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The Haunted University: academic subjectivity in the time of communicative capitalism

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**Submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2015

Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE HAUNTED UNIVERSITY: ACADEMIC SUBJECTIVITY IN THE TIME OF COMMUNICATIVE CAPITALISM

SUMMARY

In the last thirty years there have been significant changes in the governmentality and culture of higher education in the UK; concurrently, day-to-day practice has been transformed by networked computers. This political and technical double-act may be understood as a specific articulation of what Jodi Dean has termed *communicative capitalism* (2010, p.2-9).

This thesis investigates how such political and technocultural changes condition the subjectivity of academic staff across a range of academic activities and contexts. The theoretical model I develop draws notably on a combination of the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan, using Freud's conception of the 'uncanny' (1919) and Althusser's theory of ideology (1970), to consider how the academic subject of technoculture is constituted by the particular domain of communicative capitalism I term the *Haunted University*.

To develop this argument the thesis firstly establishes the 'nature' of the contemporary university – distinguishing it from earlier models and earlier moments of reform. This is developed using cultural history sources and theoretical work from social, cultural and critical higher education studies. Secondly, I use a series of cultural studies methods to identify and explore elements of the new university formation. These include the selection and analysis of relevant digital materials (e.g. academic homepages and blogs) and small qualitative surveys of academic staff. Thirdly, the broadly Lacanian thrust of my argument is developed through leveraging theoretical work from the fields of cultural studies, philosophy, critical labour studies and higher education policy.

I conclude that the series of developments and changes enacted by communicative capitalism has tended to transform academic subjectivity, bringing about what may be a permanent change in the ontology and epistemology of the academy. However, despite neoliberalism's attempt to foreclose discursive dissent, there are resistances to its project.

My original contribution to knowledge is to theorise how and why the shift in academic subjectivity is being enacted, demonstrating how the technocultural, neoliberal university is beginning to haunt the academy not only from the outside, but from the inside, too.

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Acknowledgements

I'd like to express my immense gratitude to my supervisor, Caroline Bassett, for her expert help, encouragement and patience as well as for her generosity with ideas in our inspiring discussions. I'd also like to give big thanks to my second supervisor, Sue Thornham, for her stimulating ideas, constructive feedback and expert advice.

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Love and appreciation to Paul for his enormous depth of patience, support and understanding throughout the whole process. Also to Catherine, Karen and other friends for putting up with my having no conversation outside digital subjectivity for the past couple of years. It's most definitely my round.

By sprawling all over my keyboard, papers and books, my cats (who've soaked up a lot of Freud) have tried to make my doctoral work more attractive by barring my access to it. Thanks guys.

I'd like to express my gratitude to our publicly funded higher education system which has both paid my fees - via my employer – and otherwise subsidised my study. Appreciation also to my exact contemporary, the beautiful, uncanny University of Sussex (and particularly the School of Media, Film and Music) still modern after all these years and still fighting.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Mary Thomas, 1924-2014, a thoroughly modern woman, to the end.

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Parts of Chapter 8 have been previously published as Thomas, C. (2011) 'The purloined email' in Land, R. and Bayne, S. (eds.) *Digital Difference* (pp. 3-14). Amsterdam: Sense Publishers.

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List of figures

A note on citation

Some of the books I have cited are in electronic format, in the form of kindle books. Because these do not usually have fixed page numbers I have used the location when I need to refer to specific places in the text. This I have cited in the form of: 'loc. 123-7'. Similarly, I have also used online journals and other online publications without page numbers. Where meaningful, I have referred to specific places in these texts by paragraph, in the form of 'para. 12'.

SECTION I - CRITICAL INQUIRY

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Preface - spies of the Haunted University

Gilles Deleuze posits the idea that we are moving from the *Discipline* society defined by Michel Foucault (1975), where the institution of the university involves enclosure within the campus, the seminar room and the lecture theatre, to a *Control* society (Deleuze, 1992). Here the university becomes corporate and is 'a spirit, a gas' that is not limited to the campus but is with us everywhere on our mobile devices (Deleuze, 1992, p.4).

As Andrejevic demonstrates, our world of networked computers and social media encourages us to comply actively with our own surveillance and the surveillance of others in the workplace (2007). This type of workplace surveillance is an eerie legacy of F. W. Taylor's 'Scientific Management' theories, which underpin the modern production line or fast-food restaurant. Based on close monitoring of every task an employee carried out, Taylorism takes the view that all emotion can be factored out of the workplace experience – be that boredom, frustration or pleasure (Andrejevic, 2007). A denial of the normal everyday human emotional dimension which colours the university workplace (and is a necessary part of the desire to learn) Taylorism substitutes instead the corporate idea that it must operate like an affect-free, relentless, robotic machine. This neurotic institutional illusion affects all aspects of the everyday; university, teaching, research and academic administration are all haunted by phenomenal levels of audit, producing the fantasy university of bureaucracy, of metrics, of the neoliberal ideology that contributes to my term the 'Haunted University'.

Freud's concept of the *Unheimlich,* or uncanny, provides a rich set of metaphors for thinking about the university. That a rationalist domain of learning and knowledge production might be possessed of a more shadowy and less rational (though, ostensibly, in its reductive obsession with 'efficiency', über-rational) dimension is not surprising. The uncanny is, after all, the Enlightenment's dark side, irrupting with the birth of science and haunting modernity from within (Dolar, 1991, p.7). The technologising of the everyday folds in the second element of the uncanny that creates the Haunted University – we become both subjects of technology and of neoliberalism.

1.2   Formulating my research question

My interest in this topic stems from my experience in higher education (HE). For over 20 years, from the early 1990s, I worked in a number of universities in both academic and academic-related roles where I managed the development of online and distance-learning initiatives. As an online/distance-learning specialist I worked with groups of academic and technical staff to set up online courses; my engagement with other academic staff in a variety of universities, both old and new, and with the national and international learning technology (sometimes called 'e-learning') research community raised questions for me that I have sought to answer in this project.

Over the years of debate and discussion at conferences, and the day-to-day contact with academics who were using – or not using - online learning, there emerged, for me, for an unspoken facet to educational technology: that for academic staff, it's an area of powerful emotional engagement. There are some academic staff who become highly enthusiastic, excited, even obsessed about the technologies. But it's much more common for dislike and mistrust to be expressed and it's become familiar in universities for people to characterise this in terms of neurosis, referring to themselves or others as technophobes. The term 'Luddite'[1] has also become frequently and pejoratively bandied about to describe academic staff who don't want to use the technologies.

In 'management-speak' (and I was, for some years, an academic manager – a conflicted role for many of us, as Andrew Sparkes (2007) explores) this technological disengagement among academic staff was perceived as 'change-resistant' and problematic. Successive funding council initiatives were aimed at persuading staff to embrace the technologies (Jisc, 2010a). But I was intrigued and puzzled by the strength of the emotion I was seeing, in different disciplines and different universities, and which my learning technology colleagues were informally reporting in other institutions. It seemed out of proportion to something as mundane as computer use and it surprised me that highly intelligent people reacted so irrationally. It seemed to me that the

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[1] The Luddites were groups of 19th-century weavers who took direct action against the property of factory owners. The term has become used contemporaneously to refer to those who are opposed to technology but, in fact, the historical Luddites were skilled technologists and there is no evidence of any hostility to machinery on their part. 'Wrecking was simply a technique' of 'collective bargaining' (Hobsbawn, 1952, p.59), to enable weavers to influence *how* the technologies would be used, particularly with regard to pay and conditions of work (Hobsbawn, 1952).

technologies must appear to exercise some kind of threat or to stand in for something other than themselves and I wanted to find out more.

I should mention that whilst the emotional reaction of colleagues was a 'given' in the educational technology community, I could not find any research where this was treated seriously, as a valid response and investigated as such. Research that addressed issues of why academic staff didn't want to use new technologies tended to take the perspective that such engagement was an *a priori* 'good' and that staff should be encouraged to mend their ways, update their skills and conquer their fears (e.g. Salmon, 2013, pp.xiv-xvii; Sharpe et al, 2006, pp.77-8; King and Boyatt, 2014). Which, to be fair, is what the research funding encouraged us to do[2]. But I wanted to investigate what this generalised fear – or, more rarely, fanaticism – was about, in a way that enabled me to have critical distance from it.

Historically, universities played a pivotal role in the development of the internet, so digital technology is an area that has long been important in the world of academia. But apart from the extensive literatures on e-learning, the relationship of academia to computer culture is surprisingly under-researched.

I wanted to take an overview of the landscape of higher education and the role of technoculture within it and theorise how that impacted on academics as subjects; I planned to use examples of how academic staff represent themselves or are represented digitally, to inform this. I also intended to carry out surveys for one area of my study, the experience of using (or not using) technologies for teaching. I felt this would add texture to the study and chose this area because it is the one where there is the greatest level of awareness among staff that technologies are impacting them and so where they might be more likely to have considered, varied and complex perspectives.

To this end, I employed the methodology of theoretical analysis, in the sense of selection and discussion of theoretical and descriptive material, and I applied these selected theories to the context of academic subjectivity. I used them to theorise my findings from the narrative analysis of relevant digital materials I performed and from the two qualitative surveys of academic staff I carried out. I discuss methodology in more detail in Chapter 2.

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[2] See Jisc (2010a) for examples of e-learning project funding.

Initially in my project I looked only at what the technologies meant for the academic subject. As I began to understand more about how they *produced* the subject I realised I also needed to take into account the culture of universities and the political economy of higher education, as these had a close relationship with the use of technologies. Although the issue of subjectivity invited a psychoanalytical theoretical perspective and this was where I began, the work on culture and politics led me to include other theoretical perspectives.

1.3   The research question

As a result of the above enquiry, I developed the following research question: How is the academic subject constituted by the culture and practices of the neoliberal, technocultural, university?

My study, whilst focusing on this very specific area, is interdisciplinary. To construct my field of study I combine two over-arching theoretical approaches. The first is Jacques Lacan's re-imagining of Freudian psychoanalysis and the second is a materialist perspective, in particular Louis Althusser's work on ideology. These perspectives inform and enhance each other, Lacanian psychoanalysis mitigating the reductivism that can limit materialism and materialism providing a means by which psychoanalysis can be culturally and historically anchored, rather than presenting as a universal paradigm. This is similar to Anne McClintock's proposal of 'a situated psychoanalysis — a culturally contextualized psychoanalysis that is simultaneously a psychoanalytically informed history' (McClintock, 1995, locs.1561-1562).

This 'psychoanalytic materialist' approach provides me with a way of thinking about the psychoanalytic and political production of subjectivity in the context of the university. I also draw to a lesser extent on some of the work of other philosophers, such as Gilles Deleuze, Guy Debord, Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida, where relevant.

The particular meaning of the term 'neoliberalism' I employ in this work is neatly summarised by Jeremy Gilbert:

> neoliberalism, from the moment of its inception, advocates a programme of deliberate intervention by government in order to encourage particular types of entrepreneurial, competitive and commercial behaviour in its citizens, ultimately arguing for the management of populations with the aim of cultivating the type

of individualistic, competitive, acquisitive and entrepreneurial behaviour which the liberal tradition has historically assumed to be the natural condition of civilised humanity, undistorted by government intervention

Gilbert (2013, p.9).

For UK higher education this is far from an abstract concept. The government of Margaret Thatcher, elected in 1979, set an agenda for re-engineering universities to fit in with their neoliberal worldview, an agenda that continues today, long after the life of that government, or indeed of Thatcher herself (Tight, p.76). As Roger Burrows demonstrates, in universities this involves setting up a 'simulated' market, 'through the introduction of audit and the introduction of various forms of metrics that enable systematic comparisons between individuals, departments and institutions' (Burrows, 2012, p.357).

So this thesis is an account of the newly developing academic subject. This is the person who emerges in the variously reconfigured places and spaces, culture and practices of the neoliberal, technocultural university.

1.4   The literatures

1.4.1   Literature on psychoanalysis

The thinking of Freud underpins my work. Most significantly and explicitly I have drawn on his writings on *Das Unheimlich* or *the Uncanny* (1919) to think about the university as a space of the uncanny. Lacan's 'return to Freud' and theorising of Freudian psychoanalysis from a post-structuralist perspective also forms a key part my overarching perspective in theorising academic subjectivity. Additionally, Lacan does write explicitly about the university, both in a literal and metaphorical way (1969-70) and it's possible to extrapolate, from Lacan's theory of the mirror phase, that the mirror is the first technology which produces us as subjects.

Most literature on technoculture and psychoanalysis is from a psychoanalytic materialist perspective, as I discuss below in 1.3.4. There are a (relatively small) number of other works that don't set out to take into account the political implications of computational culture, such as Andre Nusselder's *Interface fantasy: a Lacanian cyborg ontology*

(2009); whilst I have taken such works into account I have not drawn from them extensively.

Whilst the body of work on Lacanian psychoanalysis is a significant one, there is no part of it that explicitly address academic subjectivity in a technocultural university context.

1.4.2 Literature on materialism

Louis Althusser's work on ideology (1970) is an overarching concept in my thesis. I have also drawn on George Lukacs' work on reification and at times, directly from the texts of Karl Marx, whose work Althusser and Lukacs amplify and develop.

With the 21st century return to Marx in critical thinking, a number of commentators in the areas of technoculture and/or labour studies, for example, Manuel Castells, Zigmunt Bauman, Andrew Ross, Tiziana Terranova, Jodi Dean and Christian Fuchs are leveraging Marxist approaches to think about labour or culture in the time of the (post) internet. I draw on their work, but what distinguishes my study from other materialist analyses of technology is my leveraging of psychoanalysis and my concentration on the specific area of academic subjectivity.

1.4.3 Literature on technoculture

There is a significant body of work that provides an analysis of contemporary technoculture and is located broadly in the area of media and cultural studies. Some examples are the analyses of internet culture by Mark Poster (2001), Evgeny Morozov (2013) and Eli Pariser (2011); Sherry Turkle's[3] writings on the way in which we are conditioned by our use of games and social media (1995; 2011); Mark Andrejevic's work on social media and surveillance culture (2007); and the theorising of internet labour studies by Andrew Ross (2009; 2013) and Tiziana Terranova (2004) among others. There are also areas which abut, but have a less direct relation to my work, such

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[3] Although Turkle's background is in Lacanian psychoanalysis this isn't really the perspective from which she writes about the internet, so I have included her in this section rather than under psychoanalysis. However she does work from a perspective that foregrounds the idea of self as conditioned by technologies, so it would be possible to make an argument for including her work under psychoanalysis, although I have chosen not to so in this case.

as the work of Gary Hall, and others, on open access publishing and the gift economy (Hall, 2008; 2012) and similarly work on open access educational resources and software (see Downes, 2011).

These approaches concentrate on different aspects of technoculture and take a broadly and sometimes explicitly materialist approach. They have informed my thinking but they do not generally take a psychoanalytic approach or consider implications for the academic subject as my work does (though see Gary Hall's *#MySubjectification*, 2013).

1.4.4 Psychoanalytic materialist literature on technology

There is a body of work that considers technology from a psychoanalytic materialist perspective. I have drawn particularly on the work of the four most significant, in my view, writers on this area: Zizek, Dean, Kittler and Hayles.

Slavoj Zizek has theorised the connection between psychoanalysis and Althusserean ideology and has produced some work in how the internet shapes subjectivity (see Zizek 1997; 1998). Jodi Dean takes Zizek's initial work much further in terms of technology and subjectivity, connecting it up with the use of blogs and social networking (Dean 2002; 2010). Dean employs a psychoanalytic materialist approach to theorise the concept of *communicative capitalism*. By this she means:

> contemporary communications media capture their users in intensive and extensive networks of enjoyment, production and surveillance … Just as industrial capitalism relies on the exploitation of labor so does communicative capitalism rely on the exploitation of communication.
>
> (Dean, 2010, p.4)

This is an important framing concept in my study. The way in which neoliberalism leverages technology has also been called 'digital capitalism' (e.g. Andrejevic, 2002) or 'computational capitalism'(e.g. Berry, 2014). I have chosen to use the term *communicative* capitalism for my context rather than digital or computational capitalism because of the emphasis it places on the exploitation of human desire and drives by these communicative networks. But when I use the term communicative capitalism, I want to emphasise that this is a digital and computational concept, too.

Friedrich Kittler also uses Lacan to theorise the production of technology and subjectivity and develop his work on medium theory, as has N. Katherine Hayles' work on the technology of the self which, sharing an interest in medium theory with Kittler, also draws on Lacan (Kittler, 1986; 1997; Hayles 1993; 2005; 2006).

These four theorists write about technology and philosophy in a range of ways and I have leveraged their thinking to theorise subjectivity in my context of the contemporary university, although none of them directly address the issue of the academic subject.

1.4.5   Literature on the university

The literatures on the university fall into a number of categories. Firstly there are historical studies, such as the seminal works by Robert Anderson (2006) and Malcolm Tight (2009), which I have drawn on in Section II to consider the historical background to the contemporary university. I have used these sources, as well as some primary 20th-century sources, to think about discourses of the university and how they frame academic subjectivity.

Secondly, there are approaches such as work by Stefan Collini (2012a), Mary Evans (2004), Andrew McGettigan (2013), Alex Callinicos (2006) and Roger Brown and Helen Carasso (2013) which critique the contemporary UK neoliberal university as a meaningful institution. This body of work has many implications for academic staff, but in general it addresses higher education policy and its effects rather than focusing on the academic subject, and in general it only touches on technology, if touches on it at all, as part of the university machine. Similarly, works such as Bill Readings' seminal *University in Ruins* (1996) and the work of Henri Giroux (2007; 2013) provide a critical analysis of the Canadian and US university system, as Ruth Barcan (2013) does for the Australian context.

Thirdly there is a small but growing body of work on critical academic labour studies, such as that by Ros Gill (2010; 2014) and Sue Clegg (2008), Andrew Sparkes (2007) and Roger Burrows (2012), in the UK. This is more developed in Canada and the US

where there is a journal of scholar activism, *Workplace*[4]. Some of Giroux's work comes into this category, as well, as do aspects of Barcan's work.

In discussing why this is not a widely researched area, Gill says:

> despite academics' much vaunted interest in reflexivity there has been a marked reluctance to turn our gaze upon our own working conditions … there has been a relative silence on academics as workers – particularly in the UK
>
> (Gill, 2014, p.12)

In analysing 'the relationship between economic and political shifts, transformations in work, and psychosocial experiences' of academics Gill insists that 'this is not an exercise in self-indulgence or narcissism' (Gill, 2010, p.229). Perhaps the latter point, or the need to state it, holds the key to why so little work has been done on the experience of UK academics (particularly when work on the student experience could fill libraries). In the current climate of HE no one wants to risk the accusation of being 'inward-looking' when they are enjoined to be all about public engagement, or of focusing on the 'ivory tower' when they ought to be eagerly courting the world outside the university walls (insofar as there are walls any more) that some call real.

Most of this body of literature take a perspective that theorises from the standpoint of academic identities rather than using the concept of subjectivity, as my work does. Consequently it considers technology as something organised outside the self rather than a means by which self is constituted, as my perspective does. Some thinking in this area sees technology as threatening the employment of teachers by substituting for them (see Lorenz (2012, p.605), Bartlett (2002), or Giroux (2007)), a viewpoint I critique in Chapter 7.

1.4.6   My contribution

My original contribution to knowledge is to forge a perspective that weaves together technocultural theory, psychoanalytic materialism, critical academic labour studies and higher education policy studies to theorise the computational turn of the neoliberal

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[4] *Workplace* is an open-access journal available at http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/workplace (accessed 15 November 2014).

university and the way it produces academic subjects. Using viewpoints from different disciplines to reflect back on and inform each other, as I have done, provides a perspective on academic subjectivity that has not, hitherto, been available in any of these disciplines.

As a research area it is what Kingsley Amis' hapless academic, *Lucky Jim* might have called a 'strangely neglected topic' (Amis, 1954, loc.309), as there has not, to date, been any significant work from my theoretical perspective on this specific area. I would contend that what my work produces is a new vantage point from which to view higher education and the changes that are being made to it. A body of literature is beginning to grow up about academic staff in neoliberal times and my work adds a technocultural and psychoanalytic dimension to this field of critical labour studies in the UK higher education context.

1.5 Outline of chapters

Section I – Critical inquiry sets out what my research and this thesis aims to do and why and how this is achieved.

> In **Chapter 1 – Introduction** provides a general overview of my research and this thesis, situating it in the context of the literatures.
>
> In **Chapter 2 – Methodology** I discuss the research methods I used and the ethical issues I took into consideration.

Section II – Scholarly transformations: ideas of the university past and present sets the stage by discussing how we got to where we are in terms of what it is to be an academic by considering the changing historical ideas of the UK university and the way in which this produces academic subjectivity. This section provides background and context for the work.

> In **Chapter 3 – The ghost of universities past and the spirit of universities present** I look back at the history of UK universities until the end of the 20th century with particular regard to public debates about the function and purpose of the university. I then go on to discuss the most recent stage of university transformation and consider the implications of this for our current conception of higher education.

Section III – Configuring the self considers how technologies of selfhood operate on the academic subject.

Chapter 4 – Armour for my phantoms: academic homepages and blogs explores the way in which subjectivity is produced by academic homepages and blogs.

Chapter 5 – I beset me: doubles, ghosts and other troubling electronic selves considers how sites created outside the agency of the academic subject produce digital doubles which also condition subjectivity.

Chapter 6 – The body (not) in the library: space, time, embodiment considers how neoliberal technoculture inscribes itself onto the embodied self.

Section IV – Academic labour addresses questions of subjectivity in relation to some of the main areas of academic work – teaching, administration and research.

In **Chapter 7 – Phantom objects on unhomely ground: teaching in the Haunted University** I discuss how university teaching is impacted by neoliberal technoculture.

Chapter 8 – The purloined email considers how email correspondence produces academics as subjects.

Chapter 9 – An irradiation of the soul: research and the mediated academic analyses how the re-casting of research in the neoliberal university fundamentally affects subjectivity.

Section V – Conclusion

In **Chapter 10 – Re-engineering academia** I sum up my conclusions and the contribution my study makes.

1.6   Boundaries/limitations

I have limited my work in this thesis to the UK higher education context. However, as the neoliberal political agenda has cast its net widely, some of what I have to say may be relevant outside Britain in countries that have undergone similar re-invention of HE. My frame of reference and examples, however, are from the UK.

At the time of writing there are 161 higher education institutions in the UK (UUK, 2014). Different types of university – old, new, Oxbridge, plate glass, Russell group, redbrick, vocational, campus and metropolitan, federal and unitary – all have different cultures. In addition to this, different academic disciplines are culturally varied, and the various different roles academic staff may have, from zero-hours contract lecturer, to professor, to vocational practitioner and teacher to academic manager and much in between, are all very disparate. Academics may be female or male, of varying ages, ethnicities, sexual orientations, class backgrounds; they may or may not be disabled or have carer responsibilities. How, then, to interrogate the notion of an 'academic subject' in such a heterogeneous environment? I'm not proposing that my considerations of academic subjectivity apply exactly to every academic, whatever their role, in every institution in the UK. However, the changes that have been applied to UK higher education are the same changes nationally (albeit with some regional variation) and have affected all institutions. What I'm doing in this thesis is drawing out broad similarities and general patterns in the way these changes appear to be impacting on subjectivity, based on varied accounts, narratives, scholarly work and public debates about academic life, and understood through the theoretical lens I have developed.

My notion of an academic subject is, then an abstracted one. I have purposely avoided addressing issues of gender as, indeed I have issues of ethnicity, or any form of socio-cultural identity marker. This isn't to say that gender inequality isn't a critically important issue in the academy as the most cursory of glances at academic employment statistics demonstrates. Questions about the gendered culture of the academy and even of the academic subject position (see Barcan, 2013, chap. 5) are important and fascinating ones but they are not the ones I seek to address in this work. Rather I am sketching out a theoretical, abstracted space of academic identity and the academic body and analysing how it is acted on by the changing idea and practices of the university.

Feminist scholar, Adrian Rich, proposes that we should never speak about 'the body' because it is too grand a claim, and instead use only the personal, more visceral term 'my body' (Rich, 2002). I am choosing not to follow Rich's proposal in my discussion of the academic body. This is because my purpose in proposing this unmarked theoretical space is to attempt to focus on some of the commonalities that academic subjects may share whatever their social identities, whilst remaining cognisant that

individual academics are marked by difference. I would hope that this enables readers to have the freedom to read into this text the specificities of their own context.

However, remaining aware of the social marking of individuals, by gender difference in particular, I have at times in this thesis referred to discourses of gender. Some examples are in Chapter 4, both when analysing academic blogs and self-narrative and in my discussion of the gaze; and in Chapter 7 when I consider the way in which the body of the hysteric is represented.

There are many people who work and study in UK universities other than academics. Changes to higher education organisation and funding affects everyone in universities: students, caterers, IT staff, librarians, gardeners, administrators, cleaners and estates workers among others. In this work, however, I am considering only the situation of academic staff.

I'd like to be clear that although, in this thesis, I conduct a critical analysis of the implications of neoliberal audit culture in universities, I'm not proposing that blame for this bureaucratisation of HE lies with those staff, academic, academic-related and administrative, who are obliged to enact audit culture as part of their employment. Everyone who works in a university is implicated within the web of audit culture and few are in a position to affect this meaningfully. Similarly, although I critique the commodification of HE and the invention of a 'customer' role for students, I do not consider students to be at fault in this. A commitment to the university as a public project is not the sole property of the academy; I've not had to look too far to see this demonstrated by the 2013 Sussex joint student and staff protests over planned outsourcing of catering and estates services (Ratcliffe, 2013).

1.7   Uncanny subjects of neoliberalism

I'm not alone in finding the contemporary university a haunted space. Over ten years ago Nicholas Royle declared that 'the University is, increasingly, a ghostly institution. It is haunted … by a sense of its relationship to itself and its own past', an institution where 'teaching is judged by a sort of spectral, invisible … body of authorities' and research 'is subject to the eerie power and disquieting effects' of the Research

Assessment Exercise, 'a ghostly mechanism that insinuates itself into all academic writing' (Royle, 2003, p.54). Andrew Sparkes, in his work on the effect of audit culture in UK universities, is 'inspired by partial happenings, fragmented memories, echoes of conversations, whispers in corridors, fleeting glimpses of myriad reflections seen through broken glass' (Sparkes, 2007, p.521), and Ruth Barcan sets the tone of her book *Academic Life and Labour in the New University* when she opens with the words 'when I am at work, silent, sinister faces glare down at me', going on to describe the 'scary workplace presences' of 'sandstone gargoyles, chimeras and dragons perched on the roof of a university quadrangle' (Barcan, 2013, loc.46-8).

Because university managerialism closes down the space for dissent in a way that is almost beyond rationalist argument (Lorenz, 2012, pp.607-10) and because academics, by definition, are 'individualised, responsibled, self-managing and monitoring'(Gill, 2014, p.13), a strange effect occurs. In the topsy-turvy universe of the Haunted University, when institutional neurosis masquerades as logical normality, the resulting affective response from academic staff is not only sometimes painful, in the form of anxiety, fear, guilt and shame, but also disallowed and rendered secret by the collision of cultures which produce it, amplifying the horror of the haunting (Gill, 2014; Sparkes, 2012). The work of critical academic labour studies begins to break the (eerie) silence of the Haunted University and what follows is my attempt to add to these voices.

Chapter 2 – Research Methodology

2.1   Theoretical Approach and Methodology

This is an interdisciplinary piece of research making use of methodologies associated with the disciplines of media and cultural studies. There are four aspects to this:

1. I employed the methodology of theoretical analysis, in the sense of selection and discussion of theoretical and descriptive material. The overarching theoretical approach I selected for this project was a combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis and a materialist perspective, in particular Louis Althusser's work on ideology. As I discussed in more detail in the previous chapter, this 'psychoanalytic materialist' approach provided me with a way of conceptualising the psychoanalytic and political production of subjectivity in the context of the technological university.

2. Secondly, I carried out desk research to establish a historical background for locating the academic subject. I connected this with my own engagement with universities over the 20+ years that I worked in them to produce a reading of higher education informed by historical, political, cultural and personal factors.

3. Thirdly, I carried out 3 small scale studies of relevant digital materials. These comprised academic blogs and homepages; a variety of academic (and other) sites produced by a search on my own name; and an analysis of academic email exchanges.

4. Fourthly, I carried out 2 qualitative surveys of academic staff using interviews and questionnaires.

I then applied the psychoanalytic materialist approach developed in (1.) , above, to the context of academic subjectivity and used it to theorise my findings from the historical context (2.); from the study I performed of the digital material (3.); and from the two qualitative surveys of academic staff I carried out (4.).

2.2 Period of the research

This work was carried out between 2005 and 2014[5]. Whilst my theoretical perspective developed throughout this period, taking account of changes in the technocultural and political environment, the capturing of my qualitative and textual material is marked by the period I accessed or elicited it, as follows.

- For the first qualitative study interviews were carried out between December 2006 – February 2007.
- The study of email was performed in 2007.
- For the second qualitative survey the launch meeting, questionnaire distribution and completion and online commentary were completed in 2008.
- My study of academic blogs and homepages was performed in 2009
- The capturing of sites produced by searches on my own name was carried out in 2010

Therefore, some of this thesis I present as an historical account of, for example, the way in which the academic blogs of 2009 speak about subjectivity and some of it is more recent, having more contemporary currency. I make it clear at the start of each relevant chapter where that chapter stands in relation to the historical timeline of my project.

2.3 Ethical issues

Because this study in part uses human subjects and texts belonging to human subjects, the ethical considerations regarding permissions and anonymity outlined below were observed. In this I followed the Association of Internet Researchers ethics guidelines, particularly the overarching guideline, which asks 'does the connection between one's online data and his or her physical person enable psychological, economic, or physical, harm?' (AoIR, 2012, p.7).

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[5] There is an intermission of 2 years between Autumn 2010 and Autumn 2012 when I suspended studies.

Additionally, because some of the subjects were, like me, members of staff at Kingston University and because I am a student at Sussex University, I submitted my project to the research ethics committees of both Kingston and Sussex and obtained clearance.

2.4 Methods for each element of the research

2.4.1 Blogs and home pages

I conducted a search for academic blogs across a broad range of universities. I tried to find blogs that were from differing types of university from different disciplines and where staff occupied different academic roles. At this time, however, there was quite a narrow range of disciplines where academic staff had significant personal pages or blogs. There is, therefore, a bias towards computer science, educational technology and disciplines which involve publishing, such as media studies and creative writing. I concentrated only on professional academic blogs and homepages where individuals wrote under their own names and provided a verifiable link to their university role.

I selected sites belonging to 6 members of academic staff and I also used the university profile page of 3 of these staff by way of contrast to their personal sites and blogs. I chose sites which tell, in differing ways stories of self and academic life and which performatively constitute subjectivity. I then performed a detailed reading of these sites. (Please see Appendix A for more detail of the sites selected).

All the blogs and personal homepages that I wanted to use for my work were, by definition, located in the public domain. There are varying perspectives among internet researchers about whether agreement to use such material needs to be sought from the authors of such publications. Some take the approach that consent from participants is not necessary if material is publicly available (Hookway, 2008, p.105); others take the view that material is written in a context of privacy even though public available, so consent should be obtained (Elgesem, 2002). As it would not have been appropriate to anonymise the type of pages I needed to use, I took the approach, informed by Elizabeth Bassett and Kate O'Riordan's work on authorship and mediated textuality in internet research (Bassett & O'Riordan, 2002) that to situate such texts within the context of another text where they are subject to analysis changes the meaning of such blogs. As

the blogs are essentially personal in nature I decided the appropriate ethical approach was to seek the owners' approval for their use in the context of my study. I contacted the blog and personal homepage authors by email and all kindly agreed to participate.

2.4.2   My 'doubles'

I performed a Google search on my own name ('Cate Thomas', rather than 'Catherine Thomas') and harvested the sites which referred to me.

I observed patterns in the sort of sites produced and performed close readings of the sites and also read the digital texts against each other to demonstrate how the intermediation producing a range of meanings.

(See Appendix B for more detail of the sites selected.)

2.4.3   Emails

From the not insubstantial number of emails that appeared in my university inbox every day I selected chains of email text between staff where the content was not sensitive or controversial; where individual identities would not be obvious when the texts were anonymised; which were not from and did not personally discuss structurally vulnerable individuals (such as students or patients). I picked emails where, whilst the content was banal, the enacting of the mail spoke meaningfully about the issues I was researching, with varying kinds of performances and changes of meaning as the mails travelled around the circuit.

All emails were anonymised, with pseudonyms replacing the actual names of individuals.

2.4.4   Interviews with course leaders

These interviews took place in a large Faculty (approx 200 academic staff and 5000 students) located jointly across two Universities, one a post-92 institution and the other an older medical school.

Course directors were invited, via email, to participate and were given the option to invite appropriate staff in from their course teams to attend the interview with them. A suitable date, time and location were agreed. The interview schedule was semi-structured to ensure a degree of consistency.

The attitudes, experiences and perceptions of staff in the area of e-learning were sought, based on their experience of using the institutional VLE, *Blackboard*. In broad terms the themes that were explored included staff perceptions of e-learning based upon current use, attitudes to e-learning and perceived challenges it produced.

Validity of the data collected was confirmed by a verbal summary at the end of the interview and by asking participants to review transcribed interviews for accuracy.

All contributions from the participants were anonymised.

(See Appendix C for more detail of this study.)

2.4.5 Survey of staff trialling an educational social networking environment.
A learning environment was developed using opensource social networking technologies. This was piloted with a group of volunteer academic staff from across the university.

Appropriate staff across the university in all faculties, such as associate deans for learning and teaching and learning and teaching co-ordinators, were contacted. They were asked if they or any of their colleagues would like to participate in the study.

Eighteen University staff, from a wide range of differing subject areas, participated in the study which involved taking part in an initial face-to-face workshop then using the environment in a structured way for a pilot over the period of a month. Participants were then asked to complete questionnaires about their experience of the environment. They were also offered the option of articulating their views within the body of the environment itself, during the trial, in blogs, wikis, discussion forums, messaging, posts on colleagues comment walls and other spaces.

All participants used the environment. Thirteen participants returned completed questionnaires and five commented about their experience in the body of the environment (two of whom also completed questionnaires).

All contributions from the participants were anonymised.

(See Appendix D for more detail of this study.)

SECTION II – SCHOLARLY TRANSFORMATIONS: IDEAS OF THE UNIVERSITY, PAST AND PRESENT

Introduction to Section II

Preamble

'Deep, radical and urgent transformation is required in higher education,' announces a recent report from the Institute of Public Policy Research (Barber et al., 2013).[6] For those of us who think we've seen little else in the sector over the past few decades, this is somewhat disheartening. But it's useful to remember, in the face of such clarion calls for reform, that British universities have been transforming themselves, willingly or unwillingly, for centuries.

In this section I will briefly outline the history of these deep and radical transformations. In particular, I will consider these changes in relation to public debates about the function and purpose of the university. I will look at the way such debates form part of an overarching discourse about the nature of the university and its relationship to the social, cultural, economic and political fabric of Britain. I will then go on to analyse and discuss in more detail the most recent stage of university transformation and consider the implications of this for our present ideas of the university. My approach places emphasis on what universities are seen to *be*, or to be *for*, within public discourse. That is to say, the role they occupy ideologically.

This section, then, provides the background and context which informs my later, closer, discussions of how academic subjectivity is produced within and by the digital aspects of higher education.

Approach

Historians have used varying models of developmental stages to define the history of universities. For example, Ringer (1979) employs the idea of the early, high and late

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[6] I'll return to this report by Sir Michael Barber, Tony Blair's education adviser, Dearing and Browne Committee member, international educational 'deliverology' specialist and now a senior executive at Pearson Education (Wilby, 2011). It captures the zeitgeist of pro-market thinking about higher education policy and on the day of its release in March 2013 the report enjoyed a significant level of national media coverage.

industrial stages, with the high stage starting around 1860 and the late at about 1930; Kaeble (1981) identifies similar periods as charitable, competitive and welfare; and Anderson (2006) considers both these staging concepts and includes more recent observations of mass education and the relationship between state and market in higher education.

Building on these approaches, for the purposes of my enquiry I will use a five-stage model of the historical periods. The first stage, *religious and elitist establishments*, takes us up to the end of the 18th century; the second period, *modernist metropolitan developments*, continues until the end of the Second World War, when stage three, *post-war welfare state growth* continues the story. Stage four begins in 1979, charting the era of *massification and the knowledge economy*, and the final stage, *personalisation and privatisation*, starts just before the turn of the century.

Flowing through these five phases, I propose three discourses about the idea of the University: the *discourse of privilege and elites*; the *discourse of progress and the public good*; and the *discourse of commodification and private advantage*. These map partly but not entirely onto the historical periods, sometimes re-emerging in periods with different dominant discourses, as I will demonstrate.

In the table below I have linked each stage with the discourse that dominates at the time. It is not without irony that I use simple, somewhat reductionist tabulation to try and grip slippery and complex concepts. It's entirely in keeping with current dominant views of how ideas about higher education should be communicated, though not, I hope, at all in keeping with the framing philosophy of my project. But it may prove useful as a visual reference point for the reader, as is has for me, in keeping track of the conjunction of the different discourses and historical periods under discussion.

			DISCOURSES		
			A	**B**	**C**
			Privilege and elites	Progress and the public good	Commodification and private advantage
STAGES	**1**	Religious and elitist establishments C12th - 1800	X		
	2	Modernist metropolitan developments 1800-1945		X	
	3	Post-war welfare state growth 1945-1979		X	
	4	Massification and the knowledge economy 1979-1997			X
	5	Personalisation and privatisation 1997- present			X

Fig. 1 Stages and discourses of the university

The spectre of the Haunted University

In the period under discussion in this section, universities are seen in many different ways: organisations with a key role for maintaining religion's ideological grip, when their role was clerical training; mechanisms by which the ruling class are inculcated with a shared worldview; institutions responsible for 'raising the intellectual tone of society … cultivating the public mind,' as Newman puts it; centres of culture and knowledge creation in the Humboldtian ideal; vocational institutions where engineers, doctors and lawyers are trained; modernist beacons which challenge existing 'maps of learning'; and competitive, commercial enterprises, defined by the language of the market.

The most recent reinvention of universities as commercial organisations providing 'a product with a price tag' (QAA, 2013) becomes ideologically feasible because of the perceived decline of the authority of grand narratives and the way in which this makes it difficult for universities to continue to justify themselves in those kind of high modernist terms.

Another way of looking at this, and one that I find highly productive, is to begin to explore this shift in a Lacanian register. Here the erosion of authority can be viewed as the decline of the big Other, (see Zizek, 1999, p.336), a concept I will explore in the following chapters. Put together, these changes wrought by late modernity create the highly surveilled, hyper-technological space, a locus of institutional neurosis and individual alienation which I conceive of as the Haunted University.

The uncanny is not a new dimension for universities, which have always been liminal spaces. They are of the city but not part of it. They are of the locale but national, of the country but international. Seeing them through the lens of Jacques Derrida's punning concept of 'Hauntology'[7], they are defined by what they are not and present when they are not present (1994, p.202). They are a space to learn and a space to think and research. A space in which, by learning and thinking, people emerge changed. Universities are both home to students and staff, and *heimlich*, but also workplaces,

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[7] A pun on ontology

places we leave to go home. For academic staff the cellular office[8] can be a home-like, personalised, book-filled space, where people visit; but also, as workers, it is a site of alienation. Homely and not homely, *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. We never finally leave the universities where we have studied or worked. They mark and define us, omniscient guardians or *alma maters*.

Universities behave in unexpected and unanticipated ways because of their very nature; the Faustian bargain that society makes with a university is something to which many commentators refer (Fuller, 2009, loc.276; Anderson, 2006, loc.241 ; Collini, 2012, p.7). Whether in thrall to Mephistopheles or shading into diabolic themselves, universities have more than a hint of otherness about them. Non-conforming, they look inwards in order to look outwards. They are of society but not of it, distancing themselves to analyse, discuss and study it.

The space of universities has always been consciously staged. Rothblatt argues that it is 'a species of theatre, with its own conventions, ceremonies and pageantries' (1997, p.97) which employs ritual to give educational experience 'unique significance and value' (ibid., p.95). Part of the enchantment of this staging lies in the widespread use of gothic and neo-gothic architecture for university buildings. The hallowed cloisters and famously dreaming spires of Oxford and Cambridge's medieval gothic architecture imparts a mysticism in the very fabric of the buildings (Rothblatt, 1997, p.98). This romanticism, arising in relation to the actual architectures and day-to-day experiences in a very few, elite universities, nonetheless helps to exert a mythic fascination around the idea of a university in Britain. Oxbridge colleges are portrayed repeatedly in film and TV, so their appearance seems familiar (even though most people will never visit them) and forms part of a mythic notion about the space of the university.[9] However, the re-imagined gothic and other retrospective forms of the nineteenth century universities also feed into the staging of uncanniness around universities. And even the plate-glass institutions, from the black towers of Essex to the Ziggurats and Escher-like walkways

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[8] In line with corporate culture some universities have moved towards large, cubicled, shared office space (see Kunz et al., 2012); I explore notions of academic space in Chapter 7.

[9] Terry Pratchett's global bestsellng novels about the 'Unseen University' (a play on Boyle's 'Invisible College') are a recognisible lampoon of an Oxbridge college. The Oxbridge myth is so strong in the public mind that the satirical elements of it are easily understood by readers, nationally and internationally (Pratchett, 2009).

of East Anglia, with their brutalist concrete and steel architecture, are haunted by the ghost of the disappointed high modernist hopes, what Mark Fisher calls 'nostalgia' for the 'spectres of lost futures'(Fisher, 2014, loc.479), and form poignant, discordant and oddly beautiful landscapes. Newer universities are a palimpsest of all the different eras and functions that have made them: lofty, gothic, red-brick Victorian working men's colleges, warrens of decaying 1970s pre-stressed concrete hopefulness, tatty portacabins and iconic city locations, next door to the Tower of London, Madame Tussauds or the Royal Observatory. All of them – those offering direct access to the enchanted places and those referring to them, or connecting more precariously, are spaces in which to seek a changed self, spaces to get lost in, spaces of transition.

Today these uncanny elements of the university are overlaid with a new and more sinister kind of haunting. That of neoliberalism, which works in new ways and takes new forms.

The time and space of the university is altered by 'business-ification' and by technoculture. A technologised work environment changes the space of the university; it is no longer just a geographic campus, increasingly it is everywhere. There is an attempt to accelerate university time making it less like academic time – self-organised and compartmentalised according to esoteric grids, unique calendars and ritual – and more like compressed commercial time (Showalter, 2005, p.9-10; Giroux, 2007, p.121-2). Degrees are fast-tracked and the busy-ness of universities compromises the ability to 'be still and think',[10] replacing it with 'login and communicate'. Mobile technology means that staff, as well as devices, are 'always on', compressing non-work time (Giroux, 2007, p.124). These changes in space and time, arising as attempts are made to make the university more like a company – a knowledge corporation – are in tension with, the nature of the organisation as it has evolved. They are grafted onto existing university culture and the mis-matched, hybridised result produces surreal and uncanny effects,[11] as Laurie Taylor highlights on a weekly basis in his *Times Higher Education* 'University of Poppleton' satire.

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[10] The motto of the University of Sussex.
[11] I once attended an academic staff development session which opened with the trainer asking us what zodiac sign we were. The stunned silence that fell was - certainly uncanny.

All of this affects the academic staff who work in our universities at a profound level and they, of course, are the subject of this thesis. This section historicises both our UK university structure and culture and changing *ideas* of the university; it thus provides context for following chapters, where I interrogate the way in which academic subjectivity is impacted by, produced within, shaped by and co-shapes, the Haunted University.

Chapter 3 – The ghost of universities past and the spirit of universities present

3.1 The discourse of privilege and elites

This discourse sees university education as training for an elite role in society and is in keeping with a feudal or semi-feudal social formation. Whilst the social, political and religious upheavals over the 600 years outlined below resulted in changes to the universities, the discourse of privilege has proved tenacious. With the move to capitalist forms of production, the sons of the rising capitalist class joined the aristocracy as the beneficiaries of the discourse, which was not meaningfully threatened until the 19th century.

3.1.1 Stage 1: Religious and elitist establishments, 12th century - 1800

Our current university system dates back to the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th century when the medieval institutions of Oxford and Cambridge originally provided ecclesiastical training for prospective church ministers. The institutions had a degree of autonomy and attempted to create a space for themselves between the church and state (Anderson, 2006, loc.91).

In medieval England the universities' student base comprised the sons of 'middling classes', that is to say, well-to-do farmers and yeomen; and in the 14th and 15th centuries their remit expanded to train lawyers and state administrators. It was the end of the 16th century when the class complexion of Oxbridge began to change as the sons[12] of the aristocracy and other landed classes started to be sent to the universities. They were seen as a way of preparing them for a life of governance or appropriately networked idleness and giving them a veneer of cultural refinement. During this period the vocational nature of the universities was eroded (apart from clerical training) in favour of a more general, liberal 'gentleman's education'. Landowners and priests sharing an education gave them a common frame of reference; thus society ensured social stability

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[12] Women were not admitted to university during this period. They were first allowed to attend designated colleges at Oxbridge from the late 19th century, but Oxford did not award degrees to women until 1920 and Cambridge until 1947 (University of London External System, 2013).

as the gentleman priest was the moral arbiter of the rural poor, and could encourage compliance with the semi-feudal social order (ibid., loc.448).

By the 1730s around 2.5% of the male age cohort was educated at university or at their legal equivalent, Inns of Court (Stone, 1975, p.57). After this, numbers declined and did not get back to the same kind of level until the 20th century.

