

APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

*A reflective and critical afterword to *The Imperative Commands**

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Abstract

The Imperative Commands: the poetics of imperatives and assertions in everyday life.

The Imperative Commands is an interdisciplinary creative writing PhD in two parts: (a) a poem-object of 365 pages, which is an original engagement with found everyday instructional language, reimagined in an experimental/visual format; (b) ‘Appropriate Language,’ a critical and theoretical afterword exploring the inspiration, themes and methods of the poem.

The premise of *The Imperative Commands* is to investigate current institutional and corporate language and appropriate it as poetry. It is a collagistic arrangement of found imperatives and assertions, harvested from the language of state institutions and corporate bodies that hail people on a daily basis. To create this long poetic work I set myself the initial constraint of harvesting found language during the course of a calendar year (May 1st 2014 to 30th April 2015). During this time I collected found imperatives, assertions, naturalizations of contestable information as fact, and other forms of overt and tacit instruction. The material was then transcribed, organized and rearranged in a variety of forms, using both chance and editorial interventions to make deviant collocations, stochastic juxtapositions, concrete-visual constellations and lyrical expression.

‘Appropriate Language’ breaks into several forms of afterword. The introduction outlines the general architecture and aims behind *The Imperative Commands*, as well as key influences on my practice and what inspired the thesis. Its main purpose is to explore ideas around how society is manipulated by language and ideology by, and for, the various institutions that seek to influence us. To do this it focuses on the writing of two thinkers: (1) the so-called ‘father of public relations’ Edward Bernays (1891-1995), who was instrumental in developing PR in the 20th century; and (2) French philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990) and his theory of Ideological State Apparatuses—which form and inform the essential structure of society outside the state—and *interpellation*,

whereby individuals become 'subjects' through the ways in which they are hailed by ISAs and ideology.

The second purpose of 'Appropriate Language' is to consider the affinities and differences that *The Imperative Commands* has with Conceptual Writing, with a particular focus on the work and ideas of poet Kenneth Goldsmith (b. 1961). My research into Conceptual Writing, and its claims of unreadability, helped to remind me of the importance of readability that I feel about my own work. That the organization of the found texts should be a readable, though idiosyncratic, book is crucial to *The Imperative Commands*.

The harvested material when reorganized to make the poem reveals aspects of the life of a subject during a specific period of time, with disparate facets of social control brought into focus through the various language forms that constitute everyday life. The poem-object, that is also a social document, explores ways of uniting the notion of 'concept' and experimental writing—particularly within some of the methodologies of Conceptual Writing—with ways of maintaining and supporting a 'self' that is both lyrical and political.

1. 'A Sort of Introduction'¹

'To try to keep tabs on the PR industry is to seek to study the façade of the contemporary world—an impossible Herculean task.' (*PR – A Persuasive Industry?*, Morris and Goldsworthy, 2008, p. 139)

It is imperative to read *The Imperative Commands* before reading 'Appropriate Language.' It is neither necessary nor advised to read 'Appropriate Language' before *The Imperative Commands*. In fact, it is not necessary to read 'Appropriate Language' at all. I am of the opinion that you should not need to read this afterword to enjoy *The Imperative Commands*. Furthermore, as the engineer of this lengthy coffee table poetry book, it's not up to me to explain how it was made. I'm more interested in exploring the ideas and theory that inspired it. Though, for the purpose of this afterword, there will be some instructions provided. An imperative is a command and *The Imperative Commands* commands you too: commands you to look at things anew, for 'there is more to language than we are accustomed to seeing' (Hilder, 2016, p. 104).

In brief, the main idea behind *The Imperative Commands* was to harvest a vast quantity of contemporary institutional instructional language and appropriate it as poetry, with a view to looking at how this language, and public address in general, seeks to 'bind and guide the world' (Bernays, [1928] 2005, p. 38). The harvesting commenced with the Oulipian-style constraint that the material was to be gathered during one calendar year—1st May 2014 to 30th April 2015—to capture a snapshot of the language of a point in time and to examine how people were manipulated during that period. Similar constraints employing universal calendric numbers that structure living patterns—24, 12, 7, 60—were used to determine the language capture from each institution: 24 hours of imperative harvesting from

¹ This is the title of Part I of Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*. ([1978] 1997). London: Picador. It was first published in German in 1930.

television adverts, 60 household goods and 7 newspapers for instance. Once gathered, the imperatives and assertions, were collated, arranged and re-presented in a variety of forms, which I will detail shortly.

The resulting poem-object of 365 pages, is a modern book of days, a collage of found imperatives, assertions, statements of fact, among other forms of directed discourse, taken from language people encounter daily through state and private cultural institutions. As well as the 'subtle and closely-knit procedures for the control of all social networks [...] the administrative and "panoptic" systems of the police, the schools, health services, security' (de Certeau, 1984, p. 179), less obvious forms of direction—popular culture, advertising and the mass media—were also textually mined.

Although the techniques employed in my poem are very much constraint based, it is also designed to reflect a life, as lived through specific social moments, both individual and collective. It intends to reflect the social spaces created by quotidian texts through the words that bombard and inform a contemporary subject on a daily basis. These social spaces shape—or even determine—the contemporary self and it is this project's assertion that found techniques should help locate and define the self in modern life; as Marx famously put it: '[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their social existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx, [1867] 1994, p. 211). If we, as citizens, are targeted by marketing language as one subject—consumers—if whatever is directed is directed at all selves, then it is through this morass of texts that the experience of the individualized self who is subjected to this bombardment can be isolated and brought to the fore. By placing myself amid this morass of texts, by seeking out and harvesting daily instructions, I sought to become a vector of sorts, absorbing the glut of our new lingua franca—what is termed 'copy'—to show what might happen if the impossible was attempted. This is one thesis that I am testing: is it possible to absorb all the instructions that we are subjected to every

day? The more important thesis is what, and how, are these instructions instructing us?

The Imperative Commands mirrors the chaotic and impossible nature of what I set out to do. As it strives to record competing demands, exhortations and ideologies all at once, the result is a *mélange* of seemingly incongruent aims, which I outline here in no particular order:

- to *détourne* official language and make it say something, using its own words, that more accurately reflects how we live today
- to reclaim this language
- to study the 'façade of the contemporary world'
- to take a snapshot of language, across as many areas of society as possible, during a certain period, and filtered through a self, a subject of the contemporary world, i.e. myself
- to attempt the impossible
- to mimic information overload
- to enact a form of manually scraped mechanically reclaimed language
- to show how something asserted as a 'fact' becomes a truth
- to highlight the type of language which the government and the establishment uses as a means to control and manipulate the populace
- to disrupt neoliberal capitalist discourse
- to show that being hailed, or assailed, is a continual, non-stop occurrence
- to freeze-frame and isolate a cross-section of the language that directed us in 2014-2015
- to critique what is happening now

These disparate strands are bound together by my overarching belief that found poetry is a political process.

I am a concrete-found-poet, open to ‘nuancing [lyrical] subjectivity’ rather than denying or negating it outright, to defer to Nick Thurston’s definition of conceptual writing (Voyce, 2014, p. 96). Primarily interested in language as material and its political implications in the world, much of the poetry I make is appropriated, or found. *The Imperative Commands* is an extreme version, and logical extension, of this work. Found poetry is poetry made from words and phrases that are not the poet’s own. It can be created from any existing words—books, junk mail, a box of cereal²—and comes in many guises: stochastic processes, erasures, physically ‘found’ scraps and internet mash-ups,³ to name but a few. When extracted from their original context and placed in a blank document, found words take on new meanings in a new context, with the spectre of the previous meanings lurking in the background. The poetry comes from the semantic shift and recalibration of signifiers, through the poetic manipulation. For example, take the strap line of supermarket giant Tesco: ‘every little helps.’ The slogan can easily be changed by dropping the ‘e’ at the start of ‘every’ to say the very opposite: ‘very little helps’ (*The Imperative Commands*, p. 326). Here we have ‘one syllable which scatters the word’ (Derrida, 1992, p. 125), introducing a new perspective and extracting fresh meaning, as a way of questioning Tesco’s assertion by revealing what was *already* contained in the original text. This simple but pure erasure illustrates my personal preference for taking something from the language of information, marketing, or bureaucracy, to make it say something far removed from what it was originally intended to convey.

Using force-fed ‘corrected’ language of state, institutional, and repressive, apparatuses and regurgitating it to create poetry that critiques the status quo is both artistic and political. ‘An artistic intervention can be political,’ according to Jacques Rancière, ‘by modifying the visible, the ways of perceiving it and

² See *STUFF* (melville, 2011).

³ A technique invented by Drew Gardner and introduced to the Flarf collective – see the terrific new anthology *FLARF* (Gardner, Gordon, Mesmer and others, 2017).

expressing it, of experiencing it as tolerable or intolerable' (Carnevale and Kelsey, 2007, p. 257). As David Byrne writes in the introduction to Bern Porter's *Found Poems* (2011): copy '[b]eing unacknowledged [...] shapes our thinking and behavior invisibly—a stealth culture—and is all the more powerful because of it' (Byrne, 2011, p. i). This invisibility, and what lies behind, is what *The Imperative Commands* aims to uncover through its freeze-framing of a tiny cross-section of our new lingua franca. As Robert Fitterman and Vanessa Place suggest, critiquing the culture industry must be done using 'the materials of the culture industry directly' (Fitterman and Place, 2013, p. 20). This is perhaps the key concept behind my thesis: to appropriate, 'take possession of, esp. without authority' (*OED*), or 'take back' this language and, by reframing it, disrupt it through deviant collocations, to make it visible from a different vantage point.

'Appropriate Language' is going to break into several forms of afterword. The introduction will outline the general architecture and aims behind *The Imperative Commands*, as well as key influences on my practice and what inspired the thesis. Thereafter it will focus on three figures that inform it: (1) the so-called, and self-anointed, 'father of public relations,' Edward Bernays (1891-1995); (2) French philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990); and (3) poet Kenneth Goldsmith (b. 1961) and conceptual writing. But first, a brief word on the title of my poem. *The Imperative Commands* is a paronomastic catch-all term for all the forms of directed 'thought communication' and individual and collective address which I harvested. The title arose from a pun I created when thinking about advertising: an imperative is a command, so the 'imperative commands' is a tautological label, literally describing what an imperative does. Also embedded in the title is a double meaning: *The Imperative Commands* (hereafter TIC) can be read as noun and verb, or adjective and noun. This grammatical slippage is crucial to the whole project as mimesis of the duplicitous ways in which the marketing discourse of institutions employs slippery language designed to mislead, influence and ultimately control

the citizens of the world (or nowhere) by ensuring that '[n]o one is officially responsible for what he thinks' (Adorno and Horkheimer, [1944] 2010, p. 149).

Bernays and Althusser

To explore who is responsible for thought, I focus on two thinkers whose work has been crucial in helping formulate both the practical poetry harvesting and making, as well as this afterword. The first thinker is public relations counsel and nephew of Sigmund Freud, Edward Bernays. Bernays was very much instrumental in developing public relations, PR, into the manipulative behemoth that is now 'deployed by everyone' across all aspects of contemporary civilization and culture (Jansen, 2017, p. 4). His 1928 book *Propaganda* details the various techniques that public relations use (or used at the time) to turn the public toward some product or idea or, indeed, to turn it against an idea or product. Part of Bernays' reason for writing the book was to reclaim the word propaganda from the 'unpleasant connotation[s]' resulting from its associations with The First World War (Bernays, p. 48). He offers several definitions, but it is worth looking at its etymology. Derived from the Latin, *propagare*, propagate, it can variously mean to reproduce, by means of layers, to produce (offspring), to perpetuate, to prolong, to enlarge, extend, to fix, fasten, set (*OED*). Many of these meanings are in fact appropriate descriptors of how propaganda works. On *Propaganda's* first page, Bernays candidly states that 'we are governed, our minds molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of' (Bernays, p. 37). Today, as well as 'men' we have never heard of, this notion is being supplanted by computers and algorithms, big data and the scraping of people's details from social media, more of which later.⁴ I shall examine Bernays' major works in some detail

⁴ For example, in 2017 Carole Cadwalladr's investigative journalism outed Robert Mercer, Artificial Intelligence billionaire and alleged facilitator of election interfering, and others (Cadwalladr, 2017b).

as the ‘molding’ of the public mind has reached a kind of apogee in recent political events, which is suggestive of a continuation of the most heinous uses of propaganda employed in the last century. I say apogee, but perhaps the worst is yet to come, for ‘whoever owns [our] data owns the future’ (Cadwalladr).

French philosopher Louis Althusser is the second thinker drawn from in this afterword. His importance is twofold and derives from his essay ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,’ first published in France in 1970. His theory of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs)—religious, educational, family, legal, political, trade-union, communications and culture apparatuses (Althusser, 2008, p. 17)—which form, and inform, the essential structure of society outside the state, was used as a starting point for areas from which to reap found public discourse. I also heavily harvested the Repressive State Apparatuses—the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police etc. (Althusser, pp. 16-17). The second reason Althusser is crucial is because of his notion of *interpellation*, whereby individuals become subjects through the ways in which they are hailed or addressed (both individually and collectively) by ISAs and ideology (Althusser, p. 52). These two aspects of Althusser have certain affinities with Bernays, public relations and social control, as shall be seen.

Conceptual Writing

As well as drawing from the work of Bernays and Althusser, TIC can be situated in, around, or brushing against, conceptual writing. Conceptual writing is a fairly recent term used to describe an avant-garde literary and aesthetic movement, probably now moribund.⁵ The term was coined in 2003 by Craig Dworkin for *The*

⁵ In 2012, in the introduction to Vanessa Place’s essay ‘Poetry Is Dead, I killed It,’ Kenneth Goldsmith talks about the ‘crisis and decline’ of conceptualism, while Place addresses that issue within her essay. So its demise has been bandied around for some time now (Goldsmith, 2012a). Nick Thurston has an essay which uses the past tense in its title ‘What Was Conceptual Writing?’ which intrigues me, as it seems a more definite marker that conceptual writing is no longer. Unfortunately, the essay is not yet available, it’s part of *Postscript: Writing After Conceptual Art*,

UbuWeb Anthology of Conceptual Writing (Goldsmith, 2012b) and other founding fathers are the American writer Kenneth Goldsmith and two Canadians, Christian Bök and Darren Wershler-Henry. Writers who later became associated with the group and the term conceptual writing include Robert Fitterman and Vanessa Place, among others; in Britain, conceptual writers include Simon Morris, Nick Thurston and Caroline Bergvall. But what is conceptual writing exactly? It is writing that is heavily reliant on appropriation, permutational processes and constraints, in order to focus on the concepts or ideas of a work, rather than its execution of those concepts; it tends to eschew traditional lyrical poetics (natural expression, voice, psychological development, symbol, metaphor) in favour of impersonal procedure (Dworkin, 2011, xliii). There have been debates surrounding the role, or lack, of the 'I' voice in conceptual poetics (Amy King, 2013a) and the conceptualist insistence that neither it nor authorial control is needed or wanted. As I will explore with a close reading of Goldsmith's *New York Trilogy*—*The Weather* (2005), *Traffic* (2007) and *Sports* (2008)—Goldsmith does not strictly adhere to the professed methodologies of authorial distance and impersonal procedure as he has claimed.

Because of some of its techniques, its use of constraints, and its physical magnitude and length, TIC might be termed conceptual writing. Certainly, conceptual writing has exerted a considerable influence on my work. When I first looked into *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing* (2011), edited by Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith, the usage and presentation of the term 'conceptual writing' was an eco-friendly (though not a 60 watt) light bulb moment. Since 2002 I have been writing and publishing experimental works of poetry: concrete, or visual, poetry, found poetry, erasure poetry and process/constraint based poetry. The term conceptual, and much of the writing contained in the anthology, offered me a new frame for situating some of my more indefinable

edited by Andrea Andersson, and not due out from University of Toronto Press until December 2017.

writing—junk mail erasures for instance—work that was more than just ‘found’ or ‘visual’ poetry. Conceptual writing provided assurance and an entrypoint into a pared down poetics, concerned with questions of authorship, ownership and the uses of language.

Breaking News: a digression

However, more formative in the compilation and theorization of TIC, and my poetry that has gone before, is the work of three writers: Tom Leonard (b. 1944) and Peter Manson (b. 1969), and *Collected Poems* (2000) by artist Pavel Büchler (b. 1952).⁶

Tom Leonard was my personal tutor when I undertook my MPhil in creative writing at the University of Glasgow, 2001-2003. His tutelage, encouragement and support, during my studies and since have been crucial to my poetic development. There are many strands to his work that are important to me, but his fierce socialist engagement, which runs through his work, is the most necessary. Leonard constantly challenges the status quo, polemically examining the politics of language, through class, poverty, ideology and war, to name but a few. I have Leonard to thank for showing me the way to incorporate political critique into avant-garde visual and found poetics.

‘Unrelated Incidents (3)’ is worth looking at briefly, as it is pertinent to TIC. This poem is often referred to as ‘The Six O’Clock News’—erroneously, it should be noted, it ought to be ‘thi six a clock news’—which ironically goes against, or reinforces, its entire point. It features a newsreader for the BBC who explains in vernacular Scots why the news is not presented in the way that people speak: ‘if / a toktaboot / thi trooth / lik wanna you / scruff yi / widny thingk / it wuz troo. / just wanna yoo / scruff tokn’ (Leonard, [1984] 2003, p. 95). Leonard is making the

⁶ Charles Reznikoff (1894-1976) is another. I think Reznikoff is the best found poet and has been hugely influential to my work.

point that the language we receive, in this case the news, through Received Pronunciation, 'is not a neutral medium [...] it is populated [...] with the intentions of others' (Bakhtin, [1973], 2010, p. 1101). The intention of the speaker in the poem is to continue the condescension toward, and subjugation of, the working class, who are looked down on, talked down to, and interpellated by the ruling class as unworthy, because of their language, culture and education, or lack thereof. The news has to be read in the language of the elite, in order to maintain its interests and dominance over intersubjective reality. In effect, the news, or any other example of a politician's sound bite about the lower classes, labels the working class, the marginalized, the forgotten, the Other, and those not in positions of power, as 'you scruff.' It puts them in their designated place. They are identified as objects of judgement and address, and subjects of the state, the establishment, or corporations. It is neatly concluded by Leonard with the imperative phrase: 'belt up' (Leonard, p. 96).

It was through Leonard that I was introduced to the work of Peter Manson. Any book of Manson's is a repository of phonetic and phonemological language games, but the one that has most influenced me is *Adjunct: an Undigest* ([2005] 2009). Just over one hundred pages of almost continuous poetic prose, it is composed from Manson's notebooks, in which both personal and found fragments were recorded for seven years before being randomly reordered to make the book. The result is a dense paratactic plane of language where very few sentences or fragments organically lead on to the next, and where clauses intersect with disparate others to produce peculiar couplings. This causes frequently hilarious semantic mutation and bizarre bedfellows, somewhat akin to a very long game of the Surrealist collaborative parlour word game Exquisite Corpse. Punctuating the book are several constants which somehow act as signposts to the 'real' world. Announcements of the deaths of well-known figures during the seven years of note-taking is one such constant: 'James Stewart is dead [...] Daniel Massey is dead [...] Pol Pot may be dead' (Manson, 2009, p. 102). Another constant is Manson's

confessional lyric fragments, which at first glance are half-visible, elided by and drifting in and out of the heft of the found material.

The kind of fractal I like is the kind of fractal that gives you time to go to the cash machine at St. Georges Cross and then get to the off licence and back before it's finished. Just imagine what you could do with £1500.'

(Manson, p. 19)

It's a strategy that results in the blurring of the 'I' voice and lyric self, that also reinforces it at the same time. As the book progresses these first person fragments stand out amid the incongruous and dissonant combinations of words, phrases, and distorted textual detritus. TIC takes Manson's technique of paratactic placement and applies it solely to found phrases. There are no confessional lyric fragments. Sometimes you might catch a glimpse of where 'I,' as nick-e melville, might be: on the bus or at the hospital, for instance. Even though there are many instances of an 'I' in TIC—I counted 123—it is not 'me' personally, even though it *could* suggest something about me. It is not intimated through my personal lyric voice, reflections or observations, but through the language that I recorded in each location.

The third writer whose work influenced my development as a poet is Pavel Büchler. The key book is Büchler's ironically titled *Collected Poems* (2000), a slim 32 page, 17.5cm by 10cm, side-stitched booklet. Ironic, because how can a 'collected poems' be such a little book? Collected poems are traditionally the life's work of a poet in one fat volume, but in this case it is literally a book of found poems that the artist has made of words collected from other sources. Each page is a separate poem, consisting of three elements: title, main poem, and reference of the source from which the text was lifted. The poem 'NO SPARK' consists of this title, the poem 'worn points / loose connections / bad earth' and at the foot of the page in a smaller, italicized font, 'Volvo P1800 Series Workshop Manual, 1969' (Büchler,

2000, unpaginated). Each of these parts is as important as the others: the poem is not the middle section, but all three working together as a whole to create a tripartite poem, which allows and encourages a reader to complete the piece by joining the dots. Despite its size, this little playful book exerted a considerable influence on my practice. It showed me the wit that found poetry can wield and how it can say so much, with so little, to suggest something unexpected by using unusual source texts. It matched my sense of humour exactly and made me realize that I could possibly do something similar.

