material world. 200 copies of the book were distributed free to twelve libraries in 2017: eight in Belfast and four in Derry. An exhibition of prints from the book took place in three libraries in Belfast. The twelve public libraries had initiated colouring-in sessions in the wake of the mindfulness boom and the book was received largely in the context of the format's association with mental health. As with Rancière's nineteenth century novel the colouring book allowed greater distribution and increased accessibility to the work of the TDS, but this was coextensive with delimiting the sensory scope for readers through the constriction of the form (anti-book forms such as the zine address this, where illustration joins text and other pictorial elements in a contemporary equivalent to the polyglot paradigm of the page of the Arts and Crafts movement). However, the participants found ways to engage with the libraries on their own terms. For example, when The Culture Shop closed temporarily the participants negotiated new sessions in a local library. The book, through the potential of its distribution, can be viewed as an intermediary stage between solitary drawing practices and new relations with the world.



Figure 13. Om Lekha (writer) and Blinky 4 (artist), *Untitled* comic book panel, ink on paper, original size 420mm x 594 mm, published in *The Selfish Dream*, 2016.

Chapter Two || Incorporating illustration: the comic book

This analysis of the comic book is the first of three evidencing chapters focussing on particular formats of the illustrative drawn. The chapter is characterised by an attention to case study analysis, with theory drawn from participatory culture, comics scholarship and scholarship in comic form. In three sections I detail the figurative rendering of the human in terms of race, gender and sexuality, then broach the reader's entanglement in the comic book as a work of participatory culture. In the first section I address comics by George Herriman and Hergé in terms of the authors' suppression of hidden origins in received narratives of race and gender. The comic as a self-interrogatory and autobiographical medium is then developed through recent works by Gilbert Hernandez and Alison Bechdel where I consider the marginality of illustration, the psychotherapeutic potential of the comic and the comic as transitional object.

The second section contrasts two participatory comic works to develop how fan communities assemble around comic book depictions of the body. An ethical ambiguity surrounds each of these and neither are easily compartmentalised in terms of their political effects but demonstrate how a printed drawing practice generates activity and debate concerning the extent of its counterhegemonic potential. Grant Morrison's *The Invisibles* is discussed as an example of a practitioner realising the comic as an extension of their self into the world and Susan Buck-Morss is cited to discuss the comic re-enactment of the traumatic effects of the surrounding phantasmagorical technologies. Online communities then illustrate how fans, as participants, become involved in an expanded comics narrative: the *Hypercrisis*, where new formulae are created from the raw materials of the comics world. I then posit the yaoi dōjinshi self-publishing phenomenon as an alternative reader construct with an ambiguity of political direction.

The third section reflects on *The Selfish Dream*, the self-published comic book and fan work written by Om Lekha and illustrated by Blinky 4. Although conceived independently from the study, the processes of production and distribution were made in parallel to the research process and the work provides an example for applying the concepts raised in the previous discussion.

2.1 || Creation myths

2.1.1 || Family secrets

This section does not detail a comics genealogy but examines genealogy as a subject of comics. More specifically, the hidden, secret or troublesome genealogies that reflect the selfhood of their authors, the comic readership and the evolution of the medium. The autobiographic illustration introduced in chapter one is developed as I argue the comic embraces a narcissistic aspect of drawing's self-referentiality. Although the well-developed field of comics scholarship identifies the distinguishing visual aspects of comics and cartoons as sequential drawings and speech balloons,²¹¹ the aspect central to my analysis is that of comics' pictorially excessive appearance. That is, the comic as a collection, or "relay"²¹² of diagrams and an acceleration of the supplemental aspect of illustration, where the drawing is neither needed or not needed, an excess or lack.

The comic book relay of drawings manifests as a relentless representation of the human body. As with the autobiographical aspect which concerns the medium, the figuring of the body is a picturing of comic's own corporeality.²¹³ The problems of depicting the human, where the author codifies subjectivity into divisions of race, gender and sexuality, determines that the comic book's reflection on itself is characterised by an internal tension. However, this corporeality is also the intermediary between the solitude of the author and a community of readers. Comics expand drawing from an extension of the draughtsman's body to the bodies of their readerships, a possibility established when advances in printing technology and increased literacy in the nineteenth century precipitated, as with Rancière's realist novel, a rapid extension of both the circulation and readership of printed material.²¹⁴ The comic, as a paradigm of graphic literature, a convergence of image, printed surface,

²¹¹ Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art: principles and practice of the world's most popular art form* (Paramus, NJ: Poorhouse Press, 2006); Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993); Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2009).

²¹² Knoespel, "Diagram as piloting devices," 147. The necessity to repeat drawing in comics is also commented upon by the philosopher and novelist Tristan Garcia, "All images are ceaselessly doomed to disappearance, and to give birth to one does not exempt one from having to continually rebirth it in perpetuity. For this reason, to recreate is as important as to create, to re-read as important as to read, to re-view as important as to see for the first time, to redraw as important as to draw. For without this repetition, unsupported images would of themselves collapse, in a universe where each occurrence of a being is separated from its reiteration by a void." Tristan Garcia, "Dr Strange: A Hero of the Mind," trans. Robin Mackay, 'Un héros de l'esprit', in L. de Sutter (ed.), *Vies et morts des super-héros* (Paris: PUF, 2016): 11-12. <https://www.urbanomic.com/document/doctor-strange/>.

²¹³ For certain scholars, comics are a communicative and artistic system which expresses itself as a type of materiality. For Ramírez this refers not only to the physicality of the publication, but the processes involved in their creation and their interaction with the reader in specific settings. For Jeffery this package of the material and the relational is articulated as a, "reader-text assemblage." Ramírez, "Digital Reproduction," 14-15; Jeffery, "Posthuman Body," 214-237.

²¹⁴ Although also arising from technologies of graphic reproduction and marketed at mass audiences, the commodity

distribution network, author and reader, then emerged as an independent form between 1900 and the 1940s.²¹⁵ By the close of that period a definition of the ‘comic book’ had been established, a cheaply printed publication composed entirely of illustrative styles derived from story papers in the UK, from children’s newspaper supplements in continental Europe and from syndicated cartoon strips in the US.²¹⁶

These US syndicated strips, ‘funnies’ such as George Herriman’s *Krazy Kat* (1913 – 1944),²¹⁷ in turn influenced the episodic European cartoon supplements, including Hergé’s *The Adventures of Tintin* (1929 – 1976).²¹⁸ *Krazy Kat* and *Tintin* also epitomise the predicament of representing bodies as the struggle to extract new personal and filial imaginaries from the genealogical crisis of their authors. In *Krazy Kat*, Herriman adopts a dual process of revealing and occluding genealogies and origin myths which the media scholar Eyal Amiran articulates as a dialectic between ‘inking’ and ‘narrative’.²¹⁹ For Amiran, *Krazy Kat*’s thematic investment in play and reflexive commentary on its own mechanisms take on additional significance when read in context with Herriman’s New Orleans creole background and his concealment of that heritage in order to ‘pass’ as white.²²⁰

status of the comic tends to be foregrounded in discussion more so than the popular novel which emerged in a similar timeframe. It could be argued the comic is less illusionistic than the written text in this sense, the reader more aware of the material construct of the printed medium.

²¹⁵ Publishers specifically targeted a readership of children and adolescents. Nina Mickwitz, “Comics and/as Documentary: the implications of graphic truth-telling” (PhD thesis, University Of East Anglia, 2014).

²¹⁶ Examples from the UK being *The Dandy* and *The Beano*, first published in 1937 and 1938 by D.C. Thompson, and from the United States: *Action Comics*, published by National Periodical Publications, whose #1 issue in 1938 introduced the character Superman to US audiences. Comics emerge from industrial centres, hence the drawing of case studies from North America, western Europe and Japan.

²¹⁷ Appearing as a daily strip in the *New York Journal* and later Sunday edition full page format. Despite the strip’s relatively low popularity amongst the general public, the *Journal*’s owner, William Randolph Hearst, ensured the strip was retained and granted Herriman the authorial independence with which to develop his fictional universe as he pleased.

²¹⁸ First serialized in *Le Vingtième Siècle*, a conservative Catholic newspaper at a time when right-wing royalist politics were strengthening. Tintin appears as a fascist boy scout in Hergé’s pre-war stories, embodying the nationalist colonial viewpoint (*Tintin in The Congo*, 1930 - 1931), and the negative view of both capitalism and communism (*Tintin in America*, 1931 - 1932; *Tintin in the Land of The Soviets*, 1929 - 1930). After the Second World War Hergé and his newly founded studio extensively re-drew and re-edited the first twelve volumes to downplay the ideological fervency and ameliorate the racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, subsuming them into the later neo-liberal narratives of global adventure and scientific endeavour.

²¹⁹ Eyal Amiran, “George Herriman’s Black Sentence: The Legibility of Race in *Krazy Kat*,” *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 33, no. 3 (September 2000): 57-79.

²²⁰ *Krazy Kat* first appeared as a peripheral character in one of Herriman’s early strips *Lariat Pete* (1903), the same year that the activist and sociologist W.E.B De Bois consolidated, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, the concept of double consciousness, a sense of two-ness for black Americans, both “always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others,” whilst reclaiming a black identity out with the surrounding racist environment, “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” Herriman’s own perpetuation of racist caricatures before and during *Krazy Kat* evidences the continuing potency of nineteenth century illustration in creating and maintaining racist stereotypes. The illustrator and educator Robyn Phillips-Pendleton addressed this in an analysis of the representation of African Americans in illustration. “Diversity, Perception, and Responsibility in Illustration,” in *A Companion to Illustration*, ed. Alan Male (Wiley Online Library). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781119185574>.

In what Amiran describes as a ‘legibility of race’ woven into *Krazy Kat*, a process of becoming as cyclical struggle is embodied in Herriman’s obsession with constructs of color and origin myths in which the author emerges as, “possessed by ideas of an historical and racial self.”²²¹ The embodiment occurs on two formal planes. The narrative sequences point toward revelation of racial origins, they illustrate it, but do not complete it. In parallel, an act of inking (interchangeable with color in Amiran’s reading, that which embodies its namesake *color*, the racialising epithet)²²² amounts to a concealing process, blackness appearing in different forms: a cloud or an eclipse, to obscure and transform. To Amiran, “This blackness, or ‘color’ more generally, is not only the blackness of ink itself, but the signifier ‘black’, a sign of social condition,” one that forms a disguise for itself identifying it as a representational condition rather than a representation of skin pigmentation. Instances of this enactment of Herriman’s own “self-effacement” take place throughout *Krazy Kat*, in recurring motifs of hidden identities and stripped disguises.²²³

The concealing and false revealing cycles compelled by the inking process are undercut by the narrative of the comic, which to Amiran is an exposing process, although one insisting its “...revelation does not undo the fact that there is something to reveal – that having revealed there is yet more need to reveal.”²²⁴ The *Krazy Kat* storylines themselves are repetitive and obsessive concerning origins, constructing race as origin and succession rather than the mutable, representational condition of color explored in the inking process. These “fantasies of blackness... [that] conjure an originary, familial past,” manifest in allusions to a mythological and royal Egyptian lineage, or, in a storyline revealing a disquiet about babies as bearers of a familial threat, that may, “reveal a racial past.”²²⁵ Herriman articulates simultaneously race as a genetic origin: a problematic naturalization that includes an idea of purity that, “float(s) uncomfortably in a work that is always about a difference made necessary by representation”; as well as race as a cultural

²²¹ Amiran, “Black Sentence,” 58. In addition, the comics scholar Marc Singer makes a case for superhero comics, via the recurring theme of secret or split identity, as particularly potent sites for exploring race, ““Black Skins” and White Masks: Comic Books and the Secret of Race,” *African American Review* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 107-119.

²²² The US spelling of *color* is adopted here to retain continuity with Amiran’s text.

²²³ Amiran, “Black Sentence,” 68-77. An enactment of the revealing concealments of the picture, wherein, to W.J.T. Mitchell, “the ocular violence of racism splits its object in two, rending and rendering it simultaneously hypervisible and invisible.” W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 34.

²²⁴ Amiran, “Black Sentence,” 70.

²²⁵ Amiran, 65. The reworking of a mythical past in a fantastical, extra-real environment in Amiran’s analysis also suggests a reading of *Krazy* within an Afrofuturist schema. “Afrofuturism is a quest both to return home and for a new diasporic future in space.” Julian Henriques and Harold Offeh, “Afrofuturism, Fiction and Technology,” in *Fictions and Futures*, eds. Henriette Gunkel, Ayesha Hameed and Simon O’Sullivan (London: Repeater Books, 2017), 97-121: 99.

construct, “the ideal genotypic identity can never be seen: only the aesthetic ideology of color can be seen.”²²⁶

The strip revealed the comic medium’s illusionism and obfuscation, indexical to illustration’s application toward hiding whilst revealing, to indicate a truth only through declaring its own inability to represent that truth (chapter one, p.39). The only revealing permissible, to show more is to be revealed, is an articulation that any glimpse of truth can only be fleeting. The manifestations of this struggle in cycles of revealing and concealing that, to Amiran, are woven into the materiality of comic book illustration, which, “tells and withholds, performs and denies [Herriman’s] identity.” The two formal planes of inking, the relation between black and white that enables visibility, and narrative, or the story-telling aspect of the comic, which both contradict themselves and each other, betray the anxiety of *Krazy Kat* for Amiran, that is, “the endlessness of the narrative of making-invisible.”²²⁷

This paradoxical approach to author subjectivity also appears in Hergé’s *The Adventures of Tintin* (1929-1976) where an embodiment of authorial self in crisis takes place alongside the enactment of a universal everyman, a double reading comparable to Amiran’s ‘narratives’ and ‘ink’. The former has an equivalent in Hergé’s autobiographical subtext and the latter can be addressed in Tintin as an absence of ink, a void. In this instance, the whiteness of Tintin (and his dog, Snowy) are constituted from the paper substrate of the comic, but also the cultural substrate of Hergé’s social and filial background.²²⁸ To comics theorists including Jean-Marie Apostolidès and Ben Little, Tintin is the impassive detective whose own origins remain a mystery, allowing him to mutate from an embodiment of colonial Belgium in the early volumes to a revisionist post-war global problem solver. Across this evolution however, the character remains a placeholder for an assumed white male reader’s gaze.²²⁹

²²⁶ Amiran, “Black Sentence,” 58-59.

²²⁷ Amiran, “Black Sentence,” 68-71.

²²⁸ The western-centric universality was grimly rendered in the early pre-war volumes, where Africans in *Tintin in The Congo* (1930-31) are treated like objects, animals and surface reflections, whereas Snowy, originally more anthropomorphic, speaks and is treated like a master by the Congolese. Nancy Rose Hunt, “Tintin and the Interruptions of Congolese Comics,” in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Paul S. Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin (London: University of California Press, 2002): 90-123.

²²⁹ For instance, in the earlier works, “Tintin is the Belgians; he embodies the nation.” (Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *The Metamorphosis of Tintin or Tintin for Adults*, trans. Jocelyn Hoy (Stanford University Press: California, 2010): 12.) In the more nuanced narratives of the later books, such as *The Castafiore Emerald* (1961-62), Tintin’s gaze is described as synonymous with the reader’s in relation to the unfolding events (Little, “Comic Books,” 89). This is how comics draw the reader into the story for Little, by “imagining their readers and creating protagonists in their image.” 94.

In contrast to the shifting and ambiguous gender and ethnicity of Krazy Kat, Tintin is fixed as male, middle class, white and European. Yet although gendered, he is not accorded sexual desire and in this apparent absence of a libido he can be addressed in Susan Buck-Morss's terms as the, "Modern man," who, "while achieving his autogenic status, has castrated himself to become the phallus."²³⁰ Much as Dürer's avatar in *Artist Drawing a Nude*, Tintin is also "drained of sexuality," whilst embodying the male gaze.²³¹ His body is presented as a non-body, in a representational tradition of the white male as somehow outside the limits of the body. The character of Tintin is communicated as empty of identity, for the novelist Tom McCarthy he is, "the vanishing point of all desire... the sexlessness of the unconsummated marriage."²³² Although the universality required for this viewpoint is critiqued by Little, where Tintin cannot have 'blankness', as espoused by McCarthy, as he is clearly white, male and middle class. This conflation of these characteristics with a universality confirms *the human* as a category held exclusively for the western bourgeois male.²³³

However, in a paradox similar to Herriman's, *The Adventures of Tintin* can also be read as a family mystery. In a reading of the work as a subconscious autobiography, Serge Tisseron executes his own detective work to discover that the characters in Tintin correspond to Hergé's family members. *The Adventures* are then perceived as a quest by their author to unravel the lacunae in his own heritage where Hergé's father and uncle were possibly the illegitimate offspring of the Belgian aristocracy (Figure 14).²³⁴ In contrast to the politics of the early albums, which reflected the intact machinery of

²³⁰ Buck-Morss, "Anaesthetics," 8.

²³¹ The figure of Tintin is approachable in the manner that Svetlana Alpers and Martin Jay ascribe to the development of the Cartesian mode of drawing, exemplified by *Artist Drawing a Nude*. To Ernst van Alphen, as discussed in chapter one (p.40), Dürer revealed the activity of drawing within the drawing itself, the establishment of a male point of view, that whilst draining drawing of its sexuality, an act of self-castration to apply Buck-Morss's schema, also engenders the phallogocentric gaze. Svetlana Alpers. "Art history and its exclusions: the example of Dutch art," in *Feminism and art history: questioning the litany*, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982): 183-99; Jay, "Scopic Regimes," 3-23.

²³² Tom McCarthy, *Tintin and The Secret of Literature* (London: Granta Publications, 2006), 161.

²³³ Little, "Comic Books," 84. This question, "Since when has the human been an all-inclusive category?" is developed by the philosopher Rosi Braidotti in a critique of posthuman theory. "Posthuman, All Too Human? A Cultural Political Cartography," *Inhuman Symposium*, Kassel, 2015, video lecture, 1:06:56. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNJPR78DptA>.

²³⁴ Serge Tisseron. "Family Secrets and Social Memory in "Les aventures de Tintin"," trans. Barbara Harshav, *Yale French Studies*, no. 102 (2002): 145-159. Although initially Tisseron leaves aside "a moral reading of the work in favour of a consideration of its internal logic." (145), the political ramifications of *The Adventures of Tintin* are later addressed. Hergé's political stability in light of twentieth century history was this return to the child state, that of lower middle class Belgian shamed and silenced over defeat of Axis powers. Hence *The Adventures of Tintin*, "are at the crossroads of something unspeakable that is both familial and social and that discourages in a way every attempt to give them either an exclusively 'social' or an exclusively 'psychological' reading. Tintin the reporter without a newspaper investigates his own family, a family frozen like the background environ of a fairy tale. One day it will be set in motion?" (159).

European colonialism and rising allure of fascism, these adventures indulged an inner exploration that dealt “with the symbolic relations within personal life.”²³⁵

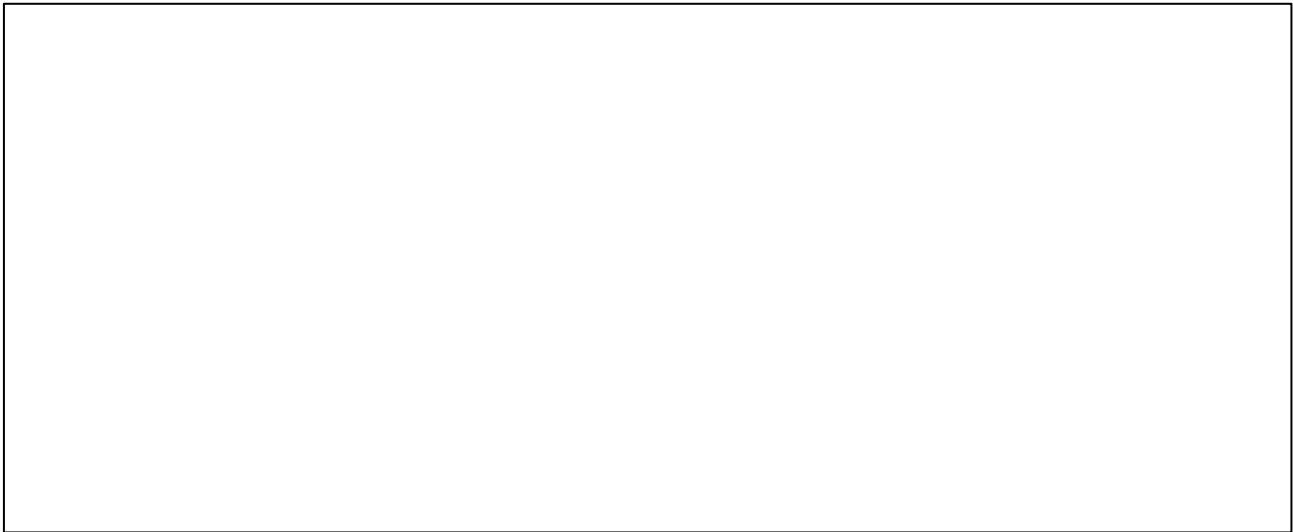


Figure 14. Serge Tisseron, *Figure 2*. (comparison of Hergé’s family and characters in *The Adventures of Tintin*), 2002, published in *Yale French Studies* no. 102, 2002, p.151.

In the collections *The Secret of the Unicorn* (1942 – 43) and *Red Rackham's Treasure* (1943) the second-most central character, Captain Haddock, anchors a narrative of unknown male heritage that mirrored Hergé’s own secret ancestry. For Hergé these crises coalesce in the characters of Tintin, as an autogenic foundling, and Haddock as the unwitting embodiment of a secret genealogy, a bastard counterfigure to Tintin’s universal everyman. Tintin, Haddock and a third character, Professor Calculus, then correspond to Hergé’s generation, where, for Tisseron, the author, “able to give a mythological dimension to his characters, each of these three heroes represents one aspect of the possible stances that can be adopted by a child confronting a parent's secret.”²³⁶ Here, Tintin represents a child lost in the world of adults whilst attempting to understand its secrets. Yet Hergé’s alternative origin story remains unproven, so *The Adventures* do not narrate a family history in as much as they narrate what happens to a child when a family history is surrounded in secrecy. In this comic book reinvention of a family secret overheard, Tisseron sees an application for stages of child

²³⁵ Apostolidès, *The Metamorphosis of Tintin*, 137.

²³⁶ Here, unlike the Thom(p)sons (derived from Hergé’s father and twin brother), who play a bumbling but authoritative role throughout *The Adventures*, Tintin, as the genealogical detective, can solve the secrets and, “detect the import of figurative meanings.” Of the other two generational representatives, Haddock is the child, “in the continual throes of a secret,” and Calculus, through his deafness, is, “a metaphoric enactment,” of the mandate given to a child, where no-one is guilty of hiding things from him because he literally cannot hear. Further, Calculus can be an idiot and a scientist, can search for scientific truth while retaining an idealised image of his parents, a docility and obedient attempt to reconcile. Tisseron, “Family Secrets,” 155.

development in the continuing formulation of the adult psyche. The discovery applied here, that “children draw the family secrets they are not allowed to talk about.”²³⁷

2.1.2 || **Childish autoclasm**

In the preceding examples the external scholarly interpretation can be seen as necessary to accessing deeper possibilities of the comic book text. In the evolution of comics self-consciousness in the latter part of the twentieth century however, artists themselves would incorporate such critical analysis into their work, interrogating the comic’s perpetuation of stereotypical figures and the presumptive approach to readerships in order to raise consciousness within the reader of their own agency and complicity in constructing alterity.²³⁸ Although this development of a self-conscious criticality within comics has been identified in previous works, it was the advent of alternative comics in the US in the 1970s that saw an intensified period of awareness and self-illumination. Alternative comics retained elements that took place in the preceding underground comic movement, including autobiography, a concern for quotidian experiences and the celebration, subversion and parody of mainstream comic books. Amongst the alternatives, some addressed the misogyny and racism that had been justified by auteurs such as Robert Crumb who were in thrall to the uncensored confessional outpouring of Sixties counterculture.²³⁹

In the community saga *Palomar*, the Californian comic book artist Gilbert Hernandez engaged the problematic depiction of race and the assumed gaze of the privileged white male. The strips ran in

²³⁷ Tisseron, 146. Further, “[W]hat matters is not this ‘historical truth’ we will probably never know anything more about, but rather the way this family secret was the crucible of the daydreams that eventually structured Hergé’s work. His own oedipal desire to be the offspring of an ‘illustrious’ father resonated with a family history that allowed uncertainty to persist regarding an aristocratic grandfather, a convergence which then produced the fantasy of a royal birth.” 158-159.

²³⁸ Comic artists knowingly invoke the tensions of the medium in these circumstances. The articulations of the autogenic/genetic in *Tintin* and the exposing/hiding in *Krazy Kat*, correlate with the more general comic book descriptors which present the form itself as held in tension. (Charles Hatfield, *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009). For comics scholar Gillian Whitlock, the dialectical relationship appears as a meditation on a conjunction of visual and verbal texts, a twofold tendency articulated as a *hybridity* (Gillian Whitlock, “Autographics: The Seeing ‘I’ of the Comics,” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 52, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 966). Nina Mickwitz detects two second-level dualities, a semiotic hybridity (between word and image, symbol and icon) and a hybridity of art forms (visual art and literature) (Mickwitz, “Comics and/as Documentary 60-61). For Scott McCloud comic’s hybridity renders it a “bastard medium.” (McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 47). In these instances, both *bastard* and *hybridity* are used in a formal register, to denote *mixture*, however these descriptors carry also a genealogical or origin connotation, untapped by their advocates but significant to this explication: *hybridity*’s invocation of the construct of race in post-colonial theory, (as defined in Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge Classics, 2004)), and the denotation of a male gendered filial narrative in the term *bastard* (Little, “Comic Books,” 189).

²³⁹ Not all alternative comics rejected these characteristics as this scene too was also, “laced with misogyny.” Suzanne Scott, “Fangirls in refrigerators: The politics of (in)visibility in comic book culture,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 13 (2013): 2.5.

the breakthrough first series of *Love & Rockets* (a bedrock of the alternative comics movement) from 1983 to 1993, within which Hernandez, along with brothers Mario and Jaime, subjected both underground and mainstream comics to scrutiny and political re-energisation.

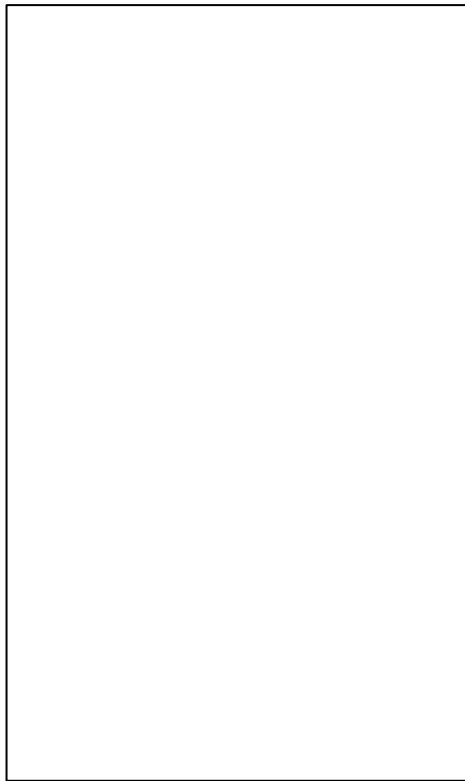


Figure 15. Gilbert Hernandez, *Untitled* comic book panel (cropped from original layout), 1985, published in *Heartbreak Soup: A Love and Rockets Book*, 2007, p.183

In common with *Krazy Kat*, a sense of struggle, an oppositional stance in terms of personhood, is manifested in the humour and violence of *Palomar*.²⁴⁰ Hernandez self-consciously draws attention to the racialisation of comic book depictions of the body and addresses the social image of comics themselves as a failed medium. In, “An American in Palomar,” part of the *Palomar* saga,²⁴¹ the character of Howard Miller, a photographer, becomes a stand-in for the comics reader as young, white, male, middle class and North American.²⁴² Miller indicates the universal gaze ascribed to the character of Tintin, but reveals the cultural specificity of its own subject construction. For comics scholar Christopher Pizzino, Miller reminds the reader that theirs too is the gaze of the, “ever-

²⁴⁰ Hatfield, *Alternative Comics*; Christopher Pizzino, “Autoclastic Icons: Bloodletting and Burning in Gilbert Hernandez's Palomar,” *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013).

²⁴¹ Reprinted in Gilbert Hernandez, *Heartbreak Soup: A Love and Rockets Book* (Fantagraphics Books: Seattle, 2007).

²⁴² Pizzino, “Autoclastic Icons,” 4; Derek Parker Royal, “The Worlds of the Hernandez Brothers,” *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 8; Jennifer Glaser, “Picturing the Transnational in Palomar: Gilbert Hernandez and the Comics of the Borderlands,” *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 15-19.

present ‘American in Palomar’” and that the Mexican characters depicted are also consciously written according to western stereotypes (Figure 15).²⁴³

In addition to embodying the reader’s gaze through Miller, Hernandez draws attention to the racializing tendencies of illustration through the backgrounded and seemingly *non-sequitur* appearance of the character Pedro Pacotilla (Figure 16), revealed as a racist cartoon character in a cheap children’s comic book read by Luba, the embattled protagonist of *Palomar* whose origins are recounted in *Poison River* (1989 – 1993).²⁴⁴ Hernandez mobilises Pacotilla, as an appropriated and re-purposed comic book stereotype, to acknowledge the failures of the medium wherein, to apply Amiran’s analysis of *Krazy Kat*, the production of subjectivity is paramount and, “the necessity of race for narrative, and of narrative for race,” is made explicit.²⁴⁵ Pacotilla does not achieve a resolution to this predicament, he is always fleeing, as with *Krazy Kat*, from “the workings of the ink itself which re-inscribes blackness even when it would deny it.”²⁴⁶

²⁴³ The temporary appearance of Miller draws attention to Hernandez’s fictional town of Palomar, which is presented as a cliché of Mexican life, much of the humour arising from the inhabitants’ failure to appear as civilised north Americans. For comics scholar Jennifer Glaser, “The representation of village as peripheral to *polis* and Mexico as peripheral to US identity is central to the ideology of American empire. Hernandez’s Palomar refuses this dichotomy and the unequal distribution of power that goes along with it,” Glaser, “Picturing the Transnational,” 15. Further, “The way Hernandez draws Miller—with the Nordic features of a stereotypical American gringo—also draws attention to the racial difference of Palomar’s residents, as well as to the otherness that Miller possesses once he crosses the border into this Central American town.” 17.

²⁴⁴ Pedro Pacotilla is possibly based on Memín Pinguín, a Mexican comic book character created in 1943. Pizzino, “Autoclastic Icons,” endnote ten.

²⁴⁵ To J. Hillis Miller theory, like the related term theatre, concerns giving a view, which is extrapolated in terms of illustration as an understanding of the invisible, a showing the hidden of nature, which simultaneously undercuts itself, always falsifying abstractions of the idea they attempt to bring into light. In this sense, illustrations “bring on themselves their own punishment” (Miller, *Illustration*, 140-150). Herriman’s comic illustration can be said to follow Miller’s formula in this instance, revealing only its own inability to reveal the truth.

²⁴⁶ Amiran, “Black Sentence,” 77.



Figure 16. Gilbert Hernandez, *Untitled* comic book panel (cropped from original layout), 1989, published in *Beyond Palomar: A Love and Rockets Book*, 2007, p.35.

This failure is situated by Pizzino and comics scholar Charles Hatfield, both in the paternalising projections of the state, and within the genre of comics itself. To Hatfield, Hernandez’s inclusion of Pacotilla signified the stereotypical view of comics as dwelling in an infantilized and impoverished condition: a trauma in US comics originating in the introduction of, and events leading up to, the creation of the self-regulatory Comics Code Authority (CCA) in 1954.²⁴⁷ Hatfield and Pizzino’s reading is toward a reckoning of comics own ‘traumatised’ status, one which requires subversion by progressive cartoonists if they are to mobilise the medium’s critical potential.²⁴⁸ The later representation of race by Hernandez, not only addresses comics’ collusion in perpetuating racial stereotypes, but voices a struggle for legitimacy for comics people stemming from the trauma that Pizzino places within comics history.²⁴⁹ In the self-portraiture of comics, it is an image of the comic

²⁴⁷ The CCA forms a Great Flood for aficionados and scholars of US comics, the censoring movement forever after associating comics with the antisocial and immature. This was a self-censoring move instigated by the industry in response to rising public hysteria over comic’s negative impact on mostly male children. The book *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) by psychologist Fredric Wertham is viewed as the catalyst in this move toward regulation. Pizzino, “Autoclastic Icons,” 2013.

²⁴⁸ “[E]ach time Pedro Pacotilla interrupts the flow of the narrative, his presence indicates the intransigence of the kinds of comics he represents—their inability to change, their unwillingness to speak meaningfully of the world outside their own images, and the aesthetic violence necessary to appropriate them for more productive ends.” Pizzino, 17.

²⁴⁹ Pizzino, 11. “US comics as a whole—announce the power of comics to manifest the traumas to which the medium has been subjected, and to allow those traumas to resonate with other historical experiences in which progress and growth (either personal or cultural) are thwarted.”

itself as always under threat, from itself now, rather than the “paternalistic projections” that led to the foundation of the CCA.²⁵⁰

For Hadfield and Pizzino this auto destructive strain is figured in comics narrative through violence, humour and self-referential characters. This is a self-breaking, or, ‘autoclasm’, for Pizzino,²⁵¹ where not only characters are destroyed but, through metatextual devices like Pedro Pacotilla and Howard Miller, comics and particularly alternative comics, self-destroy, becoming “an interrogation of [their] own medium.”²⁵² Whether knowingly or otherwise, autoclasm manifests in both production and analysis of comics. Pizzino accords with comic scholar Bart Beaty in terms of inferiority as an integral characteristic of the genre, believing the sense of illegitimacy is worthy of more intense scrutiny, not just in the socio-cultural reception of comics, but as an underlying drive within their production. The critical mobilisation of this characteristic has a two-fold agency: an expansion and restoration of the possibilities of the medium and a corresponding resistance to legitimisation, an illegitimacy that resists the logic of upward mobility because, “the natural aim of comics is not at all to become ‘sivilised’.”²⁵³

Concurrent with the rise of alternative comics in the 1980s, the term ‘graphic novel’ was popularised, aligning a branch of comics with literature and redefining an audience share as mature and capable of adult textual interpretation.²⁵⁴ To many scholars the rise of the graphic novel, as a splicing off of an aspect of comics production, further entrenched the view of the remaining comics at a substandard level within a social hierarchy. To Beaty the label is an aspect of comics’ involvement in an ongoing legitimating process,²⁵⁵ a journey to adulthood, that for Pizzino is analogous to the literary coming-of age trope: the story of comics itself an ongoing *Bildungsroman*. To these North American commentators, a childishness still remains, where comics carry through to adulthood the trauma resulting from their association with the vulgarity, crassness and antisocial

²⁵⁰ Mickwitz, “Comics and/as Documentary,” 59-62.

²⁵¹ Pizzino, “Autoclastic Icons,” 7; Pizzino, *Arresting Development: Comics at the Boundaries of Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press: 2016), 4.

²⁵² Hatfield, *Alternative Comics*, 101.

²⁵³ Jan Baetens, “Christopher Pizzino, Arresting Development. Comics at the Boundaries of Literature,” *Image & Narrative* 17, no.5 (2016): 92-93. The term, ‘sivilised’ originates with Mark Twain.

²⁵⁴ Although in circulation since the 1960s, the term came to public prominence with Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prize winning *Maus* in the 1980s serialized in *RAW* magazine from 1980-1991 and collected in two volumes published in 1986 and 1991. It is of note that the work, as an autobiography, is (as Alison Bechdel also points out in relation to her own book-length comics) a graphic memoir rather than a graphic novel.

²⁵⁵ Bart Beaty, *Comics versus Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 212.

aspects of adolescence, that is historically located in the negative public attention directed at comics preceding the creation of the Comics CCA.²⁵⁶

To contemporary commentators, this state of childishness, whether as infantile, immature, illiterate, trivial, adolescent or delinquent, can be ascribed a historical or psychological characteristic, but a point of agreement is that this dwelling in the infantile is, for recent comics, a wilful act.²⁵⁷ For many scholars, readers and producers this perpetuated adolescence of the comic is a literary mode, “the thematics of troubled development reflected in formal and aesthetic devices that directly challenge, and self-reflexively highlight, the act of reading.”²⁵⁸ To that end, comics do not want to be culturally upgraded,

“[F]or this transformation would dramatically cripple what they really are: a very democratic form of art that does not want to sever its ties with the ‘low’, that is: violence, vulgarity, immaturity, childishness and a critique of mainstream culture.”²⁵⁹

The association with immaturity as paradoxically both limiting and redeeming, is given further critical rigour when approached in terms of gender. The media scholar Suzanne Scott, whose focus is on the mainstream US superhero comic, posits that the discussion of childishness obscures the patriarchal influence in comics, and that gender, particularly in readerships, is an important issue that scholarship has omitted through a focus on age.²⁶⁰ For comic scholars Hillary Chute and Nina Mickwitz however, the childlike can be mobilised in the comic as a perpetuation of the cyclical discoveries of childhood, creating a transformative therapeutic potential for recreating a state of infancy through which the author can make reparative actions. For example, in Phoebe Gloeckner’s *A Child’s Life and Other Stories* (2000) and *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* (2015) the reparative action is not only intended as curative in relation to trauma from the sexual abuse Gloeckner suffered as a child, but in relation to the comics canon itself.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Pizzino, “Autoclastic Icons.”

²⁵⁷ Beaty, 2012; Chute, 2008; Mickwitz, 2014; Pizzino, 2016; Scott, 2012.

²⁵⁸ Pizzino, “Autoclastic Icons,” 10.

²⁵⁹ Baetens, “Christopher Pizzino,” 92. A comic strip can additionally be considered, “childish,” in that it is not yet a fully formed text, rather it is in a state of becoming. Embryonic, or not fully developed, as Serge Tisseron compared the manuscript to the comic strip. Tisseron, “All Writing is Drawing,” 11.

²⁶⁰ Scott, “Fangirls in refrigerators.”

²⁶¹ For comics scholar Olga Michael, Gloeckner re-appropriates the US underground comics movement, engaging the canon toward feminist reparative ends and transgressing comics conventions to re-instate the figure of the female. Hilary Chute situates Gloeckner’s work amongst a generation of women writers (including French-Iranian Marjane Satrapi and Americans Lynda Barry, Alison Bechdel, and Aline Kominsky-Crumb), whose investigation of

The reparative is here equated with the scopic experience of the material of the comic. For cartoonist and comics theorist Scott McCloud, placement of one picture after another stimulates the reader's imagination into viewing the still images as a sequence of events, a sequence whose temporality nonetheless is subject to the reader's own volition. Essential to this action is the 'gutter', the space between panels and also a gap in the narrative which requires reader participation to produce what McCloud terms 'closure', his fundamental operation of comics functionality.²⁶² To comics scholar Gillian Whitlock, closure is the work of observing the parts and perceiving the whole and for Chute, the closure function illustrates the rise of the centrality of viewer experience,

“[B]ecause the form represents punctual, framed moments alternating with the blank space of the gutter onto which we must project causality, comics as a form requires a substantial degree of reader participation for narrative interpretation, even fostering a kind of interpretive ‘intimacy’.”²⁶³

Whitlock describes this method as autography, “the distinctive technology and aesthetics of life narrative that emerges in the comics,” an extrapolation of autobiography that includes the haptic and material aspects of drawing and producing comics.²⁶⁴ In autography the construction of narrative aids the reparative effect the comic can have on trauma. As the author enacts a reparative engagement with past texts, the reader's experience participates, through the intimacy of closure, in, “the healing function of repetition within the cultural domain.”²⁶⁵

childhood and the body are, “concerns typically relegated to the silence and invisibility of the private sphere,” and whose work exemplifies how, “graphic narrative can envision an everyday reality of women's lives, which, while rooted in the personal, is invested and threaded with collectivity, beyond prescriptive models of alterity or sexual difference.” Hillary Chute, “Comics as Literature? Reading Graphic Narrative,” *PMLA* 123, no. 2 (March 2008): 459; Olga Michael, “Pastiche and Family Strife in Contemporary American Women's Graphic Memoirs: Phoebe Gloeckner, Lynda Barry and Alison Bechdel,” (PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2013).

²⁶² McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 67. Nina Mickwitz, in negating the negative predetermination she finds in McCloud's 'closure', prefers 'suture'. Mickwitz, “Comics and/as Documentary,” 71. The gutter space and act of closure also resembles Hélène Cixous's graspable aspect of drawing as between, rather than within the draughtswoman's strokes. Cixous, “Without End,” 19.

²⁶³ Chute “Comics as Literature?” 460. “Intimacy,” is from McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 69.

²⁶⁴ Whitlock, “Autographics;” Janine Utell, “Intimacies in Alison Bechdel's Fun Home,” in *The Comics Grid. Journal of Comics Scholarship. Year One*, Ernesto Ramirez, ed. (The Comics Grid Digital First Editions, 2012), 216-219.

²⁶⁵ Michael, “Women's Graphic Memoirs,” 49.

2.1.3 || Obsessive reparation

Alison Bechdel constructs a comic book *oeuvre* around the intersection of literary fiction, autobiography, sexual politics and interrogation of the nuclear family. Through her work, comics are re-formed as a queer medium, akin to the loser art that media theorist J. Halberstam describes as a failure to comply with heteronormative arrangements of relationships and kinship groups.²⁶⁶ Bechdel draws a parallel between the two movements: comics and queer culture have both moved from the shadows to light over the last forty years; both were considered dangerous to children and both have moved to legitimacy in the twenty-first century.²⁶⁷

In the syndicated cartoon strip *Dykes to Watch Out For* (1983 - 2009) Bechdel created a lesbian community, multiple avatars of herself and of her ideal readers.²⁶⁸ The depiction was both comforting for Bechdel, “to see my queer life reflected back at me,”²⁶⁹ and made with the reparative aim to spread positive characterisations in place of negative stereotypes.²⁷⁰ Bechdel, as a child, “didn’t see herself when she looked in the cultural mirror,” initiating a desire to redress the invisibility of queer life through lack of representation, “If people could only see us, how could they help but love us?!”²⁷¹ In addition, this became the impetus for an obsessive search for self within a

²⁶⁶ Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (London: Duke University Press, 2011): 33.

²⁶⁷ Alison Bechdel, “Queers & Comics Keynote,” keynote speech, *Queers & Comics* conference, 8 May 2015, The Graduate Center, CUNY, New York, online video, 1:07:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQrKPmnrZYw>.

²⁶⁸ *Dykes to Watch Out For (DTWOF)* is Bechdel’s quasi-autobiographical cartoon series that narrates a group of colleagues, friends and lovers from the lesbian and feminist community of an un-named US city, an alternative kinship group that parallels Bechdel’s own life. A queering of the family, which communications scholar Adrielle Mitchell posits as confirming Elizabeth Freeman’s theorizing of a queer kinship as extra-Oedipal, cultural rather than biological formulation. Bechdel does not have to renounce the family of origin to be queer: she can queer the family. Adrielle Mitchell, “Spectral Memory, Sexuality and Inversion: An Arthrological Study of Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*,” *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 4, no. 3 (2009), 6.

²⁶⁹ Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Queering Genre: Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* and *The Essential Dykes to Watch Out For*,” *Contemporary Women’s Writing* 5, no. 3 (November 2011): 188-207, 196. For reader Andre Carrington the picturing of a diverse lesbian group in *DTWOF* did not function as a mirror. He was looking at people that didn’t look like him and didn’t look like each other. For Carrington this seeing oneself not in isolation, but in juxtaposition, is a key part of the queer community. André Carrington, “Queers & Comics Keynote: Alison Bechdel,” introductory speech, *Queers & Comics* conference, 8 May 2015. The Graduate Center, CUNY, New York, online video, 1:07:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQrKPmnrZYw>.

²⁷⁰ Ironically considering the earlier discussion, it is the figure of Tintin that holds symbolic possibility of the comics avatar in transcending restrictive binaries, demonstrating the fluidity of reading in comics representation. A poster of the character in Bechdel’s studio reminds the journalist Judith Thurman of Mo, the protagonist in *DTWOF*. Thurman asked if Mo was based on Tintin, “I can see it”, Bechdel responds, although it wasn’t conscious, ‘Mo is me, not Tintin. In fact, all the characters in ‘Dykes’ are more or less me.’” As *Fun Home* was a subversive failure to conform to heteronormative family structures, the failure or crisis of representations of the self as a singularity takes place in *Dykes*, echoing *The Adventures of Tintin* and *Krazy Kat*.

²⁷¹ “To provide, “an antidote to the prevailing image of lesbians as warped, sick, humorless, and undesirable.” In contrast, “lesbians were so awesome! Free thinkers! Vegetarians! Pacifists! At the forefront of every social justice movement! ...more highly evolved!” Bechdel, *DTWOF*, xiv–xv in Gardiner, “Queering Genre,” 196. Criticism of *DTWOF*’s agenda in terms of its didacticism for Bechdel was praise: she, “wanted to be a good lesbian.” Bechdel, “Queers & Comics.”

family narrative itself imbricated with the medium of comics.²⁷² The immaturity or low cultural status attributed to the comic was a motivation for her choice of cartooning,²⁷³ a subversion of the prose literature elevated by her father, the focus of her first graphic memoir *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006), where Bechdel describes a process of becoming in relation to family histories and secrets.²⁷⁴ In evading her father's insistence that she conform to the paternal mode of femininity, Bechdel in turn thwarts the conventional gendering of comics as male, re-articulating the medium from 'bastard' to queer.

Bechdel's second graphic memoir, *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama* (2012), forms a companion to *Fun Home* by focusing on the adult relationship between the author and her mother. The materiality and making of the comic are inseparably bound into the autobiography as an act of reparation, both personal and social. It is, as with all the examples in this chapter, a comic book that interrogates its own modality, but *Mother*, in documenting the author's anxieties over producing graphic memoirs that explore her family in parallel to Bechdel's long term psychoanalysis, most nakedly presents the relationship between the comic and the author as an ongoing therapeutic process.

²⁷² Unlike the family secrets latent in Hergé's *The Adventures of Tintin*, Bechdel's autobiography is made explicit. For Bechdel, Tintin, as an object of critique, has become a generic figure with potential for transcending gender and sexual categorisation, "...the thing about Tintin is that he's not androgynous and not masculine—he's asexual. That aesthetic neutrality appeals to me. I'm always striving to be a generic person." (Thurman, "Drawn From Life.") Bechdel's view of Tintin is more akin to the gender fluidity of *Krazy Kat* (Amiran, "Black Sentence," 59). Like the Hernandez brothers her work shows an engagement with comics history and its problematizing figuration, by appropriating the universalising position on Tintin, as part of a comics culture that can be re-mobilised toward feminist reparative ends.

²⁷³ "She started cartooning with an "anti-elitist" bias that was common in the lesbian community. 'Comics were a loser thing to do, and that was the beauty of it. I liked being an outsider. It gave me an objectivity that I thought I would forfeit if I was normal.'" Alison Bechdel quoted by Judith Thurman, "Drawn From Life: The World of Alison Bechdel," *The New Yorker*, 12 April 2012. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/04/23/drawn-from-life>.

²⁷⁴ *Fun Home* details Bechdel's upbringing, the secret of her father's homosexuality and the events preceding his death in a possible suicide. As a mortician schoolteacher period-home restorer, Bechdel's father, Bruce, lives his own Proustian autobiography. Bechdel constructs a book within which she controls the actors just as Bruce is depicted building a fantasy palace around his wife and children, requiring them to play actors within it and considering them extensions of his own body. In Hillary Chute's review, "Bechdel said that *Fun Home* 'feels like a proper funeral for my father,'" a reflection of the self-reference that typifies her work, "*Fun Home*" being the family nickname of the funeral parlour run by Bruce (Chute, "Gothic Revival.") *Fun Home* then functions, "as a mausoleum to contain fragments of Bruce's life – his actions, his photographs, his marginal notes, his letters." (Mitchell, *Spectral Memory*, 4.)



Figure 17. Alison Bechdel, *Untitled* comic book panel (cropped from original layout), 2012, published in *Are You My Mother?* 2012, p.82.

The reparative processes that Chute and Mickwitz observe underwriting many contemporary women's comics are visualised most concretely in Bechdel's depiction of her therapeutic encounters. In one such sequence, her analyst explores the possibility that Bechdel, in laying bare her relationship with her mother in the comic, is attempting to destroy her symbolically in the hope that she will survive and be accepted as a true and trusted part of objective reality.²⁷⁵ The conversation follows Bechdel considering her earlier work, *Fun Home*, firstly as an act designed to hurt her mother by exposing an intimate family secret (her father's closeted homosexuality) and then, with the aid of the therapist's interpretation, as an attempt to heal her mother (Figure 17).²⁷⁶ In an asynchronous interweaving of events in her life, Bechdel stitches this process of testing to

²⁷⁵ Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?*, 267.

²⁷⁶ Bechdel, 63; 82.

destruction followed by healing to her relationship with her mother, to the transference that takes place in the therapeutic process and in relation to the act of creating the comic book.

To articulate this relation between object/mother/therapist and subject/daughter/analysand Bechdel focuses on the psychoanalytic concept of the transitional object. The concept was developed by paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott who deemed it central to the development of play in the infant state, itself central to the subsequent development of adult relationships.²⁷⁷ For literature scholar Suzanne Juhasz, a text is a transitional object, “at once a part of the self and a part of the world,”²⁷⁸ one that negotiates a shared reality separate from the inner psyche. It operates in a cultural space which, although one of play, mediates between people in a potentially dangerous time of splitting from the (m)other/object: “The object represents the infant’s transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate.”²⁷⁹

Bechdel’s application of the transitional object to her understanding of the process of making comics includes her mobilisation of childhood influences, an application of experiences as a consumer of illustrations as much as a producer. One such articulation occurs midway through *Are You My Mother?* where Bechdel recognises a habitat depicted in *Dr Seuss’s Sleep Book* (1962), one of her childhood favourites, as a pivot around which infant play, adult self-realisation and the act of illustration can be orientated.²⁸⁰ The image and accompanying description are the source of the phrase: “Plexiglass dome,” which Bechdel applied to an emotional state, a “clocking out” of contact with the external world, that her mother adopted when Bechdel was a child. In response to her mother’s pre-occupation, the infant Bechdel is also depicted in *Mother* as sealing herself off from externality. The drawings she produces during these periods are interpreted by Bechdel as portraits of the condition as, “a perfect environment,” the solitary condition of the illustrator at work.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Winnicott contributed to object relations theory during the 1940s and 50s following Melanie Klein and members of the Kleinian psychoanalytic community who expanded on earlier work on pre-Oedipal states by the Freudians Sándor Ferenczi and Otto Rank. In *Mother?*, Winnicott himself is subject to Bechdel’s draughtsmanship, inviting a reading as an alternative father figure, one who loves, plays and shares discoveries. Bechdel, 154-155.

²⁷⁸ Suzanne Juhasz, *A Desire for Women: Relational Psychoanalysis, Writing, and Relationships between Women*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003: 198. Quoted in Mitchell, “Spectral Memory,” 19.

²⁷⁹ Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1986), 17.

²⁸⁰ Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?*, 130-141. The use of childhood illustration is reflected in the title which is derived from a 1960 child’s educational picture book.

²⁸¹ In a subsequent sequence Bechdel reformulates the *Dr. Seuss* illustration as a pregnant uterus, another environment where “nothing impinges,” where there is no separation with the mother but also, “no relation.” Bechdel, 138.



Figure 18. Alison Bechdel, *Untitled* comic book panel (cropped from original layout), 2012, published in *Are You My Mother?* 2012, pp.132-133.

Bechdel explains that both the condition depicted in the *Dr Seuss* drawing, and the psychic equivalent she and her mother entered into, is a, “denial of dependence,” and a, “fantasy of self-sufficiency,” one that the baby also learns to depend upon instead of depending on the mother. She creates a diagram of this in a spread featuring a meticulous copy of *Dr Seuss’s Sleep Book* (Figure 18).²⁸² Although the condition depicted and discussed is the fantasy of self-sufficiency, the inference is that Bechdel is now using drawing to create a transitional object, a playful space for negotiating the shared reality between herself and mother toward mediating their separation.

²⁸² Bechdel, 132-133. The composition is a microcosm of Bechdel’s method, the comic format used to map and overlay a multitude of spaces, temporalities, relationships and pictographic vocabularies. Adrielle Mitchell cites *Fun Home* in this sense, as an example of Thierry Groensteen’s, “unidirectional vectorization in the construction of meaning,” a possibility conferred by the structural layout of images and text on the page, allowing the reader to move backwards and forwards, imbricating their own chronological time on the diegetic time of the comic. Mitchell, “Spectral Memory,” 8

Following from Bechdel, I read the strategy within the broader psychoanalytical concept of the potential space, of which the transitional object is a constituent. The potential space is described by the psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden as, “an intermediate area of experiencing that lies between fantasy and reality,”²⁸³ both a critical part of the infant developmental experience, where the infant separates out not-me objects in the creation of a space filled with illusion, play and symbols, and, for Winnicott, a “third area of human living... neither inside individual nor outside in world.”²⁸⁴ Within Winnicott’s description, the potential space is pivotal to the management of experiences of separation and dislocation as a child. In adult situations, the potential space is of value to the adult therapeutic process and also occurs within cultural production as a linking of objects and customs to help sustain a sense of connection to lost worlds.²⁸⁵

The play space is often figured across comic book world-building in spatial metaphors, for instance, Herriman’s Coconino County, Hernandez’ town of Palomar and Hergé’s Marlinspike country estate. In autobiography, the processes and materials of comic making itself can represent the potential space. For Bechdel the act of drawing is represented as both obsessive and reparative. This is present in the *Dr. Seuss* original, where the blissfully isolated creature is engaged in an ongoing tally marking, an obsessive drawing which is repeated in Bechdel’s own single-minded re-rendering of the scene. Bechdel’s version of autobiography has a recursive dimension, or in the author’s words, “a dizzying infinite regress.”²⁸⁶ The early stages of this recursion, the repetitive behaviour (which I introduced in this chapter as an excessive picturing of the body: p.72) is rooted in Bechdel’s childhood diary-keeping. This is depicted as having symptoms of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, an activity both troubling to Bechdel as a child and represented in *Mother* and *Fun Home* as the precursor to the author’s career in comic book illustration.

The entire context and narrative arc of *Mother* is toward self-reparation, where the drawing and re-drawing that is the bedrock of comics production should, ultimately, have a healing effect on the author. But the act of depicting a potential space, as in the *Dr. Seuss* composition, is not reparative

²⁸³ Thomas H. Ogden, “On Potential Space,” in *The Winnicott Tradition: Lines of Development—Evolution of Theory and Practice Over The Decades*, eds. Margaret Boyle Spelman and Frances Thomson-Salo. (London: Karnac, 2015): 121-133.

²⁸⁴ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 129.

²⁸⁵ Ricardo C. Ainslie, “Cultural mourning, immigration, and engagement: vignettes from the Mexican experience,” in Suárez- *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on The New Immigration. Volume 3: The New immigrant in American Society*, Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, Carola Suárez-Orozco, Desirée Qin-Hilliard, eds. (London: Routledge, 2002), 367. In addition, the concept of potential space as itself reparative, Winnicott occupied a middle position between Anna Freud’s continued focus on the ego and Melanie Klein’s identification of an “object.”

²⁸⁶ Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?*, 7.

in itself. There drawing is both illuminating but, in adding another recursive layer, also a repetition of the obsessions of old. This paradoxical duality of a potential resolution and obsessive recursion is made explicit during a therapeutic discussion of the author's childhood diary keeping wherein the therapist suggests the diary was akin to Bechdel absorbing too much of her family. The diary, like the drawing of 'perfect environments' was a distancing behaviour, and more so, "a projection of her mental apparatus, not a picture of the true self." After asking why the analytical process cannot be as one with the creative, her therapist responds,

"You relate to your own mind like it's an object... Being attached to your work, your mind, the way you would be to another person – that cuts you off from the world."²⁸⁷

The illustrated Bechdel immediately jumps from the therapeutic couch to record this useful exchange for future use in *Are You my Mother?*, the sequence encapsulating the paradox of the comics production process as reparative action whilst perpetuating the obsessive distancing from reality (Figure 19). The sequence, and *Mother* taken as a whole, re-affirms that it is only in the therapeutic encounter with the other that the rupture necessary to healing can take place, the example being the revealing to Bechdel her narcissistic attachment to her own mind, her Plexiglass Dome.²⁸⁸ As a reader, the sequence suggests to me that the potential space lies beyond the comic page, in the therapeutic, or similar relational encounter, and the comic can only be a communication of that experience. Like the analysis in the previous chapter, the comic book illustration requires a text to achieve subversion in this case. To fully appreciate these perpetuating patterns of behaviour the potential space within the therapeutic process must risk intrusion, be open to the risks implicit in

²⁸⁷ Bechdel, 152.

²⁸⁸ Bechdel's therapist in this instance considers her client's relating to her mind like it is an object as demonstrating an unhealthy reliance on her own understanding. Bechdel augments this observation with her own reading of Winnicott, where, "mental functioning [becomes] a thing in itself, practically replacing the good mother and making her unnecessary." (Donald W. Winnicott, "Mind and it's Relation to The Psyche-Soma," in *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, ed. John D. Sutherland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 201-209. Quoted in Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?* 133). For Olga Michael, 'narcissism' is a redemptive and useful conception when articulated as self-description and there is an echo of this position in Bechdel's view of her investment in her own mind as a 'narcissistic cathexis' (218). Here, Bechdel's concern is not for Freud's "attachment type of love," his early theory positing male homosexual and female love as more narcissistic. Rather, cathexis is the process of investing a fixed amount of libidinal energy in objects (such as our parents) and, for Bechdel, "the succession of substitutes who take their place." (216) Narcissism, in Bechdel's Winnicottian schema, "is what happens when you cathect your own ego instead of an external object. [...] In narcissistic cathexis, you invest more energy into your ideas about another person than in the actual, objective person." (217). Winnicott himself describes cathexis thus: "In object-relating the subject allows certain alterations in the self to take place, of a kind that has caused us to invent the term cathexis." Here, the object has become meaningful as something of the subject is found within it, and although this is an experience of the subject as an isolate, the cathected objects need to exist in a shared reality, not as a series of projections. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 103.

the splitting of self and mother/other. The comic, as a transitional object, must participate in an expanded potential space of extradiegetic narrative, one where the role of the reader is transformed.

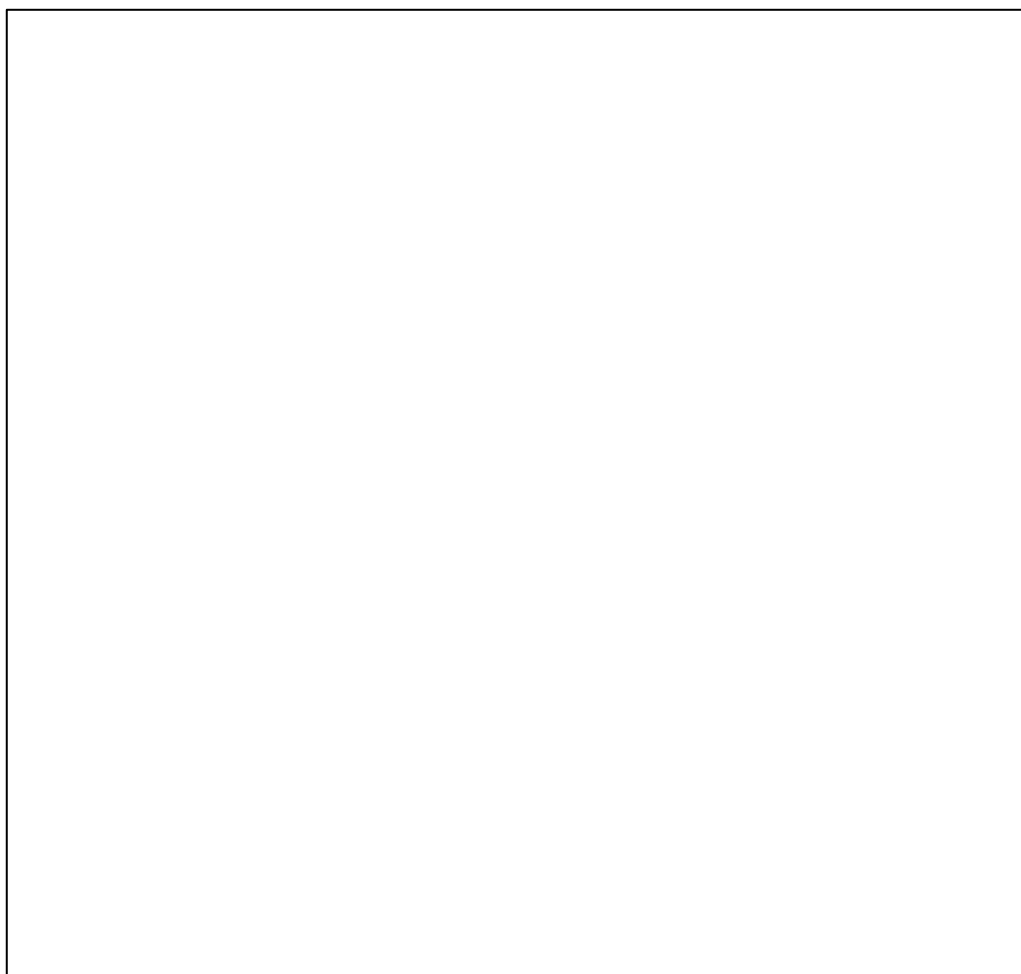


Figure 19. Alison Bechdel. *Untitled* comic book panel (cropped from original layout), 2012, published in *Are You My Mother?* 2012, p.152.

2.2 || Reader participation

2.2.1 || *The Invisibles*

Are You My mother? presented its author as relating to her mind as if it were an object. Through the example of *The Invisibles* (1994 – 2000), conceived and written by comics writer Grant Morrison, I develop a viewpoint within which the author makes an additional investment by relating to their readership as an object. The autobiographical, as the story of the author and the medium, is central to engaging communities of fans: those committed readers who participate in the narrative to the extent they form components of the comic book corporeality. *The Invisibles* is an example of a comic that actively involved fans in the narrative. Although a symptom of industrialised society, a ‘phantasmagoric technology’ using Susan Buck-Morss’s terminology, the series was presented by Morrison as an instrument for the reader to extract socially transformative potential back out of the phantasmagoric environment.

In Buck-Morss’s exegesis of Benjamin’s “Work of Art” essay, the frequency of violence done to the body in the culture of industrial nations was a traumatic response (in the sense of both dream and damage) to an alienating society.²⁸⁹ Technology extended the power but also the vulnerability of human corporeality, producing a counter-need to use technology as a protective shield, as if the human strived, “to create a space in which pain can be regarded as an illusion.”²⁹⁰ Substituting late nineteenth and early twentieth century technology for the mass media of the late twentieth, this thinking can be applied to the comic book producer’s dual investment in the body: in the excessive figuration of the body within the comic book; and, through the dissemination of the comic, in the body of the reader.

Morrison is situated in a wave of writers and illustrators who began working in comics in the UK in the 1970s and 80s and were subsequently employed to re-interpret the monthly superhero format by Marvel and DC Comics, the leading mainstream publishers in the US.²⁹¹ DC’s imprint Vertigo was

²⁸⁹ *The Invisibles* can be said to re-perform the image overload of the nascent information age in a pop culture corollary to the phantasmagoric spectacle of Wagnerian opera which, for Buck-Morss, reflected the traumatising sensory conditions of the industrialised urban environment.

²⁹⁰ Buck-Morss, “Anaesthetics,” 33.

²⁹¹ This was a strategic adoption of the alternative and countercultural motifs developed, most notably, in *2000AD*, a UK weekly comic. The scholar Ben Little sites comics as cultural production outside the art-critical establishment, the political science fiction of *2000AD* as fulfilling Antonio Gramsci’s call, as articulated by Dick Hebdige, for a counterhegemonic text that is itself popular, “[t]o engage with the popular as constructed and as lived – to negotiate this bumpy and intractable terrain – we are forced at once to desert the perfection of a purely theoretical analysis...

created in 1993 to consolidate the strategy by appealing to the growing adult comics market.²⁹² The three volumes of *The Invisibles* were created by Morrison for Vertigo and are characterised by what had become standard identifiers of comics for adults (depictions of sex, violence, recreational drug references and social critique) alongside Morrison's signature interests in the occult, psychedelia, conspiracy theory and time travel. In terms of narrative, the eponymous Invisibles are a covert anti-establishment organisation battling extra-terrestrials disguised as authority figures. The story begins with the initiation of an adolescent would-be recruit to a cell headed by the character King Mob, who in rhetorical delivery and shaven-headed appearance is an obvious avatar for Morrison himself. Mob is supported primarily by three sidekicks, inviting a reading as a traditional North American superhero kinship group in the vein of *The Fantastic Four*, *Avengers* or *X-Men* (Figure 20)²⁹³ but equally influenced by the Dudley D. Watkins illustrated newspaper strips of Morrison's working-class Scottish background which themselves depict co-dependant family groupings.²⁹⁴

in favour of a more - sensuous logic - a logic attuned to the living textures of popular culture, to the ebb and flow of popular debate" (Hebdige 1988, quoted in Little, "Comic Books," 126). Although, for Pizzino in the United States, "the suppressed status of the medium" and its domination by oppositionality since the 1960s is traced, as stated earlier, to the formation of the Comics Code Authority in 1954.

²⁹² DC Comics had a commercial impetus to expand readership ages beyond the 8-13 age range, in part a response to the shifting expectations of comic content (instigated in part by the influence of the alternative comics movement); a growing collector's market around US comics since the 1960s; and a reorientation of the superhero toward relationship narratives, part of an earlier push to attract older readers and escape from the *cul-de-sac* of the children's market. (Little, "Comic Books," 182). For DC Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons and John Higgins *Watchmen* series (1986-87) encapsulated the new approach, representing the aspects of UK comics that the US mainstream sought to emulate. For Little these were: the use of more complex visual techniques and fantastic environments to, "enable a more expansive, exploratory look at social and ethical issues"; and, "to access ideological and social narratives" whilst both evading controversy and resorting to stereotypical depictions (174-175).

²⁹³ The analogy can be seen as furthering Vertigo's aim to retain motifs of the superhero comic while appealing to a contemporary appetite for the purported criticality, self-referentiality and realism of alternative comics (Here, UK science fiction comics had the right mix of fantasy and social satire in contrast to the overly shocking critique of alternatives such as *Love and Rockets*). The superhero comic is a "body-genre" for Scott Jeffery, in the mode of film paradigms of melodrama, horror and pornography. The figure of the superhero is, "a conception of the posthuman body as an assemblage, or rhizome, formed by the overlapping realms of fictional Superhumanism, the techno-scientific practices of Transhumanism and the critical-theoretical philosophy of Post/Humanism." (Jeffery, "Posthuman Body," 220-238). *The Invisibles* superhero group also recognises histories of mystic and occult figures in comics. The countercultural evocations of Morrison's work have an additional connection to US Silver Age comics of the 1960s, particularly Marvel's output, where cosmic themes and characters showed the influence of psychedelics on creators. (139-162)

²⁹⁴ For instance, *The Broons*, appearing in The Sunday Post, published by DC Thompson since 1936. The sometimes-chaotic Invisibles cell fighting against the establishment is also reminiscent of Leo Baxendale's Bash Street Kids first published by DC Thompson in *The Beano* in 1956. There, a co-dependent relationship between authority, embodied by the teacher figure, and the anarchic polymorphous schoolkids, echoes the co-dependency of the Invisibles and their foe, the Outer Church, whose agents on earth are symbolic of the British ruling classes: oppressive besuited paternal figures, fox-hunting toffs and the aristocracy.

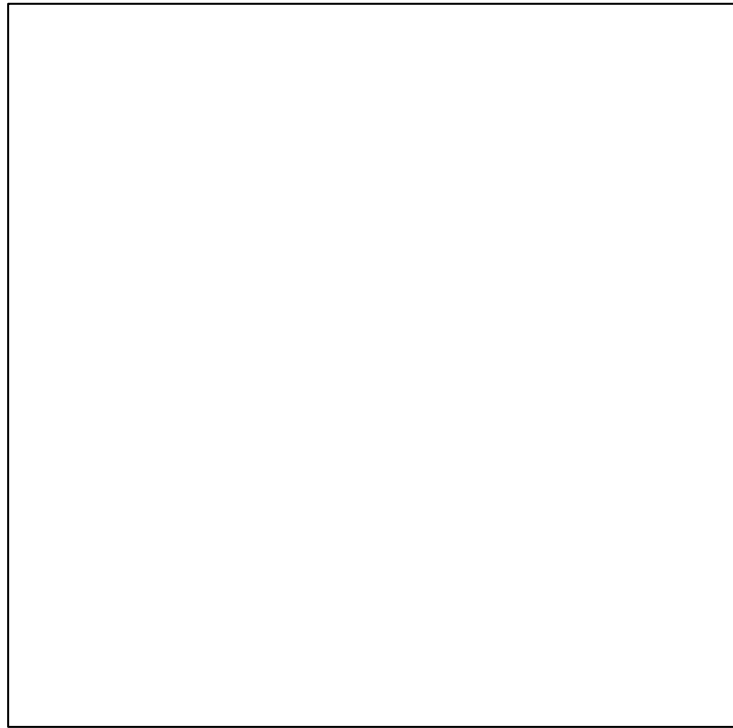


Figure 20. Grant Morrison (writer) and Steve Yeowell (artist), *Untitled* comic book panel (cropped from original layout), 1994, published in *The Invisibles*, volume 1, issue 17, 1994, p.19.

Using a bricolage of comic, literary, pop and subcultural influences, within which Morrison redeploys the influences of his upbringing, the author is established as an obsessive and discerning reader of the media phantasmagoria. Morrison's re-tooling of childhood cultural influences and obsessive self-referencing differs from Bechdel by rejecting the psychoanalytic in favour of an elaborate, auto-didactic pop cultural mythologising. The underground network of *Invisibles* is party to an esoteric knowledge and the reader is invited to presume that Morrison is too, and further, that they may share that experience by a close reading and interpretation of the narrative.²⁹⁵ In this manner, *The Invisibles* is presented as an occultural source material which readers may utilise, in the framework of communications scholar Danielle Lee Kirby, "in the formation of personal idiosyncratic beliefs and practices."²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ For comics scholar Scott Jeffery, "Morrison's work intends to provide a kind of shamanic experience for his readers, accomplished largely because of the strong connections between the reader and text." Morrison is "toying with reality," for one of Jeffery's interview respondents, or merely, "showing us how clever he is." Jeffery, "Posthuman Body," 235-236.

²⁹⁶ Kirby categorises texts operating in occultural practices in five ways: as catalyst, ideal type, reality, practice and proof. "Occulture is generally framed as deviant and incorporates an eclectic array of practices and beliefs, including various forms of magic, paganisms, occultism, environmentalism, divination, radical politics and elements of mystical traditions. [...] Within occulture, non-normative locales for experiencing the numinous and exploring the intangible abound, as is evidenced by both idiosyncratic individual practice, and the formation of communities of interest around such beliefs." Danielle Lee Kirby, "Between Synchronism and Paganism: Tracing some metaphysical uses of popular fictions," *Culture and Religion* 14, no. 4 (2013): 396-410, 396-397.

The Invisibles was Morrison's most overt pronouncement on chaos magick, a neo-religious subculture that developed in the post-industrial cityscapes of Thatcherite Britain during the 1970s and 80s.²⁹⁷ In Morrison's version of chaos magick, a malleable practice where improvisation is encouraged, the comic is presented as a tool of practice, "a site through which religious, spiritual or magical activity may take place."²⁹⁸ Within this schema Morrison pronounced *The Invisibles* a "hypersigil," a sigil being a simple hand-made drawing utilised within a chaos magick ritual.²⁹⁹ In chaos magick, experiencing orgasm while visualising a sigil is one option for activating the spell, whose aim is the fulfilment of an achievable wish or desire.³⁰⁰ As a hypersigil, the comic was, in Morrison's cosmology, a development of the concept beyond the static image to incorporate spatio-temporal elements such as characterisation, drama, and plot,³⁰¹ a "shamanic fiction," or radical enchantment of the mundane, activated by the alliance between author and reader.³⁰² The basic premise remained the same as the simple sigil however: to magickally effect some change in the circumstances of the participant.³⁰³

²⁹⁷ Chaos magick foregrounds sex magick, anarchy, psychedelia and popular culture. Another notable practitioner being comic writer Alan Moore, who with Morrison and others, was part of the initial wave of British comics auteurs taken up in mainstream US comics. An example of Moore's chaos magick in practice is his articulation of the comic book's word/image communication system as 'spelling', a combination of symbols that brings about a change in consciousness both in occult and grammatological terms. In this schema the comic can be viewed as a grimoire, a textbook of spells.

²⁹⁸ Kirby, "Synchronism and Paganism," 405. The historian Carole Cusack views chaos magick in parallel with Discordianism, a parody religion developed in the late 1950s and 60s in California, where the role of play and narrative common to forming all religions is deliberately exposed. Although Discordianism began as a prank, it later achieved a degree of seriousness as method for living, a similarity to Zen, having no deities, but being a "way." Carole M. Cusack, "Play, narrative and the creation of religion: Extending the theoretical base of 'invented religions'," *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14, no. 4 (2013): 362-377. Humour, in the form of post-modern irony and self-mockery, is therefore a defining characteristic of chaos magick. A process through which a parody can become a serious work is through the gradual accretion of complexity, Dave Sim's self-published obsessional saga *Cerebus the Aardvark* (1977 – 2004) being an example from alternative comics.

²⁹⁹ The creation of a sigil is, "the first and one of the most effective of all the weapons in the arsenal of any modern magician." Phil Hine, *Oven-ready Chaos*, version 1.3 1992-1997, downloadable pdf. <https://www.chaosmatrix.org/library/chaos/texts/orchaos.html>.

³⁰⁰ Hine, *Oven-ready Chaos*, 31-34.

³⁰¹ Grant Morrison, "Pop Magic!" in *Book of Lies: The Disinformation Guide to Magick and the Occult*, ed. Richard Metzger, 16-25 (San Francisco: Disinformation Books, 2014): 21.

³⁰² "THE INVISIBLES is a spell. It's not just a comic book. Things happen around it and to the people that absorb it. [...] Follow the instructions, you'll see." Grant Morrison, *The Invisibles*, Volume 3, issue 12 (New York: Vertigo, 2000), 23.

³⁰³ "*Illuminatus!* [Robert Anton Wilson's Discordian novel trilogy] was obviously a direct influence on *The Invisibles*. That's the kind of work I wanted to do for my own generation because *Illuminatus!* kind of came out of the West Coast Boomer hippie culture of the late '60s', '70s, I wanted to do something that could be a bible for the philosophies and experiences of educated working class punks like myself and then, going into the '90s it absorbed the influence of rave and dance culture, and tapped into all that Mondo 2000, Terrence McKenna, Cyberia stuff that was happening. It also became a fictionalized diary of my travels and magical experiments at the time." Grant Morrison, "Grant Morrison interview: 'Laughter can banish any and all demons'," *boingboing* (website), online interview, 17 April 2017, https://boingboing.net/2017/04/17/_trashed-10.html.

The communication channels instantiated between readers, fans and producers are the feature of comics that potentialise this form of magical thinking. Using the letters page and on-line fan platforms Morrison implicated his readers as a necessary component of the success or potency of the comic book assemblage as hypersigil; in turn, for the comics scholar Scott Jeffery, Morrison's comics became participatory events for readers.³⁰⁴ An instance from *The Invisibles* illustrates this gaming of a fanbase as an occultural group. Through the letters page Morrison called on fans to use a pre-prepared sigil to urge the continuation of the series during a period of financial insecurity. The sigils were to be activated in a synchronised ritual masturbation timed for 25 November 1995, the setting of which would be at each participant's private discretion.³⁰⁵ Although the actual level of participation is open to speculation,³⁰⁶ it is the event as a concept that is of interest here rather than its efficacy, as it exposes a comic maker's desire to link the disseminated bodies of their fanbase through a shared sensory experience, to create a community of readers.³⁰⁷

The sigil event revealed the author's conception of the community of readers as made in his own image. Although gender is not referred to in the initial proposal, the call to self-pleasure in the aid of the author can be read as a male homosocial exercise. This assumption aligns with the assumed maleness of the comics readership embodied by the centrality of the Morrison avatar King Mob.³⁰⁸ The extended family of Invisibles are a disparate grouping that suggested a new diversity being brought to mainstream comics at the time of publishing. However, although heterogeneous identities are represented and their characters are developed through the series, they are simultaneously inscribed as other by the central positioning of Mob. *The Invisibles* may have black and queer characters, but the Invisibles cell, and the narrative, pivots around a heterosexual white

³⁰⁴ Jeffery, "Posthuman Body," 235.

³⁰⁵ In the post on the letters page, Morrison adopts a tone of sincerity and transparent explanation, "...this is a simple functioning piece of psychic technology which everyone deserves access to." Grant Morrison (writer), *The Invisibles*, Volume 1, issue 16 (New York: Vertigo, 1995), 25.

³⁰⁶ Grant Morrison, interview by Brother Yawn, "Interview with an Umpire," *Barbelith* (website), 2 September 2002, https://web.archive.org/web/20040419180717/http://www.barbelith.com:80/old/interviews/interview_1.shtml. The event, later dubbed *The Wankathon*, is dismissible to an extent as marketing hype, especially as the second section of Morrison's letters page plea was a more straightforward request for the reader to tell their friends and associates to buy the comic. However, in a magical schema, the marketing hype is as much part of the world-building as the artwork.

³⁰⁷ Scott Jeffery posits this reader-creator activity as a "reading-assemblage," a conceptualisation of readers, texts and producers within a Deleuze-Guattarian framework; as a rhizome, a "Body without Organs," or a "machine;" that is, a whole that is not irreducible to, or is independent of, its constituent parts. The comic book is "not truly itself" in this instance, until it is put to use by readers, fans and consumers. The reader is then, "forming an assemblage with the story in order to become other," in a deterritorialisation of the comic book. Jeffery, "Posthuman Body," 61; 216-221.

³⁰⁸ In the final issue Morrison recaps on the episode, thanking the participants, establishing *The Invisibles* as an autobiographical exercise and ending on the humorous, but male homosocial line, "I've shown you mine. Now show me yours." Grant Morrison (writer), *The Invisibles*, Volume 3, issue 12 (New York: Vertigo, 2000), 23.

male and his similarly codified apprentice.³⁰⁹ A colonial gaze is risked in this arrangement, albeit cloaked in countercultural motifs, where a collection of ‘exotics’, marginalised subjects tuned into 1990s identity politics, re-instate through their difference the central white male hero.³¹⁰

Buck-Morss’s modern human is made both powerful and vulnerable by technology. In this application, the repeated establishment of the white male body in *The Invisibles* is a protective shielding from the phantasmagoric mass-media environment where overwhelming images and sensory experiences threaten the subject. The physical body became an armour against fragmentation and pain in Buck-Morss’s reading of Benjamin, where it was pictured as a sharp-angled mechanism and viewed from a detached vantage point, a “second-consciousness.” Numbed from feeling (Buck-Morss points out that narcissism has the same root as narcotic), the subject narcissistically identifies with his own image, identified as a bodily unity and as the ‘form’ of the ego, in a way that conceals its own lack, the difference between the ideal image and the experience of the fragmented body.³¹¹ Denied fragmentation, the body is represented as an ornamental surface, “as if reflected off the inside of technology’s protective shield.”³¹²

In this schema King Mob and his apprentice signal *The Invisibles* as the site of the narcissistic mirror that confirms the unity of the author and reader. In the issue immediately after the invitation to ritual masturbation, and in one of the many representations of violence to the body, Mob is pictured full-page as a cyborg-like unit, enduring his pain seemingly through the very intactness of his white male body (Figure 21).³¹³ Like modern man Mob has castrated himself, both revealed and concealed by the inking of the illustration, to become the phallus,³¹⁴ a recurring myth of auto-genesis that is figured unwittingly in comics from *The Adventures of Tintin* to *The Selfish Dream*.

³⁰⁹ The character Lord Fanny is a Brazilian transvestite and Boy is a black NYPD cop who initially appears as gender ambiguous but is confirmed as female later in the series. However, the heterosexual coupling of the male Invisibles with the available females is the central union that takes place throughout volume two, evidence that the publishers’ desired target audience was still the young male heterosexual demographic and that appealing to the male gaze through the eroticised comic was a strategy for maintaining and increasing that readership.

³¹⁰ The representation of diversity and references to pop culture/music in *The Invisibles* reflect the earlier UK comic *Deadline* (1988 – 1995) and its imitators, including 2000AD spinoffs *Crisis* (1988 – 1991) and *Revolver* (1990 – 1991) which partly responded to the homogeneity reflected in the white male UK “invasion” of the 1980s. The struggle with diversity in US mainstream comics continues at the time of this writing (for instance, “Marvel executive says emphasis on diversity may have alienated readers” <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/apr/03/marvel-executive-says-emphasis-on-diversity-may-have-alienated-readers>).