The institutions were residential, fostering the idea of belonging to an elite community. College tutorials were central to the teaching method, and from the 16th century academic staff had a pastoral role in relation to students. Gradually the public school notion of 'character development' of students became more pervasive (Collini, 2012a, p.28). Academic staff of the Universities had always been ordained ministers and from the 15th century onwards the teaching of students – by priests – became a salaried activity. As the official state religion of England was changed by Henry VIII, so was the religion of the universities and from the Reformation onwards only Anglicans could work or study at Oxbridge until these rules were relaxed in the 19th century. Furthermore, it was not until the 19th century that it became acceptable for academic staff to be anything other than celibate[13] clerics (Anderson, 2006, loc.858).

The ancient Scottish universities, St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, set up in the 15th and 16th centuries, differed from Oxford and Cambridge in that they had a greater emphasis on the professions and were more meritocratic – and so sat a little less easily in the discourse of privilege. They were a model of which the later metropolitan university developments in England took account.

Oxbridge fee levels were exclusively high. Rothblatt describes tuition fees that were, even in the 19th century, equal to a third of the income of a middle-class London family (Rothblatt, 1997, p.352). There had always been a small number of scholarships for less well-off boys, and there was significant competition for these, although increasingly

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[13] The tradition of celibacy continued into the 20th century partly because living at college during term time was not easily compatible with married life. Dorothy L. Sayers' novel *Gaudy Night* paints an intriguing picture of a mid-1930s Oxford women's college, based on Somerville College which Sayers attended. Here staff reject procreation and relationships with men for a 'blue-stocking' life of scholarship – as social expectations demanded that a choice must be made (Sayers, 1936; Showalter, 2005).

they were hijacked by the exclusive public schools (Anderson, 2006, loc.199). Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* provides a painful account of a 19th-century working-class man's desperate and doomed attempts at 'accumulating [the] money and knowledge' necessary to gain access to an Oxford college (Hardy, 1895, loc.1235). Although Jude's main barrier to the hallowed halls of 'Christminster' is economic (as, indeed, was Hardy's (Hardy, 1928, p.28-35), critically he also lacks the cultural capital needed to know how to study (Hardy, 1895, loc.417) or even to find out what pathways into university might exist, as 'he made no inquiries into details of procedure. Picking up general notions from casual acquaintance' (ibid., loc.1234-5). Such issues remain pertinent today in debates about fair access to higher education.

The main criterion for entrance to Oxbridge, apart from the ability to pay the fees, was a grasp of the classics, which were taught intensively largely only at the public schools. Relationships between these schools and Oxbridge, often relationships between specific schools and colleges, which date from their founding, worked against any possibility of broadening access to the universities. For example, until 1865 only old Etonians were admitted to King's College, Cambridge (Anderson, 2006, loc.108) and whilst such formal restrictions may have been removed, the cultural and historical connections continue.

During the 19th century there was an influx of the sons of the new industrial and manufacturing bourgeoisie into these schools, which were the main gatekeepers of Oxbridge entry and thus into the universities. Although the two universities were significantly reformed in the 19th century due largely to the influence of the new capitalist class, the students continued to inhabit an aristocratic culture into which the sons of the bourgeoisie were largely assimilated rather than altering it (Anderson, 1995, pp. 31-41).

These institutions, by creating a shared culture for the British ruling class, have provided a common frame of reference for that class, whatever their background, which has contributed to social stability – or the maintenance of the socio-economic status quo, depending on your perspective. Because many of the literary elite have attended the ancient universities, the mythologising of Oxbridge culture by their graduates in memoirs, biography and novels (Carter, 1990) and also in film and television creates a

kind of circular self-perpetuating cultural hegemony[14]. Even an avowedly working-class writer like Val McDermid reminisces about college days spent toasting teacakes on an open fire whilst listening to Bach – a vision of Oxford life that wouldn't be out of place in an Evelyn Waugh novel (McDermid, 2013). The attractions and presumably the rewards of assimilation have not gone away.

The institutions themselves continue to have a central role in a discourse of elite education for a privileged class, although the formal rationale for Oxbridge participation moved in the 20th century to meritocratic ability rather than hereditary wealth or status. The role played by Oxford and Cambridge have changed surprisingly little; at the time of writing two thirds of the Cabinet are (mainly public-school educated) Oxbridge products (Burn-Murdoch, 2012).

But at the start of the 19th century, attempts to change the world of the university were afoot; the model of the university as a place where aristocratic young men were inducted into a liberal education by celibate clerics was about to alter – for good.

3.2   The discourse of progress and the public good

This discourse sees education as necessary to improve society. Emerging as a result of the industrial revolution, it views strata of the social order as not necessarily fixed by birth. It takes the view that it should be possible for individuals with appropriate ability to obtain some social mobility through education. This benefits not just the individuals and their families, according to this discourse, but also wider society and so is a desirable public good.

3.2.1   Stage 2: Modernist metropolitan developments, 1800-1945

Public debates about the nature and purpose of universities had been underway for some time but became more insistent in the 19th century, leading to Oxbridge reforms and the founding of new, metropolitan universities. Elements of these discussions continue to have resonance for current debates about higher education, as I will demonstrate.

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[14] See Carter's A*ncient cultures of conceit: British university fiction in the post-war years* for a detailed discussion of how novels set in Oxbridge colleges reinforce and celebrate a conservative notion of this world and its cultural centrality and dominance.

The main reasons for unrest about the existing higher education provision at the start of the 19th century were: that emerging new forms of (particularly scientific) knowledge began to challenge the orthodoxy of a traditional classical education; that the growth of professionalism created a need for expertise; that a secular or non-Anglican education was demanded; and that education as an aspect of class privilege began to appear inadequate for the rapid social and economic change of the time and incompatible with Victorian ideas about the virtues of meritocratic competition (Anderson, 2006, loc. 1177-2001).

It was for these reasons that a broad-based coalition of reformers – Dissenters, Jews, free-thinkers, Whigs, political radicals, Utilitarians and others – founded 'that godless college in Gower Street' (Hibbert et al., 2008, p.958), the University of London – later University College London (UCL). The Utilitarian voice was important in the national educational debates of the time; influenced by the work of Jeremy Bentham[15], this approach saw it as vital that universities 'served the general interest' and 'provided happiness for the greatest number' (Rothblatt, 1997, p.6). This was radical in that it presented a challenge to the traditional elitism of universities that served only the interest of the few. However, it also saw education as having a demonstrably practical value, viewing it as furnishing for 'empty mind spaces' (Rothblatt, 1997, p.363), an approach that brought it into conflict with humanistic free-thinkers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Matthew Arnold.

Established in 1828, the University of London was non-residential, something which alarmed critics who saw the institution as abandoning students to the temptations of the metropolis (Rothblatt, 1997, p.368). Practically, this meant that students could live at home rather than incurring residential fees thus lowering the cost of university education. Course fees, too, were charged at around a third of the cost of Oxbridge and so could be afforded by 'our middling rich classes' (Herneshaw, 1929), the children of

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[15] The myth that UCL was founded by Bentham has grown up partly because of the Henry Tonks UCL library mural depicting Bentham's participation in the planning of the building and partly because of Bentham's famous 'auto-icon' (his preserved skeleton, dressed in his clothes, topped with a waxwork head) which is displayed in the main building at UCL. Although 'Bentham played no direct part in the establishment of UCL, he still deserves to be considered as its spiritual father. Many of the founders … held him in high esteem, and their project embodied many of his ideas on education and society' (UCL, 1999 - 2014).

shopkeepers, clerks and small businessmen. The University was intended to be vocational in nature, offered part-time as well as full-time courses and used the teaching medium of large lectures to which female, as well as male, students were admitted (Rothblatt, 1997, p.352).

The concept of the new university was reviled from two contemporary standpoints. Establishment Anglican Tories deplored its secular and reforming nature, and moved quickly to establish an alternative, in 1829, in the shape of King's College London. But more radical voices such as, notably, Coleridge, saw it as commercial and mechanistic, a 'lecture bazaar'. Coleridge took the view, in *On the constitution of Church and State according to the idea of each* that the purpose of a university was to preserve the nation's cultural legacy and supplement it, providing historical continuum. He saw it as a cultural standard-bearer in a world distorted by commerce and industrialisation on one hand and philosophies such as utilitarianism on the other (Coleridge, 1829).

John Henry Newman's approach, expressed in his 1853 classic *The idea of the university defined and illustrated,* accords with Coleridge's earlier view. Newman says that the university 'aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind', and speaks warmly of the character-building nature of the institutions where a student develops 'a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them', and learns 'to see things as they are'. Newman was unenthusiastic about what he perceived as a 'parsimonious admeasurement of studies to some definite future object' which he saw as implicit in vocational education (Newman, 1853, loc.2550-86).

Later in the 19th century Matthew Arnold, in a similar vein, defends humanistic culture from 'philistines' and 'barbarians'(Arnold, 1869). The open discussion between Arnold and 'Darwin's bulldog' (Lyons, 1999), scientist Thomas Huxley during the 1860s - 1880s, about the purpose of higher education, inherits elements from the Benthamite/Coleridge divide. Huxley, in his Mason College[16] Founder's Day Address of 1880 finds it unsupportable that:

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[16] Mason College was a science college which later became the University of Birmingham.

the man who has learned Latin and Greek, however little, is educated;
while he who is versed in other branches of knowledge, however
deeply, is a more or less respectable specialist, not admissible into
cultured caste. The stamp of the educated man, the university degree,
is not for him.

(Huxley, 1880, p. 14)

Arnold responded, in his Rede lecture at Cambridge in 1882, with a defence of the
classics. He said that whilst we may well be descended from an ape, as Huxley believes,
this ape 'carried hidden in his nature, apparently, something destined to develop into a
necessity for humane letters ... our ancestor carried in his nature, also, a necessity for
Greek' (Arnold, 1882). This is not to say that their debate was actually about the
classics as such, but rather that the classics, in the above quotes, become a stand-in for
culture and the arts in general. Huxley and Arnold both expanded on their discussion in
Royal Academy speeches and other fora and substance of their debate, as it unfolded,
was widely reported and commented on in publications such as *The Times* and *The
World* (Roos, 1977).

The debate between the Arts and Science has never really gone away; in particular, it re-
emerges in the mid-20th century with the C. P. Snow/F. R. Leavis controversy and has
particularly re-emerged during the Massification period, as I will explore later. But this
debate is more complex and nuanced than it may seem on the surface. In the late 19th-
century context, Huxley argued for the value of scientific knowledge as an important
aspect of culture, whereas Arnold and was passionately against what he saw as
mechanistic vocational university education. It's common to see this revenant argument
as being only a debate between Arts and Science, but this is only partly true; both the
Arts and Science viewpoints encompass a range of perspectives. Importantly, I would
argue, the debate is affected by how Arts or Science are culturally positioned at any
given time. Arnold was championing an approach which saw 'bad' education as
brainwashing the masses (Arnold, 1869, loc.844) and good education as making 'an
intelligent being more intelligent' (ibid., loc.519). He rails against having faith in
technology – which he felt lacked a concern with the experience of humans – not
surprisingly, in a century where its application produced wealth for a few and misery for
many. Arnold takes the view that what is 'main and pre-eminent' in the Arts is 'the

noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it – motives eminently such as are called social' (Arnold, 1869, loc.524-5). Huxley (who was in private life a friend of Arnold), was one of the leading proponents of science and technology as intellectual disciplines in an era where scientists faced a battle with religious orthodoxy to get their ideas accepted. Furthermore scientists had to contend with traditionalist snobbery which belittled scientific knowledge as valid university study. The ditty:

> He gets a degree in making jam
> At Liverpool and Birmingham

was touted about at Oxford in the late 19th century, and *Punch*, *The Westminster Gazette* and *The Pall Mall Gazetteer* all ridiculed Birmingham's (as Mason College later became) courses in their pages, the latter denigrating the degrees as study of 'Tariff and Value' (University of Birmingham, 2013).

So the standpoints of Huxley and Arnold speak about a specific historical juncture as much as they speak about Science and Arts. I'll return to this debate as it re-emerges at later times with different meanings. Importantly, discourses about technology continue to go and in hand with discussions about what a university is or should be. In this respect, for much of the 20th century and after, I would argue that technology replaces religion in these public discourses about education.

Linked in with the pro-Science educational approach was the new perspective, brought to public attention at this time by MP and scientist Lyon Playfair[17], that university education should improve the nation's scientific know-how in order to make Britain internationally competitive (Anderson, 2006, loc.1190). This approach has been re-visited since this period, to the extent that in the early 21st century it has become naturalised for us, assuming the status of self-evident truth whose ideological nature is masked. But even if we accept the (dubious) premise that it is desirable for the country in which we live to be richer than other countries and even if we accept the (contestable) idea that this can be achieved by companies harnessing science and technology to that end, it is still unclear what the role of universities is supposed to be in this. Universities

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[17] Interestingly to us, at a time of critical international debates about military ethics, Playfair is mainly known for his advocacy of the use of chemical weaponry against Russia in the Crimean war – an approach that was vetoed at the time as unethical warfare.

can and do produce qualified science graduates and carry out, insofar as funding permits, science and technology research. What they can't do is influence the behaviour of companies – only government and industry[18] itself can do that. However, the viewpoint Playfair championed in the late 19th century has never disappeared and re-emerges with significant force in the 1980s, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 9, although our contemporary model is one which involves universities carrying out both research and teaching, until the mid to late 19th century most research in both Arts and Sciences in the UK was done outside universities; the Humboltian model, introduced from Germany at this time, united the idea of a unity of research and teaching in higher education, which continues to be the conceptual approach used in the UK (Collini, 2012a, p.23-5).

In the latter part of the 19th century, civic universities were founded in the northern industrial towns of England, created with local backing to teach more practical subjects. They, also, weren't residential, charged fees affordable to the middling classes and like London, admitted women as students. What we see in the 19th century, with industrialisation, is cities becoming much larger and much more important to Britain, economically and culturally (Rothblatt, 1997, pp. 267-8). Both London and the northern universities were created to meet the needs of the populace, the local economy and the socio-cultural fabric of the urban nexus.

Colleges such as the Mechanics Institutes were also founded in cities throughout the late 19th century and some of these began to offer external University of London degrees in the early 20th century, as did other local colleges; most of them eventually became subsumed into polytechnics or universities, along with institutions which offered teacher training, art and crafts development or local specific technical education, such as maritime or mining engineering (Kelly, 1971).

Mechanics Institutes were originally radical organisations founded for working-class men, but they soon transformed into politically orthodox organisations serving only the

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[18] The private sector itself initiates and funds a significant amount (currently 1.1% of the UK GDP) of science and technology research, for its own commercial ends, either seperately or in partnership with universities (UKRCs, 2014).

needs of the lower middle classes (Royle, 1971, p.305). Friedrich Engels, in *The condition of the working class in England in 1844,* argues that the Institutes became appropriated and neutralised by the bourgeoisie; under bourgeois control they taught only science that technocrats needed their industrial workers to know and equipped workers with the 'means of making inventions' to profit the capitalist. The education became 'tame, flabby, subservient to the ruling politics and religion' and as the Institutes became less relevant to workers they deserted them for more radical alternatives (Engels,1845, loc.3868-77). These radical alternatives, a kind of 'shadow university' exist, in a way, as a subversive 'other' to formal universities. Kelly traces a line of this kind of radical education back to the Dissenters of the Middle Ages (Kelly, 1970). This 'other' university irrupts in the 19th century with a range of formal and informal agencies such as working men's colleges, churches, extension courses, the co-operative movement, the original Mechanics Institutes and the Workers Education Association (see Harrison, 2013, pp. 249-99) and, as I'll discuss later, 20th- and 21st-century counter cultural initiatives. Such agencies and approaches represent an alternative narrative and concept of what constitutes university education.

Both the London universities and their northern counterparts, however, began to be influenced by 'Oxbridge drift' within decades of their establishment. That is to say, whilst institutions were founded to provide a very different type of education to Oxbridge, with every successive wave of new universities there is a 'drift' back to the Oxbridge model. Arts subjects began to be offered in institutions that were originally vocational and universities which started out as local and non-residential developed a national focus, built halls, and encouraged students to engage in university community. Some have seen this as an effect of Oxbridge-educated academics teaching at newer institutions and influencing the curriculum (Anderson, 2006, loc.1404) or have viewed the drift as being partly due to snobbery (Collini, 2012a, p.28). It is possible that the pull of Oxbridge's cultural hegemony, as I discussed earlier, is partly responsible for the changes. Whatever the cause, the Oxbridge drift phenomenon that started in the 19th century continued throughout the 20th century with every successive wave of new universities and shows no sign of abating.

The movement towards a national approach was driven at least partly by academic focus. As the professionalised role became inclusive of research in the 19th century so

the network of which individual academics were part stretches out nationally and internationally. Being part of a national and international scholarly network became and remains vital for academic staff. It enabled them to keep current with developments their subject area and to form effective research partnerships, but it gave them a loyalty to their discipline, rather than necessarily to their locale. So universities inevitably and necessarily become, at least in part, national and even international, organisations (Anderson, 2006, loc.1994-54).

Towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the second tranche of national universities and university colleges were established and embedded. They formed important landmarks in their locales and perhaps in an attempt to gain acceptance through linking with tradition, most of them employed a retrospective architecture in their buildings. Leeds used French Renaissance ornamentation; French gothic was the style at Nottingham; Newcastle used Elizabethan-style architecture; Manchester, muted gothic; and Liverpool decorated gothic, while Byzantine was used at Birmingham (Lowe, 1986, cited by Rothblatt, 1997, p.98). So despite their 'newness' of educational focus, from their inception the architecture references older institutions, cultures and forms of knowledge.

Universities, from their inception, were funded through fees and through a range of benefactory, civic and local authority arrangements, but in 1889 the general grant to English university colleges began, and by 1914 about half the funding for all UK universities (excepting Oxford and Cambridge) came from the State (Anderson, 2006, loc.1548). This development is something both Arnold and Coleridge had both, effectively, argued for earlier, as both thought State funding necessary to protect the nation's culture.

After the First World War the administration of the grant was taken over by the University Grants Committee (UGC), who had an exceedingly light touch when it came to inspecting the institutions it was funding, taking the view that 'the greatest service a university can render to the nation is to remain true to itself' (Shinn,1986, p.128). A perspective that must seem highly appealing to today's vice-chancellors.

Until the 20th century students were largely expected to fund themselves, although towards the latter part on the 19th century they were paying less than half the actual cost of their degrees in their fee payments (Searle, 2004, p.630). There were scholarships, locally or through private patronage, but they usually covered only part of the expense of full-time study. Throughout the first two decades of the 20th century a series of acts resulted in the setting up and growth of a State and Local Authority grant system. By the 1930s half the students at civic universities held some type of scholarship or grant (Kelly, 1981, p.182), and while the acquiring of scholarships was somewhat random and patchy throughout the UK, they did create some social mobility (Dyhouse, 2007). Two notable examples of this were former prime ministers Edward Heath and Harold Wilson, who were enabled to move from provincial grammar schools to Oxford in the 1930s by means of local county grants. This had an impact on ideas of meritocracy, with the notion of the poor but clever scholarship boy (or, less often, girl) beginning to emerge. This was popularised in the 1950s by Richard Hoggart's autobiographical account of his experience as a scholarship boy at Leeds in the 1930s (Hoggart, 1957), and gained ground with increased levels of social mobility through higher education in the 1960s.

So discourses about education, by the eve of the Second World War, had been impacted by modernist notions of education for the public good; higher education no longer took place exclusively in the cloisters of Oxford and Cambridge but became part of the fabric of the metropolitan world; and the metaphor of the 'ladder of opportunity' was popularly used to describe social mobility which benefits both the individual and a society that requires an increase in its educated members (Anderson,2006, loc.1453). Despite the founding of new universities participation rates at this point were still low, at about 2% of the male and female age cohort (Collini, 2012a, p.29).

3.2.2   Stage 3: Post-war welfare state growth, 1945-1979

When the electorate of post-war Britain swept Clement Attlee's Labour party, with its promise of a planned economy and welfare state growth, to power, part of this growth was to be in educational provision. The 1951 Conservative government opted to continue with the reforms Labour had begun; the 'baby boom' population growth of the 1940s and 1950s created a need for additional university places (even before the

Robbins reform of the grant system) and work began on these in the 1950s, with eight new institutions opening their doors to students in the early 1960s: Sussex, York, East Anglia, Essex, Lancaster, Kent, Warwick and Aston.[19]

These new universities were built from scratch as campus-based academic villages. Modernist in architectural design and equally radical in their course design, the pedagogic approaches were encoded into the build of the campuses – for example, they tended to have large numbers of small teaching rooms, reflecting an intention to use seminar based approaches to learning (Warwick, 2009). Some of this was inspired by the persistent pull of the Oxbridge model of residential communities and tutorial-based study; in fact, the first of the seven, Sussex, was nicknamed 'Balliol by the Sea' by the *Times* (Tapper and Palfreyman, 2010, p.61). But there was a radical re-working of this, what the early Sussex Vice-Chancellor, Asa Briggs, called a 're-drawing [of] the map of learning' – with a stress on interdisciplinary combinations of Arts and Sciences subjects (Smith, 2001). The defiantly modern concrete and glass buildings of these institutions, what Malcolm Bradbury describes as their 'fighting modern style' (1975), speak about their departure from the architectural nostalgia of 19th-century universities and is a visual reminder of their place within the modernist project. The academic and novelist A. S. Byatt describes them as '"shiny, white and new," because "in those days universities were intensely hopeful"' (Edemariam, 2004). The new universities, as icons of their time, benefitted from substantial publicity and gained a place in the public imagination. Bradbury speaks about their 'radical aroma, the sense of educational freshness that the colour supplements and professional journals found' (Bradbury,1975, p.46) in them, and David Lodge, who was a lecturer at Birmingham, as well as a novelist, speaks of a civic redbrick institution as 'having competed strenuously for fifty years with two universities chiefly valued for being old it was … rudely overtaken in popularity and prestige by a batch of universities chiefly valued for being new' (Lodge, 1975, p.14).

As well as these new universities, a number of colleges[20] were granted the Royal Charter which transformed them into universities in the 1960s, and 30 polytechnics

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[19] Keele University is sometimes grouped in here, although it actually started as a college in 1949 and gained university status in 1962.
[20] Namely Bath, Bradford, Brunel, City, Heriot-Watt, Keele, Loughborough, Salford, Stirling, Strathclyde, Surrey and Ulster.

were either created or re-configured out of existing colleges[21] (Dearlove, 1998, p.113). The polytechnics awarded degrees through a central body, and had a distinctly vocational academic focus.

Hand in hand with these developments came, in 1963, the committee report which has lent its name to this educational era, the Robbins Report. This declared that, in order that the UK shouldn't fall behind other countries, specifically the US and the USSR, higher education places 'should be available to all who were qualified for them by ability and attainment'. A national system of student grants was put in place so that this principle could be enacted in reality and by 1970 the participation rate had grown to 8.4%, with 236,000 students studying at universities and 204,000 at polytechnics (*Times Higher Education*, 2013a). Whilst the beneficiaries of university education were largely the sons and daughters of the middle classes, some working-class children made it to university and many more to polytechnic, with the support of the grant (Anderson, 2006, loc.2486).

In the decades after the war, there was an increasingly dominant view, in public discourse, that technology and scientific progress were the key to a successful, forward-looking future for the nation. This set itself up in opposition to what Harold Wilson described as 'an Edwardian Establishment mentality' which had not grasped that 'we are living in the jet age' (Jenkins, 1964). *The Guardian* of the day described the opposing viewpoints as 'an outdated Conservative Britain ruled from the grouse moors or a modern Socialist Britain, ruled with technical skill based on equality of opportunity'(Jenkins, 1964). Wilson himself encapsulates the perspective in his famous 'White Heat of Technology' election speech of 1963 when he says 'we are redefining and we are restating our socialism in terms of the scientific revolution' (Wilson,1963), folding in technological innovation with labour policies in opposition to a perceived entrenched Establishment anti-technocratism. Interestingly, elements of this approach are re-animated by Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph 20 years later, from a different political perspective and with different results. And, significantly, it was in this 'White Heat of Technology' period that the Science and Arts public debate re-erupted, with the exchange between C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis.

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[21] The term polytechnic had been used for some London institutions from the late 19th century, but this was on a much smaller local scale than the 1960s re-launching of the polytechnic.

In his 1959 Cambridge Rede lecture, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution,* Snow took the view that Science education had not enjoyed the prestige or funding of Arts education; with an echo of the 19th century Playfair approach, he saw Science education as needing to be promoted to ensure Britain's international competitiveness. There's an underlying implication here that education is carried out for economic reasons – to create prosperity for the nation[22] – rather than an Arnoldian approach of intellectually transforming the self and the society which one inhabits or Newman's idea of enriching the public mind. Snow's lecture was subsequently published and widely debated nationally and internationally (Collini, 2013a). The most significant response to it was Leavis' passionate counter-attack in his 1962 Richmond lecture at Downing College, Cambridge, published in *The Spectator*. Leavis saw Snow as a 'technologico-Benthamite' who regarded all aspects of human life and experience as measureable and manageable. Academics, Leavis said, are seen by Snow in an arid light, their role being drained of any motivating purpose (Collini, 2012b, loc.363), their world one of 'unrelieved and cultureless banality' (Leavis, 1962, loc.836). The vehemence of Leavis' response provoked a horrified response from commentators. The critic Lionel Trilling declared that 'there can be no two opinions about the tone in which Dr Leavis deals with Sir Charles. It is a bad tone, an impermissible tone' and Thomas Huxley's grandson, Aldous, described it as 'violent and ill-mannered (Collini, 2013a, loc.34-40). As Collini says, the 'two cultures controversy' became 'big news in the 1960s' to the extent that 'the phrase itself may seem to have entered the bloodstream of modern culture' (Collini, 2013a, loc.61). In 1964 Harold Wilson invited Snow to become Minister for Technology, so the controversy appears to have done no damage to Snow's profile, at least in governmental eyes.

The attempt to avoid two cultures was one of the reasons behind some of the progressive approaches to the curriculum that the new universities adopted. But the Open University (OU), which was planned in the 1960s, had an even more radical remit. It was specifically intended to provide for working-class and mature learners what the plate-glass universities had for the children of the middle classes – but at a distance. Its mission was 'to promote the educational well-being of the community

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[22] An implication that is also present in Robbins' justification of the grant on the grounds of international competition

generally' (OU, 2014a). It had an open admissions policy and, as the 'University of the Air', a dedicated BBC production unit. This reflected its radically innovative approach to the practical mechanisms for teaching and learning which relied on using various technologies for distance teaching.

Until this point[23] teaching and learning in UK universities had been largely conducted by varying combinations of teaching methods: large lectures; smaller group discussions in seminars; lab sessions and other forms of practical small group teaching; and much smaller, sometimes one-to-one, tutorials. The emphasis of these varied depending on the institution but face-to-face, real-time learning mechanisms were the norm. The OU re-thought this concept, developing approaches that focused on leveraging technologies to free education from temporal and geographic constraints. Lectures were broadcast on BBC TV and radio. Science students were provided with home experimentation kits. Audio and later video tapes were pressed into the service of education. It was Wilson's white heat of technology applied to education and wedded to a social mission. The legacy of this is significant; today, with over a quarter of a million students, most of whom are mature learners, the OU has become the largest university in the UK (OU, 2014b). Moreover its focus on the mechanisms, technologies and economies of scale of education were to have significance for the whole of HE once the internet became widely accessible. The new OU model created two kinds of academic role. One is the role played by full time 'lecturing' staff, based at the OU head office, the Milton Keynes 'campus'. These academics designed courses, wrote course materials (and, very occasionally, recorded lectures) and carried out research. Throughout Britain a network of part-time OU academics fulfilled the role of associate lecturer, leading fortnightly group tutorials and giving academic and pastoral support to students (Tait, 2003; OU, 2014c).

The post-war expansion of education may seem, with historical hindsight, to be an important success story in many ways, but at the time it was not without its detractors. Iain McCloud, later Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, famously called the idea of the OU 'a load of blithering nonsense' in 1969 and its grant was cut severely when

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[23] The University of London had a distance learning 'External System' from 1858 but at that time it mainly provided a curriculum and examinations, rather than distance teaching as such. Distance learning is usually dated from 1844 when Isaac Pitman introduced his first postal correspondence course, but the OU's project was on a different scale (Tait, 2003).

the Conservatives came to power in 1970 (OU, 2014d). The whole project of broadening access to education came under criticism from the Right; five educational 'Black Papers', pamphlets named to echo Government white papers, published between 1969 and 1977 by Brian Cox and Anthony Dyson, the editors of the *Critical Quarterly,* gave voice to such criticisms. The papers attempted to influence government policy and as such were a rallying point for Conservative opposition to educational changes. They created significant debate – for example, the Secretary of State for Education Edward Short spoke out against the first papers at the 1969 National Union of Teachers conference ('The Blackest Day', 2005) which led to the third paper, *Goodbye Mr Short*, being named after him. The authors of the *Black Paper* essays included Conservative MPs, academics and authors, the most prominent being Kingsley Amis who contributed to three of the papers. Amis' view that universities were 'already taking almost everyone who can read and write' (Anderson, 2006, loc.2620) and that expansion was resulting in a lowering of standards – 'more has meant worse' (Linden, 2011) – was a common criticism of the changes (Radical Education Forum, 2012; Linden 2011; Anderson, 2006).

Dyson also co-opts Matthew Arnold onto to the Conservative side of the debate in a 1969 *Critical Quarterly* editorial 'Culture and Anarchy: 1869;1969'. He asserts that 'if Arnold were to return in 1969 … he would be horrified to discover anarchy subverting the temple of culture itself' and asks 'what would he make of the Jacobinism rampant in our educational theory, or of the spectacle of universities becoming the new home of the mob?' (Dyson, 1969, p.3).

The counter-cultural student protest movements to which Dyson refers represented a different kind of detraction from the new educational order. The educational 'radical utopianism' of the movements (Field, 2001, p.4) drew on ideas which saw formal education as repressive and controlling, as argued by Illich in the classic (anti-) educational text, *De-schooling Society* (1971). A. S. Byatt's fictional new University of North Yorkshire also has a shadow 'Anti-University,' which declares 'Syllabus is oppression … Teaching is exploitation … You need not be led by the nose' (2002, p.79). Even Lodge's more sedate students at redbrick Rummidge University stage a sit-in where they discuss 'What is the role of the University … What is the social justification of university education?' (1975, p.163). This irruption of alternative

approaches to education, was, as Field observes, 'the educational expression of radical social movements aiming at transforming the wider structures of capitalism' and it is also an intellectual descendent, albeit much altered, of the 19th-century working-class self-education discussed earlier – the 'other' university. Academic staff are inevitably implicated in this, too. Bradbury's eponymous *History Man,* Sociology Lecturer Howard Kirk, moves from the position of saying, cheerfully, of the new University of Watermouth, 'I think this is a place I can work with,' to, quite as cheerfully, 'I think this is place I can work against' in the space of a year (1975, pp. 48-9). The two positions are not mutually exclusive for a radical academic. Levidow points out that although universities represent the needs of the state and labour markets, 'often spaces are created for alternative pedagogies and critical citizenship' (2002, p.227). Mindful of the contradictions inherent in encouraging freedom of thought within what Althusser (1970) would describe as an agency of the ideological state apparatus, Terry Eagleton wryly points out that the only logical role for radical academics of this era was 'to have sat at the back of their own classes and barracked' (2001, p.20).[24]

The contradictions of engagement with counter-culture apart, the role of academic staff engaged with the new projects was one that combined traditional academic agency, including freedom to carry out research, with a mission to shape radical educational futures. The UGC, maintaining their light touch, gave the design of the approaches and curricula of the new institutions over to academics, who were, to a great extent, creators and owners of this brave new world of education (Anderson, 2006, loc.2472).

3.3   The discourse of commodification and private advantage

In this approach the rationale for higher education moves from the public to the private sphere, with the emphasis on the personal advantage that can be obtained for the individual by educating themselves. Education comes to be seen less as a process by which one changes or develops one's own thinking and more as a commodity that can be bought, like any other commodity available in a capitalist economy. Along with this, the role of the academic changes. Alan Bennett's play The History Boys sums this up

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[24] This political radicalism within universities was of course international at this point in history. It has been pointed to as part of the post-war growth in the internationalisation of HE; in fact, this was the second wave of internationalistion, the first being beween the medieval period and the end of the 17th century (Knight and de Wit, 1995).

neatly. It contrasts the teacher, Hector, for whom knowledge itself has intrinsic importance, with the way in which the school is commodifying learning, because of the pressure of league tables. The latter is exemplified by the approach of the new teacher, Irwin, who sees knowledge acquisition as merely a means to an end (Bennett, 2004).

3.3.1 Stage 4: Massification and marketisation 1979-1997

Student numbers increased year on year from the early 1960s with the result that by the 1970s the rising cost of higher education began to be an issue for the government. How a society funds higher education when planned expansion has succeeded in creating a mass demand for university places is a complex problem, and a range of approaches have been taken to this in other countries. In the UK the Conservative government which came to power in 1979, led by Margaret Thatcher, had a simple, doctrinaire answer. It attacked universities as it attacked all the other post-war welfare state reforms; in 1981 university funding was reduced by 11% overall (Collini, 2012a, p.33). And this was just the beginning. In total, between 1977 and 1997 there was an average funding reduction of 40% per student (Anderson, 2006, loc.3015). Along with the withdrawal of funds to the sector came attempts at culture change fuelled – or justified – by overarching criticisms about what universities were doing. Or not doing.

First of all came Education Minister Keith Joseph's re-animation of the Arts–Science debate. American historian Martin Weiner was influential in Conservative party thinking, particularly with Thatcher and Joseph. In his book *English culture and the decline of the industrial spirit, 1850-1980*[25], Weiner attacks the British ruling class for historically and persistently valorising the culture of the country house and a classical public school education over entrepreneurial, commercial and industrial middle-class 'Victorian' values – an approach which was seen as 'trickling down' to other sections of society. Although Weiner barely mentions universities, his viewpoint became folded into a strand of Thatcherite thinking about higher education, which saw it as a bastion of gentlemanly, anti-technocratic high culture. This may have some valid links back to the way in which the aristocratic culture of Oxbridge tended to incorporate the sons of manufacturers in the 19th century but it was at odds with the fact that student enrolments

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[25] Keith Joseph is purported to have given a copy of this book to every cabinet minister and advised all the civil servants in his department to read it (*The Economist*, 2010).

were significantly greater in Science in the early 1980s than they were in Humanities and Social Science. The rhetoric that universities were failing the country because technological progress and entrepreneurial spark were being obstructed by an overly refined cultural agenda was not a new one. It has echoes of 19th-century Benthamite educational approaches: William Waldegrave, Thatcher's Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, declared that 'a strong utilitarian wind is blowing through HE … This is a chill wind for some of the less well-founded liberal arts and social studies departments' (Waldegrave, 1982). The rhetoric also harks back to elements of C. P. Snow's perspective and continues to have resonance today.

The neoliberal strategy for dealing with real or imagined public sector shortcomings was (and continues to be, albeit with a greater degree of subtlety) to privatise. The gas, electricity, water, telecommunications, coal and steel industries were all taken out of public ownership during the Thatcher administration. The Conservative party had shown enthusiasm for the private University of Buckingham which was opened by Margaret Thatcher in 1976, but directly privatising higher education would have been a risky strategy to take with voters. The approach that was taken, then, was to reduce funding, massify, introduce lower-cost models and competition, thus gradually creating conditions for privatisation.[26] The extension of degree-granting powers and university status to polytechnics by the *1992 Further and Higher Education Act* was an aspect of this. Polytechnics had previously been administered by Local Authorities and this move also took educational power out of Local Authority hands as part of the Conservative drive to centralisation. The UGC was abolished and all universities, old and new, were now overseen by the Higher Education Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales (HEFCE, SHEFC and HEFCW, respectively). Academic tenure had already been eliminated in 1988 and another significant consequence of the 1992 Act was to muddy the terms and conditions of service for academic staff (because former polytechnic staff lecturers and university lecturers were on different kinds of contracts) gradually driving these down over the ensuing years (Court, 1997).

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[26] Elements of this approach were taken in the long, slow privatisation of the Royal Mail and a similiar approach is being used gradually to take the NHS out of public ownership. Or as an article in the *UNESCO Courier* in 2000 put it 'Along with healthcare, education is the last fortress to be stormed. A broad market-oriented reform of the public service of education is underway' (Levidow, 2002, p.227).

Audit culture seems so much an integral part of university life today that it is surprising to remember that it only really dates from the mid-1980s. With the 1981 cuts, the UGC began to play a more interventionist role and when the Jarratt Committee, led by an industrialist, was set up to look into university efficiency in 1985 it recommended significant change (Tight, 2009, p.137). Chiefly, it proposed a move away from self-governing communities of scholars to top-down management structures where 'universities were corporate organisations' and 'academic involvement in governance' was a barrier to corporate decision-making (Dearlove, 1998, p.115). The paper, which was long on business rhetoric and short on real understanding of the nature of academic work (Scott, 1986; Anderson, 2006, loc. 3042), precipitated a change of culture in universities. It threatened that 'universities need to show that they are making the appropriate adjustments to their outlook and priorities … it is only if they provide these assurances that the universities can expect to receive support on the scale required' (Jarratt, 1985, p.31). Coupled with the newly interventionist UGC (whose powers the report strengthened),[27] this kind of financial and performance compliance could be enforced (Ryan, 1998). It also marks the beginning of commercial discourse being more widely used in and about universities, in a way that quickly became so naturalised and dominant that by 2000 they provided dark material for Stefan Collini's satirical *HiEdBiz* pieces on BBC Radio 3 in February and March of that year (reproduced 2012a, pp.132-46).

In 1985 the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was introduced by the UGC. It was a vastly administratively complex mechanism that sought to 'measure' amounts of research carried out by individuals and departments and allocate funding accordingly. It encouraged competition between departments in universities and affected the nature and type of research that was consequently carried out, as research needed to be appropriately 'reportable' in order to be fundable.[28] It also fostered the idea within the academic community that teaching and research are discrete activities.

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[27]See particularly 5,2 (d) of the report recommendations: 'within the next twelve months, the UGC should agree with each university a programme for implementing the recommendations in this Report … and should take progress into account when allocating grants' (Jarratt, 1985, p.35).

[28] See Fuller (2006) p.152 for a discussion of how 'adaptive preference formation' means that researchers come to prefer the kind of research that is more easily funded, thus ultimately distorting the landscape of knowledge – i.e. it affects which knowledge gets created, and which doesn't. Giroux (2007) p.113 makes a similar point about reliance on private sector funding for research and the resulting effect on knowledge.

After both the 1991 *Higher Education: A New Framework* White Paper and the *1992 Further and Higher Education Act* letters of guidance from the Secretary of State for Education to the Funding Councils made it clear that resource allocation for research would increase in its selectivity via the next RAE, that undergraduate numbers would increase, and that there would be quality audit of institutions and of quality assessment of teaching (Haywood et al., 1998, p.8).

> These developments signalled the Government's intention to embark upon a process of rapid expansion of the UK higher education sector. This expansion was to take place against a declining unit of resource and within a culture of public accountability for quality.
>
> (Haywood et al., 1998, p.8)

The 1991 White Paper and the 1992 Act also paved the way for the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to be created in 1993 (HESA, 2013a). This new body was to collect and disseminate huge, complex amounts of data from universities about students, staff and finance. One result of this was that large and complex data collection activities had now to be carried out by university staff, both academic and administrative, on a routine basis. Another was that as a result of the HESA data availability, various companies began to compile league tables of comparative university rankings.

The Labour government that came to power in 1997 continued the expansion of the sector, albeit for ostensibly different motives. It mobilised a rhetoric which combined two factors. The first was the nationalistic approach that emphasised Britain's need to compete with other countries in its percentage of graduates, an approach which has echoes of earlier concerns about Britain's international position. Here it was more heavily and frequently stressed and Tony Blair's government, making reference to a globalisation agenda[29] and combining this with a target of 50% cohort participation in HE by 2010. 'An ambitious goal – because we are ambitious for Britain,' as Blair said in his famous 'education, education, education,' 2001 election speech (*The Guardian*, 2001). Implied in this 50% target is the increased participation of working-class learners

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[29] See Clegg et al. (2003) for a critique of the New Labour globalisation agenda in relation to higher education.

in higher education – 'widening access' as it came to be known. This approach might seem to echo the radical post-war approach to the sector – except that the liberal rhetoric wasn't matched by any increase in overall funding for universities. Financial resources continued to be allocated on a *per capita* basis (funding 'follows the student', as the jargon of the time has it) adding financial pressure to the political injunction to expand at a phenomenal rate (Deem, 2004, p.109). This was felt particularly at the new 'post-92' universities, which had to provide additional intensive support for students who entered the system with low A-level grades.

The net effect of these changes on student numbers, added to the effect of the post-war project and 1980s expansion, is staggering. In 1961 there were just over 100,000 university students and in 2013 there were 2.25 million, an increase of something in the region of 2000% in just over 50 years (Bolton, 2012; HESA , 2013b).

It was in 1997 that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was formed to audit university teaching (HEFCE, 2013a). It's included in this section rather than the later 'personalisation' section partly because it was planned under the pre-1997 Conservative administration and partly because it fits more meaningfully into the massification period. Its Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) used definitions of quality based on a Fordist reduction of education to a set of skills, competencies and measurable outcomes rather than on the idea of learning in a spirit of enquiry that may produce unexpected findings – what Power calls 'shallow rituals of verification at the expense of other forms of organisational intelligence' (Power, 1997, p.123). Compliance with the TQA affected the way courses were designed as well as the way they were taught. The reductionist nature of the TQA was not only demeaning and demoralising for academic staff but it encouraged a submissive conformity to a set of externally imposed rules and discouraged more creative approaches to teaching and learning. Hodson and Thomas observe, in the few years after the creation of the Agency, that the tension between the top-down externally generated QAA compliance and more traditionally pro-active academic culture 'is leading to the alienation or at least the passive submission of staff' (2003, p.381). It now required significant resourcefulness and imagination on the part of academic staff to design courses that conformed to TQA guidelines but enabled student and teacher to pursue academically rigorous and fruitful enquiries. Commentators have noted 'a gulf between policy as laid down by a small group of senior managers

responding to external pressures and actual practice as experienced within academic departments' (Hodson and Thomas, 2003, p.381) leading to 'an institutional culture that is in danger of alienating academic staff to the detriment of the system as a whole'(ibid., p.375). The political effect of audit, as Ryan (1998) argues, is that whilst 'appearing to secure the ends of justice and economy' it actually reconstructs 'institutions away from collegiality towards … upward accountability' (p.20). The TQA regulations also meant that large numbers of administrators had to be appointed to deal with the amount of paperwork it generated and that managerial roles had to be created to police academic staff in their course design, teaching and assessment of students.

Whilst there had been considerable pressure under successive Conservative governments for universities to move closer to commerce, both in terms of research activity and by making the curriculum more 'vocational'[30] there had been little in the way of funding to encourage such a shift. The Blair administration introduced a 'carrot' approach, offering financial incentives for universities to participate in what were increasingly called 'third stream' business engagement activities. This began with the *Higher Education Reach Out to Business and Community* initiative in 1998, which awarded £62 million in funding for the 2000-03 period, to the more recent *Higher Education Innovation Fund* (HEIF) support. This awarded £238 million for the 2006-08 period and at the time of writing was still active (HEFCE, 2013b).

Hand in hand with third-stream research came the widespread application of the political concept of 'employability'. Boltanski and Chiapello define this as 'the personal capital that everyone must manage' (2005, p.93) and go on to dissect how employment becomes, within what Bauman would call the 'fluidity' of late modernism (2010), not an effect of labour demand, but a matter of personal 'employability' which individuals must address in order to find work. [31] The roots of this date back to the 1980s (Chertkovskaya, 2013) although it is under the later New Labour government that the idea became embedded and naturalised. Universities became gradually co-opted into the concept of grafting employment-related skills onto degree-level study, partly through the intervention of the QAA. By 2002, Levidow observes that 'Higher Education has

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[30] The 1987 White Paper *Higher education meeting the challenge* saw turning out appropriately skilled graduates for UK industry as the central role of universities (Lockett et al., 2013)

[31] See also Chertkovskaya (2013) for a discussion of how the concept of employability has been 'naturalised' among university students.

become … synonymous with training for employability' (p.228). Increasingly this also meant educating students to be more 'enterprising', or as the QAA website puts it, developing ways in which'students can be encouraged to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, and related skills' (QAA, 2013).

All of these interventions have been attempts, whether stated or implicit, to change the culture of universities, as commentators such as Collini (2012a), Anderson (2006), Ryan (1998) and Scott (1997) have observed. Some of this is directly financial and is about encouraging academics to find private-sector sources of research funding. But much of it is not aimed at funding *per se*; rather it is about the injection of neoliberal ideology into the heart of university work and life. Stefan Collini and Peter Scott, among others, continue to dissect the rapid twists and turns of this ideological battle for 'ownership' of the university landscape in their ongoing *London Review of Books* and *Guardian* commentaries (see, for example, Collini's 2010 analyses of the *Browne Review*) and the 2011 HE White Paper (Collini, 2011) and Scott's monthly *Guardian Education* column). What's at stake is a struggle for the soul of what university research and education actually 'is', or should be.

During the 'massification' years the overall picture of employment in Britain has changed. Fewer people are employed in manufacturing and more in what has come to be known as the 'knowledge economy', a term popularised by Drucker[32] (1969, p.247). His concept of the knowledge worker moved into widespread use during and after the massification decades (it's one of the underpinning concepts in Blunkett's 2000 Greenwich speech, for example). The idea of the academic knowledge worker in relation to a technocultural landscape is particularly pertinent and I will be exploring this in later chapters. For now, it important to say that the role of the academic has always been one of knowledge worker who creates (and as Fuller puts it, creatively destroys (2009, loc.592)) knowledge capital. In the 1980s and 1990s, universities became, then, a strange, alienating combination of knowledge economy activities married with traditional academic activities and top-down management approaches and audit regimes injected into existing practices of academic self-regulation. This produces

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[32] Drucker attributes the term to F. W. Taylor, the father of 'scientific management' principles.

a shifting, contradictory and confusing workplace culture for academic staff, affecting the underlying sense of academic identity, as well as undermining the professional role.