Humour is a key aspect that links these three writers and connects them to me and my practice—they are all very funny. Puns, wit and piss-taking are very important in my work, which is quite often “gallows-humour” born of hatred’ (Richter, [1964] 1997, p. 108). If I make myself laugh making a poem, that’s normally a good sign—especially if it’s about something serious, such as being exploited by capitalism or hurt by benefit cuts. I find humour helps to bring into relief the seriousness of a poem, by way of extreme counterpoint. The main block of text in TIC gave me plenty of scope to fuse unlikely combinations for humorous and serious effect. One of my favourite attempts at this was where I splice a clause into a sentence about the last Labour Prime Minister: ‘Blair, A serial offender with a history of violence, expects Tory win in “traditional” election’ (TIC, pp. 19-20). The bracketed clause here has the feel of a news report, but instead of innocuous supplementary information—‘Charlie, a nurse from Brighton...’—the extra detail alludes to Blair’s most infamous act and toxic legacy, the second Iraq war. At the same time, it critiques the way that ex-ministers are often rolled out to comment on the events of the day. This is particularly galling in Blair’s case as, after distorting the truth about Iraq’s weaponry in order to engage in conflict, he no longer retains any credibility. With hollow, mendacious, political sentiment in mind, I would like to consider the genesis of this entire project and its context.

1.1 Inception

The seeds that propagated into TIC took root roughly a month after the UK General Election in 2010. It dawned on me just how ubiquitous the Conservative Party's new mantra 'we're all in this together' was, and how, following their victory, albeit in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, this phrase was being used to justify and defend the imposition of 'collective belt-tightening,' or austerity cuts.⁷ I remember watching BBC News and seeing the prophylactic face of the new Prime Minister, David Cameron, utter this calumny—to mend our broken society—and thinking to myself what an obvious and sickening lie it was. I realized then that something was truly rotten with the language of power and the power of language—it wasn't so much smoke and mirrors, but, with a legion of cuts looming, smoke and daggers.

It was the form of the assertion that had such an impact on me. 'We' *are* all in this together, Cameron asserted, even though only a small group of banks, lenders, financial regulators and politicians were responsible for the economic crash (the excuse to implement austerity). The bald-faced lie was compounded by its informal, conversational contraction and by the use of first person plural, 'we,' which sought to bind us into that united collective. The use of 'we' immediately treats, and targets, everyone as a group—people of all political beliefs, classes, races etc.—in an attempt, successfully or unsuccessfully, to create an unassailable bond. 'We' is also a very ambiguous pronoun as it can be unclear whether the 'we' is inclusive or exclusive. Someone using the pronoun 'we' *may* or *may not* be speaking on your behalf. In the context of Cameron's sound bite, the ambiguity may generate an extra anxiety. Perhaps it is as though, if the listener does not accept the inclusive 'we,' even on the unequal terms that it is offered, they will be faced with the exclusive 'we' that wants to persecute, punish and expel. Saying

⁷ The phrase was actually first used by Cameron in 2005 (Cameron, 2005), but grew in importance and usage in the build up to the election and thereafter was rife.

‘we’re all in this together’ carries an undercurrent of ‘you’re either with us or against us.’ In other words, such phrasing can target ‘others’ who are perceived to be outside this ‘we’ collective and therefore against the accepted consensus and the national interest.⁸ In this instance, the state deployed the sense of an ‘Other’ to sow divisions and raise barriers, with the ultimate aim of reshaping people’s subjectivity to accept Tory ideology.

After this my poetry adopted an even more overt political direction and diction. It had been political for many years, but it started to become more charged, more polemical. By the end of that last week in June 2010 I had created a found processed poem which extracted all the instances of the word ‘together’ from the three main political manifestos.⁹ Such a grouping and reframing of actual political phrases was intended to expose, through a process of saturation, the vacuous design of that Tory assertion. Before this, my found (erasure) poetry used Tipp-Ex to erase establishment discourse—junk mail,¹⁰ office related literature, and, quite presciently given current immigration rhetoric and policy, an asylum and immigration form that I found on a bus in 2006—in order to subvert its politics, not necessarily using whole phrases, as with the manifesto poems, but erasing and conflating words together. The target was the same as that of TIC: capitalism, neo-liberal politics and unaccountable corporate power. The idea was also much the same: to have official language say something else in its own words, to have it say something that reflects our ‘real conditions of existence’ (Althusser, p. 36).

A great deal of the harvested selections in TIC reflect this strategy of alienating groups through language, policy and ideology, by making and marking distinctions between others, who are marginalized, often in multi-faceted ways: by

⁸ This has perhaps manifested more overtly of late toward those presented as the ‘enemies of the people’ position vis a vis Brexit and being ‘for’ or ‘against’ the public will.

⁹ The ‘together’ poem, ‘We’re all in this,’ was published in *Scree 2*, 2010, with other manifesto poems following—using the words ‘society,’ ‘cuts’ and ‘right’—which were published in *Sous Les Pavés 5/6, Be the First to Like This* (Vagabond Voices, 2014) and *Gutter 14*, respectively.

¹⁰ See *junk mail* (melville, 2012).

gender and sexuality, class, education, religion, wealth, health and so on. This includes people with disabilities, mental health issues, immigrants, Europeans and the unemployed, to name but a few. In 'Discourse in the Novel,' Bakhtin states that 'language [...] lies on the borderline between oneself and the other' (Bakhtin, p. 1101) and 'between different socio-ideological groups in the present' (Bakhtin, p. 1099). Cameron's assertion is 'shot through with intentions' (Bakhtin, p. 1101), to 'serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases)' (Bakhtin, p. 1078).

Consequently, I began to wonder what else 'we,' as subjects, were being told by those in power, and through the media, adverts, on television, in schools, in the streets and everywhere else, and how much of what we are told seeks to persuade, deceive and instruct. That is to say, how much of what we are told every day is a form of manipulation, propaganda and social control? Which is what made me remember Edward Bernays. But before looking at him in detail, some words on my process.

1.2 The Process

Studying the 'façade of the contemporary world' is exactly what I set out to do with my thesis: to snapshot language from as many areas of society as possible during a certain period and filtered through a self, a subject of the contemporary world, i.e. myself. Such an aim was/is an impossible task. Research produced by the Global Information Industry Center claims that the average individual now receives 100,500 words and 34 gigabytes of information each day (Bohn, R.E. and Short, J.E., 2009, p. 7).¹¹ But my goal was achieved, to the best of my analogue ability, and the fruit of that labour is TIC. To achieve it, I needed some way to

¹¹ Kenneth Goldsmith cites this same report in *Uncreative Writing* (2011, p. 25; p. 231). I used this information in the first essay that grew out of this project, which I wrote in 2014, before I had read Goldsmith's book.

harness the material that I would harvest, to attempt to address Adorno's aphorism that '[t]he task of art today is to bring chaos into order' (Adorno, [1951] 2005, p. 222). Was I in fact ordering the chaos of commands? Is it actually chaos, or ordered? Was I dis-ordering? Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses provided a useful framework to help me organize.

Althusser formulates his thesis of ISAs by separating the State Apparatus, part of the superstructure which is distinct from the economic substructure, into two: the Repressive State Apparatus (the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police etc.) and the Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser, pp. 16-17). With reservations and in no particular order he suggests the following institutions as the Ideological State Apparatuses:

- the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches),
- the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'),
- the family ISA,
- the legal ISA,
- the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties),
- the trade-union ISA,
- the communications ISA (press, radio and television, etc.),
- the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.).

(Althusser, p. 17)

This was a solid structure through which to filter my phrasal gathering. It contained most areas I was keen to include, except for any specific mention of adverts, which I figured would come under cultural ISA, or of finance—perhaps because the economy is included in the base substructure, yet day to day banking these days is very much part of branded culture and thus ideological. I made a list of what I would try to capture, or extract from, during my period of harvesting:

news, adverts, bank literature, daily papers, the labels on household goods, communications from educational institutions, copy related to arts, sports and culture, the books I was reading, religious leaflets, NHS leaflets, signage in supermarkets, in high street shops and on public transport. As well as these I would note down whatever I saw, or could feasibly record, in my daily toing and froing throughout the year—this makes up the section which I call my chronological notes. At the same time, also in my day to day routine, I would collect leaflets, flyers and brochures, wherever I might find them.

This process—intense collecting of found words and materials—places my work in the lineage of one-man Dada machine Kurt Schwitters, who would ‘pick up discarded rubbish and stow it in his pockets’ to use in his collages (Richter, p. 139). In reifying the cast-off and reuniting incongruent items into artworks Schwitters ‘fragments and reorganizes the discourse of capitalism’ (Goldman, 2004, p. 57). The perfect example of this reorganization is his dissection of ‘MERZ’ from *commerzbank*, to use as a title for all his artistic endeavours (Richter, p. 138). I too picked up an immense number of physical things, but also recorded an abundance of words to be picked up solely by eyes. The language of copy is not rubbish though; it is deadly serious and wants to be taken seriously and at face value. Yet it is discarded when eyes alight on the next message. My intention was to put as much of this together in one place, to capture a barrage of text in a hefty tome, transposing it in to a single document to highlight the almost unquantifiable quantity of communications that now assail us via modern technologies. The various manipulations that I orchestrated with the sheaves of material for TIC strive toward a similar goal to Schwitters’ as outlined in my list above (page 8).

As I began, I realized the enormity of the task I had set myself and the impossibility of capturing everything became more and more palpable (even though I knew that this would be the case before I started). Despite establishing these initial filters as a type of yoke—that is, letting Althusserian ISAs roughly guide my attention, and selecting language which seemed particularly devoted to

controlling or instructing—the amount of material which qualified was overwhelming. This feeling of too much *stuff*, however, suggested to me that I was on the right track: the experience of being immersed in a vast and unmanageable milieu of language was part of what I wanted to address. I used two large cardboard boxes to store all the literature that I collected as I went along. I barely managed to incorporate a third, even a quarter, of it into the final poem.

Furthermore, I wanted to break down each area, or theme, using Oulipian-style numerical and calendrical based constraints, in order to facilitate harnessing and to mirror the various natural and unnatural numbers that structure living patterns, from diurnal, 60 (minutes, seconds) and 24 (hours), to annual, 12 (months) and 365 (days). The OuLiPo (*Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*—Workshop for Potential Literature) is a group of writers, mostly French, founded in France in 1960 by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais; others in the group include(d) Georges Perec, Italo Calvino, Jacques Roubaud, Marcel Bénabou and Harry Mathews. The aim of the group is to apply various mathematical constraints to writing, in order to explore the possibilities of imagination and chance. The finest example is Georges Perec's book *A Void* (*La Disparition* in French) ([1969] 2008) which is an 80,000 word novel that does not contain a single letter 'e'—the most common vowel in both French and English. A good starting point for an encyclopaedic overview of this group is *Oulipo Compendium* (Mathews and Brotchie, 2005).

TIC's first principle, then, as the found material was being harvested over a year, was that it be 365 pages long. Other numerical constraints were then arbitrarily assigned: 7 daily newspapers, 4 times in the year, 60 bits of text from household goods, 52 cultural phrases from films, music and television, 30 phrases from the books I was reading for my thesis, being a few examples. Keeping track of this was also problematic. I collected far more than 52 cultural phrases, but as they were in my daily notebooks, they became lost among all the other copy I recorded. Again, this—the impossibility of the task—was part of the point. If

failure is the goal of conceptual writing, as Fitterman and Place posit in *Notes on Conceptualisms* (2013), then I was half-way there (Fitterman and Place, p. 22). And if Georges Perec can fail, or not adhere to his constraints, then I was fine with that.¹² I'll talk a little more about constraint and failure in relation to conceptual writing. I shall also return to Althusser, as he was more important to my project than just giving me a structure to use for my creative process.

However, there is also some order to the chaos in TIC. To order the disorder of my copy, it forms the following blocks, some titled in the book, some not:

1. Self-placed paratactic deviant collocations, which is the main continuous block of text and is composed mainly from the literature and leaflets that I collected during the harvesting, as well as my notes from binge-watching adverts;
2. my daily chronological notes, where I noted as much as I could each day during the year of harvesting;
3. the above chronological notes mashed up using a chance process and then hand-finished;
4. 'Lyrical Commands,' an attempt at making a rhyming poem from some of my chronological notes;
5. 'A Commanding Walk!' As many shop signs as I could absorb, vocally recorded, while walking round shopping areas of Edinburgh;
6. 'Bank Them!' A minimally tweaked collage made from the literature of seven different banks;
7. miscellaneous visual, or concrete, pages, including some erasures;

¹² In 'Attempt at an Inventory of the Liquid and Solid Foodstuffs Ingurgitated by Me in the Course of the Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Four' Perec did almost exactly that. However, he 'failed' with coffee and recorded '*N coffees*,' (Perec, G. [1989] 1999, p. 249), though I consider it more a punchline than a failing.

8. monostichs that are mostly made up of lines from books and junk mail subject lines, which are intended to resemble punctuating adverts/junk mail popping into an inbox.

These discrete sections allow many points of entry into TIC due to their variations. Each section is different in form, which acts as a clue to help a reader demarcate one strand from another: whole justified pages, columns, single spaced text, one and a half spaced text, left aligned, minimal pages, visual pages and verse. So, the book can be dipped into at any point, but it is also possible to read it linearly, from cover to cover. Although it is not strictly chronological, five pages correspond to specific dates and eschew page numbers: the Scottish referendum, Christmas Day, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, and my birthday. The second page kicks this off with May 2nd, which (along with 365 pages) is there to flag up the fact that the harvesting was carried out over a year, and that the whole piece is time bound. By implication the first page is chronologically May 1st, as hinted at by the date on page two (I deliberately chose International Workers' Day as the starting point of the project, to allude to my leftist politics). The first page doesn't even have an actual page number in the top right-hand corner and could present something of a stumbling block, impasse, or paradox, were one to take it literally: 'DO NOTHING WITH THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD WHAT TO DO' (TIC, p. 1). It is the first joke in the book that plays with the notion of commands and imperatives.

There are also constants throughout TIC, which nod to some kind of diurnal structure and the habitual nature of my harvesting. The most singular constant is the quartets of 'APPLY BLOOD' which appear on every page bar a few (TIC, *passim*). These refer to my diabetes, which is a constant in my life. As a Type 1 diabetic I am required to monitor my bloods¹³ closely each day by testing it at least

¹³ This isn't a typo. As far as I know, everyone who has diabetes, that has to check their blood on a daily basis, says 'bloods' rather than blood.

four times, this helps me to see the levels of glucose in my bloodstream and administer insulin accordingly. When I use the blood glucose monitoring system the screen display instructs me to ‘APPLY BLOOD’ to the testing strip. Thus, from the very first page of TIC the trace of a lyrical self lurks in the background: a self that is critically distant, but physically closer to the world of copy and ‘[t]he publicity that fills our public space [which] [...] is an homage to Edward Bernays’ (Justman, 1994, p. 459).

The chronological sections are also constants. They begin on pages 5 and 7, respectively, and mostly continue on pages that end on those numbers. The chronological mash-up always follows the chronology of the notes. When these sections fall on a different page number they relate to specific occasions. The chronological mash-ups are displayed in columns and their purpose is twofold: to suggest, visually, newspaper columns, while the text that they contain—produced by an aleatoric process from my chronological notes—is designed to mimic information overload. To put another way, the chance texts are meant to resemble what would result if all the directed discourse we are subjected to was encountered at once, as a big mess. How do you cope with such a bombardment? How can you filter ‘truths’ from ‘lies’? How can you even make sense of it? When I did a similar random mash-up for my pilot, *ALERT STATE IS HEIGHTENED*,¹⁴ I used Peter

¹⁴ I added the following description of the short prototype of TIC, *ALERT STATE IS HEIGHTENED* (melville, 2014a), on the 23rd May 2017, only to wake up today, 24th, to see that the threat level had been raised to its highest setting—critical. ALERT STATE IS HEIGHTENED refers to the threat level of the United Kingdom. I first noticed the phrase on a pillar just inside the entrance to the National Library of Scotland. This seemed a perfect assertion to use as a title for my pilot version, *ALERT STATE IS HEIGHTENED*, as it evoked many of the ambiguities and intricacies of public language that I am interested in exploring. This threat level system has been in place since 2006, with three levels: ‘normal,’ ‘heightened’ and ‘exceptional,’ with ‘heightened’ further subdivided into ‘substantial’ and ‘severe’ (Wikipedia, 2017). (I use Wikipedia as it’s clearer and more informative than MI5’s official page (MI5, 2017)). In 2014 the level was set at ‘substantial’—it’s now at ‘severe.’ The statement is dynamic in that it gives the impression that the threat has *always* increased since the last time the sign was read. Why is it heightened? From what baseline level has it been heightened? When was it last displayed at a lower or higher level? What does it mean in practice? What are its implications in terms of levels and methods of security and policing? Why is this information only displayed in certain places? Are we at greater risk in the library? I say this flippantly, but surely such assertions should be on the Six O’Clock News, to alert us to what sort

Manson's 'Travesty' machine, an online text reassembler. At the time this system was effortless, I input a page of text, which was then seamlessly reworked into lovely chance phrases and was ready to go without much alteration. Unfortunately, 'Travesty' no longer works as well as it once did—Manson's not sure why, but agrees—only a small amount of text can be placed in it, a few lines, or it becomes incomprehensible (Manson, 2016).

With more text to mess-up, this time around I needed the assistance of a more accommodating text rearranger. In the end I used 'The Incredible Automated Dada Poetry Machine' conceived and designed by poet Calum Rodger and Sebastian Charles. This allowed me to input 11,000 words at a time, all the chronological notes which I had taken. I entered this selection of text twice, then put one mash-up through the machine a second time (these three mash-ups form the columns in TIC). I call this process aleatoric but it was hand-finished because this machine presented its own problems. I liked the results of the initial mashing, the random capitalization and punctuation, which allows different ways to read each page. But the end result was too paragrammatic, i.e. the syntax was too garbled, with lots of repetitions such as 'The the it it' rather than mixing clauses more 'sensibly,' which is why I felt I had to have a hand in it. For each iteration of 11,000 muddled words, I whittled them down to roughly 3,300 each time. The challenge here, for me, was to try and make the stochastic gibberish a bit more understandable. I had lots of fun with this sculpting, as it permitted me to focus, where possible, on creating things *I* wanted to tease out, in order to critique what is going on in the world just now, not just what was happening when I harvested my material.

of alertness we need to adopt on a daily basis? This vital state communication seems to command that we be anxious and compliant. Since its inception the threat level has never fallen below 'substantial,' the low middle tier. Things have never been 'normal,' in other words. At the same time, we are not told specifics and the responsibility for dealing with this information lies with other figures generally unknown to us (see page 41, below). We should be frightened that the threat level is not 'normal,' but grateful that it is not 'exceptional.'

TIC is a very particular project rooted in the language of the time it was harvested. However, events over the last eighteen months forced me to reimagine my creative component and constantly rethink this critical accompaniment. I couldn't envisage pulling this afterword together without addressing the clinamen of President Trump, the Brexit,¹⁵ the continuing rise of the right, 'fake news' and immigration, for example. Even if they were not specific targets for my thesis, and in some cases didn't even exist as 'issues' when I began, I realized that they were *always already* subjects embedded within the background narrative to my project and have risen to the surface as I progressed. Some of these issues will be considered to illustrate certain points in the afterword. The other thing that struck me, was that my research into Bernays and public relations suggests that what's been happening, at home and abroad, is part of a continuum and escalation of right wing rhetoric and societal manipulation that stretches back, in the modern era, to the early 20th century. Working on the afterword amid the rhetoric around the Brexit and Trump, I was alarmed to see how necessary it was to address and counter fascism in what I was writing. When I started TIC I didn't expect to mention the Nazis so directly, if at all, or to have had recourse to dip into *Mein Kampf* via Bernays, to whom I shall now turn.

¹⁵ Curiously, in April, when I first typed 'brexit' in to this afterword I was uneasily surprised to see that it was autocorrected by MS Word to have a capital B. Which means that MS Word has been updated at some point in the background, as it does, not only to recognize 'brexit' as a political event in the world, but also to stress its importance via capitalization. Moreover, it means someone took the decision that this was a necessary word to add to Word's lexicon.

2. Engineer of Consent

When I was a kid I used to love certain adverts, which at their best I thought to be short pithy films of great evocative power, or visual effect—the Metz’ Judderman advert and the Smirnoff ad on the liner, with the end song, ‘Midnight the Stars and You,’ from *The Shining*, being particular favourites—but I was unaware at the time exactly how they functioned to the detriment of society. As a youngster I did not know that ‘[a]dvertising is re-education’ (Bernays, [1952] 1980, p. 248). Don’t think bad of me. Even Vance Packard, who wrote an early exposé of the practices of advertising, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957), didn’t think adverts were *all* bad, saying advertising was vital for American growth and ‘many of the creations of ad men are tasteful, honest works of artistry’ (Packard, [1957] 2007, p. 36). ‘All advertising, whether in the field of business or politics, achieves success through the continuity and sustained uniformity of its application.’ This is actually Adolf Hitler, writing in *Mein Kampf* (Hitler, [1925] 1972, p. 169), but it could easily have come out of the mouth of a public relations counsel. I don’t invoke Hitler or the Nazis lightly, yet they are crucial to this work, through their use of propaganda and association with American PR men, in particular Ivy Lee and Carl Byoir, but also, less directly, Bernays, and the fact that their fascistic legacy looms large today in the language of current political discourse.