³¹¹ Walter Benjamin’s concluding remarks in the “Work of Art” essay concern, “the crisis in cognitive experience caused by the alienation of the senses that makes it possible for humanity to view its own destruction with enjoyment.” Buck-Morss, “Anaesthetics,” 37.

³¹² Buck-Morss, 33.

³¹³ Grant Morrison (writer), *The Invisibles*, Volume 1, issue 17 (New York: Vertigo, 1996), 4.

³¹⁴ Buck-Morss, “Anaesthetics,” 9.

The armour against fear and fragmentation attributed to the comic book illustration here, can be considered as co-determinate with the projection of the writer onto his readership that takes place in participatory exercises such as the ritual masturbation.

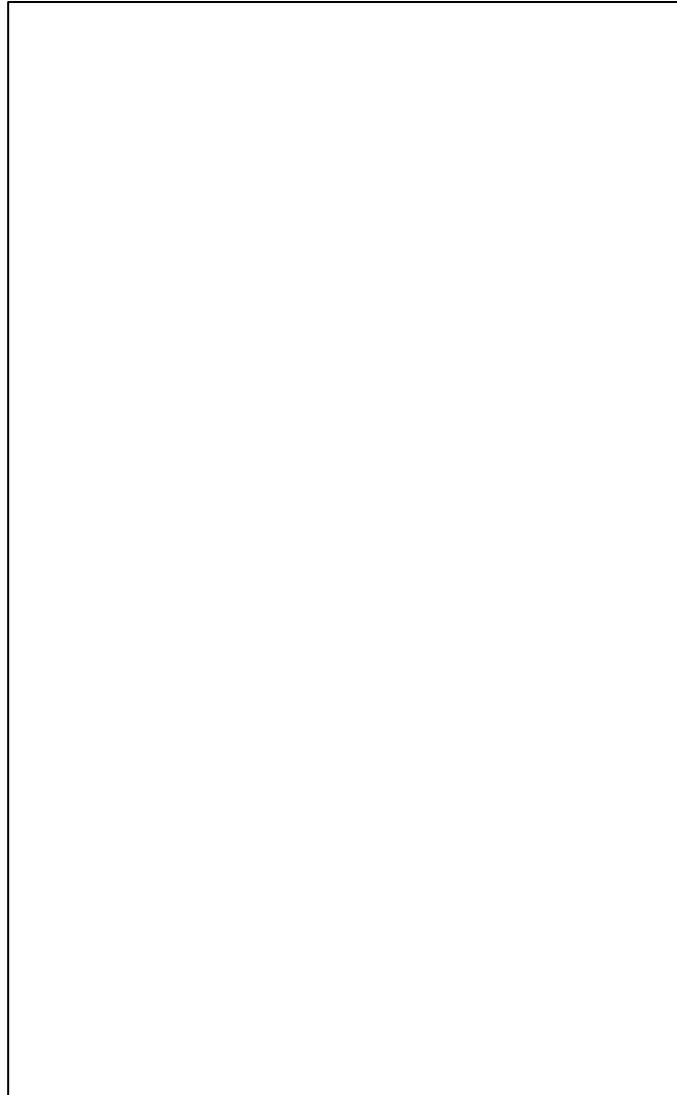


Figure 21. Grant Morrison (writer), Phil Jemenez (Penciller) and John Stokes (Inker), *Untitled* comic book panel (cropped from original layout), 1996, published in *The Invisibles*, volume 1, issue 17, 1996, p.4.

2.2.2 || **Narcissistic *Hypercrisis***

When illustration is used as a catalyst to participation and the reader is involved in the development of an aesthetic work, a question is raised as to what politics emerge. In developing this, I begin on an instance of internet conversation where Morrison fans created a new theorisation of his work. Although the example I cite is arguably benign, the mode of communication pre-figures how a

narcissistic aspect of comic book illustration, unchained by the global dynamics of internet dissemination from the private space of the comic book and localised venues such as comic stores and conventions, can be mobilised for fascist political exploitation.

The custom of publishing and responding to readers' letters began with 1930s US science fiction magazines printing fan correspondence with return addresses, allowing readers and creators to communicate directly. Many fan-driven developments have their roots in the letters page and the format became an integral element of comics culture. Here, the author's personal fantasy world became a shared imaginary that was developed and extended through communication between originator and reader to form what comics scholar Ian Gordon describes as 'discursive communities'.³¹⁵ Works such as *The Invisibles* were published at a time of overlap between these traditional means of communication and the acceleration of intra-community dialogue and opening of fan culture to global audiences made possible by the internet.³¹⁶ These works linked the digital-consuming world with a comics corporeality and presaged the emergence of what the media theorist Henry Jenkins terms a convergence culture, which includes the de-centring of the popular artwork and rise of satellite fan activities in what was to become a complex inter-relationship between fandom and commerce.³¹⁷

The online fan forum is an influential communication channel within convergence culture. 4chan is one of these, an American imageboard website launched in 2003 in the model of Japanese anime and manga online forums. Imageboards are geared towards pictures more than text, contributors are unregistered, and individual threads are deleted if updates are not regularly posted. The pictorial

³¹⁵ Ian Gordon, "Writing to Superman: Towards an understanding of the social networks of comic-book fans," *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 9, no. 2 (November 2012): 121. For instance, fan communication was a key aspect of developing an intimacy with the readership of Gilbert, Jaime and Mario Hernandez's *Love & Rockets*. At an early stage reader feedback and comment became part of the material of the comic itself, mediated in this case with editorial comment from Gary Groth. Marc Sobel and Kristy Valenti, eds., *The Love and Rockets Companion: 30 Years (and counting)*, Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 2013. Scott Jeffery posits this reader-creator activity as a "reading-assemblage," and allies it with Gilles Deleuze's use of the "Body without Organs." The comic book is "not truly itself" in this instance, until it is put to use by readers, who, form, "an assemblage with the story in order to become other." Jeffery, "Posthuman Body," 216-221.

³¹⁶ For instance, the Barbelith website, named after a sentient satellite in *The Invisibles*, published interviews, weblinks to additional research on obscure references, and a forum for reader conversation. Scott, "No Guru," 2.

³¹⁷ "[W]here old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways." Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, (London: New York University Press, 2008), 2. In terms of comics, this is an expanding of the field onto multiple platforms rather than the replacement of one form with another. For the geographer Gillian Rose, Jenkins, "argues that convergence culture is precisely one in which 'audiences' move between these different things," referring to experiences of products, in for instance, *YouTube*, fan clubs and magazines. Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials* (London: SAGE, 2012), 293.

communication, circumstances of anonymity and fleeting nature of individual threads within imageboards such as 4chan fomented a polemical and throwaway internet rhetoric that later migrated to social media. Within the comics imageboard, discussion has the playfulness of a game, where fans and trolls can adventure and compete in a fantasy world where knowing the narrative system of the work under analysis is the key to success. Participating in such a game-like conversation however, the geek-assemblage can become over obsessed with continuity, complexity and obscurity.³¹⁸

The comics scholar Timothy Bavluka details a series of 4chan threads that discuss Morrison's extensive work on mainstream superhero characters in DC Comics. Occurring over several evenings beginning in November 2009 on the comics and cartoons, "/co/," subgroup, fans of the DC Comics Universe (DCU)³¹⁹ contributed their ideas about overarching plotlines and interconnecting story-arcs to develop a comics conspiracy theory which they named *Hypercrisis* after an earlier unpublished proposal by Morrison.³²⁰ Initially the focus of the threads was on an unravelling of the fabula from the chaotic syuzhet of the DCU to evidence a master script underwriting Morrison's script-writing (figure 22). Contributors then connected ever more obscure references culled from decades of comics publishing to build a theory that the author's metafictional output for the DCU implicated the publisher itself as a scheming enemy of the reader.³²¹ In this framework, it was proposed that Morrison was subverting an industry manoeuvre from within the comic book narrative, infiltrating the corporation to fight against injustices done to

³¹⁸ Jeffery, "Posthuman Body," 228.

³¹⁹ The "DC Universe" describes the entire narrative content of the publisher including plotlines, story-arcs and character development. Morrison continued to work on mainstream comic lines during and after *The Invisibles*, specialising in reworking classic superhero narratives in the gloomier, existential mode initiated by *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986). Morrison re-invigorated the plotlines of star characters, such as Batman and Superman, with the chaos magick inspired complexity and self-referentiality of *The Invisibles*. His work on *Final Crisis* (2007) was the third iteration of an extended continuity re-alignment DC had begun with the unifying series *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (1985 – 86) and *Infinite Crisis* (2005/6). These were crossover series (incorporating characters from different titles) that restructured background myths so that story-arcs could regain continuity after decades of wandering narratives and backstories. It was also part of the continued re-orientation of the mainstream superhero comic toward older audiences. The commission to develop the 2007 update allowed Morrison to develop ideas he had originally pitched to DC in 2003 as a series called *Hypercrisis*.

³²⁰ To Bavluka it is the visual nature of the comic that allows this travel, "Unlike novels, where the diegesis is represented only by the text and the heteroglossic dialogism among author, text, and reader, comics allow the reader to see the world of the text and strengthen their participation with it. One can see the actions of a scene or emotions of a character rather than glean information from descriptive text. Comics provide another level of discourse open to interpretive actions. The reader is having a conversation not only with the language (the text), but also with the art, thus allowing for a stronger connection to the overall narrative." Bavluka, "/Co/operation and /co/mmunity," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 13 (2013): 2.6. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2013.0442>.

³²¹ "That's why ALL the meta-text comments about parasitism, the leeching of vitality from the universe, the condemnation of definitive stories, or writers who ruin characters in order to make a reputation for themselves... 'No, you're supposed to be custodians of this universe, and not only are you hurting it, you KNOW you're hurting it'." *Hypercrisis* thread post (Anonymous 12/01/09(Tue)07:06 No.13066914).

loyal readers by the commercially-driven destruction of beloved characters and storylines.³²² This perception of Morrison as an über-fan leading a rebellion against an evil management held a parallel with the fictional Invisibles underground movement which, like its influences, presented an anarchic a-typical kinship as anti-authoritarianism itself.³²³

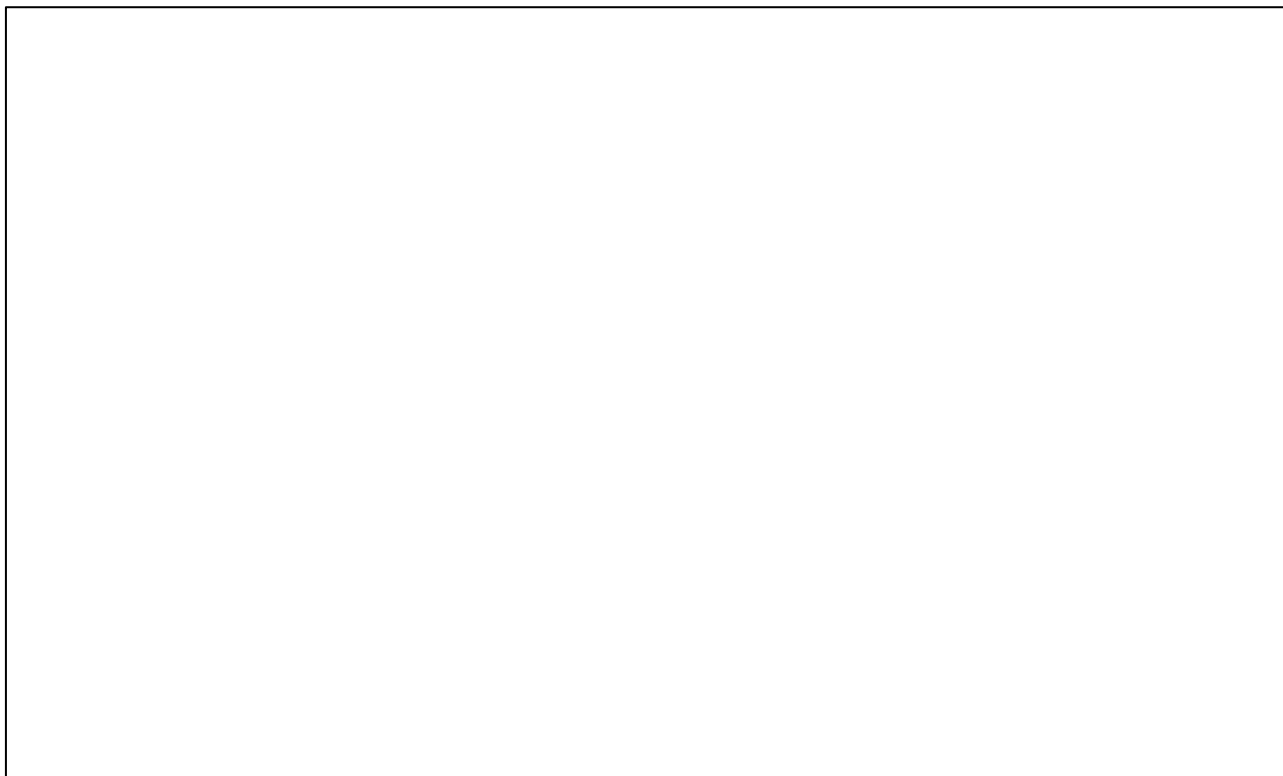


Figure 22. Anonymous, untitled fan diagrams submitted to *Hypercrisis* threads, published on 13 March 2010 (left) and 15 March 2010 (right), published on <http://boards.4channel.org/co/>.

The *Hypercrisis* moment can be viewed as a more egalitarian model of participation than Morrison's ritual masturbation exercise, mediated through the instantaneity of the "/co/" sub-group, whose imageboard anonymity was conducive, for Bavlnka, to building relationships outside of the traditional fan spaces.³²⁴ However, the male-dominated online comic fan community and its

³²² "[Morrison] creates characters or elements which are symbols for something he wants to change, and then does something to them in a story, like a voodoo doll. In Final Crisis, one of his goals was move DC away from events based on death and killing new characters for shock value. (That's a diminishing-returns way to juice sales, eventually it stops working.) So he created "Mandrakk," a giant vampire which was wucking away the lifeblood of the DC universe, which the Monitors (who are DC's writers and editors) were in denial of. He then has Superman spear this vampire through the heart while giving it a lecture about why comic book adventures should not be defined by such parasitic practices." *Hypercrisis* thread post (Anonymous 03/14/10(Sun)03:01 No.15233239)

³²³ Fans aware of chaos magick and the concept of the hypersigil imagined the *Hypercrisis* as an attempt to bring the DCU to life, which could now be read as a supersigil. "Superman uses a Super-Reality Suit to jump up several levels-- BEYOND the real world-- and fight a [original text missing] who is parasitically attacking the DCU in the real world through its writers and editors." *Hypercrisis* thread post (Anonymous 12/01/09(Tue)07:06 No.13066914).

³²⁴ These include the comic book store and conventions where pecking orders, intra community hierarchizing, and

relatively benign conspiracy theorisations such as the *Hypercrisis* conversation, fed into a wider online culture that holds a political precariousness.³²⁵ For Suzanne Scott, the internet-facilitated shift of fan media from hidden to mainstream precipitated a defensiveness in terms of the male membership of the comics subculture.³²⁶ This defensiveness reflected a wider antagonism that echoed and amplified across 4chan as it expanded to include several message boards where, over the early 2010s, a rhetoric of misogyny and right-wing ideology flourished.³²⁷

The structure and user base of the fan forum, an internet phenomenon that is intertwined with comics fandom, subsequently became subject to mobilisation by the alt-right movement in the US prior to the 2016 Trump presidential campaign. Here the susceptibility to fascist politics of the disaffected and conspiracy-prone mindset was epitomised by the mobilisation of the Pepe the frog comic book character. The character originated in cartoonist Matt Furie's self-published comic book web-zine *Boys Club* (2005), where, as one of a homosocial group of anthropomorphised animals, he represented a fraternal millennial slacker culture composed of toilet humour and studied indifference. Images of Pepe were shared on bulletin boards and early social media, and 4chan's most popular 'random' postings "/b/" board became the official 'home' for the character by 2008. In an example of the convergence of fan culture with the mainstream, social media proliferation and celebrity re-postings popularised variations of the meme across the internet until 2015, the year when its use by the Trump campaign precipitated an appropriation by the alt-right movement. The evolution of Pepe then culminated in its addition to the Anti-defamation League's database of hate symbols.

discrimination between fans can take place. "4chan's anonymous message board becomes a place for fandom to exist and flourish without needing to legitimize identity in order to have a sense of belonging." Bavluka, "/Co/operation and /co/mmunity," 1.7.

³²⁵ For cultural studies scholar Kevin Robins, "Cyberspace, with its myriad of little consensual communities, is a place where you would go in order to find confirmation and endorsement of your identity. [...] Encounters with others should not be about confirmation but about transformation." Cited in Neala Schleuning, *ARTPOLITIK: Social Anarchist Aesthetics in an Age of Fragmentation* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 217-218. For the culture theorist Mark Fisher, "blogs can generate new discourse networks that have no correlate outside cyberspace." But, "the interpassive simulation of participation in postmodern media, the network narcissism of MySpace and Facebook, has, in the main, generated content that is repetitive, parasitic and conformist." Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 75.

³²⁶ The vicious protection of subculture, which as Suzanne Scott attests, through McRobbie and Garber, has traditionally been articulated as a male space by participants and culture studies scholars. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, "Girls and Subcultures: An Exploration" in *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, eds. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (New York: Routledge, 1993) 209–21. Cited in Scott, "Fangirls in refrigerators," 3.3. In their responses to sexism through online media, female fan interventions (in costume at Comicons, on social media postings and through self-publishing) create a larger discursive narrative about comics. Scott, "Fangirls," 3.3.

³²⁷ Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: How internet subcultures are conquering the mainstream, from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the alt-right* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2017); Mike Wendling, *Alt-Right: From 4chan to the White House* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).



Figure 23. Fibonacci Blue (photo credit), *Donald Trump alt-right supporter. St. Paul, Minnesota, 4 March 2017.*

In a mirror of the ideological drift of 4chan, the character had mutated from signifying a stance of, “own your loserdom,” in the original comic to a hate symbol, albeit in the form of a shibboleth (Figure 23). Although the mass proliferation of Pepe that led to its political appropriation occurred largely outside of comic fan communities, that a comic character became a representative for the disenfranchised white male can be argued is part of the embodiment within the character of comics themselves as a disenfranchised social agent linked, at least in the US and Europe, to an adolescent white male subjectivity.³²⁸ It follows that the seeds of the appropriation of comic illustration by the right were sown in the imageboard culture which itself reflected traits of misogyny and exclusivity within mainstream US comics readerships.³²⁹

Rather than bringing something new to light, the philosopher Martin Heidegger in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1935-37), proposed that the true work of art revealed something already inherent in nature, one which linked to a condition of a distinct people or nation.³³⁰ Within J. Hillis Miller’s

³²⁸ Jeffery, “Posthuman Body,” 227.

³²⁹ Scott, “Fangirls in refrigerators.”

³³⁰ For Hillis Miller the Nazi party mobilised this conception of art as, “authentic only if it is the founding of the people,” by forcefully moulding the *volk* to their model of the inherent truth. Miller, *Illustration*, 85.

discussion of illustration this formulation left open two options, that if art reveals the essence of history, then politics based on that have authenticity, but if art does not reveal the essence, then the politics are inauthentic. Art that purports to reveal a truth about history is fascistic, for in fascism, if a light is already there, then following its path can be justified politically. In Miller's reading therefore, to denounce fascism is to believe that art does not reveal an inherent quality of history. Heidegger's claim then that art, as with Being, stems from the fundamental state of a people, brings into existence a paradox that is demonstrated by the contemporary condition of art as no longer the individual language of a particular community but a response to the urgencies of globalisation and new technology. For Miller this inaugural agency, where something new is brought to light, presents an ideological opposite to the inherency proposed by Heidegger.³³¹

4chan fans expanded on the conspiracy narratives of the comic book and recast them in the image of their fears, seeking the same stability of the unitary image in the structure of the superhero narrative, where the complexity of interconnecting story-arcs suggested an underlying truth that is inherent but hidden. In parallel, the ironic, or 'knowing' stance of Pepe was mobilised as a fascistic mode of address by the dynamic of revealing through obscuring. Fan theories, wherein the complex narratives of superhero comics suggest a hidden knowledge communicable only to the enlightened, and self-published fan works such as Furie's *Boys Club* which reinforce community identity through a humorous but narcissistic self-imaging, both reflect a defensive consumer response to mainstream culture.

In Susan Buck-Morss's reading of Benjamin, narcissism, as, "an anaesthetising tactic against the shock of modern experience," that is appealed to by the, "image-phantasmagoria of mass media," is the substrate from which fascism can grow.³³² In shutting out the traumatising experience of industrialisation and mass culture, the eye, for Benjamin, "perceives an experience of a complementary nature, in the form of its spontaneous after-image." Fascism is that after-image for Buck-Morss, a reflecting mirror within which we recognise ourselves. The possibility of Pepe's ironic, detached appearance as an icon of imageboard disaffection provided a narcissistic image to the alt-right for those who considered themselves an authentic but marginalised community.³³³

³³¹ Thus, for Hillis Miller, *The Origin of The Work of Art* is a *Holzweg*, a woodcutter's path that leads nowhere. Miller, *Illustration*, 86.

³³² Buck-Morss, "Anaesthetics," 41.

³³³ Buck Morss addresses fascism in two modes, as an artistic enterprise in which the people are both spectators and participants, where the ornamentation of the spectacle anaesthetises the spectator against the political purpose; and as the political leader as an embodiment of the people, a narcissistic mirror reflecting the intact ego (38).

This left the Pepe memes open to suggestion that an occultation was taking place that in turn implied the presence of a truth awaiting enunciation. If the comic illustration is to be non-fascistic, following Hillis Miller's analysis of Heidegger, it would have to reveal only its own inability to reveal the truth.³³⁴ However within illustration, again for Hillis Miller, both the occulted and the apparent reside, capturing the political ambiguity created by Heidegger's formulation over whether the work makes light or unveils light. Under this gaze, the alt-right phase of the Pepe meme can be perceived as an exploitation of its combination of illustrational ambiguity and imageboard narratology toward projecting the image as a mirror of a disaffected *volk* who were prevented from speaking their 'truth'.³³⁵

2.2.3 || Yaoi dōjinshi

Although the social effects can still be ambiguous, the political co-option of fan practice can be evaded by keeping central the physical material of the comic and the practice of drawing. Yaoi dōjinshi are amateur self-published manga fan fiction which appropriate male characters from across media types and re-formulate them in homoerotic pornographic scenarios for a primarily female audience (Figure 24, p.109).³³⁶ The movement arose in Japan during the 1970s within a broader youth reaction to the dominant culture and is another fan phenomenon where a commercial text is appropriated toward the construction of a community of readers.³³⁷ However, I consider that yaoi dōjinshi presents a contrast to superhero fan works such as the *Hypercrisis* which risk fascist appropriation and uncritically re-iterate the myth of the male shaman auteur.

³³⁴ Miller, *Illustration*, 85; 150.

³³⁵ The right capitalised on comic fan culture's humorous, ironic and satirical mode. For instance, "Kek," Furie's parody religion created for Pepe also became an alt-right symbol. This has a heritage in online fan culture where the Discordian term *fnord* circulated as a reference to disinformation distributed by a global conspiracy. Carole M. Cusack, "Discordian Magic: Paganism, the Chaos Paradigm and the Power of Imagination," *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 2, no. 1 (2011): 125-145.

³³⁶ Media scholar John Fiske has noted that mass-produced objects, or industrially produced texts, do not have the status of an artwork, their problematic and uncompleted characteristics make them open and provocative for "productive reworking, rewriting, completing and to participation." John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 30-49.

³³⁷ Chronologically similar to the anti-establishment strain of UK comics within which Morrison had his beginnings. A parallel can also be drawn with the US "/" (slash) fiction movement, which, like dōjinshi, emerged in the 1970s as a grassroots amateur literature that appropriates mainstream characters and presents sexual exchanges outside of heteronormativity. Sharon Kinsella. "Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: Otaku and the Amateur Manga Movement." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 301. Fans had been, "raid[ing] mass culture, claiming its materials for their own use, reworking them as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions," in relative obscurity for sixty years prior to the internet. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 162.

Sharon Kinsella, a scholar of Japanese visual culture, originates the strain of manga within a rebellious youth subculture whose individualism in post war Japan expressed a, “wilful immaturity or childishness.”³³⁸ By the 1970s manga reading formed part of the rebellion against adult society, the medium closely related by authorities to the immaturity and escapism of youth and critiqued by the intellectual left as a reactionary retreat from social issues toward petty personal themes.³³⁹ The texts of interest to the producers discussed here are ‘yaoi’ comics which originated with a group of female manga artists working in the early 1970s known collectively as Nijūyo-nen Gumi. This group radically developed shojo, a romance genre of commercial manga itself aimed at a female readership, by introducing philosophical and sexual narratives, a primary innovation being their rejection of the usual heterosexual couplings in favour of depicting love between boys. In the mid-1970s younger readers of the group’s work, mostly working-class women, created dōjinshi, amateur fan comics, which further evolved yaoi by appropriating characters from manga and animation tropes outside the genre and developing them as a form of parodic illustrated pornography. The resultant grassroots manga continues to be produced in what Kinsella describes as an ongoing exploration of desire and circumnavigation of the male gaze.³⁴⁰

In its first decade yaoi dōjinshi was largely produced by and for young women that would not have had the access, motivation or wherewithal to participate in higher education. The producers and readership have since become more varied,³⁴¹ but dōjinshi remain a grassroots movement in Japan, developed and still largely produced by and for marginalised young women. The subculture can be viewed as a phenomenon of an industrialised society that has restricted women’s agency, “where the progress of women has lagged behind other industrial nations,”³⁴² and where difficulties of relating to the opposite sex and, “profound disjuncture between experiences of men and women,” are

³³⁸ Sharon Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: Otaku and the Amateur Manga Movement.” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 291.

³³⁹ In the 1970s rebellious students considered their reading of children’s manga as a risqué and underground rejection of the classics. Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture,” 314.

³⁴⁰ Kinsella, 289. The extended definition is necessary as both yaoi and dōjinshi have been used interchangeably, and yaoi can be used more broadly, especially in the west, to denote all manga aimed at women. The inter-relatedness and interchangeability of definitions is indicative of the revolving relationship between commercial and fanwork in manga culture, each influencing the other and artists moving from one framework to the next. Professional manga artists can make dōjinshi and dōjinshi amateurs become professionals, as a result dōjinshi can appear to a professional standard.

³⁴¹ That is, affected by factors including: a cyclical relationship with mainstream comics; increasing interest from the west from the late 1980s onwards; and increased scrutiny by academics and authorities, since girl’s manga reached huge volumes in the early 1990s.

³⁴² Neil Steinberg, “The new science of cute,” *The Guardian*, 19 July 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/19/kumamon-the-new-science-of-cute>.

epitomised by mainstream pornographic comics which express both male fixation and resentment toward women.³⁴³

Yaoi dōjinshi are bound up with the dominant culture's representative regimes and, being a youth subculture, redefine, "the dominant meaning to suit their own purpose."³⁴⁴ For scholars, appropriation is key to this redefinition. Although Kinsella focuses on the parodic element of appropriation as the site of struggle and subversion of the dominant culture,³⁴⁵ for the manga theorist Yu Ishikawa the narrowing of distance between source and fan work is the most important result of the appropriation, one achieved by iterative production processes and collective authorship.³⁴⁶ This begins with the physical activity of drawing, where, in concurrence with Suzanne Scott's attribution to US fan re-drawing as 'active',³⁴⁷ the passive interpretation of the consumer leads to action through the act of re-drawing.

This process transforms readers to authors. For Ishikawa, fans filled the gaps between works of mass culture that were uncompleted, becoming excessive readers.³⁴⁸ The egotistical sense of satisfaction that fan artist turned professional Yun Kōga derives from drawing is evidence for Ishikawa that, "the objective of Yaoi fanwork seems to be the assimilation of the source text rather than 'repetition with critical distance'."³⁴⁹ In adapting the homosocial stories of mainstream yaoi to the homoerotic, the original's authorship and canonicity are subverted, the marginalised viewpoint of the female reader multiplying the potential for undermining the dominant meaning system.³⁵⁰

³⁴³ These include widely available pornographic comics, the paedophilic 'lolicon' genre being a notorious example. The gaze in these mainstream comics is both passive and aggressive, concerning fear and desire. The desire to infantilise, restrict and subordinate represents an awareness of, and a reaction to, new female empowerment. Kinsella, "Japanese Subculture," 305-306.

³⁴⁴ Yu Ishikawa, "Yaoi as Fanwork: Cultural Appropriation in Modern Japanese Culture," *Journal of Urban Culture Research* 1 (2010): 170. For the urban ethnographer Phil Cohen writing in the early development of the field, "The latent function of subculture is this – to express and resolve, albeit "magically", the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture..." Phil Cohen, "Sub-Cultural Conflict and Working Class Community," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies*, no. 2 (Spring 1972). Quoted in: John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures and Class," in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., 9-74 (London: Routledge, 1989) <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781134858170>.

³⁴⁵ Kinsella, "Japanese Subculture," 301-303. The terms originate in Japanese martial arts, the attacker or penetrator being *seme* and *uke* the receiver which has been appropriated in Japanese gay slang for the receiving sexual partner. Yaoi in turn uses these terms to distinguish the dynamic between the two protagonists within their *kappuringu* (coupling).

³⁴⁶ Ishikawa, "Yaoi as Fanwork," 175. This denies the distance between creator and reader and therefore the subordinate position the audience is placed in. Fiske, "Cultural Economy," 40.

³⁴⁷ Scott, "Fangirls in refrigerators," 0.1.

³⁴⁸ Ishikawa, "Yaoi as Fanwork," 175.

³⁴⁹ Ishikawa, 174.

³⁵⁰ That much of the appropriated material is specifically aimed at young male markets underscores Ishikawa's position that female fans are subverting the dominant system from the viewpoint of the marginalized reader. Ishikawa, 174.

The fan community, “collectively and constantly produce their own ideal versions of the story of two male characters,” evolving, “the preferred meaning of the source text,” through refinement, adaptation and manipulation. For Ishikawa it is this combination of repetitive and communal process that results in, “the subversion of the distance between the canon and the derivative text,”³⁵¹ that is: yaoi fandom relativises the source text to only one of many variations.³⁵²

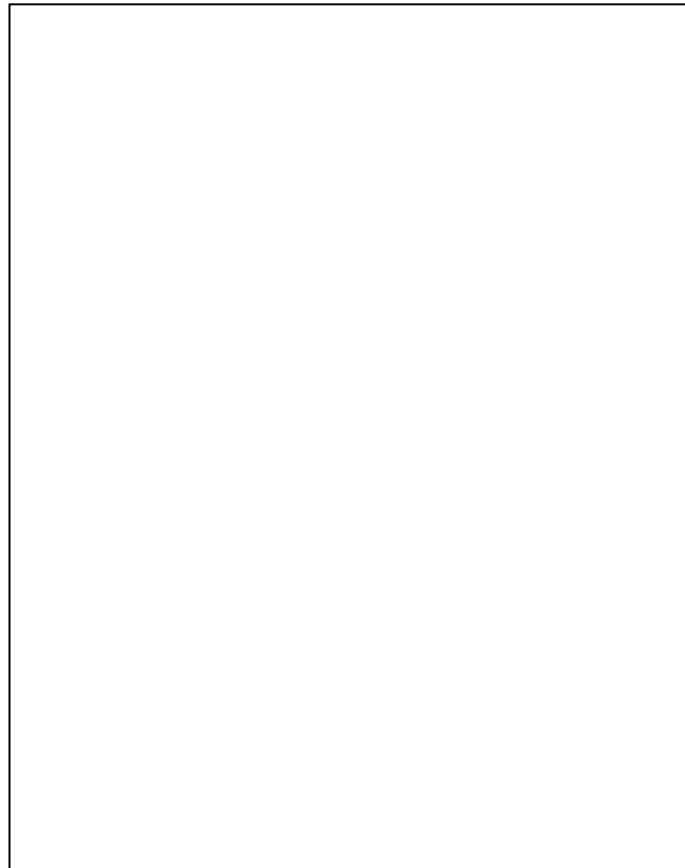


Figure 24. Author unknown, *Untitled* dōjinshi manga panel (cropped from original layout), circa 2010, digital drawing.

³⁵¹ “these multiple authors collectively refer to both the source text and fan texts as many variations in Yaoi fandom.” Ishikawa, 174.

³⁵² Olga Michael’s definition of pastiche as a, “process of repetition and resignification,” is closer to Ishikawa’s stance than Kinsella’s, “parody.” Michael deployed the term in relation to autobiographical women’s graphic novels (including Bechdel’s *Fun Home* and the works of Phoebe Gloeckner) but its “deconstruct[ion] [of] the division between the original and the copy,” and, “denaturalis[ation] [of the] subject formations therein,” could equally apply to yaoi dōjinshi. Michael, “Women’s Graphic Memoirs,” 42.

The psychologist Anna Madill identifies trauma at the root of yaoi dōjinshi's, "inherent eroticism and catalysing of obsessive interest."³⁵³ The characters are like dolls, which in Kleinian object-relations are objects that upon evaluation reveal the psychic development of their producers.³⁵⁴ The couples depicted in yaoi dōjinshi, "are in their different ways wounded beings," persecuted and castrated through their homosexual behaviour.³⁵⁵ Here the characters, or 'objects', are redolent of a, "combined parent figure (sometimes conceptualised as the mother-with-a-penis) that is both loved and hated."³⁵⁶ The illustrations present, "the torments of depressive ambivalence in which hostility is felt towards a disappointing but also intensely needed and loved object."³⁵⁷

This repetition and re-traumatising are articulated as a working through of the depressive position, where a childhood conflict is not resolved but a degree of realism and urge toward reparation is present.³⁵⁸ For Kazumi Nagaïke, a scholar of Japanese popular culture, a pornographic textuality has been developed within this traumatised puppet show, one which emphasises a scopophilic orientation of female desire.³⁵⁹ Within the projective identification taking place, where the subject's anxiety and confusion is projected onto an external object, there lies a productive transformation of the participant's sexuality. Moreover, it is the specific form of narrative structure that clarifies the ideological and sexual possibilities.³⁶⁰ The perpetually re-occurring narrative is the fan's ideal coupling of two characters, who, figured as homosexual men, have both *uke* (receiver) and *seme* (giver) pleasures.³⁶¹ Synchronous multiple roles are made possible by the protagonists reversing the traditional *uke-seme* positions and this indeterminacy, a 'bisexuality', functions as an ideological escape from heteronormativity.

³⁵³ Madill applies Melanie Klein to extract the phantasy element, the unconscious aspect of the ego, from the fantasy, the pop cultural narrative. This is considered within a "matricentric" stance in contrast to a Lacanian stance where "female is equated with lack". Anna Madill, "Even better than the real thing: fantasy and phantasy in Boy's Love manga," in *Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Popular Fantasy: Beyond boy wizards and kick-ass chicks*, eds. Jude Roberts, Esther MacCallum-Stewart (London: Routledge, 2016): 69-75.

³⁵⁴ Concerning the simplicity of characterisation, Madill makes a parallel to Klein's articulation of ego as not located at a fixed point. Madill, citing psychologist Tamaki Saitō, "complexity is created in the way that 'a single personality is often divided among multiple characters'." Tamaki Saitō, *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, trans. J. Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Cited in Madill, "Boy's Love manga," 76.

³⁵⁵ Madill, "Boy's Love manga," 77.

³⁵⁶ Madill, 74.

³⁵⁷ Saitō. *Beautiful Fighting Girl*, 145. Cited in Madill, "Boy's Love manga," 77.

³⁵⁸ Madill, 75. Klein's depressive position supersedes the paranoid-schizoid position of the infant, where objects are attributed absolute qualities of 'good' or 'bad'. The development of the depressive position permits objects to be seen as 'whole', that is, capable of positive or negative effects on the individual.

³⁵⁹ Kazumi Nagaïke, "Perverse Sexualities, Perverse Desires: Representations of Female Fantasies and "Yaoi Manga" as Pornography Directed at Women," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 25 (2003): 76-103.

³⁶⁰ Nagaïke "Perverse Sexualities," 92.

³⁶¹ The terms derive from Japanese martial arts where *uke* is the defender and *seme* the attacker and have been adopted as descriptors of sexual positions in Japanese gay slang.

Yet commentators raise concerns as to whether yaoi *dōjinshi* liberates or perpetuates systemic restraints on young women. For Nagaike, the projective identification is a productive transformation of the participant's sexuality, for detractors it can be the illustrator attempting to kill off the abject, those aspects of their sexual desire that disgust them, toward social acceptance by the patriarchy. Within the highly formulaic narratives are repeat motifs such as rape, where the *seme* cannot control his love, which in Nagaike's analysis favours the narrative function, that is to "smoothly organise" the story toward a realisation that the two protagonists must be meant for each other, the depiction of male penetrated phallic body, "a signifier that challenges the solid ground of gender/sexuality construction."³⁶² This is "subversive enough," for Nagaike, to challenge presiding myths of female sexuality that include rape fantasy and masochism.

Madill points out however, that yaoi, "has similarly been critiqued as heteronormative in terms of its *uke-seme* formula mirroring heterosexual power differentials."³⁶³ The maleness of the characters is also under question, as Kinsella notes they appear as female but with male genitals, "favoured masculine qualities with favoured feminine qualities."³⁶⁴ In this reading, yaoi *dōjinshi* producers have located themselves within the opposite sex, within the contemporary cultural and political environment and the reigning cultural hegemony.³⁶⁵ Yaoi readers don't engage in a lesbian fantasy, they seek to transcend through identifying with the phallic power, which, in yaoi, appears to control, "all general principles of sexuality."³⁶⁶ The apparent need for a "phallic authority to deal with their eroticism," suggests a shoring up of the phallocentric and even a regression to a Freudian notion of penis envy.³⁶⁷ And in a further repetition of the hegemony, the scholar J. Keith Vincent believes the parody of homoerotic couplings, "eliminates queer identity altogether" and leaves issues of homosexuality unresolved.³⁶⁸

³⁶² Nagaike "Perverse Sexualities," 90-91.

³⁶³ Madill, "Boy's Love manga," 72.

³⁶⁴ Kinsella, "Japanese Subculture," 302.

³⁶⁵ In addition, parodying the status quo was not necessarily the motivation. In interviews of *dōjinshi* artists, Kinsella found many found parody simply "easier" as they didn't have to make up their own characters. Kinsella, 304.

³⁶⁶ Nagaike "Perverse Sexualities," 97.

³⁶⁷ But Nagaike posits that the anal sex is representative of the female reader's desire of both phallic and vaginal sexuality and is in effect also visualising possibilities beyond the essentialising of female sexuality. This a liberation for its producers, "the bisexual features of *yaoi* characters represent female desires for divergent sexualities, through challenging the binarised sexual exploration as the masculine female." Nagaike, 90-91.

³⁶⁸ Nagaike, 98.

Yet, to Nagaïke, yaoi dōjinshi can still be, “a rebellion against the institutional functions of heterosexuality,” whose detractors ignore the potential of, what the scholar terms, a female-orientated space, where active participation by female readers contests a hierarchised, heterosexual paradigm with, “female sexuality and identity as bisexuality, homosociality, and other modes.” By turning illustration into participatory situations, not just suggesting an alternative, the self-published comic, in the form of the *sākuru* fan circles’ establishment of a self-organised meeting place to enable networking amongst micro-communities, creates an alternative family or kinship group. That network of physical gathering places, if not radically counterhegemonic, is nonetheless egalitarian and co-operative in spirit.

Although male homosociality has excluded women, confirming them as powerless, in yaoi that homosociality is idealised by the female reader, eroticised as a magical world in which, “they can achieve their goal of attaining a non-hierarchical sexual relationship.”³⁶⁹ In this way, although the equality of the protagonists is stressed, the manner in which this is visualised evidences the external social conditioning that women cannot participate in such equality.³⁷⁰ The yaoi dōjinshi image therefore thwarts a clear attribution in terms of any transformative potential toward the dominant culture, remaining at an interface between, and embodying the tension of, conflicting analytical positions. It is this attribute of comic book illustration that is further developed in the practical example, which, as with yaoi dōjinshi, the *Hypercrisis* and fan phenomena in general, risks participating in a feedback loop that does not challenge the hegemonic sources of the medium or the appropriated material on a structural level.

³⁶⁹ Nagaïke deploys the gender studies scholar Eve Sedgwick’s mechanism of homosociality from *Epistemology of The Closet*, where, “the very concept of philosophical experience has organised representation of discourse according to the interests of male-dominated society.” Nagaïke, 95-96.

³⁷⁰ The depiction of men in yaoi can additionally be posited simply as an avoidance of the shame incurred by women buying heterosexual pornography. In this case the centrality of the penis permits both identification and dissociation, an attainment of erotic pleasure whilst distancing from the social stigma instilled by desiring such a function. Nagaïke, 83-86.

2.3 || *The Selfish Dream*

2.3.1 || **Beginnings**

The production of *The Selfish Dream* comic book took place alongside the research process but was conceived independently of the study. None of the concepts discussed above, including ‘autography’ and ‘autoclasm’ or the thematic concerns of gender, race and sexuality were consciously part of the design process. This separation is particularly valuable in terms of reading the work in conversation with the preceding analysis, as these discursive elements manifested in *The Selfish Dream* independently of my research. However, as a measure of the effectiveness of the previous discussion, *The Selfish Dream* has at least one problematic indeterminacy: as an obscure self-published work by unknown authors, the comic had no chance of generating anything like the scale of readership that would engender significant communication between author and fanbase.

Rather, the amateur status (neither Lekha nor Blinky 4 had previous experience of making comics and the publication was produced without knowledge or prior experience of comics distribution channels) lent the work far more affinity to fan creations such as yaoi dōjinshi than to mainstream titles such as *The Invisibles*. But even within this category, *The Selfish Dream* could also be said to fail as a social intermediary in the ways yaoi dōjinshi and Morrison fan works did not, as their own functionality was inscribed through their circulation, discussion and development in fan peer groups. However, thinking of the publication in terms of a fan work is still key to my reflection, and in particular, thinking of it as a fan work of its writer and concept originator, Om Lekha. Considering this, *The Selfish Dream* is a comic commissioned in the image of an avid comic reader’s own investments in the medium.

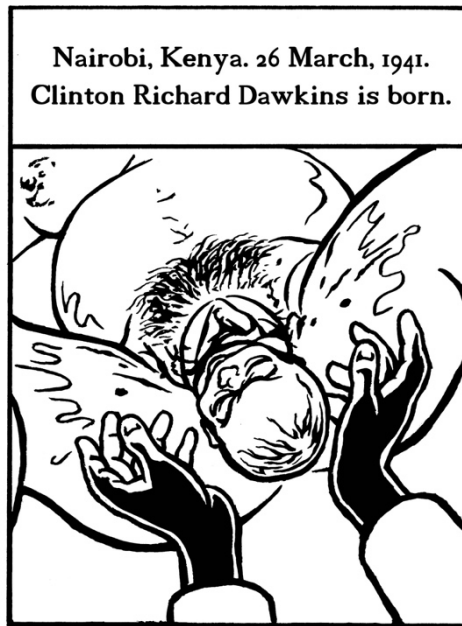


Figure 25. Om Lekha (writer) and Blinky 4 (artist), *The Selfish Dream* panel 1.1.9

(cropped from original layout), 2016, ink on paper, 60mm x 80mm.

The publication itself is a sixteen-page black and white soft-cover pamphlet in US letter size (216mm by 279mm). The story is divided between two, seven-page sections separated by a two-page single-image spread. The page layout of the two sections follows a three by three grid of uniform rectangular panels. These all contain single scenes drawn in a representational manner, with only ten instances throughout of speech balloons and information panels. The first section is a chronological biography of the biologist, author and public figure Richard Dawkins who, at the time of writing, has an international reputation as an outspoken atheist. The narrative follows Dawkins from gestation to a fictional death by corresponding each page with seven biological stages of life, the intention being to submit Dawkins's life-story to a scientific reductionist treatment.³⁷¹ In the second section an unnamed male figure, the 'psychonaut', exhumes Dawkins's corpse, transports the body to a secluded forest glade and performs a ritual sex act culminating in the physical dissolution of both the character and the representational space of the comic illustration.³⁷²

³⁷¹ The seven stages according to Lekha are: Pre-natal to birth; babyhood; toddler; pre-pubescent childhood; puberty; breeding period; post breeding period to death.

³⁷² The psychonaut's appearance was based on the real-life chaos magickian Phil Hine, an advocate of self-publishing and DIY culture.

The development of the story told in *The Selfish Dream* began with a short text written by Lekha which he described as, “a taking to task of this idea that we're defined by reproduction, and that our underpinning purpose is to reproduce ourselves.”³⁷³ When Lekha re-imagined the text as a comic, the “polemic” evolved into a reconciliation, or synthesis, of biology and spirituality, each of which, after some developmental work, were represented by the Dawkins and psychonaut sections.³⁷⁴ That the form, narrative and structure of *The Selfish Dream* was pre-conceived by Lekha, leads to a conundrum in the production process important to this analysis. Although artist and writer had many conversations on the detail of the content during production, and Lekha was receptive to improvised and playful elements occurring in the drawing process to the extent that he viewed the work as a collaboration, my perception of my role was more in terms of an illustrator realising an external text, a form of commission for a client.³⁷⁵ I conceptualise this further as Blinky 4 fulfilling an intermediary function between the original written text and its materialisation and as the collaborative process itself as an intermediary stage between two solitudes, that of Lekha working on his original text and Blinky 4 during the manual production.³⁷⁶

There was the potential in that latter solitary stage to introduce more subversive elements to the text, to add an additional layer of pictorial critique or development of the narrative, but, in my self-appointed role of illustrator, I stuck to what I saw as the brief. In doing this however, a sense of the subversive can be redeemed by viewing my faithful rendering of Lekha’s concept as visualising a set of ideas that would likely have remained unseen. Of these, it is Lekha’s thoughts on the form of the comic itself that are of most value to this analysis, although these are in themselves imbricated with the original Dawkins/psychonaut polemic.³⁷⁷ Here, Lekha identified a twofold property in

³⁷³ For Lekha, this reproduction was both in a biological reductionist and Marxist mode. “I think that one of the things that is important is this idea of the social and that there's something beyond the atomised, nuclear unit. And that's one take on what that nuclear unit is, is its function in this society at this time is that it's an economic production unit. It's an efficient, a very efficient unit, that supports economic productivity in the consumerist, industrial mode.” Within this environment, “the place of religion has been taken over by biological determinism and in place of God we have the gene. So, the gene is serving the same function as God did, which is that it is our ultimate guarantor of what we are here for.” Om Lekha, in discussion with the author, 25 September 2016.

³⁷⁴ It is of note here, that what was originally conceived as a written text and was subsequently developed into a comic was considered by one reader as an act of ‘critical dissidence’, a protest against the conventionally written academic essay by using a medium associated with the infantile and illiterate.

³⁷⁵ “I feel like we forged *Selfish Dream*. I do feel like I came as a proper writer with a properly conceived full idea, but I do feel that we forged an actual comic book as a collaborative team.” Further, “I felt like that was a space where there was a real exchange going on between the writer and the author.” Lekha also commented that the collaborative process allowed him to access what he described as a latent interest in structure and composition that he had been unable to develop in his pre-planned, multi-media artworks. “I never would have realised that I was able to talk visually, you know, in such a kind of enjoyable, properly kind of coherent way if we hadn't been working together.” Lekha, 2016.

³⁷⁶ Lekha recognized that I undertook the labour, but, “the process of making choices about the composition I felt was a true collaborative process.” Lekha, 2016.

³⁷⁷ For instance, the storytelling of the comic is a “dream craft” or magickal activity for Lekha. Major figures in comics writing that subscribe to this conceptualisation include the “British Invasion” writers Grant Morrison and his

terms of the story-telling potential of the medium, which he described as a linear or film-like structure, and a landscape or tarot-like structure. Respectively, a journey-like narrative that affords access to a linear aspect of life and a vantage-point into life's depths.³⁷⁸

The linear is suggestive of 'sequentiality', which, since the term's adoption by the cartoonist Will Eisner, has been interpreted as a pivotal characteristic of the narratological functioning of comics.³⁷⁹ Contemporary scholars have modified this central idea of the relationship *between* consecutive panels posed by Eisner, with additional movements outside of linear sequence. These are: pluralities of linkages and relationships for the comics scholar Thierry Groensteen;³⁸⁰ violations of narrative made by the panel's participation in webs of interrelationship for the scholar Hannah Miodrag;³⁸¹ and 'swarms' for Hillary Chute who views the non-sequential structure as the heart of the comics page.³⁸² These descriptions are also suggestive of the second, 'depth' aspect of the comic book illustration that Lekha identified,³⁸³ although his tarot-like property appears to concern more an

contemporaries, Alan Moore and Neil Gaiman (Lekha considers Moore the most important of these, as he "recognises flesh and human community," but Morrison, who "deals with semiotics of the comic book," is, for Lekha, the writer who has done the strongest work in connecting between comic books and dream-craft). Storytelling and magick are elemental human experiences concerned with, "taking responsibility for your own programming," and Dawkins, the central subject of *The Selfish Dream*, is a storyteller extraordinaire. "That's what Dawkins is engaging with. Dawkins at a certain point started to, felt he had to, address the world of storytelling, of communication, of imagination of language, and he coined 'meme' and now meme is part of the vernacular. People use 'meme', you can read it in the tabloids. So, this is what I understand by magick." Lekha, 2016.

³⁷⁸ "The idea of a co-existing window into our parts of a landscape of some sort, that is, 'vantage point'. So, imagine yourself having a vantage point like an eagle looking over a landscape and having things exist in their entirety but also there are particular, potential, points of focus within that scape and so what you have is a co-existence of narrative, of journey, and vantage point. [...] Tarot readings are a perfect example [of the vantage-point property] because when you start looking at their particularities of the spread you can get deeper and deeper meanings. But that doesn't mean, the deeper meanings are connected to the whole network of the entire spread at any given time. They're never disconnected from it, they're always a part of it. So that means in psychic psychological terms that you're looking to the depth behind your own actions." Lekha, 2016.

³⁷⁹ The term was central in Eisner's analysis in *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) and to subsequent definitions of the medium by McCloud in *Understanding Comics*.

³⁸⁰ Groensteen's "artology" (comics scholarship comes with its own creole) is another, "framework for looking at graphic narratives that is predicated upon the relations between and among panels." Mitchell, "Spectral Memory," 3.

³⁸¹ Hannah Miodrag, *Comics and Language: reimagining critical discourse on the form* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2013). Cited in Mickwitz, "Comics and/as Documentary."

³⁸² Both sequence and swarm rest on a, "rich temporal map configured as much by what isn't drawn as by what is: it is highly conscious of the artificiality of its selective borders, which diagram the page into an arrangement of encapsulated moments." (Chute, "Comics as Literature?" 455). This invites a comparison with the art historian Svetlana Alpers's analysis of Dutch painting, which offers multiple viewpoints and Félix Guattari's rhizomatic map, with its multiple entry and exit points. The sequential and extra-sequential is also analogous with the historical perception of the form. For Little, the formal development in comic books, "is both linear (accumulation of techniques through time) and non-linear (the moving in and out of use of various techniques as suits creators). Thus, histories of form in a traditional sense will always be looping and fractious." Little, "Comic Books," 108.

³⁸³ Where the spatial arrangement of the page generates a non-linear reading pattern. Lekha's interest in the spatial composition of the comics page creates a desire to return to comics more so than the book. "I think for me the form [...] is asking you to do that... I'll go back a page and I'm getting more and more into the habit of going back into the visual space that's being conjured in the comic book." Lekha, 2016.

imaginative projection by the reader into the images, regardless of their connection by sequence or otherwise, and is suggestive of a psychoanalytic possibility invested in the illustration.

In this vein, Lekha also holds a view of the comic page as a space for analysing childhood in order to find meaning within, what he terms, current life narratives.³⁸⁴ His position as a comics reader was interwoven into *The Selfish Dream* fan work (along with contributions from Blinky 4) through pictorial references to influential comics and other works of visual art and in this sense, the comic can be read at one level as an autobiography of its two producers.³⁸⁵ However, it is *The Selfish Dream* as representing its own medium, as a comics self-portrait, that is of most value to this study. Rather than an extended exegesis of the entire publication, I draw my analysis from selected illustrations with a concern for the sequential, non-sequential and tarot-like characteristics. This is not to negate Lekha's original intentions with the work (which I refer to in my analysis), but to develop the frameworks of the preceding discussion in terms of comic book representations of race, gender, sexuality and origins.

2.3.2 || **Occult narrative**

The figure of the midwife at the beginning of the second page is of particular value to my discussion of the work (Figure 26). The panel is overleaf from the initial sequence that illustrates Dawkins's *in utero* gestation culminating in a close-up of the midwife's hands delivering the newborn (Figure 25, p.114). Both panels incorporate elements chosen by Blinky 4 including my decision to portray the midwife as African. In treating the biography as a series of stages of the biological development of an organism, there was a conscious lack of attention paid to any characterisation outside of Dawkins.³⁸⁶ Yet there was an ambition to accurately portray the

³⁸⁴ Part of the depth of the comic book as a form is to look, "to the depth behind your own actions," to access things from your subconscious. "I think that's why you get a lot of anarchic, a lot of dream-like, a lot of sexual stuff going on in comic books." Lekha, 2016.

³⁸⁵ Examples possibly, of the disenfranchised, "downwardly-mobile white guys" who, for Scott McCloud, can afford to produce such obscure artisanal publications. McCloud coined the stereotype in the context of a discussion of the poor representation of people of colour in comics production and readership. For McCloud, speaking in the United States in 2014, comics was still, "a pale movement," with very few African Americans involved. He articulated this through the economic effects of racism, where, to produce experimental hand-made comics needed a faith in, "a country that will never let you starve." Henry Jenkins & Scott McCloud, "Geek Speaks: The Future of Comics (Part I)," USC Annenberg Innovation Lab, 23 October, 2014, online video, 1:31:34, <https://vimeo.com/110643833>.

³⁸⁶ The first seven pages were initially planned to correspond with Shakespeare's seven ages of man before Lekha chose the structure of the biological seven stages. "It becomes a kind of intellectual paradox that you [sic] used his own paradigm in a way that kind of undermines his status within the realm of ideas. If [Dawkins] is arguing that we're determined by our genes and our biological, kind of prime biological, make-up, then his status in the world of ideas, I mean, surely the world of ideas then becomes a kind of secondary factor. So, we're using that paradigm itself, kind of by showing it so literally, then we kind of turn the popular treatment of what he means as an important thinker, we turn that against itself in a certain way." Lekha, 2016.

protagonist's environment, in this instance Dawkins' infancy in British colonial Kenya in the 1940s.³⁸⁷ However, within this didactic treatment, I interpret my picturing of the midwife turning away from the reader toward the white couple (Dawkins's parents) as an act of obfuscation that illustrates an unresolved tension in depicting race and gender difference.



Figure 26. Om Lekha (writer) and Blinky 4 (artist), *The Selfish Dream* panel 1.2.1

(cropped from original layout), 2016, ink on paper, 60mm x 80mm.

That this tension, or fear, of depicting alterity manifests as a showing whilst not showing is suggestive again of Emil Amiran's conceptualization of narrative and inking. These two actions were split between Lekha as writer and Blinky 4 as illustrator and this division of labour revealed different modes of the comic book's problem with race that are evidenced by the work of one auteur in *Krazy Kat*.³⁸⁸ For Amiran, Herriman saw narrative and race as interlinked to the extent that, "there can be no written or illustrated narrative that is not about race."³⁸⁹ In concordance, inking, as the 'color' that differentiates figure from ground to form narrative, is articulated as identical to the

³⁸⁷ Dawkins's autobiography, *An Appetite for Wonder: The Making of a Scientist* (London: Random House, 2013) was used for historical accuracy as well as period photographs.

³⁸⁸ The model of the individual taking both writer and artist roles evolved from syndicated strips (Herriman) and alternative comix (Hernandez) into graphic novel auteurs (Bechdel). The division of labour in *The Selfish Dream* was in the mould of Hergé (who had a studio of artists after the second world war) and Morrison, who worked with several artists over the run of *The Invisibles*.

³⁸⁹ This amounted to Amiran reading *Krazy Kat* as, "a theory of the necessity of race for narrative, and of narrative for race." Amiran, "Black Sentence," 58.

process that sees race constructed from a contrast with racial identities that are themselves defined by contrast.

The figure in the midwife panel is both revealed and concealed by the illustrator in accordance with Herriman's concatenation of comic and racial narrative. In the cyclical narratives of *Krazy Kat*, inking, or giving color, is a mutable showing, false revealing and disguising of 'black', that parallels the representational condition of race. Blackness, as a cloud or eclipse, obscures *Krazy Kat* but only temporarily, as with the repeated coating in liquids that change the character from black to white and back again. For Amiran, Herriman is insisting, through these cycles of concealment and revelation (themselves generic narrative formulations), "that revelation does not undo the fact that there is something to reveal – that having revealed there is yet more need to reveal."³⁹⁰

Although the accuracy intended by *The Selfish Dream* producers can be said to dramatize the inherent racialisation of narrative and to reflect the social realities of the period represented, it also traps the few instances of black characterisation within the kind of support roles engendered by colonialism. Here, the lack of a cyclical process of hiding and re-revealing that performs the constructed nature of both comic and racial narrative in *Krazy Kat*, renders the midwife an immutable object under the reader's gaze.³⁹¹ This stasis (echoed across the whole comic) aids the essentialising of subjectivities rather than presenting subjectivity as in flux, as it was within the cyclical escapades of *Krazy Kat*. These adventures, although never resolving, nevertheless articulated through endlessly repetitive and imaginative sequences the personal and social crises that constrained their author.

The Selfish Dream neglects to address the racialising process of human figuration in comics yet re-constitutes race in service to its own narrative. This codification without censure was embodied in the rendering of the midwife as turned away from the reader. The absence of ink in the whiteness of the uniform suggests a need by the draughtsman to conceal an appearance made visible in the previous panel, a revealing process that is not completed. This deferral to the hidden is amplified by

³⁹⁰ Amiran, 70.

³⁹¹ A recent example of a comic constructed for the white male gaze regardless of its depiction of black characters is Mark Waid and J.G. Jones's *Strange Fruit* (Los Angeles: Boom Studios, 2015). The black protagonist was marketed as reparation to the lack of people of colour in comics, but critique focused on a range of racist tropes in the representation including the fetishisation and phallic treatment of the black male body. Tre Johnson, "Strange Fruit's complicated, controversial place in comics' diversity debate," Vox, 30 May 2017. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/5/30/15660476/strange-fruit-comics-diversity>.

the illustrator denying the character a face by which to return the reader or author's gaze, a dramatization of my discomfort of contributing, consciously or otherwise, to a narrative of race that lacked further explication within the work. Here Blinky 4 declined to subvert the narrative that is co-extensive with the comic's structure, leaving representational quandaries unaddressed; failing, in the women's and gender studies scholar Shannon Winnubst's words, to, "further unhinge the hegemony of whiteness."³⁹²

As with race the first section of *The Selfish Dream* also traps gender within a bio-reductionism. The representation of the familial as the heteronormative nuclear unit was intended to visualise a scientific reading that humanity's underpinning purpose is to reproduce itself. This dictated a binary gendering resulting in the female characters being included overwhelmingly in the context of raising and reproducing Dawkins. The male characters were given a similar base functionality, but any balance this equality of treatment may have afforded was undermined with an additional, and unwitting, metaphysical framing. The narrative treatment of the gestation sequence preceding the birth panel was intended to illustrate the first biological stage of the Dawkins organism, but, in a denial of female agency, depicts the time before birth as a cosmic or primeval space where the organism appears as *creatio ex nihilo* (Figure 27).

³⁹² For Winnubst, "The white straight male body appears as the 'normal' body – without marking, without distinction, perfectly contained and, subsequently, in power. The logic of space and embodiment that insists upon reading bodies as bound by skin not only puts the visual markings of race and sex fully into play, but also perpetuates the logic of containment in which whiteness itself, as that which is perfectly contained exactly because it is not a body, thrives. Controlling its optical illusion as the body that is perfectly contained, whiteness is never where it appears: it is somewhere else, veiled beyond capture." Shannon Winnubst, "Is the mirror racist? Interrogating the space of whiteness," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 30, no. 1 (2004): 42.

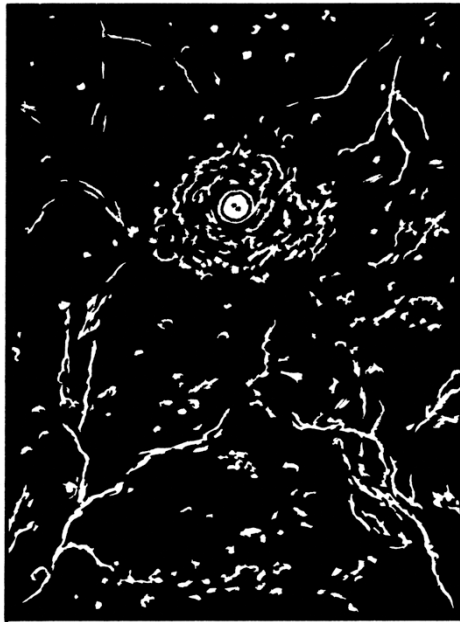


Figure 27. Om Lekha (writer) and Blinky 4 (artist), *The Selfish Dream* panel 1.1.1.
(cropped from original layout), 2016, ink on paper, 60mm x 80mm.

To Julia Kristeva such a denial is an inevitability of linear narrative, a method of diffusing or “quieting down” femininity by imprisoning the abject within the structure of a story.³⁹³ In linear narrative the feminine is expressed as spatial, the time of history excludes the feminine and linear time is made co-determinate with language.³⁹⁴ Thus the maternal body, the female body or anything that recalls the time in which the child was pre-subjective (or pre-linguistic) invokes abjection.³⁹⁵ The sequences depicting the gestation, birth and infancy are examples of *The Selfish Dream* recounting the abject whilst diminishing, or quieting down, its unsettling effects. This is most pronounced in the panels preceding the childbirth, where the interior of the womb is presented less as flesh and blood, and more as an abstracted, cosmic enclosure.

The figurative language of illustration has been articulated as pointing to a lost spacetime of multisensory communication (chapter one, pp.51-56). Dawkins’s cosmic gestation sequence can be read as an example of this as one of two sequences in the comic that discompose the representational space in favour of a more baroque arrangement (the second of these is discussed on

³⁹³ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 145. Cited in Keane, “Between Fear and Fascination,” 118.

³⁹⁴ In the evocation of woman, “we think of space, *generating human species*, [more] than time, *becoming or history*.” Keane, 117.

³⁹⁵ The grotesque, uncanny and abject, for Keane, all return to the site of the female body as monstrous.

page 121). However, gesturing toward a prelinguistic space and its metaphysical connotations within a linear, and supposedly bio-reductionist, narrative enmeshes the sequence in a phallogocentric tradition of figuring that-which-cannot-be-figured in terms of the feminine; a figuration that synchronously negates female agency.

The prelinguistic originary state has been subject to gender binarisation through the evolving concept of *chōra*, whose own origins are in the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*.³⁹⁶ In the analysis of the gender theorist Emanuela Bianchi, *chōra* was a method for Plato, “to articulate the unthinkable abyss in which becoming is made possible.”³⁹⁷ In the *Timaeus* (49a) the primeval and chaotic *chōra* is “she,” the “nurse of all becoming,” instantiating the metaphysical underpinnings of western philosophy in terms of gender. For Bianchi, *chōra* is thus an “ignoble and slippery concept, a vision of the feminine, locked into an ungraspable maternal role.”³⁹⁸ For the philosopher Judith Butler the *chōra* was a place and a medium where material, or ‘sensible’, objects take on the appearance of the Forms,³⁹⁹ although, in Plato’s mutable and often contradictory system of nomenclature, *chōra* as place is where this transformation occurs, but *chōra* as medium is articulated as a force called *physis*, a dynamic all-receiving function equated with nature.⁴⁰⁰

Butler addresses the development of *chōra* as of interest in its very plasticity toward reformulation, the concept tracing a philosophical genealogy where sexuality and sexual difference are entwined.⁴⁰¹ Of these critical developments, Butler engages with a reading of the original *chōra* by

³⁹⁶ An influential creation story related (especially through Aristotle) to cosmology, physics and biology. Emanuela Bianchi, “Receptacle/*Chōra*: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato’s *Timaeus*,” *Hypatia* 21, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 124-146, 139.

³⁹⁷ Bianchi, “Receptacle/*Chōra*,” 139.

³⁹⁸ Feminist scholarship has re-purposed the designation to contest the rationale of its production. For Bianchi, Kristeva’s gendering of *chōra* is a thorough recontextualization within linguistic, psychoanalytic semiotics to the point that it that doesn’t resemble the original dialogue. Although, in rehabilitating the association with the feminine Kristeva risks the danger of collapsing the feminine, “into a maternity that is natural, literal, or essential.” However, “to speak of the feminine with reference to the maternal may perhaps always risk a certain essentialism,” worth risking for Bianchi, who asserts the importance not to ignore reproduction as a capacity specific to women as opposed to an essence of woman. Bianchi, 138-139.

³⁹⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: on the discursive limits of sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 39-40.

⁴⁰⁰ For Plato, *physis* has no proper shape or body, so nature cannot be like either the eternal Forms or their material, sensible or imaginary copies. Plato’s “rhetoric defeats itself,” in elemental contradictions, “After all, Plato *posits* that which cannot be *posited*. And he further contradicts himself when he claims that that which cannot be posited ought to be posited in only one way. In a sense, this authoritative naming of the receptacle as the unnameable constitutes a primary or founding inscription that secures this place as an inscriptional space. This naming of what cannot be named is itself a penetration into this receptacle which is at once a violent erasure, one which establishes it as an impossible yet necessary site for all further inscriptions. In this sense, the very *telling* of the story about the phallogocentric genesis of objects *enacts* that phallogocentricity and becomes an allegory of its own procedure.” Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 44.

⁴⁰¹ Bianchi, “Receptacle/*Chōra*,” 125.

the philosopher and linguist Luce Irigaray, where the problem identified is not that the feminine is made to stand for matter, but that the feminine is cast outside binarism altogether. Here both genders are male and the feminine is the place of production, neither one nor other but a permanent unchangeable condition of both, “a nonthematisable materiality.”⁴⁰² In the *Timaeus* what was previously a non-representable *chōra* is reduced to a physical place when used to articulate *physis* (the receiving power or nature).⁴⁰³ The potency is suppressed in this instance: the *chōra* makes no contribution to reproduction as the phallus reproduces copies of itself through the feminine but with no assistance from her.

To Butler, this is, “a topographical suppression of *physis*, the dissimulation of *physis* as *chōra*, as place.”⁴⁰⁴ This condition of being entered, giving forth what enters her, not resembling either formative principle or that which it creates, is, for Irigaray, that which is taken over by the phallogocentric economy. In my reading, *The Selfish Dream* follows this Platonic depiction of woman as a site or place of birth, as a zone through which a phallic power reproduces itself.⁴⁰⁵ When the female is figured it is in terms of reproduction, but even this agency is denied by an encapsulating phallogocentric narrative that negates the female. In its rendering of the womb as an abstract or cosmic material wherein the proto-Dawkins enunciates himself, the narrative/inking enacts a myth of reproduction as male autogenesis.

⁴⁰² Both Butler and Irigaray retain the feminine as receptacle as a concept exceeding its own figuration, a disassembling of the framework that associates women with inert materiality. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 42.

⁴⁰³ Bianchi articulates the condition of place as that from which a paternal demiurge creates order, including the troubling establishment of sexual difference. Bianchi, “Receptacle/Chōra,” 126.

⁴⁰⁴ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 42.

⁴⁰⁵ The midwife, as a functional intermediary in the bringing to life of Dawkins, embodies that function of the female, disappearing from the narrative after her purpose is done.

2.3.3 || Dissolution



Figure 28. Om Lekha (writer) and Blinky 4 (artist), *The Selfish Dream* panel 2.7.6
(cropped from original layout), 2016, ink on paper, 60mm x 80mm.

“Think of it as a 'forced opening' of the chakras as in sex magick. [This] will illustrate the breaking down of selfhood of the shaman.”⁴⁰⁶

The confirmation of a phallic power as the operating mode is made in the closing pages of the second section in a sequence that follows a close translation of Lekha’s original narrative. The sequence, named ‘dissolution’ during the planning of the comic, depicts a starburst fracturing the body of the psychonaut as he masturbates using a humerus bone extracted from Richard Dawkins’ corpse (Figure 28). The linear progression of panels, like isolated frames from an animation, end on a blank panel as the light source erases the image. This culmination has influenced my reading of the second section as a temporal reversal of the first, where the white male protagonist, the container of the ideal author or reader, returns to the universal whiteness of the empty page.

⁴⁰⁶ Om Lekha, personal communication with the author, 17 November 2012.

Lekha's intention for the second section was not to critique scientific rationality (as personified by Dawkins) but to reconcile and intensify that rationality's relationship with spiritual practice (as represented by the psychonaut). In my reading however, the linearity of biological reductionism is not transformed in the second section, but replayed, in reverse chronology, as a specular image of Dawkins's cosmic beginnings. This book-ending between twin myths of autogenesis lends *The Selfish Dream* a chiasmic structure and reflects a narrative narcissism recognised by the literary theorist Linda Hutcheon as a western pictorial tradition.⁴⁰⁷ Further, although intended to depict transcendence through sexual stimulation, in presenting a metaphysical thesis in terms of the white male body and having that body meld into the material of the comic in a return to a pre-semiotic emptiness of the page, the dissolution sequence risks re-confirming a universal status given to that body by phallogentric traditions of western thought.⁴⁰⁸

This necessity of reinforced identity is central to Susan Buck-Morss's reading of fascist aesthetics. Here, the narcissism that develops from an experience of fracture and seeks to avoid re-fragmentation of the body (whilst having simultaneous fantasies of the *corps morcée*, reflected in the pictorial fragmentation of the psychonaut by the beam of light)⁴⁰⁹ is also connected to the motif of autogenesis, a persistent myth through the history of modernity and western political thought wherein modern man reproduces himself. This narcissistic illusion of total control, including the "myth of creative imagination," is entwined with ideas of freedom and has been defended and praised; yet feminist consciousness in scholarship, "has revealed how fearful of the biological power of women this mythic construct can be."⁴¹⁰ This fear is performed in the symbolic register where, while achieving autogenic status, modern man has castrated himself to become the phallus. At this point, where man feels both impotent in relation to nature and simultaneously apart from it, "aesthetic, politics and war congeal."⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ "The mirror studies of Velasquez and Picasso, and the perplexing self-reference in Escher's "Drawing Hands." Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013).

⁴⁰⁸ An inverse of Kristeva's jouissance wherein, "alterity becomes nuance, contradiction becomes a variant, tension becomes passage, and discharge becomes peace." Julia Kristeva, "Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini" in *Desire in Language: a semiotic approach to literature and art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980): 240.

⁴⁰⁹ The unitary identification retroactively leads to a fantasy of the body-in-pieces: *corps morcée*. an image of interest to the Surrealists and the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Lacan recognised the historical specificity of the fragmented body in the context of the rise of fascism in the 1930s, the 'mirror stage' being a mirror of the times. Buck-Morss's aim in her "Anaesthetics" essay, is to, "push the significance of this contextualisation very far, so that the mirror stage can be read as a theory of fascism." Buck-Morss, "Anaesthetics," 37.

⁴¹⁰ Buck-Morss, 8.

⁴¹¹ In examining whiteness Shannon Winnubst sees fascism is an application of autogenesis to the masses. The body is

This combination of, “autoerotic sexuality and wielding power over others,” followed the rise of the warrior statesman in the twentieth century who mimicked the autogenic prototype, the self-producing Judeo-Christian God.⁴¹² The proceedings of the dissolution sequence, although intended as transcendence through self-stimulation, tell a story of self-destructive emasculation, an echo of the castration that, through fear, separates the autogenic male from his conception of nature and the feminine. As discussed, a similar fear can be argued to underwrite *The Invisibles*; apparent in examples of the inking process that betray a castration anxiety in the obsessive figuration of King Mob as a cohesive white male body, and also in the projection of the author onto the reader through the concept of ritual male masturbation. Further, the dissolution sequence, in staging masturbatory excess as the progenitor of a new asexual phase, also resonates with Tom McCarthy’s exposition of the whiteness of Tintin as the, “vanishing point of all desire.”⁴¹³

This reading would appear to contrast with Lekha’s intentions with the dissolution scene and *The Selfish Dream* as a whole. In the author’s twist on transubstantiation, the physical substrate of the comic is perceived as corporeal matter, itself purposed for, “making contact with the flesh of the world.”⁴¹⁴ In this schema the printed book is articulated as an appendage to the body of the producer, seeking connection to the sensory network of the reader and augmenting the porous boundary of the surface of the body described by Buck-Morss as the synaesthetic system. Furthermore, this articulation of the material of the comic book in terms of flesh is co-determinate with its status as a commodity.⁴¹⁵

transcended toward a mastery of the bodies of others, “the white male heterosexual body disavows its own corporeality – its own particularity and specificity – so that it can function as the universal signifier and appear as the controlled, contained body. It recognizes its body as nothing more than an optical illusion and, accordingly, transcends it into a realm of mastery – of all bodies.” Winnubst, “Is the mirror racist?” 42.

⁴¹² Buck-Morss. “Anaesthetics,” 9.

⁴¹³ Tintin is permanently in this condition, a, “sexlessness of the unconsummated marriage,” (McCarthy, *Tintin*, 161) but it is an endpoint for the psychonaut.

⁴¹⁴ Lekha did not attribute, “the flesh of the world” to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, although the philosopher used the phrase extensively in his unfinished book, *The Visible and The Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968). In addition, the object-oriented and accelerationist character of Atavistic Prometheism led me to a consideration of the usage here as independent from Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological application.

⁴¹⁵ “The comic book is something that I’m handling, I’m kind of in a physical relationship with this thing.” For Lekha, when one pulls back from the narrative and structural aspects of the comic, “you’re also handling that book throughout. There’s something going on with this handling of the entire artwork.” Further, “It’s really to do with the material. You know, that contact with paper.” Lekha, 2016. McLuhan had placed the arrival of the printing press in western Europe at the centre of the development of modern capitalist society with print as the first commodity, “the invention of typography confirmed and extended the new visual stress of applied knowledge, providing the first uniformly repeatable commodity, the first assembly-line, and the first mass-production.” Here the print era was located in a continuum of western movement away from orality and magical thinking, to writing, linearity and an emphasis on the visual. Writing in the early 1960s, McLuhan foresaw in electronic communication a move back to a “non-Cartesian space” that would see the formation of a “global village” of interconnected people. McLuhan,

The metaphysical figured in the psychonaut's ritual action led the author to retroactively view *The Selfish Dream* as a document within his own playful ideological formulation, 'Atavistic Prometheanism'.⁴¹⁶ In this personal cosmology, which bears similarity to chaos magick, "consumerism is a mode of thinking or relating to the world, a paradigm, a mode of being,"⁴¹⁷ and the commodity status of the comic is to be embraced in a, "making sport with the cargo of empire."⁴¹⁸ Here the dubious ethnographic confection of the cargo cult is inverted as a self-portrait of consumer society, the 'islanders' of the west making play with snatched fragments of the passing imperialist capitalist machine.⁴¹⁹ Lekha locates an insurrectionary potential in this handling of the 'flesh of the world',⁴²⁰ which bears comparison to the emancipatory potential ascribed to the excessive reader's appropriation of source material in fan art works.

In this instance *The Selfish Dream* was intended as a stimulating sensory experience befitting Atavistic Prometheanism's credo of celebrating the physical world as a site of tactical engagement

Gutenberg Galaxy, 97-104; 124; 250. For comics scholars, the form is defined by being a printed commodity, the genre beginning and mostly continuing as a work on paper (Pizzino, *Arresting Development*, 16-17). For the art historian David Kunzle, comics are, "intertwined with the emergence of popular print culture," and, "retain popularity as tactile material objects." Mickwitz, "Comics and/as Documentary," 12.

⁴¹⁶ The comic is, "a pop cultural bull issued by a Gnostic pope." (Om Lekha, "*The Selfish Dream*," press release, 25 September 2014). Atavistic Prometheanism is, "An ideology or a philosophy or a proposal," the atavism of the title a deep primal origin and the Prometheanism, a dynamic potential. Lekha coined the name for this potential new doctrine but, in the cantankerous spirit of chaos magick, awaits someone else to systematise its contents: "I'll name a religion, but I won't actually create all the kind of stuff that goes with it. I'll be, 'well somebody else can find Atavistic Prometheanism in my notes and create a religion for themselves, I'm not going to do it'." In an interconnection with the bio-science theme of *The Selfish Dream*, this is, "[a] process akin to evolutionary theory, which pre-dated Charles Darwin although was formulated and made irrefutable by him. So, he didn't invent it, what he did was that he systematised it." Lekha is not the Darwin/systematiser figure in this conception, he is the inventor, although he acknowledges Atavistic Prometheanism, "will almost certainly never be systematised unless some really fucking odd thing happens." Lekha, 2016.

⁴¹⁷ Om Lekha, "Notes on Capitalism," personal communication with the author, 2015. The approach to consumerism is what crystallises *The Selfish Dream* in terms of Atavistic Prometheanism. Entering Lekha's cosmology here is, "the idea of human exceptionalism and that there's a Promethean dimension to the human." Here, *The Selfish Dream* is part of a working through how technology relates to Prometheanism, "...because it has been linked with the idea of material scientific discovery and I'm interested in the idea that that's really maybe an expression of the spirit of this promethean dimension of the human. But in fact, it's a falling short of the full possibility of what we can be as living conscious beings. So that's why I'm kind of drawn towards these people who are looking at consciousness and the potential of consciousness as the kind of central project." Lekha, 2016.

⁴¹⁸ Om Lekha, "Shaman Fucker," personal communication with the author, 12 September 2015.

⁴¹⁹ "[W]e'll take the fragments from this passing kind of imperialistic, über-fucking machine and then carve out little kind of grottoes to kind of amuse ourselves. So, we're turning labour entropy into festivity play. [...] The comic's impermanent, the empire's impermanent, the universe is impermanent, you know, it's all a process of change. So, it's okay to feel free with participating in things that otherwise we might say are alienating and instrumentalising. I mean, maybe there are other dimensions that it's okay to open out to." Lekha, 2016.

⁴²⁰ "I would argue that connecting with the flesh of the world is one of the most insurrectionary things that we can do. I think the reformation of the great project that is society has a lot of self-flagellation going on in it... [L]earning to enjoy the flesh of the world is profoundly radical. So, I don't have any qualms in saying that to make a comic book that's a physical object, you know, has that going on in it. And the digital world can basically look after itself." Lekha, 2016.

with the commodity. The dissolution scene was not intended then as an obscene depiction or commentary on obscenity but concerned pornography as a visceral experience linking the body to transcendence, to “the idea of connecting with an inner state [through] a visceral experience for the reader or the viewer.”⁴²¹ However, Lekha was unsure and unresolved about the status of the scene once rendered, as within it, transcendence is achieved using an object (Dawkins’s humerus bone), but only within a narrative that links transcendence with escaping the physical. Through an appeal to the senses then, the dissolution sequence was intended as a psychic reparative for the reader, but instead presented an image of self-inflicted trauma.⁴²²

Just as the reperformance of the autogenic myth cycle failed to provide a departure point to the scientific reductionism personified by Dawkins, the re-enactment of bodily transcendence also inserted a disruptive ambivalence into any invitation for insurrectionary play with the flesh of the world. In some respects, this mirrored the ambiguities of yaoi dōjinshi, but unlike them, *The Selfish Dream* fan work did not participate in a complex subcultural framework where some possibility for working through the depressive position could take place. In the autogenic myth, rising above the sensory is elevated and the idea reigns,⁴²³ and in *The Selfish Dream*, knowledge, represented by the Faustian light source, completely dissolves the protagonist and the regime of comic representation with it.⁴²⁴ Furthermore, this reverse autogenesis (appearing in forward time as auto-annihilation) is sealed in by the ambigrammatic structure, so that scant cognitive gutter space remains for any reader to perform their own ‘closure’.⁴²⁵

⁴²¹ As draughtsman, Blinky 4 made the independent decision to depict the psychonaut with an erection, a signifier of pleasure in an attempt to mitigate a reading of the image as self-abuse. This was a meaningful addition for Lekha, “I think what the erection is, is that it's activating [the reader's] connection with the idea that it's [the psychonaut's] inner state.” Further, “I do have questioning [of] this idea of ascending to Godhead. I like that kind of baroque nature of the language so there's a kind of a drama that I think does justice to what's actually happening in the comic strip. But in term of the background for what we understand about the divine, and about experience of ecstasy, you know I think that ideas of transcendence are really important because that's, for me this is about the body.” Lekha, 2016.