An important change during the massification years has been the increased use of technology in universities. This is accompanied by an increase in the use of the discourse of technology, which goes hand in hand with the discourse of business as part of the 'modernisation' of the academy – the 'technologisation of discourse' (Fairclough, 1992, p.141). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, universities had a central involvement in the original creation of the internet; and, like Frankenstein's invention, the universities' creation has returned in unexpected - and not always wholly welcome - ways.

The technologies widely in use in universities are general information and communication technologies and specific software for teaching, learning and research. From around the late 1980s to the early 1990s these gradually became the norm in all aspects of university life. The Joint academic network (Janet), which provided the physical network for information and communication technologies (ICTs) was established in 1984 and became available to UK universities over the next few years; it was later upgraded to SuperJanet (Janet, 2014). This meant universities had relatively early and robust internet access, needed for email and other communication technologies, web access and specific research purposes, such as shared databases and number-crunching tools; it is the Janet group which also established and maintain the ac.uk domain naming system (Reid, 2007).[33] So Janet network access provided the underlying technical foundation for the technologisation of universities.

From the late 1980s or early 1990s personal computers started to become the norm in academic and administrative offices; computer rooms, once used only by computer science students, from this point, begin to be built for general student use.[34] From this period all features of the day-to-day administration of universities, from booking rooms to logging, manipulating and retrieving all student data have been carried out using vast, university-wide database systems (Selwyn, 2007, pp.87-8). This level of data collection has been demanded by the imposition of the audit culture I discussed earlier.

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[33] This group was later folded into the Jisc, whose role I discuss in Chapter 7.
[34] More recently these have become superseded by 'bring your own device' approaches, see Curtis, 2012.

The adoption of Janet meant that email became used for much of the everyday internal communication between university staff and between staff and students. The fabric and space of teaching and learning began to alter in this period. Lecture notes began to be generated on computer and *PowerPoint* slides replaced transparencies as the norm for visual aids in lectures. Virtual learning environments (VLEs) such as *Blackboard* and *WebCT* began to be used, on an increasingly routine basis; teaching resources – such as the newly computerised lecture notes and slides – were often made available to students (Selwyn, 2007, p.88-9). This economy still exists alongside the use of social media and other 'personalised' technologies which have begun to be used in the *personalisation and privatisation* stage, as I will touch on in later in this chapter.

This use of technologies broadly matches general societal use of ICTs. In universities, as in many workplaces, technologies begin to get pressed into the service of the neoliberal project, with managers assuming the scales of economy in the use of online teaching and learning may mean that fewer teachers are needed (Selwyn, 2007, p. 87). Giroux discusses how this idea has, more recently, been made flesh in an example of a private college in the US context, although he does point out that it's only 'one possibility' of the future use of technologies (Giroux, 2007, pp.118-20).

The rise of technology has always been firmly linked in with the modernist project. Assisted, ironically, by the pervasive use of technologies[35] during the massification stage, what happens ideologically here is that the rational modernist project of earlier stages is seen as threatened. The grand narratives of high modernism are called into question and universities can no longer be easily justified by a call to higher cultural aims or to scientific truth, as they could earlier in the century, because this has no clear or easy space in public discourse. In late modernity, a space of meaning becomes held open which the next phase, the discourse of *privatisation and commodification*, moves in to fill.

For academic staff the massification stage is an era of phenomenal change, whatever the nature of the institution in which they work. Increased student numbers result in

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[35] I discuss at some length in later chapters the relationship between technoculture and late modernity.

significantly changed student/staff ratios (SSRs) at most institutions, averaging out at published changes of 8.5:1 in 1972 to 17:1 by 2010 (Court, 2012, pp.2-3) [36]. The increase in workload created by this growth in student numbers added to the burden implied by the audit of teaching and research all lead to a significantly increased amount of everyday work and a much lower degree of personal autonomy. It is a very different overall picture of academic life to the decades after the war.

3.3.2   Stage 5: Privatisation and personalisation, 1997-present

The *discourse of commodification and private advantage* continues into the next stage, which starts in the last years of the 20th century with the Dearing Report, *Higher Education and the Learning Society* (Dearing, 1997). The massification of higher education opened the door for both economic and personal privatisation, as successive moves by government established and then gradually increased the amount of financial contributions made by students.

The 1997 Dearing report was the largest review of higher education since Robbins, and resulted in tuition fees of £1000 being charged to students for the first time since the Robbins era reforms. In addition, the small existing maintenance grants were transformed into student loans.

The *2004 Higher Education Act* then tripled the fees charged to students, putting them up to £3000 per year for most institutions, rising to £3375 by 2011/12 (Brown and Carasso, 2013, loc.317) Most recently, the 2010 Browne review, *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, provided the new coalition government with the rationale which underpinned the almost complete withdrawal from universities of the block grant for undergraduate teaching. In 2010 the Coalition announced that £3 billion would be cut from the block grant by 2014/15 and that most undergraduate teaching would be unfunded, with some monies reserved for 'strategically important and vulnerable subjects' such as laboratory sciences and mathematics. From 2012 universities have

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[36] The main thrust of Court's argument is that although individual institutional SSRs are widely reported as benchmarks, the formula used to calculate them makes them very inaccurate. Indeed, as SSRs are included in league tables, universities are given every reason to make them appear as attractive as possible, within the shaky boundaries permitted by the HESA formula.

been funded, year on year, partly by student contributions of up to £9000 per year, via the publicly funded Student Loans Company (McGettigan, 2013, loc.184).

This sudden acceleration in the project of marketisation has a number of profound and transformational consequences, which I will now go on to explore. They are: firstly, the impact on/for students; secondly, the enabling of private-sector providers; and thirdly, the effect on the identity of universities and their staff.

Before I look at these in more detail it's important to note that although I am mainly discussing the changes in the funding of teaching at this point (the implications of research funding changes being discussed in detail in Chapter 9), during this period there were critical changes to research funding, both to the Research Councils and the Funding Councils. Government funding was reduced in real terms, in a direct way, but also cut indirectly, through the use of the Full Economic Costing (FEC) model which is an application of Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC)[37] metrics. Science and Technology research continues to receive around ten times the state funding allocated to Arts and Humanities; in addition, the small amount (£312 million in 2008/9) of UK private-sector funding which is available to universities is largely in the sciences (BIS, 2010, p.17; RIN, 2010, p.3). From 2010 the UK government made it clear that funding would only be available for Arts research that was 'applied', worked with science and technology researchers and showed evidence of 'economic impact' (BIS, 2010, p.22). It listed the six areas of Arts and Humanities funding as:

- communities and big society;
- civic values and active citizenship, including ethics in public life;
- creative and digital economy;
- cultural heritage;
- language-based disciplines;
- interdisciplinary collaborations with a range of STEM subjects.

(BIS, 2010, p.22)

What this constitutes, effectively, is an attempt to re-engineer arts and humanities researchers, to make them more 'like' scientists. Or like the BIS idea of scientists.

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[37] Put crudely, TRAC and FEC are part of an enormous data-gathering exercise which attempts to separate the way that academic teaching-time and research-time are funded. The consequence of this is that the Research Councils have had to increase the percentage contribution they provide of the costs of any project they fund; in effect, this means that they can fund fewer projects (RIN, 2010; Gilbert, 2008).

3.3.2.1   Students in the age of personalisation and privatisation

Student 'choices will shape the landscape of higher education,' predicted the former CEO of BP, John Browne, in the 2010 review of higher education (Browne, 2010, p.4). In 2013 Sir Michael Barber tells us that 'the student consumer is king' in his report *An avalanche is coming: higher education and the revolution ahead'*, to which I referred at the opening of this section (p.33). Barber was formerly education advisor to Tony Blair – New Labour's introduction of audit culture and targets in schools was his brainchild – and he was a committee member for both the Dearing and Browne reviews (Wilby, 2011). Like Lord Browne he advises the public sector whilst pursuing private sector interests – in Barber's case, as chief education advisor to the Pearson Group.[38]

I mention the biographical provenance of the above quotes to be clear about the drivers acting on such viewpoints. It's all about marketisation. Sentiments such as those behind these quotes are now sweeping through the higher education sector and students, who from 2012 have been paying up to £9000 a year in fees, are encouraged by such approaches to see themselves as consumers. In fact universities are still largely being funded by the public purse, partly by the £2 billion a year that hasn't yet been cut from the grant, partly by research grants, partly by the legacy capital assets both in estate[39] and in human capital and partly from the Student Loan Company, from which 85% of students receive funding (McGettigan 2013, loc.783) and which is underwritten by the state (Brown and Carasso, 2013; Collini, 2013b, p.12-14). As Collini says, 'there is no genuine market here' (ibid., p.12).

Students are encouraged to see themselves as consumers, but they are not, as there is no market. They pay back their loans gradually, over decades, through the payroll system, once they are in work and earning more than £21,000. If they pay them back at all. By April 2014 the default rate had reached 45%, very near the 48.6% 'threshold at which … the government will lose more money than it would have saved by keeping the old £3000 tuition fee system' (Mason and Malik, 2014). So what has changed from a student's perspective is that they will now, effectively, pay a graduate tax. A move from

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[38] Concerns have been raised about the ethics of the significant influence that Pearson, the world's largest education multi-national, is having on public education policy (Mansell, 2012).

[39] As estate assets depreciate and need to be renewed this may have implications for fees.

elite to mass higher education has a cost which has to be financed somehow and this would have been one strategy. It could have been effected without withdrawing funding from universities, to give to the Student Loan Company, who give it to students who then give it to universities. But it wasn't.

Because the (largely) public monies used to pay tuition fees travel through this circuit, they are perceived by students, their families, and indeed within public discourse as private monies – a 'loan', like a bank loan. And, crucially, once received they *become* the graduate's private, personal debt to the Student Loan Company and they may, in future, be sold off to private finance companies[40] (Collini, 2013b, pp.11-14). Like Poe's purloined letter (which I discuss later in this thesis) as the fees travel around the circuit, they transform meaning, changing the relationship and the identity of the actors involved; they make students into debtors and service purchasers; universities into service providers; and the state into something that looks like a loan shark.[41] Couching public finance in terms which discursively transform it into private finance – and then transforming it in actuality – is an ideological conjuring trick, carried out in a way that makes it appear that universities 'are malls and students are consumers' (Giroux, 2013a). And this, as Collini argues, mobilises the rhetoric of free choice for student customers in a higher education market as a kind of figleaf for what's actually happening. Which is, as McGettigan points out, the deliberate destabilising of universities 'prior to the entrance and expansion of the alternative providers' (McGettigan, 2013, loc.1762).

In tandem with the increase in what appears to be direct charging of fees to students, the National Student Survey (NSS) has gathered data about student views of their education since 2005, which contributes significantly to university league tables. This has fed into institutional obsessions with 'the student experience' as institutions attempt to improve their widely reported NSS ratings. The awareness by staff that final year students' grading of their course, department and institution are going to be publicly available inevitably affects student–staff interaction and functions as yet another form of audit.

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[40] Some of the student loanbook has already been sold off; £890m of pre-1998 student loans was sold to a debt management consortium in 2013 (BBC, 2013).
[41] As Collini points out, the student contracts with the loan company permit the company to change its terms at a future date (2013b, p.13).

As staff at the University of the Arts rather poignantly say of the NSS: 'it haunts us' (Sabri and Waring, 2011).

So in a world where students appear to be paying a significant part of the cost of their courses directly and where their feelings about their education are annually harvested, the concept of degree-level education shifts within public discourse. It moves from being part of the modernist notion of creating an educated populace as part of a re-shaping of the world for the collective good, to being increasingly viewed as wholly private concern, undertaken for personal advantage. It's telling that government responsibility for universities was moved into the new Business, Innovation and Skills department in this period.[42] Dearing began to bridge the gap between the Thatcher and Blair years with a rhetoric that spoke about both 'individual benefit' obtained by educating oneself for the 'knowledge economy', and education as a form of 'personal development' for 'lifelong learners'. The vocabulary shifts a gear into the newspeak of new-age capitalism, in line with Giddens' Third Way ideas of self-responsiblisation – in this case, the reflexive self-identity of the learner (Giddens, 1991, 121-132).

Sixteen years on, what remains of Dearing's idea of lifelong learning is a changed landscape of employment where job-roles disappear and employees are obliged to re-train to find work repeatedly throughout their careers. These are folded up neatly into the dubious concept of employability which is the 'new psychological contract' that 'responsiblises' individuals for their own ability to find employment rather than seeing labour demand as an effect of markets (Chertkovskaya, 2013; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2010, p. 93-5). Because employability is conceived of as 'personal capital that everyone must manage, comprising the total set of skills people can mobilize' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2010, p.93) it becomes something that universities must[43] develop in students (Chertkovskaya, 2013; QAA, 2013). Dearing's notion of education as personal development, a concept that has come to privilege pop-psychology notions of 'personal growth' over more theory-based approaches to educational development (such as

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[42] The department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) was formed in June 2009 'to build Britain's capabilities to compete in the global economy'. Universities had previously been part of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Science (BIS, 2009).
[43] 'Employability' is part of the Key Informations Set (KIS) that universities are obliged to provide for publication on *Unistats*, the student/consumer university comparison site; see https://unistats.direct.gov.uk/

Giroux's (2013b) re-working of Paulo Freire's 'critical pedagogy') has morphed into the idea, with much populist purchase, of students being entrepreneurs of their own futures. With the introduction of directly charged fees, education-as-commodity, purchasable for private advantage, has also triumphed. By burdening young people with a lifetime of debt, the political class has now transformed them into, as Browne and Barber tell us, *consumers* of education (Giroux, 2013a, p.12). The obsession with ensuring 'student satisfaction' which will then be reported via the NSS helps to feed this consumer identity.

The 'student experience' has become a sacrosanct and unquestionable notion in universities, but the whole concept of students as a customers who can meaningfully and objectively report on their education is, of course, deeply flawed. As Collini points out, 'a "satisfied" student is nigh-on ineducable'(2012, p.185) as the desire to learn requires a degree of curiosity which is not borne out of bland contentment; even Dearing hints that education is a process of changing and developing the self which 'theorize[s] matters of self and social agency' (Giroux, 2011, loc.64), and 'draws attention to the ways in which knowledge, power, desire, and experience are produced … particularly as these bear on the formation of the multiple and ever-contradictory versions of the "self" and its relationship to the larger society'(Giroux, 2011 loc.74-7). So, as a learner, this involves questioning one's own existing viewpoints and being pushed outside an attitudinal comfort zone. Often, as the individual undergoing change, they cannot make a clear judgement of the process during the third year of their degree. It may take a year or several years to fully appreciate it. Collini describes this as a 'post-experience good', that is to say that the full understanding of the benefits of higher education may only be discovered at a later date (2013b, p.11) and Furedi argues that assessing the quality of an academic experience can take some years (2009). And, naturally, students will have varied, conflicting and changeable thoughts about what they are 'experiencing' about their education, at a formative, demanding period in their lives. Trying to sum this up as a set of simplified questions is pointless, mechanistic and demeaning to all involved (Furedi, 2009).

The NSS becomes as part of a cycle of audit. Its phases are:

Harvest Opinions
(students fill in the form)
↓
Compare and Compete
(departments' and institutions' ratings are compared with each other)
↓
Publicise
(marketing departments mediatise the ratings they view as positive)
↓
Commodify
(ratings are used to commodify institutions in league tables)
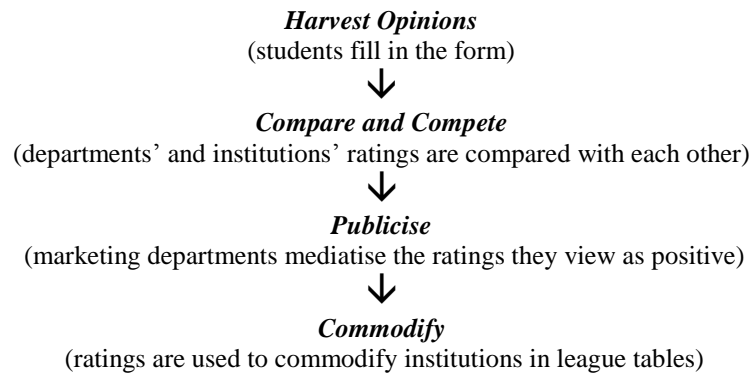
Fig. 2 Cycle of audit

This *harvest-compare-publicise-commodify* cycle purports to be about raising standards whilst being only about the act of completing the cycle itself. As Furedi argues, 'how students feel about their university has been turned into an instrument for auditing the quality of institutions of higher education' (Furedi, 2009) and involves a 'risk that data will substitute for judgement'(Scott, 2014). It is audit dressed up as democracy and as Ryan, applying Michael Power's work on audit to higher education, argues, the functionality of this kind of audit 'is that it constructs political power while appearing to secure the ends of justice and economy' and that it is an 'audit system that constructs auditability'. In fact, institutional anxieties over the student satisfaction element of league tables ('it haunts us') can result in changes to courses or institutional practices,[44] that may be detrimental to the actual quality of education (Child, 2011). The institution haunted by this late modern 'audit of feeling' cycle is a very different one to the post-war organisation, enthused with high modernist optimism.

Together with this concept of the student as consumer comes the invention of the notion of the student entrepreneur (QAA, 2012). This is an extension of the employability concept discussed earlier, where the student is 'entrepreneur of their own career' (Barber et al., 2013, p.65), with responsibility for 'creating jobs for themselves and others' (ibid., p.10). This pro-active role is in some ways in contradiction with the

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[44]Because students' rating of their own 'experience' may be based on many other aspects of their time at university other than teaching (Scott, 2014) one thing that has happened in the US example is that money is poured into making student services – accommodation, sports facilities, restaurants and bars – more luxurious rather than spending resources on teaching, as former provost of Columbia University, Jonathan Cole, among others, observes (Cole, 2010; Hotson, 2011; Scott, 2014).

passive identity of student as consumer. There is also tension, in the neoliberal reinvention of studenthood, between the *private self* who consumes education and the role of universities in the production of the *public self* – the critical, informed citizen necessitated by democracy (Giroux, 2013a).

The effect on the higher education landscape of the funding changes for the 161 higher education institutions in the UK is to intensify the fragmentation of the sector. Increasingly there is separation of universities into those which are research intensive and those which concentrate largely on teaching (Humes, 2009), as represented by the different mission groups: the Russell Group is the most vocal mission group for research-led institutions; and Million+ the highest-profile post-92 University group.[45] With accelerating sectoral fragmentation, Barber predicts that elite universities who 'attract the stars of the academic firmament … and the world's most talented students' will use their 'global brand' to expand by certifying courses that they franchise out to 'mass university' teaching institutions (Barber et al., 2013, p.56-7). He predicts that as a consequence of this, 'many middle-to-low-tier universities will have to disband' (ibid., p.57). Another possibility in Barber's imagined future is Liberal Arts subjects being available to students who can afford the fees of expensive 'niche universities', taught by staff who are 'global stars', whereas those who can't opt for vocational training at a local institute. It may be tempting to write off Barber's vision as neoliberal fantasy, but it is inevitable that the *discourse of privilege* becomes re-inscribed as a result of privatisation. A. C. Grayling's New College of the Humanities, which he founded in 2011, is a recent example of this. It offers a private tutorial college model for those who can afford its fee level, running at £17,640 for the 2014/15 academic year.

Participation in higher education became redefined, at least in theory, in the latter half of the 20th century as meritocratic rather than as an effect of class background. How far both exam results and offers of university places are now, in reality, an effect of social,

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[45] There are currently two other mission groups, the University Alliance and GuildHE. Until November 2013 a third, the 1994 Group, existed. The role of the groups varies, but their function is largely corporate branding and govermental lobbying. Scott argues that they are divisive in that they encourage sectoral fragmentation, and reinforce the British class system (Scott, 2013). Both Scott and Humes see them as reducing universities to a 'brand' and Humes argues that the tribalism they encourage allows government to 'divide and rule' the sector (Humes, 2010). Malcolm McVicar, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Central Lancashire, says 'the mission groups reflect the divisions that exist and might be exacerbating them,' adding that in the face of funding cuts they are like 'turkeys fighting over who will get it at Christmas' (*THE,* 2009).

cultural and economic capital is arguable. Terry Eagleton, a Cambridge don in the 1970s, describes his college as being 'full of rugger buggers … and upper class louts' (Eagleton, 2001, p.136). Although access to Oxbridge is, ostensibly, now through merit, a 2011 report showed that between them, five schools (including Westminster, Eton and St Paul's) sent more students to Oxbridge over three years than 2,000 schools and colleges across Britain, differences that 'cannot be attributed solely to the schools' average A-level results' (Sutton Trust,[46] 2011).

Moreover the *discourse of privilege*, which never completely disappeared, is likely to re-irrupt, in a more virulent form, if – or when – the current fee cap is removed and Oxford and Cambridge, in particular, are able to charge fee levels commensurate with their 'global brand[s]'. The Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, Andrew Hamilton, used his 2013 annual oration to argue that to enable Oxford to break even fees must rise to £16,000. He also looked forward to a higher education economic landscape with 'different universities charging significantly different amounts' (Hamilton, 2013). That is to say, fee deregulation. How that squares with 'attracting the world's most talented students' may become something of a moot point for those institutions, which would logically become 'enclaves for the international rich' (Anderson, 2006, loc.3501). Oxford's head of admission received significant press coverage shortly after the VC's fee statement by announcing at a recent Sutton Trust summit that 'his role was to weed out "thick and rich" applicants' who may have been admitted a generation ago (Sutton Trust, 2013). Speaking at the same summit Michael Barber addressed this issue of how poorer students would be able to afford significantly increased Oxbridge fees by suggesting that 'government capital money' should be used to create 'endowment funds that would get you towards a proper system of needs-blind admission'(*Times Higher Education,* 2013b). He gives this idea a somewhat contradictory twist, by then going on to suggest that funds from future privatisation could be used for this (ibid.).

I mentioned in my discussion of massification in the previous chapter that technology became pervasive in the day-to-day life in the university during this period. The

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[46] The Sutton Trust is a pressure group that aims 'to improve social mobility through education' (Sutton Trust, undated).

omnipresence of technology is critical in the stage of 'privatisation and personalisation', particularly to the concept of studenthood.

Mediatised culture valorises the privately personalised, turning it into the norm for the online world (see, for example, Crary, 2013; Morozov 2013). For example, I expect my user accounts to 'know' me so well that they tailor their input to my desires: my Amazon profile will tell me what I want to buy and my Facebook profile will tell me whom I want to friend (see Pariser, 2011; Andrejevic, 2007). Similarly online education, which grew up in the massification years, is now expected to provide a personalised educational experience to learners in a global educational marketplace. Learners in most institutions will have their own online space, which connects up to their timetables, online resources, email and other accounts personal to them and will receive messages from various parts of the organisation about anything from their fee payments to module reading lists. And in common with the whole discourse and the practices of personalisation which *feel* completely private and intimate, personal student areas are, of course, the very opposite. They enable the university to track and monitor everything a student does online; early 20th century commentary on the university described them as a digital equivalent of a Benthamite panopticon (Land and Bayne, 2004, p.165) but drawing on Andrejevic's more recent idea of the 'participatory panopticon' (Andrejevic, 2007, p.239) university surveillance can be read in terms of a more modulated and dispersed system of control 'that will continuously change from one moment to another'(Deleuze, 1992, p.4).

3.3.2.2 *The incursion of the private sector*

A crucial aspect of the marketisation of higher education is that that it becomes more possible for private providers to enter the sector. This is facilitated both by direct fee payments and by the increase in sectoral fragmentation. These factors serve to open up a space for private providers to compete as teaching organisations and recent years have seen the beginnings of companies such as BPP, Kaplan, INTO, Greenwich School of Management and Pearson move into the arena (McGettigan, 2013).

The introduction of a student loan system means that student loans can be paid from the public purse to these private companies. In 2012 the amount paid to such companies

exceeded £100m and looks set to increase year on year[47](Collini, 2013b, p.3). Private sector market consultants *The Parthenon Group* describe the higher education sector as a 'treasure island' (McGettigan, 2013, loc.1855).

Their business models tend to involve employing staff on teaching-only contracts. Typically, there is no provision for scholarly activities in staff contracts, salaries are low, leave short and the organisations are non-unionised (*Times Higher Education*, 2008a; UCUa, 2008; Lipsett, 2008a). All this is a recipe for lower-quality educational provision than universities provide and a consequent driving down of educational standards, as historian Howard Hotson demonstrates in his comparison of UK public-sector higher education with the US model[48] (Hotson, 2011).

3.3.2.3 *The idea of the personal and private university: institutional and staff identities*

What has changed, then, in the post-Browne idea of a university is that instead of it being viewed as a public service and a social good, it is now increasingly seen as a market where educational consumer goods are of benefit primarily to the private individual. In this model universities are reduced to service providers (Brown and Carasso, 2013, loc.327-8; Collini, 2012a, p.1).

There have been attempts to challenge the hegemony of the market culture. The four principal university unions, the University and College Union (UCU), Unison, Unite and the National Union of Students (NUS) all take an anti-privatisation stance and have supported local action against privatisation (UCU (undated); Unison (2014); Unite 2012, p.3; NUS (2014) p.17-19). Another challenge comes from a somewhat different constituency with the establishment, in 2012, of the Council for the Defence of British Universities (CDBU). This membership organisation, founded by a group of academic leaders and other intellectuals from the worlds of Science and Arts, opposes pressure to

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[47] McGettigan details how John Nash, who has contributed over £200,000 to Conservative Party coffers and was invited by Chancellor George Osborne to advise on higher education reform, is also one of the founder of the Sovereign company. Sovereign owns Greenwich School of Management, which has, to date, received a quarter of student loan monies that have been diverted to the private sector (McGettigan, 2013, loc.1865). Nash was granted a peerage in January 20013 and is government spokesman on education in the House of Lords (McGettigan, 2013).

[48] Interestingly, Hotson demonstrates that even judging the two systems in terms of neoliberalism's own discourse, the 'value for money' provided by public-sector higher education is much greater (Hotson, 2011).

make higher education 'serve short-term, primarily pragmatic, and narrowly commercial ends' and sees the 'instrumentalisation of knowledge' and the 'privatisation of education' as 'an enclosure of the epistemic commons' (CDBU, 2013). The more grassroots Campaign for the Public University is made up of UK academics and graduate students and shares similar aims to the CDBU (Campaign for the Public University, 2014) and there are other campaigning groups,[49] such as the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC, 2014).

There has been, in recent years, an emergence of scholarly defences of education, many of which I have drawn on in this chapter. For example, Stefan Collini's *What are Universities For?* (2012) puts a compelling argument for the inherent worth of intellectual enquiry, as do his regular *London Review of Books* essays (see Collini, 2010; 2011; 2013b); both Andrew McGettigan's financial analysis and critique of marketising education *The Great University Gamble* and Roger Brown and Helen Carasso's critical dissection of higher education policy *Everything for Sale? The Marketisation of UK Education* call some of the underpinning assumptions of marketisation into question. Work such as Ruth Barcan's and Ros Gill's writings on the damage to the academy in human terms have also been significant; such work also speaks about resistance to the neoliberal project on a personal level, by academics in the day-to-day. (Gill, 2010; 2014; Barcan, 2013).

The public debate has begun to appear in the broadsheets; it is not a discussion that has a simple left/right divide, as coverage of the CDBU in the traditionally right-of-centre *Telegraph* demonstrates. One piece, entitled 'The Brains Go into Battle' (Bragg, 2013) speaks of how 'the clarion came out from All Souls' to save our universities and 'take these islands into another great chapter in our story'; it employs notions of elites and nationalism in the fight against instrumentalist hijacking of the concept of the university (see also another *Telegraph* article by one of the founder members, Gordon Campbell, (2012)). The defence of higher education may involve some very broad-based liaisons.

The change for university staff in the post-Dearing years is significant. The increase of university audit has meant growth in numbers of the administrative staff necessary to

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[49] See http://publicuniversity.org.uk/other-campaigns/ for a list of other campaigns against HE privatisation, some of which are based around disciplines or clusters of disciplines.

service this; for the past ten years there have been more non-academic than academic staff employed in UK universities. In 2012 the figures were 197,000 non-academic to 180, 000 academic staff. The increasing imposition of a managerial culture means that there has been a growth in both the number and the power of managers in academic and non-academic areas (Ginsberg, 2011). Even traditionally academic management roles are increasingly filled by senior staff from outside the university sector (Giroux, 2007, p.106; Lipsett, 2008b; Hall, 2013, p.90) and senior executive posts have increasingly commanded higher and higher salaries (Hopwood, 2013).

The nature of academic work has always been, in a sense, entrepreneurial. Only 'highly motivated self-starters' who can 'think outside the box' (as commercial recruitment jargon would put it) and who have enthusiasm amounting to obsession for their subject area become academics. But during this privatisation period, certain kinds of entrepreneurial abilities, such as the ability to form links with organisations outside the sector, to raise funds from commercial ventures or to engage in populist profile-raising become more valued, or certainly more identified. As early as 1993, Fairclough observed a discursive 'reconstruction of the professional identities of academics on a more entrepreneurial (self-promotional) basis' (p.157) and this has increased in the last 20 years.[50] But, mirroring the student consumer/entrepreneur contradiction, the academic, now recognised as knowledge entrepreneur, is highly regulated, audited and policed in a way that no proto-Richard Branson or Mark Zuckerberg would be comfortable with. A combination of managerialism, audit of teaching, constant measuration to provide metrics for TRAC, FEC and KIS, 'customer' pressure and output-driven research assessment (transmuting from the RAE to the Research Excellence Framework[51] from 2010) does not describe an ideal entrepreneurial environment for 'creative knowledge work' (Deem 2004, p.111). This picture contrasts starkly with the high degree of academic autonomy of the post-war decades – when the idea of academic entrepreneurs didn't exist.

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[50] The US and Canada have gone further down this road. See, for example, A*cademic branding: your online presence by design,* a resource from a Canada which encourages academics to increase their 'digital footprint'; which quotes a survey showing '55% of faculty use social media for self-promotion' leaving the remaining 45% 'underbranded or misbranded' (Matrix, 2014, slide 7-9).

[51] I discuss the implications of the Research Excellence Framework in Chapter 9.

Many academic staff are in an environment where student expectations of 'service' increase as they are moved into the passive role of consumers, but under-funding means student/staff ratios don't improve, creating significant pressures. Occupational stress levels, already 25% higher than in the general population, measurably increased in academic staff between 2008 and 2012 (Grove, 2012).

The language of commerce permeates all aspects of academic life in the contemporary university, redefining what it is to be a teacher and researcher – or innovative knowledge professional (Collini, 2012, pp.94-6). This hegemonic reinvention of the core work of university life makes it hard to defend any activity that does not turn a profit and the language and culture of commerce has a concrete effect on the way universities work. For example, research initiatives are now usually expected, by institution and funder, to use 'industry standard' project management methodologies. These have limited flexibility, as they assume that all activities in the area of inquiry are knowable in advance. But scholarly research, by its very nature, often uncovers unexpected findings which have a knock-on effect on the activities to be undertaken. Concepts such as intellectual uncertainty, the unknowable and unpredictable consequences are not easily expressed in the representational universe of Gantt charts, milestones and workstreams and so they become un-representable. As Dearlove argues, 'research is a creative craft activity that does not lend itself to bureaucratic management'(1998, p.118).

Along with the resistance of academic commentators in public debates on the marketisation of higher education, there have also developed, in recent times, a range of 'free university' type initiatives, which question the idea of how education is, should be or could be organised (see for example: the Free University of Brighton, 2013; *The Guardian*, 2013; The Provisional University, 2014). Another aspect of this is development of open access publishing models which make peer reviewed scholarly journals and sometimes books, freely available to anyone with an internet connection (see Hall, 2008; Suber, 2012). These type of initiatives exist both within and outside universities and some commentators see the work of individuals, groups and organisations as constituting part of a Deleuze and Guattarian 'rhizomic' (un)structured movement (see Rolfe, 2014, p.3).

An overall way of conceptualising the whole panoply of resistance initiatives is as a re-irruption of the *discourse of progress and the public good* in the troubled contemporary landscape of UK higher education.

SECTION III – CONFIGURING THE SELF

Chapter 4 – Armour for my phantoms: academic homepages and blogs

4.1   Preface

The original selection and close reading of academic blogs for this chapter was carried out in 2009, when it was first drafted. The blogs and homepages, therefore, bear the stamp of the time in which they were created, as does the selection of them. Although academic blogging was becoming more widespread in the US at this time (see Saper, 2006[52] for an earlier account of this) in the UK it was less common. By 2014, however, many more academic staff in a range of disciplines have their own professional blogs and home pages. They are used in a variety of ways, demonstrating how increasingly media-aware academic staff have become over the intervening five years. Guardian contributor, Lucy Williams describes how, as a PhD student in 2013, she used her blog to share and discuss her research with others – as do the subjects in my 2009 examples of blogs. However, Williams also contends that 'in the face of a changing academy, university staff and students alike are acknowledging the necessity of raising awareness of their research, and promoting its merits, outside higher education' (Williams, 2013), a strand of thought about research that is less prevalent in my 2009 examples, and one I'll return to later in this thesis.

As well as being used to share and discuss research, academic blogs, by 2014, are also being widely used in a range of disciplines for teaching, learning and assessment (see Deng and Huen, 2012) and, of course, for providing social and political commentary; see, for example, sociologists John Holmwood and Gurminder Bhambras' *Campaign for the Public University* blog (CPU, 2014) which supports the pressure group I referred to in the last chapter.

Much, therefore, has changed, in a short time, in academic blogging. This chapter, however, captures a sample of academic blogs and homepages at a particular historical moment and is intended be seen as commentary on the academic blogs and homepages of that particular moment.

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[52] Craig Saper, in what is thought to be the first work on academic blogs (Kirkup, 2010) noted the beginning of a rise of more informal US Faculty blogs back in 2006

4.2 Approach

In this chapter I will consider how the academic subject inscribes themselves on what I term 'the digital Symbolic'. By this I mean that aspect of the Lacanian Symbolic order that is represented by the digital. I discuss the Symbolic as part of the Lacanian triad later in this chapter, but, the digital Symbolic, can be thought of, in relation to my context, as, for example the semiotics of web pages or the signification systems that have developed around blogging. I will be mobilising psychoanalytic theory to produce a reading of how academic homepages and blogs and other such sites can be understood both as ways of creating and playing with meaning and also as inscribing a sense of selfhood on the academic subject. I argue that they both produce a space of conformity whilst resisting easy or imposed conceptions of subjectivity.

In order to engage with the range and scope of academic homepages and blogs then being produced, I examined a range of such sites produced by academic staff working in UK universities; I then selected the professional blogs or personal sites of six academics and performed a detailed reading of these (see Chapter 2 for more detail of how I surveyed the sites and Appendix A for a full list of sites). My original intention was to analyse sites from across a range of subject disciplines. However, in only quite a narrow range of subjects did academic staff have significant personal pages or blogs at the time I conducted this work, so there is a bias towards computer science, educational technology and disciplines which involve publishing, such as media studies and creative writing. I chose sites that formed a varied selection, particularly in the kind of academic roles that the individuals occupied and that spoke about the selves their creators wanted to inscribe in differing ways that were sometimes intriguing, sometimes compelling, at times both serious and playful, but always mindful of the complexities of performing the academic self on the digital stage.

Such pages may be hosted on the university servers, on local school, faculty or department servers, or outside the university completely. These homepages can usually be accessed via the individual academic's university profile page[53] but may be accessed from elsewhere, for example by performing a google search on the person's name. Sometimes these academic homepages are webpages which do not use blog technology;

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[53] See the next chapter for a definition of profile pages.

sometimes they link up with the academic staff member's blog; sometimes they are, themselves, blogs; and sometimes they contain blogs. Four of the sites under discussion use blog technology in some way.

I am distinguishing academic home pages from their *profile pages*. Profile pages are standard pages generated by the university that provide publicly accessible basic information about academic staff. These are largely created by someone in the institution other than the member of academic staff themselves and form the 'official' institutional representation of self. I will be considering profile pages in the next chapter but in this chapter I am looking specifically at personal homepages and blogs that the individual academic has created themselves.

Academic staff tend to have personal homepages, in addition to their basic university profile page, for a number of reasons. They may want to provide significantly more detail about their work either for colleagues, students or for the general reader, than the constraints of the university page make possible; they may wish to utilise technologies and design that are not permissible on the university website; they may wish to create a sense of an independent identity which isn't purely linked to the university where they are currently employed. Ken Hyland, writing about the tension between individuality and conformity in academic homepages contends that 'the university homepage is constructed entirely on the institution's terms, requiring the subject to conform to its norms and implicitly subscribe to its corporate ideologies'(Hyland, 2012,p.320). A theoretical body of work has been developed on homepages (see for example Cheung, 2004 or Bruns, 2013) and particularly on blogging. Theoretical approaches to blogging range from examples such as Jill Walker Rettberg's discussion of blogs as socio-cultural products with an emphasis on citizen journalism and issues of self-narrative (Walker Rettberg, 2014a), to Geert Lovink's 2008 *Zero comments,* a political analysis of blog culture with a stress on media activism, to Jodi Dean's psychoanalytic materialist analysis of blog culture (Dean 2010). The kind of blogging that is referred to in the broad range of theory, however, differs from the type of professional academic blogs and homepages of 2009 which I am considering. These are, generally, not presented in the highly personal diary mode and are a long way from the model of blog culture characterised by Dean as 'react and forward, but don't by any means think' (2010. p. 3). On the contrary, *thinking* or eliciting thought in others, is central to their

project. This makes aspects of the more general work on blogging not easily applicable to academic blogs, so although I use this work in this chapter I do so selectively.

The small body of work on professional academic blogging often refers largely to the US academy (for example Saper, 2006; Paz Dennen, 2009), or explores issues other than subjectivity, but nevertheless some aspects of the US based work and some of the more general academic blog and homepage work has relevance to my argument. Rory Ewins' early work in the UK on the role of blogs in academic identity (Ewins, 2005), to which I will refer later and Gill Kirkup's review of the way blogs impact on academic practice are both particularly relevant. Kirkup's contention that academic blogging is providing 'a new genre' (2010, p.83) of academic production may, indeed, prove to be true as an enactment of dana boyd's earlier prediction that 'this medium has and will continue to shift the communicative and social assumptions that ground everyday life' (boyd, 2006, para.59).

Before I turn to my first example of an academic homepage I want to pause to talk about the slightly discomforting position I find myself occupying when re-producing and discussing the sites of colleagues in other universities. Although none of my subjects have objected to their pages being highlighted in this way, the voyeuristic position this puts me in is a little uncomfortable. I'm aware that these sites belong to actual people, most of whom I have never and will never meet, individuals who are subject to all the pressures and anxieties of the Haunted University which I am writing about in this study. So, whilst I am writing about the psychoanalytic Imaginary in relation to these sites, I'm aware that there are real people who devised them. What I'm *not* doing in this chapter is making psychoanalytic statements about those actual people, but about the symbolic performances they have created. These might be *about* self, but they are not self. They are a form of fiction, and it is this fiction I am analysing, not the creators of it.

When I refer to colleagues' publications in this thesis I use the standard convention of using their surname. This would seem a little odd when looking at their blogs, so I will instead be using their first names.

My first example of a site is Gary Hall's personal homepage (Fig.3). Gary is a media theorist whose work is in the arena of new media technologies and cultural studies. He is a professor of media at Coventry University, and his personal homepage is outside the Coventry site at www.garyhall.info.

http://www.garyhall.info/
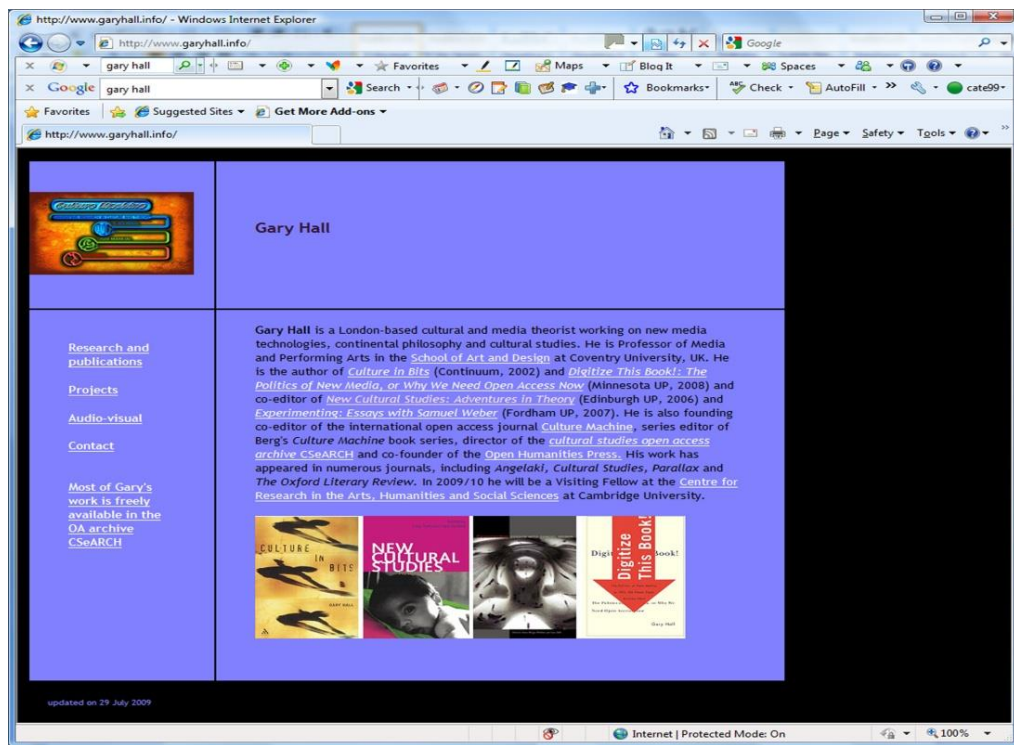
Fig. 3 Gary Hall's personal homepage

Gary's site uses bright, contemporary colour and styling which can be easily changed and updated. It's unlikely that the corporate design protocols of a university would permit this kind of individuality of styling on a website that was hosted by them and went out under their banner. By way of contrast, Gary Hall's staff profile page at Coventry, as shown below (Fig. 4), is much more subdued and conservative in its styling, like many university pages.

This use of design is a way of signalling one's own identity as someone with an awareness of changes in contemporary digital culture and styling. Additionally, an important thrust of Gary's work is the academic gift economy and the importance of breaking the hegemony of publishing houses (Hall, 2010); his personal homepage

performs this by linking to full versions of many of his own pieces of published work, something not all universities would be comfortable sanctioning on their own institutional site because of nervousness about copyright implications. In this way, having a homesite is an enactment of a kind of intellectual freedom of thought.[54]

http://www.coventry.ac.uk/cu/schoolofartanddesign/mediaandcommunication/staff/a/4644
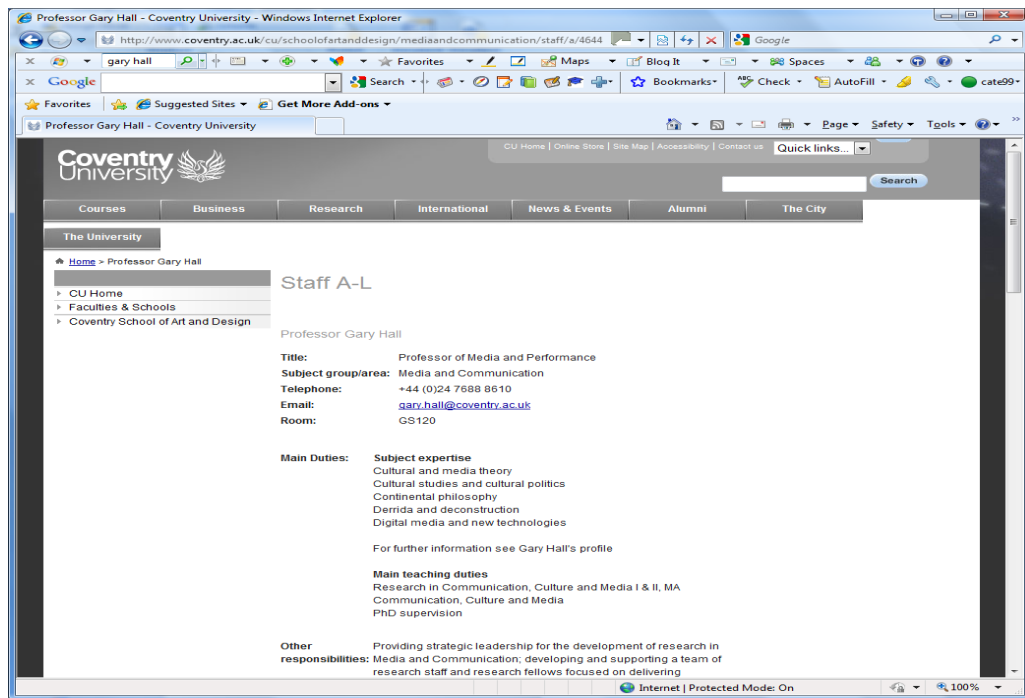
Fig. 4 Gary Hall's university homepage

4.3 A note on the available technologies

What I'm terming academic personal web pages, as opposed to blogs, are pages which are designed just to be read and to link to other sites. Blog technologies have become increasingly freely available to be used instead of or with more 'traditional' web pages. The term 'blog' is a shortened form of web-log, and a blog is designed to use a diary format, or 'log'.[55] Blogging began in the mid- to late 1990s, but didn't become 'massified' until the 21st century (Lovink, 2008, loc.125-7). In the UK, the BBC, for example, launched its blog in 2006; so when I surveyed these blogs in 2009, this was

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[54] It also permits for a degree of intellectual freedom which might not be comfortable for a corporate institution. For example, David Colquhoun, a Professor of Pharmocology at UCL, was asked to remove his blog, which criticises alternative medicine, from his university's server as a result of complaints about it. His *DC's improbable Science page* is now hosted by an external service (See http://www.dcscience.net/)

[55] It is possible to use freely available blog technologies and not utilise the journal format; in this case the site looks, to the user, like a standard website.

still a fairly early point in their use in the British context (Wilson, 2006). Blog software automatically puts journal entries in chronological order, with new entries at the top, and automatically archives entries after a certain number of posts or period of time. If the blog owner permits it, readers can add to entries by posting their own comment. Other readers, or the blog owner themselves, can then comment on comments, and in this way discussions can evolve. Blogs usually have sidebars for lists of links to other blogs or webpages, and, in some cases for recent microblogs.[56] Blogs also generally have an RSS feed, which means that viewers can choose to get regular updates from blogs to their own website (which may, itself, be a blog), either just to read themselves, or to share with others.