In a contemporary sense this can be seen in the Tory proposal (recent at the time of writing) that there will be a register for all EU citizens currently in the UK. Ostensibly to gauge demand for staying in the country, it seems much more insidious than that (O’Carroll, 2017; Travis and O’Carroll, 2017). Secondly, over the last ten years the increase and prevalence of the modifier ‘illegal’ when applied to immigrants, which has been promulgated by politicians and the media, particularly tabloids (Allen, 2016), has heavily influenced public perception of this demographic and helped to create a new figure of ‘Otherness.’ More startlingly, perhaps, there is a very specific example relating to Theresa May, which I was able

to play on in TIC: ‘Discover the benefits of becoming a citizen of the world’ (TIC, p. 162). This was the headline on a glossy magazine called BELONG, an ‘advertising feature’ which I picked up in a surgery waiting room. On the cover it alludes to the *Financial Times*—the views of which are not expressed in the magazine—and although there is no named editor, or place of publication, it states it was published by CS Global Partners. The advertising feature details how the UK is 7th on the list of countries that allows people to buy citizenship. This to me is a perfect example of how hypocritical and unjust the rhetoric around immigration and EU citizenship really is. If you have enough money you’re welcome anywhere (even Brexit Britain) via a £2,000,000 investment in UK bonds, gilts and/or securities. This bit of copy, in spite of its appalling contents, was one of the pieces I was most pleased to find and use. But like many of the phrases that I harvested, it was not till later that its relevance became pertinent. In this instance its relevance became apparent after Theresa May’s xenophobic diacope, ‘If you believe you’re a citizen of the world, you’re a citizen of nowhere,’ at the 2016 Tory Conference. As scholar and poet Dr Jeremy Adler points out, our Prime Minister’s proclamation carries echoes of anti-Semitic sentiment prevalent in 1933 Nazi Germany (Adler, 2016). Such a toxic statement highlights the hypocrisy of the Tories’ one rule for some and one for others *modus operandi*. Discovering the benefits of becoming a citizen of the world, it seems, is only a possibility for the elite, while displaced others have nowhere to belong.

Although there is mention of Goebbels’ interest in Bernays’ work in several books and articles on Bernays, it was actually a very small review of Bernays’ post-World War II essay, ‘Take Your Place at the Peace Table’ (Bernays, 1945), that really made me consider how Bernays’ writing and practice bear striking affinities with totalitarianism. The essay is a strange piece of work advising caution about being hoodwinked by propaganda, while actually being a handbook on how to hoodwink. Pitman B. Potter, an American educator, author and prominent member of the American Society of International Law, writes of Bernays’ essay:

'his methods are largely identical with those portrayed in Chapters VI and XI of *Mein Kampf* (Potter, 1945, p. 818). While identical is a bit over the top, many parallels exist with a lot of Bernays' writing and the general tenor of his thoughts on PR and the public, as shall be seen.

At the beginning of this project, then, I first thought of adverts and Bernays.¹⁶ An advert, from the Latin for 'turn toward' (*OED*), is meant to turn our attention to a product, to turn us on to a product. Bernays, as nephew of Freud, had personal access to his uncle's theories and used some of his ideas on unconscious desires, fears and insecurities to tap into the consciousness of America and change its collective mind, via advertising and other forms of public persuasion. The most explicit mention of Freud in Bernays' writing comes in a 1951 article on advertising. He briefly outlines Freud's famous theory of personality—ego, id and superego—before going into more detail about what it represents in practice:

Unconscious drives affect our behavior. These drives are conditioned by early experience. Childhood conflicts which have not been resolved may affect our adult behaviour. Frustrations of gratification lead to repression, regression, displacement, identification, projection, or isolation, and so to personality change. *The New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* by Sigmund Freud give a good description of this.

(Bernays, 1980, pp. 250)

This aspect of Bernays' relationship to Freud and the application of psychoanalysis would help to change the way that the public was managed, with corporations

¹⁶ The project really started as 'The Imperative Commands' when I was invited to deliver a keynote performance for the ConVersify conference on experimental poetics at the University of Edinburgh in 2011. That was when I first applied very specific numerical constraints to adverts, bank literature and supermarket copy.

taking a very keen interest in psychology to understand, manipulate, and effectively control consumers. This led directly to corporate in-house psychiatrists, depth psychology and focus groups (Ewen, 1996, *passim*; Packard, *passim*).

I think it's imperative to have a brief look at big data, given its pertinence to the themes of my project. The irony of TIC is that it often appears to comment on events that have happened since the material was harvested and the poem was completed: 'In a virtual world we cling to what's real' (TIC, p. 53) is one instance of this. With the advent of 'fake news' in 2016—itself a misnomer, as we shall see with Walter Lippmann—it has been implied that we can no longer really know what's 'real' in the virtual world and by extension in the 'real' world. In the context of propaganda, big data is especially associated with the automated collection and analysis of data generated by consumers and citizens in our everyday lives, with the intention of creating more targeted and effective interventions into our behaviours. It was not an issue that was on my radar when I commenced this PhD, but its profile has risen following the Brexit referendum and the US Presidential election. It now appears obvious that big data, data scraping, and 'micro-targeting' could eclipse all previous forms of propaganda, marketing and advertising, bringing 'psychology, propaganda and technology together in [a] powerful new way' (Cadwalladr, 2017b). Alarmingly, the most extreme manifestation of these new techniques is psyops, or psychological operations, a military technique and term that has been applied to the use and manipulation of big data from the web and social media (Cadwalladr, 2017a; 2017b).¹⁷

Carole Cadwalladr's investigation of outside interference in the Brexit campaign has unveiled three secretive and connected organizations—Cambridge Analytica, SCL Elections and AggregateIQ—that allegedly worked together, potentially illegally, to influence the outcome of the 2016 Brexit vote as well as the

¹⁷ Tellingly, both Cadwalladr's vital articles are the subject of legal complaints on behalf of Cambridge Analytica LLC and SCL Elections Limited.

2016 US Presidential election (Cadwalladr, 2017b).¹⁸ A key figure is Artificial Intelligence expert and billionaire Robert Mercer who has invested massively in two of these companies, owning Cambridge Analytica outright, and the intellectual property of AggregateIQ, the company that manages the practicalities of trying to influence voters online through micro-targeting. This technique targets unsure voters individually via online platforms, sending potential emotional triggers, ‘images of immigrants “swamping” the country,’ for instance, in an attempt at swaying susceptible people toward a decision, such as vote leave (Cadwalladr, 2017b).¹⁹

During the Brexit campaign, AggregateIQ was paid by various pro-Brexit campaign groups, including the Tory party’s new crutch, the Democratic Unionist Party, to micro-target susceptible social media users, using money donated by the Leave campaign which was bankrolled by Nigel Farage’s benefactor Arron Banks (Cadwalladr). The existence of such technologies alters what it means to be addressed in public as a citizen and a consumer, and therefore alters what it means to construct a found poem from public language. An addressee can no longer assume that the anonymous voice, suggesting something via whatever marketing strategy, knows little or nothing about them as an individual.

Greg Elmer in ‘Scraping the First Person’ (2015), writing before personal data may have been used to manipulate the above campaigns, describes how ‘data scraping, particularly on and across the web—including social media platforms—has become big business’ (Elmer, 2015, p. 113). He then goes on to explain how

¹⁸ The wandering hands of Cambridge Analytica and co reach far and wide, with links to Trump’s erstwhile White House aide, Steve Bannon, who was on their board, as well as Nigel Farage. The other disturbing revelation is the close links to the British establishment. For example, retired Royal Navy Commander Steve Tatham is Director of Defence Operations for SCL Group (Cadwalladr, 2017b). Sue Curry Jansen notes something similar about PR in general: ex-CIA and MI5 have been moving ‘into PR terrain’ (Jansen, 2017, p. 17).

¹⁹ ‘BELIEVE in BRITAIN,’ UKIP’s slogan during the run up to the Brexit referendum, appears quite frequently throughout TIC. When said aloud it sounds suspiciously close to ‘be leavin’ Britain,’ which makes me wonder about the existence and scope of subliminal advertising, something I did not even consider while working on my thesis.

data scrapers and ‘APIs [Application Program Interfaces] allow third-party developers to interface with the social networking site, access information and media posted with user profiles’ (Elmer, p. 121). Data scraping from social media is also known as first person media (p. 116), given that its data is all taken from a ‘first person perspective’ from Facebook, Twitter and so forth (p. 117). Ironically, my practice of harvesting material for TIC sounds like data scraping’s analogue inverse. From my ‘first person perspective’ I enacted a mode of manual scraping—a form of mechanically reclaimed language—to gather texts from inside the matrix of marketing copy. I would scrape the data that was publicly available or visible to me as someone going about their daily life and reproduce it in a Word document.

The procedures Elmer describes are exactly those employed by Cambridge Analytica and AggregateIQ, as Cadwalladr relates: ‘Facebook was the source of the psychological insights that enabled Cambridge Analytica to target individuals. It was also the mechanism that enabled them to be delivered on a large scale’ (Cadwalladr, 2017b). Ominously, APIs and data scrapers are now fully integrated into social media platforms (Elmer, p. 122). In *Compromised Data* (2015), co-edited by Greg Elmer, it is posited that we have reached the point of ‘normalization of “datafication” in our daily lives, as our social exchanges and relations become encoded, quantified, and commodified, and used to track, target and predict individual and social behaviors’ (Langlois, Redden and Elmer, 2015, pp. 3-4). Such ‘progress’ could arguably be called the logical extension of what Bernays sought to do in directing the herd and moulding public opinion. With that in mind, let us return to our analysis of the ‘father of Public Relations,’ from whom these new machinations may have first been seeded.

2.1 Steering Heads Inside

As well as being influenced by Freud, Bernays also introduced his uncle's work to America. He organized the first English translation of Freud's *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* to be published in the United States, which he talks about at length—its various incarnations, ups-and-downs, sales—in a chapter of his autobiography, *Biography of an Idea* (Bernays, 1965, pp. 252-76). Freud's book very quickly became a talking point among the intelligentsia in the country, with respected commentator Walter Lippmann, who I'll come back to, briefly discussing psychoanalysis and Freud in his book *Public Opinion*, published in 1922 (Lippmann, [1922] 1997, p. 17). Stuart Ewen, author of *PR! A Social History of Spin* (1996), also relates that in 1921 Ivy Lee, a slightly earlier forerunner of public relations than Bernays, was reported enthusing about psychoanalysis and Freudian theories and would describe it a few years later as the “art of steering heads inside” (Ewen, p. 132).

As an art of steering people's heads or thoughts, Bernays employed his uncle's theories for less noble ends, namely business. Bernays' biographer, Larry Tye, writes that where Freud 'used psychology to free his patients from emotional crutches, Bernays used it to rob consumers of their free will, helping his clients predict, then manipulate, the very way their customers thought and acted' (Tye, 1998, p. 97). 'In widely different ways, both Freud and Bernays attempted to release people from bondage to their own pasts' (Justman, p. 462); Freud 'sought to liberate people from their subconscious drives and desires, [Bernays] sought to exploit those passions' (Tye, p. 197). As Packard put it in the 1950s, public manipulation 'seems to represent regress rather than progress for man in his long struggle to become a rational and self-guiding being' (Packard, p. 34). Ultimately, Bernays' use of Freud and his attempts to help people to be free was simply 'a way of marketing consumer goods' (Justman, p. 464).

In 1923 Bernays asserted in his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* that, '[n]ew ideas gain currency through the acceptance of them by groups' (Bernays, [1923] 2011, p. 202), which, along with his use of words, images and campaigns, was one of the factors that helps to bring about persuasion of the public. Years later, he writes how crucial Freud was to his thinking in this regard. In *Public Relations* (1952) Bernays reflected on his influences before joining the Committee on Public Information in 1917, relating that 'because Sigmund Freud was my uncle, I had been exposed at home to discoveries about the mind and individual and group behaviour,' which, 'prepared me for an interest in the social sciences' (Bernays, 1980, p. 73).

In the introduction to *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1917) Freud informs the reader that the psychoanalyst 'tries to direct the thought processes of the patient,' and that '[w]ords were originally magic' and are the 'universal means of influencing human beings' (Freud, [1917] 2012, p. 5). It's no surprise then, that Bernays found it interesting, or useful for his ends, as 'language is the primary medium of the PR industry' (Jansen, 2017, p. 96), although it also goes beyond language per se. Bernays insisted that his line of work sought to 'direct' the thought processes of the masses: 'modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group' (Bernays, 2005, p. 52). At the start of the same book, *Propaganda*, he candidly states how this is done. It is worth quoting at length:

Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society [habits and opinions of the masses] constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country [...] We are governed, our minds molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of [...] we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons—a trifling fraction of our hundred and twenty million—who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires

which control the public mind, who harness old social forces and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world.

(Bernays, pp. 9-10)

In this very frank opening Bernays unashamedly announces that the public is indeed guided, that ‘the bewildered herd’ is shepherded through life, moved along, while being told there’s nothing to see here. This candour is one of the main reasons I’m fascinated by Bernays and focus on his work, because he just comes out with what I wanted to explore: the fact that a fully functioning democracy is no guarantee that the general populace is in charge and that the purpose of PR is not primarily to build and manage mutually beneficial relationships with the public, but rather to manipulate and control the public. Which, at first glance, chimes neatly with the aims of my thesis. It does, however, beg the question: can we take Bernays entirely at his word? He was a PR counsel, after all, a tireless self-promoter and self-mythologizer, breathlessly blowing his own trumpet. The examples of successful PR campaigns and actions that he uses in his books are his own (see the bacon campaign, page 44, below). Bernays generally refers to himself in the third person (‘the PR counsel’), ‘to applaud solutions that public relations counsellors offer to clients,’ thereby creating the ‘illusion of third-party endorsement of his own work’ (Jansen, 2013, pp. 1094-95). The lengthy paper trail of books and articles he wrote helped to cement this representation of himself. The claim that PR is the ‘invisible government’ may, at first glance, seem a bit of a stretch. Sue Curry Jansen, in her book *Stealth Communications* (2017), suggests that PR is not *all* powerful, but is genuinely influential (Jansen, 2017, p. 17). However, in light of recent events—misinformation about leaving the EU, the Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, ‘fake’ news and Cambridge Analytica’s alleged election and referendum involvement (all of which exploited the anger of the disenfranchised)—‘invisible government’ looks more and more an accurate description of PR, those who utilize it, and its methods, reach and capability today.

Nevertheless, after looking at a lot of his writing, and his attitude to democracy, I think it's plausible, with perhaps a tiny pinch of salt, to take Bernays at his word, for, as Jansen says: 'we're all in PR now' (Jansen, p. 175). One of Bernays' most famous phrases describing his approach is 'the engineering of consent,' from a 1947 article of the same name, which he describes as 'the application of scientific principles and tried practices in the task of getting people to support ideas and programs' (Bernays, 1980, p. 159). He goes on to say that this technique is 'the very essence of the democratic process, the freedom to persuade and suggest [...] to socially constructive goals and values' (Bernays, p. 160), which sounds somewhat oxymoronic. Whenever he says for the social good, as his examples also show, Bernays really means for the good of business: 'intelligent men must realize that propaganda is the modern instrument by which they can fight for *productive* ends and help to bring order out of chaos' (Bernays, 2005, p. 168, my emphasis).

I first came across Bernays in 2002 when I watched Adam Curtis's documentary *The Century of the Self* (2002). The well-known BBC series is about the symbiotic rise and growth of consumerism and big business, a result, Curtis argues, of the influence of Freud's theories of how 'unconscious drives affect our behavior' (Bernays, 1980, p. 250), as deployed and promoted by Bernays through public relations. The general argument of the series had quite an impact on me (it was first aired sixteen years ago and I'm still interested in Bernays).²⁰ It charts the fomentation and fermentation of consumerism, which helped big business fasten its grip on to political power. 'Bernays played a decisive role in the development of corporate propaganda' that now assails the global populace every day (Jansen, 2013, p. 1095), and which has been rampant in political and corporate discourse in capitalist globalization. And although he was 'by no means singly responsible for

²⁰ I used his phrase 'the engineering of consent' as part of a short visual poetry pentptych, 'child and adult hood games,' which is in my first book, *selections and dissections* (melville, 2010, p. 104).

any of our ills, [he] contributed richly to the culture of manipulation that defines our political life' (Justman, p. 468).

However, Bernays was not the only PR counsel, nor the first, he was second generation to Ivy Lee and Carl Byoir. PR emerged, with these two pioneers, in America in the early 20th century, as a way to defend the new industrial overlords—Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Mellon and Carnegie, famously known as the 'robber barons'—effectively 'to preserve and advance the power of these corporate elites' (Jansen, 2017, p. 4). A state of affairs that continues to this day (see Trump, Robert Mercer, Rupert Murdoch, the Barclay Brothers, Paul Dacre). Ivy Lee's work, for example, entailed helping to break strikes, as well as defend monstrous acts by his employers, such as the Ludlow Massacre of 1914 when fourteen striking miners and their families were 'viciously slaughtered on behalf of the Rockefeller mine interest in Colorado' (Ewen, p. 78). Lee was hired to secure 'publicity' for the Rockefeller family's version of events, which he attempted to do via mendacious bulletins of the supposed 'facts' of the massacre (Ewen, pp. 78-9). Two years later, in 1916, speaking to a group of railway executives, Lee explained his definition of a fact: 'What is a fact? The effort to state an absolute fact is simply an attempt to [...] give you my interpretation of the facts' (Ewen, p. 81; Jansen, 2013, p. 1098). Stuart Ewen interprets Lee's PR work as 'a newly emerging variation on the theme that "truth happens to an idea." Repeated and dispersed along the grooves of borrowed thought, something asserted might become a fact, regardless of its connection to actual events' (Ewen, p. 79). This notion of something asserted becoming a fact was one of the ideas behind my thesis, to show how politicians, the media, advertising and so on, confidently assert something so that it becomes authentic, and part of the weft of 'factual' daily discourse—'Facts stop Last' (TIC, p. 287)—such as the rhetoric of 'illegal' immigrants becoming ubiquitous, and scarcely questioned, through repetition. 'If suitable facts could be assembled and then projected into the vast "amphitheater" of public consciousness, [Lee] reasoned, they would *become* truth' (Ewen, p. 80, emphasis in the original). The

insistence on repetition brings me back to Hitler, writing in *Mein Kampf*: ‘only after the simplest ideas are repeated thousands of times will the masses finally remember them’ (Hitler, p. 169). Victor Klemperer, writing about the Nazis in *The Language of the Third Reich* (1957), also notes how important this is: ‘endless repetition [...] appears to be one of [their] principal stylistic features’ (Klemperer, [1957] 2013, p. 31). Something which could equally apply to the Tories’ 2017 election mantra of ‘strong and stable’—even if it was a massive fail as a slogan—which, it has been erroneously claimed, particularly on social media, was taken from *Mein Kampf*.

2.2 Facts stop Last

This seems a good juncture to move sideways, in order to consider Walter Lippmann and his examination of facts in *Public Opinion*. Lippmann was a nationally respected journalist in America, ‘the leading voice of the younger generation of Progressives [and] founding member of *The New Republic* magazine’ (Jansen, 2013, p. 1096). Informed by his experience of propaganda during World War I, Lippmann’s book decries the developments in reporting, the advent of the press agent and warns that ‘democracy and journalism were going to be contaminated’ by these changes (Jansen, 2017, p. 96). Lippmann illustrates this with an example of how the battle of Verdun was ‘spun’ by the French Generals to ‘prepare the public for the worst outcome,’ by deliberately choosing their words—what Bernays would later term semantic tyranny—so that ‘within a few hours those two or three hundred words would be read all over the world’ and become ‘fact’ across the globe (Lippmann, 1997, p. 21). This, to my mind, shows exactly what a misnomer our new notion of fake news is. Furthermore, the press agent is one of the people who design ‘pseudo-environments’ (more of this in relation to Althusser) by filtering the news: ‘direct channels to news have been closed and the information for the public is first filtered through publicity agents [...] the picture

which the publicity man makes for the reporter is the one he wishes the public to see. He is censor and propagandist' (Lippmann, pp. 218-19). The press agent in this example has echoes today in the way that 'news' is filtered and personally directed in social media via algorithms designed and implemented by companies such as Cambridge Analytica and AggregateIQ. This is not good for democracy Lippmann stresses: instead, he desires a situation where people can make informed choices, where a 'system of information, analysis and self-consciousness that the "knowledge of national circumstances and reasons of state" is evident to all men' instead of the alternative of 'a government of obedience and terror' (Lippmann, p. 184)—which is essentially what we have now.

To imagine what this government of 'obedience and terror' looks like at present, one need look no further than the recent, and unprecedented, media intervention by the head of MI5, Andrew Parker. He claimed that the UK has never been so unsafe, with the implication being that we should be living in fear (Dodd, 2017). The notion of fear to which I refer here is akin to that elicited from this year's fluctuating UK threat levels, which I referred to at the beginning of this afterword, (see pages 26-27, above). With this in mind I collaged the following phrase in TIC: 'We'll Expand fear the weapon' (TIC, p. 317). Drawn from the stochastic mash of my chronological notes, it pinpoints and targets exactly the type of hyperbolic language that I was interested in exploring with this project; the type of language which the government and the establishment use as a means to control and terrorize the populace.

The reason I know Lippmann and refer to him comes from my research into Bernays. Both were involved in the Paris Peace conference, Bernays as a member of the Committee on Public Information and Lippmann as advisor to Woodrow Wilson's advisor (Jansen, 2013, p. 1100). Lippmann and Bernays developed widely divergent reactions to their experience of propaganda during The Great War. Where Lippmann sees a danger to democracy, Bernays sees opportunity for business. But Bernays also saw the opportunity to cash in on Lippmann's cultural

and academic cachet by jumping on his coattails and turning them inside out at the same time. Jansen argues persuasively that Bernays co-opted, perverted, or appropriated from Lippmann for his own book (published the following year) even going so far as stealing ‘public opinion’ to title it *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (Jansen, 2013, *passim*). Bernays’ book was written and published hastily in order to benefit from the currency of, and association with, the term ‘public opinion.’ Not only that, Bernays twisted Lippmann’s message about democracy to support his own theories on PR (Jansen, 2013, *passim*). This led, ironically, in the way that non-facts become truth, to misinterpretations of Lippmann’s book and message, perpetuated in the work of Stuart Ewen, Larry Tye and Adam Curtis (Jansen, p. 1097). Prior to these works, Lippmann’s phrase the ‘manufacture of consent’ had been adapted for Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s 1988 book *Manufacturing Consent* about the role of propaganda in the American press (Lippmann, p. 158). Lippmann is discussed negatively in the preface (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p. xi), and I can’t help feeling that this is wrong and that this traducement was influenced by Bernays’ appropriation of the same phrase for his ‘engineering of consent,’ which technique *was* used for reprehensible ends.