⁴²² “That we should be in a fight [with our body] is a terrible conception,” was one of Lekha’s comments in relation to the final rendering of the scene, adding, “So much of human philosophy and storytelling is orientating us towards the idea of transcending the incarnate universe. [...] I think this is a really tragic misconception on the part of humans. [...] So that’s the thing that still troubles me about *The Selfish Dream* is this ambiguity about what's happening with the psychonaut in terms of this idea of transcendence that's so powerful in the human narrative. I'm not resolved about what *Selfish Dream* is doing in that respect.” Lekha, 2016.

⁴²³ “Kant’s transcendent subject purges himself of the senses which endanger autonomy, not only because they unavoidably entangle him in the world, but, specifically, because they make him passive instead of active [...] susceptible, like “Oriental voluptuaries” to sympathy and tears.” Buck-Morss, “Anaesthetics,” 9.

⁴²⁴ The light source is based on the Rembrandt van Rijn etching *Doctor Faustus* (1652). Within the satirical novel *Mumbo Jumbo* by Ishmael Reed, the story of Faust is framed as central to the western psyche in relation to racial politics. Here, the black Mephistopheles consulted by Faust’s white magic represents the exploitation of slave labour and as such, the west lives in fear that “the black” will come to collect their dues. Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 90.

⁴²⁵ Pizzino and Chute view comics as a fragile medium to the extent that the act of reading or consuming is an act of destruction. Hernandez’s depictions of violence show an awareness of this autoclastic attribute of comics: “An

In depicting the psychonaut as an *uke-seme* hybrid, as both giver and receiver,⁴²⁶ an embodiment occurs of the entire comic as a self-pleasuring machine which requires no external participation to complete its cycle of autogenesis/annihilation. Comics require the reader as a creative collaborator and participant in extradiegetic role-play and cannot make reparation without what Pizzino articulates as a self-breaking autoclasm, or what Whitlock describes in terms of autography,⁴²⁷ where both definitions concern participation from the reader. Ironically, *The Selfish Dream* figured its own dormancy in this regard through the centre spread, where Dawkins's body represents narrative as the quieting down of a fear of the feminine: comfortably white and male, while not quite corpse-like enough to invoke abjection (Figure 13, p.70).⁴²⁸ Like the static flesh of the comic, the body is stuck between the two autogenic sequences, in stasis as much as the work itself remains in stasis until activated by a future community of readers.⁴²⁹

Summary

This chapter established a discussion of illustration as a participatory practice through a focus on the comic book. The possibility of a political engagement of the drawn was introduced through a trajectory from comic origins, to materials, fans and fan works (or alternatively: from author to reader-becoming-author). Progressive comic producers were shown to address the genre's self-consciousness toward its own cultural marginality and its essentialising and excessive picturing of the human body by imbricating the story of the medium with autobiographical narratives. I then

essential material element of most hand-drawn comics (and of all printed ones), ink can have a usefully metaphoric relationship to blood as a pictorial element; they both flow, drip, spill and run. In the work of Gilbert [Hernandez], such metaphors attain extraordinary resonance and force. As readers, we become aware of the materiality of the elements that make comics function, and violence is usually what provokes this awareness." Pizzino, "Autoclastic Icons," 3; 11.

⁴²⁶ In our discussion on the relationship between writer and illustrator Lekha reflected on the leader/follower as a synergy. He described this as a Taoist outlook where, regardless of whether one is leader or follower the efficacy of one's actions is determined by one's receptivity. "[T]he greatness of the synergy is the self-realisation of the person in the given role, as being the yin or the yang, the leader or the follower. Of course, there's a great power in being the receptive and the element is one of the points of what Taoism is saying. People who think that somehow they're in control because they are leading are very weak and if they're unable to understand that, they actually don't have any giving without receptiveness, their capacity is reduced if they're unable to recognise the power of receptiveness." Lekha, 2016.

⁴²⁷ For instance, in a reparation of the medium, Bechdel participates in the recovery of illustration from its emptying of sexual desire (a process initiated through Dürer and the development of European printing co-determinate with the enshrinement of man as bearer of the look). Bechdel engages with the depiction of the *puissance* of drawing, as a teenage masturbatory aid and within foreplay in her adult sex life. Bechdel, *Fun Home*, 170-171; *Are You My Mother?* 188-189.

⁴²⁸ For Kristeva the corpse is a subject transformed to an object, a glimpse into the unconscious that harbours the death drive. For Freud, the death drive vacillates with the sex drive as the, "instinct to return to an earlier state of things." Keane, "Between Fear and Fascination," 40; 139.

⁴²⁹ The two reference points for the image were Ron Meuck's *Dead Dad* (1996) and Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb* (1520-22).

proposed that the production and dissemination of the comic book initiates a new connectivity between, and a confusion of, definitions of author and consumer. However, the political agency of such works of participatory culture can be ambiguous, susceptible to having an ideological orientation bestowed upon them externally, whether through academic critique or by party-political manipulation. Although their presentation promises transformation on some levels, works such as *The Invisibles* and yaoi dōjinshi risk anaesthetising their reader/producers in the same manner as their appropriated source material. In framing *The Selfish Dream* as a fan product in this instance, I propose the work embodies a depiction of the human within comic book-illustration that fails to contest regimes of social organisation that are founded on inequality.

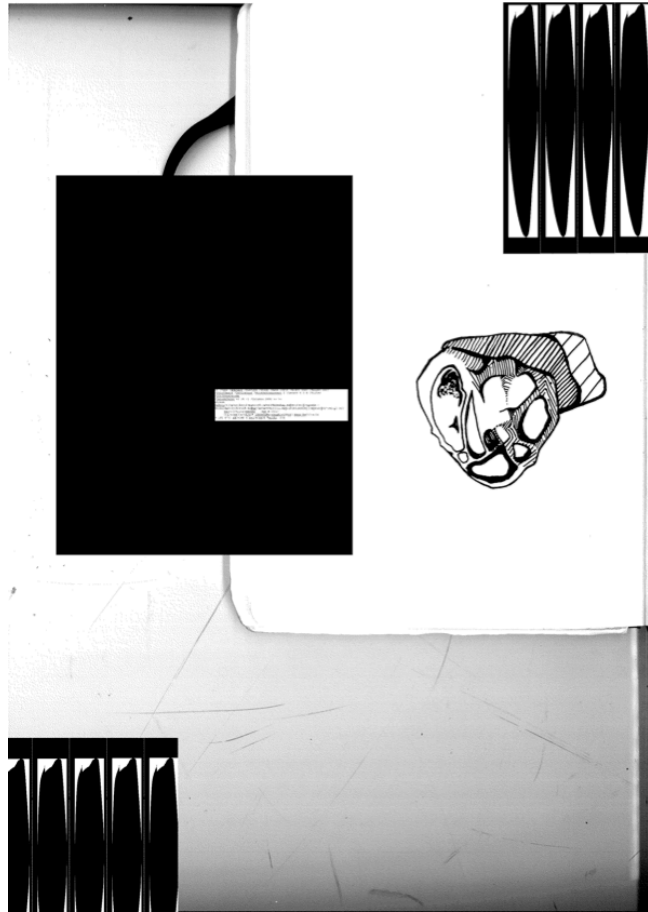


Figure 29. Niamh McCann, *black rock 5*, 2016, digital collage, dimensions variable.

Chapter Three ||

Self-publishing: DIY illustration and agonistic markets

The zine, a visually inventive form of amateur self-publishing, provides a grassroots example of printed drawing for further developing the participatory aspect of illustration. Commentary regarding the zine attaches a narrative of counter-hegemonic potential through the form's alignment with social activism, inter-subjective reparation, transformation and resistance. I refer to zine culture in the following discussion to connect drawing with its deployment (as illustration) in the formation of social spaces. The first section develops the zine in terms of its intermediation between artistic and political production, a position that scholars often view as indeterminate. Zine historiographer Stephen Duncombe's *Notes from Underground* (1997/2008) provides a benchmark for addressing the social valency of the zine within which I locate two contemporary case studies. These practitioners have developed the zine as a form of illustrated social history that interlinks the format with alternative community formation, where the material of the zine mediates between the author's production of images and an actualisation of new social conditions, between the solitary illustrator and a potential community of readers.

The second section investigates how illustrated self-publishing is circulated, exchanged and given symbolic value. The development of zines is interconnected with the participatory culture of comic fans and I discuss two places of exchange in this overlap between forms. Of these, the large scale Comiket is a focal point for a subculture based on the circulation of yaoi dōjinshi. I apply theoretical positions on the political efficacy of fan cultures that view the event as either challenging, or mirroring and reproducing, its corporate and misogynist context. The second event, DIY Cultures, is a small-scale multi-platform activist symposium themed around a self-publishing fair. The visibility of illustration is far more nuanced, invoked by the organisers in their marketing material but appearing more tangentially in the event itself. In the final section I expand on the attribution of an alternative educational narrative to the zine and zine fair. I evidence the fieldwork that stemmed from the re-application of *The Selfish Dream* as a research instrument as influencing the structure of the student study. I then posit that my final re-formatting of the work as a self-published booklet constitutes an address to a public rather than to a pre-determined community of readers.

3.1 || Illustrated zines

3.1.1 || Underground culture

This section introduces the two practitioners and the central question over the political efficacy of zine practice. Zines can be broadly described as an amateur form of limited-edition pamphlet circulated outside commercial markets and mainstream cultural capital.⁴³⁰ Their early development is interlinked with that of the modern US comic book as each were influenced by the fandom that arose around early twentieth century science fiction writing. From intra-community communication facilitated by the letters pages in mainstream SF magazines, correspondence club members in the US began to produce their own publications.⁴³¹ By 1940 ‘fanzine’, a portmanteau of fan and magazine, was being used to describe these, and the term subsequently broadened to include any amateur-produced publications for circulation within groups of aficionados.⁴³² From this lineage, fanzines developed as a response to a variety of mass-market and pop cultural commodities, forming home-made art works that, parodied, subverted, queered and kinked the material of their commercial influences.⁴³³

The etymological shift from fanzine to zine took place in the 1970s.⁴³⁴ Without the ‘fan’ the subject of zines widened, but although unshackled from their relation to popular culture, the producer’s obsessive or personal attachment to their subject remains as a link to fandom.⁴³⁵ ‘Zines’ can then

⁴³⁰ In stating this it must be acknowledged that any of these descriptors can be changed and a publication still described by commentators as a zine. The field therefore incorporates several reinventions and recodifications of the overarching definition.

⁴³¹ Since the emergence of the first fanzines, they have been mechanically printed, albeit cheaply. Some practitioners see “hand-made,” as a key identifier, but hand-made in the zine world often means using a photocopier, a key piece of accessible reprographic technology. Zines can therefore be seen more to exist in a state in-between manual craft and commercial production, although the early science fiction fanzine producers often had as an aim to transition their publications into a mass market product. Regardless of that ambition, zines generally entail a low print run with limited audience, mostly within a community that shares the values of the producer.

⁴³² A similar process took place with comics in the 1950s, fans initially writing letters, then producing their own limited-edition publications. The modern comic form began in such a manner, the first appearance of Superman, the Ur-comic book character, was in a fanzine self-published by schoolboys Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster in 1932. In attempting to find a publisher, Siegel and Shuster eventually shifted the character from evil (a tyrant based on interpretations of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*) to an all-American good guy. The title was finally published in *Action Comics* #1 in 1938. In this connection to science fiction, the modern-day comic is given an additional reading as a professionalised fan production.

⁴³³ For example, US slash fiction of the 1970s, which realised queer pornographic subtexts to mainstream heteronormative narratives (initially *Star Trek*), forming, to the media scholar John Fiske, “elaborated and public versions of the interior and semiotic productions of more normal viewers.” An irony, for Fiske, that this brings mass produced culture closer than what he terms, “official culture.” Fiske, “Cultural Economy,” 46-47.

⁴³⁴ Influential variants on the zine include developments in the UK in the 1970s, where fanzine production arose in the punk movement and football club supporter groups.

⁴³⁵ “Fandom,” for creative business scholar Nicolle Lamerichs, “has been understood as a subculture that partly responds to, and subverts, mainstream popular culture by its fan activities and appropriations.” Nicolle Lamerichs,

relate to a diffuse assortment of cheaply printed or hand-made works that often overlap with poster art, comics, artist books, alternative press and mail art.⁴³⁶ In addition, although not identified at the time as zines, the description is also back-attributed to publications that contain autobiographical narratives in traditions such as scrap-booking.⁴³⁷ Connecting all these are a particular positioning of the author as an insider to a community and, although zines could be gateways to careers in mainstream publishing and a minority of publications were developed into magazines or migrated onto commercially successful online platforms,⁴³⁸ the overwhelming majority were and are produced for small audiences and distributed by the artist producer.

Although my focus is on the contemporary illustrated zine, the authors of my case studies, Steve Larder and Lindsay Starbuck, reflect and react to many of these developmental phases. Their zines continue a traditional role ascribed to self-publishing in punk and grassroots activism whilst embodying more recent codification and theorisation of the zine as a craft practice. Their meticulous production contrasts with the lo-fi, neo-Dadaist or knowing cack-handedness of many of their punk, riot grrrl and art school forebears. Yet, although precisely and skilfully crafted, their materials still speak of kitchen-table production values and the politics of the underdog, blurring the distinction between the amateur, a status viewed as intrinsic to zine-making, and the professional writer or illustrator.⁴³⁹

“Costuming as subculture: The multiple bodies of cosplay,” *Scene 2*, nos.1 & 2 (2014): 114.

⁴³⁶ Commentators also include lineages completely outside the commonly cited science fiction and punk culture origins. For instance, the writer Stewart Home’s description of the work of Fluxus participant Ray Johnson bears similarity to zine-making practices: “Johnson’s work consists primarily of letters, often with the addition of doodles, drawings and rubberstamped messages. The work is lightweight and humorous; rather than being sold as a commodity it is usually mailed to friends and acquaintances.” Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture*, Stirling: AK Press, 1991: 61. <https://www.stewarthomesociety.org/sp/assault.htm>. Zine scholar Teal Ann Triggs includes within the description: Samizdat underground publishing; small press artist publications (Dada in particular is used to connect surrealist absurdism and appropriation with punk collage); Situationist print works; and again, the collectivist and DIY stance of Fluxus. Teal Ann Triggs, “‘Generation Terrorists’: The Politics and Graphic Language of Punk and Riot grrrl Fanzines in Britain 1976-2000” (PhD thesis, The University of Reading, 2004): 79-93.

⁴³⁷ Proto-zines with autobiographical narratives circulated in domestic contexts simply for communicating to immediate family and kinship groups. The cartoonist Art Spiegelman identifies self-published books within Holocaust survivor communities as a direct influence on his graphic biography *Maus*. These post-war pamphlets, such as *Ravensbrück* (1946), were, “often created by survivors, bearing witness in drawing with a range of artistic ability, to what they had been through in the camps.” These were printed by amateur printers and circulated in survivor communities. Hillary Chute, “Hillary L. Chute: Disaster Drawn,” WGBHForum presentation, 8 April 2016, video, 57:53, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1E30Wu134O4>.

⁴³⁸ For instance, the heavily commercialised US website, *Boing Boing*, which originated as a zine in 1988.

⁴³⁹ For Duncombe, the zinester’s amateur status is the one defining characteristic amongst the plethora of topics tackled by zines. Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from underground: zines and the politics of alternative culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm Publishing, 2008), 18.

The materials used by these two zinesters signify the throwaway of earlier zines which itself signals the ethos of an ‘underground culture’ within which the zine is embedded. Underground culture is described by Stephen Duncombe as a form of resistance or alternative to the mainstream and a movement to bring about change in the world that speaks for the marginalised and invisible. In Duncombe’s analysis, the term is interwoven and often interchangeable with zine production.⁴⁴⁰ However, zines also signify a desire for tactility, physicality and the comforting limitations of form in the age of digital publishing, and in this way Larder and Starbuck’s work can be partly understood as a fetishisation of the zine: as nostalgia for haptic communication, for community rooted in craft and for a lost subcultural authenticity denied by constant commercial re-appropriation.

Starbuck, publishing under the name Lindsay Draws, is a north American living in London who, in her website accessed in January 2018, describes her zines as combining radical and oral history with social justice issues. Starbuck’s commissions for activist welfare organisations are indicative of her practice at an intersection of DIY culture, queer kinships, feminist activism and social research,⁴⁴¹ and the aim of her practice is to dissipate what is perceived as a division between ‘artist’ and ‘worker’, and between work and art itself. The proposal for a de-alienated labour made in William Morris’s utopian science fiction novel *News from Nowhere* (1890)⁴⁴² is cited as an influence, where, in a futuristic society rooted in autodidactic knowledge acquisition and learning from nature, citizens learn a range of manual skills that reflect Morris’s own revival of a series of crafts. Morris was also self-taught, “using nothing more than medieval texts,”⁴⁴³ and Starbuck draws a parallel to her own self-education in traditional handicraft such as embroidery, ceramics and joinery as well as digital publishing techniques.

Through this comparison Starbuck places her practice in conversation with the visionary aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts Movement, where the zine is perceived as an everyperson artwork,

⁴⁴⁰ Duncombe’s discussion often moves between the zine and underground culture as if the two are the same. However, he also states that the artefact of the zine itself is not culture but rather that zines are an expression of culture and that that culture is “underground.” Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 184.

⁴⁴¹ Starbuck moved from art school to study the history of radicalism, a course she then quit. “Then when I first encountered DIY culture, it was a perfect fit with how I had always lived my life. There was no need to be an expert at anything and plenty of encouragement to do whatever you wanted so it all just carried on from there.” Interview with Melanie Maddison, *Colouring Outside The Lines #6* (Leeds: Footprint Workers Co-op, 2012), 9.

⁴⁴² For Starbuck, “It will take a radical shift in thinking about our relationship with work before this way of creating that [Morris] envisioned can happen on a wider scale. But I absolutely think that most of us have the capacity and the means to bring creativity into our lives in some way. That change can then radiate out and we can start creating more with the people around us.” Maddison, *Outside The Lines*, 6.

⁴⁴³ Maddison, 6.

consciously humble in materials and modest in scale but ambitious in terms of embodying a wider socialist ideology through craft and ornamentation.⁴⁴⁴ This can be viewed in many of Starbuck's published works where illustration is focused on communicating the cause of female emancipation,⁴⁴⁵ with particular emphasis on countering and raising awareness of the mistreatment of women within left-wing activism.⁴⁴⁶ For example: Starbuck researches, writes and illustrates radical and little-known social histories of women for the feminist *Shape and Situate* zine;⁴⁴⁷ her cover art for the *Salvage Collective* report (2016) uses a motif of an abandoned building, whose rewilding is an echo of the anti-industrialism of the Arts and Crafts Movement; and her *educational mini-zine* (2015) is intended as an instrument of direct action for women to use within left-wing communities (Figure 30).⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁴ In a similar equation of anachronistic styles with radical left-politics, the writer and illustrator Clifford Harper used a woodblock style for *Anarchy: A Graphic Guide* (London, Camden Press Ltd., 1987).

⁴⁴⁵ In a discordance with Starbuck's practice, the agrarian utopian society in *News from Nowhere* perpetuates the gender inequalities of its time of writing. Although all Morris's citizens are ostensibly liberated from oppression, labour conditions are segregated along the Victorian conception of separate and "natural" spheres for women and men. William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, (1890), extract reprinted in *Utopias*, Richard Noble, ed. (London: Whitechapel, 2009): 32.

⁴⁴⁶ The *Salvage Collective* uses the zine format as a method for communicating and spreading information for its users, the survivors of abuse within activist communities. "The salvage collective aims to bring together women (cis, trans & intersex), trans & non-binary survivors & activists who experience gender oppression, violence and abuse in UK activist communities to nurture activist cultures of care, accountability & safety. We aim to provide a network to share experiences, resources, skills and build communities of belief, support and action." <https://projectsalvage.wordpress.com>.

⁴⁴⁷ For Starbuck, these are, "people who I love, admire or can learn something from, either real or fictional." These are consciously selected from different timeframes to apply previous experiences to contemporary developments. An example is Voltairine de Cleyre, an early US feminist anarchist writer, where for Starbuck, "We are dealing with the same exact shit, the same exact divisions, the same exact barriers to change." These are stories about those, "who got their heads busted to make change happen. [...] [W]e have more of a chance of creating sustained opposition if these stories from the past are more frequently and accurately told." Maddison, *Outside The Lines*, 7.

⁴⁴⁸ The intention is for the zine to be utilised or "played" by the holder in situations where an awareness of misogyny is required. Illustration facilitates the no-nonsense statements, maximising the zine's audience accessibility and readability. Within, Starbuck writes: "I truly hope you will never have cause to use this but you probably will. When that time comes (maybe it's right now), it will be here for you. You can give it directly to someone you think needs to read it or leave it lying around in a space where theory bros hang out." Starbuck, <http://andsomeplyers.blogspot.co.uk/2015/08/free-educational-minizine.html>.

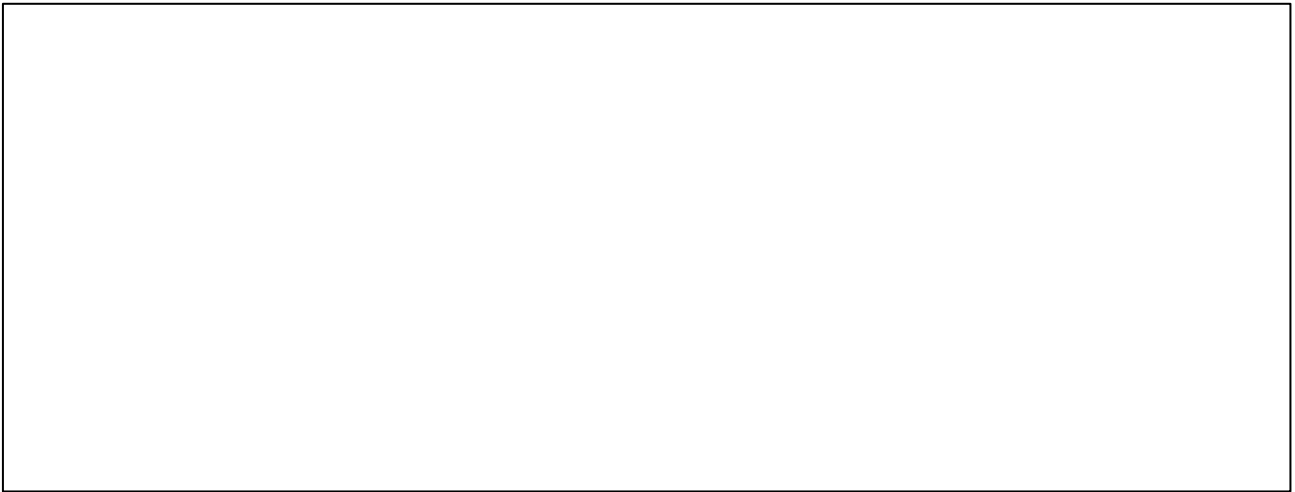


Figure 30. Lindsay Draws, *educational mini-zine*, 2015, Risograph booklet and pdf.

Although self-publishing has a long-standing, cross-cultural and polyphonic association with feminism, two perspectives on the form from the US in the 1990s are particularly worth introducing in conversation with Starbuck's activist aesthetics. The narrative of counter-hegemonic cultural production exemplified by the riot grrrl movement, and the emphasis on intimate personal narrative in US sociologist Kristen Schilt's research are in turn pivotal characteristics that are considered in evaluating the politics of the zine. Schilt describes zine culture as providing a safe space for girls and young women to articulate gendered experiences of adolescence.⁴⁴⁹ This sharing of experiences, what Schilt describes as her subjects retaining their voice and speaking the truth about their lives, initiated a recognition of broader underlying political problems forming a method of resistance to societal pressures.⁴⁵⁰ Schilt views the particular characteristics of zine production as enabling this, as the format permits a balance between what she terms covert resistance, within which girls could safely anonymise, or, "go underground" with their feelings, and the overt resistance entailed by publishing and distributing their experiences.

The amateur self-publishing described by Schilt was influenced by the riot grrrl movement, which, through the transformation of personal problems to social and political ones, enacted a politicisation process which raised awareness of sexism.⁴⁵¹ Centring on music and control of the means of creative production, riot grrrl was a defiant response to the male homosociality of hardcore and

⁴⁴⁹ Kristen Schilt, "'I'll Resist With Every Inch And Every Breath' Girls and Zine Making as a Form of Resistance," *Youth & Society* 35, no. 1 (September 2003): 71-97, 86. DOI: 10.1177/0044118X03254566.

⁴⁵⁰ Schilt examines how specific issues are processed through the zine, identifying five categories: sex, self-mutilation, sexual abuse, menstruation, and sexual harassment. Schilt, "Girls and Zine Making," 88.

⁴⁵¹ Triggs, "'Generation Terrorists'."

straight edge punk scenes. The importance of zine-making within the movement had a lasting impact on contemporary feminist self-publishing, informing the contexts within which artists such as Starbuck distribute their work and influencing the continuing practice and re-invention of the format generally.⁴⁵² Of the latter, riot grrrl characterises the productive tensions that surround discussion of zines' political effectiveness, acknowledged by Duncombe as multiple contradictions that can stifle actual political change. The curator Astria Suparak acknowledges that although responding to gender inequality, riot grrrl was itself open to critique as a purely youthful, white middle-class movement,⁴⁵³ a homogeneity Duncombe views within the broader the punk underground of the 1980s and 90s as a barrier to better representation.⁴⁵⁴

However, when considering the long-term reach and impact of the movement, possible only after some time has elapsed, riot grrrl can be rejuvenated as a political force. *Alien She*, the 2014 exhibition Suparak co-curated with Ceci Moss, presented an expansive and inclusive view of riot grrrl's cultural and political impact and evidenced, in particular, the more recent re-deployment of the aesthetic by women from diverse backgrounds. Within the exhibition, the riot grrrl zine's challenge to dominant structures of professionalism was foregrounded as a method with continuing relevance to artistic activist production.⁴⁵⁵ This countered the design scholar Teal Anne Triggs's critique, written in 2004, that any disruptive emancipatory agency that was present, both within riot grrrl and the broader punk zine cultures, had been quickly absorbed into the mainstream.⁴⁵⁶ For Suparak then, zines retain the potential for political resistance, encouraging communication and solidarity within activist communities and are, "a tool for consciousness raising."⁴⁵⁷

Another issue arises from this premise that communication is politics enough, as for Duncombe this, "conflates a model of communication with a model of politics, and politics at the macro level

⁴⁵² Riot grrrl publications were not the first feminist pop culture zines. US science fiction zines from the 1970s included *The Witch and The Chameleon* (1974 – 1976) and *Janus* (1975 – 1980), and in the 1980s women's rock and roll zines included Lori Twersky's *Bitch*.

⁴⁵³ "Riot grrrl Activism through Art and Zines | Alien She at YBCA," documentation for exhibition, *Alien She*, curated by Astria Suparak and Ceci Moss, YBCA, 25 October 2014 to 25 January 2015, published by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, 19 November 2014, video, 5:24, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=mp-VI9KUvBw.

⁴⁵⁴ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 185. Although Duncombe finds examples of marginalised communities to counter his own generalisation, information studies scholar Melanie Ramdarshan Bold identifies that, "racial identity is not covered in-depth in his analysis." Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, "Why Diverse Zines Matter: A Case Study of the People of Color Zines Project," *Publishing Research Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (September 2017): 215–228, 219.

⁴⁵⁵ Suparak, "Riot grrrl Activism."

⁴⁵⁶ Triggs, "Generation Terrorists," 40. For Triggs, "a parallel process occurs stripping away political meaning - a sanitization of its signs. Punk re-emerges as 'style' - a process facilitated within the mainstream." Triggs, 116.

⁴⁵⁷ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 185; 190.

is about not communication, but contestation.”⁴⁵⁸ Schilt also recognised this issue in her study of girls’ zines. Their micro-scale distribution within the subcultural spaces of the zine fair and punk gig were not overt enough to risk sanction by authority and their resistance value was inscribed as a communicative stage between more engaged activism.⁴⁵⁹ Here zines are only stepping-stones to social and activist action.⁴⁶⁰ Starbuck’s affiliation with grassroots activism is also helpful in raising a critique of zine practice in relation to its proposed counter-hegemonic viability. Within the underground, zines are not just to be read, but are a politics of example, a “model of participatory cultural production and organization to be acted upon.”⁴⁶¹ That zines model DIY culture to enable others to also DIY, “the result is that competitive individualism is replaced by an idea of cooperative individuality.”⁴⁶²

In viewing zines as, “the products of individual dissenters who have set up volunteer networks of communications with one another,” Duncombe aligns the ideology of underground culture with a description of anarchism, itself a philosophy of individual dissent within the context of volunteer communities.⁴⁶³ For Triggs, Duncombe is looking to the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci’s definition of a culture that rises “out of dissent,” a, “cultural resistance,” essentially anti-authoritarian and non-compliant.⁴⁶⁴ However, the efficacy of this desire, the translatability into political action is a precarious hypothesis as Gramsci’s counter-hegemonic culture required a corresponding political programme to be active.⁴⁶⁵ Duncombe therefore views the personalised zine method as having no chance of winning the struggle it communicates, and zines can only be, “pre-political.”⁴⁶⁶ As such, zinesters describing their time spent on zine creation as radical act is a tenuous claim for Duncombe, as producing a zine is a, “woefully inadequate response in the face of

⁴⁵⁸ Duncombe, 198.

⁴⁵⁹ “Although the c/overt resistance of zines could be easily dismissed as little more than ideological resistance, it can lead to more overt political action for some girls.” Schilt, “Girls and Zine Making,” 82.

⁴⁶⁰ “Zine culture emphasises action.” Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 192. Although even here there is an ambivalence, where the alternative scene can be a steppingstone for right as well as left (193).

⁴⁶¹ For Duncombe, the focus in zine culture is on the consequences of injustice not on its causes. For example, a zine on civil disobedience is not a “how-to,” it’s a personal experience of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is thus radical enough in itself for the writers, whereas the actual long-term effect is not so important. “[A]n act of non-compliance, an act of authenticity to one’s own beliefs: propaganda of the deed.” Duncombe, 197.

⁴⁶² Duncombe, 189.

⁴⁶³ This association with individualist action in itself threatens the efficacy of zines for Duncombe. Counterculture theorist Hakim Bey, “argues that a political body that refuses to name itself, stand still, and coalesce into a self-conscious organisation has the best chance of surviving a battle with the powers that be.” Duncombe, 40. Further, “One reason that anarchism is so prevalent as a philosophy in the underground world is that it is a close abstraction of the network: voluntary, non-hierarchical, with omnidirectional communication flows, and each citizen a creator/consumer” (188).

⁴⁶⁴ Triggs, “‘Generation Terrorists,’” 116.

⁴⁶⁵ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 185.

⁴⁶⁶ Unlike more formalised political movements zine culture follows Marxist historiographer Eric Hobsbawm’s formula in making their producers more like bandits and religious zealots, not yet aware or able of contextualising their urges, yet rooted in lived experience. Duncombe, 185.

all this disaster.” In addition, zines effectivity seems doomed, as, “so long as the politics of underground culture remain the politics of culture, they will remain a sort of virtual politics.”⁴⁶⁷

Another position on zine’s efficacy is that simply constituting an alternative culture is resistance enough. The zine scene DIY rejection of consumerism necessitates that the subculture remains a ghetto, a positive attribution for Duncombe. This alternative culture, more than just a publishing practice, is an entire way of thinking, being and creating; a shared ideal of what culture, community, and creativity could be,” and the zine is the, “note from the underground,” that allows this subterranean vision to be nurtured and shared.⁴⁶⁸ In contrast, the work of Steve Larder communicates a counter-cultural impetus through lived experience, combining writing with drawing to spread (to paraphrase Duncombe) the ideal of an authentic life. His work differs from Starbuck’s in that it follows a lineage that presents membership of a particular subculture as in-itself a mode of resistance.

Much of this self-documentation takes place in Larder’s ongoing serial zine, *Rum Lad* (2006 -), an illustrated journal chronicling his experiences as a musician and member of the underground punk scene in and around Nottingham.⁴⁶⁹ In *Rum Lad* Larder grafts the stylistic influence of the early twentieth century occultist Austin Osman Spare to the grammar of the North American DIY punk zine scenes (Figure 31). The subgenre documented in *Rum Lad* is influenced by the same US hardcore and DIY scenes whose development was re-invigorated by the intervention of riot grrrl. Accordingly, his zines display a transatlantic influence, notably from *Cometbus* (1989 -) a punk underground travelogue and autobiography of its sole creator Aaron Elliot.⁴⁷⁰ For Duncombe, *Cometbus* holds many properties indexical to the zine. As a long-form road trip and tour diary it attempts to, “map out the bohemia that can be found within the everyday,”⁴⁷¹ presenting an exemplar of the zinester as materially impoverished yet building a resource from their encounters

⁴⁶⁷ Duncombe, 202.

⁴⁶⁸ “[F]or in this ghetto, we get to set the standards of what constitutes valid expression and creativity, instead of having these definitions determined by the academy, art world or the commercial marketplace of culture.” Duncombe, 212.

⁴⁶⁹ Larder is a musician in four punk bands, one of which is named *The Copyscans*, itself invoking the Xeroxing process behind the zine, “that’s like a zine thing the band as well. Like all of us are in the sort of zine scene.” His illustrative zine practice is integrated into this music scene and the whole assemblage is networked through tours, publications and zine fests. Steve Larder, in discussion with the author, 25 January 2017.

⁴⁷⁰ *Razorcake* (2001 -), a US DIY punk culture zine for whom Larder occasionally illustrates, is also a major influence (Larder, 2017). For Triggs, US punk emerged from middle class boredom compared to UK punk which was originally a working-class reaction to oppression (Triggs, “‘Generation Terrorists’.”) The hardcore and underground scenes developed ideologically driven aspects, such as anarcho-punk with links to environmentalism and human rights activism, and straight-edge which espoused a quasi-monastic disavowal of casual sex, alcohol and drug use.

⁴⁷¹ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 65.

with the environment toward constructing a relational and informational network from which emerges a, “bohemian shadow map,” or, “semantic rearrangement of components of the objective world.”⁴⁷² The shadow map, “is the property of those who possess very little,”⁴⁷³ but they give the things that they don’t own new meanings, a deciphering of the subterrain beneath a straight world.



Figure 31. Steve Larder, *Rum Lad* issue 9, 2015, Risograph booklet, 148mm x 210mm.

3.1.2 || **Those who don’t like the sun**

The emphasis on personal experience in zine culture is another characteristic relevant to a discussion of the political effectiveness of the genre. When brought into conversation with the group-forming attributes, the illustrated zine can be considered in terms of intermediating between solitude and community. Both Larder and Starbuck participate in small egalitarian communities based around craft, ethical living and shared experience of the arts and, in a re-emergence of the

⁴⁷² Duncombe quotes from Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style* (London: Routledge, 1988). *Notes from Underground*, 65-66.

⁴⁷³ Duncombe, 65.

link to the science fiction zine, they can be said to also illustrate their ideal communities, much in the way that Morris depicted his in *News from Nowhere*.⁴⁷⁴ However, central to the aesthetic construction of community is an ethical outlook centred on authentic communication of personal experience.⁴⁷⁵ The relationship between authenticity, the zine as intra-community document and the access to the scene granted to an external public, also inhibits the political efficacy of zine practice.

Personal experience relayed in zines is often expressed as one of failure or social maladjustment.⁴⁷⁶ For instance, Duncombe presents an image of the ‘purist’ zinester as a white westerner failing to be successfully middle class within a meritocratic society. The stereotype reflects Duncombe’s time of writing in the late 1990s and his focus on the US punk zine, but the image is one that persists, even as the class, gender, sexual identity and ethnic background of zinesters has diversified.⁴⁷⁷

Disregarding his identifiers, Duncombe’s attribution of the loser remains relevant as he posits the purpose of the zine as a making visible of themselves, and in so doing a proclamation is made that not amounting to anything amounts to something, that what is a deficit is in fact an asset.⁴⁷⁸ ‘Loser’ is a material transformed into an accolade in this schema, self-conscious losers wearing the term as a badge of honour. The loser “comes alive,” through the outpouring of sadness to anonymous readers enabled by zine culture and a political potential lies in, “transforming personal failure into an indictment of the alienating aspects of our society.”⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁴ Starbuck views “creative” in a broad sense and, “working in my community,” refers to a range of activities, for instance, Starbuck is involved in environmentalism, working for a community orchard. Maddison, *Outside The Lines*, 10.

⁴⁷⁵ Duncombe views zines as typified by honesty rather than literary musings, a sincerity Starbuck privileges over a conceptual approach to art making. Here Starbuck’s approach to artwork is complementary to the goal of communication activism. “I want to make and interact with art that is sincere and has something to say, the kind of work many people in the official art world would deride as ‘earnest’ [...] Part of what gets me down about conventional art spaces, especially in London, is that so much of the work that makes it in there is conceptual. I really think that is a form of art that the vast majority of people find difficult to connect with, myself included...” Figurative or representational work in contemporary galleries is an, “...ironic in-joke I don’t think they really care if anyone ‘normal’ is interested in what they do.” Maddison, 5-6.

⁴⁷⁶ Zinesters are those, “who don’t like the sun,” as my first tablemate described them at Nottingham Zine Fair, June 2016.

⁴⁷⁷ US zinesters of the 1980s and 90s are, “Freaks, geeks, nerds and losers” for the zine catalogue *Factsheet Five* editor Cari Janice (Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 22). In this reading zinesters are like punks, losers on a personal level but also because they deny or reject the wealth, power and prestige of social winners. Further, they are described as loners who don’t do well face-to-face (25). In this instance, there is link to perceptions of the science fiction fan, where one history of the zine is situated, as having low social skills, being alienated from peers, and engaging in fandom as an escape from the unpleasantness of real world. Together, these are, “invisible,” losers, “in a society that rewards the best and the brightest,” which for Duncombe, describes the majority of Americans (7).

⁴⁷⁸ Duncombe, 24-25. An introversion that DIY Cultures co-founder Hamja Ahsan recodes, albeit humorously, as a “shy radicalism.” Echoing, in his Book Works publication, the irony and tricksterism zines often use to perform cultural knowledge. Hamja Ahsan, *Shy Radicals: The antisystemic politics of the militant introvert* (London: Book Works, 2017).

⁴⁷⁹ Duncombe’s losers, “have something to say and want to be heard,” even if that is merely to make public their failure, for example Doug Holland’s reprinting of rejection letters and girlfriend put-downs in the zine: *Pathetic Life*. The zine can also be vehicle of expression for those whom society deems as, “worthless people,” and Duncombe cites as an example David Greenberger’s *The Duplex Planet*. This zine as ethnographic research and humanist artwork

Failure is reconfigured similarly by the gender theorist Jack Halberstam as a particularly queer mode.⁴⁸⁰ His Gaga feminism is an approach to life, a set of creative responses to static models of success and failure for application by, “the losers, those for whom the price of success is too high and the effect of losing may be to open more doors.”⁴⁸¹ Like Duncombe’s zinester losers responding to meritocracy,⁴⁸² this failure is also in response to the danger of, “positive thinking.” In particular, Halberstam’s Gaga feminism works in spaces between normative intimacy, and mobilises both artistic practices and the mass media cultural commodities, to construct alternative models for thinking family and kinship.⁴⁸³ In a synchronicity with the zine, creativity, as Paolo Virno’s ‘virtuosity’ or Rancière’s ‘improvisation’, is central to achieving this, manifesting the ideology rather than being merely a manifesto for it.

The performative aspect of the zine has led commentators such as Triggs and the media theorist Henry Jenkins to address the amateur status through social science philosopher Michel de Certeau’s theorisation of cultural production outside elites. In this framework, the ‘strategy’ of the polis is creatively resisted by the ‘tactics’ of the subjugated,⁴⁸⁴ which are shortcuts that everyday users take to mitigate the alienating effects of the system being imposed from above.⁴⁸⁵ ‘Poaching’ from that strategy, in the form of a visual plunder and bricolage, is one of the tactics particularly pertinent to zine culture that has come to define the look of zines.⁴⁸⁶ In a specific instance, this counter-hegemonic association gave the form a distinct role within the coming together of art scenes in early 1980s New York, forming part of a cross-cultural, cross-class, “hybrid subcultural art,”⁴⁸⁷ for

chronicles the thoughts of a rest home community largely through interviews representing, “life, humour and just plain oddness.” (Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 24-27). *The Duplex Planet* was later translated into a serial comic book by *Fantagraphics*.

⁴⁸⁰ Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.

⁴⁸¹ For Halberstam, alternatives or rejections of marriage institutions and alternatives to capitalism and neoliberalism. Halberstam applies the poet and scholar Fred Moten’s thinking on rights to gay marriage, to refuse the rights denied you is to look elsewhere for nourishment, “working in the spaces between normative constructions of labor, worth, kinship and intimacy... we engage already in noncapitalist modes of exchange. Swap meets, co-ops (etc.)... stand outside of profit-orientated systems.” Judith Halberstam, *Gaga feminism: sex, gender, and the end of normal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 148.

⁴⁸² Although, “Alienation can sell in the US,” Duncombe differentiates between the rebel that speaks through mass media (often gendered male) and the rebel in zines. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 26.

⁴⁸³ An example of the latter is Halberstam’s proposition for a, “spongy relation to life” (with a reference to the animated character SpongeBob SquarePants) where “failure preserves some of the wondrous anarchy of childhood,” and blurs or “disturbs” the boundaries between adult and child. Halberstam, *Gaga feminism*, 126.

⁴⁸⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1988), 165.

⁴⁸⁵ De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 166.

⁴⁸⁶ Largely from the re-invigoration of the form by punk fans from the 1970s onwards, for Teal Anne Triggs, a “stylistic resistance.” Triggs, “‘Generation Terrorists’,” 116.

⁴⁸⁷ Lucy R. Lippard, “Activating Activist Art,” Circa (1983): 15.

the artist and writer Lucy Lippard, where a disillusionment with art world elitism, a rejection of both “pristine spaces,” and “slick pages,” occurred alongside a formation of grassroots arts communities.⁴⁸⁸

Within Larder and Starbuck’s work, not only the loser, as outsider or socially marginalised identity, has been reformulated as an affirmative figure, but marginalised communities of outsiders are also presented as models of utopian social organisation. Further, the authors’ interpretation and re-presentation of their experiences of meaningful communities is mediated by illustrated reportage and that illustration performs the way of living. The zine emerges as a more complex social mediation when considering the community formation that Lippard associates with the zine alongside the solitary stance of the failure, loser or social outcast. For instance, for Schilt’s teenage interviewees zines were a way out of the isolation they felt within friendship groups. The emphasis on their personal experiences formed a rejection of a presumed collectivism and the distribution process fostered alternative circles of companionship outside peer groups.

The act of drawing within zine practice can also be viewed as seeking a degree of separation from the group,⁴⁸⁹ for instance, undertaken in physical isolation, the format’s production processes can themselves form a salve to the frustrations of activism. Here, illustration is not a full retreat from participation, but plays a mediating role between solitude and sociality. Within this, Starbuck acknowledges a contradiction raised by Morris’s daughter May, who attributed her father’s loneliness and melancholy to his success at self-sufficiency, “Here was someone who wrote lyrically about the beauty of community, but it was completely lacking in his own life.”⁴⁹⁰ This paradox was relative to Starbuck’s own isolation which she attributes to her artmaking, a situation where participating in a community again becomes something pressing, but that community must be one that is constructed anew.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ Lippard, “Activist Art,” 14.

⁴⁸⁹ In a similar manner, Bechdel’s therapist in *Are You My Mother?* considers the making of the comic as a distancing from relations, comic illustration as a practice seeking to maintain solitude as much as to identify with community.

⁴⁹⁰ For Starbuck, “Activism can be really frustrating. The slowness of consensus decision making and the focus on process over outcome makes me want to pull out my hair sometimes. Making art that expresses my values with no compromises I get to present in my own words is a type of therapy that enables me to stay involved and hopeful.” Maddison, *Outside The Lines* #6, 5.

⁴⁹¹ “For the longest time, community was something I searched for, believing that it must be out there somewhere, ready-made. And that when I found it, it would completely meet my needs. [...] It’s only in the last few years that I’ve come to understand that community is something you have to create for yourself.” Maddison, 7.



Figure 32. Lindsay Draws, *The Man Called Uncle Tim* issue 3, 2015, Risograph booklet, 297mm x 210mm (spread).

At the time of writing Starbuck's most in-depth zine-work is the four-part *The Man Called Uncle Tim* (2014 – 2016),⁴⁹² which she describes as, “a long-term oral history zine project with my family to uncover the life of my uncle who died when I was a teenager.”⁴⁹³ The story of Uncle Tim, who lived in a “queer polyamorous intentional community,” called the J. Hartzelbucks (a portmanteau of the names of all four members),⁴⁹⁴ is told through the author's personal reflections, interviews with family members, and duo-colour drawings. Starbuck frames the historical narrative with the reflections on the research process and her own experiences, highlighting the viewpoint as one of personal empathetic insight. Although not part of the zine narrative, the J. Hartzelbucks' close engagement in environmental and community support whilst practising craft skills of woodworking, joinery and forestry foretell Starbuck's own DIY activities and interests. Uncle Tim's autonomous family parallels the non-familial kinship structures sought throughout the zine underground, and

⁴⁹² Lindsay Draws, *The Man Called Uncle Tim*, self-published (Issue #1, 2014; issue #2, 2014; issue #3, 2015; issue #4, 2016).

⁴⁹³ <http://andsomeplyers.bigcartel.com/about>.

⁴⁹⁴ Each of the four issues centres on the testimony of subject interviewed by Starbuck, chronologically: Grandma; Dad; Aunt Judy; and Don, the last member of the J. Hartzelbucks household.

Halberstam's alternative models of kinship that escape the heteronormative.⁴⁹⁵ The work also reflects the reparative function of the hidden family histories observed in the comic book. *The Man Called Uncle Tim*, like Bechdel's *Fun Home*, an investigation of an enigmatic, dead, male family member whose expression of sexual identity was constricted by societal homophobia.⁴⁹⁶

Although the intention is to celebrate Uncle Tim,⁴⁹⁷ like Bechdel's didactic mode in *Are You My Mother?* there is also a pedagogical drive toward further understanding a more nuanced relationship between sexuality, spirituality and activism. The J. Hartzelbucks adopted a version of Quakerism that ran within Starbuck's family and the author notes the influence of this on her own activist practice.⁴⁹⁸ The drawing style facilitates the pedagogical aspect not only through its clarity and simplicity,⁴⁹⁹ but through the familiar, re-assuring and homely dialect of children's book illustration, a language which also overlaps with the comic.⁵⁰⁰ The style evokes different temporalities and earlier periods, such as a rendering of a map of Ohio seemingly from the 1950s, and in itself conjures Halberstam's application of mass media to alternative frameworks of living, where the, "spongy relation to life," concerns connecting again with childhood, a quest to go back and learn again, to teach a prior self.

Larder also chronicles a 'history', but unlike *A Man Called Uncle Tim*, *Rum Lad* is addressed primarily to the community that it depicts.⁵⁰¹ In the manner of *Cometbus*, *Rum Lad* embodies the

⁴⁹⁵ "For both Dad and Grandma, their biological families provided them with total happiness and fulfilment. For some of us though, that's just not enough." Draws, *The Man Called Uncle Tim* #2, 26.

⁴⁹⁶ For reviewer Andy Oliver, "The graphic memoir as a strand of comics-related storytelling may, perhaps, have come in for something of a mauling over the last year or so for its perceived prevalence in publishers' schedules but there is no doubting its efficacy as a means of communicating personal experience in a way that few other media can. *The Man Called Uncle Tim* is a perfect case in point and also a sterling example of that sense of democracy that surrounds the DIY culture of self-publishing." Andy Oliver, "The Man Called Uncle Tim #1 - A Journey of Discovery through Family History by Artist Lindsay Draws," review in *Broken Frontier* website, September 2014. <http://www.brokenfrontier.com/the-man-called-uncle-tim-1-a-journey-of-discovery-through-family-history-by-artist-lindsay-draws/>.

⁴⁹⁷ "The author's stated intent with this project is to celebrate her uncle by examining his life through the perceptions of her extended family and separating her impressions of him from his death." Oliver, "A Journey of Discovery."

⁴⁹⁸ "I always felt like my dad's Quaker values influenced how I was raised, despite not being brought up with any religion." (Draws, *The Man Called Uncle Tim* #2, 19). For instance, within the pocket history of the Quakers in *Uncle Tim*, Starbuck views the Gurneyite-conservative split of 1842 as a parable of her own experience within left-wing activist groups. "If you've ever been involved in an activist group, I bet this sounds familiar." Draws, 16-18.

⁴⁹⁹ "If I say that Lindsay Draws has an economical storytelling technique I'm not using that as a euphemism for "simplistic" or "crude". Rather that she cuts each vignette down to the core facts, ensuring the pure humanity of the narrative is realised by avoiding over-elaboration, or the distraction of the adoption of an ostentatious or too knowing writing style. Similarly, the clarity of her illustrations gives the narrative an economical expressiveness." Oliver, "A Journey of Discovery."

⁵⁰⁰ "Not so much a comic book as a zine that employs some of the standards of the comics form... [*The Man Called Uncle Tim*] adopts some of the conventions of comics but strictly speaking is more accurately an illustrated story than sequential art." Oliver.

⁵⁰¹ Although Larder does express concern for an external readership, where he hopes that even if a reader doesn't

author's commitment to that community, to the authentic underground life. In this case illustration is used to underwrite the authenticity of the intra-community document and its author. The repetition of gig tableaux, portraits of DIY luminaries, comical skits and the landscapes encountered when touring, can be viewed in the terms identified earlier by Hélène Cixous (chapter one, pp.42-44). That is, the need of the drawer/writer to constantly re-inscribe, as the drawing only temporarily fills the yearning or lack; a need to be updated and continued without any breakage in style in order to re-assure the draughter. In my application, illustration not only evidences to Larder that he is committing his life to a scene but suggests that the scene itself requires constant updating through self-representation. Here, the DIY punk underground is in a process of continual re-inscription and Larder's illustrated zines contribute to the reproduction of that community by reflecting its ideal image back to itself.

That requirement for re-inscription suggests that the yearning, or lack, of Cixous's writer/drawer is a property of the underground scene itself. Duncombe posits that the zine network is a community of those with nothing in common.⁵⁰² If the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's discussion from *The Inoperative Community* (1986) is applied, zinesters can be viewed as seeking to escape from the community at large to the utopia of a negative community. The latter term, for the writer Georges Bataille, being, "the community of those who have no community." This can be articulated alternately in terms of the nostalgia that Nancy sees at the heart of community, which foregrounds that community is defined by a missing thing and that the missing thing can itself be a lack of community.⁵⁰³ If located in this schema *Rum Lad's* illustrative self-portraiture, of both author and DIY punk scene, can be comprehended as the re-inscription that is necessary to momentarily alleviate the lack of community that characterises the 'negative community'.

understand references, they can still relate to the authenticity; he acknowledges that zine making, like band activity, has an exclusivity and is an intra-community document. "Almost like an exclusive, and like, 'for the punks by the punks', kind of thing. And I think you almost don't want a wider audience for that sort of thing. It's made for the people who are entrenched in that culture." Larder, 2017.

⁵⁰² "If community is traditionally thought of as a homogenous group of individuals bound together by their commonality, a zine network proposes something different: a community of people linked via bonds of difference, each sharing their originality." Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 57-58.

⁵⁰³ The philosophical background to this is summarised by communications scholar Alexander Galloway, "Nancy, Blanchot and Agamben suggested that we seek out a community of those who have nothing in common; not community through a common thread, but the community of those with nothing common. They suggest that a truly ethical community can only be found among those who share nothing together. To commune means to come together at the level of one's genericness, not one's individuality." Alexander Galloway, "Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, or Unworkability" in *French Theory Today: An Introduction to Possible Futures*, Andrew Galloway, Nicola Masciandaro and Prudence Whittlesey (New York: TPSNY/Erudio Editions, 2010), 8-9. For the philosopher Robert Bernasconi, "The title of the first part of *The Unavowable Community*, 'The Negative Community', is drawn from Bataille. Bataille's phrase, 'the negative community: the community of those who have no community'." Robert Bernasconi, "On Deconstructing Nostalgia for Community within the West: The Debate between Nancy and Blanchot," *Research in Phenomenology* 23 (1993): 4.

This presents a problem for the wider zine culture's political effectivity that contradicts Lippard's earlier attribution of an activist potential to the form. *Rum Lad* foregrounds autonomy from the outside world, a self-sufficiency being strived for that is willingly outside commodified, profit-driven or mass media culture, the DIY punk scene being a support network and an alternative to a commercially driven way of life. Although about making 'things' happen for Larder, those things only happen within the community.⁵⁰⁴ Yet for Duncombe, an aim of dissenting politics is to work toward changing people's idea of the world, and the wider zine underground's identity building around separateness limits a capability to work with others on a broader, more public scale.⁵⁰⁵ Zines mistrust of politics with a "big P," where "all forms of instrumentality are suspect," and their favouring only of personal experience, results in, "an underground politics circumscribed by personal connection."⁵⁰⁶ Like the connection to anarchist formulations that resist organisation, the politics of authenticity, "with its demand that the political and personal have no separation," for Duncombe, "severely limits the scope of engagement."

Here, zinesters are not looking for a public but speaking to a particular community of readers of which they are members, a private sphere akin to a family. For some, this is a necessary strategy, such as the zines of Schilt's teenage subjects, where, "not being written for an adult audience is the main lure of zine writing, which has the ability to be simultaneously public and private."⁵⁰⁷ For Duncombe, however, zines generally avoid a public, the underground having no use for a capitalist idea of the public as workers, consumers and subjects. In avoiding such an address, zines fall short of what the educational reformer John Dewey and political theorist Raymond Williams call a common culture, one that is, "open to all and for all." Although not limiting access in terms of art's meritocracy, zines also do not make a broader invitation, remaining a 'small culture' for Duncombe, that abandons common culture to consumer capitalism.

The dilemma of whether zine culture is effectively counter-hegemonic appears undermined by the insularity of the movement. Yet technological changes since the original publishing of *Notes from*

⁵⁰⁴ "It's less commercial, less emphasis on making a profit and sale and more making sure that things happen in the first place." Larder, 2017.

⁵⁰⁵ "Celebrating otherness may be useful as self-therapy, but it is relatively useless as political strategy." (Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 194). Zine practitioners may disagree, as since Duncombe's 1997 text, zines have been used in therapeutic situations. For instance, the researcher Paula Cameron utilised zine production in art therapeutic contexts exploring identity, place and belonging. Paula Cameron, "Seamfullness: Nova Scotian Women Witness Depression Through Zines" (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2012).

⁵⁰⁶ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 195-196.

⁵⁰⁷ Schilt, "Girls and Zine Making," 79.

Underground gave Duncombe cause to revisit the counter-hegemonic potential of the zine as intra-community document. In his 2008 update to the original 1997 text, Duncombe reflects on DIY culture becoming big consumer business through the internet and on the zine format's circulation as a form readily co-opted by commerce. The late 2000's were a decline for Duncombe, the online echo chamber precipitating a return to the physical spaces of zine distribution and personal interaction between artists and readers.⁵⁰⁸ In turn zine ethics have mutated, albeit in a democratic fashion, until the original meaning is no longer retained.⁵⁰⁹ Yet, the zine's differentiation from the world of blogs, which do not constitute an alternative culture as, "there is no price of admission," and, damningly, whose values are conformist,⁵¹⁰ suggests a continuing potential for political agency in zines' very exclusivity, elusiveness and material intimacy.

3.1.3 || Currency

Although scholarly opinions differ when evaluating the political potential of zines, there is agreement that any agency rests in their materials as much as their content. Consequently, the physical and temporal quality of the zine takes on additional significance in the time of internet connectivity, both in terms of print and online publishing. Here, zines do not just give voice to the unheard (as the internet can now be said to supply this function) but form a material embodiment of that voice.⁵¹¹ For Steve Larder, his zines transfer time and affect to the reader, a tangibility that ties the material into a connection between the reader and author's sensoria, where the physicality has a longevity in comparison to the fleetingness and forgettability of the blog or forum.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁸ For Duncombe, the rise of online distribution both enabled discovery of zines and contributed to eradication of one-to-one contact with the seller through post or at gigs and fairs. In the 2008 reflections, Duncombe also reflects on the interaction with major and mainstream publishing zines have had after their high point in the mid to late 90s, finding that, "the boom and clamouring around zines has since quieted and many zinesters have resumed their quiet revolutions in the true underground." Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 206-207.

⁵⁰⁹ Duncombe, 212.

⁵¹⁰ "The result is a multitude of voices and values [...] But this diversity does not constitute a community [...] the values articulated or manifested on the web can often conform to those of the dominant arbiters of cultural value: the marketplace and the cultural establishment." Duncombe, 211-212.

⁵¹¹ "if you look at it in a sort of way of gathering information but it's still a voice and it's a way for people to be less consumer based and more like just, again, that whole kind of document and making a history and creating subcultures and maintaining that aspect of it." Larder, 2017.

⁵¹² Within Larder's DIY punk scene, zines were originally about keeping people up to date with local events. "In a way you could argue that that sort of thing is obsolete now, so for zines in music to exist at all must mean that, the creators find value in it to still exist beyond that [...] One of the things I do like to keep as an aesthetic thing is having something be physically tangible in your hands. Nowadays media is a lot more disposable and immediate and it doesn't have a shelf life longer than how long it takes you to flick past it. [...] I guess you could tie that back to 'the personal is political' side of it as well. It's just a way something feels to me anyway like a lot more. Like I said it just, especially nowadays when things are more easily dismissed and forgotten about, like even if one of my zines is just going to be sat next to somebody's toilet, I'd kind of prefer that than just be forgotten about on some forum or something like that." Larder, 2017.

Recognition of the manual production process is central to conveying time and affect. For Starbuck and Larder in particular, hand-drawn illustration marks the surface that transmits the production process between the author and the reader. For Larder, handwriting and drawing are jointly tasked with this role, an effect particularly visible in interviews with musicians, zine producers and alternative-scene luminaries. There is a compositional function to the handwriting which visually integrates the text and pictorial elements. But the script also communicates Larder's friendship and respect of his subjects' achievements,⁵¹³ and that their own reflections are themselves intimate and authentic (Figure 33).⁵¹⁴ Transmitting that respect and authenticity comprises the sharing of everyday experience, Larder's and those in the scene who he admires, that in turn is articulated as a political act, even if those stories are relatively trivial.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ "The reason I like to hand write all my stuff is 'cos it feels more like, like when I'm talking to [interviewee one] as well, she's done a lot of quite candid, very personal stuff before. And like it just feels like I'm having a conversation rather than an interview. I think that's what I want to try and have, like both the people I speak to in that particular issue, like [interviewee two], he's a teacher, he's a parent and, I just think he's an interesting guy, definitely, and like, [interviewee one] as well. So, it's more having a conversation with people who I personally find inspiring that I like, [and are] already my mates as well." Larder, 2017.

⁵¹⁴ Although Larder's major influence, *Cometbus*, is not illustrated, "It's the same sort of making a history and sort of documenting thing. And like, even though I'm drawing instead of writing, I'm trying to do the same sort of thing." But its author signature is its handwritten appearance, which, "keeps up with the feeling of it being like a journal, separate from a magazine." Larder, 2017.

⁵¹⁵ "I think part of the reason I do reportagey sorts of zine, journalistic sorts of drawing, is that it's almost like making your own history. So, it's like I've got that anthropological sort of point of view in mind as well 'cos I've definitely got that kind of, 'make the personal political, document things'. Even if it's just sort of, in the grand scheme, quite trivial. [...] I really value the idea of sharing stories for people, with people who might not have an opportunity to have those stories told. [...] Which is why I got into zine and comic culture because you've got all sorts of different types of people who have found a voice for themselves." Larder, 2017.



Figure 33. Steve Larder, *Rum Lad* issue 8, 2015, Risograph booklet, 148mm x 210mm.

In addition, each portrait is a surface to be read alongside the text, full of observed detail about the subject's life. In concert with the handwriting this often repetitive detail embodies the physical and temporal investment in the process of creation.⁵¹⁶ The signifiers of the community are inscribed upon the punk interiors and portraits in a complex of narremes that depict the body and the environment as themselves constructed from the pictorial surfaces of tattoos and T-shirts, a recursive mode of repetition comparable to Bechdel's nesting of elements within the comic book panel (chapter two, p.89).⁵¹⁷ As with Starbuck depicting the work of Uncle Tim and the J.

⁵¹⁶ For instance, Aaron Elliot, within the text itself, comments on hand lettering the eighty-two pages of *Cometbus* #31, "working midnight to 6.30am... It's taken me six weeks just to do the damn handwriting." Here the reader, for Duncombe, is brought into Aaron's process of creation and, "emphasis is place[d] on physically demonstrating the control of individuals over their technological tools." (Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 103). This is reflected in Larder's thoughts on detail, "it's definitely a very laboured way of doing it. But to me it's how I do it. If I didn't, then it wouldn't be my work. Like that's how people recognise my work, because of the way I draw people's tattoos or facial hair, you know, like every single blade. I get upset if I'm drawing a building and I'll be counting the windows, going, "one, two, three, four," and if it's wrong I'll be like, "No, do it again." I don't know, it's probably a borderline obsessive really but I guess that's just how I do it." Larder, 2017.

⁵¹⁷ This intensity is reflected in the bucolic psychedelia of Larder's landscape scenes where immersing himself in drawing detail and accuracy is both a meditative process and a borderline obsession. "I just really like getting intense with drawing. I did an illustration of a forest in a stone circle recently, and I just got completely goofed out and just felt like I was drawing every single leaf and blade of grass." This experience of drawing as consciousness

Hartzelbucks as based in practical skills and community involvement (Figure 32, p.145), illustration within the broader zine-craft represents a commitment to a scene (as exemplified by *Cometbus*) and of work being put into the community. The commitment to detail and consistency is an aspect of re-inscribing the community, re-imagining the ideal network within which the zinester can momentarily belong. In Larder's case, this necessitates including a second, more cartoonish, style of drawing as a countersignature, an antidote or foil to the detailed, more realist work. The observational style on its own would be "phoney," for Larder an incomplete representation, and the cartoon style reflects the more whimsical, humorous and fun side of his personality.⁵¹⁸ The illustration again mirrors the authenticity valued by the DIY movement, that must be continually re-performed for that movement to survive.

The process of mechanical reproduction adds an additional layer to the mediation of the drawing/writing by imprinting the performance of manual creation onto the zine, the tactile object that facilitates the dissemination of the images to the community. The visual characteristics of the reprographic process also underline the authenticity of the zinester as non-expert DIY community insider. To this end Larder and Starbuck's drawing methods are optimised for cheap print reproduction.⁵¹⁹ Both employ an external print firm that uses a Risograph, a stencil printer capable of printing in several fixed colours.⁵²⁰ The technology has found a place in contemporary zine publishing by delivering a quality between photocopier imperfection and screen-printed vibrancy, lending a degree of polish and material finesse to publications, along with enough inconsistency and imprecision to evoke the amateur heritage of zine culture. For *Rum Lad* the process retains the motif of the photocopied, monochromatic punk zine that identifies it as a subcultural tool of practice, a "scrappy" look that feels "genuine," even as Larder practices strict quality control, sending work back to the printer if not to the best standard. Similarly, for Starbuck, the Risograph bestows the appearance of the bold and unsophisticated screen-print upon her work, evoking 1970s protest movement posters.⁵²¹

altering is likened to his experience in a band, "Like just playing something over and over and over again it just becomes hypnotic. The bands that I play in definitely have that style in mind. And like my artwork as well, especially literally this moment [a reference to the drawing being worked on as we conduct the interview] is repetition of a theme and it is mind-bending after a while." Larder, 2017.

⁵¹⁸ "It's a massive part of my personality just to make fun of myself, and if I didn't include that sort of aspect in it then it wouldn't feel genuine." Larder, 2017.

⁵¹⁹ "My illustration style, of stark black and white, developed more out of the fact that I needed to photocopy my zines so I needed to have contrasty sort of pictures. So, it kind of happened as a sort of practical way and then I just decided to keep it up because it sort of seemed like it was my sort of signature." Larder, 2017.

⁵²⁰ The printer, Footprints Worker's Co-operative, is a not-for-profits arts and activist organisation, a zine distribution network and runs the annual Leeds Zine Fair, where I met Starbucks and Larder while tabling *The Selfish Dream*.

⁵²¹ Such as those of the *See Red Women's Workshop*. The style then continues as a link to a history of graphic activism that manifests in the educational activities of non-profit Risograph printers. For instance, Risoprints were made

Even if the zinester's physical involvement with printing is no longer necessary, the cheap-print style signifies a heritage wherein the creator still performs each stage of the production. In echoing this process, Starbuck and Larder's intention can be interpreted as making manifest a re-connection of roles long fragmented by capitalism.⁵²² However, the print method risks a reification of the mode of mechanical reproduction itself, where, regardless of the political content, Risographed zines appear as fanworks of the technology that produced them, recognisable in part due to the limited range and luminosity of the inks.⁵²³ Further, the uniformity resulting from the Risograph process (and from the zine format itself), establishes a visual conformism that distances the genre from self-critical or experimental political publishing. Which, to be effective, must for the writer Anthony Iles, "take issue with the standardising form of publishing conventions."⁵²⁴

Conformities such as these frustrate a reading of the genre in terms of the anti-book as introduced in chapter one (p.64). The roots of the concept are further elucidated by Walter Benjamin's 1934 address, *The Author as Producer*, where 'true' literature is pronounced as undermining its own reception as literature.⁵²⁵ Benjamin invites the reader to consider the printed object not alone, but within social relations, and further to ask if the object underwrites or overthrows these relationships.⁵²⁶ For Iles this proposes, "a conjunction between writing (not literature) and the ways the printed object would bear the trace of its production on its surface,"⁵²⁷ that prepared the grounds for Nicholas Thoburn's concept of the anti-book, whose own refusal of capitalist use follows

during "Risoprint on Friday" at the venue, Common House up till 2015. Starbuck, <http://andsomeplyers.blogspot.co.uk/2015/11/riso-prints-galore.html>. <http://www.commonhouse.org.uk/risograph-printing/>.

⁵²² McLuhan expressed a view of printed material, as it emerged in the west during the Renaissance, as the first modern commodity. "Print, as it were, translated the dialogue of shared discourse into packaged information, a portable commodity. It put a spin or bias in language and human perception... How could it do otherwise? It created the price system. For until commodities are uniform and repeatable the price of an article is subject to haggle and adjustment. The uniformity and repeatability of the book not only created modern markets and the price system inseparable from literacy and industry." McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 164.

⁵²³ As was raised in terms of illustration in chapter one, (p.60), there is an additional reading of the zine as a traumatised re-performance of the sensorial damage done by industrial society and omnipresence of commodity culture. Here, as with the comic, the zine risks reproducing the phantasmagoric effects that Susan Buck-Morss identifies in reference to Marx's commodity, "Marx made the term phantasmagoria famous, using it to describe the world of commodities that, in their mere visible presence, conceal every trace of the labor that produced them. They veil the production process, and — like mood pictures — encourage their beholders to identify them with subjective fantasies and dreams." Buck-Morss, "Anaesthetics," 25.

⁵²⁴ Anthony Iles, "Revolutionary Leaflets and Comrade Things," *Mute*, 22 March 2018, 5, <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/revolutionary-leaflets-and-comrade-things>.

⁵²⁵ For Benjamin self-publishing itself was contributing to the distinction between author and publisher, "And today there is hardly a gainfully employed European who could not, in principle, find an opportunity to publish somewhere or other comments on his work, grievances, documentary reports, or that sort of thing. Thus, the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character." Benjamin, "The Work of Art," X.

⁵²⁶ Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 1998): 87.

⁵²⁷ Iles, "Revolutionary Leaflets," 8.

Benjamin's auto-destructive mode of writing and offers an alternative to a Marxist critique of book commodity through the concept of use value. The sensory materiality of the book is essential to this political efficacy.⁵²⁸

For Thoburn, to be an anti-book, either content and form come into, "a generative and political relation of co-determination," or a disjuncture is presented between media form and signifying content which is politicising.⁵²⁹ Many zines have striven to fulfill the latter of Thoburn's criteria by negating the book form itself through techniques of erasure, obfuscation, irony, confused authorship, randomised content or the incorporation of fragile or impractical materials. However, although the monochromatic and photocopied motifs of the punk zine are retained in *Rum Lad*, Larder foregoes the appropriation and chaotic juxtaposition of the cut-up and collage technique that constituted the punk parody of mainstream media. Similarly, Starbuck's illustrative style reproduces the aesthetic of 1970s radical posters, but, although declamatory, waives the shock value often found in these for an overtly pedagogical register.

Although their form and production processes represent the appreciation of socialist craft traditions where one works hard and balances commitment to self and community development,⁵³⁰ Starbuck and Larder's zines do not strictly correlate with Thoburn's first criterion either. The techniques of illustration, handwritten text, and bespoke printing methods can be advanced as 'truth claims' which may partially obscure aspects of the production (such as the use of desk-top publishing software), thus the generative aspect (the production) is not fully aligned with the politics presented, that of the authenticity of the hand-made. Further, the clean, simple design, where prominence is given to attractive figurative illustrations emphasises that the clear transmission of the positive message is paramount (a similarity to children's books), rather than a problematisation of the received vocabulary of print that would provoke the reader into forming their own interpretations of the content.⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ "Use is not exterior to exchange value but co-extensive with it. Therefore communist objects refuse capitalist use through an instinct for tactility and by opening up unforeseen mediations and critical dialogues with what is given, taken for granted or imposed as a formal determinations on their capacity to create." Iles, 7.

⁵²⁹ Iles, 6.

⁵³⁰ Print itself is interpreted as catalysing conformity. For Marshall McLuhan, "Printed books, themselves the first uniform, repeatable, and mass-produced items in the world, provided endless paradigms of uniform commodity culture for sixteenth and succeeding centuries." McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 163.

⁵³¹ An estrangement and detouring for Thoburn, where, "A reader will need to read and engage actively to make their own minds up, to be critical, to pause and consider their own position. They will have to construct the contents from the difficult, potentially antagonistic field of its presentation, not swallow them whole without question." Iles, "Revolutionary Leaflets," 7.

The form and content of my case studies suggest a gentler political engagement with the anti-book, more akin to Thoburn's description of the pamphlet, where Starbuck and Larder's zines mimic the book form without contesting it.⁵³² Here, the illustration is itself an aspect that undermines any subversive potential, its evidencing of skilled draughtsmanship and design nous is almost too professional for a fit within an activist zine culture that gains authenticity from the amateur artist and the outsider to the mainstream. Although Larder alludes to an agency of the zine that rejects consumerism, he also accepts their usefulness to hopeful commercial illustrators for building portfolios and disseminating work.⁵³³ His view reflects the multiple goals or mutability of registers that characterise many contemporary DIY self-publishers,⁵³⁴ one that incorporates the outlook of the earlier fanzine whose not-for-profit production, for Henry Jenkins, reflected more the mutuality of the fan community rather than an outright rejection of profiteering capitalism.⁵³⁵

Both Larder and Starbuck demonstrate a conventional approach to design that seeks to mobilise the established and stable language of the zine.⁵³⁶ This is a trusted appearance, where all involved share a common idea of the values inscribed in the work. Considering the recognition of a common value, the particular commodity the zine suggests is one that plays the role of a universal medium of exchange: a currency. This can be articulated literally as a bank note, the 'money sign', which represents a value that is exchanged on the basis that it will be cashed in on a product or service more useful than it was originally granted to its owner for.⁵³⁷ Although the re-occurring description of zines as tangible, capable of being touched, corporeal, as sign, the zine is only a displaced haptic

⁵³² With the pamphlet, "there is a tracking of the seductive field of the conventional book, but it is a seduction that draws much of its power from the slight distance the pamphlet creates from the structures that constitute the book as iterable commodity — the pamphlet is not an autonomous entity wholly outside the structural patterns of the commercial book, but operates in its midst as a mimic." Thoburn, "Communist Objects," 23.

⁵³³ Where zines are, "a way for people be less consumer based and more... again, that whole kind of document and making a history and creating subcultures and maintaining that aspect of it." Larder, 2017.

⁵³⁴ For instance, many illustrators adopt the format as a step toward a 'creative industry' career rather than towards radical activism. The illustration scholar Luise Vormittag points out the pitfalls of this way of working, "While this model is certainly fruitful for some practitioners it does not offer much support or foster engagement. Illustrators carry the risk of investing time and money in their projects with no guaranteed financial outcome or career gain. This type of work also has a tendency to be insular." Here, Vormittag references the illustration educator Lawrence Zeegen's critique of DIY illustration fairs in *Creative Review*, "in which he provocatively asks whether the work is anything more than 'eye candy' and 'mere nothingness', describing it as a symptom of an inward-looking discipline 'unable to peer over the fence at a world outside its own garden'." Vormittag, "Making (the) subject matter," 64. Lawrence Zeegen, "Where's the content? Where's the comment?" *Creative Review* (March 2012): 52–53.

⁵³⁵ "Fanzines are not commercial commodities sold to consumers, they are artefacts shared with friends and potential friends." Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 160.

⁵³⁶ For instance, in the UK the majority of zines are produced in the portrait A5 format (a sheet of A4 folded). Although novelty is prized in zine circles, this is often restricted to the boundaries which are set both by the production processes and interpretations of the history of the medium.

⁵³⁷ Ernest Mandel, "Karl Marx," in *Marxian Economics*, John Eatwell, Murray Milgate and Peter Newman, eds., (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990): 1-38.

communication, a proxy for “face-to-face.”⁵³⁸ If the printed illustration becomes the seal of the bearer’s promise, intended to transmit the labour and social capital required for its production, it also succumbs to the insubstantiality of paper money.⁵³⁹

Considered as paper money, the recent development of digital currency risks reducing the illustrated zine to a fetishized banknote and the zinester’s actions to those of a numismatist.⁵⁴⁰ But the fiscal analogy is refreshed when considering cryptocurrencies, or ‘network-based money’, which, applying bitcoin advocate Andreas Antonopoulos’ description, are not to be considered solely as systems of currency, but as broader ‘platforms of trust’, a concept of decentralisation applied to the communication of value.⁵⁴¹ For Antonopoulos, cryptocurrencies represent the replacement of trust through institutions to trust through networks,⁵⁴² which, when applied to self-publishing, can posit the zine not as a container of the investments and vulnerabilities of its contributors, but a component that establishes a foundation for future social transactions. If the illustrated zine can be seen as a currency, this, as with cryptocurrencies, is then only one manifestation of an underlying platform of trust.

This escape from a reductive definition in terms of the limited function of print money can be seen in the additional exchange modes illustrated zines can adopt. The zine currency considered as a component of a platform of trust incorporates the commodity form that represents labour value, whilst also becoming an object bestowed with quasi-magical agency. The anthropologist David Graeber, writing on social currencies and the human economies that employ them, suggests that in human economies each individual is a unique nexus of relations to others.⁵⁴³ These social currencies are not used to buy or sell anything in these conditions, but rather, “to create, maintain, and otherwise reorganize relations between people.”⁵⁴⁴ The social currency has no other exchange

⁵³⁸ Larder, 2017.

⁵³⁹ As the artist Robert Anderson quotes the literary critic Marc Shell, “paper money as a ‘shadow’ not ‘substance’, has much in common with the illusory realism of an artwork. “Robert Anderson, “Reproducing an Image of Collapse: A practice investigation of recurring image forms in contemporary art,” (PhD thesis, Ulster University, 2013) 49.

⁵⁴⁰ Paper was valueless, alluded to precious metal, now the *matter* of money redundant in electronic transfer. Anderson, “Image of Collapse,” 50.

⁵⁴¹ “Money arises out of social construct of homo sapiens spontaneously. Money can also be taught to animals. They will learn how to exchange abstract tokens for food and then use them to build social relationships. Andreas Antonopoulos, “Introduction to Bitcoin,” Singularity University, 24 September 2016, video, 37:16. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1si5ZWLgy0&feature=youtu.be>.

⁵⁴² Andreas Antonopoulos, “Bitcoin for Beginners,” Bloktex Conference, 22 February 2017, video, 29:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIKZ83REIkA>.

⁵⁴³ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (London and New York: Melville House Publishing, 2014), 130; 208.

⁵⁴⁴ Graeber, 130.

value,⁵⁴⁵ re-affiliating the illustrated activist zine with the anti-book as a co-determination of form and content, where the lack of exchange yet presence of time invested as record of labour is unsettling, for Anthony Iles, “to work and its identities.”⁵⁴⁶

Triggs, as with Jenkins’ consideration of the fanzine, views punk and riot grrrl zine economies as differing from capitalist models in terms of their not-for-profit transactions.⁵⁴⁷ Taking these connotations of pre-monetary systems into consideration (for instance, Triggs’s emphasis on barter and exchange), zinesters could be viewed as gentle anarcho-primitivists, enacting the western economic myth of a barter society and longing for a lost mythographic language through illustrative drawing. The language of barter also invites a comparison with influential ethnographic interpretations of the potlatch of First Nations, and Pacific Island systems of gift and counter-gift.⁵⁴⁸ These can be articulated both as gifts of labour time, containers of social capital that can be stockpiled for potential later use as practical assistance, and as representing a debt to the community. Enacting an alternative economy is viewed by practitioners as a radical act in its own way, the zine production of beautiful commodities reflecting Lekha’s articulation of the cargo cult as a portrait of western consumption (chapter two, p.127), where the comic is an expression of play within, and resistance to, a ubiquitous consumer environment.⁵⁴⁹

Finally, within the anthropologist Ton Otto’s re-visiting of Melanesian gift cultures that were given the reductive definition of ‘cargo cults’ by western social science of the mid twentieth century, the exchangeable object can be re-considered in terms of a material challenge to the individual as unified body. Otto cites the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern’s dividual or partible person, whose personhood is constituted through, “the act of exchange in which material and immaterial things

⁵⁴⁵ Graeber, 137. In Cameron’s thesis on the therapeutic potential of the zine, gift economies, “...in their prioritizing social needs over market gains, have great implications for grassroots social change by and for those community members operating outside the conventional public economy.” Cameron, “Seamfullness,” 168-175.

⁵⁴⁶ Reviewing Nicholas Thoburn’s *Anti-Book: On the Art and Politics of Radical Publishing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016) Anthony Iles remarks, “Thoburn argues that many small press projects, indeed many pamphlets, have a price but no exchange value, this does not necessarily make them exemplary of non-alienated labour. Rather, through a sequence of specific moves which denature wage labour and engender critical thought about their own manufacture, they unsettle ‘work and its identities’.” Iles, “Revolutionary Leaflets,” 3.

⁵⁴⁷ “punk and riot grrrl fanzines are spaces, which are representative of microeconomies engaging in systems of exchange, and barter. However, it must be emphasised that producers are not profit driven in terms of our understanding of capitalist practices.” Triggs, “‘Generation Terrorists’,” 42-43.

⁵⁴⁸ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002).

⁵⁴⁹ For Lekha, this is not a rejection of but expressed in comparison with the digital. “There’s something radically different going on with the screen to something that’s in the more incarnated form. Because that screen is going to have something else on it, in a flash, in a few minutes. But the comic isn’t... you’re looking in a sense at a vessel when you’re looking at a screen and things pass over the vessel just like in Plato’s cave, the flickering on the wall... [But with the comic] this encounter with the material is going on.” Lekha, 2016.

considered as parts of persons move from one individual to another,” to develop a view of, “exchange as mutual constitution.”⁵⁵⁰ In stark contrast to the western notion of the individual as a bounded totality defined by its possessions, individuals are built up from composite parts of personhood received in exchange with other individuals.⁵⁵¹

I accept that this may be an analogy too far and am not proposing that zine illustrators live their lives in such a radical departure from the status quo. However, I believe these comparisons nevertheless add substance to the discussion of zine community members as comprising, on some level, a striving for a rejuvenated system of value, belonging and subjectivity. And, although considering the zine in these terms does not rescue the form from the critique of its political inefficacy outlined above, they do further implicate the self-published illustration within the creation and maintenance of physical networks, communities, or spaces of exchange, which themselves are open to analysis in terms of their counter-hegemonic potential.

3.2 || Potential communities

3.2.1 || Comic market

I have chosen two of these spaces of exchange to further elucidate my discussion of the participatory potential of illustrative drawing. Comiket and DIY Cultures are ongoing self-publishing conventions which both trade, to strikingly different degrees, in the currencies of self-published illustration. Each event, like zine illustrations themselves, form only one expression of a subculture, yet they provide a temporary concretisation of that culture as a whole. Their appearance further enriches the conundrum of illustrated self-publishing as neither clearly undermining nor replicating its neoliberal context.

⁵⁵⁰ Ton Otto, “What Happened to Cargo Cults? Material Religions in Melanesia and The West,” *Social Analysis* 53, no. 1, (Spring 2009): 82-102; 94. DOI:10.3167/sa.2009.53010694 – 95. Otto references Marilyn Strathern’s essay, “Parts and wholes: refiguring relationships in a post-plural world,” in *Conceptualizing society*, Adam Kuper, ed., New York: Routledge, 1992): 75-104.