So the advent of blogs began to encourage a different kind of reading and usage of the web than was assumed with standard web pages.[57] They permit readers to enter into a public or private dialogue with the blogger and with other readers. They allow users to easily add feeds from the blog so that they can always watch what is happening on a blog. They also encourage readers to view other blogs and sites, by linking into them in a themed way, which creates a specific frame of reference for the linking, and so creates meaning through the intertextual nature of the reference.

4.4   Writing the self

As the technology encourages blog keeping to be in the form of diaries, it is interesting to consider Carl Schmitt's 1918 fantasy about 'Buribunkian' diary keepers, *Die Buribunkian*,[58] in relation to blogs. This is partially reproduced by Friedrich Kittler in his discussion, in his book *Gramophone, film, typewriter,* of the significance of the

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[56] Microblogging is blogging with very short messages, often by using a mobile phone or other handheld device; Twitter is an example of microblogging technology.

[57] I'm not concerned here about how the web pages the user sees are produced, i.e. whether they are static HTML pages or whether they are dynamically created. My concern is what the user can do with them, so the term 'standard web pages' can refer to static or 'created on the fly' pages.

[58] It is interesting to note that these prophetic utterances about blogging come from someone whose legal philosophy provided part of the theoretical underpinnings of Nazism and who was himself a lifelong adherent of right-wing totalitarianism. Both the literal opposition to blogging by totalitarian states (as it enables freely available publication of information about the state within and beyond its borders) and the way in which the self-disclosure of personal information on the internet permits a more metaphorical kind of totalitarian surveillance (see Bassett, 2007) suggest that for the totalitarian worldview, there is a lot at stake in blogging – sufficient for it to be imagined, 80 years before it was technologically available, by Hitler's legal philosopher. Significantly, Schmitt's philosophical contribution to the Nazi party concerned *auctoritas*, or authority, a key and highly contested concept in the online world.

typewriter in the history of inscription (1986, pp.231-42), where Kittler uses it to argue that we are produced by media technologies (ibid., p. 231). In Schmitt's prescient, if dystopian, work he envisions a situation where the widespread use of typewriter technology produces a world of 'Buribunks', people compelled to keep diaries recording all the minutiae of their lives. These accounts are collated daily by central authorities and meticulously cross referenced, in Esperanto, so that they can be internationally available. Readings from diaries, exchange of photos, film and theatre productions, as well as conferences and journal publications all flow from these Buribunkian activities (Schmitt, 1918, reproduced in Kittler, 1986, p.238-9). What Schmitt envisages is uncannily similar to the way blogging and other social media can be currently used, in broad terms, as a socially imposed 'identity circus' (Lovink, 2008, loc.548) where 'people's experience of themselves as subjects is configured in terms of accessibility, visibility, being known' (Dean, 2002, p.114). Whilst Schmitt exhibits ironic disdain for the Buribunkian world, he does see it ultimately as an attempt to outfox history 'by writing it while it writes us' (reproduced in Kittler, 1986, p.242). Although Kittler uses the Buribunkian world to argue that our 'automated Buribunkology' creates 'a modern loop of endless replication' (Kittler, 1986, p.231; p.244) nevertheless Schmitt's understanding of our desire to inscribe ourselves on the technology is compelling. One of the attractions of crafting a homepage, of whatever type, is the sense that it provides the subject with a degree of agency in this way. Sherry Turkle describes the process of creating such a page in a way that echoes Schmitt:

> One constructs a home page by composing or 'pasting' on it words, images and sound, and by making connections between it and other sites on the Internet or the Web ... People link their home pages to pages about such things as music, paintings, television shows, cities, books, photographs, comic strips and fashion models.
>
> (Turkle, 1995, p. 258)

So, a subject can, at some level, write their own history – as it writes them in that they can choose their content, layout and style. For the academic subject, this operates in opposition to the technologising of the university I discussed in the previous chapter, and their consequent interpolation as a subject of computer culture. But even in the case of the 'personal' home pages, how much agency does the subject really have?

An academic's own homepage is about displaying credentials, presenting oneself to the university and the world. This is summed up by one academic as 'the site developed (by me) to promote my career' (Brabazon, 2007, p.18). But such self-publicity is fast becoming a professional necessity. There are resonances of Schmidt's Buribunkian world, where anyone who stops writing a diary puts themselves 'outside of all discourse' and is punished by professional demotion, eventually sinking to a level where 'they disappear ... as if swallowed by the earth, nobody knows them anymore, nobody mentions them ... they are neither seen nor heard' (Schmitt, in Kittler, 1986, p.240). So, although there is a sense in which being author of their own site may appear to furnish the subject with agency, the overall economy of presence within which they operate is one which does not easily permit silence or absence, even in relation to what might once be seen as the private activities of the self because 'without publicity the subject of technoculture doesn't know if it exists at all' (Dean, 2002, p.114).

Another way of considering the ambiguous nature of the personal page is that, for the subject, it appears to present an opportunity for performative self-inscription in the realm of a digital Symbolic. But by committing their selfhood to text they are self-consciously performing themselves as a written subject. Their subjectivity becomes textually constituted; the important part of what they are as academic subjects becomes that which exists in the realm of the digital Symbolic, and their conception they have had of an embodied self changes place with the technologically inscribed self, its importance being both diminished and also re-framed and re-imagined by the textually constituted self. In that sense the online self also becomes incorporated, in Judith Butler's sense of the term, into the body, encrypting itself into the facticity of the body (Butler, 1990 pp. 91-5).

When writing about the construction of self, Sarup draws on Foucault's concept of the production of discourse when she discusses self-narrative as a discursive product:

> When we talk about our identity and our life story, we include some things and exclude others, we stress some things and subordinate others … The stories we tell are often re-shaped in/for the public sphere. And then, when these narratives are in the public sphere, they shape us
> (Sarup,1996, pp.16-18)

So, according to Sarup, a blog or homepage reflects back on the subject who created it, and shapes the subject. Even though, or perhaps particularly because, this other, electronic self, composed of narrative and code, is created by the purposeful action subject themselves.

Self-narrative for the public domain is always challenging for the subject. As soon as they construct their page, they are committing themselves; they have created a version of themselves that may never change. And one that is immortal. The 'I' that they imagine themselves to be is a text written in water, but the digital self they have produced is a text written in marble. However, paradoxically, the inscription of the subject within the digital Symbolic is also subject to replication and change at its very moment of creation (Hayles, 2005, p. 100). A digital webpage is easily copied by others, changed, uploaded elsewhere for the world to see, in a few clicks or taps. Derrida's argument that whereas typed documents exhibit the scars and traces of changes made to them, electronic documents conceal any alterations made to them, is also relevant (Derrida, 2001, p.24); not only can versions of the subject's electronic inscription be changed by others, but it will not necessarily be evident that these changes have been made.

So, to summarise, once my Frankenstein's monster-self, cobbled together from text, photos, links and graphic art, this alternate self, made of code, is given life on the electronic page, a number of things happen. Firstly, it re-writes me, as it becomes incorporated into what I am. Secondly, it commits me, for an uncertain length of time, to a certain version of myself which I may not subscribe to tomorrow. Thirdly, and paradoxically, it is always and permanently subject to change, from its very moment of inscription, by unknowable others. It is out of my control. Fourthly, digital persistence means that it is – unlike me – immortal, at least in concept, so the versions of self which I may no longer, or may never have subscribed to, will live forever and may become me on my death.

But it is a fifth point about the digital self that I now wish to go on to consider. This is that I look at it and it looks back at me. But, to paraphrase Lacan, it never looks back at me from the place where I see it (Lacan, 1973, p.103). It looks back at me with the disconcerting gaze of the double.

Because, when I look at this self-constructed doppelganger, one of the things I'm doing is looking in a mirror, of my own making. And this brings Freud's ideas about Narcissism (Freud, 1914; 1917; Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, pp.255-7) and Lacan's concept of the mirror phase, articulated in his paper 'The mirror stage as formative of the *I* function' (1949) into play.

Before I embark on a discussion of these ideas, it's important to mention, in relation to them, another account of the double, that of Kittler's in his short essay 'Romanticism – psychoanalysis – film: a history of the double', reproduced in English in his 1997 collection of essays *Literature, media, information systems* (pp.85-100). Kittler gives a psychoanalytic reading of the double from 19th century German Romantic poetry and prose through to its re-imagining in the medium of film. His contention is that cinema has opened a world of doubles up to a mass audience (1997, p.96). I refer to Kittler's work in my reading of the digital double, as my contention is that his filmic double now has an even wider (and more personalised) realm than film, now that it populates the internet.

4.5   Narcissism and the mirror stage

Freud's paradigm of the psychoanalytic triad and Lacan's re-interpretation of this is a set of concepts that underpin the whole of this thesis, as well as this chapter. They are dealt with precisely as they are interrogated or used to interrogate the specific situation of subjectivity explored, but I will pause now to outline them.

Freud's concept of the psychical apparatus of the ego, the superego and the id, developed and changed over a long period, between the late 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, pp.130-8) and published in 1923 as 'The ego and the id', can be briefly defined as follows. The id is the element of a subject's psychological apparatus that acts on instinctual impulse and often seeks pleasure; the superego is the self-observing conscience, the controlling, policing part of the subject's mind which disciplines the unruly id and tries to keep it in check; and the ego mediates between the two psychological forces, becoming the part of the mind that produces a stable sense of self (Freud, 1923).

In Freud's concept of narcissism, the ego takes itself as love object, rather than turning its attention to an external love object (Freud, 1914, pp. 88-90). In order for the subject to be so amorously captivated by themselves, they have to have a sense of their own image. Lacan builds on this, exploring further Freud's metaphor of Narcissus, the figure in Greek mythology who was so taken by his own beauty that he fell in love with his reflection in a pool. Ovid's myth ends badly for Narcissus, as he pines away and dies because he cannot bear to leave the image he sees in the mirrored surface of the pool. So the double destroys the subject.[59]

Lacan builds on Freud's thinking to create a triad of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. This is best explicated in terms of his conception of how a child attains subjectivity, in *le stade du miroir*. Lacan sees this period of infant development, which can be translated as 'mirror phase' or 'looking-glass stage', as the place where the infant enters into the realm of Symbolic, the space of language (Lacan, 1949, pp.94-81). Before this the child has existed in the Real, and has not had consciousness of themselves as an autonomous subject. In the Real, they experience themselves as undifferentiated from the world around them, and enjoying a blissful sense of wholeness and satisfaction; in particular, they do not have a sense of differentiation between their body, as they experience it, and the body of their mother.[60]

This changes gradually, from about the age of 18 months, as the infant begins to see themselves in the mirror. This needn't be a physical mirror *per se* but can also be the regard of their mother, as she reacts to them. Transfixed by what they see in the mirror, they gradually begin to recognise this image as themselves. But this entry into the Symbolic is marked by a loss of the joy and plenitude of the Real and a sense of the subject's self as split and misrecognising. To recognise oneself in the mirror is always what Lacan terms a *meconnaissance*, literally a misknowing, or as it's more usually translated, a misrecognition, because the image in the mirror is not the self. So a gradual

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[59] Butler's concept of the incorporation of the disallowed same-sex love object into the surface of the body of the heterosexual subject can also be seen as relevant here. This incorporation produces the melancholic heterosexual, and in these terms the double could be seen for the heterosexual subject as the unwelcome eruption of both loss and disallowed desire (Butler, 1990).

[60] 'Mother' in the context which is being addressed in this chapter is also taken to mean any primary caregiver with whom the infant has a large amount of physical contact.

process of alienation begins. The subject enters into language (the realm of the Symbolic) at the mirror stage, and learns to say 'I'. But the I that they learn to think they are requires a splitting of consciousness between the former confused sense of self (a collection of limbs and body parts over which they do not have mastery, but which was originally a site of enjoyment), and the finished, perfection of the mirror image, to which the subject aspires, but from which they are inevitably alienated. This does not mean that that the confused sense of self, the 'body in bits and pieces', is the real self. Rather, the subject's concept of what self is, as the concept emerges for the first time, is inevitably shaped by doubt, confusion and mis-knowledge about their own subjecthood (Lacan, 1949, pp.94-81; Evans, 1996, pp.114-6).

The subject's very basis of existence, henceforth, is marked by the desire to become the image in the mirror, the imagined perfect self, rather than the chaotic and confused self that they experience themselves to be. But, though the mirror image is an illusion of wholeness, it lacks something vital. It lacks *objet a.* This is the element of the subject's experience of existing which they lose on entry into language, and the element that they spend their lives trying, fruitlessly, to regain. The subject feels the loss of *objet a* acutely, feeling obscurely that it was once part of their sense of self, or at least their sense of being, and looking, in vain, in the mirror for it. They are convinced it must be there, but are never quite able to see it. For *objet a* is unrepresentable (Zizek, 1991, p.55). There is no signifier that stands in for it, and we only know of its existence because of the sense of lack that subjectivity brings with it. The subject is compelled to spend the rest of their life seeking their lost *objet a* (Homer, 2005, 87-8). On an everyday level this represents itself in sexual and/or love relationships, but it is also enacted in obsessive quests, be they for truth, fame, money, possessions or more obscure stand-in objects, such as chivalric quests for the Holy Grail or Van Helsing's single-minded pursuit of Count Dracula.[61] We feel the absence of *objet a* as a lack,

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[61] Vampires, as Zizek points out, are composed entirely of *object a*, which is why they cannot see themselves in the mirror(1991, p. 55). While on the subject of the quest for *object a*, I would propose that the Medusa, the object of Perseus' quest, has the terrible, fatal gaze of pure *object a,* but her downfall lies in the fact that she can be represented (as the phallic mother), as she can be seen in the mirror. Perseus' capture of her mirror image (which does not contain *object a*) on his shield gives him the power to destroy her.

which we try to fill, but all these attempts at doing so are doomed to failure as *objet a* is essentially unobtainable, in a permanent way.

I should mention, at this point that by going on to think about narcissism and the mirror stage in relation to academic homepages and blogs I'm not seeing these sites as presentations of pathological psychology, merely as articulations of everyday subjectivity. It's important to make this clear as, blogging has, at least in the past, as commentators have observed, been criticised as a narcissistic practice (see, for example, Benton, 2006; Boklage, 2013; Walker Rettberg 2014b p. 17; Lovink, 2008, loc.1272), in the vernacular sense of the word, and that is not what I am intending here.

4.6   Homepages as mirrors

The creator of a homepage, when they use the mirror of the computer screen to stage the representation of their image, can create the perfect self. And, unlike Narcissus, the creator of a blog can also watch how others react to their screen self, as they watch comments being posted.

But this image is inevitably selective. When the subject selects the aspects of themselves to include in their blog, they are aware, like Tara Brabazon, that this is a self-marketing tool, and that there are discursive conventions to which they must adhere. No one wrote entries in their blogs, at the point I performed these close readings, about their techniques for managing email overload or their strategies for dealing with difficult colleagues or students. Few people even mentioned marking. The everyday and the mundane are excluded from these homepages because discursive practice about online academic autobiography demanded that it is an idealised version of self that the subject is creating in their mirror. In a sense, having a homepage, at this point in history was also an enactment of being the kind of person who had a homepage - and who was therefore at the forefront of this use of the technologies for sharing ideas.

What homepages conventionally highlight are research work and interests, and sometimes the more stimulating aspects of teaching. Ideas, reviews of conferences one has been to, reading lists, book reviews, links to interesting and relevant external pages are all marshalled to do the work of representing the self. What's constructed is the

digital embodiment of an abstract concept of what academic life is all about, that is to say, finding out about ideas and theories, developing one's own, and then sharing them and engaging in debate. This is, for most 21st-century UK academics, an extremely attractive, but nostalgic, idealisation of the role.

This could mean that all academic homepages are glossy exercises in bland self-marketing. But many homepages tell much more interesting stories than this. In fact, what they are, in a way, is the creator's story about themselves, written within, against and around the constraints and the conventions of the medium and the milieu in which they are situated, that is to say the technocultural university, which is situated everywhere.

In the example of Gary Hall's homepage (Fig. 2) which I looked at earlier, it provides basic information about his employment role, his research interests and his publications and graphics of his book covers. This fits the conventions. What doesn't fit the conventions, and the unexpected bright purple and orange design prepares us for this, is the text link that says 'Most of Gary's work is freely available in the OA archive and Csearch' and takes the reader to these open-access repositories. This does two things. Firstly, it is a defiant undercutting of convention about publication and copyright issues and so subverts the norms of traditional academic publishing by making his work easily available to a reader of his homepage. Secondly, it is a staged performance of Gary's open access philosophy, which stresses the political importance of making knowledge freely available as part of a digital gift economy (see Hall, 2008; 2012). By putting in the link he performs this countercultural belief. There is more than a hint of *objet a* about this linking – although, *objet a* is always a click, a link, another click away …

In general, most academic blogs contain little information about the subject's life outside their professional context. My next example of undercutting the norm is one which deviates from this. Richard Shipman is a Teaching Fellow in the School of Computer Science at Aberystwyth University and has an extensive personal academic site called *Wolf's Spoor,* which contains a blog.

Richard Shipman's site is accessible from his standard staff profile page (Fig. 5).

http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/cs/staff-list/staff_profiles/?login=rcs

Fig. 5 Richard Shipman's personal homepage

Clicking on the 'Homepage > Personal' option on this page takes me to the page allocated to academic staff in his institution, hosted on the Aberystwyth servers as shown below (Fig.6).

http://users.aber.ac.uk/rcs/
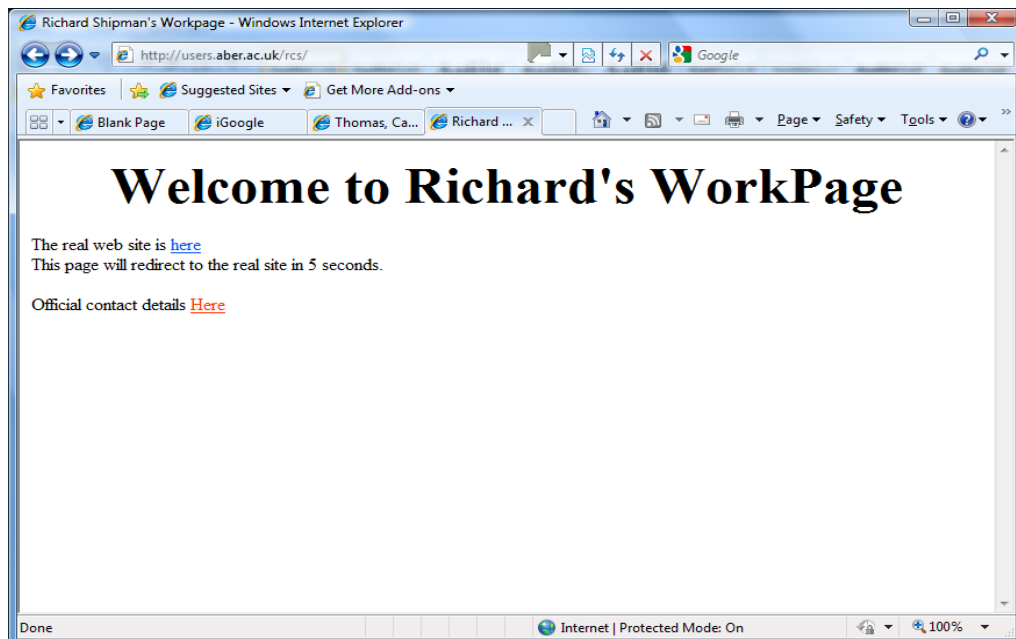
Fig. 6 Richard Shipman's personal website redirection page

Clicking on 'Official contact details *Here'* takes me back to Richard's 'official' staff profile page; clicking on 'The real website is *Here*' takes me to his *Wolf's Spoor* site. This I read as saying that the 'me' that the institutional site produces is inauthentic. There is a more authentic digital version of 'me' – and here it is. At this point I don't know why the institutional 'me' is inauthentic. I have one clue, and that is that the 'inauthentic me' is described as official. So I look to the *Wolf's Spoor* site (Fig. 7) for further clues.

The first clue I have is the fact that the site is hosted on the university servers, but not as part of the university site, which speaks to me of this created self as possessing a slightly maverick flavour. This perspective is further substantiated by the fact that different technologies are used in its construction than those used for the main university site. It is confirmed by the disclaimer on the blog sidebar that:

> opinions expressed here are my own delusions; my employers at best
> shake their heads and sigh, at worst repudiate the content with extreme
> prejudice, whenever it manages to appear on their radar.[62]

http://pcbo.dcs.aber.ac.uk/blog/

Fig. 7 Richard Shipman's *Woolf's Spoor* site

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[62] http://pcbo.dcs.aber.ac.uk/blog/
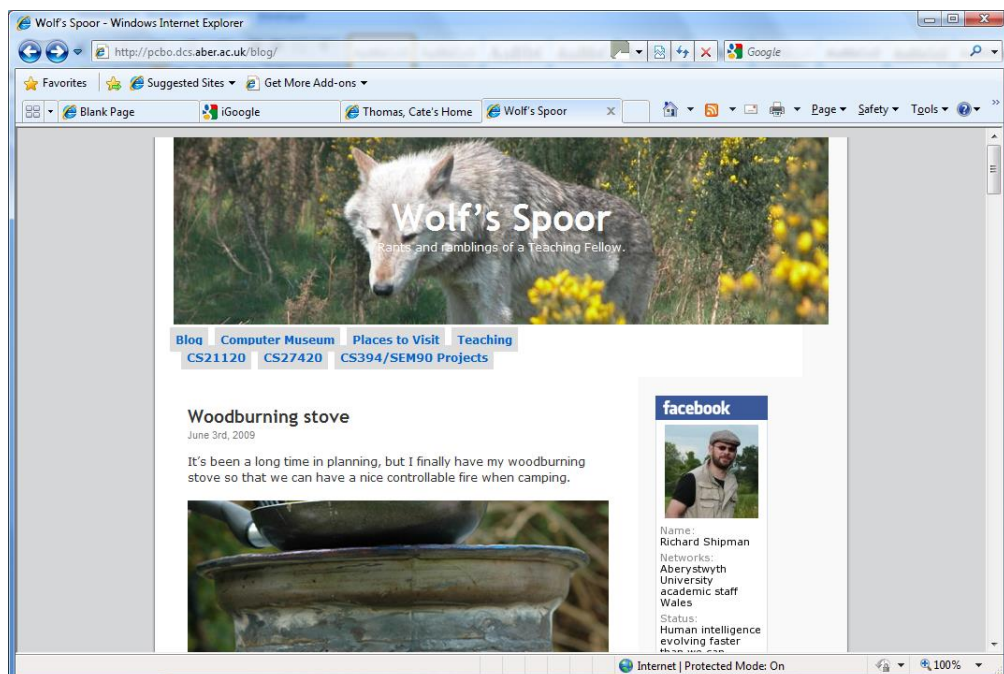
The site contains a great deal of knowledgeable, humorous and engaging information about technical computing matters and related concerns, such as open source discussions, which are directly work focused. There are links to a range of relevant, sometimes ironic, computer science-related sites and blogs. The tone is often playful, but the subject matter is in keeping with Richard's area of work. Additionally, there are also other, non-work, sets of interests explored. Technological ones, in the shape of telephones, signalling and trains; and cultural ones, in the shape of movies, photography and role-play gaming. As shown in Fig. 8 there are photographs on the site of this role-play activity, which involves medieval dress, 'swordsmanship, archery and other nuttery'[63].

So what Richard's homesite creates is an image that is non-conforming, both in terms of views and technology choices, to the overarching management culture of the university. It resists both technological governmentality, officialdom and codified expectations about presenting the self. It is enthusiastically maverick in its presentation of a self who won't be constrained by institutional control.

http://richard.shipman.me.uk/gallery/album187/WhiteWolf
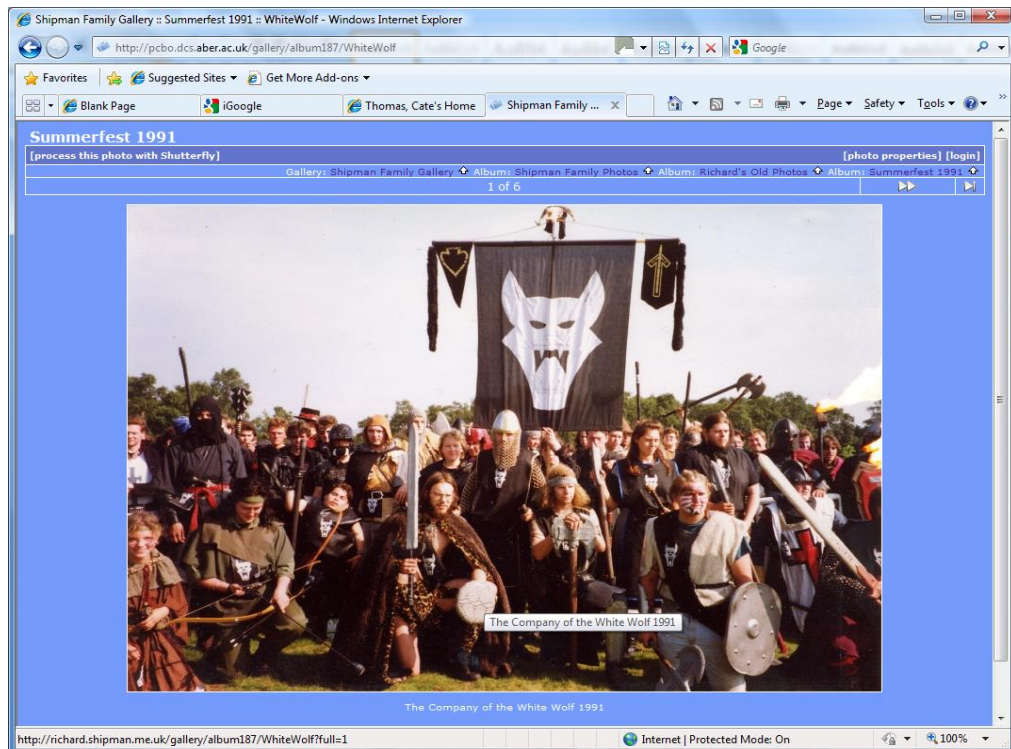
Fig. 8 Accessed from Richard Shipman's *Woolf's Spoor* site – Summerfest photo

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[63] http://pcbo.dcs.aber.ac.uk/blog/

One way of thinking about what this means is to see the orthodox discourse of academic blogging, that is to say, the inclusion of specific information in a specific register and the exclusion of other information, as interpolating the subject, in an ideological sense. What the Richard is doing when he refuses to align with this ('click here for the *real me*') is creating a discursive resistance to this interpolation, and thus subverting ideology's attempt to write him in the prescribed way, by re-inscribing himself on the digital in ways that are disallowed both in terms of technology and narrative. 'Click here for the real me' is a thus a performative utterance which resists interpellation, in Butler's sense (Butler, 1997 pp.34-9). This ties into Butler's ideas of legitimate and illegitimate subjects (see 1990, pp. 58-89), in that what is being resisted is the making of a self through a performance that is only an 'academic', discursively legitimate, self by inscribing an 'illegitimate' self – the real me. [64]

Stanley Kubrick's film *Spartacus* contains a well-known scene where a Roman general tell the slaves, captured in the revolt headed by Spartacus, that if they identify Spartacus their own lives will be saved. As Spartacus stands up to give himself up, two other men stand up and say 'I am Spartacus', followed by countless others, until all the slaves are standing. This famous utterance constitutes an interpolative resistance because it muddies the water about Spartacus-as-subject and resists compliance with the enforcement of the (Roman slave-owners') law. 'Click here for the real me' similarly elides the ability of authority to position the subject in the place where he appears to be. It differs from the Spartacus utterance in that Richard is pointing clearly to who and where he is, even if this isn't who or where he 'should' be.

There is another kind of performance that takes place on homepages, as it does in everyday embodied life, and that is the performance of gender. What I mean by this is that what we understand as gender is the result of repetitive gender acts where 'the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions' (Butler, 1990, p.190).

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[64] The irony of this, of course, is that it's precisely this kind of 'letting in' of personality and 'rounding out' of subjectivity, characterised in later blog culture, that is, ultimately, desirable for an academic worker within cognitive capitalism.

On Richard's website this performance is complex. Articulating an interest in trains, signalling and the more 'purist' aspects of computer science is an enaction of a hyper-masculine identity which valorises machinic culture. However, the visual references to participation in the acting out of medieval battles both performs an extreme form of martial masculinity and simultaneously undercuts it by pointing explicitly to its theatrical status as 'role-play'. Moreover, instances such as a link out from the site to a YouTube video of Richard performing the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* song 'The Time Warp'[65] complicate the issue of gender performance. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) enjoys an enduring queer cult status and the gender de-stabilising of its drag performances has not gone unnoticed by queer studies scholars over the years (see for example Lamm, 2008; Aviram, 1992). Butler uses the idea of drag extensively in her work, proposing that 'drag is an example that is meant to establish that "reality" is not as fixed as we generally assume it to be (1990, loc. 342). So Richard's (song and dance) performance of 'The Time Warp' again serves to de-stabilise any easy categorisation of the self he enacts on his site. Thus, in these intertwining of disparate performances of gender, Richard both establishes an identity within the traditional masculinist cultures of computing and undercuts it in ways that are playful and humorous.

The cluster of interests shown in Richard's site do have a specific meaning in the cultural milieu of computer science, in that an interest in open source software and enthusiasm for live medieval role-play games form part of a particular flavour of hacker subculture. The Uncanny is technology's repressed other side, its phantom double, and Richard's site enthusiastically articulates that (Dolar, 1991, p.7). But as well as this enthusiasm for a slightly out-of-the-ordinary part of techie culture it also, in its eccentric approach, articulates allegiance to another constituency; it speaks about the traditional image of the eccentric academic fascinated by ideas and impatient of troublesome officialdom. Perhaps, in the bureaucratised fabric of the neoliberal university, the only space in which it is acceptable to perform this image digitally is outside the main university website. The 'real site' the 'real me', can only exist outside the borders.

My next example of an academic homepage is also from the discipline of Computing. Pete Lee is a Professor of Computing at Newcastle and at the time of my survey was

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[65] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q_oipdzzsaw

also Head of the School of Computing. Pete's page (Fig. 9) contains general information about his work area and interests, linking to his own and other pages with enormously detailed, comprehensive and erudite accounts about one of his specialist areas, parallelism (Fig. 10).
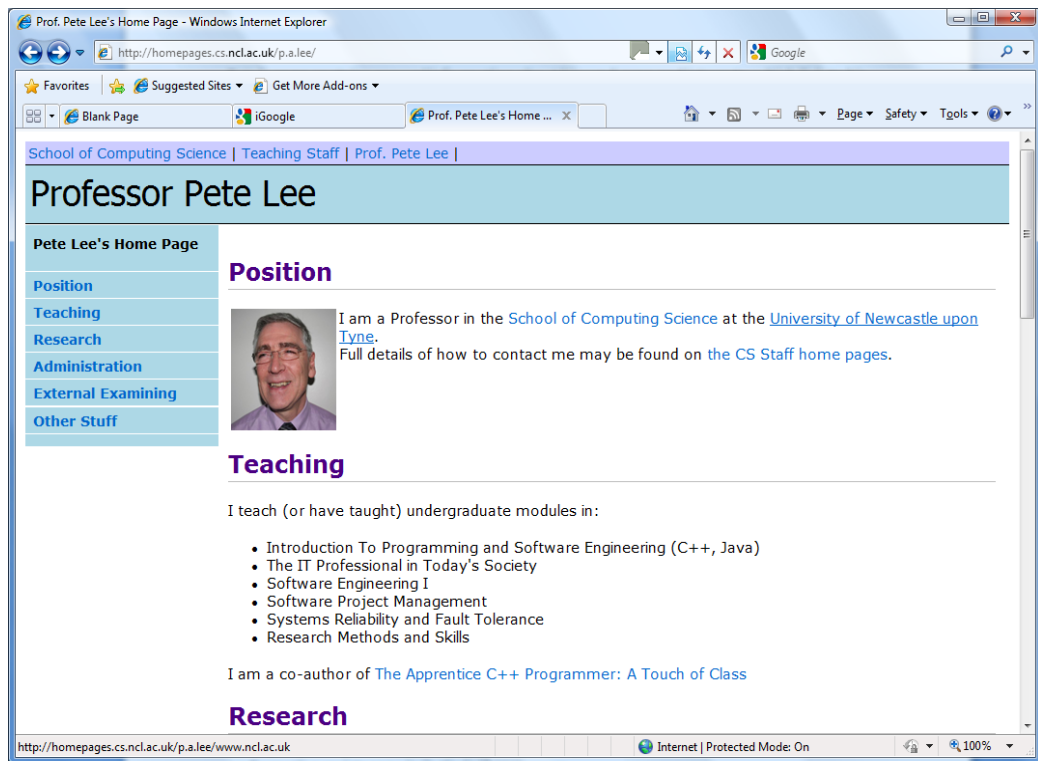
Fig. 9 Pete Lee's personal homepage

This information is presented in a matter-of-fact, rather modest way, without the slightest hint of marketing spin; as it mainly centres on Pete's research interests, it produces an overall effect is of someone who wants to share the knowledge rather than promote themselves.

Under a heading 'Other Stuff', Pete's non-work interests are mentioned; these include growing vegetables, hill walking and flying radio-controlled model helicopters. He also posts several photos of his office (for example, Fig. 11), which show a room that looks like a very typical academic office and which for me produced a slight shock of the familiar; I've seen that office so many times before in so many different universities.

http://www.parallelism.cs.ncl.ac.uk/
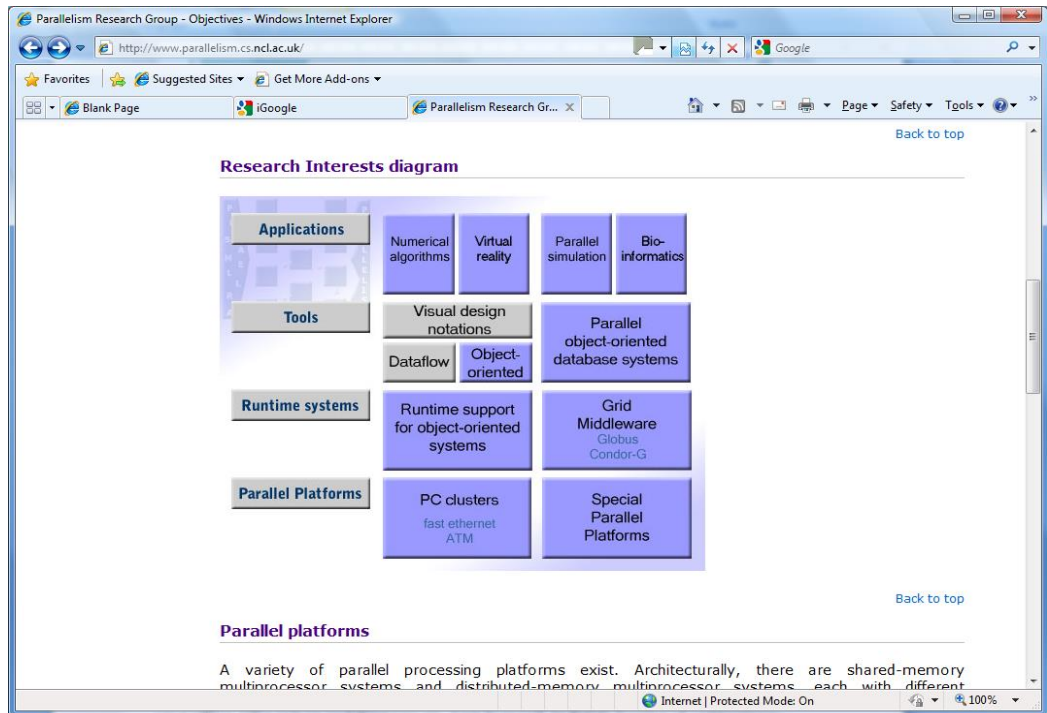
Fig. 10 Pete Lee's personal homepage – research interests diagram

http://homepages.cs.ncl.ac.uk/p.a.lee/home.informal/MyOffice2005/CIMG0131.JPG
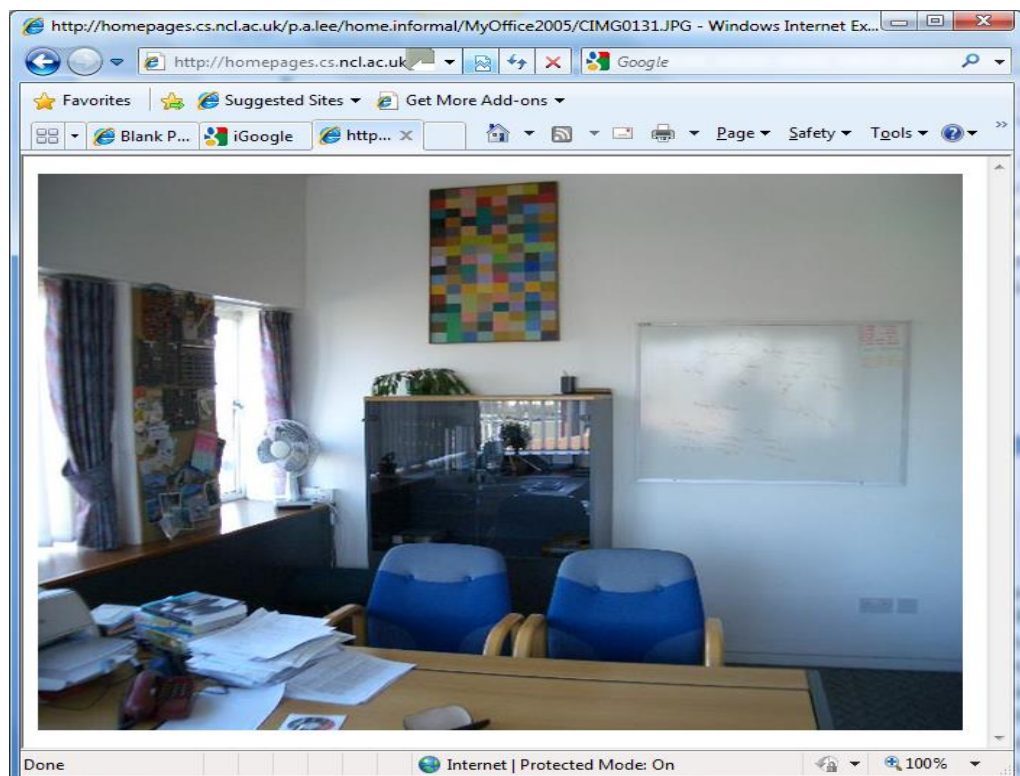
Fig. 11 Pete Lee's personal homepage – office photo

These elements, which seem slightly surprising within the context and causing slight disjuncture, seem to enact a desire to speak the everyday self which is invisible in the standard convention of academic homepages. The details shown on the photo in Fig 11 become compelling: the pinboard with bits of paper stuck on it for reference, reminders, prompts, the holiday postcards displayed on it as they would be on a mantelpiece at home, their blue skies, seascapes and the way they are displayed speaking about valued human connection; the three pot plants; the piles of papers and books; the open spectacle case; and the whiteboard with ideas scrawled on it, a memory of discussion. They are a story about the everyday, about activities which are discursively disallowed in such sites. Meetings, administration, informal discussions. The institutional, impersonal carpet and curtains, desk, chairs and window blinds that frame the photograph serve to underline the absence that the photograph is about. Embodiment. An embodied human being wrote the notes on the board, was sent postcards by colleagues, valued them sufficiently to pin them on the wall, took the glasses from the case, is wearing them. Watered the plants. In the reflection on the whiteboard you can just about make out the outline of the person taking the photograph. The shadow academic.

The 'Other Stuff' is important in the way it reinstates the facticity of embodied lived experience and the everyday within the digital Symbolic. It makes links with ideas of the natural – growing vegetables, hill walking. This is all the more interesting given that most of the site is devoted to the computational.

Hyland, in his 2011 study of academic homepages suggests that such approaches are a way that 'individuals … positioned by corporate discourses …manage to carve a sense of self'(2011, p.286). I contend that it is a way of resisting the corporate university and re-inscribing a more authentic sense of an academic self. Evgeniya Boklage, in writing about the importance of personal blogs sees them as an exercise in a civic and personal necessity, the Foucauldian 'care of the self', 'which emphasizes the self-expression values but which also has a liberalizing effect on society at large'(Boklage, 2013, para. 3). Much of what I have observed and analysed above suggests that these sites, by expressing selfhood, by resisting, also perform this civic role.

4.7   Armour for my phantoms

By creating a homepage, the subject is inscribing a story about themselves upon the realm of the Symbolic, the domain of language. But a homepage is also an articulation of the imagined relationship between the subject-as-they-feel-themselves-to-be and the mirror image, the subject-as-represented-in-language, the 'I'. So a personal homepage is a site of the Imaginary, a public acting out of the subject's imagined relationship to themselves. It is a performance of *meconnaissance*, within and upon the looking glass stage.

Lacan's concept of the fragmented body, the 'body in bits and pieces' as felt by the infant subject, contrasting with the finished and polished mirror image, clad in the 'armour of an alienating identity' (Lacan, 1949, p.78) offers a way in which to think about the personal homepage as a site of the Imaginary. Lacan sees the 'I' formation as being like a heavily armoured, fortified camp. And he views the relationship between the felt self, the fragmented body, and the finished, self-possessed statue in the mirror, as an imaginary one. In this imaginary relationship, the subject projects onto the statue the 'phantoms that dominate' them (Lacan, 1949, p.76-7).

The image in the mirror is a mirage of wholeness. The subject's projection onto that creates phantasms of the self, half-known and partially realised, what Lacan calls 'the veiled faces of the imagos' (Lacan, 1949, p.77). These return to us in dreams and hallucinations and become codified in the concept of the doppelganger, the troubling double. Thus a homepage may be, quite literally, *heimlich*, at the same time it is always *unheimlich*, because it is always the unsettling gaze of the double which meets the subject's own gaze, when they look at it.

Kittler sees Lacan's Symbolic as the realm of codes and ciphers, which can be represented in the language of the computational machine; he contends that film occupies the realm of the Lacanian Imaginary, as it provides a place onto which we can project our mirror stage illusions (Kittler, 1986, p.15). Applying Kittler's ideas to the concept of a homepage, I propose that it has a role in both the Symbolic and Imaginary orders, being composed, as it is, of language and code, fantasy and fiction.

Therefore, the subjectivity which is constituted by the blogs and homepages operates in a two-fold manner. It is the 'armour' of identity, in that it is a construction of a (fictionalised) mirror image within the linguistic and computational realm of the Symbolic. But it is also an articulation of the alienated subject's 'phantoms' and an acting out of the Imaginary relationship between the two; it is the uneasy armouring of our phantoms.

To illustrate this I return to my earlier example of Richard Shipman's site. One of the things he is knowingly storying in the site narrative is both the donning of the cultural armour of a computer scientist and the expression of his more – quite literally – 'phantom-like' uncanny, sub-cultural concerns with fantasy and gaming. Because there is cultural 'fit' here, as well as cultural dissonance, he speaks not only about an Imaginary relationship to the rationalist imago he has created, but also about technology's relationship with the Uncanny.