One instance of this was Bernays’ key role as representative for the United Fruit Company in Guatemala, ostensibly fronting a campaign to promote bananas he essentially ‘helped topple Guatemala’s left-wing government’ in the CIA coup of 1954 (Tye, p. 156). This led directly to 200,000 deaths in the atrocities that followed (Jansen, 2017, p. 60), but Bernays justified the whole enterprise because he was ‘fighting the Cold War’ (Bernays, 1965, p. 766). This set the blueprint for all future CIA operations in South America (Jansen, p. 60), something *Manufacturing Consent* deals with in great detail. Chomsky later acknowledges Bernays’ hand: ‘[h]e was the person who ran the public relations campaign for the United Fruit Company in 1954, when the United States moved in [...] and installed a murderous death-squad society’ (Chomsky, 2002, p. 30). However, in contrast to Bernays’ assertion of the essential ‘link’ between the engineering of consent and democracy,

vividly illustrated here, Lippmann wrote that '[t]he creation of consent is not a new art. It is a very old one which was *supposed to have died* out with the appearance of democracy' (Lippmann, p. 158, my emphasis). Unfortunately, the manufacture—or engineering—of consent, as my poem-object and this afterword strive to show, does not seem to have died out with democracy. To that end I refashioned the notion of engineering in my poem, particularly in the following extracts, to reflect this in a contemporary setting: 'the engineering of / Power and yourself [...] ways Order has restricted YOU best is / engineering you as affordable' (TIC. p. 207; 317). To me these versions reflect the ideas behind Bernays' approach and attitude to consent, that of the engineering, and sustaining, of the positions of those in power. This, at the same time, goes hand in hand with the creation of our selves—through the second person 'you'—as subjects, alongside the way we are *represented* as subjects, or, indeed, as others: strivers, skivers, the deserving poor, zero-hours workers, even enemies of the people. (I shall consider the use of the second person pronoun 'you' and subject creation in more detail shortly.)

Jansen explains Bernays' term 'semantic tyranny' as 'a form of instrumental communication that seeks to censor critical thought at its source using words/terms with positive connotations' (Jansen, 2017, p. 90), to which I would also add negative connotations (see also micro-targeting, page 33, above). The £350 million per week promised for the NHS after the Brexit, promoted by the likes of Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson using the old-fashioned device of an ad on a bus, is a fine example of this technique at work. It also demonstrates the strength of Bernays' statement that '[t]he important thing for the statesman of our age is not so much to know how to please the public, but *to know how to sway* the public' (Bernays, 2005, p. 119, my emphasis). This is why the legacy of Bernays and other PR trailblazers is so important today. The use of persuasion, propaganda, or semantic tyranny can be seen everywhere: see the rise of the right, see the Brexit, see Trump, see 'The Snap' General Election of 2017. An exemplar of the employment of semantic tyranny can be seen in Theresa May's assertion that

‘nothing has changed’ after the record breaking U-turn on social care, changing a key manifesto pledge, *during* the election campaign.

Bernays was a tool for business with its own economic self-interest at heart, using PR for fastening ‘people to established patterns of belief and conduct,’ or ‘converting them to new attitudes or activities in their purchasing habits’ (Bernays, 1980, p. 248). An early example of this is when Bernays, who was employed by a bacon manufacturer who wished to increase sales, even though it was already dominant in the market, convinced a doctor to say that bacon was a good hearty breakfast and was ‘dietetically sound’ (Bernays, 2011, p. 54). His campaign worked.²¹ During my harvesting I came across the following phrase: ‘Bacon, it’s important’ (TIC, p. 104). I decided to place this next to The Co-operative’s strap line, ‘Here for you for life’ –because bacon probably will be a staple of my diet for life, whether it’s dietetically sound or not—and thus allude to myself as lyric-subject behind these two disparate slogans. This novel technique of Bernays’ would develop into a ‘front group,’ an organization set-up to look impartial, but which is not. Once again, Bernays led the way, with this insidious practice reaching new lows and evolving into deliberate misinformation propaganda. Jansen cites an example whereby campaign groups are set up and financed by fossil fuel companies to discredit climate change (Jansen, 2013, p. 1095).

I have another, slightly different, example of just how far Bernays’ influence has spread. In his first main publication, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, Bernays repeatedly states that the public relations counsel ‘[i]nterprets the client to his public, which he is enabled to do in part because he interprets the public to the client’ (Bernays, 2011, p. 51), while further on in the book he substitutes

²¹ I’m a bacon roll fanatic, it would be my desert island food. Despite his professed vegetarianism, Jo Lindsay Walton and I used to visit many different cafés in Edinburgh to try their bacon rolls and then assess them. We have a rough top five. I wonder how much Bernays is responsible for my love of bacon rolls.

‘organization’ for ‘client’ (Bernays, p. 70).²² In his next book, *Propaganda*, Bernays employs the same chiasmic turn of phrase, but instead of ‘client’ or ‘organization,’ he uses ‘people’ and ‘government,’ when suggesting that there should be a Secretary of Public Relations in the US President’s Cabinet whose job should be to ‘interpret the people to the government and the government to the people’ (Bernays, 2005, p. 127). This is essentially a spin doctor—a role made famous in the UK by Tony Blair’s spokesman Alastair Campbell. Despite not being ensconced in the Cabinet, this closely resembles the role of the White House Press Secretary, which was initially occupied by Sean Spicer in Donald Trump’s administration.²³ In the hands of Trump and Spicer, the re-interpreting of facts for the press has elevated Bernays’ techniques to a new level of publicly directed mendacity, a blatant tool for spreading prejudiced propaganda and lies: inauguration crowd size, extreme banning, the betrayal of the Attorney General, Trump’s creative use of quotation marks, and so on (see any Spicer press briefing). Which brings us back to the line I previously used from TIC, ‘In a virtual world we cling to what’s real.’ Following this, I paratactically placed a direct reference, and two allusions, to the current incumbent of the White House: ‘In a virtual world we cling to what’s real. Trump plays his president card. Changing Room Chat. Wanted now: high flying apprentices’ (TIC, p. 53). In just twenty-two words there are suggestions of Trump’s previous celebrity role on *The Apprentice*, his obsession with how the media is fake, but also his own fakery, and his dismissal of his quip about how he just grabs women by the pussy as locker-room talk (Fahrenthold, 2016). Thus a few incongruous lines from TIC highlight how easy it is for words ‘arbitrarily

²² In *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Freud talks about how psychoanalysis is ‘the work of interpretation, which translates unconscious into conscious’ (Freud, [1917] 2012, p. 386). I wonder if it’s coincidence, or not, that Bernays used that term so often, as a way of describing his role of ‘translating’ between parties.

²³ Such is the speed of change in Trump’s administration that since I wrote that section Spicer has now resigned (July 2017) and the role is currently occupied by Sarah Huckabee Sanders (no relation to Bernie).

connected seem naturally related,' to defer to Ausonius's 4th century C.E. description of the cento, the first known found poem (Ausonius, 1919, p. 375).

The examples of Trump and Spicer's spin, as well as the Brexit and Cambridge Analytica's supposed election interfering, justify Packard's warning that the way advertising had developed up till the 1950s was a 'portent of what may be ahead on a more intensive and effective scale for us all' (Packard, p. 31). Curiously, I also found an example of Bernays' chiasmic phrasing, intended or not, in an article about Russia's alleged misinformation strategy, which also, it has been very dramatically mooted, may be linked to Trump's presidential victory. Rick Stengel, former managing editor of *Time* magazine, and US undersecretary of state for public diplomacy in Obama's cabinet investigating Russian shenanigans in the 'psychosphere,' said that his motto during his incumbency at the magazine was: '[w]e explain the world to America, and America to the world' (Pomerantsev, 2015).

Interpreting for, or explaining to, the public, smacks of condescension. And not without reason. Bernays' daughter Anne, interviewed in *The Century of the Self*, says that 'stupid' was one of her father's favourite words and that he thought the masses were stupid. Jansen cites Anne Bernays' review of Stuart Ewen's *Spin!* in which she recounts that her father thought that the masses could and *should* be controlled without their knowledge by PR (Jansen, 2017, p. 19). He says as much himself in *Propaganda*: '[i]f we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it?' (Bernays, 2005, p. 71). Note the use of 'our,' meaning the sage few who run things in the background. Furthermore, he seems to lament the fact of democratic liberalism:

It might be better to have instead of propaganda and special pleading, committees of wise men who would choose our rulers, dictate our conduct, private and public, and decide upon the best types of clothes for us to wear

and the best kinds of food for us to eat. But we have chosen the opposite method, that of open competition.

(Bernays, 2005, p. 39)

Time and again Bernays seems to be advocating epistocracy, or ‘rule by the knowledgeable’ (Brennan, 2017, p. 14), implying that democracy could be, and should be, just a front. When referring to PR counsels (and note the ‘our’ again) he states: ‘[o]urs must be a leadership democracy administered by the intelligent minority who know how to regiment and guide the masses’ (Bernays, 2005, p. 127). ‘[P]ropaganda, carefully adjusted to the mentality of the masses, is an essential adjunct of political life’ (Bernays, p. 110), presumably because, as he writes later, the ‘mental age of the public is not very high’ (Bernays, 1980, p. 299). With that in mind he offers some practical advice for the PR man to ‘prepare copy written in simple language and sixteen-word sentences for the average public’ (Bernays, p. 167).²⁴ His writing once again resonates with Hitler’s, who writes that propaganda ‘must be popular and its intellectual level must be adjusted to the most limited intelligence among those it is addressed to,’ while asserting that the greater the mass ‘the lower its purely intellectual level will have to be’ (Hitler, p. 164). This insistence on a small group of intelligent men is dangerous territory, which Klemperer points out about the Nazis: ‘the language of a clique became the language of the people’ (Klemperer, p. 19) when ‘a mere handful of individuals provided the entire population with the one acceptable linguistic model’ (Klemperer, p. 22). Yet Bernays knew, writing before *Mein Kampf* in 1923, that ‘by the substitution of words for acts, demagogues in every field of social relationship can take advantage of the public’ (Bernays, 2011, p. 165). He goes on to repeat PR’s potential for abuse in several other places in his writings as well, and perhaps his point has been proved by the Cambridge Analytica exposé, and to a lesser extent

²⁴ I considered composing my afterword in sixteen-word sentences, but writing this one footnote was hard enough.

some of the aforementioned Tory and Brexit campaign slogans. Olasky puts it differently, but misses the point about Bernays' own demagoguery: '[s]ince a democratic society is normally considered to be one in which "the people" do rule, and an authoritarian society is often considered one in which a small group of people rule, Bernays was trying to square the circle by arguing, in effect, that we must kill democracy in order to save it' (Olasky, 1985, p. 19). Olasky is being too kind. Bernays simply wanted to kill democracy, while preserving its semblance, in order to maintain and increase business interests' hold on power.

This can be seen in some of Bernays' more authoritarian soundbites. I have already mentioned that he believed that the 'engineering of consent' was an essential part of a 'democracy.' However, as Chomsky points out, this is not benign: '[t]he people who are able to engineer consent are the ones who have the resources and the power to do it—the business community—and that's who you work for' (Chomsky, 2002, p. 29). Bernays continues by asserting that the engineering of consent can be used to 'intensify already existing favorable attitudes; [...] may induce those holding favorable attitudes to take constructive [or destructive] action; [...] may convert disbelievers; [...] may disrupt certain antagonistic points of view' (Bernays, 1980, p. 162). In another essay in *Public Relations*, this time on advertising, he states that words and images are part of the arsenal for effectively 'negating potential attitudes or patterns of conflict' (Bernays, p. 248). At times he sounds as if he is talking about rewiring people's synapses (something even more achievable now through psyops and data scraping): '[t]o bring about certain changes of action in a personality involves a reorganization of attitudes, a modification of philosophy, establishing a new role or a new pattern of behavior' (Bernays, 1980, p. 250). To be able to do this, the engineer of consent must be equipped with the 'facts,' truth and evidence (Bernays, p. 162), yet these 'facts' will no doubt be similar to the definition provided by Ivy Lee, i.e. Bernays' interpretation of the facts, serving whichever client. All this verges on the totalitarian, especially coupled to his epistocratic yearnings, yet '[i]t's not like a

totalitarian state, where it's done by force. These achievements are under conditions of freedom' (Chomsky, p. 37). Given the above position of Bernays, as well as his instructions for public persuasion, it's no wonder his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* was used as a propaganda toolkit by Joseph Goebbels.

Much has been made of Bernays' influence on Goebbels and Nazism, not least in Ewen, Tye and *The Century of the Self*, but he was far from the worst culprit. No one knows the exact influence Bernays' work had on German propaganda, but it is true, as has just been explored, that many similarities of attitude and approach exist, and through propaganda the Nazis had made 'language an instrument, a lever, a machine' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2010, p. 255). The main texts I considered (Ewen, Jansen, Tye), which mentioned Goebbels' use of Bernays' book, cite Bernays' own account as the primary source, from his autobiography—there seems to be no other source. This makes sense in some ways, as he was 'savvy enough' not to release this information until it was 'neutral' (Tye, p. 111). Here is the complete extract from the autobiography:

Karl von Wiegand, foreign correspondent of the Hearst newspapers, an old hand at interpreting Europe and just returned from Germany, was telling us about Goebbels and his propaganda plans to consolidate Nazi power. Goebbels had shown Wiegand his propaganda library, the best Wiegand had ever seen. Goebbels, said Wiegand, was using my book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* as a basis for his destructive campaign against the Jews of Germany.

This shocked me, but I knew that any human activity can be used for social purposes or misused for antisocial ones. Obviously the attack on the Jews of Germany was no emotional outburst of Nazis, but a deliberate, planned campaign.

(Bernays, 1965, p. 652)

To be clear, this ‘shocked’ Bernays—not exactly very emphatically written or expanded on—but he already knew that any human activity can be used for any purpose including antisocial ones. Essentially, what he’s saying is that despite his influence, no matter how small, these things can happen and no blame or responsibility can be attributed to himself or his work. As Justman puts it, ‘[c]an he not have thought twice about his methods when he learned that Goebbels, the mover behind the campaign to “crystallize” Jewish windows, used the book as a guide?’ (Justman, pp. 465-66). Now, this was in 1933 and there was enough information at that time about Nazi policy to be concerned, so it seems surprising, or disappointing, that Bernays did not use his skills and PR nous, to highlight what was happening to his fellow Jews in Germany. In his essay ‘The Engineering of Consent,’ Bernays (again) alludes to the possibility of PR techniques being abused, but this time after the horrors of the death camps had come to light. This is what he says: ‘[b]ut the techniques can be subverted; demagogues can utilize them for antidemocratic purposes’ (Bernays, 1980, pp. 160-61). As mentioned, this possibility had already been flagged up in several of his works published before the war. All he seems to have done, according to Jansen, was refrain from using ‘propaganda’ and ‘manipulation’ in his writing ‘when the rise of Nazism, fascism, and Stalinism made it impolitic’ (Jansen, 2017, p. 47). Nonetheless, Bernays’ complacency on finding out about the possible use of his book is still deeply problematic and raises serious concerns about his ethics.²⁵

To conclude this section I return to Pitman B. Potter, who likened Bernays’ writing to *Mein Kampf*. In that review, Potter provides a useful definition of

²⁵ Bernays’ peers, Ivy Lee and Carl Byoir, however, were much more heavily implicated and involved with the Nazis, than Bernays, with both being associated with or employed by the Nazi regime in the 1930s. Ivy Lee worked for IG Farben, who produced Zyklon B, while Byoir had an office in Berlin in 1933 and was in contact with Hitler, Goebbels and Goering, giving them advice about the best way to present themselves. In 1934 Lee and Byoir were called before the House Un-American Activities Committee and discredited for propagandizing on behalf of Nazi Germany (Jansen, 2017, pp. 55-8).

totalitarianism, which has an eerie resonance with contemporary Western politics and links in to everything that has been covered here: PR, manipulation, fake news, the Brexit and The Snap. He asks:

But what is the essence of fascism? It is totalitarianism, of course [...] brought about by a dictatorial technique, whether the method is designed to serve one substantial program or another—capitalism, national socialism, communism, or whatever else. That method consists of the adoption, by the individuals or groups contemplating such a program, of the end in view *in advance* of any general discussion, followed by high-pressure promotion to put over the program, including, if possible, suppression of the opposition and of any individual liberty of thought and expression. Misrepresentation of facts, as far as useful and safe, exaggeration of interpretations and judgements, appeals by seductive words....

(Potter, p. 818, my emphasis)

Potter here, I think, is implying that the techniques of Bernays and other PR men could be an aid to various forms of totalitarianism. 'Suppression' and 'misinterpretation' take us back to Lippmann's prophetic thoughts about press-agents and pseudo-environments, which also pre-figured Althusser's theory of Ideological State Apparatuses and interpellation.

3. Ideological State Apparatuses: ISAs²⁶ or ‘Pseudoreality Prevails’²⁷

Althusser’s model of Ideological State Apparatuses and the associated theory of interpellation helped me to deepen and refine my understanding of how we, as subjects, are controlled and guided by the language that surrounds us and the various ideologies that this language promotes or represents. He puts forward the proposal that to his knowledge ‘*no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses*’ (Althusser, 2008, p. 20, emphasis in the original). In other words, the State maintains its power by imposing its ideology through the various apparatuses outlined above (see page 21).

This is echoed by Bernays when he writes about the mechanisms used to reach people in order to influence them—they’re not too far removed from what Althusser calls ISAs. In *Crystallizing Public Opinion* Bernays writes: ‘[m]any outside forces, however, do go to influence pub[l]ic opinion.’²⁸ The most obvious of these forces are parental influence, the school room, the press, motion pictures, advertising, magazines, lectures, the church, the radio’ (Bernays, 2011, p. 94). While a couple of decades later he writes: ‘American values are instilled into American boys and girls by their whole culture pattern—family, school, printed word, movies, radios and television—and by their cultural heritage’ (Bernays, 1980, p. 341). What are ‘American values’ if not ideology?

To Althusser, the most important, or most dominant, ISA is the educational ISA, a role previously held by the Church (Althusser, p. 25). The reason he gives for this is that ‘no other ideological State apparatus has the obligatory (and not least, free) audience of the totality of the children in capitalist social formation,

²⁶ I find it quite amusing that the acronym is the same for Individual Savings Accounts. Had I any spare cash I can now save tax-free up to 20k, with an interest rate of 0.05%! I remember when they first started, interest rates were about 4-5%.

²⁷ This is the title of Part II of Robert Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities*.

²⁸ This is one of many examples of this unfortunate, but funny, typo throughout this publication.

eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven' (Althusser, p. 30). Diane Macdonell in *Theories of Discourse*, her analysis of Althusser's theory of ISAs and interpellation, insists more directly that education is specifically organized to help keep capitalist society in place (Macdonell, 1989, p. 12). Decades earlier, Freud asserted the same: 'every education is partisan; it aims at making the child adapt to whatever social system is the established one' (Freud, [1930] 2002, p. 193). Throughout their time at school, children 'learn the "rules" of good behaviour' and 'ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination' (Althusser, p. 6). If such rules are not followed, a pupil will be punished, and should this continue into adult life, the person will fall foul of the law, otherwise known as the Repressive State Apparatus. As Ferretter puts it, '[t]he RSA and the ISA [...] work together to maintain the order of the state' (Ferretter, 2006, p. 84). At the same time, the rules reinforce the position of pupils and through good behaviour they learn their place in the system, and what their future holds: 'i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is "destined" for' (Althusser, p. 6). Althusser breaks this down, showing the staggering of school leavers, after 4th year, 5th year, or the French equivalent, starting with workers, through to managers, police and priests, as well as further education (Althusser, p. 29).

With around 50% of the age cohort currently attending university after school in the UK at present, Althusser's assertion about the education apparatus is possibly more valid than it was when it was formulated, as it now extends into the adult life of a sizeable proportion of the population. Recent governmental policy has essentially forced universities to continue the role which school plays in ideological manufacturing, making it 'difficult to avoid the conclusion that marketization is as much about social engineering as economic concerns' (Furedi, 2010, p. 2). University has become a natural extension of, and successor to, the school system's propagation of 'a certain amount of "know how" wrapped in the ruling ideology' (Althusser, p. 29). What Althusser is suggesting is that education

is the most effective form of state ideological, or establishment, propaganda. Unlike Freud, who plainly said education was partisan, Bernays does insist on a separation: '[t]he only difference between "propaganda" and "education," really is in the point of view. The advocacy of what we believe in is education. The advocacy of what we don't believe in is propaganda' (Bernays, 2011, p. 200). An alarming recent instance of how education can be propagandized and promote the state ideology, which reinforces Macdonell's notion, that education helps keep capitalist society in place, is the inclusion of Ayn Rand in the A Level curriculum (Department of Education, 2016, p. 6). A writer much admired by the right due to her philosophy of self-interest, which significantly influenced neo-liberalism, Rand's inclusion is a perfect example of such a fusion of education and propaganda 'wrapped in the ruling ideology' of the current Conservatives and neo-liberals, both in the UK and the United States (Freedland, 2017). How Rand will be taught in schools is anyone's guess, but it is no doubt the neo-liberal dream that it will create willing adherents to the neo-liberal cause.