⁵⁵¹ In the performance of human capital, the individual is not just labour power but, “becomes an owner of a nonalienated set of qualities, capabilities, and skills that are partially hereditary and innate, and partially produced by education and care - primarily from one’s own parents.” This is an original investment by nature itself, encapsulated in “talent,” and a sum of money. Boris Groys, “On Art Activism,” *e-flux journal*, no. 56 (June 2014), 12. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism/>.

Comiket is a market for the self-published yaoi dōjinshi discussed in chapter two. As with the discussion of the publications themselves, my objective is not to definitively describe Comiket, but to borrow from its rich materials (as I will with the second case study) to thematise a course through relevant theory on participatory culture. As such, my approach is toward exploring a range of analytical approaches that can be drawn out from these examples, rather than measuring them against each other. For the media scholar John Fiske, to work with and through popular culture is a necessity when its producers are marginalised from official cultural capital.⁵⁵² However, self-published zines and comics made by the disempowered still reproduce institutions of official culture, Fiske writing that the productive activity of the fan, “occurs at the interface between the industrially-produced cultural commodity (narrative, music, star, etc.) and the everyday life of the fan.” Comiket epitomises the expression of a duality which problematises any counterhegemonic assigination. In stating this, I acknowledge that the study of yaoi dōjinshi itself has presented difficulties to western ideas of self-empowerment, and elements of the scholarship have been perceived as questionable in terms of the casting of a western ethnographic gaze over an eastern subculture.⁵⁵³

The twice-yearly Tokyo-based event was initiated in 1975 by a university student dōjinshi fan club. As a communitarian grassroots movement that developed in response to a lack in mainstream culture dōjinshi is as such a site where comics again overlap with the zine and my explication is intended to contribute to an understanding of fan culture at large which also influences western zine production.⁵⁵⁴ From an initial attendance of a few hundred, Comiket currently attracts half a million attendees and is a selling and networking point for 32,000 stall holders. These *sākuru*, or fan circles, sell a range of amateur manga, including yaoi dōjinshi,⁵⁵⁵ the particular stylistic specifications of

⁵⁵² “Official cultural capital, like economic capital, is systematically denied to the people and their lack then functions to distinguish them from those that possess it. In capitalist societies, popular culture is necessarily produced from the products of capitalism, for that is all the people have to work with.” Fiske, “Cultural Economy,” 47.

⁵⁵³ Such that for sociologist Kure Tomofusa, “when academics looked at girls’ comics they were amazed. They felt like English missionaries discovering that here were different societies in Africa.” In addition, Kinsella identified a tendency in scholarship, wherein a discussion of comics in terms of literature tended to focus on western comics, but when an eastern case study was raised, the scholarly gaze was shifted to an ethnographic one. Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture,” 304; 315.

⁵⁵⁴ The overlap includes both the integrated historical development of the comic and zine (p.133) and shared formal properties. Teal Ann Triggs demonstrates this cross-fertilisation by transposing Scott McCloud’s comic book language to zine design, finding that, although drawing is not necessary to the identification of a zine, the design flow and polyglot space of the zine is comic-like. Triggs identifies modes or common graphic elements from which punk and riot grrrl zine language is built, for example, “hand drawn lettering, the use of collage techniques and cut-n-paste images and ransom-note lettering, and the use of cut out photographs from contemporary media sources.” This is viewed as an equivalent to McCloud’s, “visual grammar” of comics that the reader understands.” (Triggs, “‘Generation Terrorists’,” 110). In addition, the different interpretations of yaoi dōjinshi mirror the zine movement’s bivalent incorporation of commitment and parody, one that tallies with Duncombe’s findings on punk fandom, with its, “seemingly contradictory forms of reception, articulation, and communication.” Stephen Duncombe, “Imagining No-place,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10, no. 1 (2012): 12.

⁵⁵⁵ Comiket saw a rapid rise in participation between 1986 and 1990 when the majority working class fans were joined

which are protected through codification in the stall-holder application process.⁵⁵⁶ Comiket now has a substantial commercial component, but although of a similar scale to many of the corporate spectacles of European and US comicons, it is distinguished by being founded and still entirely run by fan volunteers.⁵⁵⁷ Although the attendance has shifted from over three-quarters female toward a balance between genders,⁵⁵⁸ these beginnings further differentiate it from the western conventions.⁵⁵⁹ This, and the subordinated position of women in the mainstream culture from which yaoi dōjinshi emerged is central to viewing Comiket as socially transformative (Figure 34).

For Suzanne Scott, gendered subcultural tensions manifest in western comic conventions despite their historical characterisation as utopian safe places in which differences are embraced.⁵⁶⁰ The comicon has been tacitly affirmed as a platform for men, where celebrities such as Grant Morrison exude a comics braggadocio for male-identified audiences.⁵⁶¹ The alternative comic scene at large is also laced with misogyny, where women are excluded from the, “back room spaces,” of subcultural decision-making and can be made to feel intimidated in specialist comics shops.⁵⁶² In controlling the place of circulation and purchase of yaoi, where the sexual excitement and social shame in buying erotic fiction could occur safely, Comiket and the women’s dōjinshi movement in Japan can be viewed as an early engagement in the recovery of these exclusions.

by teen and twenty-somethings from left-wing middle-class backgrounds. By this period specialist small jobbing printers had developed providing exclusively for dōjinshi production. The circles are self-organised groups of fans that focus on particular mainstream manga titles and produce their own versions. Although sākuru are considered dōjinshi collectives, they can consist of just one member. Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture,” 298.

⁵⁵⁶ There is also a relative difficulty of participating for foreigners as, at the time of writing, stallholders must be Japanese residents.

⁵⁵⁷ In 1989 45.9% of products on sale were dōjinshi and 12.1% original manga (Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture”). Comiket is now divided into three spaces for dōjinshi, cosplay and corporate sales booths.

⁵⁵⁸ 70% of attendees were women in 2008. The shift toward a 50/50 gender balance includes increasingly older audience and more foreign visitors.

⁵⁵⁹ Riot grrrl was another utilisation of self-publishing by women practitioners that realised the form’s socially-transformative potential. For Fiske, the initial exclusion of fan culture from the official and the economic, “makes it an appropriate culture for those in subordinated formations of the people who feel themselves to be unfairly excluded from the socio-economic or status enhancing rewards that the official culture can offer because of its direct interconnections, via the educational system, with the social order.” Fiske, “Cultural Economy,” 45.

⁵⁶⁰ There was a revealing moment, dubbed the *Batgirl of San Diego*, when a female comic book fan (dressed as Batgirl) was treated dismissively by a male panel member and heckled by male audience members, exposing “the gendered nature of the Comicon as a space.” Scott, “Fangirls in refrigerators,” 4.6.

⁵⁶¹ Morrison even “curated” his own event in 2012 entitled *Morrisoncon*. Keith Scott, “No Guru, No Method, No Teacher: “Grant Morrison” and GrantMorrison™,” *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 8, no. 2 (2015-16).

⁵⁶² Scott, “Fangirls in refrigerators,” 1.3; 2.5; 3.6. Indie comics are aligned with zine culture and other spaces in which activist self-publishing is valued, Scott citing the self-published comics as sharing, “qualities of feminine fannish gift economies.” For Scott, female fan creators in the US show limited interest in industrial exposure, “choosing instead to circulate their works for free as a mode of building and maintaining communal bonds.” Scott’s example, the comics compendium *Womanthology* (2011), is a step toward reconciliation between fan and industry, between commercial and gift economy. The ongoing debate on commercialisation of fan culture, presents, “[a] case for how gendered means of amateur production as an entry to professionalization, might be used to feminist ends.” Scott, 5.5.

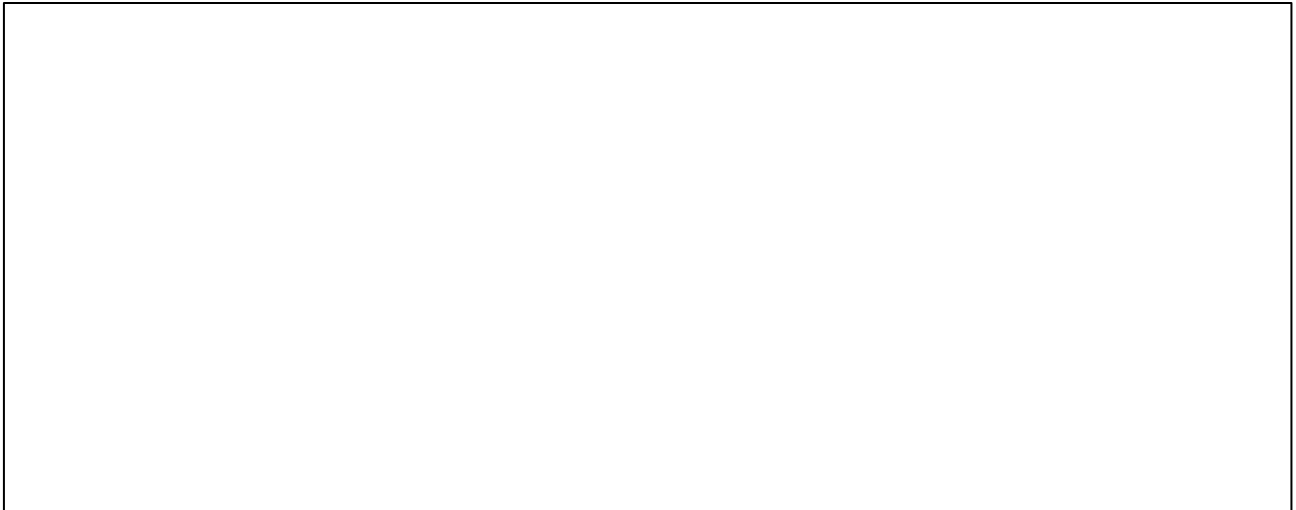


Figure 34. Left: NHK World, *The Secret World of Comiket* (frame grab), 2015, broadcast documentary. Right: unknown author, *Untitled* (cosplay at Comiket), circa 2017.

For Fiske, fan conventions are places of trade in rare goods or collectables, as much as they are forums for, “the exchange and circulation of knowledge and the building of a cultural community.”⁵⁶³ The commercial element is indicative of the shadow cultural economy of fan culture, one which parallels the workings of the official culture in an adaptation of their methods to the habitus of the subordinate.⁵⁶⁴ In serving a similar function to the dominant cultural capital the shadow economy also replicates the unequal distribution of the over-arching economic system.⁵⁶⁵ Further, within feminist theories of social reproduction, gender relations are not only shaped by patriarchal dynamics but are also, in a position taken by media scholar Susan Ferguson, “always concretely interconnected in the ongoing maintenance and reproduction of an overall capitalist social formation,” through a, “necessary but contradictory relationship between production and reproduction.”⁵⁶⁶ In these terms, although female-founded, Comiket can be said to re-perform the

⁵⁶³ In an example of *dōjinshi* as a “trade in rare goods,” dedicated fans will queue from dawn for up to five hours to obtain some *dōjinshi* that are only available at Comiket. Fiske finishes regretting that it is these dualities that have brought capitalist industries closer to the culture of the people than, “the pure motives of those within official culture.” Fiske, “Cultural Economy,” 44-47.

⁵⁶⁴ As a term encompassing habitat, inhabitants, inhabitation processes and habituated thinking, ‘habitus’ is in keeping with zine culture as an aggregate of materials, relations and situations. To Fiske this aggregate fits Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus as, “both a mental disposition and a ‘geographical’ disposition in the social space.” Fiske, 45.

⁵⁶⁵ Fiske’s description is a development of Pierre Bourdieu’s description of culture as an economy in which people invest and accumulate capital which is integrated with economic capital in the production of social inequalities and privileges (30-33). Zines are cheap, you can accumulate lots of them, like Fiske’s comic collectors, where one can be high on cultural capital even though one is low on economic capital (44).

⁵⁶⁶ For Ferguson, the disparity between gender, race and sexuality is generated by capitalism’s requirement that labour be alienated. Susan Ferguson, “Social Reproduction: What’s the big idea?” Pluto Press, October 2017, <https://www.plutobooks.com/blog/social-reproduction-theory-ferguson/>. The failure to make the connection between

state apparatus that marginalises women in the first instance. Yaoi dōjinshi now occupy only a small portion of the event, sharing space with pornographic comics such as ‘lolicon’ that are produced unambiguously for a male gaze that seeks to infantilise, restrict and subordinate women.⁵⁶⁷ Here, the free-market economy enacted in Comiket reproduces the institutions of the reigning cultural hegemony, just as the narrative aspect of yaoi dōjinshi is critiqued as locating feminine sexuality in the phallus (chapter two, p.111).

The fantasies of yaoi dōjinshi are described as glimpses of the unconscious, the personal and the societal, setting them apart from Duncombe’s view of the imaginary worlds of fandom as phantasmagorical escapes from reality, where, for social theorists Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, “fantasy constitutes an unconscious practical critique of alienation.”⁵⁶⁸ However, the artist and activist Gregory Sholette presents a critique of the working-class fantasies that form part of what he terms, ‘dark matter’, a counter-public sphere of artistic production outside critical and institutional overview, where amateur production engages in, “creative practices focused on pleasure, fantasy and networked communalism.”⁵⁶⁹ For Sholette, these are isolated and impotent moments of a distorted wish fulfilment, although the writer acknowledges they can occasionally, “resist bourgeois ideology in ways that are especially unapologetic and irredeemable.”⁵⁷⁰

A further critique in terms of the replication of the hegemony, rests in a key identifier of fandom’s vitality, which, in Fiske’s western-centred analysis, lies in the cyclical struggle between industry incorporation of the fans’ shifting tastes and fan ‘excorporation’ of the products of the industry.⁵⁷¹ But the dōjinshi movement has a decades-long inter-relationship with commercial manga production and the divide between producers and consumers, professionals and amateurs is blurred.

gendered roles and capitalism is present in Morris’s *News From Nowhere*, where although the utopian unregulated market is represented as an exchange of the outcomes of un-alienated labour, the social reproduction of gendered roles for women is retained (Noble, *Utopias*, 32).

⁵⁶⁷ Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture,” 305-306.

⁵⁶⁸ Gregory Sholette, “Dark Matter: Activist Art and the Counter-Public Sphere,” online pdf, 2003: 10, http://www.gregorysholette.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/05_darkmatterwo1.pdf.

⁵⁶⁹ “What can be said of dark matter in general is that either by choice or circumstance it displays a degree of autonomy from the critical and economic structures of the art world and moves instead within, or in-between, the meshes of the consciousness industry.” (Sholette, “Dark Matter.”) The term “counter-public sphere” is from Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, trans. P. Labanyi, J. O. Daniel and A. Oksiloff (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1993).

⁵⁷⁰ Gregory Sholette, *Dark matter: art and politics in the age of enterprise culture* (London: Pluto, 2011), 11.

⁵⁷¹ John Fiske, “Cultural Economy,” 47. In Ishikawa’s affirmative reading, “Yaoi fanwork calls into question the boundaries we unconsciously take for granted, such as ‘the canon/the derivative text’, ‘the author/the reader’, and ‘mainstream/heterodox’. The appropriation in Yaoi fanwork not only reflects a significant movement against the dominant culture by marginalized females, but also prompts discussion on the boundaries between class structures.” Ishikawa, “Yaoi as Fanwork,” 175-176.

Although this suggests a co-determinacy with, “the subversion of the distance between the canon and the derivative text,”⁵⁷² that takes place in the yaoi narrative (chapter two, p.108), it can also be viewed as a complicity with the industry whose products mirror the restrictions of the overarching economic structure.⁵⁷³

The contextualisation so far would discourage a reading of Comiket as part of a movement with anti-capitalist tendencies. Any politically progressive agency would then need to be located, paradoxically, within the *dōjinshi* model of capitalism.⁵⁷⁴ In such a framework this complicity would grant the subculture some influence in its own re-appropriation, and if this extended to influencing social reproduction, then the movement could be more definitively argued as counter-hegemonic. However, such a potential is qualified by commentators as just that, a potential rather than an actualisation. For instance, on wider participatory culture, the fandom scholar Francesca Coppa posits as a potential the possibility of fan movements to realise new communities from their subcultural beginnings.⁵⁷⁵ Duncombe also retroactively assigns a progressive political formulation from a speculative future viewpoint, speaking of a potential for fans, with their skills of solidarity, organisation and communication, to become political organisers. His analysis is toward highlighting the potentiality, however, as Duncombe considers a condition of underground culture as only ever presenting a, “virtual politics.” (p.140)⁵⁷⁶

From a different vantage point, ‘potential’ can be given a spatial configuration by viewing Comiket within object relations theory (chapter one, p.33; chapter two, p.90), where yaoi *dōjinshi* is a transitional object mediating the social marginalisation of its producers. For the cultural theorist Ricardo C. Ainslie, the potential space in the adult sphere is, “a creative engagement with the problematics of separation and loss, put in the service of constructively, if never perfectly,

⁵⁷² Fiske, “Cultural Economy,” 43.

⁵⁷³ *Dōjinshi* creates a market base for commercial work and an “understanding” known as *anmoku no ryokai* is in place between fan and corporate copyright holders. Daniel H. Pink, “Japan, Ink: Inside the Manga Industrial Complex,” *Wired Magazine* 15, no. 11 (22 October 2007). http://www.wired.com/print/techbiz/media/magazine/15-11/ff_manga. This inter-relationship with commercial culture can be viewed as foreshadowing western developments in the twenty-first century.

⁵⁷⁴ The field could then be addressed as what Mark Fisher terms a, “super-identification” with capitalism. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, 12.

⁵⁷⁵ “Fandom provides a mode of social organization that has the potential to move from being a subculture (that is, a social group based on common interests) to a community (that is, based on shared geography, kinship, or history).” Francesca Coppa, “Fuck yeah, Fandom is Beautiful,” *Journal of Fandom Studies* 2, no. 1 (2014): 78. Coppa’s revisiting of Jenkins’ *Textual Poachers* is motivated by a reclaiming of fan culture from what she views as a subsequent psychopathologising of fandom.

⁵⁷⁶ Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 202.

transcending them.”⁵⁷⁷ Ainslie’s research concerns the management of mourning within immigrant communities, where the illusion of blurred distance on intrapsychic, territorial and cultural strata, facilitates the effective engagement with a new environment and I propose the self-publishing market can also be addressed from the same bearings, where the sense of loss is for a community denied by the dominant cultural economy.

In the childhood state, a potential space is established initially in the overlapping play areas between child and mother as an essential part of the success of the infant’s development. There is a soothing and comforting illusion of being both here and there, now and then; but the process is ultimately toward mediating the child’s separation from the mother.⁵⁷⁸ The childhood and adult definitions overlap in what Ainslie describes as cultural mourning, a domain of ambiguous experience and an arena within which an engagement with and resolution of separateness is attempted.⁵⁷⁹ Here, potential space is a repetition of the splitting of lost childhood to manage situations of loss and dislocation in adult life, where, “we construct arenas of experiencing in which we creatively dissolve those tensions,” permitting an illusion of continuity between self and other.⁵⁸⁰

The yaoi dōjinshi movement reflects Ainslie’s description of the immigrant potential space as standing midway between the creations of the subject’s inner world and the realities of their social environment. It can be viewed also as a space of mourning where, for Ainslie, there is an attempt through creative engagement to deny or dilute the reality of dislocation. Further, within manga scholar Yonezawa Yoshehiro’s statement: “The city, the lost zone of Japanese society, exists here at Comic Market,” there can be observed the illusion of a restoration of what is lost. That which Ainslie places at the heart of the immigrant potential space and that resonates with my analysis of the role of illustration in zines.⁵⁸¹ With Comiket however, the restoration is not of that which is lost,

⁵⁷⁷ Adult potential spaces are mostly inconspicuous, insinuated and masked by social convention. Ainslie, “Cultural mourning,” 290.

⁵⁷⁸ Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 54-56.

⁵⁷⁹ Ainslie applies Winnicott’s theory to Mexican immigrant experiences in the US where a struggle with hybridity leads to the formulation of potential spaces such as La Pulga Flea market. Ainslie, “Cultural mourning,” 288.

⁵⁸⁰ Ainslie, 289.

⁵⁸¹ Yoshehiro continues: “...Without any interference or hindrance from outside, this abandoned and forgotten section of society has started to produce its own culture. The sense of being one body, of excitement, of freedom and of disorder exists inside this single unified space. If anything frightful has come into being, it is no doubt the existence of this space itself.” Yonezawa Yoshehiro, “Komikku māketto,” in *Otaku no hon* (Tokyo: Takarajimasha, 1998), 88. Quoted in Kinsella, “Japanese Subculture,” 313. Analogies with civic presence are also made in scholarship on western zine production. For Triggs punk and riot grrrl culture achieves anti-hegemony through a re-constitution of social space in a similar manner to the free spaces of cities. Here, zines are described as social spaces which, “enable producers to transmit ‘knowledge’ through networks but also strategically ‘change their context for the better’.” Triggs. “Generation Terrorists,” 94-96.

but of a social participation that has been denied. In this framework, the illusion of restoration does not model a desired future but can be seen as an ongoing playful space for picturing imaginative alternatives.

Adult potential spaces are in service of transcending the problems of separation and loss, but only in a partial retreat from their realities.⁵⁸² A parallel can be made with Duncombe's bivalent reading of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) in relation to fandom, where More's perfect place is both absurd and earnest, satirical whilst promoting a valid alternative. To achieve being neither a serious plan nor a prank the utopia needs to be consciously unrealistic and be openly proclaimed a fiction. Here, More's deliberate destabilisation of the image of the world he created forms, "a prompt to further imagination,"⁵⁸³ that is central for Duncombe's analysis of fan communities, whose own absurdity, "opens up a space for the reader's imagination to wonder what an alternative someplace and a radically different sensibility might be like."⁵⁸⁴

This ability to imagine alternatives, along with building community, is a core characteristic of fan culture shared with political activism. Applied to yaoi dōjinshi, depicting the, "radical alterity," is the potential of the illustrative drawn, whilst the community building is most visible in Comiket. Additionally, the phenomenon is lent a superficial affinity with counter-hegemonic critical art; in its initial strangeness to a western gaze, in the novelty of the pornographic imagery in combination with its atypical readership, and in the mainstream acceptance symbolised by the scale and visibility of Comiket. For the social philosopher Andre Gorz, the production of new subjectivities, along with subversion of the dominant regime, becomes content for such activist art practices and, "necessarily overflows the terrain of production of knowledge towards new practices of living, consuming and collective appropriation of common spaces and everyday culture."⁵⁸⁵ However, yaoi dōjinshi, as with participatory fan culture generally, would seem to match this description only in reverse, where non-critical productions of subjectivity stemming from, "new practices of living," are only retrospectively debated in terms of their radicality via an external fan scholarship.

⁵⁸² Ainslie, "Cultural mourning," 290.

⁵⁸³ Duncombe posits a political agency in the playing and navigating of the utopian "no-place," Duncombe, "Imagining No-place," 3; 11.

⁵⁸⁴ For instance, the original television series *Star Trek* was not attractive to fans as a model of a possible future. It was too camp, satisfaction was refused, so, "we were forced to imagine and act upon our own ideas and ideals of an alternative." Duncombe, 5.

⁵⁸⁵ "When self-exploitation acquires a central role in the process of valorization, the production of subjectivity becomes a terrain of the central conflict." Interview with André Gorz, *Multitudes*, no. 15, (2004), 209.

For the artist and theorist Simon O’Sullivan new art practices can contribute to the acceleration of a post-capitalist condition through “fictioning,” whose radicality also rests on a configuration of new subjectivities that rupture the dominant culture. An aspect of the creation of new subjectivity is an openness to accessing distinct psychological stages throughout one’s life, which as potential space, I have presented yaoi dōjinshi as achieving. However, O’Sullivan differentiates the political efficacy of new aesthetic practices between those that multiply our fantasies and those that rupture our illusions,⁵⁸⁶ and the reproduction of subjectivity in Comiket, which manga theorist Yu Ishikawa views as, “fan texts propagate[ing] themselves through an interconnected network,”⁵⁸⁷ is not toward an alternative but the maintenance of the homogeneity of yaoi.

Yet, in another turn, this reproduction of homogeneity can be redeemed as an asset in comparison with an emphasis within queer culture for the attributes identified by Halberstam as repetition, horizontality, immaturity and a refusal of adulthood, and through which the queer group moves outside the heteronormative and psychoanalytical dynamics of the family as reproductive unit.⁵⁸⁸ The alternative homosociality that is continually reconstituted could then be viewed as itself a new subjectivity,⁵⁸⁹ an alternative myth that undermines two identifiers of western neoliberalism: individualism; and the rationality that predicates social reproduction. Here, the relation of the heterosexuality of yaoi dōjinshi author/readers to their depictions of a quasi-homosexuality is less relevant to considering the movement’s political effectivity, than the counter-hegemonic kinship groups enabled by the exchange of those images and epitomised by the Comiket gathering.

From this viewpoint, the ‘potentials’ of yaoi dōjinshi may already then have been realised, and Coppa’s new community constituted in an earlier stage of the movement. For Kinsella, the mere presence of yaoi dōjinshi was enough and, for better or worse, girl-produced work in the late 1990s was the most dynamic front of manga with Comiket, “one of the very few cultural and social forums in Japan (or any other industrialised country) not dominated by privileged and highly

⁵⁸⁶ Simon O’Sullivan, “Myth-Science and the Fictioning of Reality,” *Paragrana* 25, no. 2 (2016): 80-93. O’Sullivan’s starting point is Jean-François Lyotard’s distinction between art that multiplies and ruptures, set out in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁵⁸⁷ “This intertextual interaction indicates the constant open-cycle relation between reception and reproduction.” Ishikawa, “Yaoi as Fanwork,” 174.

⁵⁸⁸ Halberstam apportions a communitarian agency to the representation of flock intelligence in CGI animated children’s movies. *The Queer Art of Failure*, 73.

⁵⁸⁹ Especially in comparison with male-gendered sexuality and comics as I explored through Morrison (chapter two, p.97). That is, yaoi dōjinshi community as an alternative to the male homosocialities examined by Eve Sedgwick in “Between Men,” in *Literary Theory: an Anthology*, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, eds. (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1998): 696-712.

educated sections of society.”⁵⁹⁰ The next stage, a global re-formulation of comics through the impact of manga on readership demographics, is already under way for Scott McCloud, who predicts a majority female readership of comics in large part due to the worldwide influence of manga and styles derived from manga.⁵⁹¹ Within the terms established by McCloud’s prediction, it is this transformative feedback into mainstream culture that promises one measure of the success of the efforts of the excessive yaoi dōjinshi reader to unseat the hegemony.

3.2.2 || **DIY antagonism**

The second self-publishing market discussed is DIY Cultures, an annual day-long festival and resistance conference that was thematically and physically arranged around self-publishing and which took place in the performance venue Richmix, London, from 2013 to 2017.⁵⁹² Each year’s festival had a specific theme which during my visit was, ‘radical libraries’. The event is an example of a contemporary zine fair at a nexus of activism, art and education and emblematic of the continuation of the format as a new plural space. The differences to Comiket are striking, DIY Cultures being a recent re-invigoration of the western model of the zine fair, a small-scale non-commercial event with overt activist intentions and consciously diverse contributors. However, like Comiket, the appearance of illustrated self-publishing in DIY Cultures is an agent of the creation and maintenance of a place of gathering and exchange and furthers a view of the technique in relation to counter-hegemonic aesthetic-activist practices.

The event is itself a response to the homogeneity of zine fairs experienced previously by the organisers, Hamja Asham, Sofia Niazi and Helena Wee. As such they were, “very interested in presenting alternatives,” to introduce, “new voices which previously hadn’t been heard.”⁵⁹³ Like

⁵⁹⁰ Writing in 1998, Kinsella described the convention as a closed community, attendees rarely discussing their attendance at home and work (“Japanese Subculture,” 315; 298.) However, even at the time of writing, Comiket is still culturally ring-fenced by its organisers. Although there is much interest from the west and western visitors, participants must be Japanese nationals, entry forms are available only in Japanese language, and the works on sale are scrutinised by Comiket volunteers during the convention to ensure they meet the definition of yaoi.

⁵⁹¹ Speaking in 2014 Scott McCloud predicted a majority female industry by 2024. He cites a generation of women who, as girls, read manga within which a significant minority now makes comics. A recent all-ages aspect of comics also means more, majority, women readers, then makers. He also cites the influence of a few powerful women creators, such as Alison Bechdel, whose readers will come back in a few years with their own creations. Henry Jenkins and Scott McCloud. “Geek Speaks: The Future of Comics (Part I),” *Geek Speaks: The Future of Comics*, USC Annenberg Innovation Lab, 23 October 2014. online video of author discussion, 1:31:34 <https://vimeo.com/110643833>.

⁵⁹² Although DIY Cultures is on hiatus at the time of writing, its organisers continue to produce events and workshops centred on self-publishing and zines.

⁵⁹³ A.B.S. Media, “ArtBegetsSpirit: Introducing DIY Cultures 'Independent Zine Fair,’” video documentary, 13:09, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGR3eRJzT1k>.

many more recent zine fairs, this was a deliberate evolution of the zine fair that looked outside the previous punk and riot grrrl models of resistance, to centre in particular, on black and minority representation. For instance, the sociology researcher Bogumila Hall highlights the foregrounding of Muslim identities within the event, locating DIY Cultures within a vibrant grassroots cultural scene of young UK-based Muslim creatives, “who assert their voice as political subjects.”⁵⁹⁴ For Hall, the UK Government’s anti-terrorist Prevent programme and the online monitoring of Muslim activists has reinvigorated the physical meeting space, where the zine market becomes a model of, “free spaces where discussions are held away from the gaze of the state.”⁵⁹⁵

Hall also highlights DIY Cultures’ counter-hegemonic stance as a defying of the logic of neoliberal capitalism.⁵⁹⁶ In this instance, as with yaoi dōjinshi, any latent or outright rejection of the marginalisation implicit in capitalism is presented, seemingly paradoxically, through the quintessential consumerist model of the market. However, although DIY Cultures was at root a self-publishing fair, emphasis was placed on forming a polyglot, multi-platform environment. To illustrate this, when I attended the 2016 festival to sell *The Selfish Dream*, the fair itself was arranged in a semi-circle round a central stage where politically-engaged panel discussions took place throughout the day.⁵⁹⁷ On the mezzanine level there was an exhibition, films were being screened, and additional individual publications were being sold from a specially designed floor installation. In the Rich Mix basement space, there was a programme of workshops and a further exhibition (Figure 35).

⁵⁹⁴ This is part of a broader retort to a European stance on Islam as, “outside Modernity.” The atmosphere generated is secular and diverse but is subtly hospitable to Muslim participation by being alcohol-free and providing a prayer-space. Bogumila Hall, “Art and activism of the ‘war on terror’ generation: British Muslim youth and the politics of refusal,” in *POMEPS Studies 32: The Politics of Islam in Europe and North America* (December 2018): 87. <https://pomeps.org/2018/12/18/art-and-activism-of-the-war-on-terror-generation-british-muslim-youth-and-the-politics-of-refusal/>

⁵⁹⁵ Hall, “Art and activism,” 87.

⁵⁹⁶ “The ethos of DIY, zine culture, independent publishing, and autonomy is central to young British Muslims’ art practices, standing in opposition to mass-produced and commodified forms of cultural production.” Hall, 86.

⁵⁹⁷ The theme for the year I visited was radical libraries, which was reflected in the panel discussions. Themes for other years have included DIY Justice and radical mental health.



Figure 35. DIY Cultures, below level workshop and exhibition space (left), Thunderbolts Comics UK (centre), the main stage (right), 2016.

Although hosting a plethora of published and multi-media works,⁵⁹⁸ the festival’s marketing tagline, ‘Zines, comics and alternatives’, retained an image of illustrated self-publishing as an index of the broader counter-cultural ethos and drawing was still a prominent feature of many of the works on sale.⁵⁹⁹ For instance, the feminist literary zine *The Chapess*, (2011 -) presented a contemporary development of the riot grrrl aesthetic that foregrounds queer identities. Although much of the content of *The Chapess* concerns creative writing, illustration is prominent on the cover pages continuing to signify the presence of an authentic outsider (Figure 36, right).⁶⁰⁰ The display of one-man Thunderbolts Comics UK appeared as a comic shop in miniature, a market nested within a market whose unashamedly amateur drawings reflected the moratorium on virtuoso draughtsmanship in fan-made comics (Figure 35, centre). The parody continued in Thunderbolts’ narrative content, where the white characters of mainstream US superhero comics and commercial

⁵⁹⁸ Many, if not most, publications at DIY Cultures were not zines, demonstrating that “zine” is used to signify a broader counter-cultural stance. The publication *OOMK*, as a professionally printed journal, was representative of this. For co-editor Sofia Niazi (also co-director of DIY Cultures) *OOMK* is a space for internal conversations within Muslim identifying communities (Hall, “Art and activism,” 86). Other formats included newsprint, evidence of a recent re-invigoration by online print services. Of these, prominently situated were the newspapers for the *Anti-University*, a facilitated re-staging of the 1960’s radical educational movements; and *Road Femme*, which began as an online blog. Commenting on *Road Femme*’s philosophy, editor Zahra Swanzy, states, “globally, people of colour, women of colour’s voices are not heard... are not able to express themselves. My newspaper is for them to take up space and [say] ‘this is how I feel’.” (A.B.S. Media, “ArtBegetsSpirit.”) I view the diversity of publications as making DIY Cultures a room of anti-books, what Iles and Thoburn describe as, “speculative objects.” That is, paper assemblies formed from those fragments not contained by the book and which are resistant and against the root-book. As discussed previously (chapter one, p.64), the root-book is an, “initially religious paradigm that smooths the way for an inscrutable sum of standardising and market-compliant practices which established the book as a commodity.” Iles, “Revolutionary Leaflets,” 5.

⁵⁹⁹ The deployment of illustration within the marketing of DIY Cultures can be viewed at: <https://diycultures.tumblr.com>.

⁶⁰⁰ Zara Gardner and Cherry Styles, eds., *The Chapess*, (Synchronise Witches Press, issues 1-9, 2011 - 2015).

cartoons were replaced with black characters and narratives concerning subcultures of black London youth.

Plan C's comic book, *What the f#ck is social reproduction??* (2015) is both a presentation of a research programme and a laying bare of the construction of knowledge by a making visible of the manuscripting process. Social reproduction is punned with reprographics by revealing the production processes of the comic: the illustrations are collaged and traced from other media and the artwork is left deliberately 'unfinished', retaining preparatory marks such as guidelines and pencil underdrawings (Figure 36, left). In this regard *What the f#ck* can be said to inter-relate medium and message ("Let's seize the means of reproduction!" is the closing statement), more satisfactorily than *DIY RISO* (2016), the open-submission compendium commissioned for the event. This presented the possibility for a productively jarring arrangement of content in line with the centrality of artmaking to DIY Cultures as an activity of subjectivity generation, and, by extension, a rupturing of dominant modes of representation. However, although the zine's tactility was framed as a retort to digitisation,⁶⁰¹ as with Starbuck and Larder, the Risograph production process and focus on crafted images appeared more conformist than disjunctive. The zine appeared again as a symbol of art production from a sense of exclusion but enacted a tension with this anti-aesthetic and outsider heritage in its re-introduction of virtuoso technique and fetishization of materials.

⁶⁰¹ For the *DIY RISO* curators Rose Nordin and Divya Osbon, "I guess there's a hunger to have your artwork real rather than just digital. Something about the paper and the smell of it that is universal." A.B.S Media, "ArtBegetsSpirit."

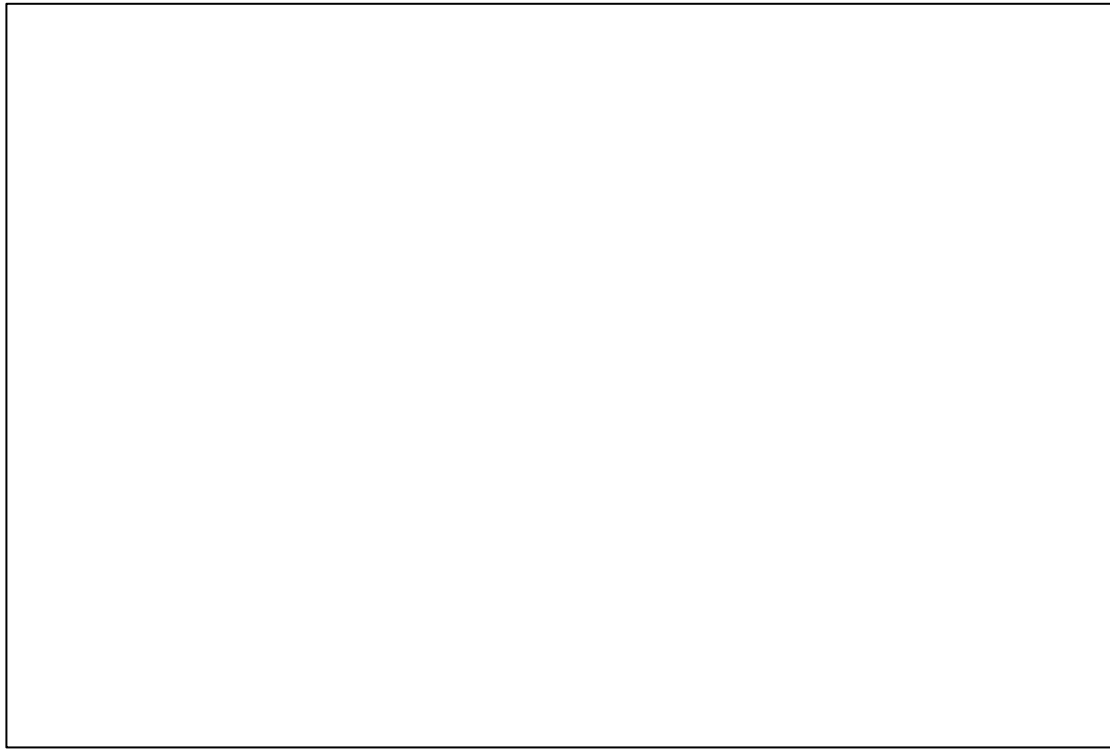


Figure 36. Left: Plan C, *What the f#ck is social reproduction??* 2015, print media, 210mm x 297mm. Right: Zara Gardner and Cherry Styles (eds.), *The Chapess* issue 9 (illustration by Brigid Deacon), 2015, print media, 148mm x 210mm.

It was the spatial arrangement of the fair itself that offered the most potential for unexpected and potentially discomfiting arrangements of material. The DIY Cultures space was suggestive of the library experience, whose architecture permits an encounter with unexpected texts, but enabled contact with a diversity of people as much as texts. This mirrored the zine itself as a place of intimacy where the body of the producer and the reader meet through the exchange of printed material. Jenkins articulates the person to person contact at fan conventions as inviting reciprocation;⁶⁰² for Schilt, zine fairs were places where the disaffected could temporarily escape the confines of their host community,⁶⁰³ and for DIY Cultures organiser Hamja Ahsan, the physical handover that takes place at the market is a moment where shyness or introversion can be

⁶⁰² Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 159.

⁶⁰³ For Schilt, writing in 2003, tabling zines is the first experience for young women of the DIY ethic, their first public show of work, and first exposure to critique. Zines passed on information on how to become a feminist and led to practitioners joining feminist groups. Pseudonyms and anonymous zine ‘drops’ at fairs allowed the girls to control the audience and feel anonymous, “while revealing their inner-most thoughts on paper.” In a commercial environment of false empowerment, of slogan T-shirts and products, the currency of the zine market reflected more meaningfully the emotional investments, including what Schilt describes as the necessary investment of truth. Here, “zines allow girls to take part in and actively direct girl-based empowerment strategies for negotiating their specific problems in adolescence, rather than market-driven strategies created by adults that often fall short of offering girls the tools to effect change in their own lives.” Schilt, “Girls and Zine Making,” 80; 87.

temporarily reconciled. Regardless of these specific assignments though, the author's involvement in the selling of their product can be viewed as integral to the zine production process alongside the drawing, writing and making processes. That is: a relational encounter that underwrites a convivial environment for diverse socially-minded interest groups to gather and share resources, and another possible 'stepping stone' toward activism for zine producers and consumers.

DIY Cultures presents a conjunction of aesthetic practice and political activism as a focus for my examination of drawing as a technique within participatory art. This conjunction can be developed through Chantal Mouffe's argument for antagonism as a central agent in what are described as artistico-activist practices, a widening of the field of artistic intervention seen as essential for aesthetic practices to play a role in grasping the hegemonic struggle in democratic politics.⁶⁰⁴ These are forms of 'critical art', ways in which art questions hegemony. 'Critical' here, is not in any way synonymous with 'contemporary', as the practices of concern are a riposte to what Mouffe terms the appropriation by capitalism of the aesthetic strategies of avant-garde activism inherited by contemporary art.⁶⁰⁵ My objective here is not to argue the validity of this position, but to apply frameworks where appropriate, and Mouffe's approach is useful for addressing overtly activist works outside of contemporary practice which consider artistic production as part of their political efficacy.⁶⁰⁶

Further, in Duncombe's call for contestation rather than just communication, there is an echo of the antagonism that Mouffe has posited as prerequisite for politically effective activist artwork. Scholars of participatory culture are also concerned that zine fairs, as intra-community networking methods, speak solely to their own fannish kinships, promising to zinesters, "a dream of non-alienation they can't deliver outside of their own subcultural confines."⁶⁰⁷ Here, the creation of new

⁶⁰⁴ "[B]y intervening directly in a multiplicity of social spaces in order to oppose the program of total social mobilization of capitalism. The objective should be to undermine the imaginary environment necessary for its reproduction." Chantal Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces." *Art & Research* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 1-5.

⁶⁰⁵ Mouffe, "Artistic Activism," 1. Mouffe offers a retort to arguments for retaining the autonomy of critical art as in itself a challenge to hegemony, as, "Every critical gesture is quickly recuperated and neutralized by the forces of corporate capitalism." Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013), 85. In terms of rejecting autonomy, Mouffe's position further contrasts with Bishop and Rancière's defence of art practice from ethical appropriation, and her rejection of the disregard of past invention contrasts with scholars that advocate rupture and constant re-invention as constituting the contemporary (The art theorists Suhail Malik and Simon O'Sullivan presenting variations of these).

⁶⁰⁶ "Acknowledging the political dimension of such interventions supposes relinquishing the idea that to be political requires making a total break with the existing state of affairs in order to create something absolutely new." Critical, or counter-hegemonic art, is thus, "constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony." Mouffe, "Artistic Activism," 4-5.

⁶⁰⁷ If the critique enabled by the DIY underground stays safely within the confines of its own world it achieves only a

subjectivities, assembly of plural voices or picturing of political futures may have little impact beyond zine culture's own 'scene' and, although inventively re-appropriating elements of the zine underground, organisers may risk the continued frustration that, "the rebellion expressed through zines and in underground culture is contained at the level of communication."⁶⁰⁸

The contestation seen as a necessary element of democratic politics is more thoroughly mapped by Mouffe's promotion of antagonism. This addresses the shortcoming of the political theory of agonism followed by the sociologist Jürgen Habermas, where a democracy benefits from a degree of ideological conflict. Mouffe argues that the agonistic approach to challenging hegemony cannot fully realise a democratic potential as although the conflict is viewed as productive, its purpose is ultimately toward promoting consensus. In positing difference as harmonious, liberalism seeks to negate the political aspect of diversity, negating an antagonistic version of politics that must be retained in any model of democracy.⁶⁰⁹ Here, the political is the site of the representations of institutions where social ordering is predicated on an exclusion of other possibilities, and what is established is fixed as 'hegemonic practices'.⁶¹⁰ Counter-hegemonic practices attempt to disarticulate these to establish another hegemony, revealing hegemony itself as contingent. For Mouffe then, the agonistic at the heart of democracy is, "a struggle between opposing hegemonic projects which can never be reconciled rationally."⁶¹¹

Public space enters this schema as a constant battleground of different hegemonies with no underlying unity, where, "agonistic confrontation takes place in a multiplicity of discursive surfaces." In challenging the liberal vision of public space as a terrain where consensus can emerge, *antagonism* includes coming to terms with the lack of a final ground, where there is no possibility

temporary release of anxiety. For Duncombe, this was a question that troubled Brecht, "[a]s a radical he feared that political art, instead of politicising people, would act as a sort of pressure release valve for dissatisfaction." Brecht was concerned that people would, "mentally and emotionally resolve their political anxieties through culture, when the real resolution of these problems could only happen by confronting power in the political realm." Duncombe, *Notes From Underground*, 199-204.

⁶⁰⁸ In Duncombe's "darker moments" he thinks zines and underground culture are not supposed to change anything, "Maybe for all their ranting and raving... zines are merely a form of political catharsis, and underground culture is meant only to be a rebellious haven in a heartless world." (Duncombe, 199).

⁶⁰⁹ "...liberalism is the rationalist belief in the availability of a universal consensus based on reason. No wonder that the political constitutes its blind spot. Liberalism has to negate antagonism since, by bringing to the fore the inescapable moment of decision - in the strong sense of having to decide in an undecidable terrain - antagonism reveals the very limit of any rational consensus." Mouffe, "Artistic Activism," 2.

⁶¹⁰ "The frontier between the social and the political is essentially unstable and requires constant displacements and renegotiations between social agents." Mouffe, 2.

⁶¹¹ This, "recognizes that society is always politically instituted and never forgets that the terrain in which hegemonic interventions take place is always the outcome of previous hegemonic practices and that it is never a neutral one." Mouffe, 3.

of final reconciliation. Here, the approach differs from established theoretical models of democracy. For Mouffe, Habermas's public sphere, as, "the place where deliberation aiming at a rational consensus takes place," is an impossible 'ideal speech situation' as it requires no exclusion (see also chapter 5 p.247). In addition, Hannah Arendt's agonism, wherein politics deals with essentially different people but without antagonism, is for Mouffe, not, "fundamentally different from the liberal one because it is inscribed in the horizon of an intersubjective agreement."⁶¹²

Habermas and Arendt both look for consensus and don't acknowledge an, "ineradicability of antagonism," as an inherent condition of difference. Arendt, according to Mouffe, "Doesn't differ from the liberal view as she sees inter-subjective agreement as the horizon. She doesn't acknowledge that the plurality is the cause of antagonism."⁶¹³ Mouffe instead advocates the creation of antagonistic spaces, which show what is hidden by spaces that show only consensus. To be radical, it is 'dissensus' that is required, the necessity of a productive tension between the motivations of participants (for Mouffe, artist group The Yes Men and activist organisation Reclaim the Streets show potential in this regard).⁶¹⁴ This differs from Rancière's use of dissensus to describe an interface between different regimes of sense (introduction, p.14). But although these tactics are valuable in creating new subjectivities and represent an important part of democratic politics, they cannot realise a transition to new hegemony on their own. To achieve this Mouffe pronounces that artistico-activist practices must also link with traditional forms of intervention such as trade unions.⁶¹⁵

Viewed as Mouffe's ideal artistico-activist practices, the zine fair, of which DIY Cultures was a particularly progressive iteration, would need to link to traditional forms such as trade unions, would need to foster dissensus and to intervene in public space. DIY Cultures met the first criterion, as the panel discussions brought a range of activists, theorists, union representatives and artists together. However, although the diversity of speakers led to robust exchanges, the participants could all be said to share a concern for emancipation and social justice, and the overall emphasis on hospitality reduced the possibility of any productive antagonism. The location, an entertainment venue usually frequented for recuperation and re-invigoration, also contributed to the unlikelihood

⁶¹² Mouffe, 4.

⁶¹³ Mouffe, 4.

⁶¹⁴ These are, "counter-hegemonic interventions whose objective is to occupy the public space in order to disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism is trying to spread, bringing to the fore its repressive character." Mouffe, 5.

⁶¹⁵ "Today artists cannot pretend any more to constitute an avant-garde offering a radical critique, but this is not a reason to proclaim that their political role has ended. They still can play an important role in the hegemonic struggle by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities." Mouffe, 5.

of dissensus taking place and the setting would also appear to discount the last criterion as antagonism, for Mouffe, requires a different mode of occupation of public space which DIY Cultures, contained in an arts venue, could not fulfil.⁶¹⁶

To my knowledge however, the event was not presented as an activist artwork in itself, and thus not meeting any of these criteria is of less relevance. Accordingly, it would be inaccurate to base an evaluation solely on Mouffe's, or on any art critical terms. For instance, one of the event's many successes was the atmosphere of conviviality generated by the organisers, without which the inclusivity and diversity central to their aims would not be possible. The zine fair as a stepping stone, a potential identified by Duncombe and Schilt, was another aspect positively emphasised. That the fair itself encircled a debating stage engendered a forum for cross-pollination between diverse activists and publishers, and, although the event did not intervene into public space, it can be argued that the organisers instead intervened elements of a more heterogeneous public space into the traditionally closed space of the zine fair.

Although I found DIY Cultures to offer the most affirmative answer to the question of the illustrated zine's political efficacy as lying in the re-invention of the space of exchange, the event itself must be considered only as a component of a broader movement, formed through the development of feminist, queer, intersectional and minority-produced zines as the most dynamic fronts of the genre. The counter-hegemonic potential does not rest solely in the possibilities of the physical meeting place or any one element as the zine underground (as with the assemblage of the body-without-organs) cannot be discerned in terms of parts. That Steve Larder suggested the true depths of zine culture cannot be gleaned from isolating just one phenomenon corroborates this observation. In the same manner, for Duncombe, it is, "the cultural phenomenon" of the zine scene that underscores the movement, rather than the format itself, thus the phenomenon survives the internet self-publishing revolution and any commercialisation or re-appropriation of the format.

3.2.4 || **The student study**

⁶¹⁶ There is not one 'public space', public space is always plural and there is no predetermined centre, no, "dispersion favoured by post-modernist thinkers' or 'smooth' space of Deleuze and followers." "Public spaces are always striated and hegemonically structured. A given hegemony results from a specific articulation of a diversity of spaces and this means that the hegemonic struggle also consists in the attempt to create a different form of articulation among public spaces." Mouffe, 3.

Drawings and their printed surfaces were intermediaries in the relational and social processes described above, and the aspect of my practical work connected to this discussion also saw the material of illustration used to generate exchange and encounter between myself and a range of practitioners. *The Selfish Dream* had a particularly in-between role in this development. After publication I began a process of disassembling the materials of the work toward the formulation of a discursive matrix beyond that of comic studies. The first acts of conversion to a more malleable research material involved reproducing individual panels in a series of posters for two installations, a severance which liberated the drawings from the strictures of the linear narrative and, in their presentation in a mixed-use social space, invited a public spectatorship rather than a private readership (Figure 38, left, p.179).⁶¹⁷ I then implemented the publication itself toward a more personal participation in the research field, selling *The Selfish Dream* at DIY publishing fairs and independent book stores. Mobilising the amateur and fan aspects of the work in this way led to an engagement with the flow of people and conversation around a spectrum of illustrated amateur self-publishing practices (Figure 37, right).⁶¹⁸

My framework for the student study was subsequently developed from the results of this fieldwork. This was influenced by the perception of self-publishing fairs as themselves sites of learning. The zine is often articulated in terms of alternative education, particularly for those excluded or alienated. For instance, Duncombe views both zines and underground culture as having constituted, “a free space where people can experiment with possibility,”⁶¹⁹ and for Fiske, fan conventions (which share a genealogy with the zine fair) give prominence to, “self-education and accumulation of cultural information.”⁶²⁰ Within my cases studies, Larder and Starbuck both sought an alternative educational model, evidenced in the importance Starbuck places on auto-didacticism and Larder’s

⁶¹⁷ The two installations were in different rooms in The Black Box, Belfast, a live performance venue. The first took the form of a temporary wall-installation in the café bar, and the second is a permanent interior design in the green room, the performer’s preparation space. The first exhibition launched on the same day as *The TDS Colouring-in Book* which provided a dissensus between two contrasting two modes of working. The publications performed the distribution of material as fit either for the expert (the comic) or non-expert (the colouring book) audiences. Although embarrassed about TDS participants seeing the content of the comic, I invited them to *The Selfish Dream* opening.

⁶¹⁸ In 2016 *The Selfish Dream* was sold by hand at *Nottingham Zine Fair*, Rough Trade Records Nottingham; *DIY Cultures*, Rich Mix London; *BALTIC Artists book market*, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Arts, Gateshead; *Leeds Zine Fair*, Left Bank Leeds and *Northwest Zinefest*, Islington Mill, Salford. Research also took place at *Dublin Art Book Fair*, Temple Bar Gallery Dublin and *Glasgow Zine Fest*, The Old Hairdresser’s and CCA, Glasgow. *The Selfish Dream* is stocked by a number of comic book and independent publishing stores including GOOD PRESS in Glasgow. GOOD PRESS represents a range of self-publishing in artist book, zine and DIY comic formats, and the premises itself, like many independent bookstores, is a blend of physical shop, meeting place and event space.

⁶¹⁹ Duncombe, *Notes From Underground*, 186.

⁶²⁰ “Official cultural capital, like economic capital, is systematically denied to the people and their lack then functions to distinguish them from those that possess it. In capitalist societies popular culture is necessarily produced from the products of capitalism, for that is all the people have to work with.” Fiske, “Cultural Economy,” 47.

concern for the educational contributions of his punk luminary interviewees (p.147). Further, Lekha's situating of *The Selfish Dream* within a broader tactical appropriation of consumerism as a tool for, "taking responsibility for your own programming," suggests his own concern for the work as part of an auto-didactic quest for knowledge.

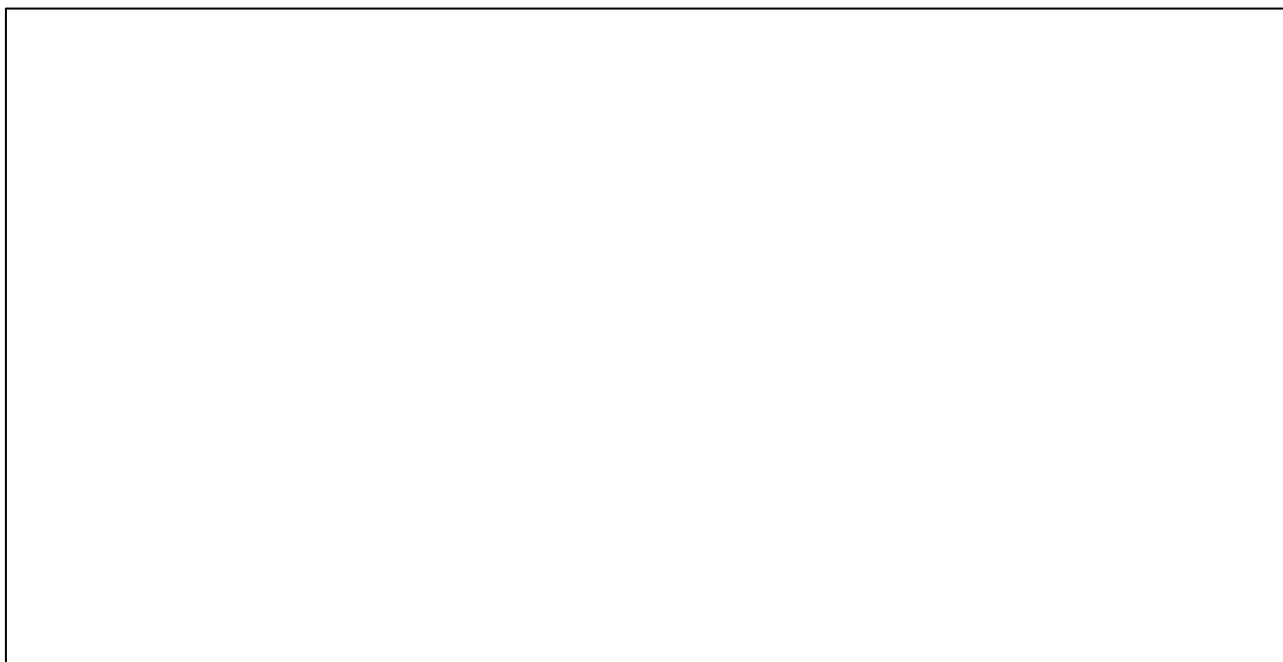


Figure 37. Om Lekha (writer) and Blinky 4 (artist), *The Selfish Dream* for sale at GOOD PRESS (left, circled) and DIY Cultures (right), 2016.

The DIY Cultures event also channelled the zine's affiliation with radical and 'alternative' pedagogies, praising, for Ahsan, "knowledge from the margins."⁶²¹ In this manner, the event mirrored a general resurgence of interest in extra-institutional pedagogic encounters that was taking place in critical practice.⁶²² For instance, given prominence were the stalls of the Anti-University Now, an open access festival of workshops established in response to the commercialisation and cost of higher education,⁶²³ and the editors of the self-published journal *OOMK*, had also collaborated with Open School East, an alternative art college that combines public access

⁶²¹ Hall, "Art and activism," 87.

⁶²² Amongst observations on alternative art schools in the UK is the relation of their rise in the 2010s to the re-introduction of student fees. David Batty, "Alternative art schools: a threat to universities?" *The Guardian*, 21 October 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/oct/21/alternative-art-schools-threaten-universities>

⁶²³ Inspired by the ideology of the original 1968 Anti-University radical education experiment, the Anti-University Now was initiated in 2015. The organisation's tagline summarises their aim and ethos as: "Free education for all – teaching and learning as direct action." <http://www.antiuniversity.org>.

workshops and a post-graduate programme.⁶²⁴ That collaboration echoed DIY Cultures' more specific focus on art education, which was enacted during the event through several experimental illustration and zine-making sessions in the subterranean space.⁶²⁵

Here, 'alternative', was an alternative route, not an alternative to, some form of more widely accepted art practice, as DIY Cultures co-founders Sofia Niazi and Helena Wee describe "independent publishing and grassroots arts" as a democratic entry into art-making, "an entry to the art world without going through a BA."⁶²⁶ In addition, although 'alternative' was stressed by the organisers, the event was more representative of an inter-connectivity between art educational institutions and what were previously the methods of a subculture. For example, several tables in the fair presented publishing projects produced as coursework by BA and Masters students.⁶²⁷ In parallel, Steve Larder was also tolerant of the implementation of zine methods in mainstream education, viewing illustration students or recent graduates tabling at zine fairs as evidence of a generation of art school tutors that would have made zines in the 1990s and 2000s and were now incorporating the culture into coursework.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁴ *OOMK* is edited by Rose Nordin, Sofia Niazi and Heiba Lamara and was launched in 2014. The editors also run a community Risograph printing service, *Rabbits Road Press*, based in London. Open School East was founded in 2013. Its website states its commitment to making the arts a more open sector and to providing a place of exchange between the arts and the broader public. The organisation was based in East London before moving to Margate in 2017.

⁶²⁵ For example, in illustrator and researcher Lucy Russell's workshop, participants used drawing to re-imagine women's magazine covers as body positive. In the philosopher Nina Power's workshop, the philosopher invited academics to re-translate their PhD's into zine form, an act suggesting both a critique of the knowledge economy and a questioning of the construction and institutionalisation of knowledge. Russell's research page: <http://ldoc-cdt.ac.uk/lucie-russell/>. Power's zine project: <https://www.facebook.com/events/597485407066202/>.

⁶²⁶ A.B.S Media, "ArtBegetsSpirit."

⁶²⁷ A similar make-up of stallholders was present at Glasgow Zine Fest and there was also a pronounced inter-connectivity with the arts institution at BALTIC Artists book market. There, Northumberland University staff and students led events including Risograph workshops, an exhibition and performances.

⁶²⁸ For Larder, DIY culture hasn't come back because it never went away. He expressed a theory that zine culture is more entrenched, perhaps because those that have grown up on it are teaching at university level, creating zine projects within art courses where the medium forms, "a good vehicle to teach." Larder, 2017.



Figure 38. Left: Duncan Ross, *The Selfish Dream* (installation), Belfast, The Black Box, 2016. Right: Duncan Ross with Hannah Woodside, student study space, Belfast, Ulster University, 2016.

My fieldwork in the zine scene, important for my analysis of illustration in terms of its relation to alternative community formulation, synchronously provided a set of methods for orientating my focus back to the experience of the draughtsperson. My time in these social spaces of distribution influenced the design of the student study in terms of the visual and spatial presentation and in a conceptual application of illustrative practice in an educational setting open to diversity and a degree of dissensus.⁶²⁹ I was attempting to make a zine, or zine-fair like space, that would co-facilitate a discussion of self-publishing in terms of the activist, emancipatory, educational, personal, sub- and pop cultural themes running through the fieldwork (figure 38, right). This was a more focussed approach than the previous TDS study, my objective being to ascertain whether a random group of students, of whom I had little or no prior experience but who expressed an interest in the study description, would relate the inter-subjective potential of publishing to any of the fieldwork themes outlined above.

I held in parallel an intention not to over-influence the study outcomes. In my recruitment advertising for the project, I invited students to develop their own published works under the broad

⁶²⁹ An aspect I considered important for my desire to promote open-ness was the creation of a bespoke study space. I situated the student study in the Art College Student Union social room which was separate from departments but familiar and supported by the student union network. I commissioned a recently graduated artist, Hannah Woodside, who was undertaking a residency in the art college, to design and build furniture, paying particular attention to the arrangement of the seats for both the small group teaching sessions and the practical activities. My own design features included a series of Dayglo posters influenced by *The Selfish Dream* exhibitions, wherein I intended to make a visual connection to performance, music and the temporality of the pop-cultural 'event'. Evidence that my overall approach to the study space as an available 'surface' came in one of the participants own augmentation of the wall with a large drawing and his own bill-posted fliers.

heading of 'printed drawing', which was intended to accommodate not only zine-practice, but artist books, illustrated pamphlets, comics, posters or any form of printing and self-publishing of interest (Appendix, p.305).⁶³⁰ In the preliminary planning sessions I discussed options with participants but left them to decide what to make. I did bring examples from zine and self-publishing fairs which I intended to demonstrate a broad range of possibilities, and some participant works did reflect the influence of these. In introducing the project, I also emphasised distribution and how participants would use their works after production as an area to consider during the early decision-making stage.

The most fruitful outcomes were again unexpected, and I applied discussion and my analysis to developing the overarching approach to the topic. For example, of the ten participants who submitted some sort of work for the project, it was Niamh McCann's poster contribution that best concretised a formal description of the contemporary zine, even though time commitments had prevented McCann from taking part in the interviews and the majority of the sessions. In *black rock 5* (Figure 29, p.131), as with zines and zine culture as I have approached it, illustration is prominent yet displaced, joining a family of symbols, photos, text, design and ornamentation. There is a recursive aspect in what I consider as an illustration of illustration, that includes the machinery of reproduction, the photocopier, as an active part of the formal space, and the image has been optimised for cheap monochrome reproduction. Yet within the mixture of digital and manual technologies the drawn mark remains indexical, a logographic condition retained as an extra-written signifier of authorial authenticity and the trace of the author's hand.⁶³¹

⁶³⁰ In addition to facilitating student's own work I published a Risograph printed zine influenced by communal projects found at Leeds Zine Fair and DIY Cultures. This contained contributions from eleven participants including myself. It revealed the condition of illustrative drawing as representing a previous representation. It was a pre-planned project outcome intended to create an output for participants and the study regardless of individual projects, functioning as a keepsake from the study.

⁶³¹ Although a zine aesthetic could be analysed from the perspective of appropriation, typography, photography, graphic design, writing and collage, drawing is omnipresent, if only as a scratching to debase or erase an appropriated image, as a subversive speech balloon, or as arrows or similar marks connecting different aspects of the page to one another.



Figure 39. Various authors, printed works by student study participants, 2016.

Sandra Preston's input to the study bridged fandom and activism. In chapter one I cited her identifying an interest in fantasy fiction book covers and illustrations within nerd or geek "drawn subcultures" (p.49).⁶³² These styles were associated with a looseness and freedom which was expressed as becoming constrained by the critical thinking developed in art school education.⁶³³ In addition Preston was a campaigner on student issues and her poster designs contained a tacit critique of ongoing changes in the University infrastructure. Mary Gilfillen also joined the study with an interest in the activist potential of publishing. Her initial concept was to convey in a small booklet, the significance of her stance on equality for sexual identities and her opposition to

⁶³² This imaginative freedom was connected to maintaining psychological health through a propensity Preston articulated as a vehicle for visualising the other beyond limitations of self. "I have a fascination with pen and ink drawings and collect a lot of books that contain these types of drawings. Something that either, usually there's an element of fantasy and it has to re-imagine what already is or create something new... the whole idea of fantasy is that you can imagine beyond your current limitations or definitions of self. And that is what people strive for in subcultures, to be different, to stand out, to have a different way of looking at the world." Preston, 2016.

⁶³³ "You sort of pick up these guidelines you feel almost hesitant so it would be nice to break with that again, break that open again." Preston, 2016.

homophobic church dogma.⁶³⁴ In the planning stage, we had discussed the possibility of handing out her publication in the manner of a religious pamphleteer, either outside her church or in a public space. But Gilfillen's developing interest in 'hospitality' resulted in her distributing her booklets to fellow students as part of a seminar presentation on that topic (chapter one, p.49-50).

On reflection, I had attempted to translate my experience of contemporary self-publishing distribution networks into a participatory research environment, itself a quasi-practical component. The fieldwork itself had resulted from a level of disaffection with *The Selfish Dream* and the desire to extract something meaningful from the distribution process. This overlapping of methods, artworks and fieldwork formed a particularly messy part of the overall research process and it felt necessary to bring some of Scott McCloud's 'closure', to the gutter spaces between these fragmented elements.⁶³⁵ Considering the recent proliferation of a psychotherapeutic sense of 'closure', and the discussion of Bechdel in particular, *The Selfish Dream* ancillary activities can be viewed as attempts at reparation, or reconciliation, through the addition of a new 'text'.⁶³⁶

My final reparative act was influenced by my discussion with Gilfillen wherein I raised the idea of pamphleteering her booklet. This act was the destruction of Blinky 4's remaining copies of *The Selfish Dream*, the re-compilation of the remains in a zine-like booklet form and the handing out of these in a public place (Figure 40). Disconnecting the panels interrupted the autogenic myth and the illustrations were partly released from Lekha's diegesis to participate in the, "free-floating discursivity," that the artist and writer Deanna Petherbridge identifies as an indicator of critically-informed drawing.⁶³⁷ This did not destroy but fragmented the narratives within the work, focusing attention on the component elements of the illustrations rather than the overarching story. The process could be viewed as drawing attention to the occlusion that characterises comic book illustration and although the phallogocentric remained, a critical reading was invited: the new non-sequiturs suggestive of troublesome narratives that are present but hidden and that it is up to the reader to suture their own connections.

⁶³⁴ In this case, the hand-crafted was intended to embody Gilfillen's investment of time, labour and self-integrity. This was again connected with 'hospitality' and the simple design was intended as a welcoming invitation and gift. Gilfillen, 2016.

⁶³⁵ 'Closure' is McCloud's term for the reader intuiting the continuity of a narrative between the discrete panels of the comic book, the spaces being the 'gutter' (chapter two, p.84).

⁶³⁶ These activities included printing and exhibiting separate panels as posters in an attempt to reclaim the illustrations from the ambigrammatic oscillation of their original narrative structure. In addition, the instrumentalisation of the comic as an intermediary in the research process, and even the written analysis in the previous chapter, could also be viewed as acts of reparation or reconciliation.

⁶³⁷ Petherbridge, "Nailing The Liminal," 27-41.

Pamphleteering was a breaking free from the failed economics of conventional distribution which had resulted in negligible sales and interest.⁶³⁸ In contrast, two hundred *Selfish Dream* booklets were hand-distributed by my assistant and myself over an hour's time. The presence of figures handing out small printed material also suggested religious pamphleteering with its associations of social conservatism.⁶³⁹ The *Selfish Dream* contained its own dogmatic vocabulary although the narrative fragmentation obscured the credo. The form and content could be viewed as disjunctive in this context, or alternatively as the seemly marriage of religiosity and perversion, reflecting Thoburn's two routes for a work to be considered an anti-book (p.154).⁶⁴⁰ The handing out of the flesh of the comic to an anonymous public is instrumental in such a consideration, as this brought the distribution into resonance with the content. That the comic had been considered as corporeal in chapter two was made crassly literal in the cutting up the centre page, where Dawkins's fragmented body described the booklet's own status as a body part. In turn, my public self-exposure presented the body of the solitary zine illustrator live in the act of re-inscribing their community.

⁶³⁸ At the time of writing the comic is available at approximately ten outlets, including: GOOD PRESS, Glasgow; Forbidden Planet Belfast and Glasgow; Page45, Nottingham; and OK Comics, Leeds.

⁶³⁹ The pamphlet was handed out in Temple Bar, Dublin in 25 November 2017, this time and location chosen to coincide with Dublin Art Book Fair. However, the depictions of the body, particularly of gestation and birth, were seen retroactively in the political context in Ireland at the time. Here, my assistant in the distribution, herself an activist for women's and LGBTQ rights, observed that the sensitivity of the depictions in the context of the concurrent "Repeal the 8th Movement" gave the work an additional resonance, and a possible ambiguity, in relation to the continuing influence of religion on politics, and of state intervention and control of the female body. This observation contributed to what Azoulay terms a 'civil gaze' on the work, where only in a public context and in conversation with many gazes can the possible impacts of an aesthetic work can be acknowledged.

⁶⁴⁰ The form suggested two cult predecessors: the ambiguous parody of the ideological pamphleteer and Evangelical tradition connected the comic to the illustrated 'Chic Tract' religious pamphlets; and in its pornographic content, scale, and hand-made appearance, the booklet suggested 'Tijuana Bibles', erotic comic-like picture books that circulated in the US in the first half of the twentieth century.



Figure 40. Duncan Ross, *The Selfish Dream* re-configured (left) and distributed in Dublin, 25 November 2017 (right).

Summary

In chapter three I developed the inter-relationship between different modes of picturing political and social alternatives through illustrative drawing. These practices and materials are linked to the temporary gatherings of fans and activists and both practitioners and theorists articulate the inter-subjectivity that takes place in these in terms of a potential for personal and social transformation. The drawn and printed image was discussed as representing a yearning for community and as a social currency that performs the constant re-inscription necessary to institute that community. Critique of the zine underground and related participatory fan cultures addresses the counter-hegemonic potential of these practices: through discussion of the confinement of self-publishers within their own communities; the form's precarious relationship with the capitalist market model; and the lack of antagonism in the zine fair. Although self-publishing events can be viewed as failing to constitute effective art works in themselves, they nevertheless provide an intermediary stage for a potentially diverse grouping to organise politically. The practical aspect relevant to the discussion was described as fragmented and messy but demonstrated the flexibility of drawing as a research material and as a method for structuring a participatory arts programme.

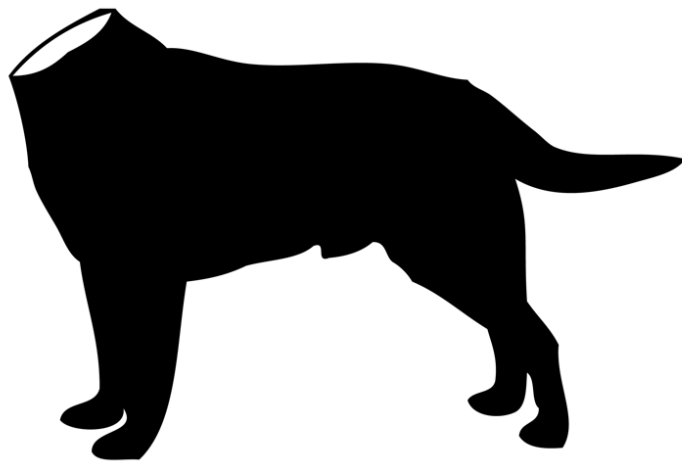


Figure 41. Stephen Hackett and Richard West, *Factotum Logo*, circa 2001, digital drawing.

Chapter Four || Public art and the illustrated newsheet

The Vacuum, published by the arts organisation Factotum from 2003 to 2014, contained writing on cultural and social matters centred on Belfast and Northern Ireland. I introduce it as a ‘newsheet’ as this describes a smaller, more localised publication than the mass market ‘newspaper’, but both formats differ from the zine’s intra-community communication as they address an anonymous public. In the first of three sections I compare *The Vacuum* with traditional grassroots political spectacles in the North and genealogies of illustrated print media. The role of illustration is introduced as one of several techniques deployed by editors, all of which can be characterised by their use of humour. *The Vacuum*’s humour rounded in particular on representations of Northern Ireland across a spectrum of cultural production.

I then consider *The Vacuum* as an unwilling, but not unwitting, public artwork between modes of publishing, grassroots and critical art.⁶⁴¹ In this reading the publication relates closely to different modes of public spectacles that typified the period as one of competing visions of the future and the past. These are political street displays, civic-sponsored re-imaging programmes and socially-engaged critical artworks. In addressing these I select individual instances of illustration to demonstrate how drawing part-constituted *The Vacuum*’s dialect of humorous critical commentary. In the third section the Factotum logo itself is proposed as both a deceptive organisational self-portrait and an apt illustration of how the publication used fictional narratives to problematize notions of community and public.⁶⁴² Pilot Publishing, the creators of the community magazine *Laburnum Pilot*, are then cited as a comparative case study where the act of drawing is applied toward instigating and sustaining social relationships. In the final section, I reflect on my formation of the Tuesday Drawing Studio as influenced by the perceived community of *The Vacuum*, and on the ecological role of drawing as exemplified by Pilot Publishing.

⁶⁴¹ In turn *The Vacuum* has invited readings as a public and community arts practice. Declan McGonagle, *A Shout in the Street: Collective Histories of Northern Irish Art V* (Belfast: Golden Thread Gallery, 2008); Declan Long, *Ghost-haunted Land: Contemporary art and post-Troubles Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Hugh Mulholland, *The nature of things: Artists from Northern Ireland* (London: British Council, 2005).

⁶⁴² Ross, “Illustrating *The Vacuum*,” 33-34.

4.1 || **Factotum and *The Vacuum***

4.1.1 || **The city: humour and *Culture***

The Vacuum was a free newspaper published irregularly between 2003 and 2014 by Factotum, a small-scale, not-for-profit arts organisation formed in Belfast in 2001. Factotum was the brainchild and personal project of Stephen Hackett, an art school graduate and ex-director of artist-run gallery Catalyst Arts; and Richard West, co-editor of *Source*, a magazine for contemporary photography. Although Factotum's activities were multi-modal, including curation, film-making and leading a choir, *The Vacuum* was Hackett and West's longest-running project and would often be considered synonymously with its publisher.⁶⁴³

The publication itself was a tabloid format newsheet with an average of twenty-four pages per issue in varying combinations of full colour and monochrome. Print runs depended on available budget and varied between 5000 and 20,000 per issue, with standard audience estimate metrics suggesting 1.5 readers per distributed copy.⁶⁴⁴ The paper was circulated by hand throughout Belfast to over one hundred public and commercial venues with an attention to an even distribution throughout the city. That the paper appeared, "across Belfast's fragmented geography," illustrates one of the defining characteristics of Factotum, *The Vacuum* seeking to exist, according to the writer Colin Graham, "in a mode outside recognized political communities."⁶⁴⁵

Over fifty issues of the paper were produced although their frequency was erratic, ten being published at peak production in 2005, slowing to only one in 2014.⁶⁴⁶ The irregular schedule was offset by the individual theming of each issue, partially decoupling the content of the paper from its release date.⁶⁴⁷ The thematic approach lent *The Vacuum* the character of a low-budget literary supplement or throwaway arts magazine with a mixture of one-off feature articles and semi-regular

⁶⁴³ The curator Declan McConagle presents Factotum as itself a "strategy," in relation to Belfast and the North, which, "operates entirely in the domain of public information systems. [A] delta of approaches to 'imaging' this place." McConagle, *A Shout in the Street*, 15.

⁶⁴⁴ Colin Graham, "*The Vacuum* and the Vacuum," *Circa* 118 (Winter 2006), 56.

⁶⁴⁵ Graham, "*The Vacuum*," 58.

⁶⁴⁶ Although *The Vacuum* was never officially wound up, at the time of writing no new issues have appeared since 2014.

⁶⁴⁷ The cheap substance of paper itself also described a limited timeline for individual issues of *The Vacuum*, lending them the "ephemeral duration" of the pamphlet. Although, to Nicholas Thoburn, "...ephemerality becomes, paradoxically, a quality that endures. It is a quality that permeates the object and colors its social encounters, providing a sense of the discontinuous and variegated nature of intellectual, political, and inorganic time. Benjamin's speculation that the object embodies times and sensations associated with previous owners and contexts can manifest here in terms of the object's association with, or expression of, particular political events, movements, or currents." Thoburn, "Communist Objects," 18.

columns that played out over a series of issues.⁶⁴⁸ Contributors were drawn from a pool of over one hundred artists, academics, poets, journalists, activists, social historians and mates, who would be approached by the editors with a specific brief based around the contributor's interests and character.⁶⁴⁹ The combination of expert and non-expert contributor and mix of academic, journalistic, literary and amateur approaches, lent *The Vacuum* the air of an accessible, informal learning material similar to the zine.

Illustration had both a privileged position in *The Vacuum* visual vocabulary, for instance constituting the majority of the cover images (Figure 1, p.20), and, in the broader *Vacuum* assemblage was just one of many techniques mobilised by the editors.⁶⁵⁰ Although creative, critical and satirical writing was the core content, contributions to *The Vacuum* often involved multiple methods of readership engagement and public intervention that took place beyond the page.⁶⁵¹ These actions in particular can be seen to frame *The Vacuum* as a participatory public artwork as much as a free newsheet and typified the editors' curiosity and willingness to access hidden parts of the city. Between these copy-generating urban interventions, the physical distribution of the paper, and various publicly sited spin-off or satellite activities, *The Vacuum* integrated itself (albeit on a modest and generally unobtrusive scale) into the public spaces of Belfast and its hinterlands.

⁶⁴⁸ The themed arts and visual culture journal *Parkett* (1917 -) was one of Hackett's influences for *The Vacuum*.

⁶⁴⁹ "As far as the main subject was concerned, we would think around interesting ways of approaching it. The theme in some cases would dictate more than other things or maybe we would have some pre-conceived way that we wanted to approach it. So, then we would write a list of ideas that described what we were doing in those cases so ask people who they'd like to be their king, so who are you going to get to do that? Normally, you're sort of matching the commissions to the people because those were the right people to do that." Richard West, in discussion with the author, 30 May 2016.

⁶⁵⁰ There were practical reasons as well as aesthetic preferences for this. The editors would have liked to have commissioned more photography, or as many mediums as they could, but they didn't get the results they did with drawings, "we never succeeded in finding someone who could work in the same way that you and David [Haughey] and other people would do, through photography, to deal with the subjects in the same way. I'd like to have done a photography issue where we set people free to go and we gave them license to go and take pictures and put them together in a broadsheet newspaper format. Photography, it's the perfect vehicle for it." Illustration was also a basic way of getting people's attention, a simple bold picture on a cafe shelf instantly connecting, for West, to people, "who think like we do." On a less practical level, the editors loved pictures, commissioned them for enjoyment, "[w]hy did we start using illustrations in *The Vacuum*? Because we could and because it was brilliant. And that's it." This was achieved through the negotiation of the commissioning process, "we know that if you ask [the illustrators] the right way and you give them a brief then they do something. And you know because they've done it before that they will do something amazing and that it would be thrilling to read it. And then the idea that you're going to make that into a thing that you'll deliver to people round the city, it's like a terrific gift." West, 2016.

⁶⁵¹ An example of the article as public intervention was the semi-regular column "Bloomer and Keogh Investigate," produced by the artists Nicky Keogh and Paddy Bloomer. The column took the form of surreal fieldwork reports from various stunts and excursions, actions that, in turn, formed anarchic public spectacles and spawned satellite artworks with a life completely beyond the remit or control of *The Vacuum* editors. The first example of this approach resulted in a madcap, nano-budget attempt to re-make the film *Apocalypse Now* on Belfast's River Lagan. *The Vacuum: Film* issue 1 (2003) <http://www.thevacuum.org.uk/issues/issues0120/issue01/is01artblokeo.html>.

The Vacuum's production took place in the decade after the 1998 Belfast Agreement, commonly cited as the cessation of thirty years of civil conflict in the region. Northern Ireland was being re-articulated as a post-conflict and then a post-peace process society which, although peaceful relative to the previous decades, was experiencing a retention of parochial, conservative and sectarian politics, continuing entrenchment of social division and rapid commercialization of public space.⁶⁵² This was a transitional period where peace, according to the art historian Vikki Bell, risked becoming synonymous with, "a no-time of consumer capitalism, where democracy's paradoxes were unquestioned."⁶⁵³ In addition the Agreement, for the journalist Fintan O'Toole, risked achieving, "something that sovereign governments had not done before, which is to create a political space that is claimed by nobody – a space, moreover, that exists not in a physical territory but inside people's heads."⁶⁵⁴

"It was a kind of anodyne future being plotted out for Belfast," for the photographer John Duncan, referring to the commodification and privatisation of the early 2000s, "but the reality of the city was always different."⁶⁵⁵ Here, *The Vacuum* editors concerned themselves with multiple fictionalisations of Belfast, spinning them together to form an alternative to the commercially-driven narratives of conventional media, government and business.⁶⁵⁶ For instance within the paper, relatively orthodox articles on historical and cultural aspects of the city sat next to uninhibited personal reflections on contemporary life and scathingly satirical or zine-like reviews of obscure cultural phenomena. Further, this unruly counterfictional content, whether investigative, polemical or insouciant, was nearly always intended to be funny.