Another way that this is articulated is in the example of Steve Wheeler's blog and personal pages, *Learning with 'e's*. Steve Wheeler is an Associate Professor for Learning Technology at Plymouth University, and his blog provides lots of information and links about his subject area. He provides the standard information about himself and his publications, including membership of journal editorial boards, his membership and chairing of various committees. He also includes in his narrative a photograph of his wife and children and some information about his family's membership of a local Christian fellowship (Fig. 12).

http://steve-wheeler.blogspot.co.uk/
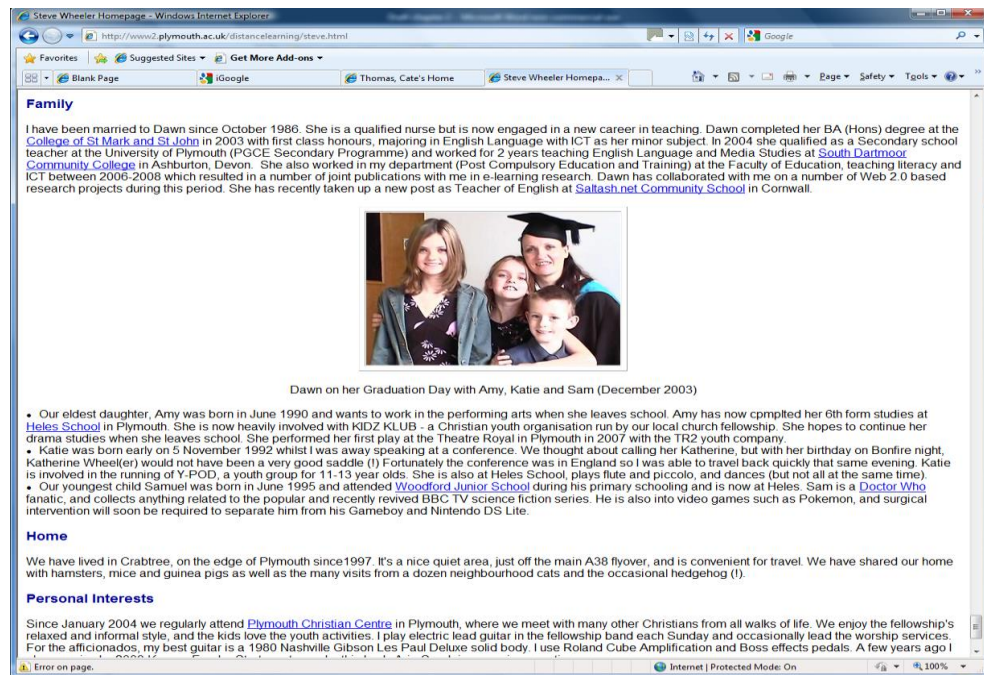
Fig 12 Steve Wheeler's *Learning with 'e's* site

So there is a narrative, here, that Steve has created, which speaks about the responsible citizenship aspect of being an academic (committee and editorial board membership) and about a conformity to dominant conservative notions of masculinity, where he presents himself as a heterosexual, Christian, family man. There is, however another narrative of self which weaves through this. The double pun in the title of the blog is the first clue to this. Learning with 'e's means 'learning with electronics' and 'learning with ease' both of which fit the respectable, responsible citizen narrative. But it also, refers to the recreational drug ecstasy, or 'e', and so means 'learning with ecstasy', a reference that's unlikely to be lost on students. In line with this more edgy alternative narrative, Steve links to blogs such as *edupunk* and *techno warrior,* and lists *Bladerunner* and *Minority Report* as favourite films; many of the photographs on Steve's blog are pure cyberpunk (see Fig. 13).

http://steve-wheeler.blogspot.co.uk/

Fig. 13 Steve Wheeler's *Learning with 'e's* site – e-learning 3 photo

So Steve sets up two intertwining versions of a self-storying, one clothed in the armour of respectability that shields another, phantom-like, self that has echoes of the fictional technocultural world of William Gibson or Philip K. Dick and the films they inspire.

In her work on the academic self and the commodification of intellectual activity, Ursula Huws asks, in relation to the pressure of the neoliberal workplace: 'what kind of armour plating do we require to survive this repeated battering of our self-esteem?' (Huws, 2006, p.3). My argument is that psychic survival in such circumstances depends on the ability of the subject's Imaginary to create this type of fantasy armour; the alternative, as Andrew Sparkes suggests in his work 'Embodiment, academics and the audit culture', is a form of psychological meltdown (Sparkes, 2007, pp.535-7).

4.8   Exhibitionism and voyeurism

Considering the homepage as a metaphor for the reflected image in Lacan's mirror stage brings to the fore the concept of the gaze. The narcissistic context of the mirror stage hinges around the subject's gaze, but this is only part of the story. In addition to the gaze of the subject and their image, there is also the gaze of the Other; homepages are designed to be read and in the case of blogs, commented on, by readers. Consequently,

the role of voyeurism and exhibitionism in relation to electronic subjectivity becomes important, as gazes are exchanged and meanings forged.

In 'The Partial Drive and its Circuit' (1973), Lacan discusses Freud's *Schaulust*, that is, the drive to see and be seen, or scopic drive. One of the four Freudian objects or drives[66], Freud presents the concept of the scopic drive in 'Three essays on the theory of sexuality, where he contends that the sexual desire to see or be seen is encouraged by 'the progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization' (Freud, 1905, p.69). All the drives, which are expressions of libido, close on objects, which act as stand-ins for the lost object, *objet a*. And all drives are destined never to be satisfied, as they are ultimately all drives towards what was lost, never to be returned. The operation of the scopic object, or gaze, in relation to the Other, is key to understanding the role played by voyeurism and exhibitionism in blogs (Lacan, 1973, pp.174-86).

Lacan stresses the point that the activities and positionings of voyeurism and exhibitionism is not an either/or, that is to say there is not a direct dyadic relationship between the two. That is to say, what the exhibitionist experiences is not the inverse of what the voyeur experiences, and vice versa. Rather, they have completely different experiences, and can change places, depending on who is in possession of the gaze and consequently how *objet a* rotates between the them on its circuit (Miller, 2007).

What the exhibitionist does, in the exhibitionist act of exposing themselves, is to make appear the gaze in the Other. For the Other, the voyeur, the exhibitionist then appears to possess *objet a*, and so be whole. But, of course, *objet a* is not so easy to obtain. The *objet a* the exhibitionist appears to have is always out of reach, it is slippery and it slips away from the gaze of the voyeur. The voyeur is entranced by the lure of the gaze, but what the voyeur sees is what they want to see. They see the 'shadow behind a curtain' (Lacan 1973, p.182), and project onto it, with the arrow of their gaze, an *objet a-ness* that it does not quite possess, that is not quite visible to them, but which they feel somehow must be there. And so, in the gaze, the voyeur does not actually obtain enjoyment or *jouissance*[67]. It is a seductive lure, but is unsatisfying. At the same time it

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[66] The other three objects are the voice or vocal object, the anal object and the oral object.

[67] The French term 'jouissance' means 'enjoyment' but it also has a sexual dimension to it, implying orgasm, so is usually left untranslated as there is no exact English equivalent. *Jouissance* transcends the

carries within it the promise of a satisfaction that is never, somehow, realised. This leaves the voyeur in a position where they would say to the exhibitionist, like Lacan, in his example of the lover looking at the beloved 'what I look at is never what I wish to see' (1973, p.103).

Ewins, writing about the role of blogs in academic identity, gives an example of the enacting of this drama when he discusses how academic bloggers are sometimes contacted by readers, who complain that they are not what they wish them to be: 'It's as if readers make up their minds about an author's identity and are annoyed to see it shift before their eyes' (Ewins, 2005, p.374).

The voyeur can only obtain *jouissance* by being discovered in their voyeuristic act of watching. The shame of being surprised in the act and the pleasure of the moment of discovery are simultaneous. And when the voyeur is discovered, they in turn become the object of the gaze, so they move into the place of the exhibitionist, in the way that Sartre's Peeping Tom, surprised at the keyhole, suddenly becomes aware of himself as object of the gaze of the other. Thus *objet a* moves around its circuit, and by being discovered in this act of voyeurism the voyeur makes the gaze appear in the other, that is to say, they make the other into the voyeur. The exhibitionist's enjoyment, and their secret desire, is for the voyeur to exhibit themselves (Nathenson, 1981). The exhibitionist's access to *jouissance* occurs, then, when the voyeur is discovered, and so become the object of the gaze – either that of the former exhibitionist or of a third person.

In blogging and personal websites, the exhibitionist drive to exhibit oneself to the world is quite explicit; to a great extent, we publish homepages in order to be seen. Blogging also means that readers of the blog can post comments; thus the reader, or voyeur, can change place with the exhibitionist, as the blog author reads the comment and publicly answers it. In blogging, then, the ability for *objet a* to make its circuit so that the places of voyeur and exhibitionist can change, is made explicit, as blogging, quite literally, invites a response from the Other, by virtue of the comment facility.

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boundary of pleasure to, paradoxically, include suffering. This is the suffering the subject (in the case above, the voyeur) obtains from their satisfaction (Evans, 1996, pp.91-2).

Barbara Freedman makes the point that the way in which cinema has negotiated the operation of the gaze is by having a convention by which actors in a film pretend not to know that the film is, or they are, being watched by an audience (Freedman, 1991, pp.1-3). So cinema itself occupies this convention of pretending that it is oblivious to the gaze of the viewer, when in fact a film's reason for existing is to be gazed at by the viewer. It is possible to draw some parallels here between Freedman's observation about cinema and what happens in the practice of blogging. A blog is simultaneously a diary, with a sense of immense privacy and self-revelation that this implies, but it is also an exercise in exhibitionism.[68] Unlike cinema, however, the potential for exhibitionist/voyeurist dramas to be played out within it is at the very heart of what it actually *is*. The enabling of performance and display, as well as covert or overt viewing is openly built into the functionality of the software and the *raison d'etre* of the blog.

Laura Mulvey, in her seminal Lacanian analysis on the pleasures of the scopic drive in cinema sees the viewing positions as fixed by the symbolic order; a male gendered viewpoint, as 'bearer of the look' (1975, p.11) voyeuristically desiring the objectified female in the film, while the feminine viewer can only aspire to identify with the eroticised female object of the gaze. Mulvey provoked significant discussion on the gender plasticity and queering of the gaze, but bringing her perspective to blogs again points up the difference between the pleasure of cinema and technoculture. In blogging, subjects are inevitably voyeurs *and* exhibitionists, obtaining a *jouissance* that Andre Nusselder, in his 2009 account of internet psychology specifies as always 'a pathological enjoyment'(loc. 1856) rooted in the need to constantly repeat (the posting, the response, the update) created by the instability of the Symbolic order, a concept I'll discuss in some detail in the next chapter.

Of course, many voyeurs of a blog choose to 'lurk'[69] in the position of voyeur

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[68] This collision of the intensely private with the supremely public is what can make blog voyeurism so powerful and compelling, as Victor Burgin (2000) explores in his analysis of Jennifer Ringley's famous streamed videoblog, *JenniCam*.

[69] It is significant that lurking, which used to be a pejorative term for those who entered an area in IRC chatrooms but only read, rather than wrote, contributions, is now a completely acceptable activity on interactive websites, such as blogs. They are called readers, rather than lurkers, and their role is measured in hits and widely appreciated. Web culture now accepts that there can be no exhibitionist role without the role of voyeur.

and, in a sense, many academic blogs are actually about voyeurism. It is common for academic bloggers to post reviews of books and conference presentations, which are, effectively, narratives about voyeurism. My next example, Grainne Conole's *e4innovation* blog, has many detailed and authoritative accounts of books and conferences. Grainne is Professor of e-learning in the Institute of Educational Technology at the Open University. As shown in Fig. 14 Grainne's blog gives an account of all the keynote speeches at the 2008 Ascilite[70] conference in Melbourne, including links out to books, papers, software, reports and projects, and photos of the presenters. This kind of detailed conference account is both a voyeuristic account and an invitation to watch others, but there is also exhibitionism in the performance of the invitation.

The performance speaks about breadth and depth of knowledge in the area, as Grainne performs the ability to précis the expert input, comment on it, and suggest links to related information. So this approach, which is a widely used one on academic blogs, performs expertise and authority, and invites the viewer to watch *with* the subject – whose embodied self is having the experience of watching, listening, speaking and being watched at the conference – in a 'Watch with Mother' fashion, as well as watching the subject and their mastery of the field.

When speaking of homepages, Sherry Turkle says that *'*one's identity emerges from whom one knows, one's associations and connections'(1995, p.258). This is even truer for blogs as they permit the performance not only of expertise, but also of a networked connectedness with the rest of the academic community and other relevant groups and individuals. So, for example, Fig. 15 shows the page of Grainne's blog which describes going to the headquarters of the educational software organisation Moodle to meet with their Director, Martin Dougiamas, and this is illustrated by a photograph of the two of them standing under the company banner.

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[70] Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education, one of the oldest and most established international educational technology societies.

http://e4innovation.com/

Fig. 14 Grainne Conole's *e4innovation* site

http://e4innovation.com/
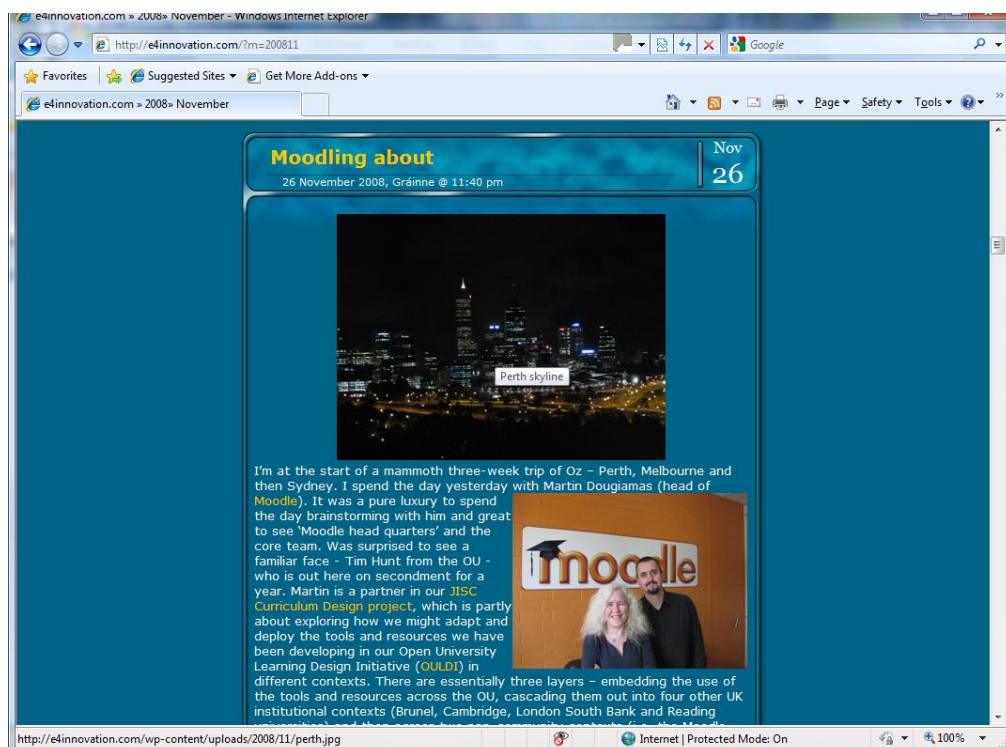
Fig. 15 Grainne Conole's *e4innovation* site – moodle photo

A blogger always knows or imagines that they are being watched. But they don't know by whom until the voyeur reveals themselves by posting a response on the blog. This is at once a very intimate and yet enormously distant act.

When the voyeur reveals themselves, by a posting, they are discovered and change places by becoming the exhibitionist. But, ironically, the only way that the voyeur can know they are discovered is for the exhibitionist to read their contribution and acknowledge or comment on it – by which act they go round the full circuit and become the exhibitionist once more. So for the voyeur, *jouissance* exists only in the nanosecond where they see, by the existence of the comment on their posting, that they are discovered, or by their imagining of the exhibitionist's experience of discovering themselves being watched by the voyeur. The voyeur always returns, by the very act of knowing their discovery, to the position of becoming once more the voyeur, and so returns to their original place in the drama.

An example of this is in Ruth Page's *Digital Narratives* Blog. Ruth is a Senior Lecturer in English at Birmingham City University and uses her blog to discuss research ideas. Ruth posts a long piece (Fig. 16) which follows on from her other ideas about digital narratives and Facebook and about whether Facebook updates can be considered to be a kind of episodic story. As shown in the next screen image a reader using the name 'Damon Lord' takes the stage by commenting that Ruth should consider using Twitter instead of Facebook for her research. The point is largely irrelevant to Ruth's carefully laid out ideas, which leads me to assume that the reader here is motivated by the drive to be seen, to become the exhibitionist. Ruth quickly takes back the exhibitionist role by a post which politely explains that this isn't what she has set out to do at all and the voyeur returns to the position of watching. What changes, now, is that the exhibitionist always knows that they are being watched, and the voyeur, having drawn attention once to their presence at the keyhole, knows that the exhibitionist will always know they are there. Their one exhibitionist act leaves a permanent imprint on their relationship to the exhibitionist, and they are now, forever, always part exhibitionist themselves, by dint of being a visible voyeur. Which is why postings make us anxious – and why we obsessively use them.

http://digitalnarratives.blogspot.com

Fig. 16 Ruth Page's *Digital Narratives* site

The voyeur can become an actor in the drama, and can have an effect on the narrative, much like the Stasi surveillance captain, Weisler, in Von Donnersmarck's film *The Lives of Others* (2006), where the intervention of the professional voyeur in the dramas of the exhibitionist artists changes a course of events. Only a voyeur can do this because only a voyeur has the information borne of a close reading of the situation. So a comment can change what the blogger's next post is about, as happens frequently in blogs.

The lure of a blog for the voyeur is that they will see *objet a*. But of course they never do. It's always another link, another mouseclick away, but somehow it slips away from them. Voyeurs of blogs can spend hours click through links, driven to search for the next, or the next link which will deliver their desire.

The entire exhibitionist/voyeur scenario within blogs only becomes charged when there is a sense of presence. When one looks at a blog where the last entry was eight months ago and the most recent response was four months ago, it seems stale and flat because it

is not current – and maybe nobody is watching. Derrida says of the metaphysical desire for presence, for immediacy, that it is inevitably structured as a kind of misapprehension or snare (Derrida, 1967, p.142-3). It is always doomed to failure. 'This desire carries in itself the destiny of non-satisfaction' (Derrida, 1967, p.143). But readers of a blog which appears to have a sense of presence will still continue to *chase* this desire for presence, just as they continue to pursue *objet a*. The sense of almost having presence when engaging with a blog is similar to that of almost having *objet a*. The voyeur continues to feel that they may get both, even if they know, rationally, that this is not possible, and that feeling leads them to continue to pursue their relentless quest.

4.9 Death and aggressive disintegration

Viewed within the Lacanian dynamics that I am using, inevitably, the mirror image of a personal page is threatening to the subject who has created it. It challenges the subject because of the contrast between the wholeness of the image and the sense of fragmentation and disunity that the subject experiences in themselves. This threatens the subject with a sense of disintegration; in contrast with the perfect image in the homepage/mirror, their sense of fragmentation and lack of control becomes more marked. The sites honed perfection mocks their chaotic incompleteness.

This leads to the subject's aggressive desire to smash the mirror and destroy the double. Ewins writes about the strong desire to tear down the blog and the destroy the archive:

> So they go on hiatus or holiday, redesign their site, tear down their archive and start afresh, or simply stop. I've seen bloggers do all these things. Apart from tearing down my archives and stopping altogether, I've done all these things.
>
> (Ewins, 2005, p.374)

Thus the desire to destroy the digital double may sometimes be acted upon. But this is not without dangers. As in the Buribunkian world, for a 21st-century academic subject to have no electronic presence is tantamount to being invisible, inaudible – and, in fact, ceasing to exist.

Paradoxically, creating a blog, is, in a literal sense, an electronic archive of the self. This archiving of the self is both an admission of mortality and an attempt to overcome death. In this way it differs from the 'official' institutional homepage, a double created by the university which lacks the authentic 'backing' of the embodied subject. In this type of page there was nobody 'at home' in the first place, so nobody to *not* be at home in the event of the subject's death. To put it another way, the institutional page never lived; it's a natural born zombie.

The electronic self, the self that is constituted by digital inscription, is and is not the subject. But it cannot die, or, at least not easily. The subject can die, in the sense of the embodied self expiring, but the digital double lives on. Because digital texts are subject to archiving in their very creation, in a way that is completely outside the control of their original author, they become immortal (or at least as immortal as digital fragility permits). This archiving forces the subject to live forever, making impossible, or barely possible, the option of death. As Kittler points out 'in our mediascape, immortals have come to exist' (1986, p.13).

But the immortal, revenant self, is and is not the subject; it is a self constituted entirely by a specific arena of digital discourse, a self simultaneously outside the control of the subject, but eerily and intimately their digital spectre. The existence of the archived electronic self, in itself, is a reminder of death, even as its creation, the creation of an immortal self, is an attempt to cheat death.

Ewins talks about academic blogging as a way of watching your own death, because of the 'post-self environment' (p374) in which bloggers immerse themselves. He concludes that:

> The promise of blogging for academics is great ... but it brings with it the risk of the 'ever present death', an awareness of the fleeting and fickle nature of the self, which can undermine the very attempt to establish one's own academic self online, or even off.
>
> (Ewins, 2005, p.375).

Perhaps the experience of watching one's own homesite has a resonance of grasping of this ultimate horror. There are echoes here of the experience of the victims of the

Peeping Tom, in Michael Powell's eponymous movie (1960), who, as they are dying, are forced to watch their own reflections in a mirror. Like them, the subject's watching of their own electronic mirror is akin to watching their own death.

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In acting as a surveiller of individual's blogs and a commentator on these blogs, I am conscious that my analysis and commentary in itself constitutes a performative act, and that whilst critiquing the archives of my subjects I am attempting to take the stately position of the archon, creating my own archive in this electronic document.

Perhaps I am also acting like a facilitator in the Buribunkian society, by reading and considering, and then engaging theoretically with the blogs of others, and producing a chapter on them. I am also the secret (or not so secret now that I've written this and fessed up to it) voyeur of all the academic home sites mentioned, as well as the voyeur of the many other homepages that I read and did not include (and being read and rejected is a much worse fate than being voyeuristically exhibited). I am also occupying the role of exhibitionist in speaking of my voyeurism.

Poster speaks about the need to find a 'happier inscription of identity' (2007, p.138) in the way in which the internet re-negotiates the relationship of human bodies to their subjectivity. But perhaps the pursuit of this is in itself impossible, if impossible not to pursue. As I have tried to demonstrate, academic homepages, whilst appearing to offer a straightforward means of inscribing oneself on the digital universe, actually bring the subject into an arena of a variety of ways of expressing the neuroses of self-love, self-misrecognition, self-dramatisation, self-doubt, and, ultimately, self-destruction. Perhaps, then, our home sites are an inevitable part of the discourse of the hysteric and are ultimately, themselves a quest for an understanding of self. Or, as Lacan puts it: 'what I seek in speech is a response from the Other. What constitutes me as a subject is my question' (1966, p.247).

Chapter 5 – I beset me: doubles, ghosts and other troubling electronic selves

Without any intention of mine I had been defined by the action reflected in the mirror. I beset me. I was the subject of the sentence written on the mirror.

(Angela Carter, *Flesh and the Mirror*, 1974, p.70).

5.1 Preface

The search for and selection of sites for this chapter was performed in 2010, which is when the chapter was first drafted. It is a product of this historical moment in the sense that a Google search on my own name would produce different doubles now, in late 2014, but not in the sense that institutional and corporate personal pages are now very different in their makeup. This is an interesting contrast to the rapid cultural change, over almost the same period, in academics' own representations of self in personal blogs, which I mentioned in the previous chapter.

5.2 Approach

Hysterics, Freud and Breuer tells us, suffer mainly from reminiscences (Breuer and Freud,1993, p.58). In this chapter I will consider how the academic subject suffers from the reminiscences of others. This manifests in varied, multiple, digital versions of the subject; ghostly tales of their life which proliferate in the countless databanks feeding the Internet.

Whereas the last chapter considered the online 'self' that the subject creates in their blog or personal homepage as a performance and staging of mediated subjectivity, this chapter addresses digital representations of the subject created by individuals and agencies *external* to them. Although these narratives are about the subject, they are not under the subject's direct control; indeed, the subject may not actually know such versions of themselves exist. Freud's concept of the double offers a fruitful way of considering how these unasked-for electronic selves contribute to the negotiation of academic subjectivity (as well adding to the sum of what the academic has to negotiate in the constitution of their subjectivity) and as I will be using this idea extensively, I begin by a discussion of the meaning of double. I then go on to consider theoretical

approaches to the way in which technoculture materialises the academic subject's double, and how the operations of ideology play a role in this, before examining the doubles uncovered by a Google search on my own name, in the light of these ideas. Next I look at the university profile page of one of the academics whose homepage I analysed in the last chapter, and consider how readings of the two sites can inform each other. Finally, I move away from specific examples of doubles to consider the way in which university audit culture plays a role in the production of doubles.

The academic double may be created by a range of individuals, groups or organisations: by the subject's employing university, past and present; by groups or projects with which the subject has been involved; by students; by other individuals associated with the subject's place of work; by commercial organisations and by state agencies. In general I will be looking at the professional representations of the subject in their work role, although, as I will show, the breakdown of the public/private divide produced by mediated technoculture means that professional life is no longer easily sealed off from the personal realm (as we have already seen in the discussion of private home pages in the previous chapter). How the price of operating within networked computer culture is the abandonment of privacy and how the distinction between work and non-work has been elided in a technocultural universe are – and have been over the past five years or so – key contemporary issues (Andrejevic, 2007, pp. 6-9; Ross, 2013, p.20). The way in which they contribute to an analysis of the university surveillance culture universities is something I will explore further in later chapters on embodiment and on academic labour. For the present, I confine myself to considering the implications of the phenomenon whereby everything we say or do (or are reported as saying or doing) on the internet leaves a trace which is stored, replicated, mutated and which can be aggregated to form a double.

5.3   The double

The use of the term 'double' or 'doppelgänger' originates in Otto Rank's *The Double: a Psychoanalytic Study* (1914), which Freud helped edit and which he draws on in *The Uncanny* (1919). The double is a radically *unheimlich* device in literature or film and is produced when an individual appears who looks and sounds identical to the subject. Sometimes they even have the same name. Rank sees the double as being associated

with shadows, portraits and particularly mirrors, as in Guy de Maupassant's tale of *The Horla* (Rank, 1914, pp.20-2). He also considers its relationship with ghosts, with guardian spirits and demons (ibid., p.51-2), and highlights the ambivalent nature of the double (ibid., p.54). Freud builds on this, viewing this 'doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self,' as a way in which the ego denies death, but which, conversely, also reminds the subject of their own mortality (Freud,1919, p.356). So the double exercises an eerie appeal for the subject, but its appearance inevitably causes them great anxiety. When the double materialises, things usually begin to go wrong for the subject. A cause of both revulsion and fascination for the subject, it acts against them, thwarting their desires and misrepresenting them to the world. Understandably, the subject traditionally desires to kill the double, as in the famous examples of Edgar Allan Poe's *William Wilson* (1839) and Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* (1891). But by killing the double, they inevitably kill themselves, as they are interdependent.[71]

As well as being a manifestation of the ego, Freud also sees the double as having qualities of the superego, as its activities can include 'observing and criticizing the self and … exercising a censorship' (Freud, 1919, p.357). To us, in the 21st century, influenced both by the legacy of Freud's work and the way in which the double has been interpreted within culture, particularly in film, the most obvious aspect of Freud's triad that we might associate the double with is the id. Typically, it behaves in ways morally repugnant to the subject and relentlessly pursues its own debauched (and the subject's repressed) desires, as one of the most famous doubles, Robert Louis Stevenson's Mr Hyde (1886) and his many filmic counterparts demonstrates.

Mladen Dolar, in a Lacanian reading of the double, mobilises the concept of the Real in thinking about what the double means for subjectivity (Dolar, 1997). As I touched on in the previous chapter when discussing the mirror stage, for Lacan the Real is the realm we inhabit as infants before our entry into language produces us as subjects. Post-

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[71] There is a – very recent – trend in science fiction where doubles are not killed but allowed to live as 'others' or 'divergences'. This is usually a fictionalisation of scientific theories of multiple dimensions, as in Jasper Fforde's *The Woman Who Died a Lot* (2012) or cloning, as in the film *Moon* (Jones, 2009). Although the presence of the double is still eerie and challenging for the subject, the apparent scientific explicability of their existence makes them more a representation of threat (of the Other) rather than an actual threat in themselves.

subjectification, we see the Real as both seductive and terrifying, and simultaneously desire and dread to return to it.

Dolar argues that double in the mirror image only manifests on entry into the Symbolic, and the price paid for this by the subject is the loss of the Real. So the split, misrecognising self knows it is not really the 'I' it claims to be because it is cut off from *jouissance*, that is to say it has lost that part of itself Lacan designates as *objet a*. We can never see *objet a* when we look in the mirror. But what the double represents is the mirror image *plus objet a*. It is a collision of the Real with the Imaginary and this creates extreme anxiety for the subject when the doppelgänger appears; *the double is more self than the self.* (Dolar, 1995, pp.12-13). Slavoj Zizek uses Michel Silvestre's naming of the double as *Père-Jouissance* to consider how it goes beyond a 'reduction of the double to the imaginary mirror relationship' (Zizek, 1991, p.54-5). He attributes the uncanny effect of the double not just to the irruption of the Real manifested by the double, but to the subject's realisation, on being faced with the (unspecularisable) gaze of the double, that the Real is present within the subject themselves: 'the double embodies the phantom-like Thing in me' (Zizek 1991, p.55).

Both Rank and Karl Miller trace the emergence of the double from its proliferation in Romantic texts and Miller goes on to associate doubles with orphans, spies and detectives in 19th-century fiction (Miller, 1985, p.49-51). Kittler, meanwhile, sees the double of 19th-century Romanticism as a product of literary texts, whereas the double of the 20th century he views as a product of mechanisation, in particular, of film. Kittler also suggests that in order for the double to appear before the subject 'the cunning strategies by which others produced it must be thoroughly masked' (Kittler, 1997, p.88). Extrapolating Kittler's thinking on older media systems into the present day (that is to say, that we are determined by media that have become yet more powerful) I propose that while literary and filmic doubles are still very much with us, the double has also moved out of a fictional space to colonise the everyday, locating its home in mediated technology. Once, only Dorian Gray and Dr Jekyll had doubles; the agency of computational capitalism means that now we all have them. My task in this chapter is to go some way towards unmasking the 'cunning strategies' by which they are produced.

5.4   The collapse of the master signifier

The technocultural double also produces anxiety in the subject because of the way it links in with what can be termed a failure of Symbolic efficiency brought about by the collapse of the master signifier. A master signifier is one which gives other signifiers their meaning; Lacan talks about it as anchoring signification chains as a *point de capiton*, empty in itself, but providing a way for meaning to stabilise. Thus 'God' or 'the monarchy' or 'freedom' all function as *point de capitons* in this way (Butler, 2004; Bracher, 1994, p.119). Zizek sees late modernism as being marked by a collapse of the master signifier: '"nobody is in charge" … [because] today's society is thoroughly reflexive … there is no Nature or Tradition providing a firm foundation on which one can rely'(Zizek, 1999, p.336). He discusses how the suspension of the master signifier within the technocultural symbolic operates and what effect it has. The master signifier holds together chains of meaning in the symbolic order; as it collapses, or loses its efficiency, so does meaning.

The suspension of the master signifier works in a number of ways. Firstly, the hysteric subject (and Zizek argues that the internet produces us as hystericised subjects) is always unsure about what they are for the Other, so if we have an even shakier idea of what the Other is, because of the collapse of meaning, then we *really* don't know what we are for the Other. That increased anxiety underlines our position as hysteric. Secondly, the failure of the Symbolic means that the Real becomes inaccessible because the gaps between the Real and the Symbolic are filled in; paradoxically, at the same time irruptions of the Real make its desire (that is to say what we imagine to be the desire of the Other) horribly present. One of the ways in which the Real intrudes is in the form of the double, the sinister *Pére-Jouissance*. Thirdly, the relationship of the Imaginary to the Symbolic becomes challenged. Because the Symbolic no longer adequately produces meaning, the Imaginary appears to be more important than it was, and its affective intensity is heightened by the inadequacy of a Symbolic anchor. That is to say, because there are not clear and stable meanings produced by language, the realm of fantasy takes over and becomes more emotionally charged. Conversely, the Imaginary is also grounded in uncertainty, because of the collapse of the Symbolic, and this, too, contributes to the production of an hysterical subject, seeking to know what they are for the Other , but thrown into spasms of anxiety by the intrusion of the Other's desire, in the form of the double (Zizek, 1997, pp. 193-213).

The subject's digital double is, then, read through this lens, an 'obscene ethereal presence' that repels and entrances the subject (Zizek, 1997, p.201).[72] It both *is* and *is not* the subject, it is out of the control of the subject yet its features and behaviour reflect back on the subject and speak about them to the world.

5.5 The dividual

Gilles Deleuze's concept of the 'dividual' is key to understanding how the double, particularly the double as simulacrum, operates. Deleuze sees subjectivity, in the move to what he terms the *Society of Control*, as leaving behind the binary conceptualisation of individual/mass which marks Foucault's Discipline Society, in favour of the *dividual* – 'Individuals have become "*dividuals*" and masses, samples, data, markets or "*banks*"' (Deleuze, 1992, p.5). Computers are the material engines of control in Deleuze's landscape and, as dividuals, we are largely composed of data and our physical selves. This data can be harvested from us, broken down further and further into a molecular level and recombined by engines external to us (Williams, 2005). These recombinations can be carried out by human agents or, increasingly, by software agents, as Niederer and van Dijck demonstrate in their analysis of Wikipedia content-editing bots which obey rules and coded protocols assigned to them (2010, pp.1377-83). Such recombinations become our spectral, proliferating doubles, built from digital traces of ourselves – traces which Mark Poster, refers to as the 'secret self' (Poster, 2007, p. 118). Roger Burrow's work on 'metric assemblages'(Burrows, 2012, p.356) argues that there are over 100 different nested metrics the neoliberal university uses to measure academic staff which are 'enacted by code software and algorithmic forms of power' (ibid., p.358) to form 'metric assemblages'. Such assemblages – doubles – are reified and performative, in that it is they who are promoted, made redundant, are awarded grants, and are entered (or not entered) for research assessments (Burrows, 2012, pp. 357-61).

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[72] This important theorising of the digital self – or selves – that Zizek carries out in his 1997 work *The plague of fantasies* is very different from readings of the digital self current at the time. These saw it as offering a freedom to experiment with identity, and implied that either the digital self, or the subject, or both had a sense of control over this – a set of viewpoints with which Zizek directly takes issue (p.166-8). Also see Robins (1995) for a sustained and robust critique of these perspectives.

5.6   Ideology and networked computers

Mediated technologies make us all (or our doubles) part of a spectacle. Internet entrepreneur Michael Wolff proclaims that 'publicity is the currency of our time' and Jodi Dean uses this headline concept as a way of thinking critically about how the economy of computational capitalism operates to produce us as self-publicising subjects (Dean, 2002, p.6). As I discussed in the previous chapter, the academic subject is inevitably implicated in this when they become the spectacularised academic. As Dean suggests, we all experience ourselves as mediated subjects and this has particular relevance to the creation of our doubles. Our secrets – and our doubles – are out there on the internet, and if they weren't then we'd feel that we didn't exist at all (Dean, 2002, p.13). In fact, even if we have (or think we have) no secrets out there, the existence of our internet doubles is a kind of publicised secret in itself – secret from us (as we don't tend to search for ourselves), but available to others. In order to understand the socio-political and psychocultural mechanisms of how this works, I propose first to consider the relationship between ideology and networked computers.

I start by taking Zizek's 1997 re-interpretation of Louis Althusser's concept of ideology and applying it to computer culture. Althusser, in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970) sees the Capitalist State as comprising two distinct parts. The Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) is made up of elements such as the army, police, courts and prisons – any part of the system that functions, ultimately, by violence. The Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) comprise a range of dispersed institutions, such as the educational ISA which is made up of schools and universities and the communications ISA, made up of press, television, radio and other communicative means (in which we would now include the various forms of communication afforded by the internet and mobile technologies). ISAs perpetuate capitalism by legitimising and naturalising its assumptions and practices. They do this, not by direct coercion, but by ideological means (Althusser, 1970, pp.95-100).

Ideology, for Althusser, is the way in which we, as subjects within a capitalist formation, imagine ourselves to relate to the world. It is essentially illusory, 'a pure dream' (Althusser, 1970, p.108) although it is something in which we 'live, move and

have our being'[73] (ibid, p.116). Ideology is an *imaginary* set of relations which justify the dominant mode of production and its associated worldviews (ibid., p109-10). Althusser sees ideology as interpolating or 'hailing' the individual as subject. To illustrate how this works, Althusser uses his famous metaphor of a police officer shouting out to an individual in the street 'Hey, you there!' The individual turns around, knowing they are the one who is being hailed. Ideology operates in the same way, as it calls the individual to subjectivity (ibid., p118). For Althusser, we are all subjects of ideology and can never be outside it.

ISAs have both a material and ideological existence. A university exists in its material manifestation, for example as practices of lectures and tutorials within lecture theatres and offices; rituals of validating programmes of study; or the more obviously ritualised practice of graduation, with its solemn procession of academics and graduates in codified, archaic dress. Its ideological role is manifold but most obviously lies in inducting or hailing students into the appropriate set of cultural norms and expectations for their future work roles within the social formation.[74]

Althusser has been criticised for being overly mechanistic and reductionist in his analysis, overlooking the agency of subjects and reducing society to a 'theatre without players' (Mattelart and Mattelart, 1978, p.82). But these type of criticisms fail to take into account that, for Althusser, whilst ideology has its material existence in apparatus and practices, it relies on the imaginative energies of the subject to make it live.[75] The creative actions of the players enable the theatre.

Seeing Althusser's proposition in this light is a step towards understanding Zizek's re-interpretation of how ideology works on the subject, which I now go on to address. This posits the idea of a knowing subject who understands how ideology works; but who colludes with it anyway, even though they don't want to (Zizek, 1989, p.28-30).

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[73] Althusser attributes this quote to St. Paul, (Acts 17:28).

[74] A point that early 21st-century neoliberal concerns (see, for example, the 2011 CBI report) that graduates aren't 'job-ready' when leaving university and the enthusiasm for putting 'employability' on the HE curriculum simultaneously misses and hits on the head with a large mallet.

[75] There's a link here with the way Althusser's contemporary, Pierre Bourdieu, highlighted how subjects, as social agents, enact symbolic orders through social structures (Grenfell, 2012).

In his work on ideology Althusser leverages the work of 17th-century scientist and theologian Blaise Pascal, who proposes that *participating* in religious activity encourages a subject to have religious beliefs; he quotes Pascal: 'kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe' (Althusser, 1970, p.114). Zizek sees the 'hailing' of the subject by ideology as not quite sufficient to understand why we become so willing to collude with it – why don't we just ignore the policeman when he hails us? He goes back to Pascal to find an explanation of this (Myers, p.68). Zizek then reads the ISAs as a collection of *belief machines* which have three parts:

1.   they manifest as Ritual;
2.   they materialise as Belief;
3.   they propose as Doctrine.

Zizek describes how a belief machine operates, using the example of the Tibetan prayer wheel. Here the devout writes out the prayer and puts it in the prayer wheel, then spins it. As the wheel spins, they don't need to be praying or even thinking about the prayer, for the machine to have its effect. The machine prays for you (Zizek, 1989, p.34).

Present-day mediated technologies are fundamental part of the communications ISA, being not just ideological space within which the subject is interpellated, but also as having a materiality (beyond the materiality of bits and bytes and hardware) co-evolved between the hardware materials of computational and the body of the subject. In fact, I propose that they form a technocultural belief machine:

1.   We go through the daily *Ritual* of connecting and re-connecting ourselves into the online media world. This may be powering up – or picking up – a machine, opening a browser or an app, checking and posting status updates, catching up with emails, messages, posts, making contacts – or many of the other activities (so chillingly satirised in Dave Egger's near-future surveillance dystopia, *The Circle*, (2013)). We all have our (apparently personal, actually identical) rituals; mobile and always-on technologies encourage us to repeat these rituals, obsessively, at any time of the day or night.

2. The technologies materialise sets of *Belief*. This could be – or could perhaps in the early years of my study have been – that the 'information wants to be free'[76] and will set us free; more recently that we don't exist if we're not visible online; that social media, the gift economy and (later) crowdsourcing produce liberating new communities and access to individual and collective knowledge; that all that we need is more information to solve our problems, large or small – or other, similar approaches. These may support or be opposed to capitalism, but inevitably they collude with it, at some level.

3. *Doctrine* has emerged around technoculture. Again there are differing flavours of this, in the same way as there are different types of, say, Christianity; however, as all Christian doctrine includes a godhead and redemptive sacrifice, so all technocultural doctrine, whether of the anarcho-hacker school or of a self-consciously neo-liberal turn, includes shared elements. The computer, the network, stands in for the godhead, so what flows from this is the article of faith that says, for example, wider, better and faster connectivity and a laptop for every child constitutes a universal social good.[77] Mediated technologies, as others have observed, have become the religion of our time. Jameson, in fact first began to speak of a 'technological sublime' over 20 years ago. Since then various commentators have theorised the way in which technoculture has become a form of religion, most notably Margaret Wertheim, who argues in *The pearly gates of cyberspace* that the 'immaterial' space of the internet returns us to an almost medieval position of conceptualising it as a spiritually charged, transcendent space of the soul. (Wertheim, 1999).[78]

So networked computers can be seen as a kind of belief machine that enables our interpolation into ideology. The belief machine of networked computing prays, publicises, befriends, and importantly, *believes* for us. Even if we attempt to resist ideology, our integration into the belief machine sucks us back in.

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[76] This phrase became a hacker 'war cry' in the earlier days of digital culture. The original quote is attributed to Steward Brand: '[O]n the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it's so valuable … On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other' (Brand, 1984, quoted in Levy, 2014).

[77] When the American Government unveiled its plans to have broadband universally available to all Americans by 2020, the Federal Communication Commission stated that 'broadband is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and *a better way of life'* (my italics), BBC (2010).

[78] I expand on the religiosity of technoculture and on the work of these and other commentators on it in the next chapter in my discussion of the space of academic embodiment.

Dean leverages the Lacanian concept of the *sujet supposé savoir,* the 'subject supposed to know', which Lacan introduces in *Book XI* of the seminars. Lacan uses it in relation to transference in psychoanalytic practice, where the analysand (wrongly) assumes the analyst to have a level of knowledge verging on omniscience; for the analysand the analyst then becomes the subject supposed to know (Lacan, 1973, pp.230-43).

In her account of ideology and networked computers, Dean, who draws on Zizek's work, discusses how mediated technologies mean that we don't have to believe any more that there is a subject supposed to know out there; 'the technologies believe for us' (Dean, 2002, p.118). My reading of this is that whilst we realise that we, personally, are not the subject supposed to know, that realisation implies that there is one – out there. A situation in which we may not believe, but one which, as the technologies believe for us, we have to permanently resist. The implication of this for the spectacularised academic subject is that they can be hailed by ideology as the 'expert,' for example, the specialist who is interviewed on radio or TV news programmes and expected to provide the answers to topical problems such as global warming or the banking crisis; they are uncomfortably situated as the subject supposed to know who can pronounce to solve the world's problems. At the same time, they are never sufficiently the subject supposed to know enough because *they* know that there is always someone out there who knows more, has more recent data, has considered the issues from a new perspective, is more experienced or has a more youthful, contemporary – and so mediatisible – viewpoint, or who just works at a more prestigious institution. The subject, for themselves, can never (unless they have some kind of grandiose personality disorder) *be* the subject supposed to know. It is their double who becomes, uncomfortably, the representation of them as subject supposed to know, as it smirks from their web-pages with smug authority.

Linked in with this is the presentation of the academic's double by their employing university as a knowledge commodity designed to enhance the reputation of the organisation. Andrew Ross discusses how, as an agent in computational culture, 'if you're not the customer you're the product being sold'(Andrew Lewis, quoted in Ross, 2013, p.18), and this certainly applies to the digital academic double. It's illuminating to go back to Marx (an avid reader of Uncanny literature) who argues that, for the worker, his labour:

> becomes an object, an external existence … that exists outside him,
> independently as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own
> confronting him. It means the life he has conferred on the object confronts him
> as something hostile and alien.

> (Marx,1844, p. 29)

He could be describing how their the shiny, marketised double might appear to an academic on the corporate university website.

So we, as subjects, are active within the world of mediated technologies as agents who contribute to imagining the evolving ideology and to our own subjectivity within it. This connects back to the failure of the Symbolic discussed earlier. Ideology, Zizek argues, in *The sublime object of ideology* and in accord with Marx, fetishises commodities, not just in that it obscures their origins, but that it gives them a spiritual value. And that spectral supplement is *objet a* (Zizek, 1989, p.49-51). So I may desire a sports car because I imagine it gives me access to *objet a*. Another person may not invest the sports car with *objet a*, but may see it in a pair of shoes or a handbag. But our desires are for the same thing and we are both the subjects of ideology in the same way. As I write in early 2013 the commodities most saturated with *objet a* for UK consumers has moved from iPhones (last year's fetish) to iPads and 3D 'smart' televisions. The smart machines that will give us our 'i/I', our 'eye' or even our 'aye'. We don't need to think, see or consent, the machines will do that for us – as they will believe for us, as they will lend us the 'i' we struggle to create for ourselves.

The final theoretical perspective I wish to leverage in my discussions of the academic double, before going on to look at some examples of doubles, is the mapping of Lacan's triad onto mediated technologies.

5.7   Lacan's triad and networked computers

Freidrich Kittler proposes that 'the medium of the symbolic is called the computer' (Kittler 1997, p.138); Zizek uses the Real as a metaphor for machine code (Zizek, 1997,

p.212); and N. Katherine Hayles, in 'Traumas of code', discusses how machine language[79] can be viewed as a kind of unconscious: 'in our computationally intensive culture, code is the unconscious of language' (Hayles, 2006, p.137). Building on these ideas, I now want to demonstrate how Lacan's Real-Symbolic-Imaginary triad can be used as a metaphor[80] for understanding our relationship with machinic technologies, or as Hayles puts it: 'the interpolation of the user into the machinic system … disciplined by the machine to become a certain kind of subject' (2005, p.61).

Zizek sees the Real as a metaphor for the code that we cannot normally see, the machine language underpinning the increasingly opaque interface of the contemporary laptop or tablet. So 'under the bonnet' of a computer, unknowably to us, language (code, the language of the Real) actually performs – it isn't just used for performative statements, like symbolic language. Machine code is not language or code as abstraction; it doesn't just make performative statements, it 'initiates action in the world' (Hayles, 2005, p.124), that is to say, it actually acts to print the file, fly the drone, launch the missile. As Hayles says, code can be seen a metaphor for the unconscious and the unconscious is the realm of the Real. Interleaved this way, Zizek and Hayles' perspectives produce a sense that the Real is there, lurking in our computer, talking to itself and performing actions – we know not what. I propose that the irruption of code (when one makes an error or the machine malfunctions), onto the computer screen always has an uncanny effect, causing anxiety – 'where has my Window to the world gone? What is all this gobbledygook about registers and bins?'[81]

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[79] Machine language is the lowest level of programme code a that actually makes the operations of a computer happen. Over this there are higher levels of language that take the input of a human finger selecting an icon and translate it, thorough the levels, into the binary language the computer itself understands.