I would suggest that perhaps there is now an even more dominant ISA, which I would term the mass media ISA – what Adorno and Horkheimer termed the 'culture industry' – which is, in effect, a merger of the communications and culture ISAs that Althusser initially proposed, now inextricably linked by advances in technology. I will use my daughter to illustrate. She's 14 and goes to school for four and a half days a week, roughly thirty hours. But like a lot of kids her age she spends an inordinate amount of time on her iPhone and iPad, often at the same time, watching films, TV series, vlogs, and doing social media. The rough amount of time she spends on mass media, either alone or with her friends, at a low estimate, averages fifty hours per week. This, I think, supersedes education, for the control of lowbrow, or mass culture 'results in what might be called the prevailing ideology of our time' (Adorno, [1954] 2001, p. 160). Even in 1928, when the film industry was in its infancy, Bernays wrote that the 'American motion picture is the greatest unconscious carrier of propaganda in the world today. It is

a great distributor of ideas and opinions' (Bernays, 2005, p. 166). The same can be said for television, which didn't exist at the time Bernays wrote that particular sentence. Television, Terry Eagleton asserted in 1990, assists the ruling class, not necessarily by promoting its ideology (Eagleton, 1990, p. 34), but by being 'more a form of social control than an ideological apparatus' (Eagleton, p. 35). He believes this control is exerted because television confines 'individuals in passive, isolated, privatized roles and consumes a good deal of time that could be put to productive political uses' (Eagleton, p. 35). Though that is most likely true, there is too much information on television that is designed to persuade, instruct, or suggest something for it *not* to be an ideological apparatus as well, whether generally or through the naturalizing of projected 'ideal' lifestyles, both in TV programmes and adverts. Luke Ferretter provides a very clear definition of ideology, using adverts to illustrate:

The messages of advertisements by which we are constantly surrounded, for example—the images of a healthy family relationship, of a mother's role, appearance, weight, hairstyle, reading matter, interests and so on, of the ideal female and male bodies, of the ideal clothes, lifestyle, home, eating habits, entertainments, of the way in which we are supposed to look, think and want—all these are examples of ideology in Althusser's sense.

(Ferretter, p. 77)

What ideology enforces, via ISAs, is 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser, p. 36). This can be summed up as exploited workers, or subjected 'subjects' in thrall to a higher 'Subject'—God, your boss, the state—as we shall see when examining the notion of interpellation. 'In ideology the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that *expresses a will* (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality' (Althusser, [1965] 2005, p. 234,

emphasis in the original). Ideology constitutes ‘an illusion’ but one that ‘make[s] allusion to reality’ (Althusser, 2008, p. 36). In relation to Ferretter’s definition, then, this would be the hopes of ‘ideal’ lifestyles as something to aspire to, as presented by adverts and the media. In *Decoding Advertisements* (1978) Judith Williamson writes about the creation of aspiration through advertising at length and how the ideal can be invoked through interrogative phrases such as ‘Is your Mum a Superfine Mum?’ (Williamson, [1978] 2000 p. 45).²⁹ The interaction created by the interrogative here implicates mothers for being inferior if they do not subscribe to that particular brand’s representation of the ideal mum, with children, by extension, being interpellated to hammer home the question.

Althusser insists that these illusions ‘only need “interpreted” to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world’ (Althusser, 2008, p. 36). Interpretation of these illusions is one of the possibilities that TIC promises. Still, the imaginary representations ‘rather than becoming objects of critical reflection, are examples of the kind of sub-conscious framework that constitutes ideology’ (Ferretter, p. 77). These ‘interior representations of the world’ were called pseudo-environments by Walter Lippmann in 1922 (Lippmann, p. 17) in relation to psychoanalysis, but he formulated the term to describe the skewing and misrepresentation of the news, as a false interpretation and was thus ‘the insertion between man and his environment of a pseudo-environment’ (Lippmann, p. 10).

I find it interesting that there’s a close link between the words interpretation and interpellation, which we will come on to, in the prefix ‘inter-’ from the *Latin* meaning ‘between’ (*OED*). We saw Bernays use the word ‘interpret’ to mean a form of explanation, or translation. So is there always something *between* people and their real existence, *between* people and the real news, *between* people and PR, *between* people and the messages of adverts, films and so on. What lies between is

²⁹ Interestingly, even though Williamson invokes Althusser for her argument, she uses the term ‘appellation,’ derived from the Latin for ‘to address,’ instead of interpellation.

ideology, false consciousness and counterfeit realities. Sue Curry Jansen sums this up succinctly:

“Pseudo-environments” are “fictions,” “counterfeit realities” that are inserted between people and their environments, whether as a result of individual eccentricities, or psychosis, cultural traditions, or by the conscious intervention and manipulation of demagogues, propagandists [...] they cultivate pictures in our heads, which do not accurately represent the world outside.

(Jansen, 2013, p. 1102)

The way I see it is that a subject interacts with the artifice of a ‘between place’ and ‘freely forms or freely recognizes ideas in which he believes,’ from which a material action follows (Althusser, 2008, p. 41). For instance, Althusser talks of the material existence of an ideological apparatus and uses the example of a mass in a church, a funeral, or a game of football (Althusser, p. 42). An individual believes in God, or Duty, or Justice, or their football team and ‘this belief derives [...] from the ideas of the individual concerned’ (Althusser, p. 41), which in turn were taken from the particular ISA in question. ‘Ideas are not the property of individual subjects [...] but the result of the situation of those subjects, in class society, within a set of ISAs’ (Ferretter, p.87), in other words, reiterating Adorno and Horkheimer, ‘[n]o one is officially responsible for what he thinks’ (see page 11, above).

Althusser goes on to posit the idea that ‘ideas’ have disappeared and have been subsumed into practices and rituals as material actions (Althusser, p. 44). In that sense ‘an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material’ (p. 40). The Althusserian linguist Michel Pêcheux restates this as ‘ideologies are not made up of “ideas” but of practices’ (Pêcheux, [1975] 1983, p. 98), while Judith Butler writes that ‘ritual is meant to render belief and practice inseparable’ (Butler, 1997, p. 120). Take, for instance, Tory rhetoric

about benefit scroungers. It is not just rhetoric, or words to woo voters, but represents Tory ideology, which is then implemented in actual policy changes, which has physical and material effects on those involved, both non-working and working claimants: less money, rent arrears, reliance on food banks, general stigmatization and othering, as well as potentially thousands of preventable deaths (Watkins J., Wulaningsih W., Da Zhou C, and others, 2017).

Althusser describes the process of how an idea becomes material: an individual's *'ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject'* (Althusser, 2008, p. 43, emphasis in the original). I see this as an ineluctable vicious cycle, with each point—ISA, action, practice, ritual—connecting and feeding off each other and flowing to the next. Trapped in the middle is the subject, who is able to enter at any point. I made a little diagram, to help formulate it in my mind.

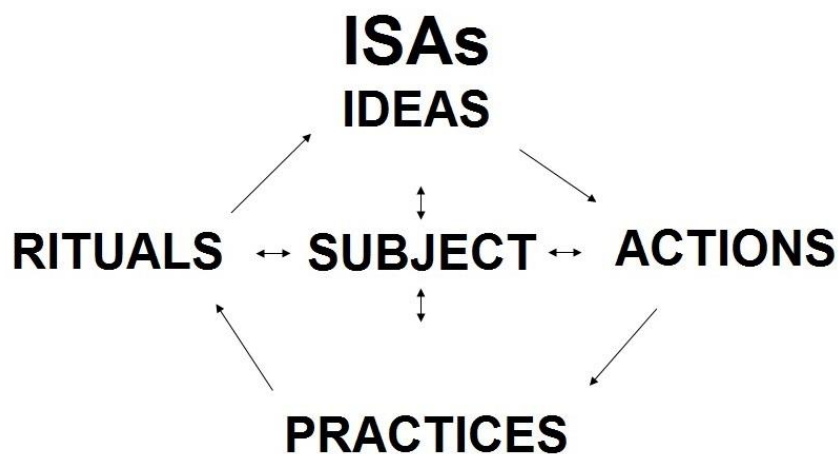


Figure 1. An attempt at visualizing the material nature of ideology.

Harvesting materials for TIC, I was essentially an example of a subject in the middle of conflicting ideologies, immersed in the everyday world of directed instructional discourse, actions, practice and rituals. Being inside an ISA as above,

or indeed inside many at the same time, calls to mind Lippmann's suggestion that in 'the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us' (Lippmann, pp. 54-55), from that which surrounds us. In my case, the two-directional proposition of the arrows was tempered by a certain critical distance, as it was my aim to show that being assailed or hailed is a continual occurrence. My critical distance came at a price, which was *proximity*—critically distant, but physically closer. For in order to resist such language I had to seek it out, to collect it, to become more aware of it wherever I happened to be.

To illustrate I will draw on the section of TIC entitled 'A Commanding Walk!' (TIC pp. 115-34). Envisaged as a nod to psychogeography, this was a kind of anti-Situationist *dérive*. The idea was not so much to discover 'new habitual axes' (Debord, 1956), but to go to the most popular shopping areas in Edinburgh. To that end I devised a route along the main commercial precincts: Princes Street, George Street, Multrees Walk and St James's Centre. I imagined it in the shape of a wonky exclamation mark that might accompany a command, and which roughly approximated my itinerary. I transcribe the drawing of my route, which was overlaid on a map of Edinburgh, below, in the style of the Corporal's stick flourish from *Tristram Shandy* thus (Sterne, [1759-67] 1997, p. 506):

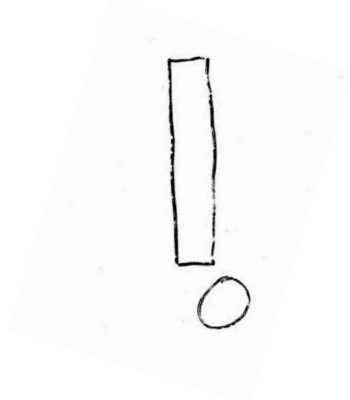


Figure 2. The route of 'A Commanding Walk!'

Starting off at the bottom left hand corner of the rectangle (East End of Princes Street), I walked up, along, down, along and then around, trying to capture as many textual interventions from the shops and the streets as I could record. To do this, I used the voice recorder on my phone, holding it up to my head, as if I were talking on the phone, so that I didn't look too mad carrying out this bit of research. When phrases caught my eye I said them aloud, as many as I could recite, without stopping on my route. Once I had finished this drift around the shops I transcribed my recording as a poem. Some of it was easier to do than other bits: the Waterstone's copy, for example, was thirty repetitions of 'feel every word' (TIC, pp. 120-21). At other times I wanted to create associations and links between the different bits of copy, links that are not very obvious in the hustle and bustle of a shopping trip, but which come to light when the language is slowed down and fixed. I set out this stall in the first two lines of this section: 'keep out sorry / for our appearance' (TIC, p. 115). The addition of a tabbed out 'sorry' on the same line as the command 'keep out' now acts as an apology from the authoritative voice telling you to stay out of somewhere, in a way personifying the command and diminishing its force.

Most people filter out much of this static because there's too much to take in. We don't, of course, succeed in filtering all of it out, as the effectiveness of marketing language shows. Happy shoppers looking for a bargain in Primark might miss that the shop is described as 'the land of summer' (TIC, p. 117-18), but they might not. The pleasant association of summer may waft around them without their full realization. Book lovers in Waterstone's probably couldn't help but 'feel every word' (TIC, pp. 120-21), when there were thirty large signs proclaiming this on the ground floor alone.

Another thing to bear in mind is that it's not just the ruled classes that are exposed to, or controlled by, ideology, since 'the ruling class lives its own ideology, just as the exploited do' (Ferretter, p. 80). The ruling class must believe in the status quo, the order of things, or no one else will buy it. 'In reality, the bourgeoisie has

to believe in its own myth before it can convince others' (Althusser, 2005, p. 234). The way the ruling-class does this is by asserting its authority, which is created and sustained by interpellation.

3.1 Interpellation

Ideology 'recruits' subjects from individuals or 'transforms' individuals into subjects, and it does this by what Althusser terms *interpellation*, or hailing. His first illustration is that of a police officer shouting 'Hey, you there!' after someone in the street (Althusser, 2008, p. 48). By turning round, the hailed person *becomes* a subject, as they recognize that the address was indeed for them, which essentially affirms 'that they really do occupy the place [the interpellation] designates for them as theirs in the world, a fixed residence: "It really is me, I am here, a worker, a boss or a soldier!"' (Althusser, p. 52).

My *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* has only one definition of interpellate: '(in a parliament) interrupt the order of the day by demanding an explanation from (the minister concerned)' (*COED*, 1998, p. 712). This, while interesting, does not help much in trying to understand Althusser. The online *OED* adds a few more definitions: an adjective, now obsolete, and two verbs, the first of which is obsolete (*OED*). Indeed, MS Word underlines interpellate in red, as it doesn't recognize this word.

Althusser's choice of the police officer—part of the Repressive State Apparatus—to illustrate interpellation, is, I suspect, deliberate and pointed, being published not long after the events in Paris, May 1968. It alludes to the typical 'police operation of assigning and checking *identities*' (Pêcheux, p. 107, emphasis in the original), echoing Althusser's argument that a subject/identity is 'created' by interpellation. Furthermore, one sense of the French verb *interpeller* relates directly to the police, so it's useful to look at what the word means in French. In French,

unlike in English, it is still in common everyday usage with several meanings.³⁰ The following are the proposed English translations taken from my *Collins French Dictionary*: ‘to call out to; to shout at; (*Police*) to take in for questioning; (*Pol*) to question;’ with the reflexive verb *s’interpeller* also meaning ‘to exchange insults’ (Collins, 2010, p. 227). These definitions, taken from a recent dictionary, represent current French language, and allow more nuance to be teased out of Althusser’s theory. My partner, who’s French, tells me that this calling out can also be from a thing, such as an artwork. This form utilizes the reflexive version: ‘*ce tableau m’a interpellé,*’ which translates as ‘that artwork really struck me’ or ‘piqued my interest.’ She also explained that in terms of the police definition, *interpeller* means more specifically to question in order to confirm the identity of someone, be it a suspect, or a witness (Coxam, 2017). So, in French, the word is usefully equivocal, and may suggest the action of a thing, while also carrying connotations of reflexive action: it is something that a person does to oneself (cleans one’s teeth), or a person does to others (hails them), or that a thing does to people (catches their attention).

As I harvested and arranged the imperatives and assertions of everyday life, I worked with language that closely conforms to the illustration of interpellation as getting hailed by an authoritative voice. In just the following short snippet, there is a voice that apparently ‘knows’ my eagerness to sell myself (with the implication that I am unable to do so at the moment), my great desire for a better role in office life, my anxiety that stocks in shops will be depleted (a flashforward to post-Brexit life?), my willingness to hurry before they fly off the shelf, and what all my favourite Easter things are:

³⁰ I’ve been watching the new series of *Twin Peaks* streaming a version with French subtitles, as I couldn’t find a decent version without. In episode 7, ‘There’s A Body All Right,’ the past tense of *interpeller* was used, *interpellé*, in connection with someone being questioned. Just to prove my point.

Learning to sell yourself. Lots of ways to win a role in office life. New Year, New Career. Be your own boss and earn £80,000pa. Psychology is the scientific study of people: how they think, act, react and interact. The madness of George. Meditation, eggs on toast and House of Cards till 3am. Hurry while stocks last! All your favourite things for Easter for less.
(TIC, p. 20)

Even my desire for autonomy may be implicated in interpellation, as the voice urges me to be my own boss and to earn a very specific sum. While working with such language, I also developed a sense of the complexity of interpellation. When we are immersed and surrounded by such interpellation, the attempt to resist being recruited by it may prove futile. Judith Butler calls interpellation 'a turning around' (Butler, p. 107), which appeals to me as it is similar to the etymology of advert, 'to turn toward.' But sometimes, there is nowhere left to turn. As Althusser argues, we are '*always already* subjects' under current ideological apparatuses, as the discourse of ideology is continually hailing citizens 'even before we are born' (Althusser, 2008, pp. 46-50). The voices shout, 'Hey, you there!' from many sides. These days they even use your name: 'If not you, Nicky, who?' (TIC, p. 79).³¹ Whether you obediently respond, or try to ignore and evade every single yell, you still end up ushered to a place designated for you.

Even when it is possible to feel that a particular 'you' is intended for somebody else, the experience of eavesdropping still shapes one's identity in some small way. Part of the shaping force may be the discomfort, or even the guilt, of *not* recognizing oneself in a piece of language. Freud suggests that there are 'two origins of the sense of guilt: one is fear of authority,' which 'forces us to forgo the

³¹ There are nine variations of my name that have been used to address me through e-mails and junk e-mails, which I have used in TIC. Does this show how protean a self is in the contemporary world, or does it show how a self tries to disguise their self, when filling out the umpteen requests for information that we are required to do in our virtual world? I can't recall using or creating all these variations.

satisfaction of our drives' (Freud, 2002, p. 63), and the other is the internal authority of the superego. Guilt, therefore, is deeply bound up with authority and obedience. One can even feel guilty for not obeying an instruction, even when it was definitely intended for somebody else. Althusser does not think that the turn toward authority (the police) is solely because of 'guilt feelings' (Althusser, p. 48), though he sees it as an important factor, since it leads, via subject formation, to obeying authority.

The focus on guilt and its relation to interpellation is another reason why I wanted to include interrogatives in TIC. Questions are a very pointed form of address—they *presume* a response or attempt to solicit one: an answer. Thus, in advertising or wherever they are used, questions are potentially even more interactive or intrusive than other copy, as you may as a hailed consumer, stop to think for an answer. In other words, you could react differently to a hailing that solicits a response, rather than just seeing a declarative slogan, such as 'With you all the way.' Your headspace might be 'taken over' momentarily, as you involuntarily answer a question that is not *really* directed at you personally. Not only that, most of the questions I included in TIC are concerned with guilt or worry. So not only might you stop to think of an answer, but you might stop to worry, or stop to feel guilty.

There are the more personal forms of guilt-shaming: 'Do I look like my diet's complete?' (TIC, p. 14). The idea here is to convince someone that they may well need to change their behaviour, because they no longer fit the 'accepted' cultural norms of weight and/or body size, as Ferretter suggests (see page 55, above). Yet it should come as no surprise that, at the same time, we are also encouraged to break with those norms: 'We all deserve to treat ourselves at Christmas [...] Christmas simply isn't Christmas without the chance to indulge in some festive treats' (TIC, p. 215). In this instance, we are being told to let go. It's the festive season after all, so, collectively, we are given permission. If we can't let go then when can we? Such indulgence is far less possible, or desired, when we

resume our 'normal' working life (which is the second subtext). But then almost straight after we are being asked: 'Too many mince pies?' (TIC, p. 351). You might even go and look at your profile in a mirror to answer that question.

Inducing guilt through, or with, anxiety, seems to be a particular *modus operandi* for most bank literature: have you saved enough money, protected your family or car, insured your dog, got the best mortgage deal or bank account (so you can save even more and therefore live more comfortably)? The whole of the section 'Thinking Ahead' (TIC, pp. 182-3), which is lifted entirely from an HSBC leaflet and reshaped to resemble a poem, is entirely driven by creating anxiety or worry in the receiver—its aim is to guilt trip you into buying insurance to cover your loved ones in the event of your untimely demise. To make matters worse, it even strives toward authenticity with a footnote stating that it received its information from a known, reliable and impartial source, Macmillan Cancer Support. To see in black and white that 'one in three' people will get cancer in their lifetime is scary.³² You could be the one in three and it could happen at any time. It could be you.

3.2 Language Forms

To explore further how we are '*always-already subjects*' under current ideological apparatuses, Althusser examines the apparatus of religion (although the same applies for other apparatuses, such as education or culture), by focusing on the use of the second person pronoun 'you,' which, while addressing *all* subjects, always resembles an individual address or interpellation. He uses Christ to illustrate: "[i]t is for *you* that I have shed this drop of blood" (Althusser, p. 52, my emphasis). Such an approach or address second guesses a positive response from the subject,

³² The tautology in this leaflet is quite comical and easy to overlook. Such a diagnosis could only be given *during* one's lifetime. Perhaps this doublespeak is a deliberate rhetorical flourish to ratchet up the fear about the inevitable?

and the affirmation—‘It’s me’—firmly situates the subject, or recruits the subject, in their designated role: religious subject, pupil, or worker, because they recognize that role and that it was *they* who were addressed.

My research suggests, overwhelmingly, that the pronoun ‘you’ is the most commonly employed pronoun in the realm of public language and marketing copy. Not including the chronological mash-up, which is repetition, I counted seventy-five uses of ‘you’ or its derivatives in just the first fifteen pages of TIC. The pronoun ‘you’ can be used conatively, to focus on a (universal) addressee, or it can be used phatically, merely in order to establish or maintain contact (Cobley and Jansz, 2010, pp. 148-9). It is usually the conative ‘you’ that is associated with the material I have harvested. Two separate examples of different apparatuses addressing subjects illustrate how ‘you’ targets and involves a viewer, or receiver, in disparate ways: ‘With you all the way’ (TIC, p. 113) and ‘We’re on to you’ (TIC, p. 132). The former is the disingenuous catchphrase of The Royal Bank of Scotland, the latter a government poster campaign about benefit fraud: one encourages trust, the other threatens. Both are perfect examples of conative phrases, directed at an individual, but also, therefore, at everyone.