⁶⁵² The time was also marked by the downturns and resurgences of the 'Celtic Tiger' in the Republic of Ireland and New Labour policies in the rest of the United Kingdom. "In contrast to a popular will to end sectarian conflict, the state-sponsored aspects of the Peace Process – extending British 'Third Way' capitalism westwards and the Celtic Tiger northwards through the promotion of private finance and the exclusion of the poor from public life – aim at establishing a wishy-washy and market-driven postmodern pluralism that actually serves to mask the real socioeconomic divides in our city that threaten ultimately to remove power from people" Aaron Kelly, "Geopolitical Eclipse: Culture and the Peace Process in Northern Ireland," *Third Text* 19, no. 5 (August 2005): 548.

⁶⁵³ Vikki Bell, "Contemporary art and transitional justice in Northern Ireland: The consolation of form," *Journal of Visual Culture* 10, no. 3 (2011): 324–353, 350.

⁶⁵⁴ Fintan O'Toole, "The Good Friday agreement is so much more than a 'shibboleth'," *The Guardian*, 10 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/10/good-friday-agreement-brexit-identity>.

⁶⁵⁵ John Duncan, "John Duncan's best photograph: a front-row seat on Belfast's sectarian divide," interview by Tom Graham, *The Guardian*, 2 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/may/02/john-duncan-best-photograph-belfast-sectarian-divide-wall-northern-ireland>.

⁶⁵⁶ Hackett and West's interest in the city was evident in their preceding newsprint publications, *Cartographies* (2001) and *Citywide* (2002). These were proto-*Vacuums* in terms of their focus on Belfast and, in particular, its subjection to fictionalisation.

Although the humorous mode is consistently described as ‘anarchic’ by commentators,⁶⁵⁷ it was in reality more mutable: sometimes carnivalesque, sometimes ironic, sometimes satirical and sometimes not even very funny. Illustration was one of Factotum’s vehicles for delivering that humour,⁶⁵⁸ a drawn dialect amongst several poached vernaculars mobilised in *The Vacuum* assemblage. This fitted with the overall design of the paper which worked against what Richard West describes as a cold documentary aesthetic, a trend that included contemporary photography that represented for the editor, ‘a return to the real’. For West *The Vacuum* was straightforward entertainment in comparison, an imaginative world that, whilst retaining a critical edge, could be entered into like a children's book illustration.⁶⁵⁹ Drawing held a number of design functions within this approach: accompanying the feature articles; as marginalia; comprising headers for semi-regular columns; or as bespoke icons and banners to suit the changing themes. The cover illustration, however, was the most prominent, heralding, communicating and problematising the theme of each issue.⁶⁶⁰

My drawing for the 2005 *Culture* issue presents an example of *The Vacuum*’s interweaving of fantasy and lived experience of the city through the ambiguous application of a range of comedic modes (Figure 42, right). Common to all the drawings referenced here I do not present the *Culture* cover as an autonomous artwork but an example of a *Vacuum* technique that contributes toward a discussion of the paper as a public artwork. Although the image makes a specific cultural reference: to the bonfires built each year across the North primarily for the annual Unionist celebrations of the Battle of The Boyne,⁶⁶¹ this subject matter was a rare digression as I tended to avoid depicting clichés of Ulster politics or recognizable Troubles iconography. However, in the fashion of a

⁶⁵⁷ Graham, 2006; Long, 2017; McConagle, 2008.

⁶⁵⁸ Counterfiction is, “a narrative of various lengths carried by various supports [...] which introduces a fictional component into our actual world, in order to scramble, block or re-route the systemic reproduction of our reality.” Yves Citton. “Counter-Fictions: Three Types of Struggles.” *Multitudes* 1, no. 48 (2012). DOI: 10.3917/mult.048.007. Counterfictions can also be alternative histories, “novelistic thought experiments about worlds in which some decisive historical event turned out otherwise than it did in ‘our’ timeline.” <https://www.english.upenn.edu/courses/undergraduate/2017/fall/engl016.302>.

⁶⁵⁹ Particularly Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963). Where, like Sendak’s protagonist/reader, West wants you to put on your wolf suit. Drawing here functions as a direct way of contrasting the quotidian and the fantastic. For instance, West considers the illustration, *Titanic Inns*, as “a drawing that works because it takes you into some other imaginary place, but we manage to combine these elements that you wouldn't normally put together. So, it's not about, obviously somebody vomiting outside a bar is something you could see every day. It could equally be a dinosaur doing something wacky, it's just, we need to find a way to get you to imagine into that space and then you'll do a drawing of it. Sometimes it'll work, sometimes it didn't work, it's a sort of balancing, like archery. It has to be pointed in the right direction and then the things have to go right and then it hits the target.” West, 2016.

⁶⁶⁰ The cover became the ‘signature’ of *The Vacuum*. West, 2016.

⁶⁶¹ The majority of bonfires are built by Unionist/ Loyalist communities to commemorate William of Orange defeating James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. To a far lesser extent bonfires are also built in Nationalist/Republican communities, mainly to mark the anniversary of the introduction of internment without trial on 9 August 1971. Footage of the bonfires circulates widely in the media, and the complex politics of representation at play have been interrogated several times in contemporary artworks. Ross, “Illustrating *The Vacuum*,” 19.

heterotopia, as much as the *Culture* cover is unlike the other illustrations it can simultaneously be read as encapsulating not only those illustrations as a body of work but also an aspect of *The Vacuum*'s overall approach that aligns the project with public art practice.⁶⁶² And in this case, 'public art' is represented as a vernacular political display specific to a particular locality.

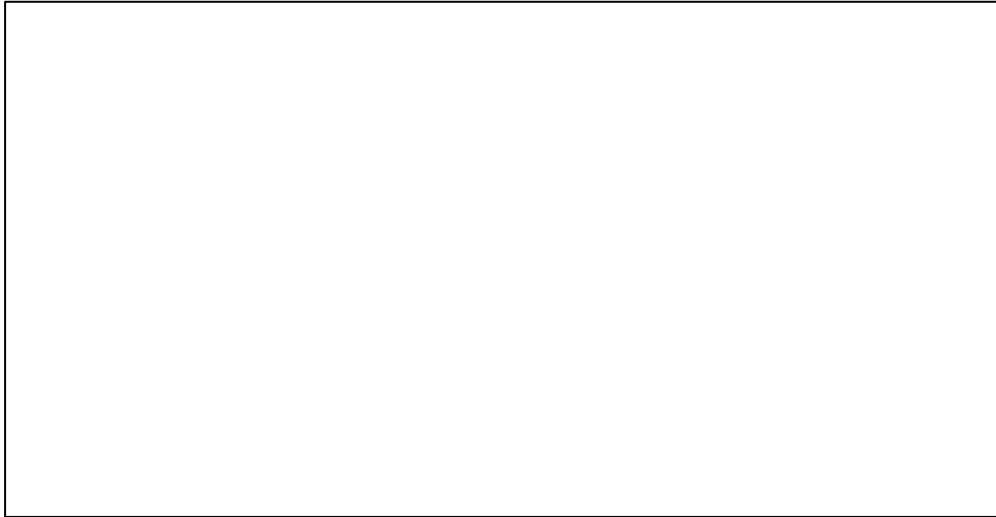


Figure 42. Left: John Duncan, *Bonfires*, 2008, photographic series. Right: Factotum (illustration by Duncan Ross), *The Vacuum*, *Culture* issue, 2005.

The drawn image was slightly dislocated from its association with the Northern Irish political bonfire however, by the replacement of the belligerent flags and effigies that usually adorn the structures with a hackneyed stereotype of an artist.⁶⁶³ This suggested an additional yet ambiguous meaning, in turn indicative of the anthropologist Neil Jarman's observations relating to the tradition of political murals. Here, although the muralist may seek to anchor their images with text, framing devices and restrictions, the image is always relatively distanced from its producer, relatively autonomous, and therefore open to new and unexpected interpretations.⁶⁶⁴ Further, citing the art historian Ernst Gombrich, Jarman views the image as opposed to the text as it is, "always relatively

⁶⁶² To an extent, West agreed that the illustrations performed the spirit of *The Vacuum*. West, 2016.

⁶⁶³ I had previously considered the image as, "an attempt to initiate an open-ended conversation between its constituent elements, to invoke the bonfire with a deliberate ambiguity towards its multiple presentations, whether the original spectacle, its re-circulation in the media, or in subsequent critical art readings." Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," 19.

⁶⁶⁴ My earlier reading also considered the openness of the image in terms of the figure: "Was the besmoked figure (my off-the-shelf shorthand for establishment arts) an enemy of grassroots culture? Was his rarified position indeed partly built upon the distasteful public art of the bonfire? Had he just climbed up there for a better view of Belfast Lough? My *Culture* cover illustration refused to settle on a specific story or satirical target, aiming rather to treat it's signified with an equality of ambiguity, the narrative elements mutually undermining and co-dependent." Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," 25-26.

unfocused and out of control,” a characteristic engaged willingly in *The Vacuum* illustrations.⁶⁶⁵ Considering this observation, mine was a conscious un-anchoring of the image made to deny the emergence of a clear meaning.

For instance, although I initially recognised an autobiographical element in the figure,⁶⁶⁶ I subsequently re-considered the self-reference more in terms of *The Vacuum*'s own relation to the issue's theme: 'culture'. The theme was itself typical in its broadness and non-specificity yet contained a particular resonance when considering *The Vacuum*'s location and period of production.⁶⁶⁷ However, as with the heterotopic quality of the illustration, the theme was also atypical in that it drew attention to *The Vacuum*'s own status as a cultural product. Through the motif of the bonfire, the *Culture* issue presented *The Vacuum* as itself a public artwork, and thereby interlinked seemingly divergent representational addresses (arts newspaper and vernacular political display). In particular, this proclamation situated the paper as an interface between critical art, publishing and grassroots cultural practices.

4.1.2 || *Sorry Day and July*

My *Culture* drawing had been influenced by John Duncan's contemporaneous photographic series *Bonfires* (2008),⁶⁶⁸ a comparison I consider in terms of *The Vacuum* creating a dissensus. Within Duncan's series, the bonfire, as a vernacular intervention into the environment, is placed in conversation with landscape art traditions, unmasking the latter's political and territorialising functions and troubling the former in regards to its aestheticising by the viewer's gaze (Figure 42, left).⁶⁶⁹ The dissensus occurs in the displacement of regimes of sensory distribution in a manner that provokes new insight, and in *Bonfires* and *The Vacuum* this is the further unpacking of the interconnectivity between politics, cultural production and public space.⁶⁷⁰ The sequence of events

⁶⁶⁵ Neil Jarman, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 16.

⁶⁶⁶ "I felt if I was going to invoke a particular working-class cultural artefact of the North, there needed to be a degree of self-critique, or satire, at play – not just of my own perceived subjectivity, but of the wider liberal arts culture that made the continuing production of *The Vacuum* possible." Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," 19.

⁶⁶⁷ To Declan Long, the themed nature, "demonstrates determination to create new types of conversations that are broadly relevant – or tellingly non-relevant – to how the history and culture of Northern Ireland might be analysed or framed." Long, *Ghost-haunted Land*, 191. The themes could be broad topics such as: *Sex, Art, Dreams* and *Media*; occasional oddities such as *Walking* or *Monsters of Ulster*; or complete obscurities such *Floral Tribute*.

⁶⁶⁸ In 2008 *Bonfires* was installed at Wolverhampton Art Gallery and a photobook was published by Photoworks, Steidl and Belfast Exposed Photography. However, the series had been in development over several years and many of the images had been previously published and exhibited.

⁶⁶⁹ Daylight Multimedia, "John Duncan: Bonfires," online video, 3:35, 2010, <https://vimeo.com/16779577>.

⁶⁷⁰ Graham described this approach as showing, "a repeated interest in disrupted public space," that in so doing, "looks for a spirit of a place that is neither whimsical nor readily definable." Colin Graham, "Belfast in photographs," in *The Cities of Belfast*, Nicholas Allen and Aaron Kelly, eds. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 163.

around *Sorry Day* (2004) furthers this dissensual mode in terms of *The Vacuum*'s multi-stranded approach to public space. *Sorry Day* not only provides additional contextualisation for *The Vacuum* alongside traditional political displays but aids in analysing the role of illustration within *The Vacuum*'s own public interventions.

The path to *Sorry Day* began with the publication of the double *God/Devil* themed issue in June 2004, the content of which was largely made up of personal and humorous reflections on religion in Northern Ireland. A small but vocal group of Belfast City councillors deemed the content insulting and, on the pretext of protecting the public, insisted their arts subcommittee withhold a grant previously offered to Factotum. Shortly after this decision, the embargo was modified to allow the funding to go ahead if Factotum apologised to the citizens of Belfast. The editors' response was to take the premise literally, staging a parodic multi-media apology including a Sorry-themed issue of *The Vacuum* and theatrical *Sorry Day* of sarcastic and comical events (Figure 43, left).⁶⁷¹

Neither fully an artistic nor activist event, *Sorry Day* was, to Graham, "a physical manifestation on the streets of Belfast of what had previously been mainly confined to the iconoclastic, anarchic and unpredictable pages of the newspaper."⁶⁷² Reflecting on *Sorry Day* from the perspective of his own autonomous but interrelated contribution (Figure 43, right), the artist Dan Shipsides viewed the event as a necessary appearance of un-authorized, unsanctioned and unprescribed art and an antidote to, "the prescription of public space around narrow neoliberal dynamics."⁶⁷³ The very ambiguity of these actions around *Sorry Day* can be viewed as Factotum and its support base using public space antagonistically. In addition to critiquing the council's decision and questioning the broader culture of civic apology, humour, in this instance, created a dissensus with received expectations by caricaturing protest itself.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷¹ This took place in December 2004. The activities included: volunteers handing out the newsheet to commuters on an arterial route into the city centre; an improvised action by the artist Paddy Bloomer in the form of a sorry Santa's grotto satirising consumer culture; a grey bus decorated with sorry signs that circled the city centre; and a sardonic pseudo-apologetic march, protest and gathering outside Belfast City Hall including Free-Presbyterian-esque placards (whose sources of inspiration included an episode of TV sitcom *Father Ted* and the Free-Presbyterian's own placard style as observed in counter protests to Belfast's annual Pride festival).

⁶⁷² Graham, "*The Vacuum*," 55.

⁶⁷³ Dan Shipsides. "Sorry intervention (Cave Hill)," website, <http://www.danshipides.com/DshipsidesWeb/sorry.html>. Shipsides' contribution consisted of the word "Sorry" written on the slopes of Cave Hill using white plastic sheeting. There is a lineage of political sloganeering using this method, Republican activists writing messages this way on the nearby Divis and Black Mountains.

⁶⁷⁴ In this mode *Sorry Day* reflected the carnivalesque approach of anarchist protestors in the 2000s who used tactics such as ambiguous chanting to complicate the attachment of a clear, and therefore manageable, identity to their remonstrations. David Graeber, "The New Anarchists," *New Left Review* 13, (January/February 2002), 67.

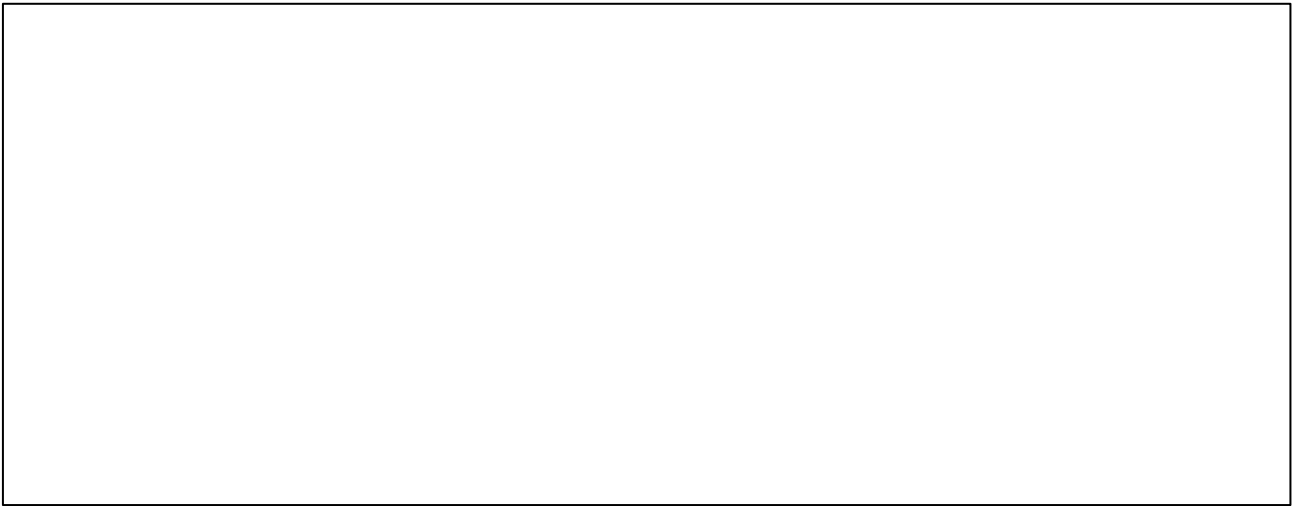


Figure 43. Left: Factotum, *Sorry Day*, December 2004. Right: Dan Shippides, *Sorry intervention (Cave Hill)*, 2004, plastic sheeting, 40m x 14m.

By parodying protest, *Sorry Day* invited a consideration of multiple approaches to publicly sited art that include appropriating strategies from grassroots political spectacles. The street parade in particular has a distinct resonance in the North, most visibly in the mass marches leading up to and including the Twelfth of July commemoration. The ‘Twelfth’ is the zenith of the marching season, an annually occurring series of street parades organized by the hard-line Protestant and unionist Orange Order.⁶⁷⁵ For Jarman, the parades in Belfast in particular, can be viewed as their participants reconstructing fragmented loyal groups into a unity, temporarily enacting a picture of the city under one cohesive community identity.⁶⁷⁶ In contrast, *Sorry Day* revealed *The Vacuum* community, the fragmented network of artists, writers, activists and associates temporarily brought together by their contributions to the paper, not in terms of an illusory unification, but as Bataille’s negative variant, wherein participants are connected only by their lack of community (chapter three, p.147).⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁵ Particular parade routes have been a source of violent dispute between marchers and resident communities. The parade, as with the mural, has long been used in media as shorthand for representing Northern Irish politics as sectarian, militant and static. “Parades take on the aspect of a slow-moving, chaotic cartoon [...] Which is how some parties like to portray Ireland’s history: a cyclical and unresolvable, timeless conflict.” Jarman, *Material Conflicts*,

⁶⁷⁶ For Jarman, parading, “...forms part of the process of mapping the city, inscribing an identity into the physical geography and reconnecting the fragmented parts into an idealised whole.” Jarman describes the temporary making of this imaginary place, “In Belfast, the very existence of the city as a single place, and the personal sense of belonging to the larger community, is brought about through the act of walking together in an act of commemoration and celebration. As the city has grown and fragmented, the very idea of Belfast as a place, and the unity of one’s own community within it, has been maintained and confirmed by personal experience of it: a city which is most readily experienced by the annual cycle of parades.” Jarman, 89.

⁶⁷⁷ The negative community of those who have no community, is developed by Nancy and Blanchot as comprising those with a nostalgia for community. Bernasconi, “Nostalgia for Community,” 4.

The example of the earlier *July* issue (2003) furthers *The Vacuum* illustrations within this disjunctive frame of reference. The issue personified *The Vacuum*'s willingness to relate to the contentious vernacular traditions of the North while forming its own material engagement with public space via the physical distribution of the paper. *July* took as its theme the Orange Order and was published in time for The Twelfth parades. Uniquely the issue comprised only illustrations, through which a narrative was constructed around the inner imaginings of a fictional Orangeman (Figure 44, right).⁶⁷⁸ *July* was atypical not only by being comprised of pictures, but, in a similarity to the *Culture* issue, by the symbiosis between content and the particular material form of *The Vacuum* itself. Factotum's attempt to engage public space through the democratic distribution of the paper conjoined the content's address to the imagination with the physical intervention of material into public space and can be seen to operate in parallel (although in contrast) with the spectacle of the parade.⁶⁷⁹

For West, The *July* issue epitomised the editors' desire to lure readers with an aesthetically pleasing image that is then discovered to contain an ambiguity or a disjunction,⁶⁸⁰ where the illustration performs its main business of, "smuggling a mystery."⁶⁸¹ To West, who scripted the issue with Stephen Hackett, *July* was an opportunity, "given the controversy and acuteness of the marching season, to make something cosmic, something that was not interested in stereotypes or the tired, oppositional representations of Northern Ireland."⁶⁸² Along with the *Culture* cover, the *July* issue, although existing to subvert Northern Ireland's stereotypes, resisted satire by, at the same time, "engaging with these stereotypes, and their problems, as a set of available stories and characters."⁶⁸³

⁶⁷⁸ *July* was an experimental early issue, "an archival item," acknowledged by West and myself, as its illustrator, as one that did not quite work. "I think we all agreed it wasn't very successful. We did it in a bit of a rush and we probably had some sort of calculation of 'how many drawings can we get you to do?'" However, its success no longer matters to West as he views the issue, in the sense of being a throwaway product, as having a time that is now gone. West, 2016.

⁶⁷⁹ Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," 26.

⁶⁸⁰ "That somebody gets this picture and they think, "Oh, wonderful, I'm going to look at a nice picture here of something nice, something interesting, something exciting. And I'm drawn in by the skill and interest in what's going on." And then they look at the picture and they're going, "What the hell is going on here? I can't help myself look at these legionnaires marching across this hill and this fox going past on these rails. Why is this, what's going on in this picture? I can't help myself but look at this picture..." West, 2016.

⁶⁸¹ I ask West if he uses illustration for a particular reason, "it's not that we thought, "Oh, we should deploy this facility." Rather what we thought was, "God, it's amazing. If we can get someone to draw something, that would be fantastic. That's like somebody giving us the power to make colours or something like that." West, 2016.

⁶⁸² Richard West, conversation with the author, 17 August 2015. "[S]tereotypes create a sort of binary thing, so it's either going to be this or it's going to be that. And people are trying desperately to avoid stereotypes or people fall into using them as a kind of a cliché. Nobody depicts the marching season in terms of Roman legionnaires." West, 2016.

⁶⁸³ West, 2015.



Figure 44. Factotum (illustrations by Duncan Ross), *The Vacuum*, *Walking* issue, 2007 (left) and *July* issue, 2003 (right).

That *July* risked normalising its subject through the potentially trivialising effects of humour, fictionalisation and illustration, was its own form of dissensus, where, like *Sorry Day*'s ambiguous protest, the issue appeared to *not* be polemical where such a stance would be expected.⁶⁸⁴

Considered as a humorous mode that voiced dissent not through direct critique, but through a generative process that added new registers to upset pre-conceptions, the performative interventions of *Sorry Day* and the ambiguity and open-ended nature of the *July* illustrations can be viewed in terms of dialogical speech. The literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin built this theory on an analysis of ambivalent and festive laughter as it occurred in folk humour of the European Middle Ages. This had been developed in the guise of legalised carnival licentiousness, wherein a temporary suspension took place, “of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life.”⁶⁸⁵

Bakhtin's concern was with the carnivalesque continuing to manifest in language as, “a survival of the ancient rituals of mocking the deity.” Essential to such emancipatory purpose was the perception of language as a heteroglossia, expressed as a, “living mix of varied and opposing voices.” A process of continual becoming, an ongoing “stratification and diversity of speech,”⁶⁸⁶ was necessary

⁶⁸⁴ *July* was not about rehabilitating the image of the Orange Order as government agencies and civic councils were attempting to do at the time, for instance, in co-operation with the Order, re-branding the Twelfth in Belfast, as “Orangefest.”

⁶⁸⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984): 15.

⁶⁸⁶ *Raznorečivost* was Bakhtin's “master trope,” the dynamic underpinning the grotesque body and the carnivalesque.

for heteroglossia to resist dominance by any one linguistic regime. The novel held a role in this process, potentially presenting a plurality of dialects through a fundamental distinguishing feature of stylistics that Bakhtin termed, “dialogisation.”⁶⁸⁷ The emphasis on the dialogical, the continual re-invention of the plurality of speech, presented an alternative to the Classical dialectical method of knowledge formation through modification of a thesis and came to influence communication theory including that used within ethnography and socially-engaged art practice.

Although the humour of *The Vacuum* was not always carnivalesque but often satirical or ambiguous,⁶⁸⁸ the plural activities and the dissensus enacted by the paper can be viewed in terms of the dialogical. In a final example that also sounds the paper against grassroots political displays, Sandra Preston from the student study, herself an avid *Vacuum* reader, identified the most resonant cover as the *Walking* issue (2007) (Figure 44, left). Although I had intended the figure to have an ambiguous identity, Preston felt she recognised the image from the cover illustration of a *Fighting Fantasy* title, a long-running children’s role-playing book series.⁶⁸⁹ This placed *The Vacuum* illustrations within the vocabulary of a nerd or geek subculture wherein the fantasy image symbolises a knowledge acquisition unchained from text.⁶⁹⁰ As a reader Preston brought this meaning to the cover regardless of whether it was intended by the publishers, and her interpretation presents illustration as a sociolect, a variety of language used by a particular group.⁶⁹¹

Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), introduction, xix.

⁶⁸⁷ The dialogical novel represents the social diversity of speech types by linking between utterances (“complete speech acts”) and language, thereby forming a, “distinctive social dialogue.” Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 263.

⁶⁸⁸ This interest stemmed from an essential concern with struggle at the centre of culture as one was also perceived within nature. Of this, Bakhtin stated, “the most complete and complex reflection of these forces is found in human language, and the best transcription of language so understood is the novel.” Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, xviii.

⁶⁸⁹ The cover was by Iain McCaig for *The Forest of Doom* (Puffin, 1983), written by Ian Livingstone; illustrated by Russ Nicholson and Malcolm Barter. The original *Fighting Fantasy* books were created by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone and published between 1982 and 1995.

⁶⁹⁰ For Preston, “If you try to create a written language that had that sense of flux it would be impossible. It’s a very unique dialogue.” In terms of the illustration’s subcultural meaning, “I would treat [the *Fighting Fantasy* books] as cultural artefacts just like my dad’s leather jacket speaks of people grouping together: the punks in the 1980s in Belfast seeking an alternative way outside the social chaos. So, I celebrate alternative expressions of human behaviour, especially when it speaks of social autonomy. So, the *Fighting Fantasy* books are part of another British culture that came together to share alternative modes of living. If you think about how they were termed, the nerds or geeks, well today you might call them just gamers. But having those labels, associated labels, it speaks of a level of intellectualism that they would have shared or upheld. So that culture speaks to me of seeking knowledge. I would respond heavily to visual language. So visual language opens up dialogue beyond the written.” Preston, 2016.

⁶⁹¹ “When you put something out there that’s visual you may have an intention, but it will get across to the viewers through many, many levels so it’s a very dynamic language. And while your meaning is still always present in their reading of it, their perception adds those layers of connotation.” Preston, 2016.

Considering Preston's investment in the image that followed from her own application of illustration, I view the community to which the figure in *Walking* belongs as uncertain and therefore open to the reader's speculation.⁶⁹² The folk-art aesthetic and visual story-telling of the political mural contains connotative elements which project the presence of a cohesive community identity to which the audience either belongs or does not,⁶⁹³ but all that can be addressed in *Walking* is a negative community. Factotum did not speak for any community, nor profess to enable any community to speak, but by using certain techniques such as illustration to create ambiguity, *The Vacuum* editors created a space where those without community could recognise one another.

4.1.3 || Publishing contexts

Ambivalent illustrations could facilitate the reader's projection of their own cultural influences which need have no overt connection to the immediate context of publication. I view *Walking* in this light as indicative of a broader temporal discontinuity and cultural displacement generated by the editors' taking inspiration from a disparate assortment of print publishing lineages. West in particular drew extensively from genealogies of political, satirical and populist publications in which illustrations were not merely decorative, but politicised modes of address to a readership.⁶⁹⁴ The earliest of these were 'broadsides', a form of local newspaper appearing predominantly in Ireland, Britain and the US from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. For illustration scholar Desdemona McCannon, broadsides, "are in some ways the simplest form of image/text relationship there is,"⁶⁹⁵ the crudest versions being only strips of paper printed on one side with ballads, songs and items of news topped with woodblock prints.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹² "*Vacuum* illustrations, although sharing a figurative and descriptive quality with the mural and parade banner, failed to correspond to the Northern Irish vernacular because they retained an ambiguity concerning their exact function or intended audience. Where the characters depicted seem uninterested in forming communities that belong to either the bipartisan model offered by traditional Northern Irish politics, or the romanticized utopian collective of socially engaged art." Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," 19.

⁶⁹³ Produced in the knowledge that their image will also play to a global audience through mass media dissemination, murals, and political spectacles in general, also mobilise a denotive register that will be accessible to a diverse cultural audience. In both registers, murals seek to legitimise a claim over a space. Jarman, *Material Conflicts*.

⁶⁹⁴ Ross, 14.

⁶⁹⁵ Desdemona McCannon, "A brief history of illustrated street entertainment," *Varoom!* 18 (Spring 2012): 34-37.

⁶⁹⁶ "And I was also buying Victorian broadsides. The thing about those, and also the British Museum print collection and Victorian typography, is that you have this kind of crude vitality about it. I love things like Thomas Bewick's woodcuts. He's a highly skilled craftsman. He's bringing this new skill of using woodcuts for book illustrations to a high level of perfection. This is an early stage of the integration of printed books, printed pictures into books. But at the same time there are the bodgers, there are the guys who are churning out things for an execution. The mission for them is to do it as cheaply as possible. They have no scruples; an execution is like a football programme. And they have off the shelf illustrations. You would have thought if there was going to be a personalised picture for anything it would be for, you know, Thomas Wood's execution. But no, he gets the same illustration as everybody else gets which is like one person being hung today, "Right, get the one hanging woodblock," and that's how they printed it. And then they compile this and they're very badly printed, very badly type-set block of text when they are printing it and then they're selling it to people at the execution. But it's very effective. You can see like the picture and the story is vitally exciting. You can see why people are interested and why this type of printed thing, object,

The ephemerality of broadsides, the combination of text, often surreal illustrations and bawdy mass-media format, and the way in which form, content and community converged within them were all influential to *The Vacuum* approach. Even the distribution of *The Vacuum* echoed the theatricality and physicality of the broadside's dissemination, which were boldly hawked by book pedlars in a process called colportage.⁶⁹⁷ For West, the illustrations of Victorian broadsides had a glory and "a crude vitality," and despite their low quality, "what they were illustrating was fascinating."⁶⁹⁸ From these sensationalist beginnings, the modern newspaper format emerged in the nineteenth century as a particularly political instrument. For media theorist W.J.T. Mitchell, cheap illustrated journals were a propagandizing through pictures in a time when the masses were "easily taken in by images,"⁶⁹⁹ instigating a conundrum, for McLuhan, by, "creat[ing] national uniformity and government centralism, but also individualism and opposition to government as such."⁷⁰⁰

The development of the political newspaper into the twentieth century also influenced *The Vacuum*. Two left wing publications in particular, the German *Simplicissimus* (1896 - 1944. Revived 1954 - 1967) and *The Masses* from the US (1911 - 1917), mixed reportage, creative writing, innovative layout and illustration in a manner that would inspire the editors. For West, that the illustrations in these were, "one step beyond the political cartoon," standing alone without contextualising captions, concur with a differentiation made by Bakhtin between carnivalesque and satirical modes of humour. The carnival is, first of all, a festive laughter, not the pointedness of satire but universal in scope, directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants, which in my application includes the producers of *The Vacuum*. Although *The Vacuum* only occasionally adopted a carnivalesque mode, *July*, the *Culture* cover and *The Vacuum* illustrations as a whole can still be seen in contrast to the far more widespread and established satirical European tabloids such as *Private Eye* and *Charlie Hebdo*, both of which plentifully deploy conventional political cartoons. The laughter of these, following Bakhtin's definition, emerges as "negative" as they are traditionally satirical, that is their particular social, cultural and political targets are presented as separate, or other, to their own circumstances of production.⁷⁰¹

that is handed to somebody in the street in exchange for a halfpenny is supplying an interest for them." West, 2016.

⁶⁹⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Chambermaids' Romances of the Past Century," in *The Work Of Art in The Age Of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings On Media*, Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, eds. (London and Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2008): 243-248.

⁶⁹⁸ A particular favourite of West's was a scene of mice besieging a castle of cats. West, 2016.

⁶⁹⁹ W.J.T. Mitchell, "Word and Image," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 56.

⁷⁰⁰ McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 235.

⁷⁰¹ Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," 28.

In terms of the local print media environment, the mainstream press was dominated by *The Belfast Telegraph*, a Unionist establishment-leaning regional newspaper which was prone to provocation by *The Vacuum* editors who were generally critical towards mainstream publishing in the North. Their local influences were the lesser known political media which confounded pre-conceived ideas of the North, such as the suffragette *Irish Citizen* (1912 - 1920).⁷⁰² Of these, West cites the early phase of the *Belfast News Letter* (1737 -) as influential not only in its mixture of commercial and “weirdly personal” content,⁷⁰³ which for West was not journalism as we would see it, but also in its cottage industry production and local distribution.⁷⁰⁴ This interest in small scale publishing led to research into more, “arcane,” printworks, particularly from the collection at Belfast’s Linenhall Library. These were political but not in a conventional sectarian way and had occasional moments of transcendent humour which West articulated as a vital sign that he and Hackett wished to replicate in *The Vacuum*.⁷⁰⁵

1970s self-publishing precedents offered alternative subjectivities within a grassroots media landscape of competing polemics and multiple radical and extremist versions of the bifurcated politics of the North.⁷⁰⁶ Although the punk zine-comic hybrid *The Hand* and the artisanal *Grabgrass* were representative of their own ‘town and gown’ polarisation for Alastair Herron, the one-time

⁷⁰² “So, I was reading local papers and I was reading one which was a suffragette newspaper. And I was doing research into the suffragettes and that was very vital, and it has the spontaneity and it has the voice of the people. And it has that kind of local community quality feel to it.” West, 2016.

⁷⁰³ “I became interested in popular print which means pre-newspaper style. Actually, that's a bit misleading in a way because newspapers start in the eighteenth century and they're immediately a kind of commercial thing. The front covers of these things normally have adverts on the whole of the front page of a newspaper in 1750 or something, 1780. And then there are notices. You have this weird mixture of the local corporate culture of people advertising “You can buy this thing from our warehouse.” And then you have a notice, a letter received from someone and it's very personal.” West, 2016.

⁷⁰⁴ “There's not really an idea of newspaper journalism in the way we expect or understand it today. It's a couple of people involved in doing it. And it's very local. There some early issues of the *Newsletter* that are amazing around the late eighteenth century. There was an invasion of Carrickfergus by the French and the *Belfast Newsletter* is carrying reports about, ‘They could be coming from, you know, over there. They, these foreign invaders, could be coming and attacking us in our city here and what are we going to do? This is what someone says is going to happen and these other people say that's not going to happen and, you know, we should prepare ourselves’. It's very, it's like getting a phone call from someone and saying, ‘Do you know what's going on at the end of your street?’ It has that kind of instantaneous feel to it. And you just read all these stories about drunk people riding into the river and stuff.” West, 2016.

⁷⁰⁵ “these sort of Loyalist magazines. They weren't necessarily Loyalist magazines, but they were small circulation things that people had published... One of which had this cover which I remember which was, and it was two dinosaurs and it said, on the cover it said, ‘What's this a picture of?’ And then it said something like, ‘Is this Church and State?’ And then on the inside it said, ‘No, it's two dinosaurs fucking, stupid’ or something like that. It was quite a mad thing and it was obviously quite an antagonistic, anti-the consensus. So, I imagine it was from the mid-seventies or something like that. And I thought, ‘Oh that's interesting, there's some people doing some stuff. They really don't like what's going on in Northern Ireland but it's not a sectarian thing, they're annoyed in the way other people are annoyed everywhere else’.” West, 2016.

⁷⁰⁶ The pan-allegiance, monthly magazine *Fortnight* covered cultural and political developments from 1970 to 2012.

Hand illustrator and now arts scholar, both publications sought different ‘ways out’ of mainstream political representation.⁷⁰⁷ *The Hand* through a working-class anarchism stemming from its production in the inner-city Republican area of The Markets; and *Crabgrass* through the creativity of the bohemian aesthete, produced by students at Queen’s University who were concerned with the poetics of materiality and the craft of the artist book. Unlike *Crabgrass*, for the network of activists and artists who contributed to *The Hand*, print was a means to an end as, when the technology became accessible, contributors Herron and Dave Hyndman moved respectively, to video production and community broadcasting.

Contemporaneous and comparative publications included the online satirical webpage *Portadown News* (2001–05), which shared the wit and intelligence of *The Vacuum* but specialized in more direct satire of post-agreement politics. And, although West identifies the Glasgow published *Variant* (1984 - 2008) as an influence only, “for the way it’s made,” its “approachable” newspaper format, *The Vacuum* nevertheless shared the publication’s left-leaning address to culture and the arts. However, *Variant* was comprised primarily of conventionally structured academic articles aimed at a literate social politics and art-savvy readership, whereas, for West, *The Vacuum* had a broader appeal, was aimed at a general public, and was thus neither an art critical publication such as *Variant*, or an art-publication-as-artwork such as the faux-tabloids published through the 1990s by the BANK art collective to parody and satirise the commercial underpinnings of the art world.⁷⁰⁸

Viewed together, West and Hackett’s influences present a concern for print as a readily distributable material whose surface shares a plethora of symbolic modes of address. In addition, their examples highlight an aesthetic address integrated with a political purpose. Illustration is emancipated within these models, as one of several polyglot textual and ornamental ingredients that together form a single, more ‘democratic’ surface.⁷⁰⁹ Rancière’s analysis of the printed page again has relevance

⁷⁰⁷ Personal communication Alastair Herron, October 2015.

⁷⁰⁸ Through *The Vacuum*’s reception as both a publication and a multi-stranded aesthetic programme, it could be said to share Nicholas Thoburn’s description of political magazines as diagrammatic publishing, where the diagram is both a graphic image and a sociomaterial assemblage. For instance, *Mute* magazine’s, “publishing diagram,” for Thoburn, “is a diagram of the magazine becoming a diagram.” Thoburn, *Anti-Book*, 225.

⁷⁰⁹ Theorists aside from Rancière have studied the print form and the formation of a “public.” For instance, McLuhan considers the novel as a radical new literary convention of the eighteenth century. (McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 273). With the printed novel, a “new technology,” the writer could abandon his patron and, “approach the large homogenized public of a market society in a consistent and complacent role.” That the content was also homogenised connected cheap print and the advent of Nationalism, “Print, in turning the vernaculars into mass media, or closed systems, created the uniform, centralizing forces of modern nationalism [...] Closely interrelated, then, by the operation and effects of typography are the outering or uttering of private inner experience and the massing of collective national awareness, as the vernacular is rendered visible, central, and unified by the new technology.” McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 199.

here in terms of the theorist's bi-valent presentation of the aesthetics of the realist novel (introduction, p.13; chapter one p.45).⁷¹⁰ Here, although establishing an ostensibly more egalitarian audience, a community of readers, Flaubert's prose in *Madame Bovary* nonetheless limited, and in a sense controlled, the sensory range of that same community.⁷¹¹ Although this emergent realism was viewed as a more precise manifestation of democratic politics at the time (for instance the political theorist Henri de Saint-Simone's contrasting the novel with, "the chatter of democratic newspapers"),⁷¹² for Rancière the form was a privileged site where nineteenth century fears of an "indifferent equality" became visible.

Equality, for Rancière, is not articulated as the base of politics but a condition required to think politics. Further, equality should be thought of as a number of different modes, none of which are political to begin with but only generate politics when implemented in the specific form of a particular case of dissensus. For instance, the equality of realist literature is a democracy of the written word as, for Rancière, Flaubert creates an equality between each sentence in *Bovary*.⁷¹³ Effective art however, is the implementation of equality in a different sense as it is, "based on the destruction of the hierarchical system of the fine arts." Its effectivity is achieved through a further dissensus, the rupture of the image of a more democratic politics through its placement in a new context. This is what reveals to the viewer that those politics as themselves aesthetic (introduction, p.13).

This dissensus was activated in the publishing works of the Arts and Crafts Movement, achieved, for Rancière, through the distribution of an assembly of sensory regimes rather than the singular indifferent democracy of realist prose. Here, Rancière can be seen to situate a similarly emancipatory dialogism to Bakhtin's heteroglossia. But unlike Bakhtin, whose focus was on the potential for a productive polyphony to take place within the text of literature, the job of Rancière's example was to show how certain written fictions, the particular textual arrangement of nineteenth century realism, created a misdirecting "equality" from their components, a flattening within the

⁷¹⁰ The specific identification of a regime of the printed page as an example of dissensus as central mode of a democratic distribution of the sensible, outlined in the introduction as concerning the capacity of both politics and aesthetics to regulate public visibility and audibility, and the policing of that capacity by any arrangement of material or relations (p.12).

⁷¹¹ The narrative also served to delimit class transgression, the protagonist Emma Bovary punished (with suicide) by Flaubert for her attempt to leave the rural lower-middle classes for the urban bourgeoisie.

⁷¹² Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 58.

⁷¹³ "[T]hat makes each sentence, in the end, equal to the entire book. He constructs this equality in opposition to several other kinds of equality: commercial equality, democratic political equality, or equality as a lifestyle such as the equality his heroine tries to put into practice." Rancière, 52.

page that elevated the novel as a form and thereby enforced a continuing hierarchy of utterances. The pictorial surface of the Arts and Crafts however, was one of, “shared writing.” The positioning of multiple elements: figurative, ornamental and written, disrupted the sensory regime of text itself. That is, it not only shared the space of the page between different modes but shared the aesthetic structure of the movement itself. Together, these constituted what Rancière terms the, “furniture for the new community.”⁷¹⁴

4.2 || **Public art**

4.2.1 || *Dreams*

Located in Rancière’s invocation of the Arts and Crafts movement, which combines graphic style and socialist ideology, is a synchronization of form, content and mode of distribution which was restaged in a contemporary context by *The Vacuum*. It is of relevance here that the most pronounced development in publishing during the paper’s circulation was the continuing expansion of the internet, and that generally this was not a platform that concerned the editors.⁷¹⁵ The choice of print over web distribution was connected not only to the material qualities of the medium but to the readership, the ‘community of readers’ that Factotum sought to reach. Print concerned diversity whereas for West, as for Duncombe, internet publishing creates only self-selecting communities.⁷¹⁶ The use of print also concerned reach as in practical terms West considered the physical distribution would garner more readers than an online version.⁷¹⁷ That print generated more possibilities of encountering the work in the public spaces of Belfast increased the possibility of experiencing the

⁷¹⁴ Rancière, 15.

⁷¹⁵ “Social media appeared towards the latter end of a number of issues into the *Vacuum*. And neither Stephen [Hackett] nor I were that interested. So, *The Vacuum* never really existed in those formats. And the website was always a web 1.0 version, but it was a static thing that people could come and read if they wanted to. Although web prevalence did encroach on a particular strand of content: the editors’ penchant for amusing factoids, the impact was minimal. “[T]hings like *Wikipedia*, meant that the kind of arcane knowledge that people like Jason [Mills] or I like to put into their articles about, people sculpting funny shaped cockerels around the world became a sort of redundancy. It’s like the sort of ephemera that the web has made more prominent. And if you want to know about people carving funny-shaped robins it’s really easy to do it now when it wasn’t ten years ago, fifteen years ago.” However, West adds, “a lot of what was in *The Vacuum* isn’t available on the internet, it’s about people responding to something that’s there and then, and it’s about somebody writing something new.” West, 2016.

⁷¹⁶ “very self-selecting communities. It’s not public in that sense whereas a café or a library or a pub is. It’s a community, certain people go there, but the city itself has more broad-ranging groups of people.” West, 2016.

⁷¹⁷ “Also, it has to be said, and this is probably the most important thing, that more people would read the *Vacuum* now than would ever read it on the internet. If we print twenty thousand copies and distribute them round the city that’s more than would ever read it if we did it as a blog or if we did it as any other format, as far as the internet is concerned. It’s just a less effective form of distribution.” West, 2016.

attributes of the printed surface itself, a harmonisation of Factotum's concern for the city as a lived space with the sensory particularities of print.⁷¹⁸

The concern for a diverse demographic reflected the content which was for West, "so much about the city and the experience of the city and the changes in the city [...] And so, it had to be in the city physically." The diverse demographic enabled by print is its 'public' who for the social theorist Michael Warner are, at their most elementary, an audience. That is, those that pay attention to some degree, if only in passing by or turning up.⁷¹⁹ In this framework *The Vacuum*'s address to a public forms a link to the emergence of the field of intellectual critique alongside the publication's links to the bawdy broadsides. This criticality stemmed from the scholarly register of a number of articles, indicating a production removed from the conditions of the vernacular displays discussed earlier and suggesting at points a more bourgeoisie perspective on civic life. However, although the paper was guilty of an occasional verbiage it was also a channel for contributors to reach wider audiences and to relate an academic rigour to a more diverse community of readers.

The growth of publishing in the nineteenth century formed the modern notion of a public, a social force separated from the traditional power-brokers and with an increasingly powerful influence on political life.⁷²⁰ This growth created a new forum and intelligentsia that mediated between civilians and the state: the 'public sphere'. For Jürgen Habermas, this bourgeois public sphere replaced one in which rulers merely presented their power with one of critique, intellectual interrogation and literary comment.⁷²¹ However, restricted to a set of men who at the same time espoused the rights of man, the new public sphere was essentially contradictory, and, although partly conceived by the proliferation of print and literacy, it was ultimately overwhelmed by mass media, as consumerism became the dominant capitalist mode and publicity replaced public speech.⁷²²

⁷¹⁸ "Everything I encounter, say on Facebook or on Twitter or something, you can say, 'Oh that's good' or, 'that's interesting'. Or, 'that makes me look at it'. But it's not the same as seeing it as a physical thing. [...] Maybe I'm being sentimental about it or whatever but... there's a difference... It's something about the way you're experiencing it through a screen and I find that, although I'm doing it all the time, I'm on my computer night and day, it's not the same type of experience." West, 2016.

⁷¹⁹ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2005), 40.

⁷²⁰ Granville Ganter, review of Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, *St. John's University Humanities Review* 1, no. 1 (March 2003). <http://facpub.stjohns.edu/~ganterg/sjureview/vol1-1/publics.html>.

⁷²¹ Thomas McCarthy. Introduction to Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1991): xi.

⁷²² Hal Foster, "Post-Critical?," in *Verso 2015 Mixtape* (London and New York: Verso, 2015): 521.

In Habermas's account the dissolution of the public sphere, alongside the decline of the utopian movements, was due to the loss of public ownership of print in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when publishing became concentrated amongst a few. The ideas of the bourgeois public sphere remained central to democratic theory however, and Thomas McCarthy's introduction to the 1991 edition of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, emphasises the need for a reconstitution of the forum for modern times, particularly as, "The press and broadcast media serve less as organs of public information and debate than as technologies for managing consensus and promoting consumer culture."⁷²³ In this context, I suggest that *The Vacuum* evoked the public sphere and bore similarity to work of the cultural critic, that representative of the bourgeoisie that also emerged in the mid nineteenth century and who, for the art theorist Hal Foster, could be seen to constitute the public sphere in operation.⁷²⁴

In appearance, the creativity and criticality of the writing in *The Vacuum* mirrored the public sphere's interconnectedness with the emergence of the realist novel (as much as the ornamented and throwaway newsheet format mirrored the heterogeneous nineteenth century press). What I termed previously as 'fictionalisation', as an approach alongside humour, can be perceived in these terms as a literary mode, *The Vacuum*'s creative writing echoing the function of the novel as a communication channel of the bourgeois public sphere. In this reading, *The Vacuum*'s distribution in bars and cafés, a call to re-politicise these gathering spaces by infiltrating critical conversation into already available commercial space, evokes the reading societies, salons and coffee houses which comprised the physical fora within which the nineteenth century bourgeoisie would debate the new form of the novel.

The *Dreams* issue (2010) demonstrated a maturation in the development of *The Vacuum* in terms of this premise by invoking both a public and a literary public sphere. To bring the aesthetic and political elements together most succinctly, *Dreams* not only involved the usual democratic distribution of the paper in public space but was unique in that the entire written content was sourced from outside the pool of contributors, that is, from conversation occurring in a series of vox-popped street interviews. Hackett, West and three regular *Vacuum* contributors, the arts organiser Ruth Graham, the journalist Fionola Meredith and the writer and *Vacuum* distributor

⁷²³ "In a post-liberal era, when the classical model of the public sphere is no longer socio-politically feasible, the question becomes: can the public sphere be effectively reconstituted under radically different socioeconomic, political and cultural conditions? In short, is democracy possible?" McCarthy in Habermas, *Public Sphere*, xii.

⁷²⁴ Foster, "Post-Critical?" 520. For Foster, much participatory art is itself a compensation for the dissolution of the public sphere.

Jason Mills, conversed with hundreds of shoppers in several Northern Irish town centres in order to collect recollections of dreams. These were then transcribed and printed verbatim, the editors aiming to include as many as possible with minimal editorial explication.

The result appeared as a satire of a qualitative study, one that liberated ‘the public’ from the subjectification imposed by demographics. I view this as a form of self-subversion by *The Vacuum*, an undermining of its own bourgeois tendencies and of the idea of imagination and creative writing as the gift of a few. *Dreams* was a parody in this sense, of the idea of both the public and the public sphere as having some sort of comprehensible form. I suggested to West that the *Dreams* issue came closest to presenting *The Vacuum* as a form of public art and although he conceded it could be perceived in these terms, whether the paper was or was not public art was nevertheless did not concern Factotum at the time. Here, the distribution of *The Vacuum* was not a reaction to closed cultural spaces,⁷²⁵ rather the editors were simply interested in a public forum, a large distribution and a democratic circulation.

The editors did hold a certain cynicism towards what they viewed as a particularly Northern Irish strain of public art prevalent at the beginnings of *The Vacuum*’s circulation and the paper often facilitated a form of protest concerning these.⁷²⁶ West described these as two types: civic sponsored sculptures that represented the commercial manipulation of public art by post-peace process redevelopment quangos; and publicly sited works by ambitious critical artists influenced by the situated practices emergent in the 1990s.⁷²⁷ For West, *The Vacuum* was distinguishable from these

⁷²⁵ Factotum presented work in a number of spaces, including galleries, which although West acknowledges can be construed as elitist, are not, however, un-democratic spaces. “Anyone can go into a gallery in Belfast, it’s free... Some people don’t for whatever reason but don’t think it’s anti-democratic. But I think that some things work well in a gallery and some things don’t. And I’m more interested in the stuff that exists in a public forum.” “I think that the print culture that we’ve been talking about, like what’s in *The Vacuum* and early newspapers are things that... they’re vital, they don’t have a problem with communicating to people.” Although West does not take issue with what he terms obscurantist work in gallery, “[i]t doesn’t do the same thing. And the medium of illustration is wonderful because lots of people can be excited by it.” West, 2016.

⁷²⁶ “[I]t was often wrapped up with the things that we particularly disliked, like Laganside [Corporation] and the council’s behaviour. And it is sort of to do with the development of the city, the things that were our pre-occupations because they were happening in front of us or to the building that Stephen [Hackett] was working in when he was at Catalyst [Arts]. So, the things that we had direct contact with.” West, 2016.

⁷²⁷ Instancing the first of these West referred to Laganside Corporation, a non-departmental government body charged with developing the post-industrial riverside and instrumental in developing ‘The Cathedral Quarter’, the re-branding of a segment of the city centre toward inward investment. For West, “Laganside became a target of ours because we all experienced the people involved there and we’d worked with them and Stephen had been in Catalyst when they were turfing them out of Exchange Place. So, when they started to commission, you know, some pottery thing to go on a wall somewhere it just seemed completely emblematic of the function that the stuff was being made for.” The “turfing out” referred to is the process in which a new tenancy for Catalyst Arts in a Laganside managed workspace was brokered in exchange for a previous tenancy in premises acquired for redevelopment. The move resulted in higher rent and hidden ground rules which restricted Catalyst’s activities. Catalyst left the managed

models, by being both “private,” *The Vacuum* being read, experienced at home or in the imagination of the reader,⁷²⁸ and “temporary,” in that the material existence of the newsheet was fleeting.⁷²⁹

Considering West and Hackett’s aversion to public art at the beginning of the 2000s, it is pertinent to compare *Dreams* (again as an atypical but also representative *Vacuum*) to the Re-imaging Communities Programme (2006 – 2015) that was managed by The Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI).⁷³⁰ This programme reflected an approach by local government toward incorporating public art into civic redevelopment strategy, particularly through a focus on commissioning new artwork to replace sectarian murals and memorials in areas identified as having high levels of social deprivation.⁷³¹ Although these projects included participatory elements, either in the consultation, design or production stages, they universally resulted in permanent material alterations in urban space. That is, regardless of the varying degrees of criticality attached to each project (some showed absorption of ideas from the earlier community arts movement and more recent concerns for the transformation of the spectator into participant),⁷³² they all resulted in public sculptures, whether as three-dimensional works, variations on murals, or in landscaped installations.⁷³³

workspace and returned to privately rented premises but lost its location in the area revamped as The Cathedral Quarter. The second category, earnest temporary installations by expensive imported artists, West identifies as being particularly offensive to the editors. These works were, “of complete indifference to most people in the city and in [themselves, were] probably clichéd and trying to gesture towards this reality that we were talking about. [...] And [were] hoping to be in communication with a sort of a bigger art world but not really very successfully.” West, 2016.

⁷²⁸ “[Like] spreading flowers out in the streets delivering *The Vacuum* to people but also, the flowers might be some peculiarly perverse orchid and the person has that orchid on their kitchen table which they sit alone at and then they think their own thoughts about it. But the big pottery clog... that goes in a square somewhere, is just going to be there for everybody to walk past. And they’re not, they could think their own thoughts about it but... you don’t form a private relationship to it. You don’t imagine it yourself, like somebody reading a novel, where you have to think it for yourself.” West, 2016.

⁷²⁹ “The clog [a public sculpture] is still there. *The Vacuum* is still there in some sense but it’s not, for most of the people who read it they’ve thrown it away. They’ve picked it up, maybe they’ve read a bit of it and, you know, and they don’t feel committed to it in the way that the big clog is just an impediment to their daily walk.” West, 2016.

⁷³⁰ The pilot for The Re-imaging Communities Programme ran from 2006 to 2008 and the main programme ran from 2008-2015 with some changes to the structure of the process, notably the division of projects into separate consultative and fabrication stages. http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/images/uploads/publications-documents/Re-Imaging_A5_8pp.pdf

⁷³¹ Bree T. Hocking, *The great reimagining: public art, urban space and the symbolic landscapes of a 'new' Northern Ireland* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 97-98.3. “[T]he ability of state authority in Northern Ireland to impose its preferred vision, or order, onto civic landscapes confronts limitations beyond what is typically found in ‘normal’ Western urban space.”

⁷³² These were a development from previous state aversion to unsettling projects. Hocking cites the state reaction to Louise Walsh’s *Monument to The Unknown Woman Worker* (1992) as a past example of ACNI’s “passive role in visual culture development as well as its insularity at the time.” Hocking, *The Great Reimagining*, 13.

⁷³³ From my own experience on *Re-imaging Communities* projects often these are abstract sculptures with some local reference that channels a civic ethos and represents a locality. For Hocking, these designate space like the anthropologist Marc Augé’s non places, where “the ‘link between individuals and their surroundings’ exists ‘through the mediation of words’.” Hocking, *The Great Reimagining*, 8. Hocking quotes from Marc Augé, *Non-places: introduction to the anthropology of supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), 94.

The ideology behind the programme stemmed from a governance structure created by the Belfast Agreement, which for the researcher and writer Bree Hocking, “ensured that political parties dominate the province’s political process and where a discourse of ‘community’ permeates all levels of social, cultural, economic and political rhetoric, including that surrounding the public art process.”⁷³⁴ The replacement of signifiers of community with uncontentious alternatives in the Re-imagining artworks however, often resulted in the, “imprinting of questionable images of community coherence,” through a, “limited menu of community-specific heritage references,” a method that can perpetuate territorialisation whilst failing to account for minorities (as the art historian Miwon Kwon is cited by Hocking). Here ‘re-imagining’ artworks fall into a, “civic identikit of place” that denies complexity of community while reifying heritage representations in the landscape and ‘theming’ the city.⁷³⁵ In contrast, *Dreams* both ignored the traditional community alignments projected onto residents of the North, and, by setting the words of its own ‘public’ to type and presenting back to that potential readership a portrait of themselves as an un-aligned and humorous body politic, it could be said to temporarily diffuse, or confuse, the other binary of two communities created by *The Vacuum*. That is, the disparate group of Factotum contributors with their connotations of a bourgeoisie literary public sphere and the unknowable community of readers.

4.2.2 || Time and money

The editors were not concerned with adhering to a recognisably anti-commercial or underground stance and were funded by both advertising and a public grant support framework. This approach prioritised the practicality of, “getting the means to do what they wanted to do,”⁷³⁶ which in terms of grants required a degree of co-operation with funder strategies.⁷³⁷ Since the Belfast Agreement, the arts in Northern Ireland had been influenced not only by the peace process and privatisation, but

⁷³⁴ In the Agreement, for Hocking Northern Ireland Assembly members mandated to declare themselves nationalist, unionist or “other,” and to require “parallel” cross-community consent on all key decisions. There was a further cementing of a two-community framework through endorsement of “parity of esteem” and “mutual respect” for “both communities.” Hocking, *The Great Reimagining*, 97-98.

⁷³⁵ Hocking, 8; 99. For Hocking public sculptures are part of a “civic identikit of flows” citing from Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), where the state manages public space as a place of becoming and a global network society, “is embedded in place via material interventions on landscape” (3).

⁷³⁶ “We always had a relationship to funding which was essentially, ‘we know we want to do something; what do we have to do to be able to do it?’ That was how our relationship with funders. We really saw them as, like we would say anything to enable us to do that. Now, sometimes we didn't have to say anything, we could say what we were going to do. But if it came down to it, if we had to tell them that we were doing something else we would have done.” This was in contrast to *Source* magazine where West’s co-editor expressed a responsibility to the peace process. “My co-editor at *Source* would feel that we have some responsibility towards the political process that has produced this funding set-up, all those kinds of things, which I think is a perfectly respectable point of view. But that's not the way *The Vacuum* was produced and that's not the attitude at *Factotum*. We saw the funding set-up as basically one avenue of getting resources to do what we wanted to do.” West, 2016.

⁷³⁷ Although paying for itself partly through advertising *The Vacuum* received state funding administered by Belfast City Council (BCC), Lottery Project Funding and ACNI Exchequer funding.

by what the art historian Claire Bishop conceptualizes as the soft social engineering and instrumentalization that influenced New Labour arts strategy from the late 1990s.⁷³⁸ This latter movement instigated a regional version of the UK culture industry, itself a reflection of a global context of constant reaction and transition within society, further determining the artist's role as toward servicing social cohesion, functionality and economic productiveness.⁷³⁹

The availability of arts funding in Northern Ireland created a double-edged scenario for arts workers, making projects such as *The Vacuum* attainable whilst bringing tacit pressures to conform to external criteria.⁷⁴⁰ Factotum were particularly cognisant of this fragility as four years on from *Sorry Day*, itself a critique of the politicised local arts environment, Nelson McCausland, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) spokesperson on culture who had argued for the suspension of Factotum's funding in 2004 when the *God/Satan* issue was published, was appointed Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, an executive position on arts funding across Northern Ireland.⁷⁴¹ McCausland and the conservative politics he represented were viewed within the liberal arts as a threat to freedom of expression.⁷⁴² Thus in the *Art* issue of *The Vacuum* (2009), where the editors took various aspects of arts funding to task in their usual mixture of humorous and revealing articles, a special place was reserved for the new ministerial appointment: a spread comprising David Haughey's illustration *Melancausland* (2009), Stephen Mullan's satirical article *Nelson's Night Thoughts* (redacted and commented upon by the editors), and various ornamental design features typical of *The Vacuum* design approach (Figure 45).

The satirical offensive took McCausland's own blog on Northern Irish culture, *Nelson's View*, as a point of reference.⁷⁴³ Therein, the minister relentlessly promoted a view of arts and culture in the image of a cohesive and linear tradition that established Northern Ireland as a distinct socio-

⁷³⁸ The public artwork policy discussed by Hocking is a localised variant of a geographically broader policy to apply visual art production to social development. Bishop cites texts by Charles Landry and François Matarasso as influencing New Labour policy toward the social instrumentalisation of art. Bishop's critique of Matarasso concurs with cultural theorist Paola Merli, where, "none of these outcomes will change or even raise consciousness of the structural conditions of people's daily existence, it will only help people to accept them." *Bishop, Artificial Hells*, 14.

⁷³⁹ Crehan, 2011; Kester, 2004; Kwon, 2002; Lacy, 2010. Hackett also lampooned this homogenisation of the field as an 'Arts and grants' culture.

⁷⁴⁰ Graham, "The Vacuum and the Vacuum," 56.

⁷⁴¹ McCausland held the position from 2009 to 2011.

⁷⁴² This had been ongoing after *Sorry Day* as West had challenged BCC's demand for an apology in the High Court as a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. After an additional appeal, the case was lost. <https://web.archive.org/web/20061002022307/http://www.indexonline.org/en/news/articles/2004/4/n.ireland-magazine-s-penance-in-defence-of-f.shtml>>

⁷⁴³ <http://nelsonmccausland.blogspot.com>.

political entity upheld by the Orange Order, the Ulster-Scots dialect, evangelical Protestantism and Unionism. Mullan's fictionalised version then excavated McCausland's obsessions to picture the politician as a maniacal narcissist. After the God/Devil issue however, the editors were cautious about the potentially libellous content and consulted legal advice before publishing the article. The advice was not to publish but the editors went ahead regardless blanking out any text that had been deemed open to litigation. As this amounted to almost the entire article, the redacted version appeared ominously censored, adding an additional layer of social critique beyond West's initial editorial intention.

The spread is an example of the interchangeability of a standing up to power and a dialogical arrangement of narrative elements. The text, its redaction, Haughey's parody of Albrecht Dürer's 1514 etching *Melencolia I* and the ornamental design elements, together form a surface of chronologically dislocated publishing tropes that underscore the duality of the medium as a bringer of new experiences to the masses and as a control over what and how that information is distributed.⁷⁴⁴ Combined with the overarching anachronism of a newssheet in the ascendancy of internet publishing, these non-sequiturs paradoxically made *The Vacuum* particularly symptomatic of its time and of its place.

⁷⁴⁴ The design of the spread invoked German Renaissance print, an Arts and Crafts design aesthetic and even, through the technique of redaction, western military communication strategies during the concurrent "War on Terror."



Figure 45. Factotum (illustrations by David Haughey, text by Stephen Mullan, design by Richard West), *Melancausland* and *Nelson's Night Thoughts* (*The Vacuum*, Art issue), 2009.

I compare this a-synchronicity that typified *The Vacuum* form and content to what the visual art scholars Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes and Suzanna Chan identify as a field of cultural production in the North that connects to a disjunction between personal and group memory and the neo-liberal and post-conflict re-distribution of civic space.⁷⁴⁵ The art historian Vikki Bell identifies ‘transitional’ art of the same period that, “explore(s) the complex temporalities of a present self-consciously attempting to narrate itself away from the past.”⁷⁴⁶ This connects with the art historian Declan Long’s consideration that one of the concerns of Northern Irish contemporary art in the post-peace process context, was a thinking through public space and community. Long’s thesis

⁷⁴⁵ Suzanna Chan and Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, “*Space Shuttle*. The Role of Diversity in the Production and Reception of Art.” In *Beuysian Legacies in Ireland and Beyond: Art, Culture and Politics*, Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes and Victoria Walters, eds. (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011): 133.

⁷⁴⁶ Bell, “The Consolation of Form,” 324. Artworks which, “suggest that the task of dealing with the past is flawed wherever the past is conceived as a history that can be rendered present to be judged by subjects who are thereby placed beyond it. That is the illusion of a present ‘no-time’ that dovetails with the desires of commercial enterprise and neo-liberal conceptions of freedom.” Bell, 326-327.

develops from Chantal Mouffe's description of dissensus in terms of an antagonism whose irreconcilability must be acknowledged. Here, "the impossibility of 'full' democratic presence, that is a politics free of antagonism, is in fact the very basis of a progressive case *for* a radicalised and pluralised definition of democracy."⁷⁴⁷ This position on democracy is further articulated by the philosopher Claude Lefort as, "instituted and sustained by the dissolution of the markers of certainty," that is, marked by a "fundamental indeterminacy," to the basis of power, law and knowledge, and therefore to relations between self and other.⁷⁴⁸

From this unpredictability arises 'public space' which, for the art historian Rosalyn Deutsche is, "the social space where, in the absence of a foundation, the meaning and unity of the social is negotiated – at once constituted and put at risk."⁷⁴⁹ Long's analysis then applies the invocation of the spectral in contemporary critical theory as constitutive of the idea of public space. Here, ideas are described as phantasmatic and accordingly, artistic tactics themselves need to be spectral. Public space itself is also addressed as a phantasm as it has no substantive identity, is enigmatic and arises from unpredictability.⁷⁵⁰ For the political theorist Ernesto Laclau, "anachronism is essential to spectrality: the spectre, interrupting all specularity, desynchronises time"⁷⁵¹ This is the aspect of spectrality that concerns *The Vacuum*, the disjunction of not only the format in the age of digital publishing, but the design style that poaches confusingly from across publishing histories bestowing illustration a spectral deconstructive logic which acknowledges the impossibility of a public space.⁷⁵²

Discussing figurative illustration in terms of democratic public art is fraught, even as I underline my position on the practice as merely a technique available to a broader aesthetic strategy. The term remains a byword for reductionist uncritical representation, with Lerm Hayes suggesting that grassroots political displays give critical art-makers in the North a challenge, "to find artistic strategies that steer away from illustration, that take seriously the specific power of the image, while resisting its facile one-sided and triumphalist employment."⁷⁵³ But illustrations, as reproducible

⁷⁴⁷ Long, *Ghost-Haunted Land*, 8.

⁷⁴⁸ Long, 9.

⁷⁴⁹ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: art and spatial politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 273. Cited in Long, *Ghost-Haunted Land*, 9.

⁷⁵⁰ Long, 9; 15.

⁷⁵¹ Ernesto Laclau, "The time is out of joint," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995), 87. Quoted in Long, *Ghost-Haunted Land*, 116.

⁷⁵² Time itself is unstable within this democratic necessity for discontinuity (Long, 4-5). Long's articulation has its philosophical basis in Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁷⁵³ Christa-Maria Lerm Hayes, "Sandra Johnston: Doubt, Gesture, Love And The Paradoxes OF (Political) Art In

intertextual drawings, emerge in interesting locations, and within critical theory itself, illustration has had lasting impact on articulating concern for viewing history in terms of singularity and linearity.⁷⁵⁴

In Benjamin's text, "On The Concept of History" (1940) the painter Paul Klee's oil transfer drawing and watercolour *Angelus Novus* (1920) is famously instrumentalised toward a brief theory of historicising.⁷⁵⁵ For Benjamin, a 'dialectical image', is a technique of thinking in images, where the contradiction between 'dialogical' and 'image', is a tension that is set in order to overcome its own opposition toward interrupting smooth capitalist conceptions of time.⁷⁵⁶ For Bell, the dialectal image that is the Concept essay, evokes the critical possibility of a non-linear viewing of history, where, "Benjamin made clear that the present has to guide the assembly of historical fragments in order to properly orientate the work of critique,"⁷⁵⁷ that is, reconstructions of the past need to be pulled toward a "magnetic pole" to create critical significance for the present.⁷⁵⁸

Although Benjamin proposed language as the place to form dialectical images, his presentation of the *Angelus* is suggestive of images themselves as functioning in this way.⁷⁵⁹ For instance the image of the angel for Patti Lather, "is the ghost of unassimilable otherness that haunts the house of Reason, self-reflexive subjectivity and historical continuity,"⁷⁶⁰ and for literary scholar Aaron Kelly the *Angelus* is the spectre of injustice that cannot be erased by neo-liberal economics.⁷⁶¹ For Chan,

Northern Ireland," in Sandra Johnston, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation of Doubt, Risk and Testimony Through Performance Art Processes in Relation to Systems of Legal Justice*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2014) 8.

⁷⁵⁴ Particularly in the years since Francis Fukuyama suggested that linear history had reached its endpoint. Francis Fukuyama, *The end of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992).

⁷⁵⁵ The text comprises thesis XI of Benjamin's 1940 essay, "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Walter Benjamin, "On The Concept of History," trans. Dennis Redmond, *Collected Writings I:2*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974). Cited by Bell, Chan and Kelly.

⁷⁵⁶ Max Pensky, "Method and time: Benjamin's dialectical images," in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 177-198,

⁷⁵⁷ "[I]t is precisely in the (dialectical) image that Benjamin saw the political possibility of a questioning of the present. Through the image's 'telescoping of the past through the present' it is here that one finds a mode of critical questioning of the present that renders the present problematic, not in terms of perceived exclusions nor with reference to a past that cannot or will not be erased, but in terms of the present's inability to be conceived through a linear conception of time." Bell, "The Consolation of Form," 326.

⁷⁵⁸ Bell, 350.

⁷⁵⁹ "It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. – Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language." Walter Benjamin, "On the theory of knowledge," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 462, N2a, 3.

⁷⁶⁰ Lather, "Against Empathy," 21.

⁷⁶¹ "Until time is no longer out of joint, until a more ethical and equitable reclamation of our own moment in history is attained, the ghosts of Belfast's other histories, other possibilities and other voices will continue, rightly and

the Angel's fragmentary appearance is in opposition to established masteries, fixed identity and concepts of linear time, an anti-historicity and emphasis on heterogeneous, fragmentary or 'disjunctive' temporalities that is useful for considering artists' critical engagements with the present.⁷⁶²

4.2.3 || Drawing in public

Considering the above, illustration can be viewed as a component of *The Vacuum*'s own dialectical image. The pen and ink illustrations and the use of the newsheet format in the rise of digital publishing presented an out-of-timeness as a rejection of linear narratives of progress or essentialist ideology. This 'out-of-timeness' however, was timely enough for contemporary Northern Irish practice of the 2000s. Critical practitioners there responded to concerns such as those voiced by Kelly that the economic development was an attempt to contain and de-politicise culture, and *The Vacuum* can be viewed in relation to these diffuse, impermanent and non-monolithic responses to public space.⁷⁶³ In these, public art is imbricated with activist, dialogical, socially-engaged and situated practices rather than the static sculpture that the term primarily signifies for Hocking. This more participatory public art is both connected to global networking culture and tied to specific locations, 'situated' in the terms of the curator Claire Doherty.⁷⁶⁴

In an instance of this local particularity, the story of politicised art action in Northern Ireland within which Shippies placed *Sorry Day* is partly traceable by commentators to the artist Joseph Beuys's appearances in the region in the early 1970s. Here, contrary to Claire Bishop's consideration of Beuys as left out of Anglophone art histories, the artist is viewed as lending a particular character to street-level engaged practices that distinguished them from the development of dialogical and

insistently, to haunt the dominant discourse of progress and development." Kelly, "Geopolitical Collapse," 553. For Kelly, Derrida's *Specters of Marx* is the most useful critique of the post-modern. Within, "Derrida reworks Martin Heidegger's concept of *adikia* to suggest that we inhabit a disjuncture in history that is not only temporal but also ethical and to stress the need to reconvene a historical tribunal that comprehends our phantasmagoric present and its injustices, to 'set things right', as Hamlet would have it." Kelly, "Geopolitical Collapse," 550.

⁷⁶² Although mindful of fragmentations connotations within a phallogocentric view of the feminine as lacking, addressed in the artist Martha Rosler's statement regarding the feminine subject, "There are no fragments where there is no whole." Suzanna Chan, "'After Hard Times': Disjunctive Temporality and Ethics of Memory in Art by Aisling O'Beirn, Sandra Johnston and Heather Allen," *Visual Culture in Britain* 10, no. 2 (2009): 155-170.

⁷⁶³ For Kelly, "The attempt to secure a similar market-driven utopia in the North also advises that an end has been reached, an outcome that allows society to preserve history only as archival curio, cultural treasure or commodified and reified remnant." Kelly, "Geopolitical Eclipse," 550. Critical art responses were often direct commissions by galleries or arts organisations which could mediate more risky artistic ventures than ACNI or local councils.

⁷⁶⁴ Where, "art is increasingly commissioned to respond to specific spaces." Claire Doherty, "From Site to Situation - Art in the Space of Public Time." Ihme productions, 8 April 2011, video, 20:41, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRCJLCZLMys>.

socially engaged practice in the rest of Ireland and the UK. Viewed as a turning point for arts in the North, the artist's visibility around his Ulster Museum lecture series inspired the first wave of artist collectives in Belfast and his concept of social sculpture, according to Lerm Hayes, influenced emergent conceptual and performance practices.⁷⁶⁵ The curator Declan McGonagle viewed this time as a political awakening, "when a new generation of artists working locally started to customise inherited conceptual art modes to deal with the 'street' rather than abstracted notions of art or the gallery."⁷⁶⁶

The Vacuum can be seen as participating in this genealogical formulation of street-situated temporary public works in much the same manner as individual, critically aligned visual artists. For Declan Long, Factotum's activities can be compared in particular to those of the artist Aisling O'Beirn. Both practices concerned physical intervention into public space in times of post-peace process regeneration, each utilise vernacular knowledge of Belfast's popular and folk culture ("informal vocabularies and unofficial narratives of the city"),⁷⁶⁷ and both had objectives to reach and include diverse, non-art-going audiences. For the curator Hugh Mulholland the quirky humour of O'Beirn's situated work, another condition shared with *The Vacuum*, does not belie the high social consequence of the stories related,⁷⁶⁸ and each of O'Beirn's and Factotum's strategies can be seen to create not a new set of images to replace the old but a fleeting convergence that illuminates unspoken experience.

My interest in the comparison concerns the appearance of drawing in a plurality of situations which can be said to engage politically, where illustration has functionality for Mulholland as part of a portfolio of communicative devices in participatory artworks.⁷⁶⁹ Similarly to Factotum's application, the use of printed drawing appears as only one technique within one strain of O'Beirn's practice, the example cited here being the artist's three-week residency, *Some Things About Belfast (or so i'm told)*. This was part of the *Space Shuttle* participatory public art programme run by PS² gallery in 2006 within which participating artists were invited to use a portacabin as a mobile

⁷⁶⁵ Lerm Hayes and Walters, *Beuysian Legacies*. A generation of practitioners in the 1970s were influenced by their experience at Beuys's *Free University*. For example, the artist-led initiative Queen Street Studios and art review magazine *Circa*, who themselves were viewed as progenitors of the artist-run gallery Catalyst Arts. This Beuysian chronology provides an alternative reading to the success of Nicolas Bourriaud (who will be discussed more in the next chapter) in positioning relational art as a phenomenon beginning in the 1990s.

⁷⁶⁶ McGonagle, *A Shout in the Street*, 15.

⁷⁶⁷ Long, *Ghost-haunted land*, 191-192.

⁷⁶⁸ Mulholland, *The Nature of Things*, 158.

⁷⁶⁹ Mulholland, 159.

gallery in different locations in six temporary site-specific sub-projects or, 'missions'.⁷⁷⁰ O'Beirn's project used the *Space Shuttle* as a drop-in base to collect local knowledge from passers-by in the form of maps, place nicknames, urban myths and anecdotes. Participants could pass time in the portacabin, where reflection and communication around the theme of common knowledge was encouraged.⁷⁷¹ The comments, writings and drawings produced on this theme were assembled, printed and displayed in the portacabin in a process that Chan and Lerm-Hayes describe as a giving back of the city to those inhabitants who are best placed to describe it.⁷⁷²

⁷⁷⁰ Although the aesthetic of the project was one of a stripped back utilitarianism, indices, such as the project title and references to the PS² as the "Mother-ship," suggested a subtle alliance with fictionalisation as a method of re-imagining public space. The cosmic analogies represented PS² curator Peter Mutschler's interest with narrative play alongside social contexts in a similar manner to Factotum's use of fiction. The project archive can be found at: <https://www.pssquared.org/spaceshuttle1.php>.

⁷⁷¹ *The Vacuum* was also concerned with lived experiences of the city. For example, architectural historian David Brett's column *What Did They Build That For?*, which monitored new developments and revealed economic processes that drove their commissioning and effect on neighbourhoods. Brett's "Review" of the housing development, "South Side Studios" in issue one demonstrated his concerns: "Let's be clear about this. The purpose of this building is to split off the affluent from the poor. To make physical neighbourliness impossible. Those high walls, that courtyard, that Bat-Cave and the electronic locks are as sure markers of social failure as any 'Peace Line'." David Brett, "What Did They Build That For? South Side Studios, Tate's Avenue," *The Vacuum*, no. 1 (2003).

⁷⁷² *Space Shuttle* was presented as a platform for public dialogue and its mobility and temporality can be viewed as a response to public art as a re-imagining in service of economic exploitation. "The mobile, temporary nature of *Space Shuttle* is perhaps exemplary of the productive ways in which artists, art and cultural practices can critically engage with a location already "softened" for redevelopment by decades of neglect and disinvestment. This mobility is one alternative to inhabiting an area of disinvestment until one is eventually driven out by those same processes of gentrification in which artists can function as unwilling facilitators of its initial stages." For the authors, Belfast is both a diverse and divided society, "where art and culture are in many instances shared, but have not so far become a widespread activity in which the majority of the population participate." Chan and Lerm Hayes, "*Space Shuttle*," 133-135.

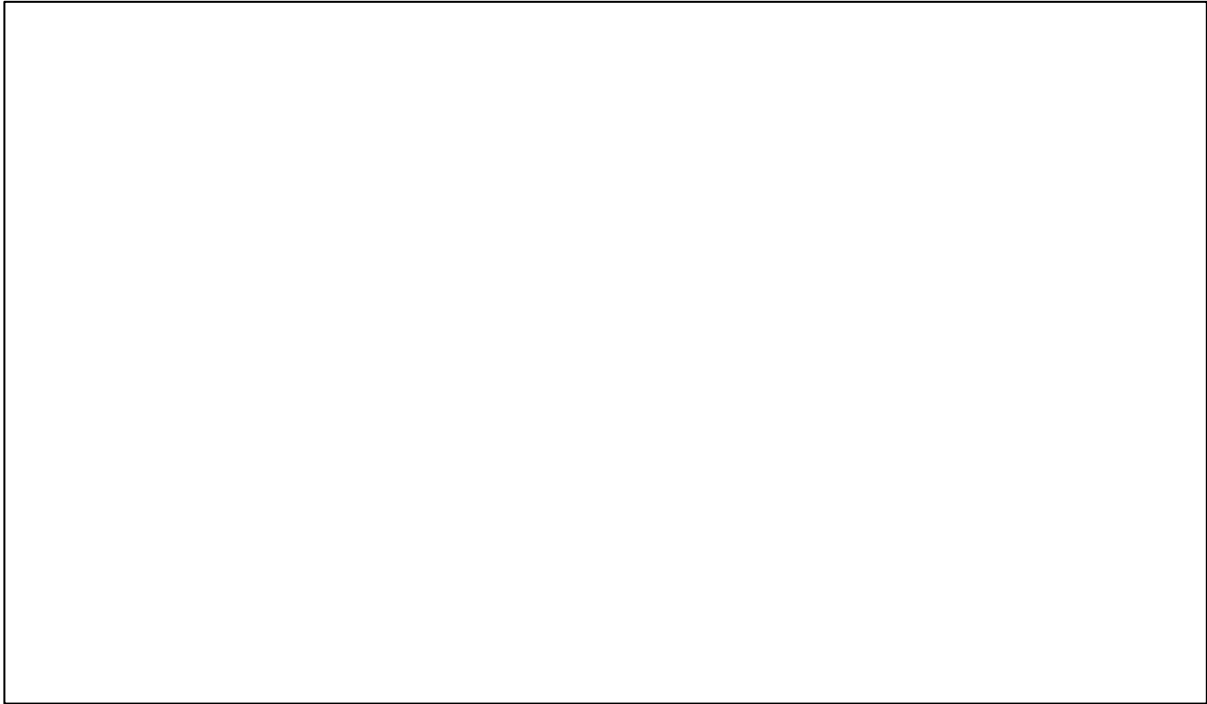


Figure 46. Aisling O'Beirn, *Some Things About Belfast (or so i'm told)*, 2006, installation (left) and poster design (right).