[80] Nusselder in a different kind of mapping of Lacanian 'cyberspace' describes a slightly different computational triad, comprising: 'the matrix, as the "noumenal" dimension of codified objects consisting of zeros and ones (the database); cyberspace, as the "phenomenal" mental spaceof the conceptualization or representation of code objects; and the interface, as their crucial medium' (2009, locs.61-2) . Nusselder doesn't make the same link between this and Lacan's triad, as I have here; his central thesis is that the screen is a place where the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic interface (ibid, loc.81).

[81] The 'Glitch' aesthetic, where artworks are based on the effect of bugs and malfunctions in software, operates along the same lines by exploiting the glitch in the software to see the 'Real' (see Menkman, 2011, for an analysis of Glitch culture).

Derrida's conception, in *Archive Fever,* of what lies inside his laptop supports this notion of an uncanny computational turn, when he characterises it as some kind of 'hidden god', saying 'I don't know how the internal demon of the apparatus operates, what rules it obeys' (2001, p.23). Now that the code of a computer has become, for most users, inaccessible[82] it is not just the machine code which metaphorically constitutes the Real, it is all the levels of code underlying the graphical user interface – particularly as computers begin to fade away into the background as we move to more pervasive technologies. Because the computer language the vast majority of us now understand is that of the Symbolic, the semiotics of the language of the screen – which Galloway sees as both being and not being a computer language, providing a 'threshold' which produces ontological transformation for the user when they cross it (Galloway, 2012, p.vii).

The computational Symbolic comprises the hardware, text, graphics, functionality, contextual usage, and the signification conventions that have emerged around them. Laptops, tablets, smartphones and watches; email, messaging, blogging and microblogging, skyping, social networking, reviews, rating and commenting, gaming, accessing and uploading video, music and photos; liking, trolling, friending, flaming, googling, sharing and stalking – are a non-exhaustive list of elements that form the machinic Symbolic. Kittler, in viewing computers as the machine of the Lacanian Symbolic, makes the point that Lacan conceived of the Mirror Stage in the same year, 1936, as Alan Turing created the Universal Machine. He quotes Lacan as having drawn a similar connection in 1955.

> It is enough to note that by means of your 0 and 1, that is, the
> connotation of presence-absence we are capable of representing

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[82] Of course we can learn what is in the Real of the computer, in the sense that it is within the wit of humans to understand what goes on 'under the bonnet' of a PC, laptop or tablet, but a vast and increasing majority of us do not have, or desire to have, this capability. There is a sense in which writing in the lowest level of code (effectively Assembler language) is now regarded as an eccentric, arcane practice, beloved of those who like to manipulate the levels and pulleys behind the magic show. Hayles points out that within the way code is written exists 'the embedded assumptions, resistant practices and hegemonic reinscriptions associated with [capitalism]' (2005,p.51); so even the Assembler coders are subject to the ideology inscribed into the language and syntax of code. As Zizek so often tells us, ideology is working on us most effectively at the moment when we think we have distanced ourselves from it and shrugged off its grip.

everything which presents itself, everything which has been brought
about by a determinate historical process.

(Kittler, 1997, p.137-8)

It is within this realm of the machinic Symbolic that our doubles present themselves, and where they negotiate meaning – even though their home is in the Real (as they are comprised entirely of code and *objet a*).

This leaves the realm of the computational Imaginary, which neither Zizek, Kittler or Hayles investigate. I propose that the Imaginary can be seen as the subject's imagined relationship to, and imagined self within or in relation to, the online world.[83] It consists of the subject's projections – what they visualise on/through/in their window, and how and who they are in relation to that. It is the self I project onto the screen, the self I understand or fantasise myself as being. It is the space where I see my own reflection on the screen of the machine, as I discussed in the previous chapter. The intrusion of the double into this imaginary causes the fantasised position of the subject within the online world to break down. I am not who I think I am, I am what the Other fantasises me to be. Maybe that is who I actually am? But the proliferation of doubles contributes to my not even knowing what the Other wants me to be, and brings about a fracturing and fragmenting of self – a self that I may make a (doomed) attempt to shore up by buying that sports car or those shoes.[84]

As I discussed earlier, because of the decline of the master signifier, the Symbolic seems no longer reliable or trustworthy to the subject. So in the computational Symbolic we do not trust anyone to be what they seem to be, and any viewpoints, however authoritative, is seen as being 'just opinions', as Jodi Dean discusses in her analysis of blogs (2010, p.3). There is no given authority in the computational Symbolic, just undifferentiated attempts to grab authority – although there are underlying ways in which authority materialises in the virtual, as for example, local censorship or surveillance (Garside, 2014) which functions as part of Althusser's repressive state

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[83] The computational imaginary has been used to mean the shared imaginary of 'computer culture'. My usage differs from this as it takes a specifically psychoanalytic approach to the negotiation of subjectivity within, or in relation to technoculture.

[84] Which online retailers are happy to help me with at the point of my fragmentation – indeed they are probably advertising them in a little box on my screen at that very moment.

apparatus. The collapse of the big Other causes the computational Imaginary to become a domain loaded with anxiety, as I discussed earlier, where we don't know who we are at all, much less who we are for the Other. All we have is a plethora of symbolic doubles to fantasise our subjectivity from – and none of them are trustworthy. The irruption of the double into the Symbolic carries with it the stain of *jouissance* (the enjoyment of the Other) and the Imaginary cannot escape from the horror and anxiety this creates. The collapse of meaning also causes the affective intensities of the Imaginary to become more potent, at the same time as the sense of closure may mean that it is stifled by the banality of a Symbolic order where everything is equal in authority and so undifferentiated, a cocktail Jameson refers to as 'a whole new type of emotional ground tone' (1991, p.6). And, in this, the borders between the computational Symbolic and Imaginary are always challenged.

5.8   The academic subject

In order to see how these perspectives work in practice, I will now go on to explore my own internet doubles. In doing this I'm reminded of Miller's point about doubles being connected with the detective (Miller, 1985, p.49), as I pursue my own doubles across the internet, track them down to their origins and force out of them an account of their motives.[85]

I have been employed mainly in academic, but also in managing and directing distance learning research and development (R and D) project roles, in several universities for about 20 years; I have also worked in the NHS and Trades Union Education. Like many academic staff of my generation in post-92 universities, I wasn't a career academic from the start of my working life, having spent some time as a systems analyst before moving to teach in HE. Most of my professional work has been in teaching and learning innovation for adult, part-time learners in higher education, mainly using distance and online learning approaches. When carrying out the activity of rounding up some of my

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[85] The practice of googling oneself not just to find dopplegangers, but also 'Googlegangers', other individuals who share the same name, has had a certain popularity for some years. Film-maker Angela Shelton tracked down 40 other Angela Sheltons to make a film about her Googlegangers, a process she records in her book *Finding Angela Shelton* (2008). There are also Facebook groups for people who share the same name and a number of name-tally websites (Rosenbloom, 2008).

doubles, I was anticipating that they might reflect some of the variety of my career. But the doubles brought up by a Google search on my name told a different tale.

http://www.kingston.ac.uk/services-for-business/contact-us
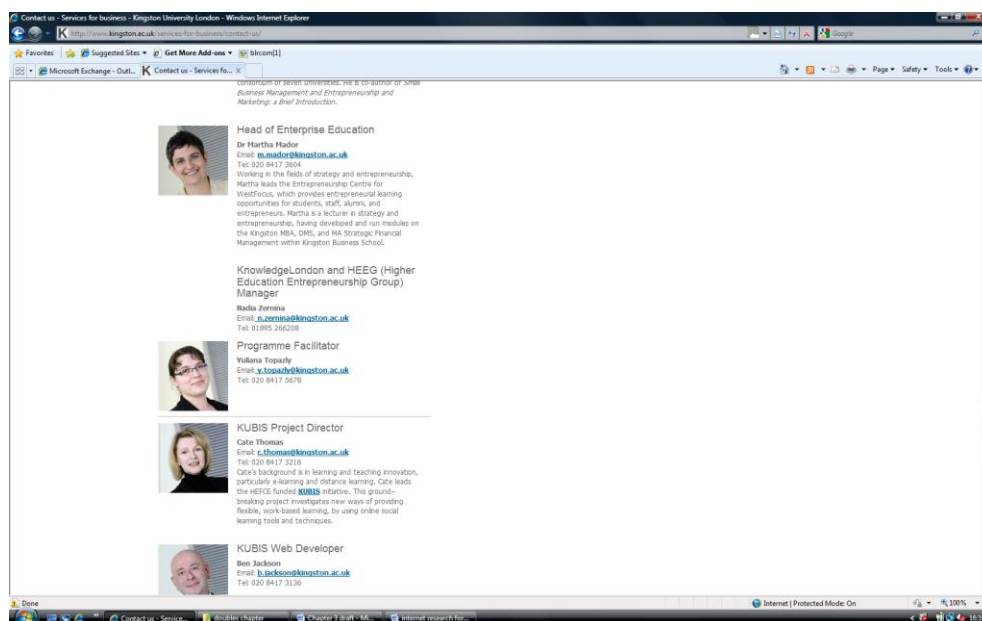
Fig. 17 Kingston University - my bio

At the time of carrying out this search, I worked at Kingston University. So, as may be expected, one of the sites which came up first on a Google search for my name, was my details on the Kingston site (Fig. 17). Five lines of text, which were written by me, describing myself are displayed next to a corporate photograph (the third one down in Fig. 17, above) and my job title, *KUBIS Project Director*. The overall heading (not visible in Fig. 17) under which I find my biography is, to me, somewhat alarmingly entitled *Services for Business*. Although I wrote my own bio, the dis-embedding of my utterances changes their meaning. The context in which they are situated suggests that the kind of teaching and learning innovation I work in is intended solely as an HE service for business, rather, than, for example, as way of improving access to higher education among working-class adults.

The funding body for the project I was leading at the time, HEFCE, produces another double high up my Google list (Fig. 18). My project was funded as part of its Employer Engagement initiative, so this forms the main thrust of the Funding Council's emphasis. A stock photo of two people in white lab coats situates the locus of the work, somewhat misleadingly, in the hi-tech industrial factory.

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/employer/projects/show.asp?id=11
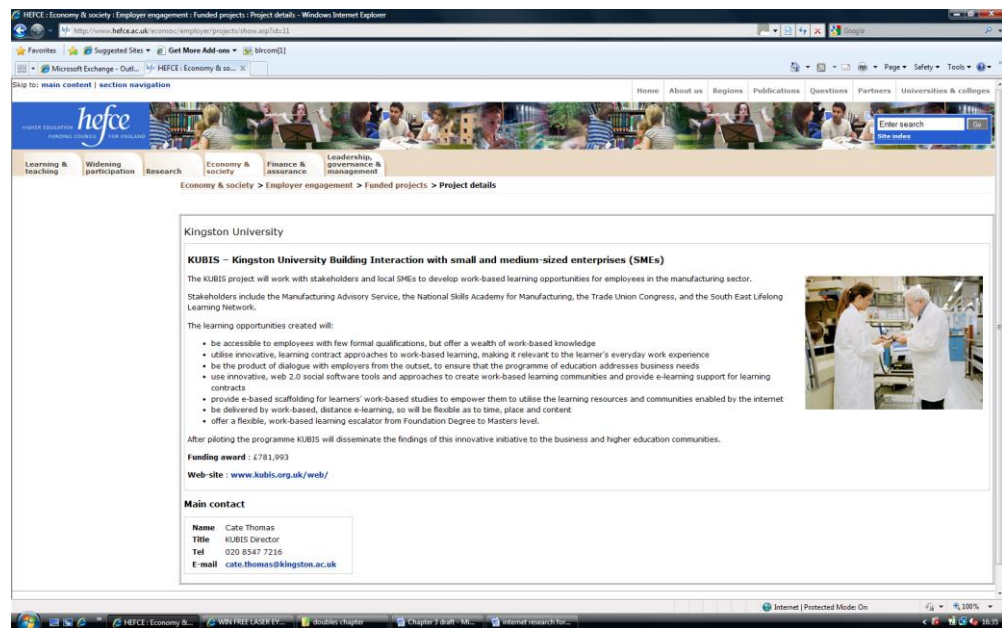
Fig. 18 HEFCE Kingston University KUBIS project

http://www.altc2008.alt.ac.uk/profiles/search?query=Thomas&go=search

Fig. 19 ALT-C 2008 presenter profiles

A third double (Fig. 19) lurks on the Association of Learning Technology Conference site. My bio and accompanying photo show up first, and when clicked produce an abstract of a paper I gave about the use of social networking technologies for learning.

A number of similar doubles also situate me as someone working in the field of technology-enhanced learning.

These three doubles and a number of others like them, which showed up in the first 20 Google results for my name, present me as engaged both with new technologies for teaching and learning and with 'business-facing', employer-focused HE initiatives. Whilst this is not actually untrue, quite recent work I have carried out with employers such as the NHS and the Gambian Medical Research Council, and work with Trades Union project partners is completely invisible. The contemporary educational ISA is saturated by a neoliberal doctrine, which assumes that higher education should reflect business needs and which valorises technology-enhanced learning above more traditional modes – and it has claimed me. Ideology is interpolating me, the belief machine is at work and is hailing me as a follower. Other potential narratives about myself, narratives which would provide a counter-cultural challenge to neoliberalism, are suppressed. I may see myself in a rather different light, but it's a struggle to resist the narrative my doubles are creating. Because of the operation of belief machine *the technologies are believing for me.*

Guy Debord, in *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, describes two of the aspects of liberal capitalism as being 'incessant technological renewal' and slander without reply (1998, thesis V). The electronic double is created by the first of these and often carries out the other. In the case of my next double, almost explicitly.

The existence of this double came as a surprise to me. I discovered it on a website called *Evalu8: academic research evaluation specialists* (Fig. 20). This Evalu8 group offers the service of 'reviewing, evaluating and evidencing the impact of university knowledge transfer, enterprise and employer-engagement related activity.' And, inexplicably, of the four evaluation experts whose names, photos and bios and CVs are listed, one of them appeared to be me.[86]

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[86] I learned after encountering this double that this site was an attempt to attract consultancy contracts. Whilst I did provide a bio and CV which was described as being 'for the website' I had no idea that it was to be used in this way. I have since had this particular double dismantled – and, so far, lived to tell the tale.

http://www.eval.org/evaluation-team
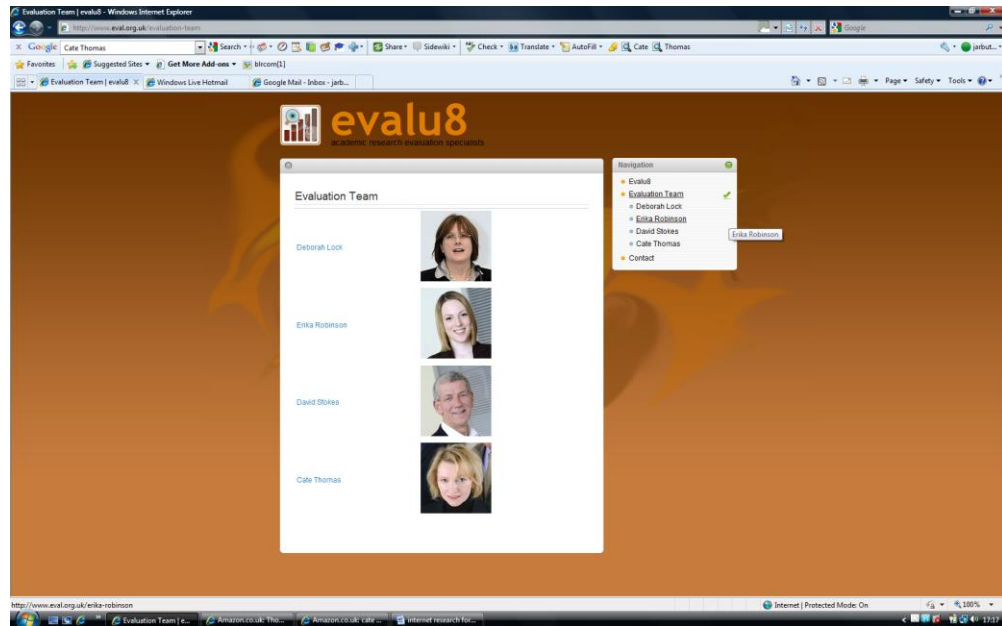
Fig. 20 *Evalu8* **site**

This unexpected double, claims, by her position on the site, expertise in evaluating knowledge transfer – which I, absolutely, do not have. Most of the other members of this group are business-facing administration or finance managers, so my double is present as the subject-supposed-to-know (about education). So that others can believe in this group, the creation of my double hails *me* as the subject-supposed-to-know (about education in a knowledge transfer context). The technologies interpellate me as this; without them it would not have been possible for the creator of the site to create this double. The collapse of the master signifier means that claims of the site make sense. Of course it's valid for university administrators to be experts in evaluating academic research! It's just another set of opinions, isn't it? And of course it's okay to co-opt a distance learning specialist as a member of the group without telling them. A university's a knowledge network, right?

The overall sense that some of my digital doubles are presented more in terms of business and new technology than my work-role at the time, or the overall sum of the work I have done in my career, might otherwise invite, has an additional consequence. It affects the way other doubles – ones that I might otherwise be comfortable with – might be read.

For example, the Beyond Distance Research Alliance site (not shown) contains the title and short abstract of a conference paper I gave at their conference, entitled 'The Electronic Academic: Subversion, Surveillance, Disruption'. Whilst the paper was about the way in which academic staff are surveilled by employers in the move to universities operating as control institutions, the positioning of that paper among all the business/ IT /evaluation narratives does not connote this, but rather suggests that it might contain advice about how to better control disruptive, subversive academics. Whilst I might be, in this example, attempting to resist the ISA, this turn around co-option interpellates my double as a willing, indeed policing, subject of neoliberalism.

http://kn.open.ac.uk/public/person.cfm?userid=9707
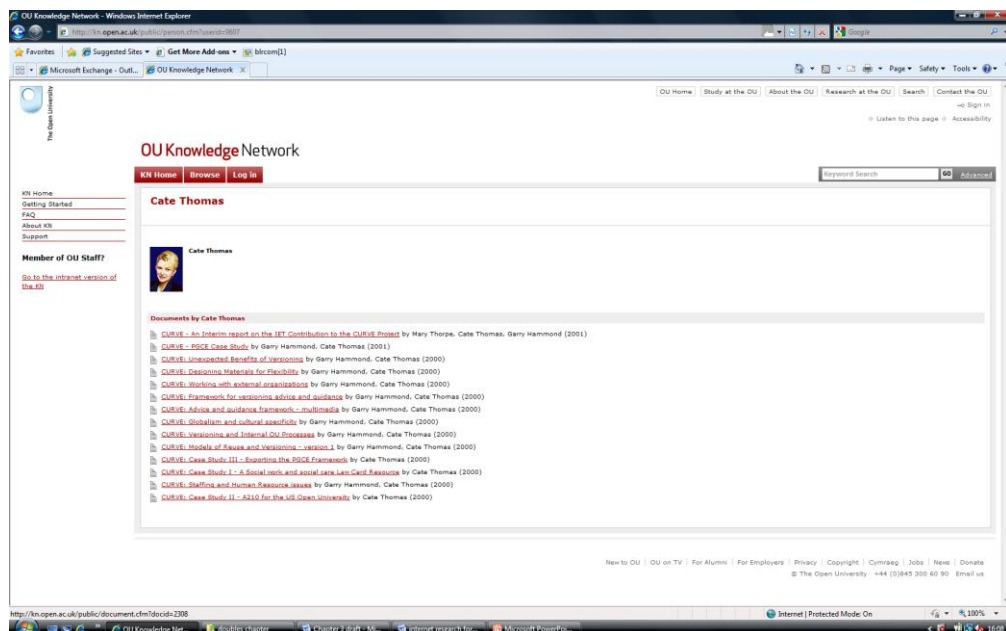
Fig. 21 OU knowledge network

Another unexpected aspect of my technologically engaged doubles also arose from my Google search. Over ten years ago I was involved with two projects which included strands of work on access and authentication for journal publisher portals and on the use of metadata for identifying educational materials. These are areas normally of interest largely to technically minded librarians. But I have a disproportionate number of doubles popping up that identify me with this work (Fig. 21 is one example) because, as one might expect, metadata communities have expertise in search engine optimisation. People may find themselves haunted on the internet by many ghosts of their previous

lives – their over-exuberant partying shared in Facebook photos, or their dubious political past surfacing from the archive. But my extremely persistent ghost appears to be that of the technical librarian I never was. This illustrates how belief becomes organised technologically; our subjectivity is not only 'spoken for' by mediated technologies, but also 'coded for'.

A third, slightly eerie, surprise was to find my Amazon Wishlist displayed on the 123People aggregator site (not shown). Whilst I manage this list of Christmas and birthday gift suggestions for my family and friends with the awareness that it's a public document, it was still an odd experience to have a list of *Star Trek*[87] DVD boxed sets and books on 19th-century spiritualism irrupt in the middle of narratives about professional work. In this context it seems to speak about deeply held private desires – what indeed, I have actively and materially wished for, the items I currently fetishise and invest with *objet a*. They are desires, not possessions – where I secretly want to go, not where I've been. The computational Real has slipped into the technocultural Symbolic and here are my private objects of desire, laden with the stain of *jouissance*, on show to the world. Whilst I wouldn't be ashamed to be seen reading a book on Victorian spiritualism in a public place, the wish to possess such a book breaking through as a message from the Real in this way makes it appear as a shameful desire – that can only be the darker side of the technical librarian.

The overall effect for me, as a subject, of these doubles appearing in the computational Symbolic is twofold. Firstly, many of the doubles that are out there are the most pedestrian and banal that my working self could be reduced to. A suffocating closure in the fabric of meaning is at work, which disallows more radical versions of self; it is I, not the double who is orphaned[88] – from my own political history and cultural engagement. The double who looks back at me not only misrepresents the values and opinions that I, as a subject, hold - but they are also boring.

Secondly, this leads me to forget and mistrust memories that I have of work that was focused on cultural inclusion and social justice. After all, they aren't there on the screen

[87] Ironically, if I actually did inhabit the world of ICT to the extent that my doubles suggest, admitting that there are *Star Trek* episodes that I don't already own would be tantamount to professional suicide.
[88] As I mentioned earlier, in his work on the double, Miller associates doubles with literal and metaphorical orphans and orphaning (1985, pp.47-50).

– so did they really happen? Maybe they're just another set of reminiscences. My Imaginary is impacted by this – both my computational Imaginary but my wider Imaginary as a subject. Maybe the years I have spent working on social inclusion initiatives aren't important? They aren't important within the educational ISA because my mediated HE self disowns them. They certainly aren't what I am for the Other. The whole effect is deeply unsettling to my sense of subjectivity.

Overall, in the pursuit of my ghostly doubles, I'm reminded of Freud's account of how Jentsch attributes the Uncanny effect as being strongest and producing the greatest panic in the subject when 'there is an intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object become too much like an animate one' (Freud, 1919, p. 354). This is the uncanny valley I feel myself to be in with my compound technocultural double – is it, in all its multi-faceted forms, the real, animated version of my history – or am I? Although I may be the only one of us who is actually, biologically alive, I prefer not to think about which of the two of us is more resilient.

Naturally I can't know the doubles that another person would find, searching on my name from a different IP address in a different location on a computer with a different browsing history and with different cookies and beacons associated with its browser. As Pariser shows, the results we get when we search are selected for us by sets of protocols outside our knowledge and control, ostensibly to produce results that will be of greater interest to us (Pariser, 2011, pp. 61-75). A fact which only compounds the horror of my own doubles for me, as I can only know what they are for me and have no way of finding out how they appear to others. That is to say, Google protocols ensure that I *really* don't know what I am for the Other.

5.9   Semiotics, narrative and meaning in university staff profile pages

The necessary self-publicity of personal home pages and blogs might be hedged around with all kinds of constraint and exhortation, as I discussed in the previous chapter, but the subject has some agency in their construction. In university staff profiles, they have much less.

Such profiles are usually a standard page that includes data gathered from the subject. The data is often extracted from the subject via a proforma asking them specific questions about their professional background, teaching and research interests, research projects and publications. It's unlikely that there are many universities where the option *not* to fill in these profiles exists for members of staff; anyone failing to fill them in is likely to have them filled in by someone else, using the university's metric assemblage of them. How these questions are framed and how meaning is constituted in the resulting profile page is largely outside the subject's control – staff are obliged to write themselves onto the electronic fabric of the Haunted University but have very little agency about how they do this and certainly no input into the overall design. As Hyland observes, 'the individual is disempowered and discursively constructed as an employee by institutional design teams' (2012, p.311). Consequently, the page which results from this is framed by the dominant discourse of the university itself and so speaks about its over-riding concerns – as with my own university bio which I mentioned earlier, presented, in my case, as a 'Service for Business'.

The common use of the term 'staff profile pages' must also be unpacked. It is the subject's role as a member of 'staff', that is to say, paid employee of the institution, that is important here – not their personal vocational roles which might include teacher, writer, researcher, thinker, mentor, scientist, artist or inventor. Originating in the military, the use of the word 'staff' within institutions connotes the exercise of control and discipline; staff profiles are an area where Foucault's discipline society narrative overlays that of Deleuze's control society. It is the language of regimentation, observation, docile bodies and the individual/mass divide – in fact the term staff is a mass term that, in formal usage, has no singular.

The word 'profile' is significant also, moving the compound phrase towards connoting *control* as well as discipline. The relatively new, widespread (it's used to describe user identities in social media) usage of the word in this context collapses together two of its previous meanings, and wraps it up with a third, emergent technical use of the word, as follows. The two legacy dictionary definitions of the word profile are 'outline of the characteristic features' and 'one's manner, attitude or behaviour with regard to the extent to which it attracts attention to oneself and one's activities' (Chambers Dictionary, 1986). The third, more recent, meaning is from the area of computing,

where the word 'profile' has come to mean a data record associated with a particular user. So, in this context, the new, composite use of the word 'profile' means: data associated with the subject, which provides a snapshot of them, but which is also a measure of how much attention they may attract. It is surveillance, summary and publicity, all in one neat package; adding 'staff' to this expands the meaning to also include regimentation and the disciplining of the docile body.

I'm now going to move on from investigating my own doubles to considering the academic profile page double, together with the personal homepage of one of the academics, Pete Lee, whose personal homepages I highlighted in the previous chapter. I have chosen Pete's page because it neatly encapsulates the gap between the self-created page and the double, in a corporate university context, in a way that is not untypical of academic profile pages.

Below (Fig. 22) is Pete's personal university homepage and underneath (Fig. 23), by way of contrast, it is his Newcastle University profile page. [89] The differences seem slight on the surface, but are significant. The profile page is headed by the university logo and department name, with a picture of the University building to the top left of the page. Such corporate branding and linkage with the material university (of bricks and mortar, rather than of ideas) situates Pete firmly under the Newcastle flag. That the design of this page is identical to every other Newcastle academic profile page also produces a sense of uniformity and conformity.

By contrast, on his personal page Pete's name and title are the most eye-catching part of the page, as they are in much larger font than any other text. Pete has described his teaching and research interests largely in short paragraphs starting with the word 'I' – 'I am a professor in … I teach … undergraduate modules in … I am co-author of …'. In the university profile there is no 'I'; it comprises a potted bio written in the third person foregrounding the elements of activity most important to the corporate university: experience of having worked in industry, leadership of research groups, qualifications.

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[89] This distinction was perfectly meaningful when I did the online fieldwork of finding, capturing and analysing personal homepages and profile pages in 2009. However, now, as virtually all universities have moved to the use of staff profile pages the prevalence of the personal academic homepage may have dwindled, particularly with the rise in popularity of blogging.

http://homepages.cs.ncl.ac.uk/p.a.lee/

Fig. 22 Pete Lee's personal homepage
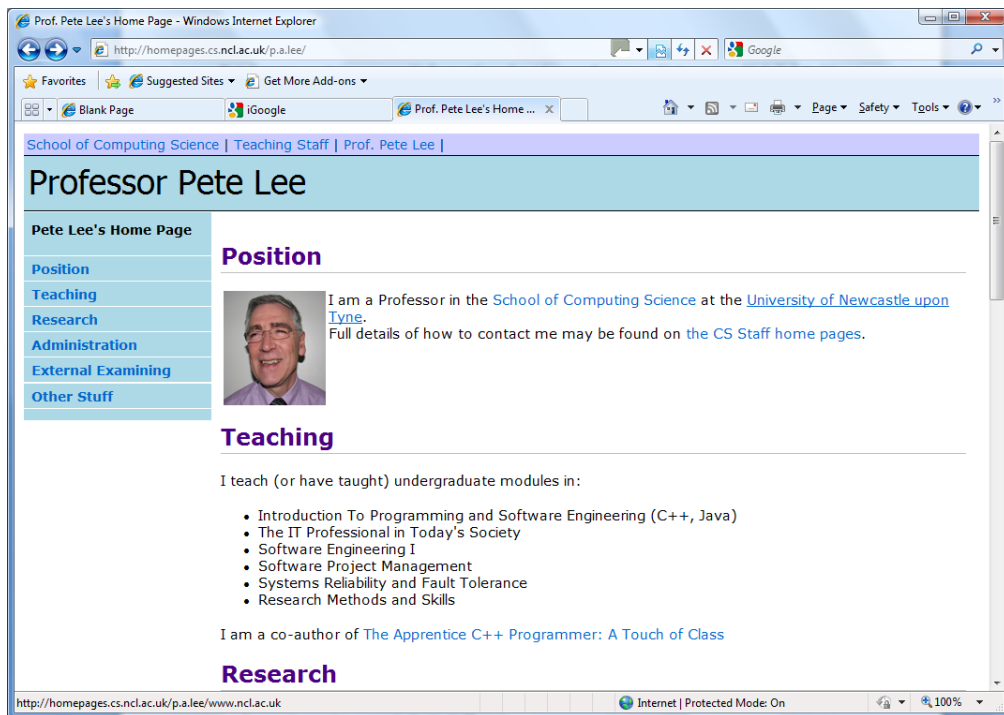
http://www.cs.ncl.ac.uk/people/p.a.lee/
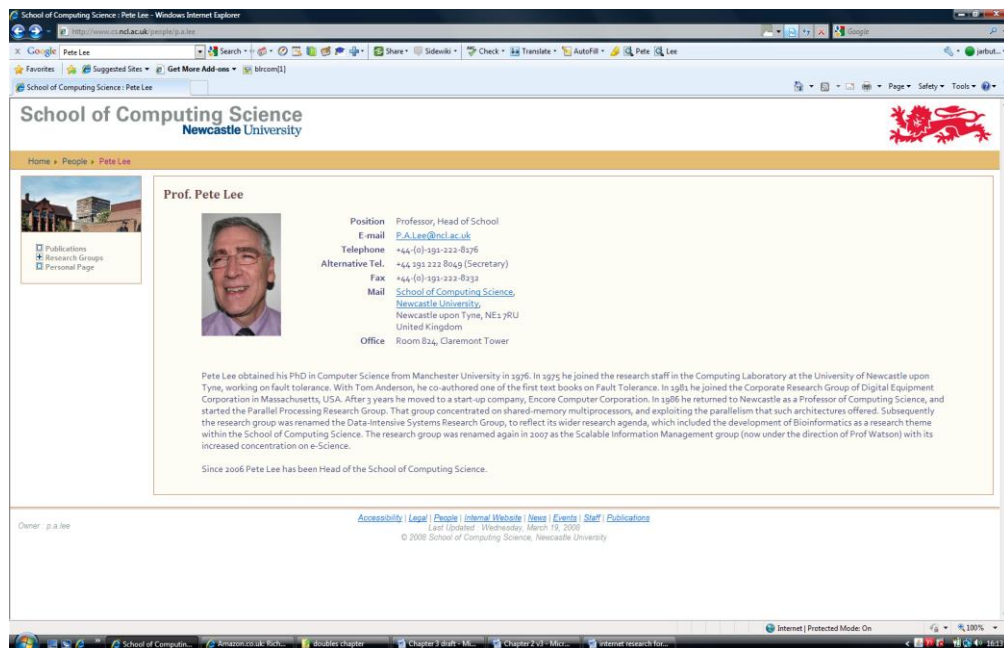
Fig. 23 Pete Lee's university profile page

In the profile there is no sense of a person fascinated by his own area of intellectual enquiry, and keen to share the interest with others; the profile double is all about high-level personal achievement and successful industrial engagement. It highlights Pete's

role as Head of School, something you have to hunt around quite a bit to find out from his homepage.

Naturally, a 'personal' personal page, that is to say, one not explicitly about the work self, would be different again, even for those, like many academics, who have a vocation. [90] Kittler says of our film doubles that they 'presentify' rather than narrate and 'simulate' rather than verify (ibid., p.98). I take this to mean that they present our lives in a way that's based on surfaces and superficial 'snapshots' rather than on our own perceptions of self and any sense we may have of our own authentic tales. This speaks of the difference of perspective Caroline Bassett outlines of the idea of the death of narrative espoused by postmodernists and the everyday necessity of narrative which lies 'at the heart of the processes through which humans make sense of their experiences in everyday lives' (Bassett, 2007, p.3).

The difference between Pete's own personal page and his corporate profile is that the latter *presentifies* and *simulates* him in a way that is more palatable to a market-driven culture where industry experience is valorised rather than intellectual enquiry, even (or perhaps especially) at a Russell Group institution like Newcastle. The profile page interpellates him within the educational ISA as a managerial industry expert, in contrast to his own narrative about himself, which resists this and asserts an identity as a scientist, researcher, teacher and human being who isn't too bothered about hierarchy and status.

What I'm describing here is not just a different story, but a difference between narrative and simulation. Despite being situated by technologies and conventions that might mitigate against this, Pete produces, on his own page, an authentic sense of an academic self; what the university produces is a self that is a better fit with the neoliberal model of what an academic should be and in this sense is *inauthentic*. The irony here is that the self the university actually needs to carry out its role as a university *is* the authentic academic.

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[90] More recent trends in academic blogging sometimes involve a melding of work interests and personal life and interests; see for example Cuthural Theory academic Mark Fisher's blog http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/

The gap between Pete's version of himself and his corporate double hints at the way in which universities have begun to commodify academic staff, transforming them, in the university shop window, to a corporate *simulacrum* they might hardly recognise. However much we might want to resist the neoliberal university, our ghostly doubles collude for us. We might disagree with the corporate project, but our doubles believe for us.[91]

I'm now going to move on from specific doubles to discuss the idea of audit created doubles. Earlier in this work I considered the way in which the neoliberal university is partly a function of an audit society, which I see as another aspect of Deleuze's Society of Control (Deleuze, 1992). Similarly, there is an entire realm of audit-created academic doubles, whose elements are harvested from feedback and evaluation forms and stitched together to form the data doppelgängers that Burrows refers to as 'metric assemblages' (Burrows, 2012, p.356). Miller's association of the double with spies and double agents (1985, p.49) is particularly pertinent in audit culture because the elements that make up the double are the product of surveillance I will now look at several examples of this in higher education.

The *Rate My Professors* site invites HE students to evaluate, anonymously, the academic staff who teach them in the categories 'easiness', 'helpfulness' and 'clarity' (RateMyProfessors, 2010).[92] It also, alarmingly, allows students to give them a rating according to 'hotness', and to leave comments. The commodification of the academic subject (not their teaching, but the person themselves) is explicit in one's *Rate My Professors* double, which comes very close to Debord's idea of slander without reply (1998, thesis V).

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[91] Whilst the university staff profile page may be an uncomfortable form of publicity for many academic staff, the alternative can be worse. In a previous role at Kingston University I worked in a faculty where, unlike the rest of the university, academic staff didn't have online profiles; consequently the rest of the institution struggled to believe that we actually existed, as we had no visible presence within the institution's computational Symbolic.

[92] There are differing analyses of this site. An empirical study by Angela Legg and Janie Wilson (2012) found 'conclusions drawn from RMP are suspect and indeed may offer a biased view of professors' (Legg and Wilson, 2012, p.89) while one by James Otto et al. found that 'online ratings in their current form may be useful, even though possible abuses could limit validity in specific instances' (Otto et al., 2008).

But even finding a flattering double on this site is an eerie experience for the subject. We may not know what we are for the Other, and that causes us anxiety, but having what we are for the Other spelled out can be even worse. The site proposes itself as an evaluation of the subject's effectiveness as the teacher – as the subject-supposed-to-know. But *the subject* is aware that they aren't the subject-supposed-to-know, so they feel doubly misjudged. They can only assume that the voice can't really be the voice of the Other because the Other couldn't be so deluded. So, although it's disconcerting, they can only see the *RateMyProfessors* double as an exercise in mis-seeing that, orphaned from its context, exists only as a fantasy of student desire. One that, because it has the subject's name on it, ends up grinning – or leering – at them from this site. But it may also have other implications. The *Times Higher Education* quotes a UK principal lecturer in Marketing, Stephan Dahl, as saying:

> any form of feedback is good – and RateMyProfessors is just another form of feedback. Just as any consumer rating website, it has its helpful reviews … I could see the potential for using information from some of the feedback on there to inform hiring and promotion.
>
> (*THE*, 2008b)

Which leaves us to form the uncomfortable conclusion that even the most unreliable parts of the belief machine may be not just hailing us, but hiring us.

The part of the audit culture that we are told is the most anonymous evaluation for academic subjects is the annual National Student Survey, or NSS. Here data is collected online from students about their experience of their course, their lecturers and their university. The scores are aggregated so that schools, faculties or departments and universities themselves are given a publicly available breakdown of their ratings in different areas.

Despite the anonymity of this process, a widely reported incident during the 2008 NSS created some oddly situated doubles. Here, two Psychology lecturers were covertly recorded by a student encouraging their class to be 'pragmatic' about their approach to completing the survey and pointing out that if they criticised the university the resulting ratings would affect the students' employment prospects. This recording was made available online and went viral (Newman, 2008). The lecturers, whose comments may

actually have been slightly humorous and discursive in the context of a lecture theatre, but disembedded and publicised appeared to be more sinister and manipulative, were vilified by the media. As the act of making public is always a positive one within mediated technoculture ('the information wants to be free') the doubles created for these two academics pitilessly interpellated them as guilty within the communications ISA – because that is what the technologies believe for us.

When data is collected on the subject for purposes such as the NSS, the subject is disintegrated not into a dividual but into sub-dividuals. Tiziana Terranova identifies this as a 'microsegmentation' of 'individuals into data clouds subject to automated integration and disintegration' (2004, p.34). Added to that there is online data which is collected in order *not* to be anonymous, such as data for internal institutional selection for Research Excellence Framework (REF) submissions and then the exercise of the REF itself[93], all of which constitutes a reduction of the subject and their research to numerical data and then finally to part of a score, which I will discuss in relation to reification in the next chapter.

The collapse of the master signifier could provide the university with a discursive freedom to contest its place and function as part of the ideological state apparatus. But instead, what seems to be happening is not this, but two other strands of change. The first is that the spectral university of neoliberalism creates simulations of academic subjects. There are many ways in which the academic subject is harvested for data and that data aggregated to make different kinds of doubles, some of which will bear the subject's name. Many of the doubles may be orphaned, like my *Evalu8* double, or the ones created by *RateMyProfessors*, and some will network back via links and references and be only one face of a larger double. In the absence of any stabilising *point de capiton*, these doubles stand in for the subject.

The second is that when academic subjects do contest the values of neoliberalism by their choices about their work or by their behaviour, the doubles simply close around

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[93] REF data starts off as personal and then as it travels through the circuit becomes (theoretically) attached to institutions rather than persons, as the score is generated for subject areas rather than individuals – although, ultimately, everyone involved knows exactly where they and their colleagues stand in achieving the departmental REF ranking.

them and silence those resistances – as I have demonstrated in my own account of my doubles.

This doesn't mean to say that resistance is futile. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, online interventions by subjects themselves can result in a way of re-inscribing their version of subjectivity back into the Symbolic. The collapse of meaning at some level, does give subjects a degree of agency to author their own inscription. Furthermore, what is lost in the university's simulated account of the subject are the elements that make the subject valuable to the university an employer – their independence of thought, their intellectualism, their creativity, originality, their maverick outlook. All of the things that the subject's own self storying can provide. So the key question that is raised for the university is this: to fulfil its project- what does the university really want – and need? The subject – or the double?

Chapter 6 - The body (not) in the library: space, time, embodiment and the digital myths that lie beneath

6.1 Preface

In the previous two chapters of this section I have considered how the academic subject inscribes themselves or is inscribed upon the digital. In this chapter I will address the issue of how the embodied subject is produced in the space and time of the Haunted University and how technologies change and enact this. In order to do this I will look initially in some detail at digital myth-making. This is an important background to notions of embodiment and disembodiment, space and time, because it underpins our whole conception of how we exist within technoculture and so how our temporal, spatial and bodily organisation is constituted in relation to the digital. In particular I'll look at how notions of the sacred are animated in the service of digital myth-making. I'll then go on to consider the time and space of the university, how they are given meaning by ritual, and how the embodied and disembodied subject is constituted within these constructs. I'll also touch on the way in which risk and risk-avoidance are mobilised in the constitution of the subject and discuss how the psychoanalytic idea of transitional space operates in relation to the digital in the neoliberal university. Finally, I'll end by considering the way in which the academic subject is required to enact both fragmentation and bodily reconciliation by their positioning within the time, space and rituals of the university.

6.2 Alienated bodies

As subjects, there are many ways in which we are alienated from our bodies. From a Lacanian perspective, splitting occurs at the moment of becoming subjects when we (literally or metaphorically) see ourselves in the mirror; Louis Althusser views the constitution of the subject within ideology as a form of estrangement which overlays an imagined subjectivity onto the material self (Althusser, 1970); Judith Butler sees subjectivity inscribed on the surface of the body, thus alienating us as it constitutes us (Butler, 1993); Friedrich Kittler, perhaps slightly mischievously, specifies a date at which the immaterial self started to become separated from the physiological self by technology – the late 1870s, with the mass production of the Remington typewriter (Kittler, 1986) .

We may be profoundly alienated from our bodies from all of these theoretical perspectives and in other parts of this work I consider what the implications of this may be for the academic subject. Yet bodily existence, and the material world with which we engage through embodied practices, conditions our subjectivity.

6.3   Technology and myth

Information and communications technologies form a critically important part of this material world and the way in which our subjectivity is conditioned by this is also affected by social myths which proliferate about technologies. By this I mean not necessarily collective falsehoods (although such myths are often shackled to hegemonic ends) but, in line with Mary Midgely's concept of myth, a form of cultural imagining which helps us to make sense of our world (Midgely, 2004). It's vital that we become aware of the myths we inhabit (or which inhabit us) because 'If we ignore them we travel blindly inside myths and visions … provided by other people' (Midgely,1992, loc.303-4).

It's possible to trace a 'mythic period' when new technologies are heralded as having revolutionary, world-changing impact which is romanticised as a force for good or demonised as damagingly disruptive, depending on the standpoint of the commentator (Mosco, 2004, pp.1-3; Dourish and Bell, 2011, loc.60). Electricity, the telephone, radio and television have all, in turn, gone through a mythic phase before becoming embedded in the everyday. Computers and the internet have been going through this form of mythologising for several decades; generally speaking, it posits 'digital revolution' as inevitable and desirable (or inevitable and inevitably undesirable in the dystopian mirror of the utopian myth) employing rhetorical strategies which foreclose dissent and position it as irrational technophobia (Morozov, 2013, pp.35-9; Mosco, 2004, pp.17-21; Dourish and Bell, 2011, loc.67-77). Furthermore, the new phase is provided with names which contribute to the reconceptualisation of the social formation we inhabit, so that, for example, in an earlier part of the 'digital revolution' we found ourselves in a world of 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' living in a 'global village' located in an 'information society' whereas in 2014 we're told that our environment is becoming increasingly 'smart' and 'intelligent' and our lives

'networked' – in a way that's 'woven into the fabric of the planet' (Dormehl, 2014). The main point of these re-christenings is to 'construct the changes connected to new media as radical novelties' (Fuchs, 2009, p.399) and so announce (the myth) that the new form of social organisation breaks with traditional capitalism and that the old rules no longer apply (Jameson, 1991, p.3).

Computing keeps going through periods of re-mythologising where the current sub-phase becomes embedded everyday practice and culture and the next sub-phase is seen as the 'revolutionary' era that will change everything. Thus, as I write this, an *Observer* article quotes tech entrepreneur Mike Grothaus on the Internet of Things (IoT). 'It's a revolution … It won't be as flash or obvious as the smartphone revolution, but it will be more profound because it connects everything together' (Dormehl, 2014). The myth becomes part of the marketing strategy for computational devices and consequently techno-euphoric myth and marketing spiel each feed off each other. *The Observer* invites Grothaus and other 'smart object' entrepreneurs to spin their myths about IoT – because they are knowledgeable about their industry – but they are also selling us their smart devices (in Grothaus' case, kitchen scales which have opinions about what you should eat). Which isn't to say there isn't dissent – in fact the article in question quotes a prominent techno-euphoria dissenter, Evgeny Morozov; yet somehow dissent morphs into a negative opinion about the 'revolution' rather than a negation that there is a revolution.

Economist Ernest Mandel models three phases in the development of technology: the steam era, which lasted until the mid-19th century; the electrical and internal combustion era; and the subsequent nuclear and electronic era (Mandel, 1978, cited by Jameson, 1991, p.43). These three technological phases roughly coincide with the three political and economic stages of capitalism: market capitalism; the imperialist or monopoly phase; and our current stage, which Frederic Jameson refers to as 'multinational capitalism' (1991, p.43)[94]. I mention this in my discussion of technology because Mandel views each of these key phases as a *significant expansion* on the previous; and in our own era it is technoculture which enables 'a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas' (Jameson, 1991, p.44). As Caroline Bassett, drawing on

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[94] Mandel's last phase, multinational capitalism, might variously be considered to be subsumed in or be regarded as distinct from emerging formations, such as informational capitalism.