However, working through my gathered materials, I began to feel these uses of ‘you’ to be doing more. ‘With you all the way’ used conatively, above, can also be read as phatic. While not necessarily being concerned with transferring information, the phatic is more to do with subjects making their presence known. Examples of phatic speech could include polite chitchat about the weather, or interjections such as ‘hmm’ or ‘really?’ when listening to someone tell a story. Even a classic phatic filler like ‘you know’ does something more than just maintain contact, or give the speaker a moment to collect their thoughts. Hearing the words ‘you know’ also encourages the listener to nod along, to assent, to recognize their role, in the Althusserian sense. The same is true more generally of the everyday language we are bombarded with. Even the apparently innocuous function of neutrally checking in with the subject, maintaining some kind of social contact, as

with the phatic, may prepare the subject to be recruited from another angle. In the following extract from TIC, I enjoyed being able to create this moment, in which the repeated 'you know' switches suddenly to an actual army recruitment slogan:

Get an alias for every you. The panda made me do it. Be part of it. There is nothing more human than the will to survive. When you know, you know you know, you know. Search RAF online. NOW!

(TIC, p. 285)

The phatic can also include such instances as when the catchphrase of a personality, or that of a company, becomes subsumed within everyday language as a way of maintaining contact with others. For, as Marcel Danesi puts forward in *Why It Sells*, 'advertising has become one of the most recognizable and appealing forms of social communication to which virtually everyone is exposed' (Danesi, 2008, p. 27). One example might be Tesco's strap line 'every little helps.' Infuriatingly memorable and directed at all subjects, it has become an even more frequently used phrase in everyday speech than it ever was before being appropriated by the supermarket.³³ Such an example is even more insidious than a logo, as it can make part of a simple, commonplace, private conversation become an unwitting verbal advert. A fine illustration of how '[t]he images and messages that advertisers promulgate on a daily basis delineate the contemporary social landscape' (Danesi, p. 27). To reframe it through the lens of Bernays who, with his usual condescension in illustrating how the herd hardly thinks, says that instead of a mind the common man is 'inked with advertising slogans, with editorials, with published scientific data, with the trivialities of the tabloids and the platitudes of history, but quite innocent of original thought' (Bernays, 2005, p. 48). Again, it seems, no one is responsible for what they think.

³³ If I had a pound for every time someone, or even myself, has said it, I could buy my shopping for several months.

It might be thought that the phatic function would be missing from the kinds of language which I am drawing upon. However, it appears to be a key tool in marketing discourse, because—corresponding to Bronisław Malinowski's primary definition of phatic in 1923—'the ties of union are created [and maintained] by a mere exchange of words' (*OED*). On one hand, institutions employ phatic phraseology to assure us that, although they are not human, they are still present and attentive to our needs as humans, by conveying the impression that they are listening to us, while also reminding us that they are there (for you). Furthermore, phatic is contained within emphatic, meaning forcibly expressive (*OED*), with the emphasis on forcibly being key to the language we are force fed.

I've already stated that although the title of my PhD is *The Imperative Commands* it seeks to cover more than just straightforward imperatives, such as KEEP OUT, because I realized while I harvested my copy that *everything* in language is an instruction of some kind, an uninvited intervention into an individual's life, a sudden address, or hailing. To put it another way, each text that we encounter in our daily lives is a 'thought communication' as Bernays would have it. What I gathered, then, was whatever came my way: whatever was instructional, declarative and directed, and thus included imperatives, assertions, statements of fact, present tense clauses, interrogatives and subjectless phrases.

The imperative mood employs tenseless phrases and no subject (Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad, 2006, p. 92). Tenseless, in this sense, means the infinitive is used with no specific tense assigned, it can be present and future at once, but never the past tense. If we consider KEEP OUT, this tenselessness essentially equates to timelessness: we are forever being told to KEEP OUT. Moreover, having *no* pronominal subject makes it applicable to *all* subjects who encounter the command. It means that I interpellate this to myself: that *I* must keep out, and likewise *you* must keep out too. Subjectless phrases abound in marketing discourse, so that even when there is no *visible* subject or pronoun in a phrase, there always is, implicitly: to use Tesco's famous slogan, again, every little helps (you).

For all verbs, in Standard English, apart from 'to be', the present tense is the same as the infinitive (Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad, p. 92), which creates this timeless—always present—quality in imperative phrases. The language of much of what is included in TIC, are examples of this tenseless timelessness, for example: 'We care about here,' which is the strap line of the Clydesdale Bank (TIC, p. 33). 'Care' comes from the infinitive 'to care,' so the bank is essentially saying that it cares just now, but also that it will continue to care, with the present becoming the future, or a constant 'caring.' Additionally, as this is a deictic phrase, with the context of the 'place', i.e. here, dependent on where this phrase is encountered, it means that the Clydesdale Bank is continually caring about 'here,' and 'here' becomes everywhere they have an advert, which altogether demonstrates their faux concern for everywhere. Throughout my poem this language usage is demonstrably evident as being contained in much of the discourse we receive, which means that we are given present and future tense verbs, embedded in phrases that interpellate us, essentially as hidden commands, instructions or exhortations. An example of such a hidden imperative can be illustrated by the rebranding of the police force in Scotland, which since April 1st 2013 has been known as Police Scotland,³⁴ with the strap line 'Keeping people safe' (TIC, p. 114). The (deliberate) noun/verb slippage exercised here creates a sinister tone to the force's new title and duties: they 'police' Scotland, they are no longer just the police. This duality has probably gone unnoticed in the main by Scottish citizens. And the strap line begs the question: keeping whom/what safe from what/whom?

If we look at the etymology of 'imperative,' it offers another way of interpreting, to borrow from Bernays' lexicon, what commands are doing. The word is derived from the second Latin prefix IN 'in, on, into, towards, within' and *parare* 'make ready' (OED). I would argue that the word imperative therefore has a secondary level of meaning, or purpose, that of making a subject ready, to make

³⁴ Note the foolish date for such an initiative.

ready, or to make ready *within*. To make ready for what? To make you ready to accept the status quo or to know your place, as Althusser explores with interpellation. To illustrate, whenever I go to see a film at the cinema and have to sit through the adverts, I wonder who the adverts are for. Typically, there will be an advert for a luxury car, a Lexus or similar, worth £20-30,000, or more. That advert is not directed at me as a consumer, nor, I would hazard, at most of the cinema-going audience. Instead, it puts me in my place. That car would never be mine—if, indeed, I wanted it—it was just for the ‘haves.’ To me, this is an example of being ‘made ready,’ prepared from an early age to accept how things are and that things won’t change. What I mean is that even if some text, or an advert, is not a direct command—buy this car!—it still interpellates subjects with the *order* of things. Given my exploration of micro-targeting, it could be supposed that the old-fashioned forms of advertising and marketing manipulation, such as a car advert, are redundant or moribund. Yet, the surface sheen of advertising and marketing, the backdrop against which we cast shadows every day, is still an essential component for capitalism and the elite, in the way that it both presents and disguises how life truly is. It is there to remind us plebs of class and wealth distinctions. French sociologist Henri Lefebvre puts it succinctly: ‘ideologies and mystifications are based upon real life, yet at the same time they disguise or transpose that real life’ (Lefebvre, [1947] 2008, p. 146). TIC is an attempt to demystify these transpositions and portray an alternative to official discourse, looking beyond, or behind, the meaningless cant to elicit a different version of ‘reality.’

Early on in this afterword, when I sketched out the genesis of this project, I considered the use of the first person plural pronoun in relation to the Tories’ ‘we’re all in this together.’ The use of ‘we’ in the Clydesdale’s copy, allows us to look at pronoun usage from a different angle: how it is employed to create specific tones in marketing language: informal, friendly, inclusive. Such positioning is an attempt to personify an institution, make it sound like a friend, or someone who

really cares. Verbal contractions—it's, we're, you're—reinforce this informality and help the language sound warmer, welcoming, speech-like: 'If you're giving them a hand make sure it's a clean one' (TIC, p. 5). If we re-consider the Conservatives' erstwhile mantra, the contraction logic applies to that as well: 'we're' uncontracted obviously means 'we are.' 'Are' in this sense is the present/future sense of the third person plural of 'to be,' meaning we *are* right now, and will be for the foreseeable, in this together. There is no equivocation. Even though it wasn't true, it was asserted as the truth and in that sense becomes a command—a fact that we, who are all in it together, should just accept.

In Standard English 'you' can be singular or plural and can act as a gender-neutral, indefinite pronoun (the equivalent of 'one'), unlike in French, for example, where the formal 'vous' and informal 'tu' system is used, which would change the tone, or make clearer who the intended audience might be, rather than just a blanket 'you' directed at everybody. Bernays discusses the use of 'you' in the advertising that preceded his era: 'Although the appeal was aimed at fifty million persons, it was aimed at each as an individual' (Bernays, 2005, p. 77). Bernays goes on to say that the use of 'you' is no longer sufficient and that desires for objects should be insinuated into the minds of the public by appealing to the 'home instinct' via the portrayal of desirable lifestyles using visual images and tableaux (Bernays, pp. 78-79). But, as I have shown, the use of 'you' is as ubiquitous as ever. Something that Williamson notes in *Decoding Advertisements* exactly fifty years after Bernays: '[a]lthough the aim is to connect a mass of people with a product [...] this can only be achieved by connecting them with the product as individuals, one by one [...] there is only one receiver of the ad, the subject "you"' (Williamson, p. 51). At the same time, for every 'you' there is an 'an implicit "non-youness"—a system of differences [...] in which each sign also points to an Other' (Williamson, p. 60), one of the Tories' aims in using 'we're all in this together.' Williamson then goes on to affirm Bernays' suggestion that ads sell us a lifestyle as well as a product, with the products helping to fashion who we are, or think we are: '[i]n

buying products with certain “images” we create our selves, our personality, our qualities’ (Williamson, p. 70).

As noted in the introduction, the title of my PhD, *The Imperative Commands*, is a catchy catch-all term to cover the general tenor of everything I was harvesting—i.e. any form of public facing language. This decision implied that everything was a command of some kind, even if an actual grammatical imperative was nowhere to be seen. Althusser’s theory of interpellation allowed me to theorize the sense that all this language was potentially part of a structure of command. Warren Montag, Althusser’s biographer, writes of interpellation that ‘this action implies more than simply a hailing or calling out to the individual and instead takes the form of a command’ (Montag, 2012). To put another way, *all* language that’s around us is interpellating us at all times. All discourse in the public domain, therefore, is a form of address, an unasked-for appeal, or call, irrupting into our lives, or our consciousnesses. If we are all in PR now, as Jansen asserts, then marketing copy is our new lingua franca.

Of course, some of the earliest written, or linguistic, commands were the Ten Commandments, so it makes sense, especially after the previous religious example, for Althusser to turn to Moses. Here he uses the same argument as the previous illustrations: Moses, having been interpellated—called by God by his name—‘recognized that it “really” was he who was called by God’ and ‘recognizes that he is a subject’ (Althusser, 2008, p. 53) formed by ‘the divine voice that names, and in naming, brings its subjects into being’ (Butler, p. 110). Thus Moses realizes he is a subject of, and subject to, a higher Subject, which Althusser denotes with a capital S: ‘[t]he ‘Unique, Absolute, *Other Subject* i.e. God’ (Althusser, p. 52, emphasis in the original), which can be transposed to any other authoritative body, or person, such as the State, a parent, or a boss. As a subject, Moses obeys ‘and makes his people obey God’s Commandments’ (p. 52), and consequently Moses’ people become subject to him. About religion, Freud writes the ‘assurances of protection and happiness [...] are the reward for the fulfilment of the commands;

only he who obeys them can count on receiving these benefits, while punishment awaits the disobedient' (Freud, 2002, p. 207). It follows that if you, as a subject, don't obey the commands you will be punished by God, the RSA, or your parents.

The 'subject' and 'Subject' formation, according to Althusser's thesis, is a quadruple interpellation: the subject recognizes that they are a subject, they recognize the higher Subject, they recognize other subjects and that other subjects recognize the Subject, and finally that everything really is so, and that if they behave accordingly then everything will be fine (Althusser, p. 55). People 'inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs [...] "recognize" the existing state of affairs [...] and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to [Theresa May],³⁵ to the boss' (Althusser, p. 55). Once this role (of subject) has been accepted most people will accept that this is 'how things are' and will be obedient to societal norms.

So 'when ideology "calls out to" a person, it is to ensure that law and order are maintained' (Ferretter, p. 88). In other words, ideology, like the police, works for the state. In other, other, words, the language of adverts, marketing copy, NHS leaflets, or any other type of ostensibly innocuous public language, also works for the state. To repeat, the goal behind collating a year's worth of discourse was to see what 'work' language was doing on behalf of our various higher Subjects, and then wrest it back, without permission, through appropriation.

³⁵ Hopefully not for much longer, with any luck. I write this on June 12th 2017, a few days after the hung parliament.

4. Appropriate Language

Extreme forms of appropriation can be found in conceptual writing, one of the reasons I was initially attracted to it. Goldsmith, for instance, retyped an entire copy of *The New York Times* for his book *Day* (2003), while Vanessa Place, who works as a defense attorney, mostly representing sex offenders, appropriated her own cases of rape trials as poetry in *Statement of Facts* (2010). Despite, or because of, these *outré* approaches, conceptual writing became the poetry *du jour* in America, with Goldsmith being invited to the White House and appearing on the US chat show, *The Colbert Report*. It is hard to imagine a similar scenario for Britain's avant-garde.

4.1 Conceptual Writing

So what is conceptual writing exactly? In his introductory essay to *Against Expression*, Dworkin states that it is heavily reliant on appropriation, permutational processes and constraints to focus on concepts or ideas, rather than the end result; it eschews traditional lyrical poetics (natural expression, voice, psychological development, symbol, metaphor) in favour of impersonal procedure (Dworkin, xliii). He follows this by stating how with 'minimal intervention, the writers here are more likely to determine pre-established rules and parameters—to set up a system and step back as it runs its course—than to heavily edit or masterfully polish' (xliv). Works favoured for the online and print anthologies were those 'fundamentally opposed to ideologies of expression' and refused if they 'had too much authorial intervention, however masterful or stylish that intervention might be' (xliv). What Dworkin means here with 'ideologies' is unclear, to me at least, but the general tenor of his introduction seems to be dismissive of any kind of writing that relies on authorial self-expression, i.e. most lyrical poetics. Amy King summarizes this in saying that conceptualism 'boxes in

and reduces the varied uses of “I” by a multiplicity of poeties to one long misguided, uniformed and even solipsistic “lyricism” (King, 2013a). About this Goldsmith is unequivocal, ‘certainly nothing expresses my own interiority’ (Goldsmith and Boon, 2011, p. 59). But as language poet Ron Silliman has pointed out, referencing ego: ‘Goldsmith’s actual art project is the projection of Kenny Goldsmith’ (Silliman, 2006). The claims of conceptualism outlined here, are open to examination, as shall be seen.

Two key anthologies of conceptual writing have been published, the previously mentioned *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing* (2011), edited by Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith, and *I’ll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women* (2012), edited by Caroline Bergvall, Lanie Browne, Teresa Carmody and Vanessa Place. Andrea Brady, in an unpublished essay, ‘Conceptual Writing and Bondage,’ given as a talk at the University of Reading in 2013, finds that the anthologies don’t really help us to understand what conceptual writing is, stating that the term ‘conceptual writing is very hard to define,’ which is muddled by the conceptual precursors that appear in that anthology: ‘Acker, Aragon, Beckett, Burroughs, Cage, Mallarmé, Roussel, Tzara, Warhol and Yeats’ (Brady, 2013). Brady goes on to suggest that conceptual writing is either a range of practices that are in opposition to the reactionary lyricism of the MFA culture, or that there is no coherence to the term at all (Brady).

As well as co-opting the above authors, conceptual writing has sought to bring concrete poetry under its umbrella as well, as both predecessor and contemporary, even though no work from the golden age of concrete poetry is included in *Against Expression* (Goldsmith, 2012b; Perloff, 2012, p. 12). As a concrete, or visual, poet myself, I can see that similarities exist between concrete and conceptual writing, different ways of reading, material use of text, and so on, but I’m not a fan of co-option in retrospect. For starters, concrete poetry existed for at least fifteen years prior to the birth of conceptual art, in the late sixties, let alone conceptual writing. Indeed, Hilder argues that conceptual art ‘contains figures

who produce work that borrows the techniques of concrete poetry while at the same time denying any line of influence' (Hilder, p. 153). Concrete poetry, in its heyday, was called a truly international poetry movement (Williams, 1967, vii) and Goldsmith makes this parallel, too, that conceptual writing is, similarly, an international movement (Goldsmith, 2012b). Yet it's a much more closed group than the concrete poetry movement ever was, or is, underlined, perhaps, by Dworkin's dismissive assessment that 'conceptual' would become a label, vaguely used by poets: 'I'm a kind of a conceptual poet' (Goldsmith, 2012b). I have no issue that 'conceptual' exists as a term for certain writing, and I assent to Brian Reed's more recent suggestion of '*conceptual*' as a short-hand way to designate not a handful of provocateurs but an array of contemporary authors and works that share a proclivity for large-scale appropriation, reclassification, and remediation of found language' (Reed, 2016, p. 2, emphasis in the original). However, I don't believe that it should force itself upon historical writers by classifying them as conceptual. In fact, *Against Expression* almost proves that there's nothing new to conceptual writing: 'the features which conceptualist critics claim for their work are, in fact, characteristic of most writing throughout history' (Brady). To invoke Samuel Beckett, who is included in *Against Expression* as a conceptual writing antecedent: '[t]he sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new' (Murphy, Beckett, [1938] 2003, p. 5).

But as I mentioned earlier conceptual writing provided me with an aha moment. Yet a problem remained: the term 'conceptual writing.' I was never very comfortable with using it as a marker for my own work (though I have on occasion) and was not entirely sure why. Ironically, it just didn't feel right appropriating this label and affixing it to my poetic practice. Some suggestions why: not all my work uses impersonal procedure (and even the more impersonal I still find to be very self-expressive—I like being expressive, surely the main reason I, or any writer, even 'impersonal' conceptualists, write at all); it seemed more like a (closed) movement than a genre, (though that's maybe changed, given Brian Reed's

comment, above); and it made me feel like an outsider, or someone who was jumping on the bandwagon, which was not the case at all. So, although useful to me as an appellation, it was often more of a turn off than a turn on.

I will now move on to a close reading of some of Goldsmith's work, which I focus on in particular, because to all intents and purposes he was the most visible conceptualist, but also, and perhaps more importantly, because of his insistence that his books can't be, or don't need to be, read. This stance complicates defining conceptual writing—if you don't read the writing, surely it makes it harder to pigeon hole, understand, contextualize and so forth? But Goldsmith assures us that 'you really don't need to read [his] books to get the idea of what they're like; you just need to know the general concept' (Goldsmith, 2011a, pp. 5-6). He is more interested in a 'thinkership' than a 'readership' (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 100). His books are 'fantastic things to think and talk about, but not so great to read' (Goldsmith and Boon, 2011, p. 59), because they are 'impossible to read straight through' (Goldsmith, 2011a, pp. 5-6). Without knowing these warnings, or suggestions, I had already read and enjoyed *Fidget* (2000) straight through—Goldsmith's attempt to record every movement his body made in one day (more on this book later)—so I decided to close read the more specific constraint-based *New York Trilogy* to see what might be revealed about the books and Goldsmith's claim that a) his books don't need to be read and b) to ascertain whether he sticks to his pre-planned rules.

4.2 Chancer

Kenneth Goldsmith is a chancer, in many senses of the word, although, perhaps not in the way he generally asserts: as simply a reframer of appropriated text as it happens to re-present itself through the use of pre-designed chance constraints. As the über-showman and ringmaster general of conceptual writing for the previous two decades, Goldsmith has adopted and maintained a particular stance: that of

being an uncreative writer, relying on impersonal procedures to manufacture his poetic works: ‘the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the text’ (Goldsmith, 2007a). Here, by way of explaining conceptual, or uncreative, writing, Goldsmith cites his own appropriation of conceptual artist Sol Lewitt’s ‘Paragraphs on Conceptual Art’ (1967), by changing ‘art’ to ‘writing’ or ‘text’ throughout the manifesto, thus reimagining Lewitt’s famous machinic dictum.³⁶ The idea, or concept, is thus foregrounded as the most important element in conceptual writing, as Goldsmith, once again using his Lewitt reframing, informs us that ‘uncreative writing is good only when the idea is good’ (Goldsmith, 2007a).

What I seek to explore is exactly how ‘uncreative’ Goldsmith is, drawing on a close reading of his *New York Trilogy*—*The Weather* (2005), *Traffic* (2007) and *Sports* (2008)—to argue that Goldsmith does *not* strictly adhere to his professed methodologies. The three books share certain characteristics: they share the same dimensions, have a similar design, are roughly the same length and, most importantly, have a related constraint: they are all transcriptions of their respective topics from radio reports. Here is each purported constraint: *The Weather* is a year’s worth of one-minute weather reports, one for each day, taken from 1010 WINS New York City news radio; *Traffic* is 24 hours’ worth of one-minute traffic reports, from the same radio station; while *Sports*, taken from New York Yankees radio, is the entire commentary of a match between the Yankees and the Boston Red Sox, the longest baseball game in history. Such pedantic works require an equally pedantic reader and I felt confident I’d be up to the job.