Some Things About Belfast is multi-faceted, and it is not my aim to represent it fully here. Rather, my focus is on just one technique within the artist's methodology: O'Beirn's use of printed drawing to communicate the work's aesthetical-political mode (Figure 46). O'Beirn's bold black-on-white figurative drawings, which appeared on street posters attached to the *Space Shuttle*, are superficially similar to many of those in *The Vacuum* and provide a similar function of capturing viewer attention through a recognisable language. Simultaneously however, they present what I consider as an aesthetic of the anti-aesthetic, a rejection of the pre-Modern, crafted or ornamental design approaches such as those often used by Factotum. Here, as the drawings appear to be digitally traced or rotoscoped from a photographic source material, a de-personalisation of the line is presented that denotes a utilitarian functionality reminiscent of instructional diagrams, a careful avoidance of the artist's trace that in turn communicates the work as centred on participant experiences.

These are drawings voided of *puissance*, undermining the traditional prominence of authorship by ensuring no evidence of the artist as exceptional remains.⁷⁷³ In this instance, the artist's skills are as "an honest, caring broker,"⁷⁷⁴ a channel of communication, rather than a virtuoso craftsman. The drawings therefore state that they are not the representatives of a unique ability that emanates from the individual body and manifests in the art object but are neutral mediations between regimes of sense. An equation is therefore presented between the drawing as a channel, as was discussed in chapter one (p.36), and the artist as an intermediary, a broker in this instance between 'the public' and public participation. This conscious extraction of the expert trace or of manual dexterity signifies a critical awareness of figuration, mimesis or spectacle as used to distract and persuade⁷⁷⁵ and mitigates a risk Hocking views as common to Re-imagining Communities projects, that of privileging the sponsor or the artist criteria even when the work is presented as a community project.⁷⁷⁶

For Claire Bishop, the removal of a medium is essential to the equality necessary to the politics of participation. Privileging a medium is divisive and works should instead encourage appropriation by participants in ways unexpected by the authors.⁷⁷⁷ In this instance, drawing signifies that lack of privileging a medium and thus an openness to participant interpretation. O'Beirn's illustrations present a lack of authorial identity and they also signify that there is no clear material outcome. Their only purpose then remains as an invitation to engage the public not in art-making but in participation itself.⁷⁷⁸ For Chan and Lerm-Hayes, in their application of Terry Eagleton's paradox of

⁷⁷³ In a similar concern for temporal de-synchronisation, Vikki Bell identifies practices that utilise painterly figuration alongside what could be termed community art or socially-engaged approaches. For instance, the artist Rita Duffy's figurative paintings, "like dream images, are without a coherent narrative; they cannot fall into a line of historical progress, cannot be connected to the present through the dominant narratives." In achieving this they demonstrate a concern, "with the experience of everyday existence within a society in which the need to enact rituals to confer identity and stability has been both a comfort and a conservative mimesis that sustains closed communities united by past and potential acts of violence." Bell, "The Consolation of Form," 333-334.

⁷⁷⁴ Chan and Lerm Hayes, "Space Shuttle," 126.

⁷⁷⁵ Such that is deployed in the intensive marketing of a, "desiccated consumer culture that glosses over consumer consumption." Chan and Lerm Hayes, 134.

⁷⁷⁶ One of Hocking's case studies compares a Re-imagining Communities commission with a "competing" project from a grassroots community group. Both projects led to a fixed artwork on a Belfast "peace line." In this instance the community-led project appeared as more successful in terms of seeding social interactions. In one sense, as it was a graffiti project, its global aesthetic was more recognisable across communities than the ACNI sponsored mural. In another sense, its effectivity for Hocking was due in part to the presence of the graffiti artists on the site, where they created interaction and a jovial atmosphere to the extent that, "it was not the art that softened the space so much as the artists themselves." Hocking, *The Great Reimagining*, 106.

⁷⁷⁷ "The politics of participation might best lie [...] in putting to work the idea that we are all equally capable of inventing our own translations. Unattached to a privileged artistic medium, this principle would not divide audiences into active and passive, capable and incapable, but instead would invite us all to appropriate works for ourselves and make use of these in ways that their authors might never have dreamed possible" Claire Bishop, *Participation* (London: Whitechapel, 2006), 16. Cited in Chan and Lerm Hayes, "Space Shuttle," 138.

⁷⁷⁸ Here, O'Beirn's project was, "Working to privilege the accounts of those who are not usually given a platform," and further, "could be described as running counter to the re-packaging of the city as theme park." Chan and Lerm

identity politics to *Some Things About Belfast*,⁷⁷⁹ art and culture partly delineate identification, but participation, by incentivising awareness and formation of one's own identity, "can then loosen the clearly delineated Northern Irish zero sum conceptualisation of both identity and space," an ousting, in Eagleton's terms, of the politics with which identity was previously so bound up with.⁷⁸⁰

The *Space Shuttle* was then presented not as a production area for art and culture, but as an environment for reflecting on the impact of culture and facilitating the potential re-formulation of identity in this light.⁷⁸¹ If I then apply Chan and Lerm-Hayes's analysis to *The Vacuum*, the *Dreams* issue emerges with a similar register in relation to participatory public art. Here, anonymous street-level conversation was re-printed verbatim with minimal commentary such that any representation of individual, community, or public identity was displaced by an atomised fictional subconscious. The removal of received identities, as O'Beirn's drawings signified, created both a space for new subjectivities to be formed and presented an infinite diversity as a unity in itself.⁷⁸² The *Dreams* illustrations could be seen as superfluous in this framework, even risking in their 'expertness' the re-inscription of a hierarchy. However, in contrast to O'Beirn's drawings which embodied the artist as mediator, the *Dreams* images were a necessary "way in" for West, a wilful seduction that brokered between the casual reader and what could otherwise appear as an unappealing sea of text.

4.3 || Publishing communities

4.3.1 || The dogsboddy and the pirate utopia

"[I]t all kind of happened in there in terms of it was ambivalent, it was humorous, it was anthropomorphic, it had animals, it had all the things. It looked a bit political, but it wasn't necessarily. All that kind of stuff was in there."⁷⁸³

Hayes, 133.

⁷⁷⁹ "The paradox of identity politics, in short, is that one needs an identity in order to feel free to get rid of it" Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 66. Quoted in Chan and Lerm Hayes, "*Space Shuttle*," 141.

⁷⁸⁰ Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture*, 63. Chan and Lerm Hayes, "*Space Shuttle*," 141.

⁷⁸¹ "[Beuys's projects and *Space Shuttle*] give opportunities to listen, sit, drink coffee and look, acknowledging the need for 'passivity' as much as that for activity and activism. Privileging activity for its own sake neglects "being" and reflecting.'" Chan and Lerm Hayes, 138.

⁷⁸² What Beuys, for Chan and Lerm-Hayes, "may have summarized as 'Unity in diversity'." Chan and Lerm Hayes, 138.

⁷⁸³ West, 2016.

The description above refers to what I view as the defining *Vacuum* illustration, the Factotum logo (2001). The ‘dogbody’ or ‘headless dog’ was synonymous for readers with both the paper and the publisher and embodied the unruly approach that included aspects of satire, seriousness and the carnivalesque (Figure 41, p.185). To West, the logo was a haphazard concoction but although there is some confusion over the provenance of the design its creation can nevertheless be attributed to either or both of the editors.⁷⁸⁴ The logo is indexical to much of the discussion so far, in being a clue to the social imaginary of the paper, its ambivalent humour, and to how *The Vacuum* production method contributed to the diversity of artistic models already present in Northern Ireland. If a singular identity could ever be attached to *The Vacuum* this was a glimpse of its appearance, if only as a silhouette.

In being a pun on ‘factotum’, a visualization of the eponymous dogbody, the image performs the text/image interplay aspired to within the pages of the paper. The invocation of a dogbody suggests Factotum is not an independent authorial identity but works at the behest of some occluded other, an invitation to read the organisation as an intermediary or ‘broker’. However, although the dog, as a Labrador retriever in this instance, is an animal originally bred for functional purposes and obedience to its master, such a body without a head is ungovernable. And as there is no functionality to a headless dog, the logo presents a self-contradiction, undermining any intent to present an image of cohesiveness.⁷⁸⁵ The dogbody can then be viewed as an anti-logo in its refusal to signpost a clear political allegiance or ideological coherence.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁴ West also can’t remember the exact source for the image other than the material was plagiarised out of a book of dog silhouettes. This lack of clarity over origin (whether source material or author) is resonant of Michel Foucault’s differentiation between “resemblance” and “similitude.” With resemblance (the degree to which an image mimics an original), the image always points to its forebear and is therefore consigned to an inferiority. Similitude however, has no anchoring original, only other versions that are similar, and is therefore set loose indefinitely on a series of repetitions and variations. In brief, “Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it, similitude serves repetition, which ranges across it.” René Magritte’s paintings and drawings, according to Foucault, “dissociated similitude from resemblance, and brought the former into play against the latter.” Magritte’s *La Trahison des images* (1929) is a paradigmatic example of painting harnessing these two modes, the text of the painting (in English), “this is not a pipe,” contests the image so that the overall figure is, “at once opposed and complimentary.” Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 44.

⁷⁸⁵ Following the anthropologist Alfred Gell’s reasoning in this regard, the image could be described as a trap. For Gell, “[e]very work of art that works is [...] a trap or a snare that impedes passage; and what is any art gallery but a place of capture, set with what Boyer calls ‘thought-traps’, which hold their victims for a time, in suspension?” Alfred Gell, “Vogel’s Net: Traps as Artworks and Artworks as Traps,” *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 15 (1996): 15-38, 37. DOI: 10.1177/135918359600100102.

⁷⁸⁶ In terms of what Stephen Duncombe describes as underground culture, the image is reminiscent of Raymond Pettibon’s *Black Flag* logo (c.1977), an example of the artist’s drawings which, for the visual culture historian Kerstin Mey, “move fluently between the language of the comic strip, the illustration and the caricature.” For Mey, “Pettibon recruits his fluid and heterogeneous array of signs from the rich vocabulary of American urban popular imagination, the literary ‘canon’ and the omnipresent images of a mediated reality across different cultural

This ambiguity can be seen to work against, in the words of engaged arts theorist Grant Kester, “soliciting the viewers' interaction too overtly, running the risk of being assimilated by the malevolent forces of consumer society.”⁷⁸⁷ Here, the surrealist humour only just holds the visual register back from the edge of a more sinister quasi-fascist appearance,⁷⁸⁸ a function of the logo in terms that I suggest contributes to its aesthetic efficiency. We expect the representations of participatory public art to reflect the future democratic community that is their goal. However, when *The Vacuum* is considered as public art, the ethical ambiguity of the logo creates a dissensus, a separation of the work from a representation of that democratic goal.⁷⁸⁹

In terms of accessing the aesthetics of Factotum and *The Vacuum*, the logo can be further visualised as a Jolly Roger, the semi-fictional flag attributed to eighteenth century pirates.⁷⁹⁰ Appearing on the imprint, or masthead, of each *Vacuum* issue, the dogsbody invites an address of the organisation and its antics in terms of a pirate utopia, a Temporary Autonomous Zone, to use anarchist author Hakim Bey's confection, where the quotidian is suspended and an anarchic community can momentarily rejoice in ritual mockery of its masters.⁷⁹¹ The logo was not initially conceptualised as such yet West agreed its boldness suggested some channelling of the Jolly Roger's potency, especially as he held an interest in the pirate utopia as a model for a more democratic society.⁷⁹² My consideration rested on perceiving Factotum in this way but West applied the piratic analogy to address Belfast

hierarchies.” It could be said that the Factotum logo shares this fluidity, invoking politicised countercultural movements such as punk yet resisting an easy anti-authoritarian reading. In terms of the current context of writing, it could also be suggestive of the alt-right's re-territorialisation of pop symbolism toward reactionary ends (chapter two, p.100). However, the logo can be read as much as a parody of such movements (radical left or right) as it is of the corporate, and in this way it can, as Mey describes Pettibon's drawings, “unstitch almost didactically many of their social and cultural ideals and illusions by displacing their signs and symbols in shifted contexts – visually and textually.” Kerstin Mey. *Art and Obscenity* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 61-62.

⁷⁸⁷ Within Kester's discussion of engaged arts such a property can add to, “the potential aesthetic significance, of collaborative and dialogical art practices that are accessible without necessarily being simplistic.” Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 13.

⁷⁸⁸ As frivolity and totalitarianism are two associations not often sought by the promoters of socially-engaged art, the logo was gleefully inhospitable to funder requirements for artists and arts organisations to self-present as useful and benign to the tax-paying public.

⁷⁸⁹ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 28 - 29.

⁷⁹⁰ *A General History of the Pyrates* (1724) popularised literary tropes surrounding pirates, the Jolly Roger being one. *A General History* is officially authored by Captain Charles Johnson, although Daniel Defoe is amongst one of several writers considered to be the true author. The logo as a Jolly Roger and *The Vacuum*/Factotum as a fantasy pirate organisation, evokes the editors' use of fictionalisation.

⁷⁹¹ Hakim Bey. *The Temporary Autonomous Zone: Ontological Anarchy; Poetic Terrorism* (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2007).

⁷⁹² “The idea of when a lot of people have met and have agreed terms on that basis where they're going to share things and they're going to help each other and only create rules by mutual consent and then them setting out for an island somewhere, is like a very exciting model for how a society might run [...] Now, is *The Vacuum* a pirate enterprise? I could see why you might sort of go that way [...] I like the idea of us being sort of piratical in the sense of bringing together a motley crew of people who have different skills and then you go and try and take on some madly ambitious thing as a prize and I like that idea.” West, 2016.

itself as a space of diverse fictionalisations through which he had freedom to navigate.⁷⁹³ In this manner, West's approach to the city as an island or microcosm paralleled conceptualisations of Belfast, the North, or, indeed, Ireland as a "representative place."⁷⁹⁴

In terms of the piratical narrative I view as latent in the imagery, especially considering West's stated interest, *The Vacuum* can be seen as a ship, Foucault's heterotopia par excellence,⁷⁹⁵ whose buccaneering took place in a broad environment of cultural production. Therein, the Factotum humour was a subversion of that environment, the paper equally mocking critical art, grassroots political displays and the civic-sponsored public art model that centred on uncontroversial monolithic sculptures and de-politicised workshop programmes.⁷⁹⁶ In this sense *The Vacuum* itself formed part of the discussion of critical art, contributing to its diversity by confounding received ideas of what publicly funded critical art should do or be. In this light, a reading of the logo can also be made toward comprehending how Factotum and *The Vacuum* were themselves received within the environment of critical art. In particular, how they were often discussed, positioned and represented in terms of a collective.

That the headlessness was mistaken for symbolizing a de-hierarchized organizational structure demonstrated the contemporaneous critical value ascribed to anonymous, co-authored artworks. For

⁷⁹³ "Islands" was to be the theme of an adventurous issue of *The Vacuum* involving a trip to Madagascar. Through his research into pirates, West had learned of Libertatia, the fabled pirate utopia on Madagascar mentioned in *A General History of the Pyrates*. In a demonstration of the extent of this interest West had wished to relocate to the island in 1994, the "weirdness" interesting him, from the unusual animals, strange topography to the particular colonial history. However, he moved to Belfast instead. West posits the move as due to an interest in the "living metaphor," "what it meant was that I sort of felt I had licence to explore any possible version of a story of the city and that included the suffragettes and saints' lives and whatever else, you know, paramilitary zines. [...] Madagascar's the same. Pirates was part of that, because it's a sort of isolated place in relation to the western world and Britain there's not much written about it. But often they're quite extraordinary stories about somebody who's shipwrecked there then they walk across the island and then they publish a book about it. Ten years later after they've lived there for twenty years when there were no other westerners there. And so, it's like someone's gone to the moon, really, from the perspective of eighteenth-century London. And the piracy thing is one aspect of that." West, 2016. Of the *Islands* issue, after a depressing preliminary trip to the Isle of Man, the editors were put off the Madagascar trip and the issue was never produced.

⁷⁹⁴ The Northern Irish art scene has been described as a Galapagos Islands where, like zine fairs, islands and cargo cults, curious practices have developed in isolation from mainstream interest. For Chan and Lerm Hayes, the PS² portacabin, "appears as a microcosm of what is important in current relational practice and its thinking on diversity, as reflected in *Space Shuttle*'s cosmic metaphor, together with Alastair MacLennan's assertion that for him as a Scot, Belfast appeared as a tiny place with enormous differences that could show problems of humanity in a nutshell – like a small universe. Beuys shared this sense of Ireland as the most representative place, a 'case study'." Chan and Lerm Hayes, "*Space Shuttle*," 139. It also of note that a seemingly perpetually deferred comeback of *The Vacuum* is the *Statelet* issue, which would have explored Northern Ireland itself in terms of political fantasies such as the pirate utopia.

⁷⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias," *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* (October 1984); ("Des Espace Autres," March 1967 Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec), 9.

⁷⁹⁶ Derivatives, respectively, of an expanded sculpture and community arts movement that had originally had a disruptive effect on art practice. Hocking, 2015; Bishop, 2011.

Bishop this was a structure reified in the arts after the turn toward participation during the 1990s.⁷⁹⁷ But Factotum, being entirely the creation, and under the creative direction, of Hackett and West, was always more of a benign monarchy than a utopian socialist democracy,⁷⁹⁸ a confounding of the oppositional binary of the exceptional autonomous artist figure and the ideal of a de-authored community.⁷⁹⁹ Under this guidance, *The Vacuum* formed a platform through which a variety of practitioners could interact on differing terms and in this way the logo can be viewed as an (anti-) flag under which contributors could assemble temporarily,⁸⁰⁰ not in opposition to their ongoing models of artistic practice but as an additional, complementary or contrasting way of working.⁸⁰¹

The depiction of a cohesive body is also suggestive of illustrational lineages that envisage political structure in terms of the corporeal, such as Abraham Bosse's frontispiece for Thomas Hobbe's *Leviathan* (1651) and Louvain's *Utopiae Insulae Figura* for Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516).⁸⁰² The incompleteness of the Factotum dog however, denies a cohesive collective identity to the disparate

⁷⁹⁷ A trope of the 1990s and 2000s critiqued by Bishop as the romanticising of working as a group and a pre-occupation with de-authored collectivity as a more ethical art production than the individual artist auteur. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 51; 194.

⁷⁹⁸ West prefers to describe Factotum as family-like, with its tensions of hierarchy and role, a better description than the idealised "collective." "There is a lot of, an idea of this collective, it's like it's some kind of free-floating thing... that it's wonderfully accepting of diverse opinions which we were not ever pretending to be. [...] We do like the idea that we were thought of as being a group of people in that we had regular contributors who were our collaborators.... And although we weren't a collective, I do like to think of us as a family of contributors and collaborators." However, Factotum worked with whatever external description was appropriate for the situation, for example, accepting the label of "artists" if it opened doors to opportunity. West, 2016.

⁷⁹⁹ Lawrence Street Workshops is another example in Belfast of a group that takes its organisational identity from an applied art (Factotum's being publishing). Neither collective nor completely autonomous, "The Workshops" is both a building that houses artist studios, small businesses and a carpentry workshop, and a platform for various events, activities, temporary art works and creative partnerships. Unlike Factotum and most arts organisations in Northern Ireland, The Workshops exists without state funding, supported by studio rent, commercial work and private investment. It frustrates simple identification as a craft or fine art venture by housing a variety of visual, musical, trade practices and contemporary artists.

⁸⁰⁰ There were multiple instances of this: contributors working anonymously under pseudonyms in order to maintain multiple creative identities; autonomous but affiliated works such as Shipsides's *Sorry intervention (Cave Hill)* (2004); breakout works from Bloomer and Keogh's column; and related works such as *Beckenkopf*, my inscription of Lekha's *Polite Fictions* column header onto aimnín's scalp during *Club Curious*, a 2003 performance event in Catalyst Arts. The headless dog in this light suggests another of Bakhtin's variations on heteroglossia: the grotesque body, a rebellion against the finished, completed and cleansed citizen. Following from this, the comical and unruly body can be seen as a narreme not only of *Vacuum* illustrations, but of newspaper illustration in general.

⁸⁰¹ Claire Bishop contrasts visual art practice, with its singular 'artist' figure, to film and theatre and their plurality of authorial terms: director, producer, designer etc. For Bishop, the lack of equivalent in fine art has led to a reductive critical framework underpinned by moral indignation. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 9.

⁸⁰² Louvain's *Utopiae* presents More's island as a human brain insulated within the head. For literary scholar Antonis Balasopoulos, "the island functions as a spatialized, reified analogon of the mind that envisions itself in terms of autonomy and sovereignty, of prophylactic insulation from the 'pollutions' or 'infections' of the world outside its bounded realm". Antonis Balasopoulos, "Utopiae Insulae Figura: Utopian Insularity and the Politics of Form," *Journal of Global Cultural Studies*, out of series (2008): 22-38. For Horst Bredekamp, the *Leviathan* collaboration between Hobbes and Parisian engraver Abraham Bosse, represents the centrality of the image for Hobbes in communicating the complex new position of the state as a body politic. Horst Bredekamp. "Thomas Hobbes's Visual Strategies" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan*. Ed. Springborg, Patricia. Cambridge University Press, 2007: pp 29-60.

activities and diversity of contributors. The dog's appearance can then be said to evoke Maurice Blanchot's "privation of the head" or "acephalous person" and Gilles Deleuze's "dividual," in discursive traditions that address true community as a people connected only by their lack of having anything in common (as the zine underground was discussed in chapter three, p.147).⁸⁰³

The relevance of such theory to participatory art is made explicit by Kester, who views an acceptance of the lack of common identity addressed by Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Inoperative Community* as essential for effective dialogical practice, where non-fascist communities need to, "accept, rather than deny, the fact of our underlying mutability." For Nancy it is this disconnectedness that binds us and its production through a recognition that we have no substantial identity and that this is shared by others thereby challenges our tendency to project our egos onto the world.⁸⁰⁴ For Kester, this is an important break from the influence of Enlightenment philosophy, as from an awareness of a linkage only by pre-lingual "original or ontological" singularity, by just being together in time and space, we can then intuit a common lack of identity in an inverse of Immanuel Kant's intuiting the existence of a common identity.

⁸⁰³ Galloway cites Nancy, Blanchot and Agamben in this regard. Galloway, Masciandaro and Whittlesey, *French Theory Today*, 8.

⁸⁰⁴ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 154-155.



Figure 47. Factotum, *Untitled* (Headless Dog graffiti, Belfast), circa 2000s, paint on wall, 1m x 60cm (approx.)

In its appearance amongst the urban environment the logo presents Factotum as a dog on the street, a framing, by way of the popular phrase, “even the dogs on the street know,” as the lowest level of cognition able to comprehend the social reality of a situation.⁸⁰⁵ However, even this basic function was troubled by the Factotum dog’s acephalous bearing. In a tentative experiment with guerrilla marketing the logo was manually reproduced as stencil graffiti, a form of drawing/writing whose continual re-inscription (to apply the terminology of Cixous) is necessary to glimpse a fleeting ‘truth’ (Figure 47). Following Derrida, the truth is then revealed by drawing as the momentary presence of the draughtsman or draughtswoman’s *puissance* (chapter one, p.40).

Considering this, the re-inscription of a ‘dog on the street’ simultaneously presented a denial through decapitation of that dog’s single denotational role as a witness to a political given. If Factotum is the headless dog, in this application synonymous with Derrida’s draughter, then the

⁸⁰⁵ In the North, the colloquialism is particularly favoured in castigating the ineffectiveness of politicians and media to comprehend communicate what is common knowledge. The editors used such turns of phrase to maintain an accessibility to the paper regardless of one’s knowledge of Anglo-Irish politics, whilst indicating the social and political context of *The Vacuum* to those in the know. “Vacuum” itself, is an example of this, appropriated from a common journalistic cliché for instances of deadlock or lack of leadership in Northern Irish politics.

truth emerging from the graffito is that the elemental identity of the organisation is as an agent that exists only to re-inscribe the absence of any identity capable of being re-inscribed.⁸⁰⁶ Considered in these terms, the manual reproduction of the Factotum logo acknowledges the insubstantiality of identity itself and that our only commonality is our fundamental disconnectedness, an understanding, for Kester, that is a necessity for effective socially-engaged art.

4.3.2 || *Laburnum Pilot: a street magazine*

I have argued for a particular continuity between the drawn image and *The Vacuum* approach. However, as I have also emphasised, illustration was far from an essential component, only one of many techniques employed by Factotum whose perspectives would each provide a novel reading of the organisation. In addition, the illustrations themselves were largely produced at a remove from the public space of distribution (the dogsbody stencil graffiti being a notable exception) and the inter-subjective encounters made possible by drawing as a physical act were not fully mobilised by the editors. To consider a closer integration between drawing, a publishing community and a ‘public’, I identify a socially-engaged work in which drawing is not an index of the project aim, but constitutive of it. In doing so, the analysis can be developed further toward viewing the components of illustration: drawing and a relation to text and publishing, in terms of a social proposition as much as a set of materials.

Laburnum Pilot was a one-off publication produced in 2004 by the artists and ecologists Ella Gibbs and Amy Plant within a six-week residency at the Drawing Room gallery, London.⁸⁰⁷ The project, synchronous with *The Vacuum*’s peak production, was also an experimental public artwork based on publishing and a collaboration between a two-person team and a network of contributors.⁸⁰⁸ Distinguishing the works however, were their address to different communities of readers. *The Vacuum* sought an anonymous public whereas *Laburnum Pilot* was envisaged partly as an outreach engagement with local residents and partly as an intra-community document for those residents to

⁸⁰⁶ The stencil experiment also precipitated an unexpected re-appropriation and re-appearance of the logo which in itself demonstrated the mutability of the image as a non-identity. After Hackett and West stencilled the dogsbody onto the side of a south Belfast heritage building that was undergoing renovation, the new tenants, a restaurant and micro-brewery, misread the graffito as an original artefact from the 1920s and used the image in branding a craft beer they called *Dogsbody*. The logo then made a circuitous and unexpected journey back to Factotum when the beer turned up for sale in the John Hewitt pub which, at the time, was regularly frequented by *Vacuum* contributors.

⁸⁰⁷ *Laburnum Pilot* is subtitled: “A Street Magazine made by the people who live, work & pass through Laburnum Street.”

⁸⁰⁸ The proximity in practice was evidenced in Amy Plant and Factotum’s contribution to the exhibition ARTISTS/GROUPS curated by Grant Watson at Project Arts Centre, Dublin, 30 October - 6 December 2003.

connect with the diverse cultural activities taking place in the area.⁸⁰⁹ An additional and fundamental difference to *The Vacuum* was Gibbs and Plant's ground rule that all the visual contributions had to be hand-drawn. This decision was informed by the gallery's specialisation and the artists' particular interest in drawing, but also by the need to create a challenge, a restriction that would generate innovative solutions.⁸¹⁰

For Plant, the restriction formed a neutral starting point from which to develop the possibilities of drawing in generating engagement with place and the artist's objective to, "celebrate and appreciate that whole spectrum of what drawing can be,"⁸¹¹ suggests a correlation between the multiplicity of drawing and the resident community's diverse cultural activities. Exploring the mutability and diversity of drawing could then reflect the objective to promote inter-cultural engagement between the residents. Important to this possibility was to transgress the association of drawing with technical skill and to posit the activity as simple communication that occurs daily for most people.⁸¹² In turn, this reflected Plant's wider approach to social practice, where participants are encouraged to view art outside the preserve of experts and to see themselves as engaged in creative processes.⁸¹³ Drawing is a particularly apt demonstration of this, "a common thing," for Plant, experienced by everyone and completely accessible.⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰⁹ In addition, although it was early in the internet age, for Plant, "it was starting to feel like communities were no longer defined by where you were living, more so maybe through interest groups." Amy Plant, in discussion with the author, 4 August 2017.

⁸¹⁰ *Laburnum Pilot* was influenced by a precursor print work, *Drawn*, which featured found drawings accumulated during a residency in India. This, "was different in the sense that [*Drawn*] was more about looking for drawings that already existed in the environment rather than encouraging new ones to be created." *Drawn* was a mapping exercise in the sense that Plant engaged with drawings in everyday life. The line was conceptualised as a connection between contributors and their movements through the lived environment. Plant, 2017.

⁸¹¹ Plant, 2017.

⁸¹² "[E]very time we write something with a pen or a pencil... So that can be seen as a form of drawing too." This connection with writing was part of the design concept, the editorial team hand writing and the designers creating a hand-written font from written submissions. Plant, 2017.

⁸¹³ "And we wouldn't necessarily consider that a work of art, of course, but I think one of the things that I'm always looking at, when engaging people in art, in an artistic process, is trying to show them that, okay, you might not call yourself an artist and you might not have the same skills as an artist, but that doesn't mean that you're not involved in a creative process, necessarily. And maybe it's sort of opening up people's eyes to what that could be, expanding that a bit." Plant, 2017. There is a commonality with Chan and Lerm Hayes apprehension of O'Beirn's work. The authors' quote Wolfgang Zinggl in support: "Using the word art with a changed meaning *and yet in a way that is understandable to a large number of people* is a prerequisite for admitting any shift in the conception of art." Wolfgang Zinggl, ed., *WochenKlausur: Sociopolitical Activ-ism in Art* (Vienna and New York: Springer, 2001), 134. Quoted in Chan and Lerm Hayes, "*Space Shuttle*," 136-137.

⁸¹⁴ The hand-drawn map is one of Plant's examples of the everyday communicative drawing and the artist considers the functionality of the map an apt method for community engagement. "I think in the past maps were always hand-drawn, weren't they? And I've actually done some other projects that were about engaging children in drawing maps where we would go out into the environment and they would observe things in the environment and draw them and then I'd take those drawings and digitally put them down and make a map out of them, of their area. And then those would be published and then distributed. So, they were functional perhaps." Plant, 2017.

To enable these propensities as observed by Plant, the artists established the gallery as a gathering place and used drawing activities to mediate various instances of social encounter, such as collaborative design charettes and all-ages drawing workshops. Commissions were given to a mixture of amateur and professional practitioners and to adults and children alike. This created possibilities for humorous pairings, such as a child’s illustration of an article on grown-up dating, and zine-like discordances between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ drawing. The zine-like was also apparent in the appropriation of the magazine format, *Laburnum Pilot* appearing as an illustration of mass-media, with drawing presented as a counterpoint to the ubiquity of the photograph (even the adverts were hand-drawn, Figure 48, centre). Gibbs and Plant also drew and the hours they spent hand-copying photographs supplied by residents can be viewed as conveying the time and labour invested by the artists in the project as a whole (figure 48, left).⁸¹⁵



Figure 48. Ella Gibbs and Amy Plant (eds.), *Laburnum Pilot: a street magazine*, 2004, print media, 210mm x 270mm.

The inclusive approach to drawing was mirrored in the structure of the working group where residents joined an editorial team to form a partnership with the designers, the ‘professional’ contributors and the artists. This in turn reflected what Plant identifies as various layers of audience

⁸¹⁵ “There was a woman who lived on the street who’d been a musician in the past and she brought us the front cover of an album that she’s been in, so we wanted to include that. So, I sat there for hours drawing this. I think Ella and I got really absorbed in that process of drawing ourselves. And we’d be there until like midnight, you know, or throughout the night, in the gallery, just doing drawings. And really having a great time going back into doing that.” “[I] ended up feeling like I was back at high school, kind of doing my drawings where I would copy photographs.” Plant, 2017.

in the project made possible by the particular conjunction of print and social engagement. That *Laburnum Pilot* enabled a set of viewpoints, new experiences for contributors to see themselves, their artwork and their writing,⁸¹⁶ underlined, for Plant, a consideration of her practice as anchored in a process-based approach with the particularities of print providing an additional structure for engagement.⁸¹⁷ However, considering that publishing exists in public space, its materials could also be viewed *as* public space, and for Plant, print and process were linked more inextricably than method is to methodology.⁸¹⁸ Here, the materiality of print as itself comprising public space, addresses the challenge of working in public where, “the people who are using that space don't often get a say in how it's designed or created.”⁸¹⁹

The experience of *Laburnum Pilot* in these terms led to the creation of a long-term collaboration between Gibbs and Plant that they named Pilot Publishing. This was, “a very expanded idea of publishing,” expressed on their website as enabling the artists to think of publishing and public space as the same realm, to question who, how and why these spaces are controlled and to activate alternatives inspired by and for communication.⁸²⁰ Key to the development of Pilot Publishing was the celebratory street party held to launch *Laburnum Pilot*. Although the artists had planned on the magazine being produced regularly it was this communal gathering that emerged as the most enduring aspect.⁸²¹ The extent of enthusiasm and participation was such that the event became an annual occurrence outside of the artists' initial involvement and made *Laburnum Pilot* one of Plant's most successful projects in terms of a sustainable afterlife.⁸²²

⁸¹⁶ “[W]here else are you going to find an article about a street cleaner, you know, it's pretty rare [...] It's about elevating, I guess, giving a platform that people wouldn't normally have.” Plant, 2017.

⁸¹⁷ “[W]hat's really important because it's through the doing of something and engaging people in doing something that issues are revealed that you wouldn't have known about before. And then new ideas can extend from that.” Plant, 2017.

⁸¹⁸ Plant, 2017.

⁸¹⁹ *Laburnum Pilot* presented the objective for Plant for residents to have, “some more control over what we see in our public space, who's creating that space, having a voice in that space. [...] We often have very little control over what [our environment] looks like or how we use it. It's always somebody else who seems to be in charge of that. And it's the same with our published media - that unless you're working in that field or an expert in that field, you're not controlling that space either.” Plant, 2017.

⁸²⁰ <https://energycafe.wordpress.com/about/pilot-publishing/>

⁸²¹ The event had expanded from a traditional street party to include various local campaigns and organisations and unexpected contributions. An event committee was formed, a license applied for and Laburnum Street was officially closed off. The event became a collaboration with a campaign to open the local swimming pool that had featured in *Laburnum Pilot* (Liz Hughes, “Three pence for a bath plus towel and soap,” in *Laburnum Pilot: A Street Magazine*, eds. Amy Plant and Ella Gibbs (2004): 18-19.) Then a dance instructor who had contributed to the magazine offered to perform, a stage was required, he was joined with performances from Vietnamese community group.

⁸²² All this energy that gets stirred up when you go and engage people in a process and then you leave. And then what happens to all of that? And there are connections that are made, and there's lots of intangible things that happen for sure that do have an afterlife. But to see something like that happening where you really have helped to activate something that continues.” Plant, 2017.

Print-published drawing can be seen as a means to an end in this instance, a stage in a process that, if successful, activates space in a sustainable way without requiring any further connection to print or drawing. Plant emphasises however, that although the street party was the enduring success, it was only arrived at through the printed drawing project.⁸²³ When Pilot Publishing was established, the artists then retained the intermediary possibilities of drawing, but as a set of techniques that could be re-introduced to a project at any point in its process rather than a central theme. The drawing-only rule from *Laburnum Pilot* was also retained as an abstraction, Gibbs and Plant keeping the idea of a constructive restriction that would ‘seed’ ongoing activity.⁸²⁴

This can be observed in Pilot Publishing’s *Energy Café* (2008 – 2012) which, like *Laburnum Pilot*, began with a pilot project linked to a specific space, in this case an area of land recently re-opened as a country park.⁸²⁵ Gibbs and Plant had an initial intention to work with professionals and locals toward re-activating the space, “with a feeling of the original commons where land was used as a resource for all.”⁸²⁶ The pilot initiated a longer-running programme in the form of a series of situated experiments with off-grid living, re-wilding and community gardening. This prolonged second stage involved the artists touring a mobile kitchen to various locations over several years, inviting local participation in a range of culinary, horticultural and creative activities (Figure 49, right).

The project echoes the Beuysian heritage perceived in O’Beirn’s *Space Shuttle* project, that of relational practices as, “low-key, practical and orientated towards individual people, forging small but long-lasting groups with an eye to the medium and long-term.”⁸²⁷ Rather than spectacular, for Chan and Lerm Hayes, these are a fine-tuning of relational skills and networks, and rather than being overly disruptive, they take on a recognisable form. In this way, the subject of *Energy Café* clearly concerned ecology in the sense of research into our inter-relationship with the living

⁸²³ “[I]t felt like the street party was where all the energy was. And that’s totally fine. How would we have ever known about that without doing the magazine? And we actually participated in that street party again the following year with a video project, funnily enough!” Plant, 2017.

⁸²⁴ “The ‘Pilot’ part of ‘Pilot Publishing’ comes from our wishes that the energy and expertise invested in the collective work can continue to glow and generate in some way, after we’ve gone (like sowing ‘seeds’). So, the larger projects are often prototypes, experiments or tests...with longevity in mind...” Pilot Publishing, artists’ website, <https://energycafe.wordpress.com/about/pilot-publishing/>

⁸²⁵ This was Gunpowder Park in Waltham Abbey, Essex. The site had been Common Land connected to Epping Forest with a later history of industrial use.

⁸²⁶ <https://energycafe.wordpress.com/about/>.

⁸²⁷ Chan and Lerm Hayes, “*Space Shuttle*.”

environment. In addition to this the project formed an ecology in itself in the sense of a sustainable approach to life and artmaking.

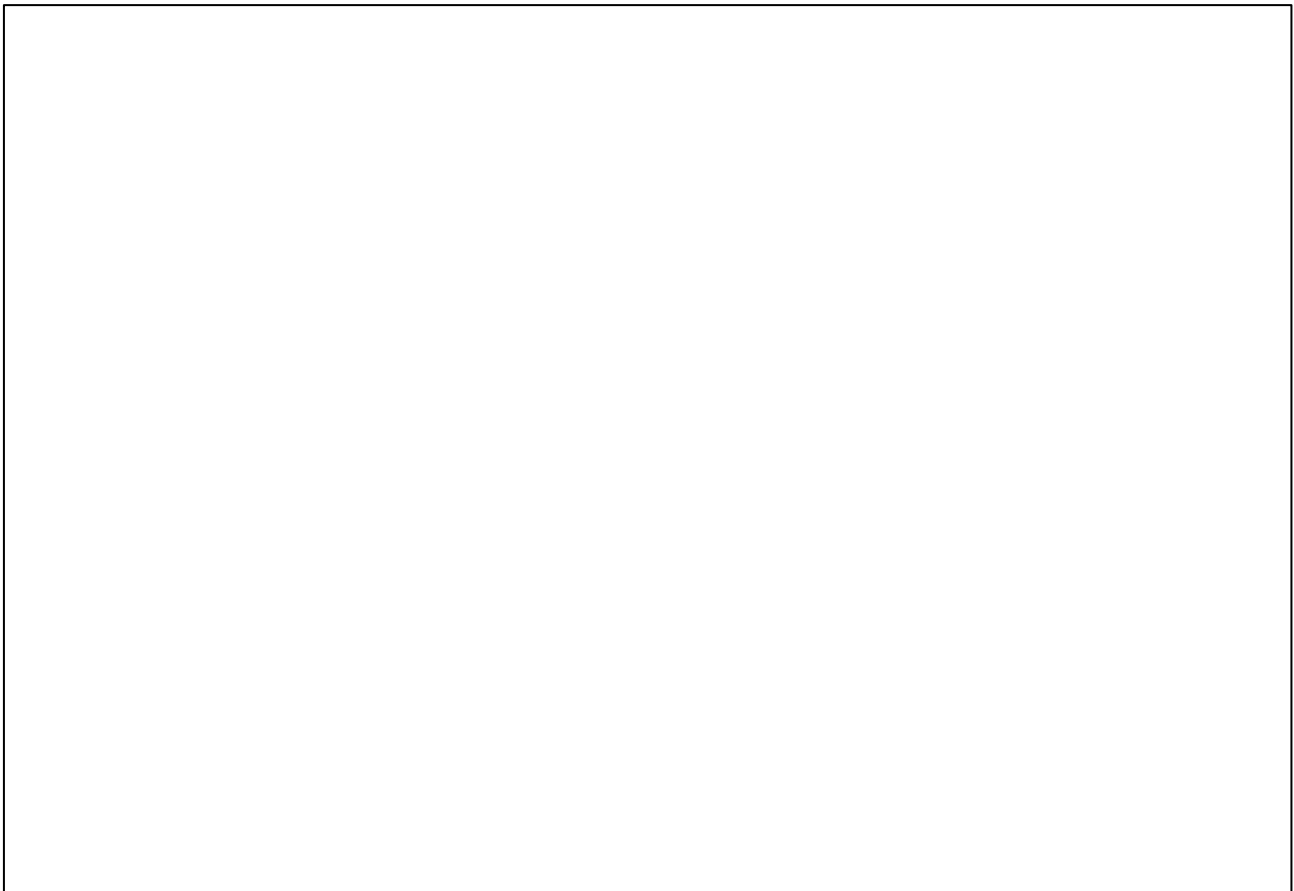


Figure 49. Pilot Publishing, *Energy Café*, 2008 - 2012, planning drawing (left) and mobile installation (right).

Drawing, as a relational and communicative act, was also viewed by the artists as an integral activity for sustaining the ecology of *Energy Café*. Drawing was applied as a technique aiding the organisation of the project, for instance in planning sketches (Figure 49, left), in documentation (Pilot Publishing invited an artist to sketch the *Café* activities on an ongoing basis)⁸²⁸ and in communicating the project, where the hand-drawn aesthetic channelled the back-to-basics approach to a broader audience.⁸²⁹ The durational qualities of the act of drawing were also linked by Plant

⁸²⁸ “That idea of looking at drawing as a way of documenting a happening, what's going on.” Plant, 2017.

⁸²⁹ The *Energy Café* blog (<https://energycafe.wordpress.com>) was an example of a convergence between digital and traditional media. “I really like using that combination of digital media and hand-drawn, sort of disrupting that, digital with the hand-drawn, especially things like websites and blogs.” Emblematic of drawing within *Energy Café* was the hand-drawn logo where Plant recounted asking, “Do we even need a logo? Well, if we do, then it's going to be a sketch or hand-drawn or something’. [...] We just decided to ask a few people to draw a letter and then put it together as the *Energy*, a very simple, hand-drawn thing. And I think a lot of that also, using drawings in something like a logo which sounds like such a corporate thing, and it, in a way was really a way of being very un-corporate.” Plant, 2017.

with the wider ecological concerns of Pilot Publishing and her own ongoing horticultural practice.⁸³⁰ In a practical application, Plant follows a tradition of observational drawing and drawing in nature as a way of “marvelling” at something that one would take for granted otherwise and a way of connecting to the environment. In this conceptualisation, the activity of drawing forces the draughtswoman to slow down, requiring patience in a similar way to gardening. A slowing down that, more broadly, Plant views as an ability increasingly lost to contemporary ways of living but central to an approach to life that is ecologically sustainable and necessarily more communal.⁸³¹

4.3.3 || **Drawing ecology**

To close this chapter, I re-introduce the Tuesday Drawing Studio as influenced both by my *Vacuum* experience and the durational and ecological frameworks of more definitively socially-engaged practices. Although both approaches give drawing a role in addressing societal conditions and imaging alternatives, Pilot Publishing’s application differed fundamentally from Factotum’s. For Gibbs and Plant, drawing was an act that in a small instance performed a social transformation, that is, it enabled an encounter that could lead to more enduring conviviality. Although Pilot Publishing’s drawings also functioned as artefacts to be read and recognised, for Factotum this capacity was wholly their purpose, and, unlike Pilot Publishing, *The Vacuum* illustrations were at their most functional when ambiguous.

Taking these differences as representative of their aesthetical-political operation, they can also be used to locate Pilot Publishing and Factotum within Rancière’s theory of artistic effectivity. The dogsbody logo encapsulated *The Vacuum* aesthetic by undermining its own image of a future community (suggested by the politicised mode of street art and the design itself that held a range of ideological connotations) and in this way it served to cast doubt on any act of representing a cohesive future, whether as ethnocentric monoculture, privatised free-market, or socialist collective. However, the politics of the Factotum community of practice that directly produced *The Vacuum*,

⁸³⁰ Plant now sees drawing in relation to her current work on a sustainable farm in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, where, “even farming is a strange form of drawing in a way.” In the farm Plant and her partner are striving to mimic or to encourage the natural process as much as possible rather than enforce that kind of mentality of, “‘Man can do it better. We can do it better than nature’.” For Plant, there is no instant gratification in growing food, tending a garden or trying to be in harmony with the seasons. Patience is therefore another connection between drawing and farming, the value of both is a becoming lost in their processes. Plant, 2017.

⁸³¹ “I think one of the things that drawing does, especially if you’re doing observational drawing, outside or whatever it might be, is it does kind of slow you down. And I think that’s what we need to do in general, in order to live in more harmony with nature and see ourselves as part of an ecosystem... And I think the same thing goes for how I see ecology and community working well. That in order for us to live in a more sustainable fashion, for want of a better word, we do need to be more communal as well.” Plant, 2017.

which I have partly framed in terms of a bourgeoisie literary public sphere, were not consciously exposed as part of the work. *The Vacuum* then, although part-forming a commentary on critical art, disengaged from being addressed as critical art itself by consciously not critiquing its own mode of production, a requirement for Rancière's effective art.

In comparison, *Energy Café*, as a work of environmental activism, could be seen to directly present and perform Pilot Publishing's vision for a future community. Whereas *Laburnum Pilot* had retained a connection to the gallery and thereby underwent an amount of reframing for an art audience, *Energy Café* took place entirely in public space and in direct communication with participants. A gallery presentation in comparison, would re-contextualise the work toward a scrutiny of its aesthetic operations, as, in Rancière's terms, a productive questioning occurs when those operations are wrenched from their context and presented in a manner incongruent to their original regime of sense. This was not Pilot Publishing's aim with *Energy Café* however, and its success as a work is dependant more on criteria for effective activism than effective art.

Many aspects of the socially-engaged public art that broadly informed the presentation of *Energy Café* as an artwork had been introduced into civic public art strategies in the 1990s and 2000s where works were purposed toward addressing local social conditions. In the North of Ireland these strategies were aimed at residential communities categorised by local authorities as having high levels of deprivation. In particular, the Re-imagining Communities Programme raised earlier (p.207) sought to integrate these participatory elements into the design processes of permanent sculptural installations in areas where sectarian memorials, murals and flags were being removed. Although there was an emphasis on resident involvement in my experience of these, the many restrictive parameters resulted in designs tending toward the uninventive and unchallenging and often reduced the scope for actual participant involvement in the production process.⁸³²

However, in programmes commissioned by galleries, who could mediate between the artist and the funding criteria, there was more scope for working beyond the view of public art as permanent sculpture. In my experience of these, I attempted to use the printed publication, as I had learned from Factotum, as a vehicle for investigating ideas of community through processes of production

⁸³² I have been a commissioned artist on five Re-imagining Communities projects and a researcher for the planning of one Re-imagining commission. I found when there was an opportunity to expand beyond the parameters and create a more ecological work this was often due to the presence of a motivated long-term resident who would maintain and energise the project locally.

and distribution and I considered the features of *The Vacuum* that would translate most effectively were the style of article commissioning that instigated interaction with and between residents. *The Ballykinler Village News* (2011) was the first complete example of this where I focussed entirely on the relational possibilities and abandoned my own illustration.⁸³³ In *The Roundabout* (2013) however, I re-introduced the act of drawing as an instigator of communication, as Gibbs and Plant had in *Laburnum Pilot*.⁸³⁴ The appearance of the resultant publication was somewhere between a community art work composed of participant submissions and an independent work authored by myself (Figure 50).

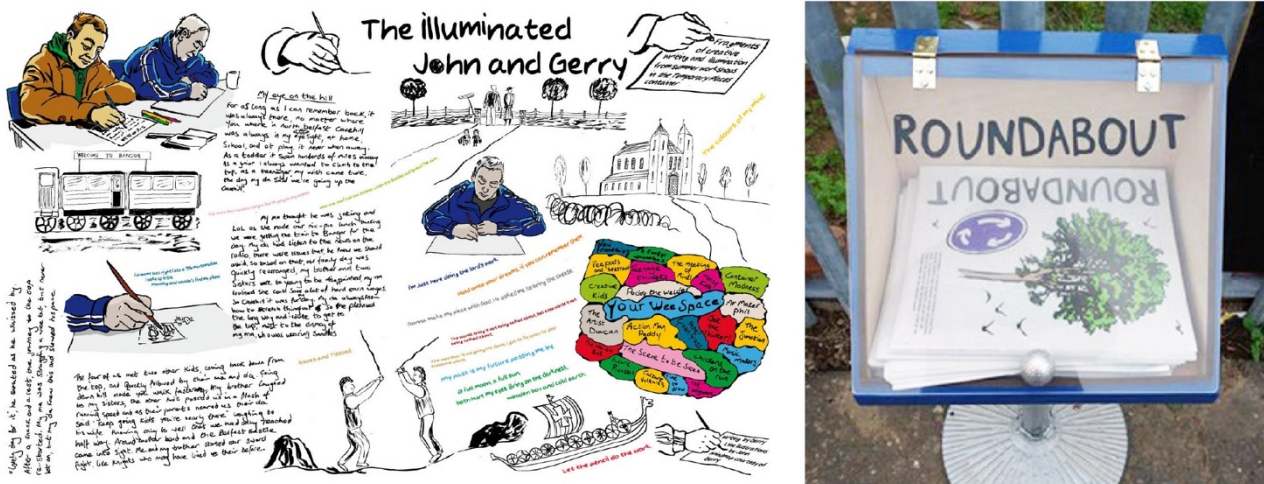


Figure 50. Duncan Ross, *The Roundabout*, 2013, printed newsheet (left) and mixed media dispenser (right).

What was absent in this combination was the humorous critique of the surrounding cultural landscape that I have argued made *The Vacuum* particularly effective. In attempting to translate the format to the kind of public-spirited projects that would have been treated with a degree of cynicism by the editors, I ended up removing the aspects that made the model successful in the first instance. What enables these aspects is the establishment of an ecology of contributors over a sustained

⁸³³ In *The Ballykinler Village News* I was trying to create and connect the two communities of participants and audience that I perceived as taking place in *Dreams*. There were no illustrations, as I felt any display of my own handiwork would be counter to the aim of giving voice to the residents. Rather, I became the editor, borrowing various *Vacuum* devices to generate copy, such as commissioning interviews with local characters and using articles as a pretext for youth groups to physically explore the built environment.

⁸³⁴ *The Roundabout* was another free newspaper produced in situ and distributed locally. As I had moved away from drawing in *Ballykinler News*, I sought to reintroduce illustration into the working methods. “I employed illustration in *The Roundabout* for different objectives: as an interview technique; as an alternative documentary form to the photograph; to present information in an accessible way and to create regular social environments where participants could produce their own illustrations for the paper.” Ross, “Illustrating *The Vacuum*.”

period of time and the crafting of a way of working through trial and error. The contradiction in this regard, lay in my attempt to reconcile my experience as a *Vacuum* illustrator with the short-term objectives, continually changing participants, and pre-conditioned outputs encountered in civic-commissioned engaged arts. It was not until the development of the TDS however, that I recognised this melancholic motivation in my attempt to replicate my illustrator's solitude within its community of practice (introduction, p.3).

This is not to posit that the TDS was ineffectual or disingenuous because of this but rather to acknowledge that the initial programme arose from my seeking to re-inscribe the absent community as much as it stemmed from my attempts to apply the language of participatory public art to practicing drawing in a convivial setting. This was evidenced by my relinquishing the publishing outcomes of previous works in favour of the creation of a regular meeting place that did not have a fixed end-point, a valuing of the relational space over the material of print and in the retention of drawing as a method of re-inscribing an identity for myself as a draughtsman as much as to provide an accessible practical activity for participants.⁸³⁵ In this context drawing was unchained from any editorial brief and used more toward seeding relational encounters for the group and for application in a range of practical activities that sustained the ecology of the programme whilst equating to a broader conception of ecology as a way of living.⁸³⁶ Drawing was a 'slowing down' in this instance, realised in my establishment of the TDS as an ongoing programme from the outset but also recognisable as a response to the absence created through the ending of the long-term experience of *The Vacuum*.⁸³⁷

⁸³⁵ Mid-way through the research process I reflected on the TDS in terms of a transition, the illustrator undergoing a metamorphosis from draughtsman to group facilitator. "In terms of my role within the studio, it could be argued that I have ceased to be an illustrator and am now an educator or coordinator. I view my activities as still analogous to illustration: the drawing itself may be produced by the participants but the TDS is an illustration-like space where different representational forms converge and converse. The studio is hence a development of what was one of the most valuable aspects, for me, of *The Vacuum*: the creation of a convivial working environment that temporarily harmonized the solitary activity of drawing with a sense of shared experience and community belonging." Ross, "Illustrating *The Vacuum*," 29-33.

⁸³⁶ In a similar way to the experience of being in nature, Amy Plant viewed the slowing down enabled by the drawing process as beneficial for mental health. TDS participants also expressed benefits of attending the group in terms of mental health. O'Neill referred to a shyness, a saying through drawing that mediated her lack of confidence in speaking. For Lightbox Willie the space was also useful for "dealing with people," and Lesley Gordon foregrounded the impact on health, seeing the group situation and relationships with others as therapeutic.

⁸³⁷ Previously I had articulated the on-going aspect as a circumvention of the temporal restrictions of the state-funded public and community art projects I had previously worked on. These could be seen as inheriting what the artist Kate Crehan cites as time constrictions imposed by post Thatcherist "audit culture," (Crehan, *Community Art*). Duration can also function as a proof of ethics regarding artist and community. For the artist Ailbhe Murphy duration forms a pivotal characteristic of relational practice, where time commitment is a fundamental ethical gesture in terms of identifying and showing solidarity. Here, notable platforms and complex networks require time for negotiation, agreement, conversation and disagreement. However, Murphy identifies, "the inevitable instrumentalisation of [durational engaged] practice." Where effectivity is a criterion the use of time, like money, can come under review, the degree of participation and ownership is then opened for measurement and, "time

Thankfully the participants productively undermined many of my subjective impositions on the programme, for instance by furthering the TDS as a nexus of durations rather than simply an exercise in the long-form.⁸³⁸ And as the idea of a single duration was upset, participants also undermined any identification with a restrictive definition of community arts.⁸³⁹ Rather, their own indifference to stereotypical cultural identities established the programme in terms of enabling solitude, or isolation, from the condition of being externally defined as a member of a particular community.⁸⁴⁰ If replicating characteristics of *The Vacuum* were then a mark of success, the TDS could be redeemed in one sense, in that it formed another gathering of solitudes, another negative community of those connected only by their disconnection to community itself.

Summary

I introduced *The Vacuum* within this chapter as in conversation with: grassroots political displays; histories of publishing; and contemporaneous participatory public art works. Humour and

becomes part of the measurement device.” Murphy, “Temporal Economies,” 16-19.

⁸³⁸ For Simon O’Sullivan, an “aesthetic ecology” is produced by the different durations of repeating motifs. “A kind of aesthetic ecology is produced which means the practice has more in common with a series, or again, a scene, than with an object *per se*.” O’Sullivan, “Myth-Science,” 84. The multiplicity of durations was reflected in participant reasons for attending. For instance, for O’Neill the rhythm of the studio created “time for me,” and for Patten, also in his early sixties, the studio facilitated contemplation of ageing and was a way of marking time (Patten, 2015). Some participants required consistency and repetition and would work on a single drawing for months, others saw the TDS as a way of introducing more dynamism into their life and would work on several projects simultaneously. The occasional short-term projects I introduced also retained the benefits of quick, intensive experiences of art working and contributed to the diverse experience of time.

⁸³⁹ Which, although the TDS had no remit to respond to any particular place or serve a particular community, could be assumed from the partnership with New Lodge Arts, the local youth arts organisation which supported the TDS and provided the Culture Shop venue. New Lodge Arts used the local geographical identity to instil a positive sense of belonging in an area associated with deprivation and Troubles era ghettoization. The multivalent responses of the TDS contributors however, often showed a lack of identification and general ambiguity toward the received cultural identity of the New Lodge area and its association with partisan politics, showing concern more for city-wide issues, such as homelessness and access to education. Even the term “community art” for Byrne, was associated with the controlling propaganda activities of grassroots political groups, a locally held view of community arts as sinister and paramilitarised. “I would associate [community arts] as murals at the end of your street. I don’t think that that term would have been used away back then when I was growing up. But it wouldn’t be too far away from it... It’s the impression that it conjures up to the lay people, is horrible dirty murals... that plaster this city.” Interview with Marty Byrne, 22 January 2016.

⁸⁴⁰ A consequence of the Belfast Agreement and post-conflict urban re-generation programmes was the measurement of demographics using restrictive religious, political and geographical categories. Community art practice in this context can risk the attribution of community belonging as a pre-condition for participants and can lead to situations where art works continue to entrench received identities. Considering this, the TDS was in alignment with Grant Kester’s description of Miwon Kwon as being, “highly sceptical of art projects that conceive of community members not as singularities-in-waiting but as members of an existing collective.” For instance, referring to a case study from Kwon’s study, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), Kester notes, “The a priori constitution of the collaborators as workers or tenants led them to produce “predictable” projects that simply reinforced their existing sense of identity and prevented them from achieving a properly critical awareness of the ethical compromises entailed by this collective status.” Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 159.

fictionalisation were presented as Factotum's primary methods, which were used within an array of approaches. Although illustration was only one of these, I argued that the technique can be read as indexical to the paper's disruption of what a critical arts newssheet should be. Illustration was also referenced in terms of considering the newssheet as a participatory public artwork formed from its own culture of production, visual content and manner of distribution. The Factotum logo was a prime example of this, as it was reproduced on multiple public surfaces where it communicated the presence of a collective critique of public space whilst denying a clear organisational identity or ideology. In a different but complimentary manner, drawing within the activities of Pilot Publishing was a method for initiating gatherings and conversations as much as a way of generating images, and publishing was translated from the production of print material to a framework for giving voice to participants. I viewed my initiation of the TDS from my attempts within civic public art commissions to emulate both the Pilot Publishing and *Vacuum* applications of drawing in public space. I then proposed that the programme's functionality can be located in the absence of community identity outside of the practice of drawing and that the re-interpretation by the participants can be considered as the most sustainable aspect.



Figure 51. Duncan Ross, *Untitled* (study of the Big Chick), 2018, ink on paper, 200mm x 150mm.

Chapter Five || **Process, conduct and evaluation**

In the following analysis, I continue to develop the use of an illustrative mode of drawing as both a practical and conceptual method. I cite two examples which combine ethnographic or educational frameworks with the ethos of social transformation that typifies engaged art practices. Neither illustrator Mitch Miller's dialectogram nor artist Tim Rollins's Art and Knowledge Workshop have a print publishing outcome, but print culture influences their methods and forms part of the overall 'material' of the works. Both cases interconnect with art-making approaches variously described as activist, community, hybrid and, more recently, as dialogical or socially-engaged and I refer to the art theorists Kate Crehan, Grant Kester, Suzanne Lacy and Lucy Lippard to engage with these aspects.

The Art and Knowledge Workshop was a long-form experimental art education programme directed by Rollins from the early 1980s until the artist's death in 2017. My focus is on the manner in which drawing was used within the workshops as a method of interpreting literary texts and developing art works. As a process managed and steered by a charismatic leader, the programme also serves to introduce the problematic subjectivity of the artist in the community. In contrast, Miller's approach draws extensively from ethnographic ethical procedures and the description of illustrator is welcomed. As with Rollins, print and the book form are not outcomes, for Miller however, the language of illustration is still central and the visual dialect of the comic book illustration is deployed to create drawings as practical consultation documents for civic clients. Here Miller regards the materiality and ubiquity of illustrative drawing as a particularly suitable medium for socially-engaged practice.

In the final section I consider the engaged illustrator's conduct and the Tuesday Drawing Studio in terms of an extended view of process and as presenting a method for evaluating open, long-form art programmes. I refer to the critical arts perspectives applied to Rollins's practice to further develop the dialogical and relational possibilities in using drawing as a conceptual framework; and I connect the TDS to the work of both Rollins and Miller through the parallel processes of illustration or illustration-centred activity. I then apply the anthropologist Tim Ingold's conceptualisation of the line along with aspects of the theorist Simon O'Sullivan's proposals on fictioning and minor literature to view the impact of the TDS beyond the confines of the studio and to consider abstract conceptions of the line as a movement through space and time.

5.1 || Jammin

5.1.1 || The Art and Knowledge Workshop

The beginnings of the Art and Knowledge Workshop were in an after-school club facilitated by Rollins as part of his junior-high teaching post in a Puerto Rican neighbourhood in the South Bronx.⁸⁴¹ Originally this was part of a broader civic programme aimed at increasing basic literacy among students described as emotionally or academically at risk. From the outset of the programme, Rollins connected discussion of the literature syllabus with current situations of politics and morality which in turn students were encouraged to relate to their own experiences. Rollins then developed the method of visual interpretation used in the workshops toward producing large-scale paintings that had extraordinary success in the international art market and led to significant media exposure over the next four decades for the artist and his student group, the self-named Kids of Survival or K.O.S.⁸⁴² The production process was enmeshed in the reception of the outcomes and even if the paintings were, in the early days of the programme at least, presented as the work itself, for audiences these were coextensive with their utopian scenes of production.⁸⁴³

It is the educational process and setting that is the focus of my analysis, rather than the finished paintings and subsequent art world interactions. In particular my concern is with the relational encounter mediated by the practice of drawing.⁸⁴⁴ This was the ‘jammin’ method, a form of textual

⁸⁴¹ BBC Omnibus, “The Art of Survival: The Story of Tim Rollins & K.O.S.” online video of television programme originally broadcast 3 November 1989, published online 29 September 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_KdAO6MqiM.

⁸⁴² In 1985 the paintings were exhibited at the Gladstone gallery then at the Whitney Biennial. The following year Charles Saatchi bought works from an exhibition curated by the art dealer Jay Gorney. Rollins and K.O.S. then participated in *Documenta 8* in 1987 and the Venice Biennale and IKON Birmingham in 1988. The following year they were represented by Maureen Paley and then in 1991 took part again in the Whitney Biennial. The art market success afforded the programme autonomy from the US grant-giving system, financing a separate studio space where Rollins pursued the Art and Knowledge Workshop full time after seven years of teaching. Salaries were also provided for K.O.S. members that stayed with the project into adulthood. By the 2010s, the workshop was pan-generational, with new students aged from ten years old to original members in their forties.

⁸⁴³ Suzanne Lacy acknowledged a difficulty with this strategy in that although the exhibited works attracted critical attention (Rollins and K.O.S. being a rare example of youth arts that gained international exposure), the emancipatory processes, the functional quality of what she termed hybrid arts, was “rarely taken seriously.” (Lacy, *Leaving Art*, 224). But the manner of production of these works was always at the centre of the reception of the paintings, and since the rise in critical interest in participatory artworks from the 1990s the collaborative process that Rollins and his select group of participating students has been the central focus for commentators. Further, the “reception” itself, composed of project documentation, public relations exercises and critical commentary, can also be described as a location of the work of new genre public art, a “media practice” that the curator Miwon Kwon identifies as the aesthetic mode of Land Art, another artistic form arising from the de-materialisation of the art object in the 1960s. Miwon Kwon, “Ends of The Earth (and back),” video lecture, Reykjavík Art Museum, 21 March, 2013, 51:01, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTrqr0bzPjQ>.

⁸⁴⁴ In producing high art, Rollins sought an aesthetic autonomy and status far from mass production. As with Amy Plant,

interpretation stemming from the aim of the after-schools club to increase literacy. With the initial meagre resources of pens and photocopy paper Rollins would introduce works of literature to the students who, whilst reading and discussing the texts, would respond through drawing and note-taking.⁸⁴⁵ The participants were encouraged to work quickly through the paper, with sketching and doodling given priority over writing.⁸⁴⁶ During jammin, students didn't illustrate what was being read, but related the material back to their own experiences using visual influences relevant to them. For Rollins, their cartoon and graffiti movement source material, "were more real than anything he could bring in," and he promoted these subcultural visual dialects with an aim to interweave them with the canonical literary sources (Figure 52).

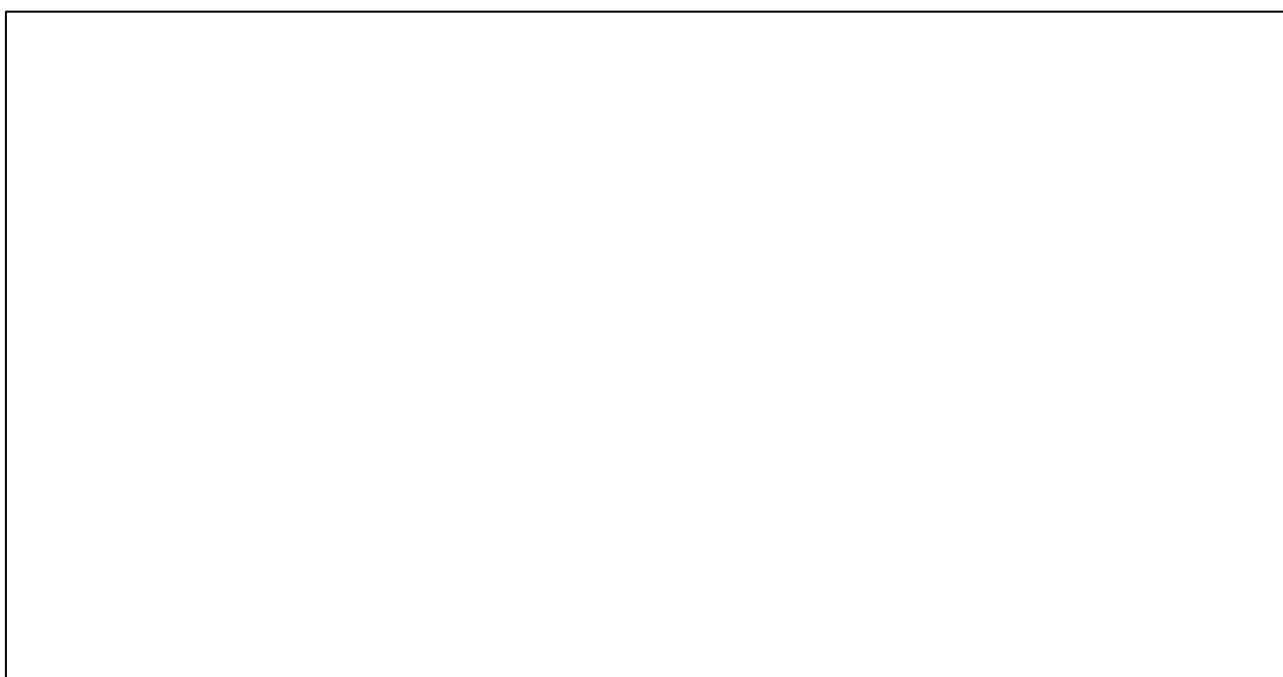


Figure 52. BBC Omnibus, *The Art of Survival Tim Rollins and K.O.S.* (stills depicting the jammin method at the Art and Knowledge Workshop), 1989, broadcast media.

For the media scholar Ioana Literat, a complexity of metaphor is possible with the drawn image that is not available through textual representation, making drawing a valuable mode of expression for

the association with illustration is my conceit. Although Plant was concerned with two of what I determine as illustrations components: drawing and publishing, she does not ally her practice with any history or framework of illustration, but rather to histories of activist and socially-engaged art practice. Likewise, Rollins's concern with illustration, as raw material and as a process, is presented as incidental to both his intended outcomes, the grand scale paintings in a high art tradition, and the pedagogical encounters within the workshop.

⁸⁴⁵ "[O]ne of his students would read aloud from assigned texts while everyone else drew or painted, relating the stories being read to their own life experiences." Dennis Hoey, "Maine-born and bred, collaborative artist Tim Rollins dies at 62," *Portland Press Herald*, 28 December 2017, <https://www.pressherald.com/2017/12/28/maine-born-and-bred-collaborative-artist-tim-rollins-dies-at-62/>.

⁸⁴⁶ Marco Daniel and Jena Fisher, *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.* (London: Riverside studios, 1988).

young people whose language abilities are limited.⁸⁴⁷ In comparison to photography and video, drawing for Literat is particularly generative as it can incorporate representation and abstraction and create a time for reflection, an opportunity to, “craft a more complete depiction.” In addition drawing offers more nuance than speech, Literat citing Carl Jung’s use of drawing within psychoanalysis to, “reveal more subtle messages and more obscure realities,” than possible with verbal descriptions. For the sociologist David Gauntlett, drawing is a bodily engagement with the environment that engenders, “a different type of cognitive process, which transcends the domain of purely cerebral thought.”⁸⁴⁸ This discourages a sense of hierarchy, promoting an inclusivity and empowerment that makes the form particularly appropriate for collective work. In all these ways drawing can be seen as an apt method for the Art and Knowledge Workshop’s communal and transformative principles.

Still within the early development of the programme, Rollins began to guide the material generated from sketching and doodling toward the production of new artworks.⁸⁴⁹ A key moment in the formal development of these was when the then twelve-year-old student Carlos Rivera drew directly onto the page of Rollins’s copy of George Orwell’s *1984*. What Rollins first chastised as a mistake was developed into a motif and then into a signature technique. In this process whole books would be disassembled and laid out in their entirety, students would then draw and paint onto the fragments which were then re-accumulated onto large canvases and further worked upon (figure 53).⁸⁵⁰ The procedure mobilised illustration both by appropriating the printed matter of the set texts and by re-applying the languages of drawing that students encountered daily in comics, cartoons and graffiti. Jammin in this way was an act of illustrative drawing as much as a response to and augmentation of the original texts.

⁸⁴⁷ For Literat, drawing’s co-constructed, playful nature, and positive lack of, “dependence on linguistic proficiency,” make it particularly useful as a non-language-based research method when working with young people. Literat cites research projects that employ participatory drawing as a form of non-textual ways of knowing and that activate a performative dimension of image-making. Literat, “A Pencil for Your Thoughts,” 84-98.

⁸⁴⁸ Literat, 88.

⁸⁴⁹ Rollins described jammin as a musical process along with an ambition, “to make that music into art.” But Rollins was frustrated with the early works depicting degradation of street life which re-performed negative stereotypes and, “replicated the dominant culture’s image of the South Bronx.” Daniel and Fisher, *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.*

⁸⁵⁰ The canvases were sourced through Rollins’s contacts in the New York arts scene. His experience in the mid to late 1970s included early collaborative work in the art collective Group Material and he had trained at the School of Visual Arts where he was taught by, and assisted, the pioneering conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth. There he had been influenced by Lucy R. Lippard’s thinking on de-materialisation: “Maybe their ideas didn’t have longevity, but K.O.S. and I as a group would not exist without Lucy Lippard and Joseph Kosuth. [...] What we did was, we took the ethereal motifs of minimalism and the esoteric theories of conceptualism and brought them into material manifestations in concrete situations. We have influenced the way in which collective art is made. We offered a model that was an alternative to the mural-project approach of community-based art practice.” Tim Rollins, “Only What You Do For Christ Will Last: A Conversation with Tim Rollins,” interview by James Romaine, *Image*, no. 60 (Winter 2008-2009), <https://imagejournal.org/article/christ-will-last-interview-tim-rollins/>.

From this viewpoint drawing can be seen as an intermediary. That is, within the process of re-inscribing the original print material, in elevating marginalia to the language of high art through Rollins's intervention, and as an intermediary in a process of social transformation.⁸⁵¹ In the latter sense, drawing is an activity between hierarchised social spaces: the street and the art gallery,⁸⁵² an action within what the curator Lucy R. Lippard viewed as a revivification of high art through transfusion from low culture that she sited within the rubric 'activist art'.⁸⁵³ Lippard was writing at the inception of the Art and Knowledge Workshop in 1983, a period of boundary transgression in the arts where, "a renewed sense of the power of culture to effect how people see the world around them,"⁸⁵⁴ nourished a developing conceptualisation of the artwork as an initiating thing that can bring about social change.⁸⁵⁵ In order to preserve its integrity, activist art seeks to avoid, "being assimilated and manipulated by the dominant culture," to avoid co-option by the market by straddling the fence between mainstream and outreach, and to be "subversive on one hand, empowerment on the other."⁸⁵⁶ Further, works that fulfilled these criteria most impressively for Lippard were long term projects that took place through deep involvement with social life.

⁸⁵¹ The scale of the paintings suggesting a conversation with both abstract expressionism and street art such as wildstyle, the spray-paint graffiti genre which itself appropriated imagery from the comics underground and operated on a semiotic register between display and concealment, writing and drawing. The Workshop's breakthrough work in this vein was the *AMERIKA* series (1984-1989) where the "long golden horns" played by fictional members of Franz Kafka's utopian artistic commune in the novel *Amerika*, were re-imagined as the jazz horns of Dizzie Gillespie and Ornette Coleman (Jazz, a black modernism and black rhizomatic system, as the historian Paul Gilroy articulates, is itself a communitarian art form with complex tensions between group synchronicity and individual creative assertion (*The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993). Rollins' view was that K.O.S. students were encouraged to represent their own individual "freedom" by each illustrating a golden horn, the more "bugged-out" the better. To Rollins, the resultant cacophony of *AMERIKA* was a symbol of democracy and a realisation of the groups drive, "to make a work of political art that is gorgeous," a contemporary William Morris wallpaper whose beauty was also politically provocative. Tim Rollins, "Tim Rollins and K.O.S. - A History," video lecture, Rollins College, 1 November 2013, 1:02:36, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeLGrBh0YQ>.

⁸⁵² An activation of de Certeau's child scribbling in the margins where, "[t]he child still scrawls and daubs on his schoolbooks; even if he is punished for this crime, he has made a space for himself and signs his existence as an author on it." De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, 31.

⁸⁵³ Lippard, "Activist Art," 11-17.

⁸⁵⁴ Lippard, 12.

⁸⁵⁵ Developing from the US community arts movement, Lippard's definition of activism is similar to Bishop's description, from a UK perspective, of community arts. Bishop describes the early UK community arts movement as historically rooted in the experimentation and radicalism of the 1960s. The movement concerns, "people and time," establishes new social roles for the artist and has its fortunes intertwined with public funding. The attention of early community arts was towards the marginalised with the aim to empower through participatory art practice, the founding principles being co-authorship, participation and the provision of, "a blueprint for a participatory democracy." The movement was against the international art world and its criteria of success (skill, virtuosity etc.) and its concealed class interests, and thus formed an opposition to elitist cultural hierarchies. For Bishop these definitions are still pertinent today, but the historian raises the concern that there is still no suggestion of how to evaluate or measure the impact of community arts. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 177.

⁸⁵⁶ Although as Lippard adds, activist art, "is often quite effective when seen within the very citadels of power it criticizes." There is a danger that the novelty aspect leads to the market capitalising on radical movement however, but Lippard suggests a reasonable trade-off with capitalism if activist art is bought and displayed, the market "nonetheless supporting further opposition." Lippard, "Activist Art," 15; 17.

On an ideological level, Lippard placed consciousness-raising and organisation for social change at the core of these immersive, long term activist art projects. Later theorists viewed the workshop first as the location of these emancipatory aspects,⁸⁵⁷ and then as part of the “fragmented array” that comprises work in social context.⁸⁵⁸ The artist Kate Crehan, in reference to her own long-term community project *Free Form*, cites the workshopping method as partly fulfilling the revolutionary premise Walter Benjamin proposed in the essay, “The Author as Producer.” This critiqued an assertion by Modernist novelist Alfred Döblin that progressive intellectuals should not align themselves with proletarians but position themselves as benefactors or ‘ideological patrons’.⁸⁵⁹ In contrast Benjamin argued that intellectuals should, like revolutionary workers, be actively involved in working class struggle, intervening, in the words of the art critic Hal Foster, “in the means of artistic production - to change the ‘technique’ of traditional media, to transform the ‘apparatus’ of bourgeois culture.”⁸⁶⁰ This presented a proposal that the artwork must be situated in the relations of production of which it was concerned with improving, which for Crehan crystallised in the practical space of the workshop where the challenge to the production of art under capitalism and the model for progressive location for the visual artist proposed in “The Author” could be realised.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁷ In Suzanne Lacy’s schema, the workshop is one of different framings reflecting different sites that the work takes place in. Work in school might prioritise student voice, in a gallery, aesthetics, in public media, the “persuasive perspective and politicians’ presence.” The role of the artist is positioned differently depending on use of venue. Lacy, *Leaving Art*, 228.

⁸⁵⁸ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2.

⁸⁵⁹ Walter Benjamin, “*Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, part 2 1931-1934*,” trans. Rodney Livingstone and others, Edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press: 2005): 768-782.

⁸⁶⁰ Foster, “The Artist as Ethnographer,” 171-204.

⁸⁶¹ Through years of dialogue the artists of Crehan’s *Free Form* project worked on finding a language acceptable to both the communities and to their own art-trained background. Considering this situation Crehan questioned what class or political identity determined the character of the work produced if the artists were mindful of not projecting their own. In “The Author as Producer” Benjamin provided a response to this question by suggesting that artworks should focus on their *situation*, rather than *attitude* toward the “relations of production” of their time.

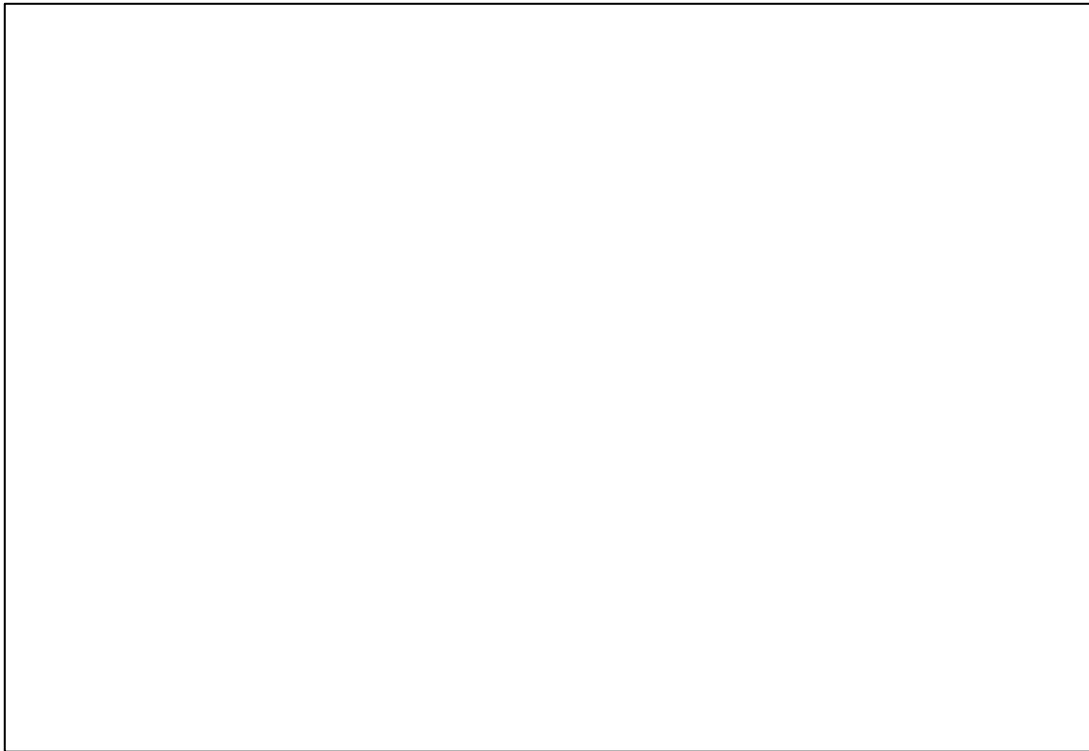


Figure 53. Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, *Tim Rollins and K.O.S. Workshop for Amerika IX*, 1987.

In Crehan's application, the workshop provided a space for potential collaboration between 'expert' and those denied participation by systemic limitations, a levelling of hierarchy where 'non-experts' can learn expertise and the artist is displaced as the lone creator.⁸⁶² The application of this thinking by recent practitioners reflects the critical view that engaged-work is distillable to the social relations at its centre, rather than arising from any specific media in use. However, in Rollins's particular model of the workshop as the site of social transformation the relational is interwoven with the specificity of illustrative drawing. Rollins was part-inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement's return to communitarianism and unalienated labour, a model of the communal workshop as, "a dress rehearsal for a wonderful society."⁸⁶³ The polyglot page of the book that was

⁸⁶² Crehan cites the faction of community artists who are interested only in modes of interaction, letting participants handle all elements of the artwork, resulting in the handprint style of works which typified a negative view of community arts. For Crehan, *Free Form* was different as its 'expert' artists gave a professional finish to artworks, even if they were sentimental or kitsch. The works needed to look competent by some sort of consensus or else they could be mistaken for vandalism. Crehan, *Community Art*, 137.