Jameson's critique, observes, one of these areas is the human body, which, in the cultural space of late capitalism 'can no longer easily hold itself together, or indeed hold itself apart from what might previously have been presumed to be distinct from it' (Bassett, 2009, para.13). This is an aspect of what Christian Fuchs describes as 'the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity' which 'transnational informational capitalism' produces (Fuchs, 2009, p.399).

This relationship between physiology and computing is one to which I'll return later in this chapter; for now, I want to try to grip the meanings of the electronic era and the way I will start to do this is to break it down, again, into phases.

6.3.1   Phases of mythologising

In the early 1990s, Mark Weiser, head of the Computer Science Laboratory at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), famously described three eras of computing:

> First were mainframes, each shared by lots of people. Now we are in the personal computing era, person and machine staring uneasily at each other across the desktop. Next comes ubiquitous computing, or the age of calm technology, when technology recedes into the background of our lives.
>
> (Weiser, 1991)

Elaborating on, rather than deviating from, this, others have suggested that we are currently coming to the end of a device era and are at the beginning of a data era (Grossman, 2012) where 'convergence of mobile, cloud computing, social platforms and Big Data' (Holley, 2013) marks the present and near future. Another way of thinking about the same thing from the standpoint of the subject/user is to consider how the personal computer phase has moved from using discrete technologies to technologies which increasingly interoperate across devices and platforms. So we've moved from wired, desktop, single screens and standalone devices with local storage and services, to portable, mobile, wireless, always on, multiple screens and many devices, with cloud storage and services. Data is increasingly shared between devices and services without the manual intervention, or even the knowledge of the subject/user and media which previously operated in separate spheres – newspapers, magazines, film, TV and web are said to *converge*, that is to say they are all accessed through the

same devices via the internet or mobile telecommunications networks as well as being accessed simultaneously in websites that permit/enable easy aggregation of multiple sources and formats by users.

The, not uncontested, terms web 1.0 to web 2.0 have been used to conceptualise the way in which the web has changed during this time. The idea of web 2.0, popularised by Tim O'Reilly in 2004, has come, ten years later, to describe applications and services that engage the active involvement of users in activities (somewhat euphemistically) described as 'collaborating and sharing' that is to say, social networking, posting user generated content such as blogging, uploading music, video and photos, reviewing consumer items and so on, all of which are also aggregated under the heading of 'social media'. By extension web 1.0 – everything before 2004 – becomes seen retrospectively as the static web, where only expert users were able to publish and the type of media convergence I described above was not possible (see O'Reilly, 2005, for a more detailed account). This perspective can be a useful form of shorthand, but it has its detractors. The web's inventor, Tim Berners-Lee, has always taken the view that 'every person who used the web had the ability to write something' (Berners-Lee, 2005), that it is just a case of web editors becoming easier to use and that the term web 2.0 is 'a piece of jargon' (Berners-Lee, 2006). Other critiques of the terminology have stressed, for example, the naivety of a notion of online communication which views it as politically neutral (Roberts, 2009) and have seen the changes in the political economy of the technologies as having a complex relation to cultures of production that 'the banner of 2.0' seeks to simplify rather than address (Bassett et al., 2009).

The semantic web, or – inevitably – 'web 3.0', is a concept coined by Berners-Lee to conceptualise how the web can be gradually altered to enable it to respond to users in a way that appears 'intelligent' (Berners-Lee, 2001). It enables computers to be more able to respond to complex commands and opens the way to developments in *ubiquitous* technology.

Weiser's predicted phase of 'ubiquitous' technology, also referred to as pervasive or ambient technology, or shortened to 'ubicomp' (Dourish and Bell, 2011, loc.210-19) appears to be something that is just beginning. In this, interconnected internet-enabled devices, located in the world around us, interface with each other and with us in ways

that we experience as effortless (BCS, 2013). The term 'post-internet' or 'post-digital' has been used to conceptualise this present and near-future moment, where the internet fades into the background of the everyday – becomes banal, because of its ubiquity – with our interest shifting, instead, to what it makes possible (McHugh, 2012). At the same time, the IoT, itself a term that has had niche or sub-cultural currency for a number of years (see, for example, technology writer and sci-fi author Bruce Sterling's 2007 *Internet of Things* speech at Google Tech Talks, based on his earlier book, *Shaping Things* (Sterling, 2007; Sterling, 2005)), has gained momentum as the most recent way of presenting this concept (Gill, 2013); in the UK, it claimed widespread public notice in 2014, when Prime Minister David Cameron announced development funding for the technologies, employing the kind of mythic rhetoric I referred earlier when he said: 'I see the Internet of Things as a huge transformative development … We are on the brink of a new industrial revolution' (*The Guardian*, 2014).

6.3.2   Digital stories: science fiction and technology

An arena where the myths we spin about technologies (and about what they might mean for the future of human subjectivity and embodiment) speak eloquently is the medium of science fiction. Our current conceptions of digital culture were birthed in storytelling and have continued to be shaped by it (Bell, 2007, p.2), so it is meaningful to consider a selection of literary and cinematic texts from these three decades. As Bell suggests, such stories '"package" cyberculture for us, providing a frame of meaning' with the result that 'we experience our interactions with new technologies as a folding together of material and symbolic tales' (Bell, 2007, p.6).

The predictive stories we tell about technology have an effect on the kind of technologies that a society produces – as another much quoted PARC researcher, Alan Kay, claimed: 'the best way to predict the future is to invent it'[95] (Dourish and Bell, 2011, loc.171). Weiser's advice on designing interactions between humans and technologies is to 'start with the arts and humanities' (ibid., loc.207). In a study of the way in which science fiction and technological innovation influence each other, Bassett et al. suggest that science fiction concepts are 'appropriated, adapted or used as

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[95] Kay may have meant inventing the future by writing it in code, given his background, although this quote has been taken to mean any type of invention.

inspiration'(Bassett et al., 2013, p.43) by technical audiences, and that the 'interactions between the fictional and the real … produce a map of influence as a co-constituted and iterative process' (ibid., p.41).

In the 30 years since William Gibson invented the word 'cyberspace', popularised in his seminal 1984 cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer*, this type of mythologising has morphed through different phases. The idea that the material body has become irrelevant, mere 'meat', as Gibson's console cowboys mockingly describe it, with the immaterial and limitless cyberspace self, by contrast, being valorised for its quicksilver mutability, gained ascendency throughout the late 1980s and 1990s; Bell proposes that the way in which Gibson imagined the future of the internet had a 'profound influence upon its development' (2007, p.3). This is arguable, but Gibson, Donna Haraway and the early and separate imaginings many others about the internet all began to influence the shape of what it would become. A comprehensive discussion of the many origins of internet culture is beyond the scope of this work, but it is worth also mentioning the trajectory, tracked by Fred Turner, of the print-based virtual community which grew up around the Californian *Whole Earth Catalog* in the late 1960s and 1970s onwards. From this, the early virtual electronic WELL community emerged, first documented in Howard Rheingold's 1987 article on the emerging concept of virtual community. This was expanded into his seminal text *The virtual community: homesteading on the electronic frontier* in 1993 (Turner, 2005).

In Gibson's imagining of the internet he saw a new Wild West of a glittering data network colonised by spectral console desperados; the metaphor of the Wild (or Wired) West began to be used to speak of the unregulated nature of the internet and sometimes of its colonial ambitions[96] (McClure, 2000; McGann, 2001). Taking a different perspective on the same idea, cyberfeminist approaches, such as Donna Haraway's influential *Cyborg Manifesto,* seized the possibilities presented by the internet of moving beyond the gendered body. Haraway's techno-human cyborg 'is a creature in a post-gender world'(Haraway, 1985, p.150) who creates a 'post-modernist identity out of

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[96] See, for example Katie Hafner and John Markoffs' *Cyberpunk: Outlaws and Hackers on the Computer Frontier* (1991) or Rheingold's work. Helen McLure's historical analysis of this phenomenon *The Wild, Wild Web: The Mythic American West and the Electronic Frontier* (2000) provides a useful overview.

otherness, difference, and specificity' (ibid., p.123) as 'a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies … to ourselves' (ibid., p.181). Sherry Turkle[97] continued to explore this type of perspective from a psychoanalytic perspective into the 1990s, focusing on online virtual role-playing games and taking the viewpoint that 'when we step through the screen into virtual communities, we reconstruct our identities on the other side of the looking glass'(Turkle, 1995, p.177).

These perspectives of the online world as a liminal space, which renders identities plastic, continued to animate narratives about digital culture, as internet science fiction moved into virtual realities. Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel, *Snow Crash,* articulated anxieties about the perceived all-powerful nature of a virtual reality (VR) 'metaverse' (a futurist internet) which corrupts the material bodies of users, an issue also explored in Pat Cadigan's 1991 novel, *Synners*; as Slavoj Zizek argued in 1997, the more 'disembodied' we think we are because of the 'cyberspace promise of casting off our bodies', the more attention we pay to exercising, enhancing, disciplining and adorning them (Zizek, 1997, p.166). For the 1999 films *The Matrix* and David Cronenberg's *eXistenz* the central concern for the films' subjects is the impossibility of knowing whether reality is 'real' or just another virtual state – a textbook uncanny anxiety (Freud, 1919, p.367) and one which implies an internet omniscience. Richard K. Morgan's 2002 novel *Altered Carbon* takes the devaluing of material bodies to its logical conclusion, offering a dystopian fantasy where consciousness can be stored and downloaded into interchangeable bodies or 'sleeves'; by the time a film like Jonathan Mostow's 2009 *Surrogates,* in which humans no longer leave their homes or have contact with others, except through their synthetic surrogate, emerges, the self is situated back in the imperfect body and the use of surrogates is presented as a form of collective neurosis about body fetishism and risk avoidance. Stories about the internet (insofar as there are stories about the internet any more[98] – it no longer enjoys the centre stage position it had in *The Matrix*) begin to concentrate on ideas of security, risk and the gaze of the Other, as in the negotiation of webs of surveillance in Gibson's 2010 novel *Zero History*, with its camouflaged spy drones and CCTV-scrambling streetwear.

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[97] Turkle's analysis is perhaps most most notable and has proven most enduring, but there were others who employed psychoanalytic perspectives, such as Allucquère Rosanne Stone (see Stone, 1995).

[98] Similarly visual arts are not 'about' the internet any more but more about how humans negotiate the omnipresent digital, so we have 'post-digital' art movements (see Alexenberg, 2011, or Mc Hugh, 2011).

As Robert Briggs suggests in his account of Gibson's meta-fiction, Gibson also presents subjects who exist in a collapsed time, with a 'futureless present' as well as the titular absence of history (Briggs, 2012).

6.3.3   Virtual realities and the Internet of Things

Vincent Mosco, in his study of the political economy of the online world, argues that within internet mythologising the internet is elevated to the status of a force which renders the material world of bodies, place and time redundant (Mosco, 2004, p.4). As I have demonstrated above, narratives about the internet, at different historical moments, move between imagining it as an omniscient entity that can conjure into being an immaterial self and then wrench it loose from its physical moorings; to conceptualising it as a liminal area that can offer unimagined freedoms as well as dangers, when it compromises ontological certainty; to ideas that it is an omnipresent – and still omniscient – other, recording our every thought, feeling, utterance, action and location. But, although it is conceptualised differently at all these historical junctures, over all of them it remains narrated as something we absolutely couldn't do without.

Pointing out that these accounts are stories does not make these tales groundless – and at times in this thesis I explore the ground which underpins some of them – but nevertheless it is important not to lose sight of their fictive dimension. Furthermore, there are always competing viewpoints about *which* narratives we're inhabiting at any time: 'technological realities are always contested. No single idea holds about what technologies are and what they do' (Dourish and Bell, 2011, loc.111). Take the example of the technologies of VR and pervasive computing, which Weiser saw – back then in 1991 – as 'diametrically opposed'; he describes the former as an approach 'which attempts to make a world inside the computer' and the latter as 'the process of drawing computers out of their electronic shells' (Weiser, 1991, pp. 94-8), implying that the latter will be more relevant and meaningful to us.

Although VR captured our imagination in fiction, film and gaming (despite not capturing a market, as it didn't achieve commercial success) for some years, pervasive computing, or what Weiser calls 'embodied virtuality' appears, as I mentioned earlier, to be the way our everyday technological world is tending. However, recent

developments in immersive 3D headsets, such as Occulus' *Rift* which becomes available to games consumers in 2015, may mean that VR becomes part of the everyday digital, too (Greenwald, 2013). Perhaps, as in Philip K. Dick's exploration of the biotechnical uncanny, *Ubik* (Dick, 1969), they might fuse, making normality a permanent state of ontological uncertainty, where we never know whether we're in a virtual reality or a real one, augmented by ubiquitous technologies. Whether this creates permanent anxiety or whether we become habituated to, or even comforted by, it remains to be seen. In a mundane, device-driven and experiential way the elements of VR and IoT are already becoming, or are about to become, entangled. We look at our mobile screens to read the data from wearable body monitors and a similar approach may be used once the monitor becomes embedded within our bodies. In this way, the technology becomes not spectacular, but banal – though no less uncanny.

This approach has meant that a 'quantified self' movement, whose slogan is 'self knowledge through numbers'(QS, 2015)has come into being. Here participants use devices to track and share all their personal quantifiable data (Walker Rettberg, 2014b, p. 61) from exercise, to sleep, to productivity, in the desire, like Dave Egger's doctor in his dystopian novel, *The circle* 'to measure what we'd like to measure—which is everything'(2013, p. 153). As Walker Rettberg points out, the fantasy of 'closure and containment, knowing rather than not knowing, are seductive possibilities to many'(2014b, p. 74). The current marketing of ubiquitous IoT devices offers them as a responsiblised antidote to risk, providing 'security, peace of mind' (Alex Hawkinson, quoted in Dormehl, 2014) whether from our own unruly bodies, which might be secretly brewing up diseases to kill us, or from potential home invaders, who might be secretly lurking in our basements.

6.3.4   The religious turn of digital technologies

The concept of a self divided into a despised material body and a superior immaterial element, which has gained ascendency in internet culture, is not, of course, a new one. A dualist split into matter and spirit has been part of western religio-philosophical traditions for at least three thousand years, as Margaret Wertheim demonstrates in her account of historical conceptions of space and the sacred (Wertheim, 1999, p.28). Modernity, however, has situated us within a culture that is 'profoundly materialist and

physicalist' (ibid., p.29). The re-emergence of the concept of an immaterial self as the more valuable and 'authentic' part of our being holds strong resonances of the pre-modern, that is to say, of medieval Christianity's idea of the soul (Hayles, 1993, p.173-90; Wertheim 1999, p.251-80) or of concepts from other pre-modern religions (Davis , 2004, p.232). Internet mythmaking uses directly religious language and imagery and sometimes even makes explicit connections. As influential VR designer, Jason Lanier, has said, 'I see the internet as a syncretic version of Christian ritual, I really do' (quoted in Wertheim, 1999, p.253). Thus there is a sanctification of the internet, conceptualising it as 'an idealised realm "above" and "beyond" the problems of a troubled material world … a utopian arena of equality, friendship and power' (ibid., p.18) and the selves we are within it as transcendent. Erik Davis calls this religious turn 'Techgnosis' (Davis, 2004).

More recent post-internet sanctification, as fictionalised in Gibsons's most recent novel *The Peripheral* (2014), sees the network as an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent presence keeping us, as responsiblised individuals, free from risk in a world of threat – as long as we believe enough and pay enough.

Jameson, drawing on the diverse ideas of Edmund Burke and Susan Sontag, sees late capitalist technoculture manifesting as a kind of hysterical sublime (Jameson, 1991, p.4); others have used the term 'the digital sublime' in a slightly different way (Taylor, 1999; Mosco, 2004). For Burke, writing in the first machine age, the sublime was a product of 'the strongest emotion' (Burke, 1757, loc.486) that, as well as exciting pleasure, was connected with horror, and with that which was 'dark, uncertain, confused, [and] terrible,' (ibid., loc.787) – or, in short, uncanny.

Mobilising Jameson's related concept of contemporary cultural experiences being marked by euphoria and a kind of shallow intensity (Jameson, 1991, p.40) we can see this this *uncanny sublime* as saturated with shallow *affect*. Jodi Dean describes how our use of communications and social media creates affective networks where we are driven to seek the satisfactions available when 'every little tweet or comment, every forwarded image or petition accrues a tiny affective nugget' (Dean, 2010, p.95). Failures of the network to link, comment, forward or 'like' our contributions also contribute affective resonance, producing uncertainty and anxiety (ibid., p.96). This moves us into the

subject position of the hysteric, in that we don't know what we are for the (online) Other (out there, maybe), and so we fall back on the immediate, shallow, binding effect of the communicative network in all its banality and, in an echo of Zizek's argument about disembodiment, we are moved into the classic hysterical position where we are enjoined to speak our anxieties through the medium of the body by obsessing over disciplining, adorning and augmenting it. Internet of Things technologies offer us a new (and uncanny) dimension of bodily obsession, where we can use networked devices to constantly monitor, quantify and share our 'wellbeing' by surveilling all our bodily processes, waking and sleeping, 24/7.

Even if we, in a post-Snowden world,[99] are cynical about the extent to which we wish to be personally surveilled, IoT technologies may still interpellate us as their subject. As I argued in Chapter 5, the machines believe for us. We may not want to actually be surveilled by the State but we shrug and let it happen because our desires have become bound up with it. There was a Facebook joke posting in the fortnight after the Snowden revelations that offered, instead of the usual sorts of privacy options for postings (i.e. *public/ only friends/ only close friends/ only me*) the options of *public/ only friends and the CIA/only me and the CIA/ only the CIA*.[100] We read it, we laughed knowingly and we carried on using Facebook – because the machine believes for us.

The overstatement of claims for the world-changing nature of networked computers, has varied in type, if not in magnitude over the last three decades. In the nineties Bill Gates' proclaimed that 'we stand at the brink of another revolution…just about everything will be done differently'(Gates, 1995, p.3; p.7). *Time* magazine, in 2006 declared that 'you' were *Time* 'person of the year', because web 2.0 was 'about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing … it's really a revolution' (Grossman, 2006). In the present decade, *Wired* magazine pronounced in 2013 that 'the past two decades have seen a nuclear explosion in the collection and storage of digital

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[99] Edward Snowden was an analyst with the US National Security Agency. In 2013 he leaked revelatory documents to the press about the extent to which the US was carrying out an international surveillance campaign, particularly with the complicity of telecommunications companies and other governments (*The Guardian*, 2013).

[100] See, for example, http://paulbernal.wordpress.com/2013/06/17/prism-share-with-the-cia-and-facebook/

information' leading to an 'information revolution: big data has arrived at an almost unimaginable scale' (Perlstein, 2013).

These type of 'cyberbole'[101] together with the leveraging of the sublime, contribute to the ability of techno-mythology to create what Barthes refers to as 'euphoric clarity' (Barthes, quoted in Mosco, 2004, p.30). In this, complexities, tensions and conflicts are denied and smoothed over – or in Levi Strauss' terms, they enable us to deal with social contradictions that cannot easily be resolved (Mosco, 2004, p.28). For Althusser, we are always already engaged, as subjects, in spinning myths about our relationship to the material world around us (Althusser, 1970); mythologising of the internet and the post-internet world offers us additional sets of ways to fantasise our subjectivity. In my examples across three decades, above, for instance, the myth articulated is firstly that our world is being transformed, which then morphs, over time, into the idea that internet subjects are empowered by these changes, which later segues again to the idea that we're all (simultaneously willing and unwilling) subjects of big data. That these concepts are contradictory does not stop us inhabiting and defining ourselves against the palimpsest of digital culture that they create.

All of these myths both reveal and conceal something about the society that creates them; one of the things they attempt to conceal is the importance of our lived experience of the contested area of time, physical space and our material bodies (Mosco, 2004, p. 19). It is these areas to which I now turn my attention, in the context of the university.

6.4   Time of the university

Mosco posits the idea that the digital world operates 'by transcending what we once knew about time' (Mosco, 2004, p.4), that is to say, by confounding our existing notions about what time is and how it operates within our daily lives. Manuel Castells argues that the power relationships which shape a social formation are built into that society's social construction of time (Castells, 2009, p.33-6). He sees networked capitalism as dissolving time 'by disordering the sequence of events and making them simultaneous in the communication networks, thus installing society in structured ephemerality' (Castells, 2009, p.35). Similarly, Jameson, back in 1991, observed the start of social and

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[101] 'Cyberbole' is Steve Woolgar's term (quoted by Mosco, 2004, p.25).

cultural formations being 'dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time' (Jameson, 1991, p.24).

Any 'internetisation' of time, in a university context, is an overlay (and competitor to) a form of temporality that, itself, differs from the world outside educational institutions, as Elaine Showalter demonstrates in her discussion of academic time (Showalter, 2005, pp. 9-15). Showalter observes that academic time is 'organized and compartmentalized according to various grids and calendars, vacations and rituals'(ibid., p.9), with the three terms being characterised, respectively by hope in the autumn, a winter of endurance and anticipation in the spring (ibid., p.12). Barcan argues that there are two sorts of academic time: scholarly time, which is characterised by long-term 'big temporality' (Barcan, 2013, locs. 2328) and requires a degree of seclusion from everyday time; and teaching time, which has its own rhythms and rituals. The temporal structure of Universities attempts to encompass both these forms of time (Barcan, 2013, locs. 2328-67).

In Britain, university time differs from the Gregorian[102] calendar year, which begins in January; the agricultural cycle, which starts with spring; and the financial year, which commences in April. Originally designed to fit in with the (pre-industrial) farming year, by beginning in autumn academic time starts when the harvest has been gathered in. At the same time as it accommodates, in literal terms, the physical, semi-natural, world of agricultural production, which Castells designates as 'biological time' (Castells, 2009, p.34) it also, in terms of what it stands for, exists in opposition both to that world and to other temporal structures. Offering another form of temporality to the ordinary, quotidian world, it is a structure of time that defines itself as being of the mind, of knowledge and of culture rather than being of the biological, the material, the everyday and the financial. Assisted by the remnants of an ecclesiastical past, which are demonstrated in the continued naming of terms as Lent, Trinity and Michaelmas in older institutions (Barcan, 2013, loc. 2367), academic time has an overlay of the sacred about it, as opposed to the profane ordinariness of the everyday. These sacred connotations are partially constituted and emphasised by the rituals and routines that

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[102] The introduction of the Gregorian Calendar to Britain in 1752 provoked 'Calendar riots' on the streets (Poole, 1998); perhaps the rioting workers would have agreed with Castell's perspective – that power relationships speak themselves through the social construction of time (Castells, 2009, p.33-6).

structure academic time, giving meaning to it and narrativity to academic experience. Bourdieu discusses how the rituals of educational organisations '*consecrate* those entrusted to them' (Bourdieu, 2003, p.291, italics in original) and speak of 'a whole set of rites of the academic tradition, which have the function and effect of giving the solemn sanction of the assembled collectivity' (ibid.).

6.4.1   Time and ritual

Graduation ceremonies are one example of such rites. These are self-consciously elaborate, codified events, involving 'the mace and the trumpets, the Latin and the sonorous orations, the elaborate costumes, the doffing of hats' (Feldman, 2013); the academic body, draped with the robes of their respective *alma maters*, processes solemnly before a student body, newly wrapped in the colours of the university.

Such rituals need to be seen in the context of neoliberal pressures to change the structure and rhythm of academic time. These influences seek to accelerate academic time and compartmentalise it differently, making it more like commercial time, with 24/7 libraries and online learning environments, fourth-term 'summer schools' and fast-tracked degrees (Giroux, 2007; Hartman and Darab, 2012, p.53-7). Rituals such as graduation represent both a resistance to commercialisation in that they underline how universities and university time are quite *unlike* the business world, and a capitulation to it, as they enact a commodified spectacle of student outcome for those providing the student income.

6.4.2   Fast academia and new forms of ritual

The socially constructed nature of time renders it plastic, as many have observed. Castells sees the 'clock-time'(Castells, 2009, p.34), which we take for granted, as a creation of industrial capitalism enabling the disciplinary ordering of tasks (what can be measured can be managed) overlaying 'biological time' which represents 'the life-cycles of nature' (ibid.). High modernism explicitly 'makes strange' received notions of time:

> Time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and
> fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect upon the mind
> of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon

the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second.

(Woolf, 1928, loc.923-6)

The whole idea of time being re-imagined as '24/7' in technocultural capitalism, what David Cameron enthusiastically refers to as the move to 'a world on fast forward' where we 'will only succeed if we have a relentless drive for new ideas and innovations'(*The Guardian*, 2014) is in itself a denial of the existing temporal rhythms and behaviours of the world. As Castells suggests, in a late modern take on Marx's modernist idea of the 'annihilation of space by time' (Marx, 1857-8, p.539), this is a:

> relentless effort to annihilate time … by compressing time (as in split-second global financial transactions or the generalized practice of multitasking, squeezing more activity into a given time); on the other hand, by blurring the sequence of social practices, including past, present, and future in a random order, like in the electronic hypertext of Web 2.0.
>
> (Castells, 2009, p.35)

This approach to time conceptualises a human subject who, machine-like, is 'always on', occupying an environment both barren and bland[103]. As Jonathan Crary, in a study of the neoliberal reinvention of time, says:

> A 24/ 7 world is a disenchanted one in its eradication of shadows and obscurity and of alternate temporalities. It is a world identical to itself, a world with the shallowest of pasts, and thus in principle without specters.
>
> (Crary, 2013, loc.474-5)

Thus Crary's permanent, past-less, future-less, present also collapses the boundaries between work and leisure and eradicates what is unimportant to it: 'billions of dollars are spent every year researching how to reduce decision-making time, how to eliminate the useless time of reflection and contemplation' (Crary, 2013, loc.236-7). As a

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[103] Psychoanalyst, Darian Leader, in a Lacanian account of the significant increase in diagnosise of depression in the UK, suggests that it may be an inevitable result of this form of fast capitalism, as depression is a form of resistance to this enforced efficiency and effectivenes: 'the refusal of current forms of mastery and domination'. (2008, p.13)

temporal construct, this could hardly be more oppositional to the needs of academic life as Yvonne Hartman and Sandy Darab demonstrate in their study of the application of fast time to the university. They call this approach as 'speedy scholarship'(2012, p.49), and propose that it tends to close down 'intellectual reflection, scholarly debate and engagement with ideas' (2012, p.55) for students and staff on 'speeded-up' courses. Hartman and Darab argue instead for 'slow scholarship' which they see as 'distinguished by engaging with ideas through deep reflection, experiential learning, and reflexivity, ultimately resulting in critical insight, creativity, and innovation'(2012, p.58).

Within the quotidian rituals of academic life, which may vary from one kind of institution to another, but will include such events as departmental and team meetings, away days, senate, lectures, seminars and tutorials, it is possible to detect an a struggle between competing temporal discourses as they battle to shape a collective meaning. In examining the role of such rituals in the production, or as Bourdieu might say, the 'expectation of consecration' of the academic subject, anthropologist Robert Gibb describes how staff meetings operate as 'rites of incorporation for newly appointed lecturers' (Gibb, 2003, para.3). But incorporated into which culture is the question – a worldview that valorises the pursuit, exchange and discussion of knowledge or one which pursues rather different ends.

To illustrate this I take the example of a form of university ritual which has been introduced in most higher education institutions since the massification phase – the validation of a new course or programme of study. Like many aspects of bureaucratic innovation in higher education, under a guise of ensuring transparency and rationality, this process smuggles in something quite different. Such a ritual involves the production of a document which describes, in detailed and strictly codified terms, every single imaginable aspect of a course, including a business case for its existence in the first place and imagined career routes for its eventual graduates.[104] For example, in a part-time course for adult learners, for which I led the validation process at a post-92 university in 2008, we had to include: policy drivers that supported the existence of

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[104] See, for example the University of Sussex guidelines for validating courses which summarises all this (and more) rather neatly: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=validation-overview-feb-2013.pdf&site=368.

such a course; evidence that there was a market for the course; and evidence that there would be an employment market for our graduates (despite the fact that they already had jobs) several years down the line. All of which we dutifully supplied and all of which, already imaginary, were rendered meaningless when the economy was driven into financial collapse the following year. Even the main policy driver for this initiative, namely the Leitch agenda[105] on lifelong learning, moved from New Labour HE policy centre stage to the cupboard of forgotten government initiatives (Leitch, 2006; Henderson-Morrow, 2013).

But, reality apart, in the validation process esoteric forms and formulae must be employed to create the sacred text, in a process that becomes about the document itself rather than anything external. Gnomic mantras about 'learning outcomes' and 'transferable skills' must be repeated, reverently, in the appropriate boxes, benchmarking against national subject frameworks and universal qualification level descriptors must be ritually performed. For example, in the course validation I mentioned earlier, each module had to be represented by a list of: *Aims, Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Content, Teaching and Learning Strategies, Assessment Strategies, Major Categories of Assessment, Achieving a Pass* and then, finally *Bibliography*.[106] Completing such set of tasks, several years before they are actually going to meet the students and teach the module, is a highly imaginative act on the part of the module leader.

Many hours, days, weeks and months of academic time must be offered up to the completion of the sacred validation document. Once a course is validated, the reified validation document assumes the status of a holy text that must not be deviated from under any circumstances. What I am describing here is the *sanctification* of a bureaucratised ritual of audit and control, where activities formerly occupying the realm of the *profane* are elevated to the *sacred*, making notions of what is sacred or profane in academia a contested area.

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[105] The Leitch Report, *Review of skills: prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills*, stressed the social and economic need for higher education to be made available to working adults (Leitch, 2006).

[106] A list that seems to me now so arbitrary that it brings to mind Jorge Luis Borges' taxonomy *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* (Foucault, 1966, p.xv).

Another way of thinking about contested temporal cultures in universities is to consider academic diaries. In a literal sense, personal engagement diaries are the place where one determines how one's time is spent; traditionally, paper-based diaries have been used for this, but the last 15 years or so have seen the introduction of shared access, electronic 'open' diaries into universities. In an open-diary system, others can determine an individual's time, 'inviting' them to meetings where there is an event-free space in the person's day; the layout and the way screen diaries are configured invite every fraction of every hour to be filled up with events.[107] A paper-based diary may contain events that the user puts in them, but it implies other non-allocated time in between these. Many normal academic activities don't easily map to screen diaries designed for the commercial world. Who would boldly state, in front of the unblinking gaze of the whole department, that they were planning to spend a whole afternoon reading, or an hour or two thinking? As Stefan Collini wryly points out when considering the issue of 'Don's diaries', 'published scholarship quite often involves an elaborate exercise in covering one's tracks' (Collini, 2012, p.148). Even specifying a length of time for preparing lectures is uncomfortable – too long and it might be deduced that the person doesn't know their subject – too short and it looks negligent. It may be that there is something about the academic role that is innately a little fugitive, as Collini implies, but the shared screen diary also represents a clear example of the imposition of neoliberal time onto university life and counter-practices, such as using a private diary, form a resistance to this. Or maybe an act of survival.

6.4.3   Sanctifying quantification

What such rituals of audit and control discussed above are ultimately sanctifying is *quantification*; the practice of bureaucracy which reduces all activity and thought to numerical code. What can be measured can be managed. In the rite of the validation the entire process of planning a structured opportunity for learning is reduced to set of tick boxes on a checklist.

The elevation of quantification to an epistemic virtue is explored by boyd and Crawford, in relation to the currently ubiquitous concept of big data. They highlight:

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[107] Weiser's prediction that we will have 'appointment diaries that write themselves' may mean in practice that a range of others write our diaries and our various electronic devices aggregate information from a range of sources – as they are already beginning to do (Weiser, 1991, p.99).

> the widespread belief that big data sets offer a higher form of intelligence and knowledge that can generate insights that were previously impossible, with the aura of truth, objectivity and accuracy.
>
> (boyd and Crawford, 2012, p.663)

Consequently, the non-numerical is reduced to an epistemic vice and qualitative perspectives are seen in the same light as superstition because of the false validity, the *sacredness* with which the quantitative becomes imbued.

6.5   The space of the university

In the postscript to Section 2 of this thesis, I began to consider the idea of universities as physical spaces. I argued that both the effect of universities being situated in their locale, but not being 'of' it (as they are national and international) and the influence of much of the choice – or happenstance – of university architecture, taken together with a number of other factors, contribute to a sense of liminality and uncanniness about the physical space of universities.

Space as a social construct, encodes values and meanings which influence the spatial practices of those who occupy it; the production of space also produces knowledge and meanings which are inevitably conflictual and contradictory (Lefebre,1974; Schmid, 2008, pp.41-3). In a *Times Higher* discussion of the architecture of higher education, Matthew Reisz says 'space touches on just about all the tension points within universities' (Reisz, 2010, para.2). He goes on to suggest that whilst academics may be able to ignore some unpalatable aspects of their university's business 'in so far as buildings express corporate values, they are inescapable'(ibid.).

In a study of the spatial models adopted in higher education, Pablo Calvo-Sotelo sees university architecture as a 'confrontation between dream and reality, convergence and deviation, Utopia and disenchantment'(Calvo-Sotelo, 2001, p.184). It is also a collision between the sacred and profane. Changes to UK university buildings during the massification years speak about conflictual perspectives and the tussle for sanctity. From a managerial perspective, the marketing value of the external appearance is key. The Vice-Chancellor of Nottingham, David Greenaway, speaks about having created a

new campus that 'says something powerful to our students and staff … about our values and commitment'(Reisz, 2010, para.28); Philip Ogden, Senior Vice-Principal of Queen Mary, speaks about his university's development as being 'architecturally innovative' and stresses the 'symbolisms of impressive new buildings'(ibid., para.32). Human geographer Nigel Thrift sees such developments as 'in keeping with an architectural rhetoric about changing working which arose in the mid-1980s' and has now established itself as orthodoxy'(Thrift , 2006, p.293). Discourse around these developments tend to emphasise the neoliberal shibboleths of 'flexibility', 'adaptability' and 'efficiency', qualities which help to produce a consumable world that has, within this mindset, a sense of 'rightness' – what Thrift terms 'efficacy' (Thrift , 2006, p.282). Educationalist Margaret A . Miller enthusiastically recommends that 'campus space should be flexible … it should allow for changes' (Miller, 2004, p.6), adding 'we will need private financial support to develop our campuses in line with our visions' (ibid., p.7). Thrift views these architectural developments as a means by which capitalism attempts to boost knowledge production and innovation by designing 'new space time arrangements' (Thrift , 2006, p.290), with university 'buildings [that] are meant to manipulate time and space in order to produce intensified social interaction' (Thrift, 2006, p.292). Ogden places an emphasis on changes in working practices, saying 'space matters a lot in influencing people's behavior'; his 'innovative' campus includes an open-plan office, housing 300 academic staff (Reisz, 2010, para.32-33).

6.5.1   The academic body and office space

A move to communal academic office space marks many building initiatives of these years. Liverpool University's building project involves creating open-plan academic offices which Steve Dickson, the director of facility management, sees as a move to 'make space more productive' (ibid., para.48). Asked about academic staff views on this he says 'there can be some initial reluctance, but … we can meet the goals of an efficient design alongside academic goals' (ibid., para.50). These comments neatly encapsulate the irony of a neoliberal perspective – space is productive, and design is efficient – in contrast to the goals of academics. Which, by implication, are neither productive nor efficient, like their owners. And unlike the buildings around them.

Fig. 24: Architect's drawing of the Hadyn Ellis building at Cardiff

In Malcom Bradbury's novel of university life, *The History Man*, new campus buildings are constantly being planned at Watermouth University, to the extent that the VC 'had the reputation for suffering from building mania, or, as it was put, an "Edifice complex"' (Bradbury, 1975, p.47). The massification years have been filled with university building projects, to the extent that it's become normal for there to always be the planned 'new building' at any UK university – one which may or may not come to pass. This fantasy building represented in spreadsheets and CGI drawings like the one in Fig. 24 is more than Bradbury's 'Edifice complex'; it's an embodiment of management desire for sacred, soaring, glass and brick perfection, unsullied by troublesome, unruly bodies of staff or students. In the illustration above, pure, white space is substituted for the profane fleshliness of bodies.

Reflecting on his own experience as a historian in both British and US universities, Bernard Wasserstein sees the 'conditions for efficient scholarly productivity' as consisting of 'privacy, peace and quiet, and book and document storage space' (ibid., para.10). In an ethnographic study of a change from cubicle offices to open-plan arrangements in a British university, Rachel Hurdley draws attention to the importance of the informal and pliable connective space of corridors; used by everyone, these spaces permit a range of social and communicative behaviours which are lost in a change to open-plan environments. Using the example of the medieval hall she demonstrates that the hierarchical divisions of space do not necessarily need walls and

concludes that 'flexibility, accessibility and openness by design does not necessarily lead to these qualities in practice' (Hurdley, 2010, p.60).

Communal offices can have an atomising effect. 'There is something isolating about forced togetherness,' reflects Peter Lennox, drawing on his own experience of open-plan working in the University of Derby (Lennox, 2010, para.6). 'If the office is just the office, where is academia? Some other place, some other time' (ibid., para.7). The effect of open-plan academic offices inevitably means that much work has to be done at home, decreasing the amount of time staff spend on campus. Kunz et al., in a case study of a faculty re-build, describe how such changes, far from improving communication, actually impacted negatively on the established faculty community of practice, particularly for early-career academics, partly because staff spent more time working from home and partly because they no longer had private space where informal conversations could be held (Kunz et al., 2012).

A meta-study of the effects of open-plan offices for staff suggests that lack of privacy is 'an unsolved negative aspect' but that employees and managers have differing views on this (Ding, 2008, p.401). I suggest that it is an *unsolvable* negative aspect because the erosion of privacy is actually part of the disciplinary philosophy behind open-plan offices, hence the discrepancy Ding finds between employee and management perspective. Open-plan offices operate as a form of what Mark Andrejevic calls a 'participatory panopticon' (Andrejevic, 2012, p.239) replacing the single, authoritative watcher at the centre of Bentham's model with distributed 'others'. The introduction of this into academia as part of the neoliberal project effectively creates a form of peer surveillance where staff not only get used to 'an emerging surveillance regime' but also become 'habituated to a culture in which we are all *expected* to monitor one another' (Andrejevic, 2012, p.239, my italics).

Whilst within technocultural mythmaking the presence of the body in any location is irrelevant, in the university workplace it becomes a site of conflict. If lack of quiet office space leads to an individual having to work from home, the peer surveillance machine means they can be stigmatised as lazy or disengaged. 'Not being "around" two days in a row would result in pointed remarks from administrative staff and other colleagues,' Gibb says, reflecting on his own experience in a new university (Gibb,

2003). However, what an open-plan strategy does is forcibly relocate the academic body to other environments to enable the subject to carry out essential work tasks. This is usually the home, but as is the case for many 21st-century knowledge workers, it can be a public space, such as the coffee shop; interestingly, as libraries become virtual, it is less likely to be the traditional scholarly haunt of the physical library.

So the subject is here always placed in the position of bodily transgression with regard to regimes of discipline and control. The compliant body that observes injunctions to occupy its allocated office space when not teaching or in meetings produces a subject who conforms to expectations of physical presence; at the same time, it is more likely to produce a subject who fails to comply with other institutional expectations – particularly the research output demanded by the Research Excellence Framework.

6.5.2   Transitional space and the digital workplace

If the academic body is frequently and inevitably manoeuvred into a transgressive space then the disembodied academic must strive to negotiate their subjectivity in online space. In previous chapters I considered the metaphor of Lacan's mirror stage as a way of exploring internet subjectivity. As Deborah Luepnitz suggests in her analysis of 'the space between Winnicott and Lacan' (Luepnitz, 2009, p.957), Lacan's re-working of Freud focuses on a tragic reading, as I discussed in Chapter 4 and also harnesses Freud's ironic approach as I explored in Chapter 5. It is an *unheimlich*, abstract and radical worldview, which concentrates on desire, alienation, language and absence (Luepnitz, 2009; Kirschner, 2010). An alternative way of employing psychoanalytic theory to think about the negotiation of the digital self is to leverage Donald Winnicott's concept of transitional objects and transitional space. Winnicott's version of Freud differs from Lacan's in that it is humanist in approach, focusing on concrete relations, wholeness and presence. It embraces the comic and the social, foregrounding the self as social agent (Luepnitz, 2009; Kirschner, 2010).

In Winnicott's reading, the transitional object of early infanthood is an item such as a soft toy or a blanket that the infant begins to realise is separate from itself. The infant also realises that the object is separate from its mother. The object becomes a focus for forceful emotions, desires and fantasies that the baby had previously directed solely at

the mother. This gives the infant a sense of power as, unlike the mother, the object does not go away. Thus the object becomes a defence against anxiety for the infant as it insulates them from their own vulnerability. The infant becomes highly attached to the object, which it views as having magical properties. The object opens up a creative space where the infant learns to distinguish between 'me' and 'not me' to differentiate between fantasy and reality and to create meaning. This space, which is neither the internal world of the individual nor the shared social world is the third space – Winnicott's transitional or potential space. It is through this space, which for children is a space of imagination and play, Winnicott argues, that we develop subjectivity (Winnicott, 1971).

Roger Silverstone uses Winnicott's concept of transitional objects and transitional space to model our relationship with media. In adults the transitional space becomes an area which continues to offer us 'relief from the strains of inner and outer reality' (Silverstone, 1994, p.12) which we fill with the adult version of imagination and play – cultural work and cultural objects. Silverstone argues that we rely on the media, particularly on television, to enable us to populate this area with objects and activities. He stresses the relevance of Winnicott's point that there is both a '*paradox and acceptance of the paradox*' (Winnicott, 1971, p.119, italics in original) because 'we will never challenge the baby to elicit an answer to the question: did you create that or did you find it?' (ibid.). That is to say, the viewers of TV will both *find* their screen objects, through watching TV, and *create* them. They create them because it is the viewer's imaginative work which endows proto-objects with significance and meaning, projecting onto them an emotional intensity, as the viewer cathects – and creates – their object - as the cult of celebrities who are 'famous for being famous' would suggest.

These ideas have also been applied to computational media. For example, Caroline Bainbridge and Candida Yates use Winnicott's concept of the transitional object to develop a psycho-cultural approach to digital media. They see the 'intertwining of emotional lives … with media objects (and more specifically as objects of our inner worlds)' as 'crucial in demonstrating the extent to which media have become integral to subjectivity'(Bainbridge and Yates, 2011, p.ii; see also Bainbridge and Yates, 2014). Sherry Turkle uses Winnicott's notion of transitional space to think about children's relationship to robot toys (2007); Jon Dovey and Helen Kennedy explore Silverstone's

approach to play in relation in their work on game theory (Dovey and Kennedy, 2006) ;
Rivka Ribak uses Winnicott to theorise the idea of mobile phones as transitional objects
in teenage culture (Ribak 2009; 2013); and Matt Hills considers social media as a form
of transitional space (Hills, 2014).

Online environments, then, are a third space of cultural experience, cathected objects
and imaginative illusion (Robins, 1995, p.804). Like other potential spaces, they are
also zones of disillusion; the transitional objects of technoculture mediate the constant
shift between illusion and disillusion which continue to produce our subjectivity, partly
by our reality testing of 'me' and 'not me'.

Use of mobile media underlines the potential of computational objects to fulfil this role;
like the 'traditional' transitional object of infanthood – the Linus blanket, the teddy bear
– mobile media are something we are loath to let out of our hands or our sight and we
become irrationally anxious and distressed if separated from them. In the technocultural
transitional space, however, the objects we cathect in order to attain subjectivity are
partly comprised of code. If we introject them and make them part of our psychic
landscape what they offer us, then, is cyborg-like connectivity with the technics. In the
workplace of the university this connection further conditions subjectivity. The
acquisition by university 'office' devices - the smartphone, tablet, and/or laptop - of
transitional object status means that not only can the subject carry their work
everywhere, but that they feel a drive to do so. We don't just take work home with us,
we're only at home if we're working.

Like Lacan's mirror, the transitional space can function malignantly, as well as being
able to help us to construct a socially viable sense of self (Zinkin, 1983). Bernard
Steigler, adopting a Winnicottian view to develop an account of digital subjecthood,
describes the transitional object as the place where desire is created (Steigler et al.,
2012, p.179) enabling a 'relationship of love' and the 'feeling that "life is worth living"'
(Steigler 2013, p.2). In this, he draws on Derrida's conception of the *pharmakon* as
something that both has oppositional qualities and is the '*différance* of difference'
(Derrida, 1972, p.127) the place where meaning breaks down, and is rebuilt (or not). He
sees the transitional object as the first pharmakon we find/create. It can, therefore, be
internal /external and curative/toxic, playing a role in the creation of addictions,

depression or violence as well as enabling more socially acceptable creative behaviours (Steigler, 2013, p.3).

In its role in the creation of the always on, technologised, cyborg subject of the neoliberal workplace I mentioned earlier, the object can thus be seen as playing a part in, from one perspective, the positive and productive, socially acceptable behaviour of the dedicated professional. At the same time, from a different perspective, it has a role in encouraging and distorting the subject's desire so that it presents as the compulsive, addicted, obsessive behaviour of the person who is unable to stop working . As Ros Gill discusses 'metaphors of addiction, obsession and failure' are regularly used by academics to speak about their relationship to workplace technologies (Gill, 2014, p.22). The irony is that the technics encourage the subject (did you find that or did you create it?) to do this to themselves. Furthermore, the image of the first perspective, the dedicated, responsiblised professional leads them, in line with university culture, to validate the compulsive behaviour.