Goldsmith frequently states he is the most boring writer in the world (Goldsmith, 2011a, p. 5). This is certainly true at a surface level. Who in their right

³⁶ A trick perhaps lifted from Raymond Queneau. In 1974 Queneau took David Hilbert’s *Fundamentals of Geometry* (1899) and reformulated it as the *Foundations of Literature* by replacing ‘points,’ ‘straight lines’ and ‘planes’ from Hilbert’s book, with ‘words,’ ‘sentences’ and ‘paragraphs’ (Brotchie, 1994, pp. 3-4).

mind would want to read 120 pages of reported weather reports? Perhaps the following from Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* would have served as fitting epigraph for *The Weather*: 'Nothing bores the ordinary man more than the cosmos. Hence, for him, the deepest connection between weather and boredom' (Benjamin, [1982] 2002, p. 102). Or possibly this aphorism, also from the *Arcades*: 'Boredom is the threshold to great deeds' (p. 105). Maybe, but not to great books. Although the books were a challenge, and quite dull a lot of the time, I think there are enough little mysterious details to keep you reading, though they are not the sort you would recommend to a friend, with an enthusiastic command: 'you *must* read this book!' To illustrate, here is a small section from *The Weather*:

Ah, yes, indeedy, and actually it's a ... uh, you know ... fairly tranquil as well, with sunshine getting dimmed by high mid-level clouds, high temperature thirty-four degrees. Clouds easily thicken tonight, low thirty. That's the easy part of the forecast.

(Goldsmith, 2005, p. 17)

Weather itself is not boring. In its constant flux, it's a constant concern for everyone. We're interested in it for many reasons: what to wear, if it's safe to venture out, or whether it's a good drying day, to take some commonplace examples. It's a mundane daily preoccupation and this is reflected in the language and structure of Goldsmith's book. It's logically structured round the seasons, being split into four parts, with each paragraph meant to represent one calendar day. Perloff delights in saying that what is presented as 'fact is largely fiction' and calls this structure artifice in a positive way (Perloff, 2005). Perhaps, but it was artifice before Goldsmith got his hands on it: strict demarcations of seasons and time are essentially human constructs by which society is organized and the weather is a forecast, a prediction, not a fact.

Given the premise that each paragraph represents one day, one of the first things to ponder is the amount of paragraphs. Esteemed critic Marjorie Perloff may be, but she's no mathematician: she counted 293 (Perloff, 2005), whereas I counted 308. Let's meet halfway and say 300. That leaves 65 days of weather forecasts missing. Perloff posits holidays and days away so that Goldsmith can't listen to the local forecast, thus reflecting a typical 'lived' experience, i.e. Kenny's weather (Perloff, 2005). That makes sense (I had the same idea before I read her article), it's local weather from a local radio station and could be the first, imposed, constraint: only transcribing the weather when in New York. Fair (weather) enough.

So we have reason to be wary, to take what Goldsmith says with a pinch of grit, but he repeatedly asserts that he faithfully adheres to his pre-decided constraints: '[i]n order to proceed I have to build a machine. I have to answer each question and set up a number of rules that I must then strictly follow' (Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 119). Note the word 'strictly.' Yet the act of transcription allows him a lot of leeway: '[w]hat you hear as a brief pause and transcribe as a comma, I hear the end of a sentence and transcribe a period' (Goldsmith, p. 205). It would appear, then, that at least some authorial decisions are made, following the set-up of the constraints, as the act of transcribing necessitates choices to be made by Goldsmith: all the punctuation, capitalization, the fillers, pauses and some strange grammar choices. On top of this, all three books are full of what could be errors, for instance: 'but everybody'll getting... ' (Goldsmith, 2005, p. 29) and 'your' instead of 'you're' (Goldsmith, 2008, p. 94). The interesting thing about these instances is that they call into question who actually wrote those words. They could be from Goldsmith's transcription, a mistake by the radio presenter, an omission from typesetting, or at the proofreading stage. An authorial levelling out could be argued as existing here, were it not for a more definite example of editorial control.

The most striking occurrence of the interior author, which Goldsmith claims never to use, can be seen in the following extract from *The Weather*: '...good weather for vi ... for visiting grammar's house' (Goldsmith, 2005, p. 85). Grammar,

not ‘gramma’ the American way of saying Grandmother. This is what Goldsmith transcribed, how he chose to spell it, turning it into the linguistic term ‘grammar.’ A quick internet search of American terms for this elderly relative produced no versions spelled ‘grammar.’ I’m pretty sure Goldsmith would know this, meaning he deliberately made an editorial decision for poetic effect. It seems he definitely used his interiority on this occasion. This example supports the notion that when reading his unreadable books little surprises that delight can be discovered, that go some way toward making it worth the effort, but at the same time also undermine the whole uncreative writer myth. Despite Goldsmith setting up his constraints in advance, this shows that he does make decisions as he goes along, adding authorial interventions after the fact. Why would he do such a thing? Is he testing the reader to catch them out by noticing these details—a kind of poetic hide and seek? Perhaps he really doesn’t think anyone will be reading his books, so he can tinker with his own machine and create ludic poetics, on a whim, for his own amusement and self-expression of his cleverness. The ‘grammar’s house’ line is preceded the page before with the following statement from the weather forecaster:

Well, September is “Be Kind to Writers and Editors Month” and individuals always have to worry about parts of speech and elements of style. We don’t want, say, a writer to die a critical death.

(Goldsmith, 2005, p. 84)

This appears as a genuine chance find, ideal for a writer whose project is ordinary language. Is ‘grammar,’ then, a sly nod and a wink to worrying ‘about parts of speech and elements of style’—a metaphor about the slipperiness of language, that Goldsmith’s exploring through the process of transcription?

Goldsmith is not the only conceptualist not to follow their proposed constraint to the letter: Robert Fitterman is another. ‘The Sun Also Also Rises,’ one

of my favourite conceptual pieces, is a work that employs Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1927) as a source text, and which, according to the introduction in *Against Expression*, erases 'all sentences that do not begin with the first person singular pronoun' (Dworkin and Goldsmith, 2011, p. 223), therefore leaving only the sentences beginning with 'I,' which makes the poem.³⁷ This sounds fairly straightforward as a constraint and concept, and appears feasible when read, with the detached sentences forming a new, obtuse and elusive, narrative, from ghosts of the old:

CHAPTER IX

I came down. I would leave for Paris on the 25th unless I wired him otherwise. I stopped in at the Select. I went over to the Dingo. I wrote out an itinerary. I asked the conductor for tickets for the first service. I described where we were.

(Fitterman, 2009, p. 71)

On closer inspection, comparing it with Hemingway's novel, this is not the case. It's not just sentences beginning with 'I' that have been isolated, but also clauses, while some sentences are cut short, and then sometimes both sentences and clauses starting with an 'I' have not been included in the Fitterman de-boot. There are no obvious reasons for these editorial decisions when comparing the texts, so I can only presume that the author felt certain parts did not flow as well as others. This in itself is fine. But why there is this insistence on a rule, constraint, or 'machine' to follow, when it's not followed, is perplexing. As with Goldsmith, is it a form of

³⁷ I like this treatment a lot and was inspired by Fitterman to use it on very personal material of my own, love letter correspondence and my psychiatric medical notes, respectively—part of 'lovetmails' was published in *Viersomes 002* (melville, 2014b); a small section of 'Notes' in Zarf 1. Both projects are unfinished and I will return to them after this one.

laying down the gauntlet to make a reader work harder? How does Fitterman's piece square with Dworkin's caveat that writing would be refused from inclusion in *Against Expression* if it 'had too much authorial intervention, however masterful or stylish that intervention might be'? How is 'too much' quantified or decided? There seems a fair amount to me here. Fitterman also goes against his own definitions regarding conceptual writing when it is asserted in *Notes on Conceptualisms* that 'adding on to and/or editing the source material is more a strategy of post-conceptualism; so is renegeing on the faithful execution of the initial concept' (Place and Fitterman, p. 22). Which, as we have seen, Goldsmith seems happy to do as well. Does this, then, situate some of their work as being closer to post-conceptual? Does this negate conceptual as a term? Or is this a deliberate blurring, or playing around? Or should we go with Walter Benjamin's idea that we should '[n]ever trust what writers write about their own writings' (Benjamin, p. 203)?

Some of the praise for Goldsmith's projects centres on how his works force a fresh eye on daily language as 'a reframing of the "everyday" that defamiliarizes it and allows us to return to mundane moments in order to re-examine them in a new light' (Wershler, 2008). To my mind, the idea that conceptual writing compels you to read in a different way is one of the things that makes it valuable. In Fitterman's case, it makes you return to the source, Hemingway's novel, though it's not mandatory to do so to enjoy the appropriated poem. Similarly, Simon Morris's *Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head* (2009)—a print version of Morris's blog, in which he retyped the original scroll of *On the Road*, one page a day, starting from the last page and moving backwards to the start—encourages you to return to the original *On the Road* (1957) to compare and contrast. With Goldsmith, on the other hand, you come face to face in miniature with the minutiae of the daily hum of existence and can examine it afresh. Perloff's way of interpreting this treatment of the mundane is one way to do it, mine is another, and this is where I find conceptual writing inclusive—it's open to many readings.

Goldsmith insists that his work is all about language, information overload, copying and recycling. But he never seems to comment on what his process reveals, or about what contemporary language might reflect about society. It doesn't seem to be about a 'larger idea' other than language itself (Goldsmith and Boon, 2011, p. 59). In fact, he states an ambivalence towards politics in his appropriations, more of which later. In *Unoriginal Genius* (2010), we find Perloff writing about *Traffic*, focusing on 'colourful phrases like "what a doozy," "snail's pace"' (Perloff, 2012, p. 156), as if these are interesting linguistic illustrations of everyday discourse. But these stock phrases do not surprise; language is built on clichés. What did surprise, in the same book, however, was the frequency of violent metaphors and imagery from sport (boxing and wrestling) and the war on terror: 'taking a pounding' (Goldsmith, 2007b, p. 54), 'getting slammed,' 'getting pounded,' 'getting creamed' (p. 55); and then, later, torture abounds: 'torture test' (p. 78), 'torture mode' (p. 79), 'a gruelling torture test' (p. 83); there is also an abundance of 'mess' (*passim*), which has many connotations.

Interestingly, Perloff doesn't mention these, even while attempting to raise the cachet of *Traffic* by associating it with Jean Luc Godard's *Weekend*, implying that *Traffic* is as much a searing critique of 'the evils of consumerism' as the French New Wave film (Perloff, p. 155; King, 2013b). Elevating *Traffic* to a critique of consumerism is not evident at all from the material that Goldsmith gathered in the book, it's too big a jump to make, in my opinion—we know we drive too much and have too many cars on the road. Such a point is nothing new. Yet no such critique of American politics is offered, when it seems more obvious and less of a leap. The ubiquity of violent imagery could be considered an illustration of the prevailing language currency, each utterance a metonym for American foreign policy and imperialism at the start of the millennium. Did the language of news reports on Guantanamo and the torture of some 'folks' seep from the mass media to smear the public's lips and thus inure people to these stories and the signs intrinsic to such language? Such an examination of where everyday language 'is

at' and what it can say about contemporary life seems far more relevant and necessary to examine. Hilder cites Italian poet and critic Sarenco who, when comparing conceptual artists to concrete poets, said that the poet wants to know 'whom and what there is behind [the language], who commands behind that language, what class situation it represents' (Hilder, pp. 184-5). These questions are always important to me and are part of what TIC aims to interrogate. By contrast, I don't think any of these questions are even considered by Goldsmith or raised by his conceptual writing, even when it seems that the opportunity is there to do so.

One detail—the crux according to Perloff—that makes *The Weather* interesting is the way Iraq weather forecasts segue into the New York weather reports, after the start of the second Iraq war in March 2003 (the transcriptions began in December 2002): 'it continues to be favourable for military operations' (Goldsmith, 2005, p. 39). This could be seen as a fine example of 'marvellous' chance, as it was an 'unanticipated event' (Perloff, 2005). But I'll go out on a limb here, for 'suspicious probing is always salutary' (Adorno, 2005, p. 86), and suggest that perhaps it was not *just* down to chance. The war had been mooted, and planning already in progress, by George Bush Jnr, and other hawks, at least as early as August 2002, if not immediately after 9/11, well before Goldsmith commenced his transcriptions (Anonymous 1, 2002). Furthermore, weather was acknowledged as a major factor in planning military operations in Iraq, due to the risk of sandstorms, the heat of summer and lessons learned from the first Iraq War (Anonymous 1; Davidson, 2003). To me it seems possible, then, that when (rather than if) the war started, weather forecasts about the conflict would cast a shadow over local weather reports, in order to keep the populace up to date about the conditions for war and its progress. It could be argued that Goldsmith took a different kind of stochastic gamble with this project: the hope that once the war began Iraq weather would find its way into local forecasts, organically enhancing Goldsmith's project on the way, by 'chance.' Whichever way it happened, Iraq

meteorology plays a crucial role in *The Weather* for a number of pages, making for a more acute reflection of a particular period of time. This makes it even more inexplicable that the language of war, and by extension imperialism, in *Traffic* and *The Weather*, is not pursued by Perloff.

The topics the trilogy focus on are designed to reflect preoccupations of a typical American. To invoke Georges Perec's anti-fascist parable *W, or the Memory of Childhood* (1975), America 'is a land where Sport is king' (Perec, [1975] 1996, p. 67). The 'sportified' language is a mark of fascism: brawn and athleticism trumping intellect (Klemperer, pp. 231-41). Victor Klemperer, in *The Language of the Third Reich* writes in some detail about Hitler's fascination with boxing (p. 238) and Nazi co-option of the language of sport: 'all kinds of sporting expressions provide fodder for the LTI in general' (p. 233), to prepare, or make ready (see pages 69-70, above), the mind and the body for conflict. Goebbels used the following phrase in 1944, to shore up the troops and the people: "'We will not run out of breath when it comes to the final sprint'" (p. 239).

One way of trying to unpick the use of sport and warfare terms, is to return to Bernays. In a chapter on technique and method in *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, Bernays attempts to show how psychology can be used practically in public relations. He discusses the importance of self-preservation—shelter, food hunger, sex hunger—before listing seven primary instincts and emotions categorized by psychologist William McDougall, one of which is 'pugnacity-anger' (Bernays, 2011, pp. 155-56). Here, both warfare and sport are invoked. Bernays details a PR campaign against tuberculosis (no doubt one of his own campaigns) that utilized phrases such as 'kill the germ' and 'swat the fly.' He then explains that 'the terminology of warfare' is more effective because the 'public responds to a battle in a way that it might not respond to a plea' (Bernays, p. 157). 'It is this element of conflict, directly or indirectly,' he continues, 'which plays an overwhelming part in the psychology of every crowd. It is the element of contest which makes baseball so popular' (p. 158).

Although this doesn't give a direct reason for the frequency of sporting or violent terms in mundane public informational discourse, it does suggest why these lexical phrases may have entered that domain: because they are more effective and also because they are maybe current in other places, such as reports on conflict. Adorno also refers to sport when communication takes a sinister turn: 'speaking takes on a malevolent set of gestures that bode no good. It is sportified' (Adorno, 2005, p. 137). This citation could be applied to the various terms used in traffic reports, as signs that were malevolent gestures at some point have become subsumed among everyday language. Surely this bleed of words was noteworthy, plain to see, and deserving of critique, especially at a time when the USA had embarked on its most aggressive imperialistic expansion programme for years?

When first planning this critical component I had intended this section on conceptual writing to be a detailed close reading of some of Goldsmith's printed works: a see-saw assessment of conceptual writing, a finely balanced examination of its pros and cons. This intention changed with his poem 'The Body of Michael Brown' which he performed at 'Interrupt 3' a poetry and poetics festival, at Brown University on March 13th 2015.

4.3 The Corpus of Kenneth Goldsmith: Editorializing or editor-realizing?

Goldsmith's reading at 'Interrupt 3' really scunnered me, essentially altering my approach, attitude, and warmth to Goldsmith's work, as up till that point I had been a defender of conceptual writing among my poetry peers. After this performance, however, it was a position that I felt could no longer be maintained. It also forced me to rethink my position toward conceptual writing and Goldsmith in particular, who loaded the ammunition for his own attack.³⁸ That poem is still

³⁸ There was added piquancy here, necessitating a stance, or assertion of distance, toward Goldsmith, in light of his Brown performance. Not long after that debacle I was due to be anthologized in a collection of new concrete poetry since 2000, *The New Concrete*, published by The Hayward Gallery at the South Bank Centre, and was informed by the editors that Goldsmith had

highly relevant, in my opinion—perhaps marking the passing of conceptualism as a movement—and as a result, I close read it, or what I could, to explore it as another example of Goldsmith not following the ‘machine that makes the text.’

The poem was allegedly an uncreative reframing of the autopsy report of Michael Brown, the black youth killed by police in Ferguson, Missouri, in August 2014 (Steinhauer, 2015), typifying the still endemic and very frequent institutional racism of the US. Initial objections centred on whether Goldsmith had the right to appropriate this particular text, even though it was a publicly available document, mostly because he is white, rich and privileged. What really incensed people, though, was the fact that Goldsmith intervened editorially—in contradiction to his statements about chance processes—to change the order of the report, ending the piece with an autopsy observation on Michael Brown’s penis being ‘unremarkable’:

Goldsmith read for roughly 30 minutes [...] “It appeared that Goldsmith had just read the autopsy report in its entirety but the last line was, ‘The remaining male genitalia system is unremarkable.’ This was striking to me, and another audience member questioned why the performance ended on that,” [...] “Later I looked at the autopsy report online and realized that he had rearranged the material.”

(Steinhauer)

This reading has undermined Goldsmith’s contention that his ‘work is relational in that it starts a conversation between people’ (Goldsmith and Boon, 2011, p. 59).

written the introduction. I was/am more than happy to be associated with the constellation of writers included in the anthology, from early concretists (Augusto de Campos, Eugen Gomringer, Bob Cobbing, Ian Hamilton Finlay) to contemporary (mIEKAL aND, Cia Rinne, Richard Kostelanetz, to name but a few). However, the Brown University incident made me question whether I wanted to be endorsed, albeit indirectly, by Goldsmith and increased the need for me to assert my position as a writer.

It did start a conversation, though perhaps not the one he intended. The conversation quickly and overwhelmingly turned against him. Tellingly, Goldsmith himself then closed down the discussion by preventing the release of the footage and transcript of the performance. Ultimately, Goldsmith was forced to issue a statement of defence on Facebook (Goldsmith, 2015a),³⁹ which, while hardly apologetic, framed his actions as gracious and decent: too much hurt was being caused, and it was time to end it. One might cynically suggest that by this stage, the only fresh harm Goldsmith was in practice preventing was any further harm to his own reputation. One of the co-organizers of 'Interrupt 3' informed me that after the performance Goldsmith also declined to answer questions or participate in the discussion session (Capone, 2015). A curious decision, perhaps foreshadowing what would come after. Unfortunately, these decisions made it impossible to compare the whole poem with the original autopsy report, to see exactly how Goldsmith had rearranged things, but luckily there is one very short video clip of the piece (Aaps, 2015).

The poem and the performance—what little exists of it—caused a furore on social media, including a death threat to the conceptualist. Months of protest followed the killing of Michael Brown, which Goldsmith no doubt would have been aware of, so he either knew he would court controversy, without realizing how much, or was too complacent to consider the ramifications and associated signifiers, despite the intense public outcry following the killing. In his defence Goldsmith avowed that he was not editorializing, i.e. offering an opinion (*OED*). I posit, however, that his choice of text, presented something approaching an opinion and that the way he changed his source text supports the notion that he is more an editor, than a setter of machines as he generally claims. It is a work not so much of appropriation, but, rather, expropriation: taking away from its owner (*OED*); dispossessing a dead body of any last vestiges of ownership—ownership

³⁹ The defence no longer exists online.

that was originally taken by the police. It is worth bearing in mind Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous sentence 'White men are saving brown women from brown men,' (Spivak, 1988, p. 92), in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Did Goldsmith think it was up to him to 'save' or reclaim Michael Brown's black body from other white men?

The year before, Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* (2014) was published, a powerful lyrical polemic exploring what it means to be a black person in contemporary America. The book presents various examples of low-level and high-level racism in the US and how the reality of being black is a constant straddling of the line between being both invisible and hypervisible. Illustrating the invisible, Rankine describes an encounter with a white man by saying he has 'never seen anyone who is not a reflection of himself' (Rankine, 2015, p. 17). At the same time, in certain situations the opposite can also be true, where the point is not to be invisible, but 'rendered hypervisible in the face of [racist] language acts' (Rankine, p. 49). *Citizen* tackles the issue of systemic police racism head on, with parts dedicated to some of the victims, including Trayvon Martin. Michael Brown's name also appears on a memorial list that fades to white, implying the problem is unending (Rankine, p. 134). Rankine captures the problem succinctly in three lines on an otherwise blank white page:

because white men can't
 police their imagination
 black men are dying
 (Rankine, p. 135)

The book is full of such examples of exact controlled anger, many of them truly jaw-dropping. Such a work reinforces the question of why Goldsmith felt it was necessary or appropriate to wade into this debate. Rankine did not need back-up.

The first thing to consider, then, is the choice of textual appropriation, as this is the first subjective decision a writer makes, even if an ‘objective’ process is used thereafter. As the base text for generating writing, the original frame necessarily says something about the writer, it cannot avoid the supposed ‘neutrality’ of a constraint-led machine that creates a poem by ‘chance.’ Most of the texts I choose to erase or use for a found piece employ capitalist discourse enforcing the hegemony of the ruling classes and generally make me angry. And while it’s true that Goldsmith could have felt that way about police brutality, he did not contextualize the poem, offer any anti-police polemic, or any solidarity with the protest movements that had emerged (Szilak, 2015). I search capitalist hegemonic texts for language that can be *détourned*, extracting and exposing through found techniques what lies behind these entreaties and the metonymic function they represent in the wider political landscape.

So what does Goldsmith’s choice of this particular autopsy report say about him? What does it suggest about his politics? In a blog about the same performance the poet CAConrad states that he had found Goldsmith to be pretty apolitical in person (Conrad, 2015). On politics, Goldsmith has previously written the following:

In its self-reflexive use of appropriated language, uncreative writing embraces the inherent and inherited politics of the borrowed words: far be it for conceptual writers to dictate the moral or political meaning of words that aren’t theirs.