⁸⁶³ Tim Rollins, Angel Abreu, and Rick Savinon, "On the Origin: An Interview with Tim Rollins and K.O.S." interview by Gracie Mansion, online video, artnet news, 21 November 2013, 22:24, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/on-the-origin-an-interview-with-tim-rollins-and-kos-52518>. "[I]t's really about building some new kind of cultural democracy [...] I think what we've done is that we have challenged elite notions of fine art that put boundaries on who can appreciate art, who can make art, and who can feel the impact of that art. I think that is our biggest collective achievement." Alex Greenberger, "Tim Rollins, Artist and Activist Whose Work Thrived on Collaboration, Dies at 62," *Artnews*, 27 December 2017, <http://www.artnews.com/2017/12/27/tim-rollins-artist-activist-thrived-collaborated-dies/>.

an instrument in the jammin process reflected the Arts and Crafts Movement's, "idea of a furniture for a new community," which for Rancière had, "also inspired a new idea of pictorial surface as a surface of shared writing," as discussed in the introduction and first chapter (p.12; 43).⁸⁶⁴

5.1.2 || **Transgressive communication**

Considering the discussion above, the jammin process can be viewed as a mode of communication central to forms of practice addressable as community art.⁸⁶⁵ In *Conversation Pieces* (2004) Grant Kester identifies community arts, along with "temporary public art," developing in the UK and US from what is termed, the, "post-Greenbergian diaspora of art practices during the 1960s and 1970s," that is, the shift to conceptual art, performance and situational happenings framed within terms such as Lippard's de-materialisation and Beuys's social sculpture.⁸⁶⁶ From this point, Kester delineates the engaged-arts landscape of the 2000s whose broad nomenclature includes the artist Suzanne Lacy's "new genre public art" within which practitioners define their practice around facilitating dialogue among diverse communities, practising beyond the institutional confines of the museum and becoming, "context providers" rather than "content providers."

For Kester, these community-centred practices are underwritten by the elemental process of communication, and to explore this he develops his own definition under the rubric of dialogical aesthetics, "a new aesthetic and theoretic paradigm of the work of art as a process [...] dialogue itself [being] fundamentally aesthetic." Dialogical practices challenge what Kester calls an orthopaedic aesthetic, where the viewer is inherently defective and the artist, "uniquely suited to both recognise this defect and to remedy it."⁸⁶⁷ Further, he locates an emancipatory possibility not in the ever-changing object of art but in the process of communication the artwork catalyses. The requirement to understand the work of art as a process of communicative exchange rather than a physical object requires a more nuanced account of communicative experience, one that distinguishes it from the purely instrumental, yet must question any claim to represent a community.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁴ Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 15.

⁸⁶⁵ For instance, in response to a comparison to the work of painter Kerry James Marshall, Rollins stated, "[Marshall's] work is about community. Our work is a manifestation of community made visual." Tim Rollins, "Only What You Do."

⁸⁶⁶ In the US in the 1980s and 90s the shift in emphasis from sculpture to the dialogical in the definition of public art was also partly influenced by a shift of focus in US funding from art to social issues. Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 128-129.

⁸⁶⁷ Kester, 88.

⁸⁶⁸ "On what basis is community membership ascribed when discursive violence occurs whenever one individual speaks

Kester's description of dialogical practice is partly predicated on a comparison between Jurgen Habermas's theories of communicative interaction and feminist theories of 'connected knowing', as each centre on the primary act of intersubjective dialogue. Habermas's discursive communication, where the argument is foregrounded rather than the status of the speaker, takes place in a public sphere, an egalitarian space where anyone can participate as long as they adhere to, "certain performative rules that insulate this discursive space from the coercion and inequality that constrain human communication in normal daily life." A solidarity is created among participants in this ideal speech situation which, if not leading to consensus, can at least allow self-critical awareness and therefore some transformation in participant's lives. Kester relates this proposal to samples of dialogical practice where the artist listens and is willing to accept, "a position of dependence and intersubjective vulnerability," relative to the viewer or collaborator, allowing participants, "to view dialogue not as a tool but as a process of self-transformation."⁸⁶⁹

However, the de-hierarchisation and neutrality of voice necessary for Habermas's intersubjective dialogue to take place, "denies discursive legitimacy to forms of communication (emotional, nonverbal, or gestural etc.) that cannot be articulated in terms of a system of argument," prompting Kester to ask, "how do we differentiate an assent won by rhetorical attrition from true understanding?" To resolve this, Kester brings feminist models of epistemology to bear on dialogical practice, which mitigate Habermas's tendency to overvalue pure argumentation. In *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (1986),⁸⁷⁰ "connected knowing," an identification with participant perspectives over counter-arguing, is described by the authors as a procedural form of knowledge, two aspects of which are highlighted by Kester. Firstly, connectivity between subjects is achieved by recognising the social contexts from which others speak, judge and act. The speaker's history can then be given recognition and the forms of social domination that influence the context can be acknowledged, that is, those aspects that Habermas had bracketed off to allow for his ideal speech situation.

for another, no matter how firmly [...] anchored in a given collective." Kester, 130.

⁸⁶⁹ Kester's example is the work of Stephen Willats, a British artist known for work with residents of social housing complexes in England during the 1970s and 80s. Kester, 110-111.

⁸⁷⁰ Mary Field Belenky, Blyth McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, eds., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986). Cited in Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 113.

The second aspect: ‘empathetic identification’, is an identifying with others as opposed to advancing previously formed opinions/judgements. This can lead to empathetic insight, a “rapport between artists and their collaborators, especially in those situations in which the artist is working across boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or class.” However, empathetic identifications can also be difficult to negotiate and involve risks. These include identifying the artist operating as an outsider, “occupying a position of perceived cultural authority.”⁸⁷¹ Or identifying the artist as a member of the community, raising the issue of who within the community allows the artist to speak for them. In both instances Kester highlights a concern that if from outside the community, “the artist usually has cultural and financial resources to make the socio-cultural transgression;”⁸⁷² but if perceived as from the community there is always the potential for a fetishisation of authenticity by the institution in relation to the validity of the ‘local artist’.⁸⁷³

Considering the long term durational aspect of the Art and Knowledge Workshop, Rollin's practice does not initially appear to fall prey to the first of these positions where Kester warns of, “the artist appearing as a Nomadic Odyssean within 'community arts'.”⁸⁷⁴ Living in The Bronx however, was a choice for Rollins and hence the question posed to him by a resident: “Why are you here?” illustrates a local awareness toward the empathetical gaze of a more privileged outsider as primarily influencing the aesthetic strategy of the K.O.S.⁸⁷⁵ Conversely, if as the founder and director, Rollin’s embedded-ness in the community of the K.O.S. lent him an insider’s viewpoint, then his leadership could also risk overly orientating the value of the work toward the artist’s own charismatic authenticity. Considered in relation to Rancière’s treatment of *Bathers at Asnières* (introduction, p.16), it can then be asked if the successful K.O.S. members really transcended the barriers imposed by class and ethnic categorisation as the limiting conditions of the previous social framework could be seen as continuing to be replicated in their new condition of dis-identified aesthete.

⁸⁷¹ For Kester, there are multiple registers in many community projects: solidarity creation; enhancement within community, “Dialogical projects can enhance solidarity among individuals who already share a set of material and cultural circumstances;” and counterhegemonic, that challenge community identifiers, “dialogical works can challenge dominant representations of a given community and create a more complex understanding of, and empathy for, that community among a broader public.” These are empathetic insights “produced between the collaborators and other communities of viewers.” Kester, 114.

⁸⁷² His ability to transgress class boundaries was acknowledged by Rollins, describing himself as “a white Yankee missionary.” Rollins, “Tim Rollins and K.O.S.”

⁸⁷³ Murphy, “Should I Stay?” 16-19.

⁸⁷⁴ Kester continues outlining the danger of the artist: “functioning as a kind of tourist of the disempowered, travelling from one site of poverty and oppression to the next and allowing his or her various collaborators to temporarily uninhabit the privileged position of the expressive creator.” Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 114.

⁸⁷⁵ Kester, 122-128. Rollins acknowledged his position in this respect, “It’s tough but necessary to critique your own practice in a racist/classist/sexist culture when you are working with people from less privileged backgrounds.” Daniel and Fisher, *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.*

Rollins was articulate in communicating the Art and Knowledge Workshop in the emancipatory terms elucidated at the time by Lippard, particularly promoting the agency of the K.O.S. participants within the programme.⁸⁷⁶ And for the most part, the problems of the artist speaking for others in community art works, as outlined using Kester's theories on communication, were successfully negotiated. However, although the Art and Knowledge Workshop addressed power on multiple fronts: by empowering participants; infiltrating institutions of power; and seeking critical audiences for the work of marginalised artists, Rollins did generate some scrutiny over what were reported as manipulative teaching methods and an overly controlling approach to the group's behaviour and image.⁸⁷⁷ Even the curator Maureen Paley's counter to such critique, "When people try to do things that are incredibly passionate, there are no rules," strengthens the image of a magnetic and forceful personality at the centre of the programme that further undermines the potential for the levelling of hierarchy, that for Crehan, forms the basis of the effectivity of the community arts workshop.

Rollins's workshopping technique generated a tension between the experiences of participants and those of secondary audiences. To proponents such as the writers Marco Daniel and Jena Fisher, the Art and Knowledge Workshop encouraged its participants, "not to become artists necessarily, but to value their endeavours both as individuals and as social beings,"⁸⁷⁸ suggesting an emancipatory experience for all, regardless of individual achievement. Here it can be argued that the Workshop did achieve class transgression for those successful participants who stuck with the programme as Rollins's core group of collaborators. The cost was to be trapped in a role of participant however, as by seeking a high art status for the resultant artworks (thereby diverging from much previous community practice), the programme also generated exposure and opportunity only for a core group of six favoured participants; re-creating, albeit with the best of intentions, a model of meritocratic hierarchy dependant on external validation, a model from which much community art sought to extricate itself. The possibility of transitioning to the status of fully autonomous artist, a role held unquestionably by Rollins, was then foreclosed by the parameters of activist art itself as K.O.S. members were condemned to be viewed as supporting subjects within the totality of the work.⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁶ For instance, K.O.S. created their, "own situation" for Rollins, one that was, "independent, libertarian." Cheryl Kaplan, "By the People and for the People: Tim Rollins and his Youth Project K.O.S." *db artmag*, no.47 (2008), <http://db-artmag.de/archiv/2008/e/2/1/589.html>.

⁸⁷⁷ Most notably in Mark Lasswell's feature for the *New York Magazine*. Mark Lasswell, "True Colors: Tim Rollins's odd life with The Kids of Survival," *New York Magazine*, 30-38, 29 July 1991. <https://books.google.co.uk/books>.

⁸⁷⁸ Daniel and Fisher, *Tim Rollins and K.O.S.*

⁸⁷⁹ The control Rollins exerted over the workshop and its image risked fulfilling Hal Foster's critical viewpoint of the developing social turn in the 1990s, one where artists risked, "facilitated self-representation" (Foster, "The Artist as

5.1.3 || Education and illustration

In later reflections Rollins ascribed a more autobiographical motivation to his drive toward intensive, long-term and emotionally-involved group-work. The need to form a “second family” with the students was attributed to his unstable upbringing, an instability generated partly by his father’s alcohol abuse.⁸⁸⁰ This upbringing was also steeped in the religious practices of the surrounding Pentecostal Baptist community,⁸⁸¹ a spiritualism Rollins rediscovered in the 1990s after a period of turbulence in the project.⁸⁸² In this new context I can perceive jammin as an exegesis, a form of textual interpretation akin to the close attention to the literal word in the Pentecostal tradition. And, although the jammin process had taken on the appearance of a pastoral address from the outset, following Rollins’s return to religion, moments such as Carlos Rivera’s scribbling on *1984* could be further mythologised within the evangelical tradition of the revelatory.

In later interviews Rollins even articulated the jammin process as a form of speaking in tongues prevalent within the Pentecostal method of prayer, a “visual glossolalia.”⁸⁸³ This illuminates the particular entanglement of an illustrational mode within Rollin’s relational approach, a dialogical or polyphonic method of communication that is tied to the use and perception of drawing in relation to text and print reproduction.⁸⁸⁴ This religious back-attribution adds another view on the

Ethnographer,” 196-197). As a case study, Foster identified an “ethnographic” stance in participatory artists of the period in reference to the site-specific *Project Unité* (1993), where over forty artists were commissioned to respond to a Le Corbusier designed housing project in Firminy, France and its largely immigrant resident community. For Foster, by positioning themselves as observers rather than participants, the *Project Unité* artists gained sustenance from the other while limiting their own risk. They were turning to ethnography, as artist Kate Crehan interprets Foster, “in order to find a more comfortable place for themselves” (Crehan, *Community Art*, 131). However, Bishop, whilst acknowledging that *Project Unité* was part of a “transitional” phase of participatory art, found a defence in the artists’ attempts to “produce a participatory apparatus.” Here the tensions in the project produced useful instances of “art overlapping and engaging with the social sphere,” where (albeit with anxieties): “art was put into direct confrontation with an ‘authentic’ everyday audience.” Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 199.

⁸⁸⁰ Lasswell, “True Colors,” 33.

⁸⁸¹ “Rollins was also walking the line between art and religion. Raised by his Revivalist great grandmother during the summers, Rollins recalls: “In Maine, the only time you had art was Friday afternoons at Church’.” Kaplan, “By the People.”

⁸⁸² After the shooting of K.O.S. member Christopher Hernandez in 1993, Rollins, “went back to the church,” eventually becoming a deacon at Baptist Memorial Church in Harlem. Larry litany Litt, “In Memoriam: Remembering Tim Rollins,” *The Brooklyn Rail* (17 December 2017 – 18 January 2018), <https://brooklynrail.org/2017/12/in-memoriam/Larry-Littany-Litt>. Contemporary accounts depict Rollins prior to that the time as more materially driven. Lasswell, “True Colors.”

⁸⁸³ “[The painting] *Amerika I* came from a Holy Ghost moment. People underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit. We don’t make this work. It is not *like* speaking in tongues. It *is* the Holy Spirit present. The golden trumpets in *Amerika I (after Franz Kafka)* are visual glossolalia. Painting is capable of rapture. Our paintings are ecstatic utterances made material and visible.” [Interviewer:] “The work is a materialization of the spirit in action and the process of collaboration between yourself and K.O.S.” [Rollins:] “In church we call that “call and response.” You say something, and they say something back, and you say something back that is greater than what you said before. It is glossolalia.” Rollins, “A Conversation with Tim Rollins.”

⁸⁸⁴ For O’Sullivan, the metaphor of speaking in tongues is useful in two aspects, the creation of images that speak back

communication at the centre of projects where the artist works with a community, that, although making Rollins's ethical position perhaps even more precarious in a contemporary light, nevertheless produces a novel connectivity between illustrative drawing and community arts.⁸⁸⁵ This contributes to the identification of a particular aesthetic of participatory illustration that distinguishes it from overarching theory which has, at least since Lippard, identified social-engagement as fundamentally dialogical and process-orientated, not influenced by any one look, style or media.⁸⁸⁶

Lippard describes activist art as a hybrid, "the product of different cultures communicating with each other," and as a striving to combine social action, social theory and fine art tradition.⁸⁸⁷ Teaching and education is a recurring constituent incorporated into such hybrid practices and, although with pastoral overtones, Rollins's work can be viewed as a precursor of contemporary art's engagement with experimental learning environments.⁸⁸⁸ The field is itself strongly influenced by Paulo Freire's 1968 text *The Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, wherein schools were critiqued as smoothly providing knowledge and skills for a functioning capitalist society.⁸⁸⁹ Freire's countermeasure was to consider education as consciousness-raising (*conscientização*), a learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions toward taking action against the oppressive elements of reality.⁸⁹⁰ The Art and Knowledge Workshop can be viewed as seeking a transformation in the lives of K.O.S students by raising consciousness of the mechanisms of societal control and in

to the producer and a layering, or accretion of images, that gives an artwork an internal self-referentiality, or opacity. Both aspects are acts of "fictioning." O'Sullivan, "Myth-Science," 83.

⁸⁸⁵ Community, for Kester, is a term, "subject to profound levels of abuse" (Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 129.) For Kate Crehan the word has a seductive combination of authenticity and vagueness, which appeals to artists and politicians alike. A powerful term for the latter, as it fuses "powerful and positive emotional charge with a useful vagueness as to precisely what social relations constitute 'community'." Crehan, *Community Art*, 193.

⁸⁸⁶ The work of Suzanne Lacy is given as an example, her feminist dinner parties, not just the event, but the year-long processes of organising, and the documentation, and the "continuing community networks" that follow. Lippard, "Activist Art," 15.

⁸⁸⁷ Lippard, 15. Lacy, considering new genre public art of the 1990s, also defines a "hybrid practice." Youth arts, where Lacy situates Rollins/K.O.S., is part of a movement of artist teachers and parents who set up projects to engage gangs and education programmes for youth development. Suzanne Lacy with Ann Wettrich, "What it Takes," in *Leaving Art: 222-235*.

⁸⁸⁸ Rollins's own art education took place over the period when Beuys, who, along with Klaus Staeck, Georg Meistermann and Willi Bongard, established the Free International University in 1973. This was based on foundations laid out in the manifesto Beuys co-authored with Heinrich Böll. Heiner Stachelhaus, Joseph Beuys, trans. David Britt (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1991): 115-117. The Art and Knowledge Workshop's 2012 participation in the Hayward Gallery's own alternative art college, the *Wide Open School*, illustrates the connections being made to earlier projects through the re-surgency in interest in alternative education in the 2010s (chapter three, p.176).

⁸⁸⁹ Kester views this conservative educational propensity as originating in the nineteenth century pedagogical drive to instil morals in the poor. Freire's description of a "banking" style of education is borrowed by Kester in this instance, to describe a conventional style of art, "in which the artist deposits an expressive content into a physical object, to be withdrawn later by the viewer." The banking style is replaced in dialogical practices with the "process of dialogue and collaboration." Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 10.

⁸⁹⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 17.

terms of making that transformation happen within the structure of the project, where the latter occurred as favoured workshop members became high-profile artists.

Yet, along with appearing to fulfil certain aspects of emancipatory teaching, the educational style within the Art and Knowledge Workshop can appear quite unlike the open pedagogies espoused by Freire. Instead, Rollin's clear position as leader and teacher modelled the traditional imparter of knowledge that was the initial subject of critique, the 'banking' model of education Freire had called into question as reinforcing oppression.⁸⁹¹ Here a comparison can also be made with Rancière's 1987 book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* where the author analyses and develops a radical early nineteenth century teaching method proposed by the language teacher Joseph Jacotot. In a post teaching French to Flemish speaking students, Jacotot acknowledged his own ignorance of his students' language and left them to work out a bi-lingual text independently of instruction. When their précis equalled those of French speaking students, Jacotot formulated the premise that the acceptance of his ignorance by both himself and the students had facilitated their learning.

Such theorising does not clarify any one correct path for emancipatory education however. For instance, for Jack Halberstam, Rancière's revisiting of Jacotot, "advocates in an anti-disciplinary way for emancipatory forms of knowledge that do not depend upon an overtrained pied piper leading obedient children out of the darkness and into the light."⁸⁹² This levelling out of hierarchy enacted in the classroom was one which dialogical, activist or community arts saw as a model for a more egalitarian society. In contrast, the artist Martin Krenn argues that the radical ignorance of Jacotot is now commonplace, used by the institution to demand more independence from the student and to legitimise cutback in actual teaching.⁸⁹³ For Bishop, tensions such as these usefully problematise pedagogic art projects, forcing an examination of the underlying motivations and efficacy of both art and education.⁸⁹⁴ These paradoxes were lived out in the Art and Knowledge Workshop which retained a conventional, even reactionary, student-teacher position (as raised in the

⁸⁹¹ The banking method, "by which teachers deposit information into pupils to produce manageable subjects under a paternalistic social apparatus – a technique that reinforces oppression rather than granting the students consciousness of their position as historical subjects capable of producing change." Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 266.

⁸⁹² Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 14.

⁸⁹³ This particularly impacts on the more vulnerable. "Of great importance in neo-liberalism, self-education is enforced particularly on those in precarious working conditions – they are called on to continually educate or train themselves so as to remain qualified for a flexible labour market." Krenn, "The Political Space," 89-90.

⁸⁹⁴ "Pedagogic art projects therefore foreground and crystallise one of the most central problems of all artistic practice in the social field: they require us to examine our assumptions about both fields of operation, and to ponder the productive overlaps and incompatibilities that might arise from their experimental conjunction, with the consequence of perpetually reinventing both." Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 274.

previous section) while it included techniques that strove toward Freire and Rancière's flattening of hierarchy between subjects on a society-wide scale.

These techniques are again tied to a particularly illustrational mode that sits within what Literat describes as a broader suitability of drawing for facilitating overlooked, rejected or silenced perspectives and narratives.⁸⁹⁵ Rollins used the focus on literature to encourage the appropriation of print, including book and comic illustrations as available physical materials for K.O.S. to copy, doodle on, cut up and collage. Thus the impact of illustration in the student's environment, through graffiti, animation and product packaging, was re-formed as a visual language which Rollins combined with the literary sources. This appropriation and embellishment of published matter can be viewed as an emancipatory critical method rooted in convergences between print, education and political consciousness.

For Marshal McLuhan the advent of print dictated an educational method epitomised by the work of sixteenth century humanist Petrus Ramus who saw the school as an adjunct to the newly emergent press and the book as a productively homogenising instrument that would, "translate every kind of problem and experience into the new visual kind of lineal order."⁸⁹⁶ For Ramus scholar Father Ong, it was the American educational reformer John Dewey who first effectively critiqued this print-based pedagogy as a uniformly packaged learning that only allotted the student a, "passive role of consumer."⁸⁹⁷ The use of print and other forms of mechanical reproduction to reduce learning to a process of consumption prompted different critical approaches from twentieth century Marxist and

⁸⁹⁵ The educational use of drawing correlates with the advent of participatory communication theory in the 1970s, a field fuelled by the poststructuralist critique of, in Gilles Deleuze's words, "the indignity of speaking for others," (As quoted in Michel Foucault, *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews*, trans. D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 209.) Critique led to the means of visual production (whether the pencil, camera, or video camera) gradually passing into the hands of research subjects. Literat, "A Pencil for Your Thoughts," 85.

⁸⁹⁶ "Ramus was entirely right in his insistence on the supremacy of the new printed book in the classroom. For only there could the homogenizing effects of the new medium be given heavy stress in young lives. Students processed by print technology in this way would be able to translate every kind of problem and experience into the new visual kind of lineal order." McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 146. McLuhan goes on to quote Walter Ong, who proclaimed that the Ramist visual method of itemising and classifying sounded, "highly reminiscent of printing processes themselves, so that it enables one to impose organization on a subject by imagining it as made up of parts fixed in space much in the way in which words are locked into a printer's form." Walter Ong, "Ramist Method and the Commercial Mind," *Renaissance Quarterly* 8 (1961): 155-172, 167-8. Cited in McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 175.

⁸⁹⁷ "Dewey, on the other hand, is the perfect foil to Ramus in his striving to dislodge the school from the fantastic Ramist idea of it as immediate adjunct to the press and as the supreme processor or hopper through which the young and all their experience must pass in order to be available for 'use'... In our time John Dewey worked to restore education to its primitive, pre-print phase. He wanted to get the student out of the passive role of consumer of uniformly packaged learning." McLuhan's analysis of the movement from Ramus to Dewey was to set the context for the coming of a new age of post-print, networked communication, "Dewey in reacting against passive print culture was surf-boarding along on the new electronic wave" (McLuhan, 144; 146).

Modernist theorists who, as Kester reminds us, believed that, “one of the chief effects of mass media is to promulgate ruling-class ideas under the guise of entertainment.”⁸⁹⁸ As a counter-strategy the critic Clement Greenberg urged for a radical art that was hostile to the accessibility and kitsch of popular culture, believing artists should consciously make art difficult in order to reveal the materiality of language and the failure of communication.⁸⁹⁹

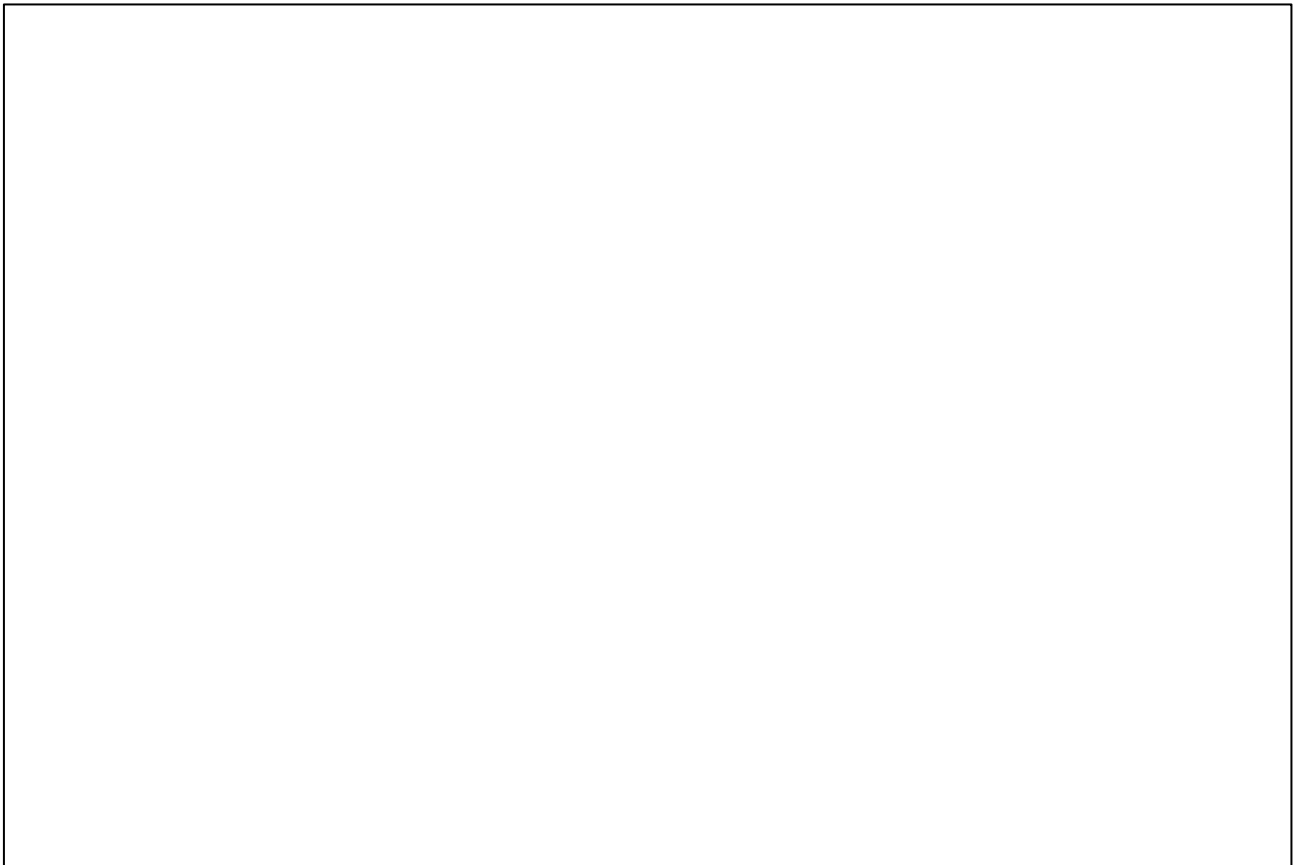


Figure 54. Tim Rollins and K.O.S. *Animal Farm – G7*, 1989-92, acrylic paint on paper on canvas, 2034mm x 1372mm.

However the tactic of jammin, and many methods within community, dialogical or pedagogical arts that emerged post-war, can be viewed as owing more to the approaches of Greenberg’s near-contemporaries, such as Bertolt Brecht, Dziga Vertov and Aleksandr Rodchenko who, as Kester attests, although sharing Greenberg’s cynicism about mass culture, made a distinction between mainstream media and those forms of popular culture or revolutionary art that are generated by or

⁸⁹⁸ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 83.

⁸⁹⁹ However, Greenberg recognised that Avant-garde art was primarily only available to the elite, the ruling classes and the rich, who had the time and education to study the art historical context and recognise the contribution radical art could make. Nevertheless, he deemed it critical to continue cultivating an Avant-garde, not least “...because it holds out the promise that in an ideal future the leisure time required to appreciate it may be available to everyone.” Kester, 44.

for the working class.⁹⁰⁰ Amongst these, Walter Benjamin advocated appropriation of the ephemera of mass-production as a method, asserting, in Historian David Frisby's words, that, objects must be "snatched from the false context of the historical continuum," and redeployed to interrupt and counteract passive consumption and linear versions of history promulgated by capitalism via popular culture.⁹⁰¹ Works by Rollins and K.O.S. such as *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn—Asleep on the Raft (after Mark Twain)*, (2011) and the earlier *Animal Farm – G7* (1989–92) (Figure 54), show both the appropriation of mass media-illustrations and their re-inscription on the printed page. Jammin therefore combined two methods of appropriation, a re-drawing of historical illustrations in order to jar them out of their original context and a re-inscription through drawing onto found printed material.

5.2 || The dialectogram

5.2.1 || Awkwardly in-between

In contrast to the Art and Knowledge Workshop, where the jammin technique was relatively peripheral in the overall presentation of the work, Mitch Miller closely identifies as an illustrator, terming his practice, "social text illustration."⁹⁰² The self-coined 'dialectogram' is his method and methodology, describing both the documentary drawings he creates over the course of consultative community placements and the relational production processes involved which centre on extensive interviews with workers, inhabitants, staff and stakeholders.⁹⁰³ These placements are with community groups and publicly funded organisations, often in what Miller describes as hidden, misunderstood or badly portrayed places in or around his home town of Glasgow.⁹⁰⁴ They have included a public consultation on the redevelopment of Clydebanks Central Library, the creation of a record of life in the former Red Road housing scheme and assessments of the impact of urban redevelopment such as a series of dialectograms made in response to the regeneration of part of Glasgow's East End prior to the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Miller works for up to three years on these extended residencies, producing large-scale, intensely detailed, pen and ink illustrations which

⁹⁰⁰ Kester, 83.

⁹⁰¹ David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1986): 216. Quoted in Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 84.

⁹⁰² Miller, "An unruly parliament."

⁹⁰³ This totality is described by Azevedo and Ramos as, "a meeting point between ethnography, documentary, socially engaged practice and mytho-geographic aesthetics." Azevedo and Ramos, "Drawing Close," 140.

⁹⁰⁴ <http://www.dialectograms.com>.

represent his interactions and interviews with a variety of stakeholders, often to inform a decision within the host organisation (Figure 55).

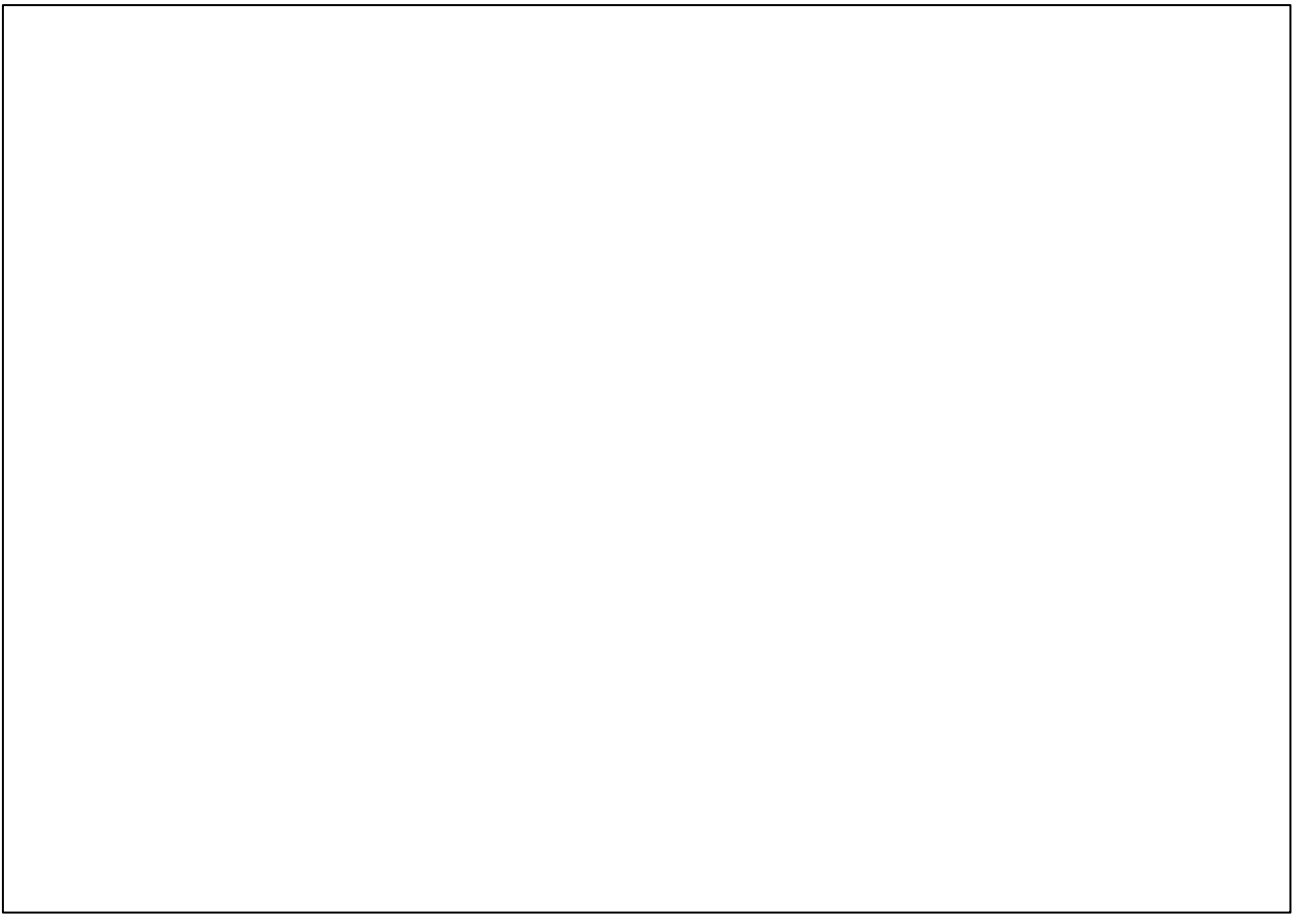


Figure 55. Mitch Miller. *Piershill Community Flat*, 2013, pen and ink on card, 1189mm x 841mm.

In each commission, Miller makes the consultative process public, both in the final display of the dialectogram, as a real-time record of the interactions that took place, and in the production process itself which includes the spectacle of the draughtsman at work. This emphasis on visibility during the making of the work, the open studio, presence in public space and *in situ* display of the dialectogram, is a model for more transparency in democratic decision-making. Yet Miller is not creating an autonomous performative or utopian art work in the mould of the Art and Knowledge Workshop. The clear aims of the consultative brief distinguish the drawings, and the relational situations they document, from ethnographically informed practices that also engage with art markets, institutions, audiences or circuits of cultural capital.⁹⁰⁵ The external objectives, what I

⁹⁰⁵ These are the subjects of Hal Foster's critique in "The Artist as Ethnographer." There are also more recent concerns about ethnographic approaches in contemporary art and their "rather predatory engagements with anthropology,"

consider as ‘texts’ in my definition of illustration, also differentiate the dialectogram from what the engaged-artist Ailbhe Murphy describes as the speculative aspect of long-term activist art projects,⁹⁰⁶ which, alongside the aim of social transformation, also incorporate a critically informed re-framing of the aesthetic paradigm.

Miller’s wilful purposing his drawing practice as ‘illustration’ could also be seen as setting the dialectogram apart from socially-engaged art practice. However, for Miller, his view of illustration as concerning a “getting between things,” whether getting between people or between difficult texts, renders the technique particularly suitable for engaged practice.⁹⁰⁷ Miller conceptualises illustration as an activity of interlocution that is potentially at odds with traditional ways of articulating the field as merely supportive of an external text. This raises the potential for practices such as the dialectogram to develop a distinct identity between socially-engaged art and participatory design,⁹⁰⁸ as illustration also contrasts with the design focus on solutions, by offering an entirely different set of problems for the reader. “That’s nothing to do with solving a problem, that’s to do with adding another element to the text or in relation to the text, [which] then creates all sorts of relationships,” an unsettling quality Miller articulates as generating the unique elements of involvement and immersion for the reader of illustrated books.⁹⁰⁹

In documenting lived social experience, drawing is given a more pressing responsibility to relate a truth. In chapter one (p.57) the illustration scholar Catrin Morgan questioned the truth claims of graphic journalism (or ‘reportage illustration’), where an aesthetic of truth construction becomes a style that communicates a transparency in method and authenticity of the illustrator’s gaze.⁹¹⁰ That a function of the line as authentic trace of self is open to manipulation provides a connection between illustration and an ethical mode. For instance, George Butler situates the authenticity of his

from within the field of anthropology. Roger Sansi, *Art, Anthropology and The Gift* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015): 37, 44. Quoted in Ramos and Azevedo, “Drawing Close,” 141.

⁹⁰⁶ Activist practices are concerned with, “the creatively speculative relational network.” Murphy, “Temporal Economies,” 18.

⁹⁰⁷ “[Illustration] could be the ultimate socially engaged area of activity.” Miller, 2017.

⁹⁰⁸ “We can pretend to be an adjunct of engaged participatory design in this field, talking to them about engaged illustration. Or we could pretend to be a kind of socially engaged art. We’ve got stuff to learn from both, but I think illustration has got this real ability to... Where it’s coming from right now is look at both things and actually decide how it wants to do it. And I don’t think we have to do it in the same way as either socially engaged artists or socially engaged designers.” Miller, 2017.

⁹⁰⁹ Miller cites Tenniel, in *Alice in Wonderland*, and Josef Lada in *The Good Soldier Švejk* as two examples of book illustrations that aren’t, “solving anything for you as a reader.” Miller, 2017.

⁹¹⁰ The illustrator “performing the role of witness” in the manner of Francisco Goya’s print series *The Disasters of War* (1810-1820). Morgan applies the term ‘truth claim’ from Tom Gunning, “What’s the Point of an Index? Or Faking Photographs,” *Still/Moving: between Cinema and Photography*, Karen Beckman and Jean Ma, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 23- 40.

own reportage illustration as an effective answer to anxieties about the veracity of photography.⁹¹¹ However, Morgan questions whether Butler's line really answers that anxiety and if a sense of trust can be engendered from the transparency of the making (as Butler argues) as that transparency is simply one of illustration's own language of truth claims. These signifiers, such as the artificial drips and splatters that illustrator Olivier Kruger adds to his digital drawings, have come to perform their own honesty, lines that ultimately, "talk more about their authenticity than the scene they are describing."⁹¹²

To mitigate and draw attention to the ersatz effects of such truth claims, the dialectogram drawing contains a high degree of correspondence with the dialectogram process. One example of this is Miller's self-representation, where he depicts himself within the drawing as an equally fallible but well-meaning inhabitant of the social space being researched (Figure 57, p.262).⁹¹³ Making himself visible in the finished drawing is an acknowledgement of the impact of Miller's own interpretation of a situation and a record of his positioning of himself as a participant during the consultation, a relational technique deployed toward, "equalis[ing] knowledge between as many of the actors as possible."⁹¹⁴ Self-deprecating humour is another technique Miller uses to undermine any objectivity, both in the interactions and in the drawings. In conversation, humour can appear as a nervous reaction, but is also applied consciously, a way for researcher and interviewee to "feel each other out," to get a sense of each other, to establish a starting point in order to work back to truth.⁹¹⁵ In the representational space of the drawing, an undercutting wit is a companion narrative that forms a critique of the ethnographical and socially-engaged stance of the artist,⁹¹⁶ a self-parodying

⁹¹¹ George Butler, "A Dying Art," TEDx Warwick, 10 April 2014, 15:02. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ryXonDPNpE.

⁹¹² Morgan, "Mythical Speech."

⁹¹³ This distinguishes Miller's practice from its common alignment with graphic journalism and makes it similar to graphic facilitation, a recording method whereby an illustrator creates a live chart or diagram during a meeting or group discussion, creating a mnemonic visualisation of the proceedings.

⁹¹⁴ "Mutuality is like democracy itself. It's a great idea. It doesn't really exist in practice, but we can all try for it to some extent. But the mutuality of it is always questionable. I go into a place, I have done seventeen dialectograms now of some form, so I know a lot of stuff that they don't. I'm very skilled at how I interview them, I'm very skilled at how I interact in this social environment now to make the project move. That's not an equal playing field, that's not mutual. I'm bringing a capital, a social capital, a professional capital with me that is hard-earned. I don't apologise for it but it's definitely not on the same level as they are. But I try to equalise knowledge if I can. I try to create situations where, you know, I'm on the back foot more as well. I'm quite conscious of that. With Clydebank Library, I was making a point of having the librarians give the public tours of the space and I would come along on a tour. But the point of that tour was so that you equalise knowledge between as many of the actors as possible. And I was also taking a bit of a back seat when the participants talked to each other. So, there's ways in which you can get around that." Miller, 2017.

⁹¹⁵ Humour also is a way of talking truth. "And that does relate to truth. It relates to how the truth comes out and our ability to find the truth together depends a lot on that humour. But humour also is a way of talking truth as well, the funny quip, the black humour. And again, some of my best projects are based on a shared black humour." Miller, 2017.

⁹¹⁶ And also portrays the moments of humour that inevitable arise during the residencies. "To represent the truth... you have to have funny stuff as well as the hard stuff." Miller, 2017.

method reflected in the name ‘dialectogram’, which as a pun on dialect and diagram forms a “bad joke” or tongue in cheek exercise, but, as Miller acknowledges, is sometimes also deadly serious.⁹¹⁷

Miller views his role as to represent with care and responsibility the personal importance given to the stories, words, or utterances he gathers from contributors. The dialectogram gives them a forum, or platform, but Miller is, in his own words, very careful how he brings experience and expertise into each scenario.⁹¹⁸ The completed drawing is a record of listening as much as observing,⁹¹⁹ an inscription resulting from the conversations catalysed by Miller’s visible industriousness in the context undergoing his research. Influencing this emphasis on the presence of the illustrator is Miller’s previous background as a researcher for universities and government. This has granted a knowledge of ethnographic techniques that supports understanding and navigation of the ethical decisions required in representing lived experience.⁹²⁰ The more ethical approach to his illustrative work was instigated by the first dialectogram, *A Showman’s Yard* (2008), where Miller worked with his own family background in the travelling showman community whose traditional neighbourhoods in Glasgow’s East End faced displacement in the re-generation accompanying the 2014 Commonwealth Games (Figure 56).

⁹¹⁷ “[S]ome of the more tongue in cheek [dialectograms] are actually about quite serious stuff. Because, I don’t know why, I think that’s an important counterpoint to make. The point about the making of them as well and the engagement because, I think the hanging about talking to people is probably ninety percent of the work. Humour is so important in that. How we engage. If you can’t, I think one of the first things I gauge with my collaborators is what makes them laugh, you know, just in a sort of everyday small talk sort of way. You know, what kind of cracks or quips set them off, where their limits are. You learn so much about people from humour, what they find funny, what they don’t.” Miller, 2017.

⁹¹⁸ For example, working with the building concierges in the Red Road flats, Miller needed both a humour and a toughness. This is not a balance, but a getting to the truth of the situation. “You have to have both because the concierges were again very funny people. Ronnie, who was my main guy, had the driest wit you’ve ever heard. Yet it was entirely understandable. He had a job where he could get stuck by a needle just by putting his hand in something... It’s a hell of a job. So, to represent the humour is so important, to get that, not balance, but to get that truth of it. Dialectograms aren’t balanced, I would say that, but they are truthful, or try to be.” Miller, 2017.

⁹¹⁹ To the art critic Suzi Gablik, the rise of social-engagement in public art is part of a cultural drift, or paradigm shift, from “seeing” to “listening.” Suzi Gablik, “Connective Aesthetics,” in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, ed. Suzanne Lacy (Seattle: Bay Press, 1996), 82.

⁹²⁰ Miller also underlines the problematic nature of the field itself. For the anthropologist Tim Ingold the term ethnography is burdened with “descriptive accuracy” and thus opposed to creative world-engagement. Ingold sees ethnography as highly formatted and wants to divorce it from anthropology. (Azevedo and Ramos, “Drawing Close,” 149.) In the context of our interview for this study, Miller is more forthright, it’s a “fucked-up” discipline: “[ethnography] is often just used as a method and it’s a wonderful toolkit you can use. But I think it needs to be remembered that it’s a discipline of its own... It’s got some massive problems; it was a colonial instrument for years. Especially by the French but also by the British and everybody else. So, ethnography’s got darkness there... That tool comes with a baggage and you have to be aware of that baggage.” Miller, 2017.



Figure 56. Mitch Miller, *The Showman's Yard* (detail), 2008, pen and ink on card, overall size: 841mm x 1189mm.

This pilot project raised concerns of participant confidentiality, representation and future audience. Upon completion, Miller's family (and Miller himself) were shocked at the level of detail about their lives and although the final product was liked and found impressive, there were worries about where the information was going to go. Miller attributed these issues to an initial lack of focus in his own intentions, to not maintaining communication throughout the project and to not reconciling his illustrator and ethnographer sides.⁹²¹ From that point, an ethically centred approach was adopted, a focus on the elemental and complex part of the dialectogram process as, "the equitable balance of how you deploy ethnography, [of] your dynamic with your participants."⁹²² Miller

⁹²¹ "I didn't quite know what I was doing but I also was very poor at having a discussion with my family about what I was doing." Miller, 2017.

⁹²² It was a struggle to crack this process for Miller, to keep, what he describes as, his ethnographic head on and stay up

articulates his subsequent system of methods, for instance developing a phased system of showing contributors the dialectogram, as a striving for mutuality, an ethnographic stance that aims to reduce power imbalances between agents.⁹²³

In a further imbrication of the relational and the book-practice within which illustration is situated, mutuality is in part a development of Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia introduced in chapter four (p.191).⁹²⁴ This is a diversity of utterances entering into the artwork (for Bakhtin, the emergence of the modern novel during the Renaissance), such that, "each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships."⁹²⁵ The reciprocity that is achieved within Bakhtin's dialogical exchange influenced communication theory which in turn influences socially-engaged art practices.⁹²⁶ This is evident in the illustrator and educator Luise Vormittag's view of illustration as integrated with wider social circles, where image-makers contribute to, or picture, urban imaginaries that, "participate in social construction of reality," and, "allow multiplicity of voices."⁹²⁷ In Miller's articulation, this dialogical potential of illustration is partly located in its ability to create a new vantage point for the viewer, particularly a view from the margins.

5.2.2 || Comic book ethics

to date with ethnographic discourses. "I work to please myself a lot but it's helpful that I did have those years of experience as a fieldworker, not for the purpose of making art or anything fun but the purpose of serious surveys for social things with real ramifications and I think that helps keep me right, it keeps me honest. But I'm always in a head space where I've got to stay honest. I've got to check myself every now and then to make sure I'm doing this the right way, the ethical way." Miller, 2017.

⁹²³ "But there is an element of care, so I've got all the stories, I'm gathering stories. So, you look at an archive for any dialectogram it's just interview after interview, notebooks full of stuff. There's utterances, to use a very Marxist term, or words that I've been given that, to me anyway, are important, have to be laid out on the thing and make their way into the drawing. And there will be in that, quite a personal thing. I'm often identifying that. What they're saying is so important there, means so much to them, but that's my take on it. So yes, there is an element of, there's a job of mine is to get the voices out there if I can give them that forum, that platform to speak. You know, it's dialogic imagination, that's part of what I'm there for." Miller, 2017. This ongoing evaluation is a foundational principle for Suzanne Lacy, "It's tough but necessary to critique your own practice in a racist/classist/sexist culture when you are working with people from less privileged backgrounds." Lacy and Wettrich, "What it Takes," 222-235.

⁹²⁴ Derived from Bakhtin's over-arching concept "raznorečivost," or heteroglossia, from which Bakhtin also develop his theories on the grotesque body and the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*). Bakhtin's, "dialogical," is also the literary base on which Grant Kester develops a view of the work of art, "as a kind of conversation – a locus of different meanings, interpretations and points of view," where, "Dialogical Projects unfold through a process of conversation." Kester, *Conversation Pieces*.

⁹²⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in The Novel," in *Dialogic Imagination: 259-422*, 263.

⁹²⁶ This is posited as an alternative to a sacrificing of the other. In Kester's analysis of communication theory, reciprocity is articulated as both participants relieving their "excess" by blurring boundaries between self and other. Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 118-123.

⁹²⁷ Vormittag, "Urban Imaginaries."

The illustrative style of the dialectogram is influenced by a number of forms including maps and architectural diagrams, each of which has a set of associations and historical applications that Miller recognises and repurposes toward representing those marginalised voices. It is the influence of the comic book however, that most effectively connects between the spaces of illustration and the real-time experience of working on a commission. Here, as with Rollins's jammin technique, the printed illustration is integral in terms of influencing the practitioner's ethos, even when printed outcomes are not part of the commission.

A pivotal aspect that links Miller's concern for the comic book with the discussion on previous chapters, is the importance attached to a physicality that permits the form to move between and through people as an exchangeable object and common point of discussion.⁹²⁸ The illustrated artefact, whether the folk art discussed by James Walker (chapter one, p.57),⁹²⁹ the comic book as articulated by Om Lekha (chapter two, p.127) or Miller's dialectograms, invites the viewer, reader, or handler, to participate in its corporeality, which is, to some degree, to imagine or empathise with the experience of the people involved in its production. This is an area codified by Miller's self-addressed question, "Can I make things that you can look out from, that you can use as a point of exchange?" A sphere within which illustrators, as "great collaborators," are well-equipped to operate.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁸ "[Comics] were exchanged, they were talked over, they were argued over, they were discussed in a sort of democratic open way, albeit with all the problems that came with being part of a mass industry." Miller, 2017.

⁹²⁹ In Walter Benjamin's 1929 essay *Some Remarks on Folk Art*, vernacular hand-crafted art works are described as incorporating the human being within themselves. For illustration scholar James Walker this enables the viewer to see the world from within the object not from the object's surface. Walker discerns the focus of that vernacular agency as a characteristic of the illustrated line. James Walker, "The vernacular line: Adoption and transposition of the kitsch in illustration," *Journal of Illustration* 1 1, no.1 (2014): 29–40. Walter Benjamin, "Some Remarks on Folk Art," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 1: 1927–1930* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2005), 278–80.

⁹³⁰ "Anyone who's illustrated is equipped for it, it's just we need to recognise it ourselves and decide if we want to do that. And I think that's the thing at the moment with the wider field of, would you call it, socially engaged illustration, social practice illustration? Whatever you call it, participatory illustration, I think where we're all deciding how we want to do this right now, how far down certain lines you want to go. But that's quite a powerful place to be in." Miller, 2017.

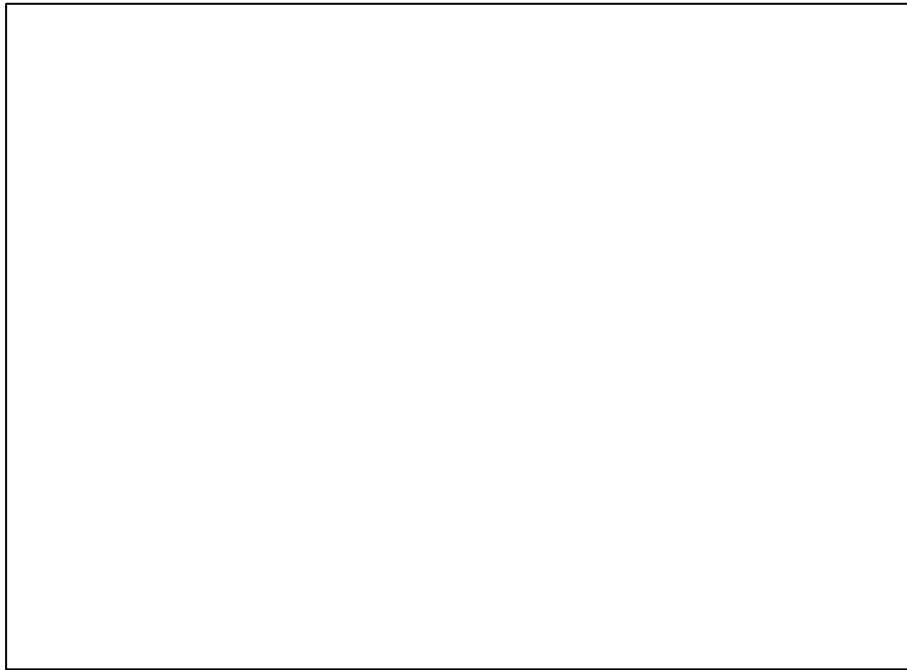


Figure 57. Mitch Miller. *Piershill Community Flat* (detail), 2013, pen and ink on card, overall size: 1189mm x 841mm.

The open-ness to participation is reflected in the pictorial layout of comics. Miller cites Scott McCloud's theory that space equals time within the medium, and experiments with this principle through re-arranging structural components, such as frames and panels, within the dialectogram.⁹³¹ This re-structuring is important in terms of, "the way in which the mechanics of comics influence and dictate how they're actually read and looked at,"⁹³² and Miller illustrates this further through the analogy of a museum wherein a comic-like conflation of space and time takes place. Here, the museum works on the same principles as comics, the walls or separations between discrete pictorial units akin to the gutter space identified by McCloud.⁹³³ In a museum, spaces also represent time as distinct, laid out with, "the Egyptians over there and the Romans there and so forth," which renders the experience of walking through similar to the manner a reader 'walks' through a comic, "going from artefact to artefact through a space which is the page."⁹³⁴

⁹³¹ Miller, 2017.

⁹³² "[I'm] interested in how time is dealt with within comics, and therefore within a dialectogram, and how the space of the drawing itself operates for the reader." The US cartoonist Chris Ware is an influence, whose works like the multi-volume *Building Stories* (2012) undo the linear sequentiality of the comic book and experiment with multiple "ways in which you can deal with narrative graphically." "[Ware] has taken the grammar of comics and just de-sequenced, he's taken it out of sequence." Studying these comic book methods were important in translating the information Miller collects in sketchbooks into the dialectogram. Miller, 2017.

⁹³³ "The gutter, where that brings the reader in to an active part of the process is something I instinctively picked up on. But I didn't sit and think this is how it's going to work. I did it a few times and I was like, "Oh, right, that's my comics background coming in there. That's just me adopting the gutter as a technique." Under the disguise of being an architectural drawing or a badly done architectural drawing." Miller, 2017.

⁹³⁴ Miller, 2017.

The key phenomenon for the comic reader and the museum visitor, is their experience of a bleed of pictorial elements from other sections of the narrative into their area of focus. The reader is always, even when concentrating on a panel, influenced by the whole spread in the case of the comic, or another aspect of the building, as in the museum.⁹³⁵ For Miller, this means the reader has to decide for themselves the connection between different elements of a dialectogram (in the manner of McCloud's 'closure' raised in chapter two, p.84),⁹³⁶ actively participating in the drawing and bringing their own interpretation through subjective connection of discrete elements. This reading activity is expressed as having to *live* through the space, a critical mode for gaining knowledge and understanding from the experience.

Miller's use of the comic book dialect to depict both the humorous and the broader serious predicaments that people found themselves in provides a practical example of this concern for illustrative space.⁹³⁷ Here, the position and the styling of individual pictorial elements is pivotal, Miller altering the appearance and putting the right distance between depictions requiring gravitas and those intended to be funny.⁹³⁸ The subject's rather than the reader's experience is accounted for here to ensure the humour is never used to cheapen their experience.⁹³⁹

⁹³⁵ "One of the reasons I think we read comics, or a dialectogram, is you're looking at one bit there but in the corner of your eye there's other bits here. It's not like a film where what you saw before is replaced so there's a whole spread of images and ideas you're sort of looking at and trying to understand. And whenever you read a comic the top panel is still in the corner of your eye. That sort of movement across the page is very distinctive. I think it's very like how we look at spaces like museums and galleries when you'll be looking at one thing but there's all sorts of stuff, you notice other stuff happening there and there's that sort of back and forth between them." Miller, 2017.

⁹³⁶ McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, 63-93.

⁹³⁷ "But it was also tricky because, the same basic style of drawing I'm using to depict an asylum-seeker family coming in to Red Road and the trauma of that, and some kids stealing the concierge station sign and using it as a see-saw, you know. It's the same line. So, even from the get-go I was trying to work out, how can I use the same line? Is it about positioning, so is it about making sure there's distance between them?" Miller, 2017.

⁹³⁸ "Varying, putting a bit more into certain types of lines so with all the serious stuff, I tend to go a bit more realistic, it's got a bit more realist, a bit more shading happening plus cross-hatching in some, and more openly cartoony on the humorous stuff. That rule of thumb didn't always hold up but that's broadly how I did it." An example was with Piershill, where an amusing anecdote needed to be spaced precisely in relation to a serious depiction of abuse a resident had received from a neighbour, "the spacing of it was difficult for me, it was a bit close. I made the jokes here and this, here, and I had to kind of work out how - I don't know how successful I was but I tried to at least make some sort of clear visual water between it." This problem of spacing, "might not be unique to a dialectogram but it's something that's very particular to it." Miller, 2017.

⁹³⁹ "It's something I'm always trying to be conscious of and trying to make sure the visuals respect, it's not so much about the reader actually, it's about the collaborators, it's about if the participants give me that story, you should respect that story, not to cheapen it. So, you should never use humour to cheapen things, I think. There's that old adage that comedians use. I'm always trying to punch up with the humour as best I can but I'm always having to be very aware of the way I execute it. It can get in the way of that sometimes or it can cause problems." Miller, 2017.

The visual dialect of comics again mirrors Miller's ethnographically informed approach to accessing a place that, "isn't too elitist and isn't expressing my own power too much."⁹⁴⁰

Influencing this are the newspaper cartoon strips *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie*, published since the mid 1930s in *The Sunday Post*, and from the 1940s to 2015 as alternating biennials that were staple Christmas gifts for Scots children.⁹⁴¹ Although co-created by D.C. Thomson editor R.D. Low, the strips have become synonymous with their draughtsman Dudley D. Watkins, whose fluidity of line, creation of unity between text and images, and depiction of Scottish working-class life, inspired the development of the dialectogram. The useful marginality that Miller seeks to activate is also embodied by the original appearance of the strips as a peripheral component in a newspaper that was itself a throwaway medium, and the common fate of the annuals as improvised colouring-in books. This disposability that enables an interaction and movement through people and place is a manifestation of comic's marginality, that for Miller, is in itself powerful.⁹⁴²

Miller contrasts the marginal and throwaway language of comics, to the 'correct' or 'standard' illustrative forms of the map, diagram or architectural drawing. The dialectogram's comparability to these illustrative archetypes is Miller's variation of Michel de Certeau's conception of 'tactics', a method consumers use to create their own culture from material poached from a strategic centre.⁹⁴³ Voicing the dialectogram in a comic book dialect lends Miller's allusions to the standard forms of map and diagram an accessibility across readerships where, "even if they're not comics people, they respond to the visual language side of things better, I think, because it does come from that place."⁹⁴⁴ This deployment of a marginal form is a key strategy of abrogation, which for Miller, "refers to the rejection by post-colonial writers of a normative concept of 'correct' or 'standard' English and of corresponding concepts of inferior 'dialects' or 'marginal variants'."⁹⁴⁵

An additional anti-colonial tactic can be inferred in what has been described as the unreadability of the dialectogram. The narrative multiplicity can be superficially read as an attempt to capture the complexity of the case community, yet the meaning of the dialectogram can be unreadable or 'ungraspable'. This is a positive feature for Vormittag who finds in the "cacophony" of the

⁹⁴⁰ Miller, 2017.

⁹⁴¹ Since 2015 *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie* now have their own annual.

⁹⁴² "There's something very powerful about what comics can be, the way they can pass through hands, they get... they get re-used in all these sorts of ways. They're supposed to be thrown away." Miller, 2017.

⁹⁴³ If the dialectogram is a map, it is a "pigeon's eye view." Azevedo and Ramos, "Drawing Close."

⁹⁴⁴ Miller, 2017.

⁹⁴⁵ An approach to drawing in this regard which corresponds to the writers James Kelman and Tom Leonard, who mobilised the unburnished dialects of their working-class protagonists to problematise the literary forms of verse poetry and the novel. Miller, "More Than a Pun," 193-200.

drawings, a seeking to do justice to the heterogeneity of a place, a productive failure to simplify for easy consumption or control.⁹⁴⁶ This is not a deliberate aspect, rather a product of the production process which productively augments Miller's understanding of his illustrative line as, "the thing that contains the boiling mass of stuff that's behind it," the single aesthetic required to stop the dialectogram falling apart. Miller acknowledges that the ungraspability identified by Vormittag could be subconsciously present in the work, as his first dialectogram, "was all about my dissatisfaction with how things are reduced into diagrams, things are reduced into images or analyses." The idea of the image failing is valuable in itself as it undermines the cartographic impulse to know a place definitively.⁹⁴⁷ Therefore, just as a dialectogram is a failed representation, it is a successful tool within long term relational works, as its failure to represent communicates the indefinability of the lives gestured towards within.⁹⁴⁸

Miller endeavours to limit any prior conceptualisations obstructing the act of producing the drawing however, as, "You have to immerse yourself in a process and the process is all about filling up that space and trying to honour the stories you've been told and the engagement you've had."⁹⁴⁹ Instead he seeks to retain a circular reading, to stimulate a game-like building of narrative from looking, the reader having to make the effort to participate, to suspend belief and to not comprehend the dialectogram as an abstract sea of lines. To Miller the value for people in this activity, "is being able to choose how the narratives unfold for them by how they look at it and scan across it,"⁹⁵⁰ just as the museum requires the subjectivity of the visitor and their active movement between rooms to connect different spatial and temporal locations.

⁹⁴⁶ Vormittag, "urban imaginaries."

⁹⁴⁷ "the document is always going to fade at the edges, it's always going to fail. So, here's another failure but it's a failure on my own terms, perhaps. [...] So, I think [Vormittag] is right, that *is* the value of a dialectogram. It kind of shows the impossibility of defining a place in its constant slipping-through-your-fingers. As you grasp it you realise you're not grasping it." Miller, 2017.

⁹⁴⁸ Failure, to borrow from Halberstam's usage within queer politics, is a rejection of hegemony. Halberstam's own references to dialect also concern social class, where the theorist describes the apolitical negativity of the writing of Irving Welsh in terms of a decolonising strategy. *The Queer Art of Failure*, 118.

⁹⁴⁹ Miller, 2017.

⁹⁵⁰ Miller contrasts the experience of reading the original dialectogram with experiments he has made in presenting the drawings online: "[W]hen you look at things online there's a danger that it becomes a sort of film. It becomes something that you're thinking too much about the sequence of. I think that what people value about these things is being able to choose how the narratives unfold for them by how they look at it and scan across it. So, in a way that works well for it as an online artefact because you can look at and there's genuine exploration there. Because, I am guiding you in some ways but I'm not really guiding you directly as part of a consciously unfolding narrative. So, there's a tension in what I'm saying there with the online element." Miller does see some potential with online publishing however, where zooming, panning and scanning functions form new narratological possibilities that escape the danger of the image becoming film-like. Miller, 2017.

5.2.3 || The dialogical illustrator

The perception of comics as a low status, marginal form of art is translated into Miller's own appearance within the research process.⁹⁵¹ As a self-effacing tactic he will, half in jest, introduce himself to potential interviewees as a 'cartoonist', dialectograms being, "to an extent, cartoons of more respectable forms of drawing."⁹⁵² The task of the placement is reflected in this stance, as, although the consultancy will contribute toward civic transformation, it is not intended as a transformative experience in itself. To this end the lowly cartoonist figure embodies Miller's ethical position, that he holds no power to change circumstances nor assumes any authority within the host community.⁹⁵³

The individual author functions to hold the form of the drawing at the point of ungraspability,⁹⁵⁴ and, in an ethical sense, to limit the potential for the dialectogram to be read as a claim to represent any pure cultural identity, which in itself would instate a hierarchy. Paradoxically then, Miller's retention of an identity as 'artist', even in the most baseline form as a person with a pencil and piece of paper, is in itself a necessarily solid position to be in from an ethnographic perspective. He views this as limiting confusion as to his motivations, allowing him to be recognised and making public the usually hidden process of illustration (a proxy for the broader creative and consultative processes).

In addition, it is possible to view Miller as striving not to claim any empathetic insight within these processes. Although mutuality is the ethical guide in Miller's practice there is also a degree of its opposite present, that which qualitative research theorist Patti Lather identifies as *not* knowing the other, not imposing a mutual reading of agents in a given situation.⁹⁵⁵ Here, a parallel can be drawn between the discussion of the image as unknowable and Lather's call to resist any definitive account of another's experience, whether by scientific method or the subjective experience of

⁹⁵¹ "To me, the reason that Dudley D. Watkins' style works so well was because he's actually tried to use visual art to engage with his place and find a place in it." That Watkins was an outsider to the life he depicted, born in Manchester and raised in Nottingham, is all the more meaningful for Miller, "There's a subtext there about working out your place, your position in this new place and you come to terms with it and finally you're communicating that." Miller, 2017.

⁹⁵² Miller, 2017.

⁹⁵³ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 115.

⁹⁵⁴ "There is an element of trying to funnel other people's experience through it which I think is, you know, what people do in documentary art and other things. I'm not unique in that by any stretch of the imagination. But I suppose I'm quite aware of how I try to do it. I'm quite paranoid about it, I worry about it. I have used some group drawing techniques. There's a funny thing about dialectograms. I think people [sigh] opening it up to a final group drawing, say making this a group drawing, would be difficult and I think push it beyond that ungraspability point or that awkward point into complete chaos. Maybe I'll do that on my last one whenever I retire." Miller, 2017.

⁹⁵⁵ Lather, "Against Empathy," 19-20.

empathy. From this viewpoint, the dialectogram can be seen as engaging with Grant Kester's two problems of community arts: that the objective of liberatory class transgression can all too often be one-way (that is, for the artist but not the participants) and conversely, that a fetishisation of authenticity can be perpetuated by those artists claiming authorisation to speak for a community.⁹⁵⁶ Each of these enact a 'discursive violence' that for Kester resides in every claim to know the other, even within the practice of empathetic connected knowing.

In Lather's critique of qualitative research in ethnography which questions the status of the researcher as an antidote to scientific objectivity, the scholar finds suspect any claim to the real and authentic. Whilst the, "[c]onfessional tales, authorial self-revelation, multivoicedness and personal narrative, all are contemporary practices of representation designed to move ethnography away from scientificity and the appropriation of others,"⁹⁵⁷ they are as much ploys which the privileged bestow to the authority of the voice, or in the words of Ailbhe Murphy, "the romance of the speaking subject."⁹⁵⁸ Considering Lather's counter-proposal, where the researcher sets out to move away from, "the wish for heroism and rescue through some 'more adequate' methodology and toward a learning that can tolerate its own failure of knowledge and the detour of not understanding,"⁹⁵⁹ Miller's presentation as the non-privileged cartoonist, through its disconnectedness to an image of the 'expert', can be also be viewed as a retort to the authentic voice.



Figure 58. Mitch Miller, documentation of dialectogram research process, 2008-2016.

⁹⁵⁶ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 130.

⁹⁵⁷ Lather, "Against Empathy," 20.

⁹⁵⁸ Murphy, "Temporal Economies," 18-19.

⁹⁵⁹ Lather, "Against Empathy," 18.

However, the low status persona of the cartoonist could equally be viewed as signifying a degree of empathetic insight through its association with marginality and, as the clustering of Miller's project locations reflect his own background in a working class community in the East End of Glasgow, his perspective could be viewed as bestowing a degree of authenticity and affording an insight into many of his residency contexts. In these terms the participants or contributors to the dialectogram process can be considered as having a particularly important role in ensuring the commission does not become centred on Miller's empathetic and subjective position. This is evidenced in Miller's suggestion that the most fruitful examples of participant contributions are the attempts to subvert his process or his authorship,⁹⁶⁰ for instance, activist staff in particular will test, "to see if I was legitimate, if I was authentic."⁹⁶¹

In one such case, Miller describes the head of service at his 2016 placement at the Clydebank Central Library immediately realising the dialectogram could be worked toward his agenda to protect the service from defunding, for example by strategically deploying Miller's presence in meetings with key stakeholders.⁹⁶² In a second instance Miller's intention to test out his own models of engagement in a 2013 placement in a drop-in facility for local residents, Piershill Community Flat in Edinburgh, was productively undermined by the project co-ordinator.⁹⁶³ Miller found the staff had already tried many of his ethnographic techniques and the co-ordinator herself was an extremely adept practitioner in terms of social activism and social engagement.⁹⁶⁴ Here, the objectives of the social-text illustrator were constantly being re-purposed toward the co-ordinator's own aims, "an agenda of her own which was to keep this place open, make these people's lives better which - how can you argue with that agenda for a start?"⁹⁶⁵

⁹⁶⁰ "The best ones, again, tend to be the ones where I'm getting pushed back, I'm getting something back from them that maybe isn't entirely reverential or entirely as I see it going." Miller, 2017.

⁹⁶¹ This is both invigorating and terrifying. Miller recalls his experience of one activist. "Christ, she's testing me. She's got every right to because I want access to people she cares about and is protecting." This back and forth was important in building a friendship. Miller and the activist became closely allied in what they were doing to the point where, "she will call for me and say, "Can you come, I want to use you for this consultation meeting, can I use you for that? Can you come and do some scribing or something?" Miller, 2017.

⁹⁶² "What I liked though was he was very honest about it. 'If we took you into this you'll help us a great deal because it would allow us to build some bridges with a group we've got a difficult situation with'. And I was like, 'that sounds like a great idea. Let's do this and work out how we do it'. So, there was an honesty and a transaction there that was very open, and I could completely get behind that. 'Cos I get his issues, he's got face.'" Miller, 2017.

⁹⁶³ *Piershill* was Miller's central practical work in his PhD thesis. Miller, "An unruly parliament."

⁹⁶⁴ "The thing we forget especially in the arts is that people like activists and social workers, they read this stuff too or they've done it already, they've tried these things, and sometimes it's quite refreshing because they're like, 'Yeah that doesn't work, we tried that. I can't believe you guys are still playing around with this stuff because we tried it ten years ago and its shit, you know, it's awful'." The co-ordinator was, "in a very gentle way... sceptical and cynical about a lot of these great new ideas that those of us in the creative disciplines think are new." Miller, 2017.

⁹⁶⁵ "[The Piershill co-ordinator] and I developed a really real friendship and there was that friendship based on, you know, the equalisation of it. She had seen it all in a way. She'd seen artists come in in all sorts of ways and pretend they were going to change her world and she was like, 'Nyah, nyah, sit in this desk for day and tell me you can

Miller accepts being ‘gamed’ in this way and welcomes the dynamic into the dialectogram process, even when that risks being more cynically re-deployed, such as being used as the bearer of bad news or other such situations, as he describes, where the civil servants would rather not go.⁹⁶⁶ In both Piershill and Clydebank however, the co-ordinators were open about placing Miller in situations that could be used to benefit the organisations and he was happy to be ‘instrumentalised’ in these cases.⁹⁶⁷ In terms of his interview subjects more broadly, Miller views being gamed as the participant realising their power as a subject. This can lead to a lot of “back and forth,” between Miller and participant, especially in a longer-term project such as the *Red Road Flats* (2012-2015).⁹⁶⁸ Here, “there was a network of contacts and faces and names and you had to work with the ones who were willing as much as those you were trying so hard to reach.” Miller was tested by some with stories that were clearly not true and some that were implausible, “out there,” but true nevertheless. Just as with the activist staff, “that gaming with each other, the brinkmanship of it almost, [is] a way of testing each other out,” and, although not all these antagonisms for Miller are productive, the more fruitful relationships tended to have this element.⁹⁶⁹

change my world’. But because there was that honesty between us, because I recognised quite quickly she was, it was, ‘Okay, you’re going to get on my train here’, we were able to have a very good relationship, a very strong and very funny relationship. And we swapped war stories. Because I’ve, again going back to ethnographic experience, the good thing about that was I had been an activist as well myself in some ways and I had some war stories and it just sort of helped with that. So, there were things like that where people realise the power of what you’re doing for them or at least the use of it and then they grasp at it.” Miller, 2017.

⁹⁶⁶ Miller associates this with Claire Bishop’s comments on New Labour policy seeking to mobilise the arts in the void left by de-industrialisation. Although he doesn’t agree, “with everything [Bishop] says by any means [such as] where she’s saying that the artist is a kind of Blairite feel-good element,” he has experiences of socially-engaged artists being used to plug gaps in provision, or, “because none of the people who actually are responsible want to do that. [...] You know, the artist is a sop, the artist is the soft centre you can throw into a situation and no-one’s going to, probably, punch an artist.” For instance, during a group project out with his dialectogram practice, “it was so clear that we were there to break some bad news to people because none of the civil servants wanted to be the ones to do it and so they got artists to do it.” Miller, 2017.

⁹⁶⁷ For Clydebank Library this happened first at the commissioning stage, during the initial showing of previous dialectograms to the client, “they kind of got it. And when I had that initial conversation about here’s how I made this one, the manager was like, ‘Oh, yes, this is a way of consulting we can do here’.” Miller paraphrased the head of service: “‘We have this shitty situation we’ve got to deal with. We’ve got potential you bring us to deal with some of that. Can we use you?’ And I’m like, ‘Yes’. [...] And then you decide, ‘Okay, here’s how you can actually help people in real time’. And in fact, it’s really exciting when you can try and work out how you can play your small part. So, I’m not claiming I solved people’s problems by any means, but people can see me as a tool and that’s fine. [...] The reality of working in the public realm is you’ve got to maintain that relationship and be part of that and understand their system and their political reality without getting drawn into it. It’s not your job to do that for them. You have to at least acknowledge it’s there and be willing to work with the tensions that can create which is where it gets interesting.” Miller, 2017.

⁹⁶⁸ The Red Road Flats were a northeast Glasgow high-rise social housing complex built in the mid 1960s and demolished between 2010 and 2015 in a process of re-generation also connected to the 2014 Commonwealth games. Miller worked with residents and staff over a three-year period to create an archive of life in the flats through several dialectograms.

⁹⁶⁹ In one project, although there was a pleasing pictorial outcome, it was a very frustrating process, “a very difficult heritage group who had this internal politics. Old people are so difficult sometimes. Give me some recalcitrant teenagers, they’re so much easier to handle than old folk with agendas. But you know there were these internal agendas and they were using me often as a tool for that, as a way of fighting these fights.” Miller, 2017.

To stimulate this productivity, Miller uses a variety of live drawing methods during the development process (Figure 58, p.268). One technique involves bringing a table into a public place within the commissioning venue and offering free drawings to passers-by. For Miller, the trade-off for participants is their responsiveness to conversation, and the technique's purpose is to gather contacts and establish initial interviews. However, people can think, "'I'm just going to game this resource here. This guy is offering free portraits, I'm just going to take the piss a wee bit',"⁹⁷⁰ This an important part of the back and forth and, "it also gives them a bit of power and it creates relationships."⁹⁷¹ The back and forth is then formalised to a degree in the series of moments where the in-progress dialectogram is shown to participants and the client.⁹⁷² Here the physical material of the drawing facilitates the phased approach that Miller has developed since *A Showman's Yard*.

The phased process culminates in a public exhibition of the completed dialectogram whose physical awkwardness (dialectograms are usually drawn on A0 or 2A0-sized card) gave rise to a display value that Miller did not initially envisage. The size is now viewed as a function, as it changes the physical space of the presentation environment, the reader thinking, for Miller, "'Wow, I've got to somehow move around this thing and look at it, find ways of looking at it'." This additional layer of awkwardness, the requirement of physical re-orientation to access upside-down or miniscule elements, is conceived by Miller as a rewarding experience.⁹⁷³ The completed dialectogram is then gifted to the client organisation creating the potential for constructive appropriation by the new

⁹⁷⁰ For instance, returning with photographs of their grandchildren or requesting Miller draw elaborate, self-aggrandising fantasy pieces. "There was one guy, I did a portrait of him one day and he came back the next day and said, 'I want you to draw me with Tommy Burns, at Aviemore'. And I was like, 'Okay, that's fine, there's a simple problem with that. One, we're in the library at Easterhouse, two, Tommy Burns is dead and we're definitely not at Aviemore'. 'No, I've got it sorted out'. He then produces two pictures, one of himself at Aviemore looking really cold in an anorak and the other one of Tommy Burns where he's surprised him outside of Celtic... It's such a funny photograph. So, it's 'All right, okay'. So, there I am at this thing (this has nothing to do with... I've already interviewed him, I've already got what I wanted), but he's like, 'I can still take something from this guy'. It's incredible, so I draw Tommy Burns with him at Aviemore in this weird drawing." Miller, 2017.

⁹⁷¹ And again, some of the cheekiest people in these situations are the ones Miller has the best relationship with at the end. Miller, 2017.

⁹⁷² There are open days when the drawing is well under way and staff sessions that include ongoing conversations around access. The commissioner is part of this "messy" process. The presentation of the drawing to the commissioners, or "signing off" of the document, is an important stage, a time of some emotion that Miller considers as an agreement that the task has been fulfilled satisfactorily. This, for Miller, is when the reality of the next stage hits for the commissioners, where they ask, "...how do you get this out here, what would you recommend, how can we make this happen?" In response Miller, "usually [doesn't] say much. I say, 'There it is, there's the final thing, I want you to sign it. But have a look, any questions?' And nine times out of ten it's quite a silent process because they're just looking and talking amongst each other maybe, quietly, and they may be asking a couple of questions or maybe I'll point something out. But it's like I kind of leave them with it. It's a point where I step back a wee bit, let them decide what they think of it, how they feel about it." Miller, 2017. In addition, for most clients there are also formal communications during and after the project, for instance funding and project reports.

⁹⁷³ "They're big but detailed, they're encumbering and massive and yet intricate. There's all these paradoxes with them and all these problems that they face." Miller, 2017.

owners.⁹⁷⁴ This would be considered by Miller as another aspect of the dialectogram's 'ethnography', another layer of appropriation which potentially empowers the contributors,⁹⁷⁵ and another affiliation with the comic book, as, "once [comic books] are out there, people will use them in any way they want."⁹⁷⁶ The object of the dialectogram in turn reflects the ethnographic approach as the awkward and the in-between state of the drawing process mirrors and enacts the messy process of consultation.

5.3 || Wayfaring lines

5.3.1 || A meshwork of entangled lines

The dialectogram is articulated as a series of relational and temporal moments and the jammin process mobilised illustrational drawing as a group learning experience. In each instance, the characteristics detailed in chapter one: drawing, text and reproduction, are fused with the relational aspects of the work, and in each case I have posited that drawing is translated into a structuring concept or theoretical approach. In keeping with my practical methodology as a whole, I cite the Tuesday Drawing Studio again here, not as an exemplar of my research field but to dramatise a further conflation of participatory working methods with the act and artefact of illustrative drawing.⁹⁷⁷

⁹⁷⁴ Organisations have re-purposed the drawing as outdoor signage or made prints for display in order to keep the original safe. Miller sees this lack of control over outcomes as a sign of a part of him that's an illustrator and not a proper artist. Miller, 2017.

⁹⁷⁵ Miller doesn't think about the potential for reproduction when he's making the dialectogram, "because it needs to keep a certain madness to it, or a certain flow to it, from the physical side," Although a part of him still works in an editorial illustrator or cartoonist mode, eating his sandwiches over a drawing as if only a scanned and re-touched version will be seen. If Miller was concerned at the time of about how the dialectogram might look online for instance, he could lose its crucial awkwardness. Although their size and complexity renders them awkward for publication and Miller does not consider this during production, "I would love to be able to find a way of it folding out, for example, and just takes up your whole table and your space and it's like, "Jesus! It's big." Printing as a tablecloth is one option being explored by Miller. Miller, 2017.

⁹⁷⁶ The dialectogram is the client organisation's property and Miller is keen on people using the thing in that way, "that publication idea comes in: how [the dialectogram] is reproduced and how it has another life beyond my involvement. It's just as important to me and I'm always trying to tell... 'You have this now and you use it the way you want to. Let me know how but use it, do use it.'" Miller, 2017.

⁹⁷⁷ The bedrock of the TDS were the regular workshops where participants could pursue whatever design or art activities they wished, but occasionally a temporary group project would come about, devised by myself or by outside invitation, that participants could freely contribute to. In both these ways the project differed from the intensive, all-consuming platform created by Rollins and from Miller's practice, where the illustrator is embedded in an already existing community.

Here, the anthropologist Tim Ingold, a key thinker influencing Miller's theorisation of the dialectogram, provides a vocabulary of interconnected perspectives on social and spatial production that facilitate a reading of the TDS aesthetics. This vocabulary provides a more phenomenological framework for articulating engaged art programmes which I present as a companion to the critical perspectives on participatory art applied to the topic so far. In adopting this framework, my aim is to consider the TDS as drawing-like, in that it is concerned with lines of becoming or emergence and is a live illustration of social, spatial and temporal processes. The line is elemental to Ingold's formulation which he applies to differentiate between fundamental modes of inhabiting Earth, contrasting an itinerant, improvised and wayfaring line with a line that connects disparate points in order to colonise or territorialise (Figure 59).



Figure 59. Tim Ingold, *Figure 3.1 The meshwork of entangled lines and the network of connected points*, illustration published in *Lines: a brief history*, 2007, p. 82.