(Goldsmith, 2011b, p. 101)

The inherent politics of this reframing are the associated signs of contemporary racism in America. In *Theory* (2015), Goldsmith’s first post-Michael Brown publication, he states: ‘[m]y writing is political writing; it just prefers to use someone else’s politics’ (Goldsmith, 2015b, unpaginated). This highlights the

problem: the politics that come with the autopsy text that Goldsmith used—the state sanctioned version—are institutionally racist. One definition of autopsy according to the *OED* is ‘any critical analysis,’ something clearly lacking in this report and Goldsmith’s poem. The autopsy fails to question the use of force by the police and, by its omission, essentially maintains the implicit opinion that the youth deserved to be shot. To look at it another way we might turn to Althusser and his proposition that we are ‘*always-already subjects*’ from birth, placed into the ‘ideological recognition’ assigned to us at that time (Althusser, 2008, pp. 46-50). Michael Brown was born into a concrete ideology, which interpellated him as an Other, a person of colour, with all its attendant prejudices and injustices, including his eventual treatment at the hands of the police. The subject formation—to a god, your boss, or the police (see page 72, above)—is inextricably linked with guilt, so that ‘to become a “subject” is thus to have been presumed guilty’ (Butler, p. 118). But some of us are born more guilty than others. Rankine writes that ‘there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description’ (Rankine, p. 105), and in this case it was Michael Brown, who also became what Rankine terms ‘hypervisible’ in the eyes of the police. This incident is an extreme version of Althusser’s example of using the police officer as a vector to explain interpellation, as well as the notion of ‘assigning and checking *identities*.’ Michael Brown’s identity was established: identified as black, this was enough for the officer in Ferguson to interpellate him as guilty, but instead of being hailed with a ‘Hey you!’ he was hailed by a hail of bullets. Unlike Althusser’s example, Michael Brown was not even given the chance to turn toward his hailing, and ‘accept’ his designated place, for he was shot in the back, unarmed. Following his death, this ideology even continued to interpellate Michael Brown as a ‘*concrete subject*’ (Althusser, p. 47) within a specific ‘subject’ category, through the dehumanizing language of the autopsy.

In *Discipline and Punish (Surveiller et Punir, 1975)*, Michel Foucault talks about the body as being ‘directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry

out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs' (Foucault, [1975] 1991, p. 25). Other autopsies were carried out, including one arranged by Michael Brown's parents, yet Goldsmith chose to use the state sanctioned autopsy, reinforcing (unwittingly, I believe, I don't think he was deliberately racist) the American racism behind the killing, 'based on appropriation of bodies' (Foucault, p. 137), via the through line of slavery, ownership, white supremacy and lynching (King, 2015).

In his Facebook defence, Goldsmith stated, first of all, that he 'took a publicly available document [...] and simply read it' (Goldsmith, 2015a). He then apparently contradicts himself and undermines his stance toward process and 'strictly' following rules, the most important instance being how he 'altered the text for poetic effect' and 'narrativized it in ways that made the text less didactic and more literary' (Goldsmith). An unusual approach given his oft-touted procedure of setting up the engine and letting its machinations take over. I'm also unsure how a factual autopsy report, if unchanged, could be classed didactic—there is no obvious moralizing in the original report (Anonymous 2, 2014). He then goes on to explain that he 'did not editorialize,' he 'simply read it without commentary or additional editorializing' (Goldsmith, 2015a). What does he mean here by 'additional'? Does he mean the opinion that was already in the report? If so, this is problematic because he 'translated into plain English many obscure medical terms that would have stopped the flow of the text' (Goldsmith). This would change the tone completely. The flow of the text should have been stopped, disrupted, questioned. In the words of one commentator on this story, a doctor, 'the language of medicine is difficult. It arose to exclude those bodies not privileged to learn it' (Szilak), which creates a power/knowledge dynamic—another authoritarian voice—so that the lay person cannot understand. If Goldsmith had retained this abstruse language, the dynamic of the unjust power-relations behind the killing of Michael Brown may have been more pointed and critical.

As mentioned, there is a very short clip—twenty-five seconds—of this performance available online. I compared it with the autopsy report and these are the amendments which Goldsmith made: ‘auditory meatus’ becomes ‘ear’; ‘anterior of the midline of the head’ becomes ‘right of the midline of the head’ and ‘15mm x 9mm. It is irregular with clean edges’ becomes ‘15 x 9mm and is irregular with clean edges’ (Aaps; Anonymous 2). What these changes—Goldsmith’s ‘translation’—signify is a dumbing down, a sanitizing of the violence. In effect Goldsmith is enacting Bernays’ notion of ‘interpreting’ for the public, appealing to the lowest intelligence, patronizing his listeners, while stepping back from the distancing effect of medical terms. In terms of flow and poetic effect, I see nothing wrong with the medical language here: ‘auditory meatus’ is much more poetic than ‘ear,’ it’s unusual, even iambic, as is ‘anterior.’ Although the evidence here is scant, Goldsmith’s decision to ‘translate into plain English’ seems an error of judgement.

Further on in his defence, Goldsmith tried to equate the Michael Brown poem with the tenor of his book, *Seven American Deaths and Disasters* (2013), in which he transcribes unfolding reports of infamous American tragedies, such as the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, John Lennon and the attack on the World Trade Centre, among others:

In the tradition of my previous book *Seven American Deaths and Disasters*, I took a publicly available document from an American tragedy that was witnessed first-hand (in this case by the doctor performing the autopsy) and simply read it [...] This reading was identical in tone and intention.

(Goldsmith, 2015a)

This is another disingenuous assertion. The sections in the above book are all transcribed from real-time radio reports as the events took place, and in his

afterword Goldsmith explains this process and the reasons he did not include certain, other, assassinations:

The events depicted here were selected based on the fact that they were unravelling in real time, thus highlighting the broadcasters' uncertainty as to what they were actually describing. While I found broadcasts depicting the assassinations of, for example, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, no media were present during those shootings; by the time the reporters arrived on the scenes, the language was more flatly characteristic of standard reportage.

(Goldsmith, 2013, p. 174)

The use of media reports, then, is a key feature of this book. Crucially, 'The Body of Michael Brown' is not based on such reports unfolding in real time, a very important difference; nor is the doctor a first-hand witness, but is acting after the event, without having seen what took place: the autopsy report is not an oral transmission, but a particular report delivered in a particular language style. Perhaps Goldsmith is being somewhat arch here, as autopsy comes from the Greek meaning 'eye-witness' (*OED*). Further on in the afterword to *Seven American Deaths*, Goldsmith also explains why he did not use the Secret Service transcript of the Ronald Reagan shooting, as it was 'rendered in arcane police code, stylistically different enough so as not to fit in with the other pieces' (Goldsmith, p. 174). The autopsy report is also very stylistically different from the other pieces, which makes that part of Goldsmith's defence ring hollow.

Additionally, the 'tone' is not identical as he asserts, because they are composed from different media, describing completely different situations: chaotic events described by people reacting to them as they happened; a doctor describing, in technical language, a non-moving cadaver. As for 'intention,' we have no idea what his intention was in relation to the Michael Brown poem—due to the void of

silence he created around his reading—so cannot compare this with the ‘intention’ of the pieces in *Seven American Deaths*. One thing is clear, however, aside from the black astronaut killed in the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster, this book is focused on white deaths. This shows at least one difference in intent.

Let us return to ‘poetic effect.’ What is the intended poetic effect of finishing this work with the penis observation? This is a very specific instance of Goldsmith using his ‘interiority,’ because, for the life of me I can think of no hypothetical reason for placing it there. Chopping the text around in such a way is an unthinking mirroring of the dismemberment of black men who were lynched (Cooley, 2004; Kimmel, Milrod and Kennedy, 2014; King, 2015), and, indeed, those now cut down by bullets. To use Foucault again, thanks to Goldsmith, Michael Brown’s body, for the second time, this time in death, ‘was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it’ (Foucault, p. 138). First through fear and control, secondly for art. Ending on a comment about a dead black man’s cock is below the belt. It signifies that perennial male issue, the most puerile and ‘basic’ idea of male competitiveness and braggadocio: penis size and the mythology of the endowment and sexual prowess of black men. To finish on that is mystifying. Did Goldsmith mean it to be a form of punchline, debunking the myth? He wasn’t even well hung. Ending with that phrase is verging on being the literary equivalent of stuffing the genitals in the mouth of a black man after a lynching (Cooley; Kimmel, Milrod and Kennedy).

4.4 The Body of Kenneth Goldsmith

That was not the first time that Goldsmith has focused on a cock. In *Fidget* it was his own. In Perloff’s afterword she writes how Goldsmith explained the conceit of this book was to record every movement his body made during one day, by describing his actions into a tape recorder around his neck, an impossible task and part of the point: ‘every move was an observation of a body in space, not my body

in space. There was to be no editorializing, no psychology, no emotion' (Perloff, 2000, p. 91). To me 'a body in space' is quite misleading: it automatically *is* his body being observed, as he follows the decisions made as to what actions to perform that day, isolating himself in his flat, until he can take it no longer and leaves to get drunk.

Part of his day 'included having to describe [his] masturbating in detail' (Goldsmith and Boon, 2011, p. 59). Note the word 'having.' Goldsmith elected to masturbate on that particular day, he did not have to do any such thing, it was his subjective choice. Or maybe he was bored. Perloff has no issue with this chapter or the general macho somatic gaze of the book: '*Fidget* is quite obviously a man's narrative, especially in the masturbation passage in the fourth chapter' (Perloff, p. 100). His description of this activity also shows strange choices: he describes blood rushing into, and out of, his penis. This is not a movement you can feel, taking place in the process of tumescence, it can't be felt—I've certainly never come across such a sensation—so why pretend that it can?⁴⁰

Legs stiffen. Stroking continues. Sperm cascades from tip of left-hand index finger onto back of left hand. Sperm flows onto thumb and into gully between thumb and forefinger. Blood rushes out of penis. Sperm dribbles out of penis tip. Body thrusts forward. Right hand clenches. Meets left. Fingers close.

(Goldsmith, 2000, p. 30)

Perhaps the Michael Brown poem was an attempt to extend Goldsmith's work on the body. Perloff generally exalts Goldsmith to the status of visionary in her approach to his work. She believes *Fidget* is 'a devastating send-up of the now all-pervasive Foucault-inspired discourse on bodily primacy' (Perloff, pp. 93-94). No

⁴⁰ When I first read this passage I misunderstood it as meaning he had ejaculated blood and feared for his health.

mention is made of other artists using the body for art, such as Carolee Schneemann, whose 'Interior Scroll' performance and poem dates to the same year as the French publication of Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir* in 1975 (Rothenberg and Joris, 1998, pp. 436-39).

As a writer who uses found material I read the autopsy report (Anonymous 2), bearing in mind the comments about Goldsmith's rendering, to examine it as a base text and think about how differently it might have been reframed. Had Goldsmith really wanted to highlight the injustice done he could have concentrated solely on the lines using 'gunshot' and the wounds, to draw attention to the extremely heavy-handed discharging of bullets. He could have used a more post-conceptual approach, as per Place and Fitterman's statement above (see page 83), by editing it more heavily to disguise the origins and say something anti-police, anti-racist, i.e. editorialize it more pointedly. Or, had he read it with no changes at all, it may have been more likely to tell 'the truth in the strongest and clearest way' as he averred (Goldsmith, 2015a), by exposing the systemic racist language and behaviour of the American police state. Had Goldsmith framed it more overtly politically, asserted his solidarity, albeit white and privileged, with the Black Lives Matter campaign or the Movement Against Police Brutality, it might have changed the register, the reframing and its reception. Had he contacted Michael Brown's parents beforehand, asked permission, received their consent, offered his reading fee before the fact, all that would have helped. He was complacent. At what point in his 'thinkership' was finishing with a line about a poor dead black man's cock sensible, political, amusing? It was none of these. It was pure Blaxploitation. Perhaps his celebrity status dazzled him into the myopic position of 'unthinkership.' If conceptual writing is only good when the idea is good, then, this poem was not a good idea.

In his Facebook defence, there is no real apology, just an explanation of some of his thinking. Last year in an interview about fashion (Cronberg, 2017), Goldsmith shows no contrition, or understanding of what happened, even after a

year to reflect—indeed, he seems more defiant. He claims that the response was anti-Semitic, with the clothes he wore during the reading of the Michael Brown poem inciting this excoriation. I don't recall reading anything even vaguely anti-Semitic in all the criticism around that event, but he does say a lot of it was anonymous tweets. Goldsmith also says he is no longer asked to read in America, nor would he. It's all a sorry mess. The whole incident is a shame and fundamentally altered his standing. In the same article he says: '[p]eople don't engage with me or with what I write directly. That way they don't have to read anything,⁴¹ they don't have to think, they just have to go, "Look at that freak"' (Cronberg). I have tried to engage directly in this afterword, by reading and thinking, and I think my critique is fair. And for the record, I don't think Goldsmith's a freak, I like the fact that he wears outlandish clothes. Nonetheless, I think he failed on this occasion, which has led to his 'critical death' (see page 81, above), at least in the States.

What I took from this episode most of all is the importance of choice of source text, which I have mentioned elsewhere, and ethical editorialization. It is not about trying to get one up on others, or show how clever you can be, but about contributing to a dialogue with other practitioners, in a wider community of engaged poets, artists and activists with aligned goals and targets. I strive to appropriate and edit in a way that definitely, deliberately distorts or subverts the source material and furthers this dialogue. Goldsmith's Michael Brown poem did not do enough in this regard and as I posit there were other ways that he could have approached it, which may have had a different outcome. Goldsmith's subject—lyrical self—often seems to be smugly above the material he processes, whereas I am deeply implicated in mine, frequently drawing from issues that affect or interpellate me directly.⁴² I believe that editorial control over found poetry is

⁴¹ Another contradiction. I thought we didn't have to read his work?

⁴² My exhibition 'DOLE' in 2013 is a good example of this approach. The exhibition was held in an old social security building and combined materials found there, in conjunction with personal Job

crucial to making it poetry. In this way found poetry can facilitate a fresh exploration of a 'lyric subject struggling against the constraints of language' (Hilder, p. 110): a subject that is lost in those constraints and the ideologies behind that language, but which allows through that struggle the chance to find one's self.

Seekers Allowance letters and correspondence about my experience of the benefits system, as I was unemployed at the time. The exhibition catalogue was belatedly published last year by IR11 Publications, *DOLE* (melville, 2017b).

5. Life Gets in the Way: A Conclusion of Sorts

‘WTF / is going on?’ (melville, 2017a, unpaginated).

Life gets in the way. For me, specifically, it was the Brexit and Trump. As I mentioned in the introduction to this afterword, they were subjects which were already embedded in the ideas behind my proposal, and which have risen to scum the surface as I waded in. I don’t think I’m alone in feeling that the global landscape changed quite dramatically in the second half of 2016. Consequently, it seemed imperative that this had to feed in to what I was doing, for these events of national ‘insanity’ and ‘self-harm’ are exemplars of what TIC is all about. ‘Self-harm is usually a private problem’ (TIC, p. 13), but our collective act of stubbing a cigarette out on our skin is the exact opposite. As a current metaphor for the Brexit I decided to use the lines I had cut from an NHS leaflet about self-harm and place them near references to Europe. I’ve read several articles very recently, October 2017, that still use that metaphor to describe the ongoing Brexit debacle. ‘BELIEVE in BRITAIN. You must treat the act of self-harm as something that needs proper cleaning and first aid’ (TIC, p. 349). The implication from my rearrangement being that it’ll take more than a bandage and some micropore to heal this mess.

The events of 2016 did not, I must add, detract from my harvesting of instructions, which was carried out in 2014-2015, but they did interfere with my life, my psyche, my anxiety and, by extension, my PhD. Would I even have time to finish the thesis before the nuclear winter set in? This—a good example of ideology manifesting itself in material, physical form as anxiety—and other overreacting questions preoccupied me for a while, as I’m sure similar imaginings occupied the thoughts of many other sensible people. However, the interference was not entirely negative for my own selfish reasons.⁴³ In many respects it helped

⁴³ I also got another poem out of it: *ABBODIES* (melville, 2017a). Despite typically making found, visual, erasure or process poems, this poem was more personal and lyrical, with less reliance on

augment the poem, give it more depth, the possibility of more readings, and contributed to proving the points I was trying to make about the ways people can be manipulated by language in the service of ideology. In the end, TIC as a project, in its original conception, turned out to be not just a snapshot of language and events at a particular time, but a morphing, organic glimpse into the future. Possibly the strangest chance collocation that I manufactured is the following: ‘Great May from ever. your right. of ideas. packages. Please dementia forget Desirable’ (TIC, p. 177). Part of the chronological mash-up, which I then reshaped, it was a complete coincidence that ‘May’ should end up so close to ‘dementia.’ I finished that section around six months before ‘The Snap,’ so had no way of knowing how largely the word ‘dementia’ would feature in the election campaign, because of the so-called ‘dementia-tax.’ The practices and ideologies which the language I harvested highlights, are constantly in a state of flux, growing in strength and developing toward some next step in the continuum of right-wing rhetoric and societal moulding.

Overall, these developments in the global political landscape were like a(n un)welcome gift to my project. And it’s a gift that keeps on giving.⁴⁴ Almost every day while I was writing up this afterword I came across something, mainly articles, but also a few books, that was highly relevant to my subject. Much of these unintended finds I felt compelled to incorporate. Couple this with the swift pace of change, which I mentioned at various moments throughout—the UK threat levels, Sean Spicer’s departure, for example—and the protean nature of the world

‘impersonal’ processes and could be classified as one of my ‘Departure Poems’ (melville, 2014b), as it involved a lot of words, and thoughts, taken from my actual head. The poem was a direct response to the Brexit referendum and Trump, filtered through the lyrics of ABBA, ‘Corpses’ by Chilean poet Nestor Perlongher and my own personal circumstances and state of mind. I used the name nicky, rather than nick-e to reflect this more personal approach. Unfortunately, it’s not imperative based, so I couldn’t merge it into TIC, but I include it as an appendix.

⁴⁴ This morning, 26th October 2017, Cambridge Analytica was in the news again. This time it was mooted that they had approached Julian Assange of Wikileaks to ask whether he was in possession of Hillary Clinton’s missing emails, in relation to ‘assisting’ in the US presidential election race (Smith, 2017). Just to illustrate the daily occurrence of relevant developments that I could reference.

at the moment really comes into focus. It seems that nothing is stable at all. The way I merged these changes into the afterword, by adding them, then amending them, or not, after something changed in the world, made it feel as if I were a hamster on a wheel. That it was more a running commentary—or a commentary that was running me. This is somewhat at odds with Goldsmith’s dispassionate mechanical, and apolitical, approach which can end up being disingenuous and unethical bad art. Repeatedly responding to irrupting contexts and re-evaluating the scope of TIC and the afterword shows a lyrical impulse and a desire to let loose the subject within the constraints of appropriation, and attempts engagement rather than studied detachment.

What I envisaged when I started, and which was part of my original PhD application, was that I would capture a snapshot of the language in 2014-2015, the time during which I reaped my materials, and therefore isolate for inspection the language that tried to own us, control us, or shape us during that time. And I think I did that, but took it further. I also suggested that it would be a social document of sorts. A resource that could potentially be studied by linguists, sociologists, anthropologists or the ‘Conspiracy and Democracy Project’ at the University of Cambridge. With current or recently current language on display it could provide an insight into the way that people, their thoughts and actions are influenced by the morass of texts we live our lives in. But I felt it was important to try and take the language that I had gathered and form it to critique what is happening right now, what has happened, and, indeed, what might happen. Perhaps it was naïve of me to think it possible that the language of 2014-2015 might be considered in isolation as a snapshot. For this, I now realize, is far from the case.

To refer again to Potter’s definition of totalitarianism (see page 51, above): the idea that totalitarianism, or other forms of domination, has an ‘end in view *in advance* of any general discussion’ is united with the ‘suppression of the opposition and of any individual liberty of thought.’ This essentially speaks of where we are now and of Brexit Britain. It calls forth the examples of ‘enemies of the people,’

Tory MPs writing to Vice Chancellors of Universities questioning what is being taught, as well as the rise in anti-immigrant rhetoric. Perhaps the right, of varying degrees—Ukip, Donald Trump (and possibly Russia), Cambridge Analytica’s billionaire owner Robert Mercer, and the Tories—really do know their end view and how to get there: Brexit, the US Presidency, European destabilization, whatever. This makes sense in some sense. Especially if we think about the amount of money that these players have at their disposal. Given the rise in technological application of power and manipulation through social media and the internet, potentially exercised by the wealthy, it holds true that ‘the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest’ (Adorno and Horkheimer, p. 121). In other words, those who have the money control the technology that controls the people, enabling mass thought-manipulation to achieve their ‘end in view.’ Bernays always had an end view, what to achieve for his clients, but I think even he would be amazed at how propaganda is now functioning as a terrifying extension of his techniques. We are being manipulated by language in far more sinister ways than ever before, to whatever ends that might be is unclear to a certain extent, but it’s clear that it is an ongoing concern.

I think TIC illustrates how things bubble away under the surface, grow, shift and mutate, and how the future might be viewable if we look closely enough. The fact of Trump and Brexit informed this whole project even before its inception, they were *always already* subjects of *The Imperative Commands* and their emergence has, I think, made the poem better, and more vital, in a way I couldn’t have foreseen when I embarked.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ And then, this morning, I read that ‘fake news’ is the word of the year. Not only that, but there has been a 365% increase in its usage since 2016. This made me laugh out loud. There are 365 pages to *The Imperative Commands*. As I suggest in *ABBODIES*: ‘Coincidence?’ (melville, 2017a).

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