The TDS is pictured here as an intersection or knot of Ingold's wayfaring paths, the movement through time and space of multiple organisations, people, projects, places and objects. The overlap and entanglement of these constitute a meshwork,⁹⁷⁸ which Ingold presents in contrast to the ubiquitous 'network'. Therein, the line is reduced to a connector chaining together isolated points in space, an empirical connotation also present in De Certeau's 'strategy' (p.264). In contrast, within the fabric of the meshwork, various lines are, to paraphrase the painter Paul Klee, taken for a walk.⁹⁷⁹ To work with this relational conception of lines is to practise wayfaring and the subject

⁹⁷⁸ Tim Ingold, "Up, Across and Along," in *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007): 72-103. Ingold borrows the term meshwork from Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991): 117.

⁹⁷⁹ Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, trans. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972).

who follows these lines is described by Ingold as a wayfarer. The wayfarer is nomadic, not local, a place-maker not a settler and the wayfaring trajectory is a way of making productive and reflective the journey.⁹⁸⁰ Importantly, and unlike the figure of the tourist, the wayfarer has no final destination and, in this reading, is to be distinguished from the Nomadic Odyssean, the “tourist of the disempowered,” a condition Kester warns socially-engaged artists can too readily assume.

In Klee’s collection of teaching notes, first published as the *Pedagogical Sketchbook* in 1925, discussion of the line forms both a drawing exercise and an allegory for the journey of knowledge accumulation.⁹⁸¹ Klee identifies a spontaneous active line and a pre-ordained passive line which can be read in correspondence with Ingold’s itinerant wayfaring approach and its opposite, the point-connecting line as demarcation and colonisation.⁹⁸² To Ingold, Klee’s process of making that was more important than the end result is equivalent to the wayfarer’s path through space-time.⁹⁸³ The wayfaring inhabitant participates from within, laying a trail of life and contributing to its weave and texture in what can be viewed as a contiguous, but more yielding, translation of de Certeau’s description of counter-hegemonic tactics. Although the imagery overlaps with the influence of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on Rancière’s Aesthetic Separation essay, where the artwork is “a knot or a twist of sensations,”⁹⁸⁴ Ingold’s conceptualisation is concerned less with aesthetics but with establishing an ontology of becoming through an approach to making. This is where I posit the value of Ingold’s thinking when placed in conversation with critical art perspectives.

A path taken by the TDS participant Lightbox Willie provides a more practical view of wayfaring in relation to the TDS. His example also permits a view of a TDS outcome in terms of a reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘minor literature’ by the artist and theorist Simon O’Sullivan. The path involves several organisations and individuals, but particularly PeasPark which, as introduced earlier (introduction, p.22), was initiated during *Temporary Places*, the public art project in north Belfast that took place over the summer of 2013. ‘Community garden’ does not adequately describe PeasPark however, as the site continues to provide a theatrical space for a range of temporary and engaged architectural and artistic interventions, a mixture of celebratory re-occupation of public

⁹⁸⁰ Tim Ingold, “Up, Across and Along,” 101.

⁹⁸¹ Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook*.

⁹⁸² Mapping being one example. Ingold, “Up, Across and Along,” 75.

⁹⁸³ Ingold continues the art critic John Berger’s comparison of carpentry with drawing, developing equivalences between the two in order to bring out the, “itinerant, improvisatory and rhythmic qualities of making as a way of working with lines.” Tim Ingold, “The textility of making,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (January 2010): 99.

⁹⁸⁴ Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 4.

space, as in *Laburnum Pilot*, and durational ecological work, as with *Energy Café*.⁹⁸⁵ Its location in an area of urban waste ground described as an interface, a buffer zone between neighbourhoods aligned to opposing political positions, gives it an activist aim specific to its location. Considering the previous unlikelihood of horticultural and artistic activity on such a place, PeasPark can also be considered an ‘interface,’ in the terms of Rancière’s printed page: a potentially democratic space where dissensus can take place.

Lightbox Willie developed a series of sculptural installations in PeasPark through a chain of instances engendered by the TDS inhabitation of a meshwork. His process, or pathway, was instigated during a TDS drawing session at the site, a sketching trip which had as a subtext a narrative of presence and visibility in a variety of public or semi-public locations (Figure 60, left).⁹⁸⁶ After the session Willie worked up a series of exploratory drawings and developed a playful concept around their potential realisation as a monolithic sculpture at PeasPark, an idea Willie pitched more seriously to the PeasPark co-ordinators during the TDS PS² exhibition later in the year. The co-ordinators backed the proposal and over the summer Willie, with help from other participants, PeasPark, PS² and myself, completed the installation (Figure 60, centre). In my application of Ingold’s framework the process can be viewed as Willie’s wayfaring path intertwining with a small meshwork of organisations that ‘inhabited’ the city.

⁹⁸⁵ Artistic projects in PeasPark include short-form participatory works by the artist Anne Marie Taggart, temporary structures made by the architect Timothy Waddell, a bandstand made with recycled building materials by Paddy Bloomer and an ongoing sound installation by the artist Robin Price. From the TDS participants, McKeown’s constructed parody road signs are permanently sited on the plot, Byrne and O’Neill provided drawings for the rotating outdoor billboard posters and Lightbox Willie is, at the time of writing, working on a third sculpture. To facilitate this arena the principle organisers of PeasPark, Suzanne Thompson, Callie Persic and Peter Mutschler, are engaged in ongoing negotiation with residents, local activist groups, landowners and networks of arts and ecology organisations.

⁹⁸⁶ The proprietors of the shop, *Sina’s*, are supporters of PeasPark and can be viewed as part of the meshwork. The chickens (along with the occasional goose, duck and turkey) supply eggs for sale at *Sina’s* and are left to forage in PeasPark during the day.



Figure 60. From left: TDS participants sketching at PeasPark, Belfast 2015; Lightbox Willie, *The Big Chick* (installation documentation), 2015; Lightbox Willie, amulet workshop, PeasPark, 2015.

Although the sculpture, nicknamed *The Big Chick*, was far from a terminal point in the process,⁹⁸⁷ the outsider art aesthetic offers a supporting reading to the work as process. In O’Sullivan’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari, outsider art is an example of a ‘minor literature’ which deterritorialises the major language,⁹⁸⁸ de-territorialisation being in one sense a process of interrupting or rupturing a state apparatus that seeks to capture or contain aspects of the human sensorium.⁹⁸⁹ A minor practice is also always in process, like the wayfaring line, but here undergoes both a break with, and a utilisation of the old. For example, Miller’s use of a drawn dialect can be viewed as a minor literature in this framework, an abrogation or ‘stuttering’ of the major, that is: the dominant regime that demarcates territory. In Miller’s case the major literature is the colonising map, diagram or architectural plan which purports to give a definitive view of place.

Minor literature bends the major, “pushes up against it, forces its limits to a point of absurdity,”⁹⁹⁰ which is how O’Sullivan contends outsider art operates in relation to more established cultural forms. In my application I view these established forms as the multiple modes of public art discussed previously in relation to *The Vacuum* in chapter four, the grassroots political street art,

⁹⁸⁷ At the launch of the *Big Chick* Lightbox Willie facilitated his own open-air workshops, where participants were invited to make clay talismans to attach to the sculpture in a form of quasi-shamanic ceremony.

⁹⁸⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁹⁸⁹ In this sense the wayfaring path can also be seen as a ‘line of flight’ from the forces of territorialisation and reterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

⁹⁹⁰ Simon O’Sullivan, *Art encounters Deleuze and Guattari: thought beyond representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 73.

government sponsored re-imaging projects and critically-driven interventions associated with post-peace process Northern Ireland. I view the static subjectivities imposed by community arts as being transgressed in this way, as by adopting a wayfaring mode within the surrounding meshwork of the TDS, Willie, through the various activities he staged around the completed sculpture and his continued involvement, re-imagined his role from participant to artist and then to arts facilitator (Figure 60, right). This reflected O’Sullivan’s reading of minor literature in terms of ‘community’, where the usefulness of the term is not as a simple idea of a new people, but a movement in becoming. Additionally, if any affirmation of a new community does take place, “it is a bastard community of the sick and the frail, a mutant community always in progress.”⁹⁹¹

We can see the dual disruption and affirmation of the minor in terms of the line taken by Lightbox Willie. His artistic development confounded the expectations of the community art participant by proposing and enacting activities completely outside my plans for the TDS. His actions were an affirmative engagement with the physical spaces of each point of production of the sculpture: the Culture Shop, PS² and PeasPark.⁹⁹² His activities drew people into those spaces using humour to bend and unsettle, constituting, in O’Sullivan words, “a different mode of being in the world,” and a possibility for considering the wayfaring mode as, albeit in a gentle manner, a public art tactic that resists. One of the ramifications of this reading in terms of social engagement is that the small group gains more political effectivity by actively entangling its pathways within a wider meshwork. This provides a counterpoint to critique of much community arts (of which the TDS is exposed) as forming only modest, ameliorative gestures.⁹⁹³

5.3.2 || Good conduct

An analogy of the line can also be applied within engaged works to discuss the behaviour and motivations of the artist/facilitator. Relational conceptions of the line are well represented in drawing theory. The curator Catherine de Zegher establishes the line as a linking movement between an act of image production and the intersubjective possibilities of live performance,⁹⁹⁴ the

⁹⁹¹ Furthermore, “if there is a gathering of the new people, what they will have in common... is their failure (intentional or otherwise) to live up to the models offered (in fact forced upon them) by the major.” O’Sullivan, *Art encounters*, 78.

⁹⁹² Willie’s process, or wayfaring, can be seen as an outsider version of O’Sullivan’s concept of fictioning. In this the artist, in order to resist capital’s colonisation of time, space and the unconscious, maintains a constant state of creative emergence, living imaginatively in order to, “produce ‘new’ landscapes [and] new platforms for dreaming.” Strategies of fictioning include configuring new subjectivities, creating rupture, and accessing distinct psychological stages throughout one’s life. O’Sullivan, “Myth-Science,” 85.

⁹⁹³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 23.

⁹⁹⁴ The drawn line as, “[b]orn from an outward gesture linking inner impulses and thoughts to the other through the

line, “draw[ing] on relation as relation draws on line.”⁹⁹⁵ Similar elucidations occurred in my participatory studies. For instance, Melanie Ward observed a connection in the interview situation that related to drawing, “This is imaginary here, but there is a line between people looking at each other. And, I suppose, a line in a space. And to me that's sort of drawing.”⁹⁹⁶ When considered along with these relational articulations of drawing my application of Ingold’s wayfarer model can be given further relevance to engaged practices.

Within a meshwork all participants, including the facilitator, create pathways. In conceptualising themselves as conduit or channels, practitioners further present the line as flowing through their own ‘synaesthetic system’ (chapter one, p.32). Considering the draughtsperson as a conduit further connects concepts attached to both drawing and engaged art practice. The former raises the concept of ‘ductus’ as the flow from the body to the inscribed image.⁹⁹⁷ Ductus was a medieval method of writing conceptualised as *way through* a composition in contrast to the imposition of a composition which Ingold invokes to deepen his analogy between travelling and mark-making.⁹⁹⁸ The illustrator in this framing is not the origin of the ductus but part of the conveyance of that ductus. The conception bears similarity to Leroi-Gourhan’s graphism, the writing/drawing that evolved from the integration of a telling of stories and drawing of lines, where the lines are traces left by manual gestures that accompany the flow of spoken narrative, itself an iteration of a previous telling (chapter one, p.49).⁹⁹⁹

This is evidenced by Rollins, where drawing as glossolalia, “is about being in a place that is not about you. You become an instrument for something that cannot be articulated any other way.”¹⁰⁰⁰

The Pentecostal version of ductus that I propose was enacted by Rollins is underwritten by a

touching of a surface with repeated graphic marks and lines.” Catherine de Zegher, “A Century Under The Sign of Line: Drawing and its extension (1910-2010),” in *On Line: Drawing Through The Twentieth Century*, Cornelia Butler and Catherine de Zegher (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 23.

⁹⁹⁵ De Zegher, “Under The Sign,” 23.

⁹⁹⁶ She added, “[I]t's actually just the line that's important. Whether it's of a musical line or it's an imaginary line or a physical line, or no line. You know, just a thought of a line... I think, to me drawing is just sort of everywhere and everything.” Ward, 2016.

⁹⁹⁷ Van Alphen, “Looking at Drawing,” 62-64.

⁹⁹⁸ Ingold, “Up, Across and Along,” 95.

⁹⁹⁹ For Ingold, in common with both Leroi-Gourhan and McLuhan, technology is viewed as further distancing communication from that originary flow of ductus, first “stilled as handwriting,” which gave way to print. The typewriter also broke the connection between, “the manual gesture and its graphic trace.” The punctual movements of keys unrelated to the marks engraved on them, leaving an *impression* on the page, rather than a trace. Ingold here laments that the dotted letterline of print does not go for a walk. The, “perfect negation of the signature that comes above it.” As the modern writer does not leave a trail, so the modern reader does not follow one, reading *across* the page rather than *along* it and joining *up* components in a hierarchy akin to an assembly line. Ingold, “Up, Across and Along,” 93-96.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Romaine, “A Conversation with Tim Rollins,” 9.

structure of faith wherein, “you become an instrument,” a framework where the artist can be seen as the ‘pastor’ and the K.O.S. his conduit. Although the workshop can be a device to deliberately destabilise authorship, as Bishop suggests, Rollins was the instigator and steered the work in the Art and Knowledge Workshop, delegating the drawing to a micro-community of his own making where the students were appendages to the commissioner or teacher. The conception also compares to Miller’s practice, where the artist accepts an articulation of both his ethical experience as flowing through the development of the dialectogram and his physical presence in the community in terms of channelling his encounters there.¹⁰⁰¹

However, Miller’s conscientious consultative conduit is influenced by a secular ethnographic methodology. Here, the illustrator as a conduit for a group or community, seen as the ‘hand’ of another person or other people, positions themselves in-between the identification of a social need, or impoverishment, and a potential solution. In this reading Miller’s self-presentation as a cartoonist, with its connotations of lower status, is indicative of his task to mediate information between a public and an institution rather than to create an autonomous art work.¹⁰⁰² It is a position that can still be ascribed to certain socially-engaged art practices. O’Beirn was described as an honest broker between participants during the *Some Things About Belfast* project and it is of note that drawing also played a role in that instance as a signifier of the absence of an aestheticizing agenda (chapter four, p.215).¹⁰⁰³

The artist as channel is also an image in the collection of essays *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) where the curator Nicolas Bourriaud posits contemporary art as already, “an activity consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions and objects,”¹⁰⁰⁴ the artist “produc[ing] first and foremost, relations between people and the world, by means of aesthetic

¹⁰⁰¹ “What I had to learn in the past few years is how to put those two heads on at the same time and have them co-exist rather than be an option... I'd been working as a researcher. That's where the ethnographic experience came from. That was the day job... to pay the bills. And then the illustration and the art happened at night. It was a Batman thing; it was a double life... So, when I was doing this, I was using a lot of life experience but also my ethnographic experience and knowledge just was flowing through it. But I wasn't switching on the levers in my head that were ethical, they were aware of ethical situations and issues of representation...” Miller, 2017.

¹⁰⁰² To an extent, Miller acknowledges the possibility of being a conduit for the people that he’s working with but is under no illusion that he is the arbiter of this process. “There's an element of that, that I'm trying to be a conduit to some extent. But there's no question, it's my style, it's my head it's going through. I don't make any pretence to be this disinterested observer who simply charts stuff. I'm not a medium - or maybe I am because mediums were all charlatans and I guess I'm a charlatan in some respects. [laughs]” Miller, 2017.

¹⁰⁰³ The artist as mediator was a central conception in socially-engaged arts in the UK in the 2000s, as articulated by the UK-based independent think tank Comedia in 2002. Ailbhe Murphy, “Tower Songs: Critical Coordinates for Collaborative Practice” (PhD thesis, Ulster University, 2010), 153.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002), 10.

objects.”¹⁰⁰⁵ Due to this formulation of art as a state of encounter, the ‘place of art’, the exhibition, gives rise to an, “arena of exchange” which must be judged on aesthetic criteria.¹⁰⁰⁶ In this, “space display,”¹⁰⁰⁷ the individual becomes a flow or a “distributive channel” foregrounding the artist’s bodily presence in relational settings.¹⁰⁰⁸ Applied to a broader context of participatory practice, for instance within socially-engaged arts, Suzanne Lacy suggests the effectiveness of relational practices can only be understood, and must be assessed, on the quality of these relationships,¹⁰⁰⁹ and Claire Bishop, although focussing on participatory works with a disruptive antagonism as their method, also positions the question of the quality of the relations as the seat of the work’s effectivity.¹⁰¹⁰

Contributing to that quality are the models of engagement the practitioner establishes and within which they situate themselves. These models are projected from the subjectivities, such as pastor, ethnographer or ecologist (Rollins, Miller and Plant respectively) that the illustrator/facilitator ascribes to their position, establishing the nature of the conduit through which the ductus is channelled. Considering these identities as part of the work affects the evaluation of the emancipatory aspects of social art practices and necessitates a reflection on my own subjectivity within the TDS. For instance, in the introduction I related the instigation of the programme to my experiences with *The Vacuum* (p.3) where the TDS can be viewed as my attempt to replicate a kinship just as Rollins accepted his motivation to create a ‘second family’.

In addition to considering the influence of my previous fraternal frameworks on the TDS, it is also of value to consider my instigation of the programme as a shoring up of an identity as an illustrator which I may have been failing to continually re-constitute through the actual practice of drawing. My ‘drawing’ was delegated to the group in this formulation, who could be considered as the illustrator’s hand or as an extension of the commissioner’s body. In this sense, although the TDS focus was on non-expert creativity appears to confirm the programme as a community arts project in a lineage of experiments with alternative education (as illustrated with the example of Lightbox Willie’s installation), the TDS is nevertheless open to critique as the establishment of a situation centred on my own insecurities.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Art is a form of barter in this schema. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 42.

¹⁰⁰⁶ These being: an analysis of the coherence of the form; the symbolic value of “world” it presents to us; and the image of human relations reflected in it. Bourriaud, 18.

¹⁰⁰⁷ “[T]he space of interaction, the space of openness that ushers in all dialogue.” Bourriaud, 44.

¹⁰⁰⁸ For Bourriaud, “[I]t is the socius [...] that is the true exhibition site for artists of the current generation... less as society’s users and inhabitants, more as distributive channels through which info and products flow.” Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002): 65. Quoted in Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 207.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Lacy and Wettrich, “What it Takes,” 222-235.

¹⁰¹⁰ Bishop, “Antagonism,” 78.

Although influential texts accentuate the *naïve* teacher as a method of more egalitarian knowledge accumulation,¹⁰¹¹ there is a risk in engaged-arts practice of the artist constructing a situation of learning centred on themselves as a student. This creates a one-way class transgression where the practitioner's freedom to be a student again is lacking a reciprocal effect in terms of the participant's social mobility.¹⁰¹² Bishop identifies this characteristic within examples of pedagogic practices wherein the artist seeks to position themselves as an amateur, to be a student again or to learn from their students. The artist surrounding themselves with a group of people outside of the arts mainstream can also be viewed as a retreat from critical glare,¹⁰¹³ as with the artist Liam Gillick's critique of Andy Warhol's Factory as a reflection of an inability to engage with contemporaries like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. To Gillick, Warhol's insecurity led to this gathering of people around himself, the creation of a "phantom group" in which to operate, rather than risk the disagreements that would arise from engaging with peers.¹⁰¹⁴

The premises of Bishop and Gillick are useful for reflexive responses to community work. For instance, acknowledging my own possible turn away from a peer group to surround myself with people who I perhaps subconsciously presumed would not critically challenge my authority, motivations or methods. Yet, in this respect, the aimlessness, messiness and unstructured aspects of the TDS worked to mitigate this potential, rescuing it from merely embodying my insecurities.¹⁰¹⁵ This messiness facilitated participants viewing the programme as a channel for their own interests and myself as a useful conduit, where my connection to organisations and knowledge institutions were available to be 'gamed'. In this reading my risk-aversion and lack of ambition in terms of the possible outcomes from the TDS was superseded by the more daring approach participants took to their own artworks. For instance, they situated their works in public places, added performative aspects to creatively satirise activities I had planned and gave their own practices unambiguously

¹⁰¹¹ Such as Rancière's *Ignorant Schoolmaster* and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (discussed on p.251), and also in the philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend's "epistemological anarchism." Feyerabend recounts teaching a group of students with mixed abilities as revealing the narrowness of his knowledge. "The wonderful stories I had so far told to my more or less sophisticated audience might just be dreams, reflections of the conceit of a small group who had succeeded in enslaving everyone else with their ideas. Who was I to tell these people what and how to think? I did not know their problems though I knew they had many." Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London and New York: Verso, 1993), 264.

¹⁰¹² Responses to critique of Rollins/K.O.S. "What are you doing here?" My status as an educated outsider coming into the area. Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 130.

¹⁰¹³ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 266.

¹⁰¹⁴ Gillick, "In Conversation," 10 May 2012.

¹⁰¹⁵ In contrast to Rollin's vision for the Art and Knowledge Workshop and the clarity and consistency within which Miller views his practice, the extent to which I conducted the group varied. Although I planned occasional group projects, mostly participants wanted to work on their own ideas, or have me teach them the skills needed to realise those ideas.

activist agendas.¹⁰¹⁶ Many of these contributed to extending the impact of the programme outside the workshop where remaining in the studio space minimised possibilities for intervention in public space. In this way it was the participants that contributed most clearly to the antagonism necessary for effective social engagement.

5.3.3 || **Reproducing the line**

A key difference in circumstances between the case studies and the TDS is that Rollins and Miller's programmes stemmed from external aims and began with pre-established 'communities'. Rollins aimed to improve literacy in a community of Puerto Rican school students and Miller is commissioned to consult with often at-risk or marginalised groups linked to specific institutions and locations. The TDS however, was not aimed at a specific people and the community of solitudes described in chapter four was unforeseen (p.232). Although bearing some similarity in approach to Claire Bishop's European tradition of participation,¹⁰¹⁷ more obtuse and narrative-driven than what the historian identifies as the clear ethical and emancipatory priorities of US 'social-engagement',¹⁰¹⁸ the TDS can be perceived as outside both models but with characteristics of each. Additionally, the programme was not a response to an externally identified social need and although it had fleeting similarities to many of the strands of participatory art articulated so far, any effective political engagement in the terms sketched above was generated more by the influence of partner organisations and the actions of individual participants than by my design. In not being fully committed to any one strand of participatory engagement however, the TDS risked being ineffective in all of them, and my final abstraction of the line is therefore applied to the programme as a method of evaluating its effectivity outside of these strands.

¹⁰¹⁶ For instance, McKeown produced several murals for a homelessness rights organisation over the period of his TDS attendance.

¹⁰¹⁷ Bishop identifies the split in approach between Europe and the United States in the respective art practices emerging from both regions in the 1990's reflecting their continental and analytical philosophical discourse traditions. the North Americans taking a more pragmatic approach to participation and the Europeans, a more romantic and narrative path. Referring to European and US practices respectively, Bishop summarises, "The resulting difference is through forms that operate through fiction and opacity and those that are expressed unambiguously (through interviews, statistics etc.)" Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 200.

¹⁰¹⁸ Respectively: an authored lineage of participatory art that is disruptive and interventionist; and a de-authored lineage which is constructive, affirmative, ameliorative and "embraces collective creativity." In both, "the issue of participation becomes increasingly inextricable from the question of political commitment" (Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 74). Such precariousness occurs in many activist, dialogical or community artworks making it necessary that dialogical projects be looked at as separate cases (Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 131). Activist or community arts, with primary focus on transformative experience for participants, can be concerned less with the fraught interfaces with contemporary critical art practice. Unfortunately, for Bishop, this can lead to community art works entering, "a realm of useful, ameliorative and ultimately modest gestures, rather than the creation of singular acts that leave behind them a troubling wake" (Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 23).

Throughout this thesis my definition of illustration has been dependant on a drawing destined for reproduction. It follows that if I conceptualise the knot of wayfaring lines that comprised the TDS in terms of an illustrative drawing, I must also address its relation to reproducibility. This reproduction can then be taken into consideration as an effective component, just as the effectivity of illustration is linked to its reprographic dissemination and potential for subsequent unintended re-formulation by readers. To this end I view the TDS in terms of a ‘commoning’, not in the sense of working in the community, but as the continued formation of a commons.¹⁰¹⁹ The political economists Massimo de Angelis and Stavros Stavrides describe the commons as a common pool of resources and the community that sustains that pool, whilst the environmental anthropologist Patrick Bresnihan views the commons purely in terms of an ongoing set of social relations between people and things, that is, the commons is “socially and materially productive,” producing new social subjects and “vital and nourishing bonds of trust.”¹⁰²⁰ Connecting both viewpoints is the centrality of the verb-sense, ‘to common’, which for De Angelis and Stavrides is, “the social process that creates and reproduces the commons.”¹⁰²¹ The commons is then further understood as a process of commoning, an act of maintaining or reproducing itself.¹⁰²²

Considering the commons this way accentuates the relational without ascribing the shared identity implied by ‘community’. Whoever is involved in the commons is a commoner and there is no community outside of the commoning activity. Furthermore, being a commoner is producing subjectivity, where, “commoners learn how to relate differently and recognise unknown potentials,”¹⁰²³ and commoning can therefore be seen as a making process allied to another of Ingold’s frameworks. This is the wayfarer’s engagement with a ‘textility of making’, a proposal for a model of making processes as the creation of forms of things from a field of force and flows of materials.¹⁰²⁴ ‘Textility’ in this sense is a rejection of the Aristotelian *hylomorphic* ontology where form (*morphe*) is created from matter (*hyle*), defined by Ingold as the rigid imposition on matter of a pre-decided form. The dominance of *hylomorphism* gave rise to an ontology of technology and

¹⁰¹⁹ Patrick Bresnihan and Seoidín O’Sullivan, “Seating System,” *Fugitive Papers* no. 5 (2013): 4-5.

¹⁰²⁰ Bresnihan and O’Sullivan, “Seating System,” 4-5. Bresnihan’s example is Seoidín O’Sullivan’s *Seating System* (2013), an installation of modular seats influenced by the artist’s involvement in activism and research into critical pedagogies. This aimed to create a physical and relational space for empowerment, possibility and commoning.

¹⁰²¹ An Architektur, “On the Commons,” 2. In commoning, for Stavros Stavrides, “...we have to reject the exclusionary gesture which understands space as belonging to a certain community. To think of space in the form of the commons means not to focus on its quantity, but to see it as a form of social relationality providing the ground for social encounters.” An Architektur, “On the Commons,” 16.

¹⁰²² Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides, “On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides,” interview by An Architektur, *e-flux journal*, no. 10 (June-August 2010).

¹⁰²³ Bresnihan and O’Sullivan, “Seating System,” 4-5.

¹⁰²⁴ Ingold, “The Textility of Making,” 91–102. I view Ingold’s “textility of making” as a correlate to Walter Benjamin’s perception of the vernacular object as forming a site from which from which the viewer can look out, and in relation to Bourriaud’s comments on the *socius*, as an information channel, being the fundamental site of concern for artists.

suppressed what Ingold describes as a previous ontology of textility. The concept also builds on Klee's integrated theory of knowledge acquisition and working with materials, where drawing is a fundamental gesture both conceptually and physically. Here the process of making is more important than the end result, and any resultant artefact is of value as the possessor of the actions bestowed upon it.¹⁰²⁵

Wayfaring, working with this relational conception of lines, can be further considered as a making activity of the weaving, rather than the *hylomorphic* approach. This would appear to favour such spiritually informed conceptualisations as Rollins's view of the K.O.S. paintings as a manifestation of the community of the Art and Knowledge Workshop and to further the dialectogram as a trace of a series of relational interactions. Both Rollins's and Miller's practices however, focussed on the production of an object which is then made central to the efficacy of the relational aspect of the programmes. Rollins afforded the Workshop paintings a transformative agency through a mixture of market value, Marxist perspectives on de-alienated labour and Pentecostal mysticism; while Miller frames his drawings within a professionally defined ethical tradition in addition to incorporating aspects of Ingold's ontology and emancipatory social theories such as those of de Certeau.

Miller also relates both the object of the dialectogram and the assemblage of people during and after its production to the sociologist Bruno Latour's description of a 'Thing', a title derived from the political assemblies of Medieval pre-Christian Germanic peoples.¹⁰²⁶ The Thing is both those who assemble because they are concerned with an issue (that is they disagree), and the cause of their concern itself. That the disagreement is one and the same as those who share it offers to Latour a conception of an integrated site of political dissensus and aesthetics. "An aesthetic of matters-of-

¹⁰²⁵ For Ingold, this differs from the view of anthropologist Alfred Gell and social theorist Bruno Latour whom Ingold interprets as appealing to an "agency" of objects, rather than to a "vibrancy of materials." Within Latour's actor-network theory all actants (people, objects and processes) are treated as equal contributors to a social situation and "social forces," are done away with. In addition, Latour privileges the network: "whenever you wish to define an entity (an agent, an actant, an actor) you have to deploy its attributes, that is, its network," and its reverse, "an actor is nothing but a network, except that a network is nothing but actors [...]. Here again, network is the concept that helps you redistribute and reallocate action." (Bruno Latour, "Networks, Societies, Spheres: Reflections of an Actor-network Theorist," keynote speech presented at the International Seminar on Network Theory: Network multidimensionality in the digital age, Los Angeles, 19 February 2010). In terms of Gell, his attribution of agency to artefacts resides in the intention human agents have enrolled within them, whereas in Ingold's schema objects are possessed by the action bestowed upon them, "they are swept up in the generative currents of the world." (Ingold's examples range from the kite to the cat-flap.) Ingold, "The Textility of Making," 95. Ingold also rejects Gell's "abduction of agency," in that neither human nor object are "agents" but rather all are "hives of activity." Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

¹⁰²⁶ Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2005):14-43, 23.

fact,”¹⁰²⁷ not of the beautiful and self-contained,¹⁰²⁸ where the Thing is not an art object but offers, “paramount examples of hybrid forums and agoras.”¹⁰²⁹ The Thinging model of the knot of lines that Miller applies to the dialectogram fits a visual practice whose concern is primarily with the political.¹⁰³⁰ In comparison, the TDS was not tasked toward such clear socio-political objectives as Miller’s dialectograms, (nor toward the production of art, and artists, as was Rollins’s Art and Knowledge Workshop, which could equally be said to convene an assembly around a particular concern).¹⁰³¹

Instead, the particular efficiency of the TDS was its accidental receptivity to commoning, a continued reproduction of the knot of wayfaring paths that the programme convened. This stemmed from a number of conditions akin to Miller’s view of illustration as creating a new set of problems. Here, the initial lack of projected outcomes, both political and material, enabled participants to bring their own conceptions to the identity of the programme and I develop on a selection of these in my conclusion. Additionally, I did not exclude those who could be disruptive to the programme’s own survival (as Bishop critiqued relational practices of the 1990s such as Rirkrit Tiravanija’s) and participants occasionally pushed the boundaries of what the partner organisation, New Lodge Arts, considered reasonable behaviour. Although at times there was antagonism at other times there were breakthroughs, such as NLA trusting certain participants to become keyholders and thereby enabling what I conceptualise as a ‘reproduction’ of the programme. In this instance, a collection of long-term participants who had long been seeking more autonomy to pursue their interests began an evening session centred on music that ran three times a week without the need for a ‘professional’ facilitator.

Like Klee’s spontaneous active line a new community art initiative had begun along the old model of grassroots self-motivation and without the need for an authoring (or authorising) external artist figure. It became apparent then, that the gradual superfluousness of the conducting facilitator was

¹⁰²⁷ Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik,” 23.

¹⁰²⁸ Latour’s example of a beautiful self-contained aesthetic is a Leonardo da Vinci drawing. Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik,” 23.

¹⁰²⁹ Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik,” 23-24.

¹⁰³⁰ Mitch Miller, “An unruly parliament of lines: the dialectogram as artefact and process of social engagement” (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2016).

¹⁰³¹ The closest I came to giving the TDS a political direction was when I collected thoughts on the programme after its first year: “Two tenets inform the Tuesday Drawing Studio. The first is the focus on drawing rather than 'art'. In doing this, the programme hopes to bypass the hierarchies inherent in art production and to share drawing's autonomy in relation to visual disciplines. The second is the commitment to be an ongoing, zero/low budget venture with no external obligation to deliver outputs. The Tuesday Drawing Studio seeks to circumvent the constraints of publicly funded ('community') arts projects and in doing so, form a consistent presence for those who take part.” Duncan Ross, “Tuesday Drawing Studio – a description,” unpublished document, 22 November 2014.

itself a necessary process for the evolution of the programme. In this sense it was the participants more than myself that fulfilled Bourriaud's call for art to fight against the commodification of space and time by creating new models of human relations. Participants had gathered round a practice (drawing), engaged with the underlying relational structure of the meeting-space itself and re-inscribed their own model, retaining the structure but leaving behind the restrictions imposed by my focus on drawing. They then addressed, to a degree, the problem with drawing as a failure of real action by using the TDS as a waystation toward their own workshop, own projects and a greater degree of independence.

After a period of change including the temporary closure of the Culture Shop, the long-term participants were invited by New Lodge Arts to continue both their music-centred evening session and to reintroduce a Tuesday workshop session.¹⁰³² At the time of writing, the gathering maintains an existence, albeit fragile at times, that continues after my involvement, subtly transforming the group and also how New Lodge Arts relates to participants and programmes. If the TDS was effective then, it was with the eventual redundancy of the TDS and the programme can then be viewed as forming an intermedial stage for those participants who sought to alter their living conditions, albeit on a humble scale. Therefore, although I had initially envisaged the TDS as concerning drawing as image-making and a manual activity, the achievement is perhaps better perceived as the facilitation of a knot of people and pathways that constitute a commons.

My analysis in this case has indicated that the effectivity of illustrative drawing within engaged practice rests on mediating a break from the practice of illustrative drawing itself. My case studies demonstrate more nuanced approaches dependant on context and participants, however, certain self-subverting tactics can be deployed, together or individually. For instance, the artist can extract drawing from the production process of commodities as with the dialectogram or can activate the intermedial as a transformative method as with jammin. They can overturn the deferment of action to a future time (as the diagram was critiqued in chapter one, p.61) and can use illustration to think beyond the restrictions that illustration itself imposes as was my intention with the discussion of the TDS.

¹⁰³² The music workshop continued after the original TDS drew to a close in March 2018 and when New Lodge Arts had to close The Culture Shop due to funding cutbacks. The participants then independently organised a new venue for their sessions in a nearby library. The Culture Shop subsequently re-opened and from January 2019 four of the participants have been continuing the Tuesday meet-ups.

Summary

In this final chapter I provided evidence of using illustrative drawing within dialogical, social or engaged arts practices in terms of methods and conceptual frameworks. In Rollins's Art and Knowledge Workshop illustrative drawing was a method of group learning and generating material. In this case drawing was an in-between phase, a nebulous aspect within the critical discussion of the work as a totality, but can be perceived as having an intermediary role in the production of communities and artworks. Conversely for Miller, drawing is the central act and artefact of the dialectogram methodology and the 'illustrator' is a distinct role particularly suited to ethnographic research. The comic book is a recognisable dialect and has a formal practicality which Miller links to the condition of mutuality between researcher and participant. In this process the physical presence of the illustrator is tasked toward giving a forum and they can be understood as a channel, echoing earlier articulations in the thesis of drawing itself as a conduit or method of translation (chapter one, p.36). To provide additional philosophical frames of reference for participatory illustration, I considered the TDS: as a knot of lines in an abstract sense; in terms of the conduct of the facilitator; and as a 'reproduction' of the 'line' as a method of evaluation. From this perspective based on personal relations, social interconnectivity and duration, I proposed that the TDS can itself be usefully considered as a reproducible intertextual drawing.

Conclusion

1 || Re-inscribing community

In my introduction, I established two broad characteristics corresponding to my methodological and theoretical approaches and which distinguish my study from available research. My methodology centred on including practices across critical arts and participatory culture in order to identify the operations of illustration in social or relational circumstances. My theoretical approach was then to investigate the congruity between the aesthetics of illustration and their social-political effects, as within the nascent field of illustration and social engagement participation has not yet been addressed from this perspective.¹⁰³³ The result was the identification of three recurring conditions of drawing: the re-inscription of community and solitude; the necessary acknowledgement of multiple gazes when considering the illustration within participatory works; and an attribution of the intermedial (including the interfacial and the in-between) that is afforded to aspects of participatory practices incorporating drawing.

My intention in this concluding text is to summarise each of these conditions in consideration of practitioners applying drawing in novel forms of participatory art. Firstly, the use of illustrative drawing to re-inscribe self and community can be viewed as particularly valuable as it necessitates an acknowledgement of the inter-relationship of politics and aesthetics that Rancière places at the centre of participatory art. Many of the works I addressed differ from Rancière's definition of 'engaged art' practices, as they do not consciously distance themselves from the community-to-come, the social situation intended for transformation. Rather, I concerned myself with cultural production across a spectrum of 'effectiveness', that is, with illustration used in participatory actions with differing social-political effects and intentions.

To begin I looked at drawing as an act of mediation between self, world and other to find corollaries with Rancière's distribution of the sensible, which sees the political formulations of community as concerning access and denial of sensory experience. For Serge Tisseron this social function begins at the infant stage, where drawing/writing is an instinctive act that negotiates separation of self and world. The adult manuscripting process in this formulation is a re-enactment of the infant's primal mark-making, in Tisseron's conceptualisation, a direct bodily communion with the world. Drawing

¹⁰³³ I cited Miller and Vormittag in this instance (introduction, p.7).

could then be considered as an extension into the environment of the boundaries of the body's 'synaesthetic system', that which Susan Buck-Morss articulates as the porous border of the human sensorium between self and world that is itself the site of aesthetic experience. I considered this thinking alongside participant works, for instance Niamh Clarke's project for the student study which applied drawing and reprographics as imperfect methods of duplication, where the metamorphosis of the photographic image destabilised a clearly identifiable authorship and the deeming of something lost in that 'translation' also conveyed a social and subjective displacement in terms of self and community.

In relation to writing, I cited Jacques Derrida's conception of drawing as at once re-inscribing the presence of the draughter and drawing's own *puissance*, an act that for Hélène Cixous creates a space for experiencing the fleeting appearance of a 'truth'. In reference to André Leroi-Gourhan, I furthered drawing as gesturing toward an absent but more holistic oral-haptic communication. In this framework, drawing can be seen to enact a pre-verbal or non-verbal condition as a manual system and, in parallel, to mourn the absence of what Leroi-Gourhan describes as a prehistoric multi-sensory communication system (or for Marshal McLuhan: a lost tribal cosmic space that preceded the compartmentalisation of language by print). In this way, I viewed two drawings by Tuesday Drawing Studio participants as concerned with a return to the hand-made magical artefact as an attempt to reach back to seemingly lost or absent ways of being and communicating.

From this line of inquiry, I then questioned what was being re-inscribed when drawing becomes illustration, that is, when it is aligned to a text and mechanically reproduced. My proposal here was that although the drawing process continually reconstructed the subjectivity of the draughter, the function of the illustration concerned the re-inscription of a community, that is, a shared sensory experience. I then observed the roles given to illustration in relation to this function, where practitioners would either faithfully invest in a perceived ability of illustration to delimit a new community or use illustration subversively: to expose the aesthetics of community production or signal the absence of a politicised idea of 'community'.

Aisling O'Beirn's awareness of the stylistic affectations of drawing as themselves imposing an aesthetic (a particular distribution of the sensible) on their arena of deployment, was toward interrupting the re-inscription of any politicised sense of community. Here, although the artist figure is de-centred to become a broker rather than a creator, figurative illustration is retained to signify

that such a de-authorisation has taken place. The de-aestheticised design strategy denies the drawing process as a re-inscription of the artist, creating space for the subject's own gaze whilst protecting individual participant identities under an illustrated flag of communitylessness. In Miller's variation the marginalised drawn dialect of comic style-illustration invokes the material of the comic itself as, like the zine, a point of exchange that creates a temporary conversation, a unit of 'participatory illustration', that Miller enacts in his research encounters.¹⁰³⁴

Considering drawing as a re-inscription of the draughter (or to signal their absence), and illustration as a re-inscription of community (or its absence), the activities combined can be said to embody what Rancière describes as the, "tensions of being together and being apart."¹⁰³⁵ For Rancière, effective art engages this tension by making its subject that of the aesthetic construction of community. Effectivity, as with critical art, is part of the ongoing response to the representational regime, a regime of concordance between sense and sense, between, "the texture of the work and its efficiency."¹⁰³⁶ For Rancière there are two ways of moving beyond this: oppose the mediation of representation with a being together without mediation (as Plato's *choros* concerns the inclusivity of the carnival rather than the separation of stage and audience); or an opposite movement, an aesthetic separation that breaks the link between cause and effect.¹⁰³⁷ If illustration is deployed within this definition it would need to reveal the necessary separation of the work from the direct construction of a community.¹⁰³⁸ In this instance, the human subject is viewed as in solitude, a dis-identified person who has succumbed to two separations, first from a previous community

¹⁰³⁴ "Going back to the comic side here, you know, comics were exchanged, they were talked over, they were argued over, they were discussed in a sort of democratic open way, albeit with all the problems that came with being part of a mass industry. And I think illustrators operate in that area, they are at home there, they are great collaborators within that sphere and we are well-equipped for it. Anyone who's illustrated is equipped for it, it's just we need to recognise it ourselves and decide if we want to do that. And I think that's the thing at the moment with the wider field of, would you call it 'socially-engaged illustration, social practice illustration'? Whatever you call it, 'participatory illustration', I think where we're all deciding how we want to do this right now, how far down certain lines you want to go. But that's quite a powerful place to be in." Miller, 2017.

¹⁰³⁵ Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation," 5.

¹⁰³⁶ Rancière, 5. The illusion of this concordance is what necessitates a 'break' from representation, the depiction of which Rancière views as central to works of 'critical' art. However, these critical works are in turn subject to his own critique as they nonetheless maintain a form of representation in their equation of aesthetic rupture with social rupture.

¹⁰³⁷ Rancière, 7. The "aesthetic break" presents aesthetics as a collapse of that harmony of correspondence. Rancière articulates a common appearance of critical art as an attempt to plug the gap between two usages of community: the community of sense of the work and the community that is supposed to emerge from it. The political aim is defined through, "a clash of heterogeneous elements [toward] prompting a change in perception," an attempt to include the aesthetic break in a continuity of representation. This approach is ineffective, for Rancière, as there is no way of calculating the impact of any perceptual change on the viewer's future actions. Amongst Rancière's examples in this respect are Martha Rosler's series of photo-collages that include *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-1972) and Charles Ray's kinetic sculpture *Revolution counterrevolution* (1990) which is representative of a "self-neutralisation" taking place in 1990s critical art. Rancière, 9. (See also introduction, p.16).

¹⁰³⁸ I view this as an "art for art's sake" for the era of participation with a proximity to Clement Greenberg's call for a Marxist avant-garde art which must remain autonomous from the kitsch of commodity culture.

engendered by shared experience, then, within the new ‘aesthetic community’, whose solitary members are aware of the dislocation that comes with the acquisition of an aesthetic gaze.

In establishing this formula for effective art Rancière makes a parallel between two works, Seurat’s *Bathers at Asnières* (1884) and *Je & Nous* (2003-2008) a contemporary project by the French architectural group Urban Encampment.¹⁰³⁹ These are not presented as paradigms of effective art but because they capture a tension, “between two statuses of artistic practice: the work as means for producing an effect, and as the reality of that effect.”¹⁰⁴⁰ For Rancière, *Bathers* depicts the new gaze afforded to the working classes by a leisure time that emerged in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴¹ This new configuration of the sensible is disorientating, as not being a worker any more is not being fit for a place in life, resulting from the separation taking place when a worker becomes a viewer.¹⁰⁴² In this framework *Bathers* shows the resultant ‘solitude of being together’ as an ‘aesthetic community’ of dis-identified persons, the same condition the painting bestows upon the spectator.¹⁰⁴³

This emancipated gaze continues for contemporary new communities. In *Je & Nous*, Urban Encampment proposed constructing a public place of solitude in the Parisian suburb of Sevran which was constructed in the 1970s to house new immigrant populations. Although, “extremely useless, fragile and non-productive,”¹⁰⁴⁴ the planned building would nevertheless provide for the residents a temporary separation from any restrictive and received identities attached to their communities. This “possibility of being apart,” was for Rancière, the “dimension of social life which is precisely made impossible by the ordinary life in those suburbs.”¹⁰⁴⁵ The presentation of *Je & Nous* as a series of video portraits and architectural proposals show emergent forms of socialisation connecting the work, for Rancière, to the depiction of the workers in *Bathers at*

¹⁰³⁹ Critical practices such as Urban Encampment’s sought to escape the museum, they don’t make objects but, “provoke modifications of the space of everyday life, giving rise to new forms of relations.” Rancière, 5.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Rancière, 4.

¹⁰⁴¹ The workers’ gaze is directed toward the opposite bank of the River Seine, where the established bourgeoisie leisure time is depicted by Seurat in *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884).

¹⁰⁴² Rancière, 1.

¹⁰⁴³ For Rancière the condition of dis-identification is an aesthetic experience which, “has a political effect to the extent that the loss of destination it presupposes disrupts the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations.” This is not political as in the adoption of a new ideology, but in the sense that the nineteenth century novel triggered new passions rather than making workers aware of their exploitation. Aesthetic experience is therefore not rhetorical persuasion nor framing of a collective body, but rather, “a multiplication of connections and disconnections that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live in and the way in which they are ‘equipped’ to adapt to it. It is a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible.” Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 72.

¹⁰⁴⁴ <http://www.networkedcultures.org/index.php?tid=64>.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation,” 2.

Asnières. Further, the two works also already claim to actualise the new communities for their subjects. Seurat depicted a newly dis-identified community whose gaze is in the process of joining that of the spectator of the painting and similarly, in *Urban Encampment*'s video portraits, the Sevran residents gaze directly back at the viewer, suggesting their participation in the artwork is already enabling a solitude from their destination communities toward joining the dis-identified aesthetic community of the viewer.

Rancière developed his view on these case studies to posit that an engaged art's role is to create spaces of solitude. Even as the artistic project must be produced in the social space requiring transformation, its efficiency rests in its presentation as an aesthetic work in separation from the direct constitution of community, such that the construction of community is itself revealed as an aesthetic project. The examples I have cited offer different contrasts between this conception of engagement, and the use of art techniques in the direct formulation of community. For instance, O'Beirn's drawings within *Some Things About Belfast* most clearly enact the requirement for aesthetic separation by signalling a strict functionality, a pointed disavowal of the ductus and its links to the re-inscription of mythic community. In contrast, the aesthetics of drawing within Ella Gibbs and Amy Plant's practice were given a correspondence with the ecological communities under formulation, *Laburnum Pilot* initiating a return to a direct activist approach that was realised more fully in the roving project *Energy Café*.

The TDS was a more mutable project considering Rancière's description of the effective aesthetic work. Although participants viewed the programme as creating community (as I will discuss next), in instances when the TDS was re-framed, such as during a two-week residency in the PS² gallery in June 2015,¹⁰⁴⁶ those aspirations became subject to the dis-identified gaze of the art audience. As with *Bathers* and *Je & Nous*, where the aesthetic community (the art spectator) gazes on subjects who are in the process of joining that self-same community, it was the TDS participants own assertion of private space, "the new free gaze of the worker,"¹⁰⁴⁷ that was put on display at PS². For Nicolas Bourriaud the spectator's gaze is a participation that is embroiled in the critical judgement. Further, the emphasis on the gaze signalled the move to the relational realm that represented art

¹⁰⁴⁶ The TDS exhibition was part of a year-long programme of events developed by gallery director Peter Mutschler under the title, *Community as Artist*. https://www.pssquared.org/community_as_artist_TDS.php. A feature of the PS² gallery was its shop window which artists often utilised to fussy the boundary between gallery and street. This was where Lightbox Willie pitched his sculpture to the PeasPark organisers and was the first experience for most participants of presenting in a contemporary art context.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Rancière, 10.

developing a political project in the 1990s,¹⁰⁴⁸ that is, claiming to enact new social formations. Considered as Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, the PS² exhibition formed an arena of exchange where the relationality at the heart of contemporary practice can be judged on aesthetic criteria (chapter five, p.279).¹⁰⁴⁹

This raised an ethical consideration as the necessary separation provided by the gallery from the programme's base in the Culture Shop risked positioning the participants as unwitting performers. Here, participants would appear much as Seurat's bathers, whose access to leisure time, to new passions such as drawing, was presented as a spectacle of social process. As 'subjects' in this case, the TDS participants were not fully at the stage of dis-identification of the PS² audiences, the aesthetic community, who are already aware that dis-identification entails its own neutralization and leads only to a state of aesthetic solitude.¹⁰⁵⁰ Considering this possibility my recommendation for future practice where group drawing is presented as an aesthetic act, would be for the practitioner to counter any furthering of inequality between the spectator and participant by revealing the use of illustration in re-inscribing community. A critical work in this instance would need to present any discordance between the audience and participants as an actively jarring component of the work, not to leave it unaddressed as a passive spectacle.

2 || **The civil view**

Perhaps even more so than the above recommendation the practitioner must also acknowledge the role of the participant gaze in constructing the work. The experience of the participant is central to the practices I have reviewed but from a research perspective these points of view are difficult to access and record. By studying a programme that I was involved in whilst acknowledging the bias that comes with my investments in it, I was afforded some access to such participant viewpoints. From their perspectives it would be reductive to view the TDS purely from its presentation in PS², as the simple reframing of workshop activity alone belies the ongoing and external context, the 'meshwork' that I have argued constitutes the effectivity of the programme (chapter five, p.273).¹⁰⁵¹ In a similar manner Claire Bishop has critiqued Bourriaud's exemplars of relational aesthetics as

¹⁰⁴⁸ Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 25.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Bourriaud, 14.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 119. The foregrounding of the production process in Tim Rollins' practice provides an example of the ethical quandaries in its suggestion that the gaze of the K.O.S. participant is being given precedence. However, this orientates the critical gaze onto the producers in such a way that they become the work, potentially without informed consent, and the danger, as Kester warns, of the other becoming a vehicle for the authoring subject

¹⁰⁵¹ Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 64.

focusing purely on the relational instances of their spectator participants to the detriment of both the materials of the work and the social context of their production.¹⁰⁵²

The TDS exhibition was only one of several different framings experimented with over the course of the programme and I believe a consideration of the effectiveness of such participatory programmes requires an understanding and acknowledgment of all the gazes involved in its production. This leads to the second recurring condition I propose as of value to participatory work incorporating illustrative drawing, and one where the practical aspect of my study has been most useful. For Ariella Azoulay, the effectiveness of a work that involves participation can be recognised by taking a civil view, a consideration of the gazes from which the work is constituted, including the overlapping ‘aesthetic’ and ‘political’. The civil view requires re-inscription as it is not fixed in time and a renewal of its conditions of existence must be made through the open participation of others.¹⁰⁵³ In my application, the consideration of multiple gazes is useful for addressing where drawing can contribute to participatory practice both as a technique and as an ethos.

Within the TDS the meeting space and the activity of drawing were interlinked in their affordance to participants the possibility of applying their own aesthetical-political paradigms to the programme. I did not provide ready-made solutions for participants and the TDS was only ever a stage, in terms of a site and a moment, for what was brought to it. This worked for those who had a need, conscious or otherwise, which could be facilitated in some way by the venue, the other participants or myself. This was observed most fully by Anne Marie Taggart, the artist who took on day-to-day facilitation of the TDS from October 2016, as the application of the participants’ own relational frameworks to the programme.¹⁰⁵⁴ I believe the TDS was rescued in this way from its beginnings in what can be seen as my nostalgic attempt to reproduce the *Vacuum* community (chapter four, p.235) as the participants reproduced elements they perceived in the TDS but that had not been considered by myself.

¹⁰⁵² For instance, the ‘feelgood’ aspect of Tiravanija’s dinner parties fail to achieve the democratic aim of relational art. Bishop cites Rosalyn Deutsche in this instance, Deutsche arguing, “that the public sphere remains democratic only insofar as its naturalized exclusions are taken into account and made open to contestation.” Bishop, “Antagonism,” 65.

¹⁰⁵³ Azoulay, “Getting Rid of The Distinction,” 259.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Taggart in turn brought her own gaze to the TDS. One of her self-initiated projects with participants was a planned re-staging of the Bauhaus *Triadic Ballet* with participants constructing their own ‘drawn’ costumes.

There were different examples of these including a view of the TDS as a therapeutic group and as a space for theatrical expression. But amongst those most often cited were a view of the programme as an educational situation, a feature of community arts discussed in chapter five, and in terms of a collective, as was raised in relation to the perception of *The Vacuum* production team in chapter four. In the first instance, Lightbox Willie felt that the focus on drawing and illustration was a particular attraction for those who felt left out of education or had left school early, a situation common to most of the participants.¹⁰⁵⁵ This was conspicuous in Grace O’Neill’s consideration of the TDS as a classroom, a view we discussed in connection to the school education she had left at a young age.¹⁰⁵⁶ There was also interest in the TDS as a stepping-stone toward accessing more structured art education, either for gaining entry to the art college by joining an official course or through more informal access to art college facilities.

The other common expression, the communitarian team, differed from the hierarchical classroom model. In Lightbox Willie’s case, the comparison was to his previous work within a ‘squad’ of engineers. In addition to holding the possibility of a regular schedule and the discipline that entails, the TDS in this framing constituted for Willie a need for both inter-cooperation and the continuing re-establishment of individual ability. Here the team model necessitated being taken seriously by myself and the participants but also meeting the stringent standards of the internal ‘team’ discussed in chapter one (p.55).¹⁰⁵⁷ In both worlds, Willie’s commitment to a task demonstrated his worth to the squad and drawing provided a malleable, repetitive activity through which to do this.¹⁰⁵⁸ This reading as a team, with myself considered an equal member, was shared by long-term participants Marty Byrne and David McKeown, who viewed the programme in terms of the collectivity they associated with street art production. For McKeown, this view of the TDS as an inter-dependent egalitarian group was crystallised in the PS² exhibition,¹⁰⁵⁹ where the experience of creating work together formed a relational support structure.¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵⁵ “For most of us the only source of literature was comics and things like that. I came out of school at fifteen and found it very difficult to read and write. You can still see me getting very flustered if you asked me how to spell a word. So, for most of us [comics were] accessible.” Interview with Lightbox Willie, 15 September 2015.

¹⁰⁵⁶ O’Neill was not seeking an “Ignorant Schoolmaster” in this case but sought a teacher/pupil model wherein she would be imparted with knowledge. In contrast, Patten, the one participant with a formal education and previous career in the visual arts, found his academic approach to drawing challenged by the diversity of methods and approaches in the studio. Patten, 2015.

¹⁰⁵⁷ This was a, “showing the personalities within me that I should be taken seriously,” a world view influenced both by Lightbox Willie’s engineering experience and his later interest in western occult traditions such as Theosophy and Tarot. Lightbox Willie, 2015.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Drawing is one skill for which proving yourself adept results in social and spiritual reward. Lightbox Willie, 2015.

¹⁰⁵⁹ “Listen, we all did that. We’re all part of one team... And it’s not all me. I think we’re good as a collective.” Interview with David McKeown, 29 December 2015.

¹⁰⁶⁰ For instance, where sharing experiences of each other’s work was mutually beneficial to participant confidence. For McKeown, potential TDS participants are, “wary,” that is, concerned about their skill level. “Unless people see

The TDS can be seen as a process of negotiating gazes between audiences, participants, collaborating institutions and myself, a negotiation required in the civil view as multiple gazes creates dissensus, a discontinuity or disagreement. For instance, McKeown was ambivalent about being subjected to a gaze by the exhibition, at one point expressing only a practical interest in the space and at another point aware of and interested in the presence of audiences.¹⁰⁶¹ It was my gaze he singled out for attention however, being particularly observant of my responses to the project. I consider my gaze as under scrutiny here, or rather, as McKeown returning my gaze to critique what he perceived as my underestimation of the group's capabilities.¹⁰⁶² This was a challenge to the artist's gaze as the one that bestows value and demonstrated how the participant formulations provided diverse narratives for the TDS which in turn brought the programme into existence. McKeown's awareness of this, reminding me of how the programme relies on the commitment and invention of the participants presents the TDS as not reducible to what the gaze of the aesthetic audience bestows upon it and as beyond the jurisdiction of myself, PS² or any other 'professional' viewpoint.¹⁰⁶³ The framing of the work by participants therefore pictures more diverse possibilities that interconnect the materials and lives lived outside the studio, that is, those social and political aspects that Bishop views as neglected in relational aesthetics and which for Azoulay constitute the work itself.

In chapter five I proposed that the continued development of the programme by committed participants was a form of sustainable reproduction, a commoning (p.283). If the TDS is considered

[other people's work], they don't know what to expect [...] They always assume they are not as good as somebody else." That, "people are disheartened about failure," yet we over-stress the negative, his example is how we focus on one negative opinion out of twenty positive ones. Failure puts people off, but in the TDS people are supportive of the work, and even if it is not a true opinion, it is respectful. "It's just to let people know we all did this. It's like it's the same with PS². I mean people came down to look in it. They didn't just come down to look at me, they came down to look at us all, as the group. And I just like us to be part of, to actually come up with something, to say, 'Listen, the Tuesday Drawing Studio did that'." McKeown, 2015.

¹⁰⁶¹ In the first instance McKeown felt, "I just wanted to do [the image] big. It didn't matter who was going to see it. I was doing it for myself." In the second instance McKeown stated, "It's funny saying this because we were down on Sunday. And one of them tour buses pulled up outside, and the whole bus was just looking straight through the window. And we had the projector up with one of the images. And I think it was a big audience!" McKeown, 2015.

¹⁰⁶² This was an influential experience for McKeown and an opportunity to demonstrate/exercise his capabilities. "I got the impression you were kind of taken aback at what we were doing. I didn't think you thought we'd rise to the occasion. You knew we could do stuff but, you know, it's, 'these people surprised me'. That's the impression I got from yourself [...] You're used to seeing us sitting [in the Culture Shop] with a piece of paper. And then we're getting a big blank canvas, big massive room..." McKeown described viewing art as young man by driving around the city at night with a friend to look through the windows of commercial galleries. To be on the production side of the window compared to sitting in the street looking in was particularly resonant for him in terms of accessing such a space. "The people who get their stuff in galleries have better opportunities. The rest of us wouldn't get those opportunities." McKeown, 2015.

¹⁰⁶³ Also addressed by Miwon Kwon's proposal that, "participant identity makes them more susceptible to appropriation by arts institution or artists." *One Place After Another*.

as an aesthetic work using Azoulay's framework, its effectivity rests in that time extending before and after it, that is, beyond the spectator and inclusive of the manifold subjectivities that created the conditions for the programme's existence and continuation. To use Tim Ingold's terminology, this would be to view the programme as a knot constituted by the wider meshwork of interconnecting pathways (which I consider here as consanguineous with Azoulay's gazes). Additionally, rather than the studio space, it was the external participant works, such as Lightbox Willie's series of sculptural interventions in PeasPark or McKeown's murals for a homelessness awareness campaign, that were more akin to the political spaces described by Azoulay as where relations between people could take place in public.¹⁰⁶⁴

That the TDS could become a vessel for multiple participant gazes, just as it was susceptible to different critical gazes in presentation situations, was amplified by the lack of a clear aesthetic or social purpose to the programme. By accident rather than design then, the TDS bore some similarity to the empty space that Urban Encampment proposed would enable temporary solitude for residents toward the establishment of subjectivities outside the restrictions of their communities. The TDS was not entirely empty as it was thematised by the act of drawing. But, without further explanation, 'drawing', as a description of activity, retains an openness to interpretation that leaves enough unobstructed conceptual space to act as a conveyor for participants' diverse ideas of cultural production.

The potential of the programme was emergent rather than pre-defined in this case and can be seen in hindsight as fostering participation as social involvement rather than constituting a 'participatory' artwork. In this light, participation was mediated by the conceptual openness of drawing which then posits the TDS as a space for a different kind of solitude to Rancière's, one away from the gazes that instantiate a fixed community or familial identity. The kind of participatory art that drawing can convene in this approach is toward creating a potential space, a channel from which political spaces can then develop. To encourage this potential, the artists, participants and spectators can focus on what they choose to re-inscribe, and to view drawing, or the drawings, in correspondence with the aesthetical-political expectations of the draughter toward the programme as a whole.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Azoulay, "Getting Rid of The Distinction," 251; 254. Lightbox Willie's collaborative balloon drawings for PS² take the motif of drawing and stretch it beyond my notions of the project (Figure 61, left).

In this framework the TDS-as-drawing can be perceived in the sense of an illumination through which the idea shines through. Or, as an interface between the community from which solitude is desired, and the potential new community of the future. The ‘Drawing’ in the programme’s title can then be viewed as referring to the emptiness of the space as an unobstructed channel available to participants to explore re-inscriptions of solitude and community and it was participants themselves who helped absent illustration by bringing whatever they wished to the programme. Here, drawing was thought through, by the most active participants in this case, to a point beyond drawing.

Not conceived as a work then, the TDS had no identity, it was merely a channel, a ‘drawing studio’ where participants who brought their own relational models to the programme could make of it their own. The TDS/drawing was again an intermediary that allowed for individual exploration and provided space for participants, including myself, to explore their absent communities. Drawing is also an emptiness in this formulation, which together with the empty space of the studio engendered a receptivity to new gazes. In this case, the dissolution of drawing as the central activity within the TDS was again necessary to allow the underlying relations to continue in new, participant-generated social arrangements.

The flexible identity, or lack of one altogether, illustrates how contrasting modes of participatory art and multiple participant viewpoints can be attributed to the same programme. For participants as with myself, the TDS became a repository for this seeking of a desired, alternative, lacking or ideal structure.¹⁰⁶⁵ Maintaining the emptiness of such a space of solitude would require preventing a group identity from coalescing, as the exclusivity of such a community would limit the public accessibility to the programme. The facilitator, as an intermediary or dis-identified person, would remain in such a case to maintain the lack of identity and navigate the work away from becoming a community in itself for those involved.

3 || **Intermediaries**

The producers of my case studies from participatory culture (for example, comic fans and zinesters) face more limitations than artists in terms of liberating themselves from the restrictions of community. In these practices, I view aspects of participatory cultures that incorporate illustrative drawing as fulfilling an intermediate position or mediating role between different forms of solitude

¹⁰⁶⁵ In my instance, it could be said I finally achieved the recreation of a vacuum by accidentally instigating this empty space.

and community membership. Participation, for Rancière, requires there to be no mediation between the subject and political action,¹⁰⁶⁶ but illustration, as I have evidenced, is often applied as an intermediary. This articulation of the intermedial is the third condition that I propose is of value to practitioners using illustration in participatory works.¹⁰⁶⁷ These intermedial aspects show the constrictions of illustration: its figuration, instrumentalization, inseparability from an external text and relationship to distribution, as themselves presenting a discursive flexibility that contributes to the epistemology of drawing as social-engagement. In this regard illustration can be viewed as an interface between participatory culture and critical art practice, a method through which non-experts can engage in cultural critique and a common language that artists can use to speak to non-art audiences.

Practices between these poles include those of Tim Rollins and Mitch Miller. The jammin method was described by Rollins as a speaking in tongues, invoking a spiritual experience whose objective was to connect its adherents to the cosmic. Although a defamiliarization process, this preparation of students for a more communal and guided life seemed at odds with the dis-identification conferred by the aesthetic gaze being fostered within them. The act of drawing was an intermediary process in the artwork production in correspondence with the media presentation of the Art and Knowledge Workshop as a new situation which directly improves participant conditions, a stage in the dramatic sense as a dress rehearsal for a future sociality. Rollins's description of the resultant paintings as the manifestation of the K.O.S. community would then discount the work from the realm of effective aesthetics in Rancière's codification.

Like Rollins, Miller's practice concerns the social transformation of participants in some part mediated through the language of illustration. Unlike Rollins, Miller does not work toward the aesthetic autonomy of the art world and accepts the limitations of interpreting aesthetic practice as transformative in itself. The dialectogram is also a stage toward a future social re-arrangement, zine-like and pre-political. And although this suggests drawing holds the intermediary role, as act, agency and artefact as proposed above, the technique can only fail to represent social complexity and the dialectogram instead installs the illustrator's bodily presence as the true instrument of intermediation between his commissioners and participants. When the practitioner considers

¹⁰⁶⁶ Rancière, "Aesthetic Separation," 5-7.

¹⁰⁶⁷ The conception is applicable to the description of objects, actors, points, processes or periods that mediate between regimes of sense. The illustration can be expressed as the intermediary or the image can indicate a mediation taking place in another, more intangible, aspect of a work. Intermediary can suggest a barrier, an indecision or incompleteness, or a dynamic point within a process: productive, interruptive or innovative.

themselves this way, their own 'gaming' (that is the subversion of the illustrator by co-ordinators) and the realisation of contributors of their power as subjects all bring participation to the work. Here, although Rollins can be viewed as re-inscribing himself through The Art and Knowledge Workshop, Miller, who also abrogates the 'major literature' through what he considers a marginalized illustrational dialect, performs the comic book re-inscription of the author in order to reveal his own subjective fallibility.

Grant Morrison's comic book writing activated the readership as participant in the narrative at a time when the letters page (a common ancestor of both the zine and the superhero comic) was evolving into a multi-platform author-reader dialogue. The community of obsessive readers addressed by the author in works such as *The Invisibles* in turn re-constituted themselves through an ongoing exegesis of the source material. Although the internet bulletin board of the 2000s generated novel possibilities in terms of reader engagement a narrative of white failure unresolved in mainstream comics was activated by the alt-right, and Pepe the frog became a vehicle to imply the presence of a race-based ideological grouping. The intermedial position is a vulnerable indeterminacy in this example, where the image is left open to appropriation if it does not address the subjectivities implicit to the development of the medium. Pepe's unobstructed migration from comic to bulletin board to fascist mascot being a pointed example.

The depiction of the body in the comic most completely represents the extradiegetic story of the genre itself. From radically different perspectives, Hergé and Herriman both revealed and obscured the racialising narratives underwriting the social context of their production. In Eyal Amiran's reading of *Krazy Kat* the continual showing that there was yet more to see, the hiding in order to reveal again, itself revealed a condition of illustration wherein there is always something obscured. A later more conscious self-criticality became the trait of alternative comics and graphic novels, for instance, in Hernandez's use of self-satire, an exaggeration of illustration's objectifying and racializing tendencies, to disrupt the reader's narcissistic cathexis of the image. Alternately, rather than an auto-destructive illustration that exposes its own contradictions, in *Dykes To Watch Out For*, Bechdel consciously drew her 'ideal readers' in order to make visible what had been hidden. This overt use of the cartoon strip to present a positive image of queer identities then evolved into an articulation of the comic as a reparative transitional object which could mediate between Bechdel's subject (herself) and her familial environment.

Just as Bishop questions Bourriaud's privileging of conversation, Duncombe expresses concern for the zine underground's preference for intra-community dialogue over public contestation. The efficiency of the zine approach remained indeterminate in this analysis, suggesting positions between passivity and action, communication and direct action, and between steppingstones to activism or retreats from engagement. Through a discussion of the work of Starbuck and Larder I presented my particular concern with the zinester's deployment of sequential illustration as a way of maintaining an identity and sustaining a community. My focus on the drawn figure that brokers between the producer and the reader reflected the aspect of zine consciousness where the establishment of the gaze of an alternative community is considered a counter-hegemonic act.

The yaoi dōjinshi movement further problematises any clear reading of fan-produced illustrated publications as counterhegemonic. Although like the western zine, fan-made comics mediate a solitude from the broader community, there is a debate as to whether their re-inscription of patriarchal and capitalist formulations lead to a form of healing or usefully negotiate the social constrictions placed upon the readers and authors. Under a scholarly gaze, yaoi dōjinshi can appear as a scopophilic retreat from wider political engagement and complicity with consumerism. But, when the viewpoint accommodates duration and the wider field of women's manga, the form can be seen as contributing to a global re-structuring of comics readership community by ending perceptions of the medium as beholden only to the male gaze.

Lightbox Willie's description of drawing as a mediator between an internal dialogue and external social relations suggests the illustrated zine's mediation between the establishment of individuality and the maintenance of a community. In both instances, the connection to socialisation is co-determinate with drawing's role in knowledge production. In the work of Pilot Publishing, drawing moved away from the intermedial toward a method of direct learning. The hand-drawn continued to present *Energy Café* as a waystation toward new social gathering spaces, and the 'slowing down' Plant describes as a sustaining attentiveness to nurture and growth also suggests the correspondence of drawing, ecology and knowledge production.¹⁰⁶⁸ Alternative learning is perceived as an intermediate stage, an adolescence, not as a moment past but a transitional phase that can be accessed throughout life. In Halberstam's articulation this is an approach for a productive exit from heteronormative kinship groupings (chapter three, p.143) but in terms of artistic practice, it can be as a retreat, as Bishop and Gillick posit the practitioner's establishment of themselves as teacher or

¹⁰⁶⁸ A correspondence also pursued by John Ruskin. Doris Rohr, "Drawing on Nature: the Legacy of Ruskin's Moral Cosmos" (PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 2016), 38, 56-57, 185.

ringleader as an avoidance of adult socialisation and participation in the public sphere (chapter five, p.281).

Where illustration does not mediate, where it actively formulates or re-inscribes community and can be said to be participatory, it either hides the false condition of equating representation with lived reality or dis-identifies participants, leaving them in a new ‘aesthetic community’ underwritten by the same framework as their former destination. It is these paradoxes of illustration within participatory practices that are a resource for practitioners convening new forms of participatory art and culture. To engage with the paradox of illustration as in any way participatory, the draughter must develop awareness of drawing’s own contradictions, to accept and develop its processes of revealing and hiding, and to foreground the gazes which bring the work into existence. But also, the illustrative drawing must be comprehended as indexical to the political space constructed by the work. There, the paradoxes of the programme, the project, or the artist themselves can also be critically engaged in a similar way.

For instance, when Miller’s act of illustration, “creates all sorts of problems,” it becomes productive. The authorial avatar that haunts the dialectogram is an acknowledgement of the failure of the drawing to communicate a given community identity and in an extension of the concept of ductus to social relations (Bourriaud’s ‘flow channel’ or ‘socius’ as a basic unit of human interaction), the image points back to the illustrator themselves as the ‘medium’, even as they in turn indicate that the drawing is the interface. The truth of the situation can then only be glimpsed in the conversation between the two countersignatures, the draughter and the drawing. O’Beirn’s drawings referred to here, mobilised the paradox of participatory illustration by presenting drawing itself as a paradox. By saying *there will be no aesthetics here*, drawing heralded the *Space Shuttle* project’s remit to question cultural production and its subsequent impact on civic space.

Richard West’s description of drawing as smuggling a mystery is my final articulation of the contrary, a drawing that again shows but hides. If I consider my *Vacuum* experience, I can view my use of drawing as the continual re-creation of a space of solitude and, in turn, my use of *illustration* as an ongoing renewal of community membership. Paradoxically, at the same moment, the Factotum directors were using illustration to re-inscribe the absence of a communal identity in order to demonstrate that the re-inscription of self through drawing, and of community through illustration, can be undermined through the vocabulary of drawing itself. This was encapsulated by

the headless dog logo, a peripheral object that nonetheless provides an insight into the *The Vacuum* as between the regimes of critical practice, public art, grassroots street display and publishing. In its graffiti form the dogsbody signified *The Vacuum's* interventionist methodology as itself an escape from what McLuhan described as the enclosed space of printing. In this instance, the logo could be the quintessential reproducible intertextual drawing that re-inscribes negative community, but for Factotum it was just another component deployed by the editors to think their organisation into existence.

I have forwarded that *The Vacuum* intermediated between artistic communities and public readerships; the TDS between art institutions and non-expert practice; and *The Selfish Dream* between DIY culture and comics scholarship. I believe then, that to perceive the workings of illustration in cases such as these will lead to more effective incorporation of drawing methods into participatory art-making. The outlook of this research is therefore focussed on increasing perception of the modalities of drawing within participatory works toward more considered and sustainable projects in the future. Furthermore, as the thesis outcomes took place across fields of scholarship and disciplines of visual practice, I expect the ongoing impact to be made not only within diverse networks of knowledge, but to actively intersect between such fields.

In this manner, while continuing to contribute to the distinct areas of contemporary drawing theory, comics scholarship and fan studies,¹⁰⁶⁹ the outlook for my research necessarily involves an engagement in the cross-disciplinarity emergent in both illustration and critical participatory practice. In particular, the new spaces of exchange at the nexus of fan studies and critical art, where intervention and slippage between activist, DIY and participatory culture is taking place, present particular scope for the practice-led methodology and theoretical position applied here.¹⁰⁷⁰ The impact of the research in this case will arise from novel relational situations where the act, agency and artefact of drawing is embedded in the interchange between informal knowledge networks and critical theory-as-practice.

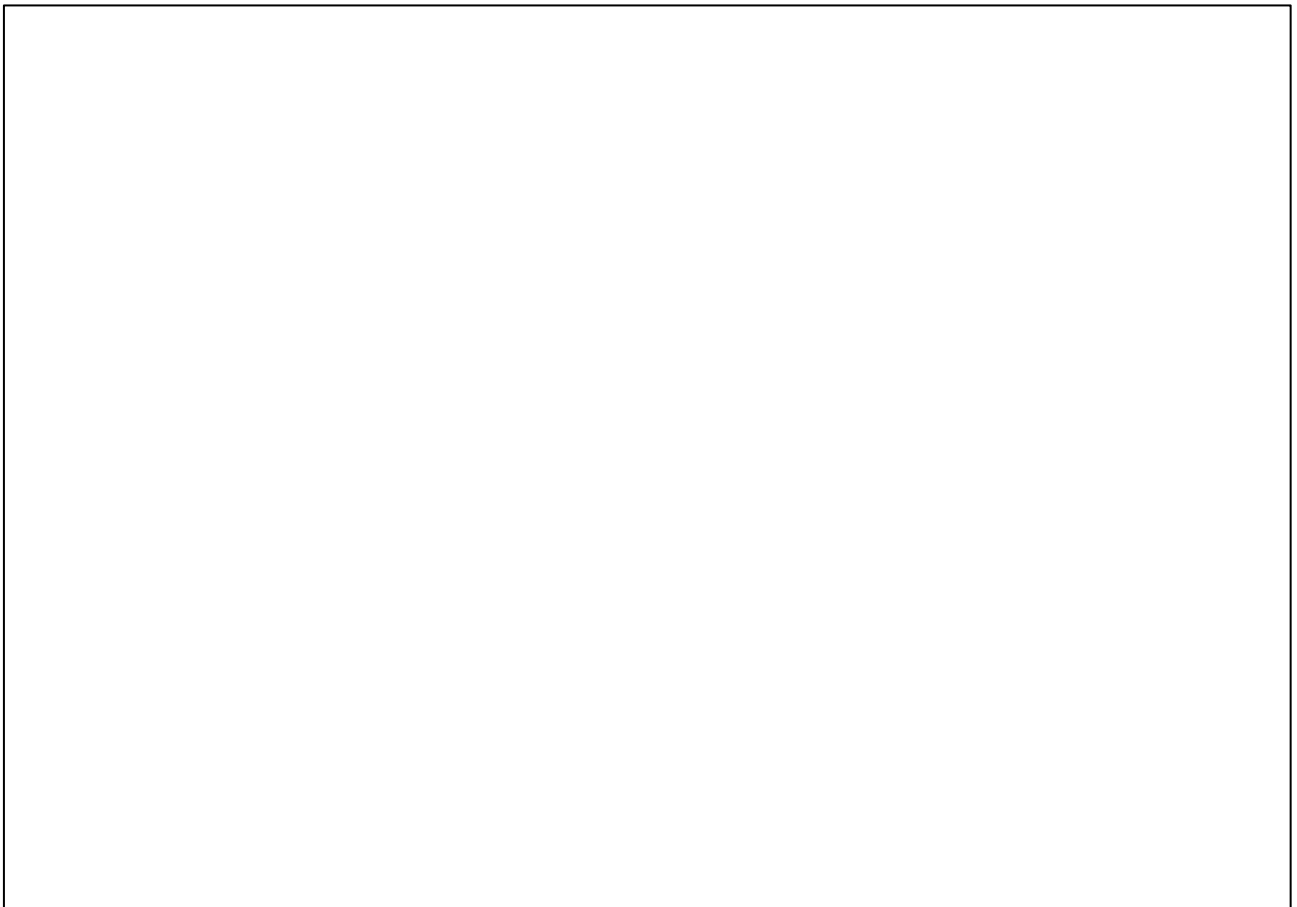
¹⁰⁶⁹ The findings of chapters one, two and three are being developed in article proposals for journals in contemporary drawing studies, comics studies and fan studies respectively, much as chapters four and five were introduced as developments from paper presentations in 2015 and 2017 (introduction, p.4).

¹⁰⁷⁰ For instance, the implications of Queer and intersectional fan practices for critical art are considered in *Fandom as Methodology: A Sourcebook for Artists and Writers*, edited by Catherine Grant and Kate Random Love (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019) which presents a novel challenge to the binary of collective and individual authorship. The philosopher Reza Negarestani and artist Keith Tilford's *Chronosis: Exordium* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2019) is a 'theory-fiction' in the form of a comic book presenting an example of illustration at the forefront of recent cross-pollination between critical scholarship and the materials of fandom. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/95/227164/chronosis-exordium/>.

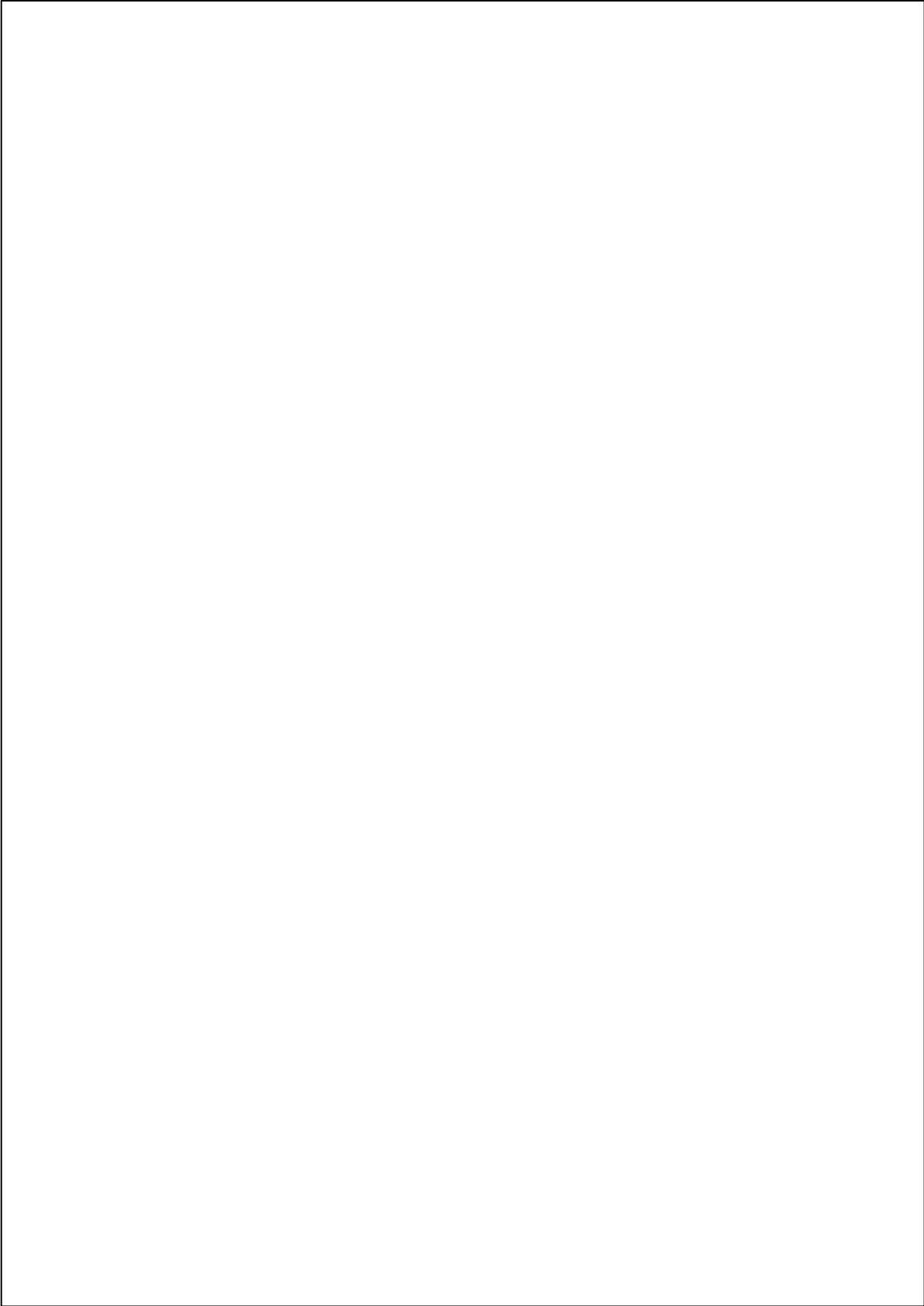
iv. Appendix

The Tuesday Drawing Studio and student study promotional material

Promotional fliers for the TDS



Promotional leaflet for the student study



v. Bibliography

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