The transitional object, as Winnicott suggests, can also be a space where religious impulses are created, a point which resonates with the ideas about the sanctification of technology I discussed earlier. Thus the introjection of the object becomes a form of (psychic and digital) religious communion weaving a heady element of the sublime into the addictive behaviour.

Silverstone discusses how television operates, in a world which the subject finds stressful and threatening, to ameliorate the anxiety that it participates in producing. Networked culture occupies a similar area of ideological space, providing for us the focus of our daily rituals, which enable us to sustain a (false) sense of ontological security. In the university workplace, not only does the technical transitional object provide us with the stress and pressure of yet another email or appointment, it also provide us with the release of tapping onto other sites to soothe ourselves with banality – or even of the 'escape into more' of opening a different email. Importantly, it provides something that is always there and always on, in our negotiations of 'me and 'not me', and is always ready with something new for us to love or hate. Or 'like'.

6.6 Fragmentation, risk and (dis)embodiment

In the workplace of the university, the spatial and temporal world of buildings, ritual, timetables and meetings is always presented as the authentic, physical, material, 'real thing', so the academic subject must be organised in relation to this. But the subject is also, always, the immaterial self – of knowledge and ideas, and also of mediated technoculture. Consequently, in relation to the disciplinary regime of the university, the subject is always being made to fragment. The rituals of bureaucracy purport to produce the risk-free university, managed through spectacle, newly sanctified rites, statistical ritual, and through continuous surveillance of staff. This is meant to provide a collective, institutional ontological security. This succeeds only partially in its own terms, and much has to be sacrificed for this partial success.

There is a permanent conflict, for the academic subject, between this surreal idea of risk mitigation and a sense of personal, professional judgement. The judgement must always be suppressed, or consigned to fugitive 'guerrilla' activities; the pretence of operating in line with bureaucratic diktat must always be maintained. Discussing how embodiment operates in relation to the virtual, Bassett argues that at same time as the subject is forced to split, there is also the demand that they reconcile themselves into a coherent narrative (Bassett, 2009, para.41-3), particularly at 'moments when … coercion is exercised (ibid., para.43) The split academic subject is forced to attempt the (impossible) reconciliative task of 'giving an account of oneself' precisely at such moments of control or coercion: in the promotion interview, the annual performance review meeting, or in front of the appointments panel. As I'll discuss in more detail in Chapter 9, as academic identity becomes increasingly mediated, injunctions to give public 'accounts of oneself' also increase. Privacy may not yet be theft, as it is in Eggers world of *The circle* (2013, p.303), but it begins to border on the secretive and the uncivic; in the space and time of mediated disembodiment, the body becomes laden with new meanings, unfeasible expectations and improbable duties.

SECTION IV – ACADEMIC LABOUR: TEACHING, ADMINISTRATION, RESEARCH

Chapter 7 – Teaching and technoculture: phantom objects on unhomely ground

7.1 Preface

This chapter was written in 2013-14. It leverages the literatures to map out and theorise the shifts in academic subjectivity implied by changing approaches to teaching and learning. It also draws on two small surveys of academic staff I carried out in 2006-7 and 2008, using various theoretical perspectives to situate and understand the findings from these studies.

7.2 Approach

In this chapter I set out to explore how changes in the technologies used by academic staff in their teaching have impacted on their subjectivity. I will be looking back at more established technocultures which utilise embodied interaction and print technology and newer ones which use digital technologies and are often referred to as 'e-learning'. As part of this I will use the findings of the two studies I carried out into academic response to digital teaching technologies. In order to place all this into a historical and cultural context, I'll use the same historical periodising I employed in Section 2 when tracing the development of higher education, before coming back to look more closely at the current period.

In theorising the subject positions which various approaches to teaching offer, I will leverage Lacan's concept of the four discourses to develop a reading of how the subject is constituted by the discursive practices of the lecture, the seminar and other teaching forms (Lacan, 1969-70). Proposed by Lacan in his 1969-70 Seminars, published as *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XV11*, the four discourses are: the discourse of the *master*; the discourse of the *university*; the discourse of the *analyst*; and the discourse of the *hysteric* (Lacan, 1969-70). They are part of Lacan's *oeuvre* that have not been widely used in literary or cultural studies (Homer, 2005, p.13). This is, perhaps, because they are thought of as relating rather more to clinical practice than to cultural theory, offering, as they do, differing subject positions for analyst and analysand during the process of psychoanalysis. However, as Lacan says 'I mention analytic experience in this connection only because it gives this a precise designation'(Lacan, 1969-70, p.13). In Lacan's text, as Mark Bracher argues, each discourse propose a different form of

intersubjectivity which is 'constitutive of the social order'(Bracher, 1994, p.108) and so has meaning for other contexts where social bonds are negotiated through language. Bracher deploys the four discourses in his account of Lacanian intersubjectivity and the relevance of psychoanalysis to the social. In this chapter, in addition to my own reading of Lacan, I will draw on Bracher's account, applying it specifically to the context of the intersubjectivity negotiated in teaching situations.

In Lacan's schemata each discourse has 4 positions: an *agent* who speaks the discourse; an *other* to whom the discourse is addressed; a *product*, which the discourse creates; and a form of *truth*, which it expresses. In each of the different discourses, the following signifiers occupy, in turn, each of those positions: the master signifier; knowledge; the subject; and *object a.* For example, in the discourse of the master, the master signifier is in the agent position and the subject is in the positon of truth, whereas in the discourse of the hysteric is the subject who is the agent and what is produced is knowledge (Lacan, 1969-70, pp. 9-68)[108].

I'll come back to the meanings produced in different educational contexts as they become appropriate in this chapter. The discourses were formulated by Lacan following the student uprisings in May 1968 when ideas about the university, knowledge and authority were very much to the fore, nowhere more so than Paris, where Lacan gave his seminars. This makes them particularly pertinent to this chapter and the way in which teachers negotiate the positions available in the four discourses offer a fertile way of thinking about how pedagogic practice serves to produce the academic subject.

In addition to psychoanalytic theory, later in the chapter when I begin to discuss online learning developments I will also mobilise the materialist concept of reification to theorise the relationship between the academic subject and the material they produce.

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[108] Tracing the intersubjective meanings produced by the full placing of the signifiers in the schemata is outside the scope of this work, aside from where they are discussed in relation to educational context. However, for completeness, the full placing is as follows: In the master's discourse, the master signifier is in theposition of agent, knowledge is in the position of the other, the subject occupies the position of truth and *objet a* is the product; in the university discourse, knowledge is in theposition of agent, *objet a* is in the position of the other, the master signifier occupies the position of truth and the subject is the product;in the hysteric's discourse, the subject is in theposition of agent, the master signifier is in the position of the other, *objet a* occupies the position of truth and is the product is knowldege; and in the discourse of the analyst *objet a* is in theposition of agent, the subject is in the position of the other, knowledge occupies the position of truth and the master signifier is produced (Lacan, 1969-70, pp. 9-68).

7.3 Elitist establishments – and small-group teaching

Firstly I will consider small-group and one-to-one teaching practices. This method was established in Oxford as part of the 19th-century reforms (Anderson, 1992, p.8). It remains commonly used in the Oxford or Cambridge tutorial or supervision sessions, where groups of one to three students meet with an academic member of staff on a weekly basis to discuss a specific topic, with students giving papers on the topic and getting feedback (Ashwin, 2005, p.632). A small-group form of teaching allied to this, but with a larger number of students, is the model more widely used in higher education, where groups of around eight to 20 students meet with a member of academic staff on a weekly basis in a seminar or tutorial to discuss a topic related to the weekly lecture (Barcan, 2013, loc.3660). The one-to-one tutorial or supervision session is also a way of inducting students engaged with research projects into the practice of research, something that is important in terms of the Homboldtian model of a community of scholars (Anderson, 2006, loc.54).

These approaches are based on the principle of Socratic or Platonic dialogue where learning takes place via discussion with a more knowledgeable individual (see Saren and Neisser, 2004, for a detailed account of this). The subject position offered to the academic, by these forms of small-group teaching, is that of authoritative guide or mentor.

7.3.1 The discourse of the analyst

From a Lacanian perspective, the discursive position into which the academic subject is interpellated by the small-group pedagogic approach is that of the *analyst*. In this the lecturer encourages the students to speak, attempting to frame an interchange which produces authentic knowledge – as opposed to the inauthentic or instrumental knowledge that the discourse of the university or the master would produce, as I'll discuss later. As Bracher, proposes, this is knowledge in continual flight from closure, which does not offer 'unequivocal meanings … or values' (Bracher,1994, p.124-5). This discursive approach serves to induct students into the culture and practices of academe and as an embodied, shared event, it carries an affective charge.

That isn't to say that a lecturer might not choose a different discursive position in a seminar or tutorial; they could choose one which is less disruptive of closed systems of knowledge and taken-for-granted attitudes, such as the discourse of the master, which is more inclined to offer unequivocal meanings; as Lacan says of teaching, 'it is easy, after all, to spin off into a discourse of mastery' (Lacan, 1969-70, p.69).

7.4 Modernist metropolitan developments – and the lecture

Lectures were, naturally, used in earlier universities, but were excluding in many ways; as well as the economic and class barriers to Oxbridge I discussed in earlier chapters, lectures were also closed in the sense that women weren't admitted to them until the late 19th century (University of Cambridge, 2015; University of Oxford, 2014). These social and economic exclusions were compounded and reinforced by the tradition that the lectures were given in Latin – Matthew Arnold famously broke with this when he became Professor of Poetry in 1857 and gave the first Oxford lecture in English (University of Oxford, 2015). With the development of the metropolitan universities in the 19th century, lectures came to represent the transmission of *public* knowledge and attain a centrality[109] in higher education. Lectures continue to be used in UK universities as one of the principal methods of teaching. David Willetts, when minister for Higher Education, lamented the failure of digital learning technologies to prise university teachers away from what he (pejoratively) calls the 'medieval' model of the lecture (*THE*, 2014a, p.11).

7.4.1 The discourse of the master

In the embodied, shared event of the lecture the academic is positioned as the discourse of the *master*, which Lacan paradoxically declares, in one of his 1970 lectures, is always 'the starting point for teaching', despite the fact that he sees the discourse of the analyst as having a more radical impact (Lacan, 1969-70, p.69). In the ritualised performance of the lecture what is being acted out is the mastery of knowledge; in pedagogic cliché the subject becomes the 'sage on the stage' (see King, 1993). In this staging of knowledge and authority, the subject speaks within a discourse where meaning is held in place by

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[109] Which isn't to say that seminars and tutorials aren't widely used and aren't, in some disciplines, the principal teaching method. However, lectures remain as an iconic practice for universities - academic posts are still commonly entitled 'lecturer' and most higher education institutions use the lecture at least as an organising tool.

the (illusion of the) master signifier and cannot be disrupted (Bracher, 1994, p.119). This fixing of things in their places is echoed by the body of the subject standing at the lectern, with the serried ranks of the student body facing them, rigidly anchored by lecture hall seating. Within the discourse of the master, all bodies, like all meanings, are secured by place.

I'd like to consider, at this point, a well-known painting of a lecture: André Brouillet's 1887 depiction of one of neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot's lectures on hysteria.

Fig. 25: *Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière*, **1897, by Pierre Brouillet.**

Freud studied under Charcot in 1885-6 and Charcot's thinking was influential in Freud's development of psychoanalytic theory (Morlock, 2007, p.137).[110] In this painting (Fig.25) , Charcot is presented as enacting the master's discourse. He is placed at the front of the class, upright, feet planted firmly apart, embodying the position of power, with (discursive) space separating him from the students. But, as Sue Thornham argues, the focal point of the painting, both for the students and the viewer, is the body of the hysteric (2003, p.79). Although the hysteric is presented as a (sexualised) specimen to be subjected to the male gaze, in fact the *discourse of the hysteric*, in its refusal of order, can undermine the master's discourse. The unruly, transgressive hysteric in her refusal to be contained by the restrictions of clothing, body language or

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[110] Freud had a lithographic reproduction of Brouillet's painting in his consulting rooms in Vienna and later, famously, over the consulting couch at his house in London (Morlock, 2007, p. 131).

meaning embodies an authentic questioning search for knowledge. This is Butler's illegitimate, disallowed body, contrasting starkly the legitimate body of the master, Charcot (see Butler, 1993, pp. 33-36). The master's discourse values knowledge, insofar as it is useful, but it is inauthentic – despite the confusion and disorder of the hysteric's search for knowledge, it has authenticity that the master's discourse lacks (Fink 1995, p.133 ; Zizek, 1993, p.274).

Positioned as the master within this discourse, the subject position produced for the lecturer is one where they must project the illusion of their own wholeness and coherency. They must hold meaning in its place and force the world to make sense – even if it doesn't. The hysteric, in their search for knowledge can find *jouissance*, but this enjoyment is not available to the master – the loss of *jouissance* is the price they pay for mastery (Lacan, 1969-70,pp.107-8).

As the seminar leader can occupy the discourse of the master, rather than the analyst, so the lecturer can, by their refusal of closure and fixity of meaning, choose to inhabit the discourse of the analyst. This they may do by what they speak about and how they speak about it. Zizek, for example, in his public lectures, has made the point that if a comet were hurling towards earth, philosophers, like himself, would not be able to provide a solution, which would come, instead, from scientists (Taylor, 2005). By this utterance he moves, temporarily, out of the discourse of the master, by admitting the limitations of his discipline. The mechanistic, reductionist *discourse of the university*, on the other hand, offers mechanistic, reductionist ways for the lecturer to vacate the role of the master – for example by getting students to use 'clickers' or *response systems,* sometimes called *voting systems,* in lectures. Under the guise of giving the learning subjects a voice and encouraging interactivity, what this actually does is allow them to point and click on 'multiple choice' questions when instructed to by the lecturer (see, for example, Sheffield University, 2014) . To dress up pointing and clicking as activity and voice is a classic trick of communicative capitalism which, as Dean proposes in *Democracy and other neoliberal fantasies*, fetishizes acts of participation, however shallow, empty and purposeless they may be (Dean, 2009).

Asking, at this point, 'to whom does a lecture belong?' would tend to evoke the obvious answer of 'the lecturer'. This becomes a more complicated question once lectures become recorded in various ways, a point to which I will return later.

The other form of teaching that the metropolitan universities moved to the fore was examinations, which position both teacher and student within Lacan's *discourse of the university.* This discourse is concerned with the following of rules in the service of maintaining the established order; it appears to be rational, but in fact will leverage any approach in order to serve the master signifier (Fink, 1995, pp.132-3). As Bracher says, 'bureaucracy is perhaps the purest form of the discourse of the University' (Bracher, 1994, p. 115). In this sense it is about subjecting the student to a dominant, totalising system of knowledge, making judgements about the extent to which they succeed or fail in the acquisition of this knowledge and then credentialing them for roles within the system of capitalism production. The lecturer, as a subject within this examination system, is in the service of the master signifier and the totalising system of the discourse of the university. It reduces them to a disciplining agent of the bureaucracy.

7.5 Post-war welfare state growth, 1945-79 – and the 'active' learner

A significant post-war development which implies a change for academic subjectivity is the movement in ideas about pedagogy. A range of theories about how children learn began to be used in schools in the 1960s and 1970s which 'can loosely be defined as the move towards … child-centred education with an emphasis on individualisation and learning by discovery'(Gillard, 2011, Chapter 6). These ideas drew on the work of a range of psychologists including Jean Piaget's and Lev Vygotsky's constructivist approaches (see Piaget and Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky, 1962) and the broadly humanist work of Carl Rogers (see Rogers 1969), among others. These type of approaches, which began to be used to theorise the education of adults in the latter decades of the 20th century (see, for example Jenny Rogers' much re-printed 1971 handbook, *Adults Learning*) represent a broad range of theoretical perspectives (a discussion of which is outwith the remit of this work, but see Pritchard, 2013 for a more detailed account) but what they have in common is the belief that the student learns by 'doing'. That is to say, that students need to engage in activities such as case studies, role plays, problem-based learning, discussions, written exercises, games and so on in order to learn. These

approaches have gradually acquired purchase in orthodoxies about higher education learning. Sheffield University's 'toolkit' for making large-group teaching more 'interactive'(University of Sheffield, 2014) is a good working example of this, as is educational theorist Diana Laurillard's influential book *Re-thinking university teaching* (Laurillard, 2002) or educationalist James Atherton's contention, expressed on his National Teaching Fellowship award-winning website for educators, that 'the lecture is basically the social technology of the Middle Ages' (Atherton 2013). Although approaches to teacher training may have moved from theoretical modelling to evidence-based 'what works' models (Biesta, 2007pp. 1-3; Pritchard, 2013, p.3) active learning approaches still remain as an orthodoxy in advice to teachers in higher education (see, for example, Crawford, 2015).

This changes the role of the academic subject to what Alison King, in 1993, referred to as 'from sage on the stage to guide on the side'. This phrase has been so often repeated in the intervening years that it has become a cliché within higher education pedagogy, particularly in online learning (as Michael Berman, 2013, notes).

There are three ways of considering the consequences of this for the academic subject. The first is that they can be positioned more within the discourse of the analyst, who vacates the seat of mastery, accepts the unstable nature of meaning and subjectivity, and attempts to encourage the student to find the truth. The second is that, as the 'rules' are set up by the teacher, unless the group actively rejects the 'rules' (the hysteric position), choices are all made within the frameworks previously established by the constructor of the exercise – the teacher. This is one of neoliberalism's stock methods of deception, which hoodwinks the student, enabling the learning process to stay within the discourse of the master whilst having the appearance of occupying the more radical discourse of the analyst. A third way of thinking about the consequences of this change is that as these ideas about the efficacy of 'learning by doing' become a form of orthodoxy, other approaches to learning in classroom situations, such as creating opportunities for listening and thinking, which may appear to an observer be passive behaviours (and which certainly evade audit), become less acceptable as pedagogic practice (see, for example, my earlier example of Willetts on lectures and learning technology, *THE*, 2014a, p.11). The academic subject thus becomes the Deleuzian subject of '*perpetual*

training'(Deleuze, 1992, p.5), enjoined to change their teaching practices by learning how to employ ever-changing, new techniques (see, for example, the HEA, 2014).

The most notable large-scale development of alternative teaching models in the post-war era is the Open University, which, created in the late 1960s and early 1970s, leveraged these new approaches to teaching and learning within a distance learning context (Rowntree, 1992, p. 7-19). It implies potential new subject positions for the academics who create courses and materials and for tutors who teach on them. From the 1990s, the development of 'e-learning' as a form of distance learning has been used by many universities and has meant that these subject positions became more widely influential.

The OU premise was that students were (and in an updated way, still are) taught through a combination of video and audio materials; books and papers; and 'workbook' type print material, which forms the main part of most courses and guides the student through the topics. Written by the course team this, typically, tried to replicate tutorial dialogue, providing questions students are meant to consider and space for them to jot down their answers. It referred outwards to set texts, often instructing students to read specific sections and then asking questions about them. Science courses sometimes additionally used home lab kits. More recently, OU courses have used online elements (see Mason, 2000).

The subject positions offered for the academic who created distance-learning material were those of expert, owner, enthusiast and leader. Like lectures, the creation of materials positioned them within the discourse of the master. For BBC television lectures the subject position offered was the same as for as the lecture, with two additional dimensions. The first is that the teacher became mediatised in a way which foreshadows (albeit at 3am) the idea of 'celebrity' academics, which I address in more detail in Chapter 9. The second is that the lecture became a commodity, so if we were to ask the question 'to whom does a lecture (or a set of course materials) belong?'[111] in

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[111] The OU does, in fact, hold copyright of all course materials produced by academic staff, with the individual staff members holding a perpetual licence to use the content for their own purposes.

this context, the expected answer might be the OU[112] – or even the BBC. This began to prise the lecture loose from the discourse of the master, as the discourse of the university began to take over. For the subject this involved a loss of agency as they move from a position of authority (albeit inauthentic authority), to a position whereby they, as 'knowledge workers' are subject to the discourse of capitalist knowledge production.

7.6 Massification and the knowledge economy, 1979-1997 – technology, regulation and audit

7.6.1 Digital technology initiatives

During this period governmental moves to introduce digital technologies into universities for teaching, research and administration gradually began, gaining momentum in the 1990s. I mentioned earlier that it was the introduction of the Janet network in1984 that provided the basic infrastructure for universities to become technologised; the group that established Janet became part of the new Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC, later changed to Jisc) in 1993. This organisation was state funded, largely through the Higher Education Funding Councils, until 2012 when it became a registered charity with subscription funding (Jisc, 2014a). Jisc set out to 'champion the use of digital technologies' (Jisc, 2014b) in the sector, a mission it still pursues.

Prior to the establishment of Jisc, a number of initiatives aimed at increasing the use of new technologies for teaching in higher education were created by the Conservative administration with financial support from the funding councils. In 1984 the *Computers in Teaching Initiative* (CTI), which had the mission 'to increase the *effectiveness* of teaching through the application of appropriate learning technologies' (Martin, 1996, my italics), was established and continued to fund projects and centres in universities for 15 years (Fraser, 1998). In 1992 the *Teaching and Learning Technology Programme*

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[112] The central OU is, effectively, a publishing company, where centrally employed academic staff do not necessarily have contact with students (other than full-time doctoral students). Geographical regions then operate a little like franchises, carrying out the face-to-face teaching of courses that are designed and determined elsewhere (Milton Keynes, to be precise) (Burt, 2006, pp.9-10). This model is sometimes referred to by neoliberal discourse when considering the re-organising and partial privatising of British higher education in the 21st century (see Blunkett, 2000; Barbar, 2013), but it usually neglects to consider the massive 20th century state investment in the OU.

(TLTP), with the stated aim to 'make teaching and learning more *productive* and *efficient* by harnessing modern technology' (Haywood et al., 1998, p.3, my italics), was launched. The importance that government, through the funding bodies, ascribed to the role of technologies for teaching in higher education is demonstrated by the size of this initiative. It was funded by £75 million over its 15-year lifespan, which was reported in 1996 as being 'the largest technology-based initiative of its kind across the world within higher education' (Tiley, 1996). The investment by the Conservative government during this period is significant, particularly given its overall commitment to decreasing state spending and the specific cuts it made to higher education funding.

There are two main reasons for this governmental push to increase the use of digital technologies in universities. Letters of guidance from the Secretary of State for Education, Ken Clarke, to the heads of the funding councils in 1991-2 prioritised, in the future governance of higher education, 'continued *expansion* of undergraduate provision, quality *audit* of institutions, [and] the quality *assessment* of teaching (TQA)' (Haywood et al., 1998, p.8, my italics). Both the culture and practice of governance implied by overall institutional audit and, specifically, teaching audit have been enabled and amplified by the use of information technologies for both administration and teaching. The use of technologies across these two areas became operationally, strategically and culturally entwined across the next decades, with, for example, student enrolment data being fed from management information software to learning environments, and grades being exported in the other direction.[113] This, therefore, formed one reason for the drive to encourage universities to use technologies. The other priority mentioned by Clarke, the move to a mass higher education system, and its implementation against a decreasing unit of resource, formed the second reason (Haywood et al., 1998, p.8). Learning technologies were seen as potentially 'achieving productivity and efficiency gains whilst maintaining and improving quality in the provision of teaching and learning' (Tiley, 1996). That is to say, they were seen as providing the magical silver bullet that would enable mass education, despite decreasing

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[113] There was a popular concept in the early years of the 21st century that it would soon be possible for one great, integrated information system, the 'MLE', to be seamlessly used for every single aspect of administration and learning in universities – from finance, to room allocations to online teaching and research support to marketing, possibly across institutions (see Jisc, 2002 for an example and Jisc, 2010b for more detail). This ambitious utopian or dystopian (depending on your perspective) modernist notion has not yet been realised and may prove to have been a totalising fantasy of senior administrators steeped in the discourse of the university.

per capita funding levels and the added demands, created by students entering HE at lower academic level, of intensive teaching and support.

I mentioned earlier that 'active learning' approaches began to permeate education in the latter part of the century and it was this perspective that was leveraged by advocates of learning technology (see, for example, Khan, 1997). In the 1990s, the use of digital technologies and the internet were also becoming widespread both locally and globally, at least among wealthier nations. This change, added to the exhortation from government, which I discussed in Section II, that HE should become more vocational, led to a perspective which took the view that the UK needs to have a technologised workforce in order to compete, globally, with other nations and that it is a function of universities to produce this technologised workforce. I will discuss this viewpoint in more detail later in this chapter, as it becomes the 21st-century clarion call for the use of technology within higher education.

7.6.2   The discourse of the university

For the academic subject, the main change in this period was the increased regulation of teaching and the growth in student numbers as I discussed in detail in Section II. Imposition of regulatory frameworks on courses and teaching practice resulted in the loss of agency for the subject as their programmes of study were obliged to conform to externally imposed codified sets of criteria and subjected to continual evaluation. So academics became subject, in their teaching, to a bureaucratic regime of control – Lacan's *discourse of the university*, which Zizek, writing on the four discourses, sees operating as by 'nonauthentic, compulsive … false knowledge (Zizek, 1993, p.274). The huge increase in student numbers during this period led to an overall decline in student/staff ratios particularly for less well-funded subjects and institutions (Court, 2012, pp.2-3). So solutions were sought that enable mass teaching; educational technologies were touted as one answer to this, but strategies such as increasing the size of lectures and the substitution of tutorial or seminar discussion by 'active learning' group work, carried out outside the classroom with minimal supervision, also became used (Clegg et al., 2010). In their work on the way in which neoliberalism attempts to hi-jack emergent pedagogies and technologies for learning, Clegg et al. demonstrate how active-learner or student-centred approaches continue to be 'denuded of critical

content as a result of the intensification of academic labour' (2010, p.48) and how technologies may be used as forms of crowd control for such activities as computer marked assessments (Clegg et al., 2010). So, from the massification of the 1990s, newer forms of teaching become pressed more forcefully into the service of the discourse of the university.

7.7   Personalisation and privatisation, 1997-present

7.7.1   Attitudes to the technics

With much of the initial technical infrastructure for the use of digital technologies having been put in place, this period marks the most intensive increase in the use of such technologies to date. It is important to stress that, as an HEA report suggests, use of technologies is not evenly spread across the sector either within institutions or even within departments, schools and faculties (Sharpe et al., 2006). Or as a HEFCE-commissioned report puts it, the adoption of technologies 'is best perceived not as a linear narrative but as a complex tapestry' (Haywood et al., 1998, p.6). To complicate the tapestry even further it's possible (if difficult to prove) that because there have been injunctions by funding bodies and by institutions to adopt educational technologies, there is a tendency at the level of individual lecturers, courses, schools and institutions – and consequently funding bodies themselves – to over-report both their usage and the positive outcomes they yield. So although I will be describing general trends in the use of technologies for teaching, it is in the knowledge that these may only partially represent the actuality in individual institutions.

I started this thesis by referring to ideas about technophilia and technophobia, an idea I'll come back to later in this chapter. These two pathologising approaches, however, represent two potential traps that exist in analysing the role played by digital technologies in higher education. On the one hand, a danger lies in the possibility of acting a flag-waving enthusiast for the technics *per se* without taking into account their role in enabling the project of university marketisation. On the other lies the danger of taking an overly reductionist stance that sees only the potential for technology to make education 'cheap and replicable' fitting seamlessly with 'largely bankrupt pedagogical ideas' and threatening the employment of lecturers (Bartlett, 2002, p.4).

Educationalists Sean Sturm and Stephen Turner acknowledge and avoid both these traps, observing that the technics can be used 'against the grain' of both commercial technology providers and of the corporate university, when they say of learning technology that:

> its outcomes, whatever its objectives, are neither calculable nor preset…its remediation by academics and students can redesign – or redirect the design drive of – the neoliberal university.
>
> (Sturm and Turner, 2012, p.65)

7.7.2   The e-university

For the Blair government, which came to power in 1997, e-learning technologies formed an important part of the vision for education. The £62 million 'e-University' was announced by the Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, in his 2000 'Greenwich Speech'(Blunkett, 2000). In this he discursively linked the new project with Harold Wilson's radical 1960s OU project, which by 2000 was respectable and flourishing (Weinbren, 2014). Blunkett attempted to make this link despite the fact that, unlike the OU, the e-university was a private-sector corporation funded from the public purse which aimed to turn a profit by selling online courses to overseas students. In the Greenwich speech he leveraged the claim that globalisation meant that 'learning has become big business' and 'virtual learning is an industry that is striding forward all around us', and he linked this with the idea of a knowledge economy (Blunkett, 2000). But, as Clegg et al., among others, argue, globalisation as a totalising concept is both unproven at the level of political economy and unconvincing as a social theory. Furthermore, presenting it as the unassailable meta-narrative of our time and linking it to the technological determinism of the 'information technology revolution' myth (Castells, 2000) as narratives like Blunkett's do, excludes alternative analyses and 'reduce[s] the space for resistance' (Clegg et al., 2003 p. 45; see also Rosenberg, 2000 and Callinicos, 2001).

Much of this century's public discourse about higher education and technology has leveraged the same mythic approach of technological determinism and pressing international competition. As Clegg et al. argue: 'the effect is to create an anxiety …

[where] organisations are likely to feel under pressure and to speculate and take risks, sometimes resulting in spectacular failures' (2003, p.46).

The e-University became one of the nation's 'spectacular failures' when it attracted neither the international learners nor the private finance its creators had envisaged (House of Commons Select Committee in Education and Skills, 2005; MacCleod, 2004a; Garrett, 2004). The existence of two similar publicly funded, semi-corporate 'spectacular failures' in e-learning, the £1 billion University for Industry launched in 1998 (MacLeod, 2004b) and the £50 million NHS University launched in 2003 (Flood, 2005), serve to support Clegg at al.'s point. Interestingly, these three initiatives seem to have been quickly and quietly forgotten.

The collapse of the e-University in particular led the government to change tack on e-learning; HEFCE announced that the future organisation of e-learning would 'put a greater emphasis on public good rather than commercial objectives' (Harrison, 2004). In 2005 HEFCE published its ten-year strategy for online education which articulated a shift in higher educational policy discourse about e-learning. The earlier presentation of governmental policy on e-learning in the Greenwich speech was a 'third way' rhetorical splicing of a centralised, state-planned, modernist project with a corporate venture, articulated by claims such as: 'business–university collaborations are driving forward the communication technologies which will support virtual learning' (Blunkett, 2000, para.21). HEFCE's 2005 presentation of e-learning, however, added the *personal* privatisation of the social aspect of education to *economic* privatisation. What was stressed in the HEFCE policy is 'individualised support' and 'flexibility of provision'(HEFCE, 2005, p.4). The drivers which were presented in this document are not so much global economic pressures, but the *desires of students*, who:

> use the internet and new technologies every day – for finding information, communicating, and seeking entertainment, goods and services. Learners are bringing new expectations of the power of technology into higher education (HEFCE, 2005, p.5).

This consumerisation of the student as learning subject and the fantasy of agency and control that is sold to them, as it is sold to all consumers, attempted to position the teaching subject as a cross between a producer of consumer goods in a knowledge

factory and a personal shopper; but this is a false positioning. Students are both subject to the discourse of the master, which produces them as speechless and powerless, and the discourse of the university which produces them as data objects (Bracher, 1994, p.121). Only the discourse of the analyst produces them as speaking subjects and this discourse is increasingly made unavailable by pressure on student/staff ratios.

7.7.3   Digital teachers

For academic staff in this period, there is an injunction that they must learn how to use digital technologies in their teaching. When the 1997 Dearing Report looked forward to the (imagined) potential savings in cost and gains in quality of e-learning in higher education, it also said:

> communications and information technology are far from being
> embedded in the day-to-day practice of learning and teaching in most
> higher education institutions … the main reason is that many academics
> have had no training and little experience in the use of communications
> and information technology as an educational tool.

(Dearing, 1997, p.36)

Throughout this period, there was pressure at a national, institutional and departmental level for academic staff to use e-learning technologies. Laying out the 2003 governmental position in *Towards a Unified e-Learning Strategy,* Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Charles Clarke, said 'I want all … lecturers, all trainers and mentors, to experience the fantastic excitement of these new ways of learning and teaching' (2003). Liz Beaty, HEFCE Director of Learning and Teaching, took the view that 'the curiosity and innovation of those in higher education is driving them to explore new approaches to learning supported by technologies' (HEFCE, 2005, p.1). On the other hand, in a paper on the psychological impact of learning environments Morgan et al. discussed evidence of 'technostress' where 'computerisation makes work more difficult, increases stress levels' (2000, p.74). In fact, during this period academic engagement with technology was frequently discussed in terms of affect, as in the three examples quoted, where the emotional responses of 'excitement', 'curiosity' or 'technostress' are cited. This ideas of the technics exciting emotionality was pushed further, to the extent that engagement became often discussed in terms of

psychopathology and frequently stereotyped as *technophobia* or *technophilia* (Salmon and Jones, 2004; Orsmond and Stiles, 2002) and the pejorative use of the term 'Luddite'[114]has slipped into common usage in universities (Baggaley, 2011).

During this period the types of learning technologies used can be split into two phases. Phase one covers first-generation technologies and stretches from around the late 1990s to about 2007-8, when second-generation technologies began to be used in UK universities, alongside first-generation software. Although the terms web 1.0 and web 2.0 are not unproblematic, as I discussed in the previous chapter, they are useful and fairly apposite terms to use for discussing educational software. In first-generation or web 1.0 learning environments, for example, academic staff post information for students to read and determine how students are organised into groups for online discussions. Students take part in online discussions – or not – and submit their assignments. In second-generation or web 2.0 environments, students can create their own material, choose with whom they share it and create groups for discussion with whomsoever they wish. This implies a distinct shift in practices and assumptions in online teaching and learning.

In the two studies I carried out, which I mentioned at the start of the chapter, the first was of academics who had used a first generation environment and the second was of staff who had used a first generation environment and who took part in the trialling of a second generation environment. In the next two sections I will discuss these studies and my findings, as part of my analyses of first and second generation teaching and learning technologies.

7.7.4   First-generation learning technologies

The main technology used in this phase was Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), which became widely adopted after their introduction to UK universities in the late

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[114] Robins and Webster, using the term 'Luddite' in non-perjorative, more historically accurate sense (see my Footnote 1 for clarification), writing about IT in the 1980s in *Information technology: A Luddite analysis*, call for a neo-Luddite, anti-capitalist political strategy (Robins and Webster, 1986); in 1999 they revisit this approach, concluding that many of the varied ecological movements of the late 1990s constitute a 'new spirit of Luddism' (p.59) albeit one that uses social media to mobilise (Robins and Webster, 1999, p.39-60).

1990s (Selwyn, 2007, p.84). By 2010, they were 'an essential part of almost every higher educational institution' (Jisc, 2010c).

The most widespread VLEs in the UK were the US Blackboard and Canadian WebCT, until Blackboard Inc. acquired its main rival in 2006 making it the online learning environment most used by UK universities[115] (*Education Week*, 2006). Some alternatives, based on open source technologies, such as Moodle, have also been used (Simonson, 2007, p. 8-9).

VLEs have been, typically, used as a place where academic staff can make course details, student handbooks, reading lists and resource links – and in many institutions, lecture notes and lecture PowerPoint slides – available to students. In some institutions, particularly post-92 universities, it became mandatory for staff to make some or all of these things available to students via the VLE. I'll introduce my own 2007 study of academic staff using a VLE a little later, but some of the reasons my interviewees described for adopting the technology were because it was a 'central university directive', 'compulsory' and in 'compliance with faculty policy'. In an earlier study at a post-92 institution, Roger Bennett found that the statement 'the university's management has forced me to adopt new teaching technologies and methods' was the second most popular reason for academic staff using ICTs in their teaching (Bennett, 2001).

7.7.4.1 *Learning objects and reification*

During the first-generation phase the area that was high on university learning and teaching research and R&D agendas, as well as attracting private-sector interest was the concept of the 'learning object' (Rehak and Mason, 2003). This was the idea that online learning materials could be broken down into constituent sections and each section could be identified by a metadata label or 'tag'.[116] This tag would contain structured information about the material thus making it possible to search for it – and then, potentially, purchase it. An online lecture transcript, for example, would form such a

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[115] Technically, VLEs are largely content management systems, with add-on features such as discussion boards. Typically, for commercial VLEs an annual licence for a black box system is purchased (for a non-trivial fee, in terms of university budgets) from a educational software company thus effectively outsourcing this aspect of education to the private sector.

[116] This is the concept behind the semantic web which is an important part of the Internet of Things.

learning object. Whether meta-tagged or not, what happened when the transcript of a lecture was placed in the institutional VLE is that it was transformed into a *commodity*.

So, for the academic subject the VLE brought about two changes compared to face-to-face teaching. Firstly, it separated the subject from the product of their labour, both in a literal sense, as it harvested the digital product from the material subject, and in an associative sense as the lecture transcript, once in the environment, had an existence apart from the subject so the subject was not automatically associated with it in the same way. Secondly, the creation of 'learning objects' commodified both the *practice* of teaching and that which was produced to enable that practice (i.e. the lecture transcript). Both of these contribute to a process of *reification*.

This is a concept from Marx, specifically from the theories of commodity fetishism and alienation, which Georg Lukacs further develops to form the theory of reification or 'thingification'. In this:

> a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, it turns into a commodity which … must go its own way independently of man, just like any consumer article.
>
> (Lukacs, 1923, Section 1, para.11)

Robbins and Webster, in *Times of the technoculture*, applied this analysis to digital technology, using the term 'technology fetish' in order 'to understand the way in which capitalist technology assumes the form of a discrete and reified entity, with its own autonomy and momentum'(Robins and Webster, 1999, p.50).

Read through this optic, a lecture transcript, once online in the institutional VLE, became a commodity, estranged from the subject. This commodification inverted relationships between people causing 'the social relations of individuals to appear in the perverted form of a social relation between things' (Marx, 1859, p.4-5). So the relationship between lecturer and student became transformed into a relationship between the commodity of the lecture transcript and the student; to take this to its logical conclusion, it became a relationship between the commodity of the estranged

learning object and that of the *educational credential* that the student seeks to acquire. So this 'mediation of things' meant, as sociologist Val Burris describes it, that:

> the social character of each producer's labor becomes obscured and human relationships are veiled behind the relations among things and apprehended as relations among things
>
> (Burris, 1988).

These things took on a quality that Lukacs, quoting Marx, refers to as 'phantom' or 'ghostly objectivity' (Lukacs, 1923, section 1, para.1), in that although not alive they have a relationship both with each other and with living beings and are imbued with a special and undefinable value. From a Lacanian perspective, what they become imbued with is *objet a*,[117] making them (phantom) objects of the learners' desire. In Lacan's discourse of the university what is produced is surplus *jouissance*, a promise of *objet a* (Lacan, 1969-70, p.39).

It is not only the relationship between individual lecturer and student which became affected by this process of reification; the whole social relations of teaching and learning in the university become reified. Academic subjectivity has been profoundly affected by this. As the 'learning objects' have become animated with subjectivity, so the estranged academic subject has become objectivised. As Lukacs proposes, reification:

> stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things.
>
> (Lukacs, 1923, Section 2, para.24)

7.7.4.2   Communities of practice and 'people people'

I now turn to the first of the two studies of academics views and experiences of online learning. In 2006-7 I interviewed all 12 programme leaders[118] in a large healthcare faculty about their own experiences and those of colleagues teaching on their courses, of using first-generation online learning in their field. These were semi-structured

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[117] *object a* is Lacan's interpretation of what Freud calls *Das Ding* - 'the thing'. That 'thingification' is a psychosocial process producing *Das Ding* is, then, unsurprising.

[118] i.e. academic staff with overall responsibility for specific fields of study. This healthcare faculty was jointly based at a post-92 university and an older medical school.

interviews. Broadly, the relevant areas which were explored were, firstly, a general overview of e-learning within their remit and secondly the perceptions of e-learning of the interviewee(s) and the reported perceptions of their teams. The validity of the data collected was confirmed by a verbal summary at the end of the interview and by asking participants to review transcribed interviews for accuracy (see Appendix C for more information).

Whilst there was some enthusiasm for using these digital technologies, the interviewees also has reservations. One interviewee pointed out that in her school[119], academic staff 'are "people people" and who value empathy and physical communication'. She saw these qualities as an important, enriching dimension of the student/tutor and student/student relationship and, as this was a culture into which it is critical healthcare students are inducted, she viewed this aspect of professional education as being degraded by a move to online learning.

Other interviewees talked about having formed 'communities of practice' to offer co-mentoring practical and psychological support in e-learning to academic staff within their schools, with one adding that a 'transition from conventional [teaching] to e-learning … requires the establishment of *relationships* – technological and pedagogic', an approach also found by Bennett (2001, p.50).

Another said 'some staff are frightened' and described how colleagues had tried to help each other over the 'fear'. All of this implies that some of the academic staff surveyed perceived one effect of e-learning as being that 'human relationships are veiled behind the relations among things,' as Burris says of reification (1988). This was unappealing to them and may have led them to 'not value the technology' as another interviewee put it. But it also suggests that a positive resistance strategy to this reification of e-learning material and its consequential objectification of academics was for academics to add more of a human, affective dimension. They did this by forming and cementing interpersonal relationships between themselves when using the technics. Clegg and Rowland, in theorising of the role of kindness in university teaching suggest something similar. They identify the personal quality of kindness, as distinguished from the public

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[119] The faculty was divided into a number of smaller schools.

duty of care; the latter they view as being easily reduced to a performance indicator, while the former is disruptive of managerialist approaches to education (Clegg and Rowland, 2010, p.724-6).

It is justified to suggest that the academic and professional disciplines which comprise healthcare valorise both the physical dimension of the human body and the importance of affect in human communication. This is a consequence of their own disciplinary interests. The foreclosure of bodies enacted by e-learning takes away what is for them (as it may be, perhaps to a lesser extent, for academic staff from other disciplines) a means by which meaning is *produced*. By making bodies absent it robs bodies of their capacity to be unruly, making them illegitimate and disallowed by their absence whilst at the same time rendering actual bodies compliantly tethered to screen and keyboard[120] (see Butler, 1993, pp. 33-36) and the academic subject forced to move from positions of either the discourse of the analyst or master, where human relationships are valued, if not equal, to the discourse of the university, where the 'totalizing, tyrannical power' (Bracher, 1994, p.116) of the discourse is leveraged in the service of commoditised relations.

7.7.4.3 The ghost of an event

Returning to the question I asked earlier – 'to whom does a lecture belong?' – produces no simple answer once we start to consider the lecture transcript, or even the video of a lecture online in an institutional VLE. The lecturer? Or their employer? It's taken for granted that traditionally published work such as a book or journal article *belongs* to the subject – they own the copyright – although in writing it they are performing part of their duties for their employing university. The UCU, however, points out that:

> in higher education, it is common for the individual institution to be the first owner of the intellectual property and its associated rights generated by any employee, although many waive their rights to the copyright of standard academic publications.
>
> (UCU, 2014).

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[120] At the time of my study bodies were tethered to screen and keyboard, and most of them to desks. By 2014 bodies are tethered to tablets and phones, disciplining objects which move around with them through geographical space.

Yet the whole structure of the RAE and the REF has actively encouraged this idea of ownership. When the individual academic moves institutions they 'take' their publications with them (in the sense that they are entered for the research assessment of the university where the person works on the RAE/REF submission date, not the one they worked in when they were published) unlike any 'impact' element their research may have, which, stays with the original employing institution as I will discuss in Chapter 10. The whole vexed question of intellectual property ownership of online teaching materials is intimately tied up with concept of reification. Interestingly, legal guidance to universities on this from Jisc advises that the copyright of a transcript of a lecture written by the lecturer within the course of their employment with a university is generally owned by their employer; the performance of it, however, is owned by the lecturer (Jisc, 2010d). Because of the complexity of the area, the UCU, in 2014, set up a service to offer members support and advice on intellectual property issues (UCU, 2014).

This period marks the start of it becoming, in UK universities, not uncommon for lectures to be recorded in some form – video, audio or transcripts – and made available for students. There remain questions over the extent to which these are actually used by students (see, for example, Kamad, 2013). There is a sense in which the reified object takes over and becomes an end in and of itself, to the extent that what we get is the lecture that is recorded in order never to be heard. Students may desire to have it (it is, after all, imbued with *objet a*) but do not necessarily act on that desire. Perhaps by not being 'in the moment' the recorded lecture lacks co-presence and affective charge, so is not an 'event'. It is the ghost of an event.

7.7.4.4   *Technologised subjects*

The neoliberal project of regulation and audit has been also further enabled by the use of VLEs. Most systems permit academic staff to easily access data about students' online activities. They can see how often each student has logged on, how much time they have spent online, which pages and sections they have visited. In the Blackboard VLE, for example, this data is presented as a colourful pie chart which compares the differing amounts of 'activity' for all the students on the course. Thus academic staff are encouraged by the functionality of the software to surveille students' use of the VLE

and use simplistic metrics to make judgements about their commitment to their course. What staff members may not be aware of is that the course leader (or anyone with the necessary level of administrative access) can use the same function to monitor how academic staff use the environment.

Teaching materials that academic staff upload into the environment are also 'under much higher levels of scrutiny by students and peers', as one of my interviewees put it, than the teaching of a face-to-face course. So the teaching materials themselves (and by association, their creator) can also be surveilled by anyone with appropriate permissions – or at least, that possibility exists which means, in a classically Foucauldian way, that all material is felt, by those responsible for it, to be subject to scrutiny - because any of it could be, at any time. The potential to use VLEs as a Taylorist management tool to monitor the behaviour and output of academic staff is present in the software; often in institutions the permissions, which determine who can see what, are not set at the local level of a course or programme, but at the level of the department or, more usually, because the technology is centrally managed, of the institution. Land and Bayne, in their work on e-learning and surveillance, used the term 'the glass university' to consider how VLEs of this period acted as a version of Bentham's panopticon, making all activities and interchanges potentially visible to those in control of the institution (Land and Bayne, 2004, p.165).

Deleuze's concept of the 'dividual' which I explored in my discussion of the academic double can be used to explore the digital constitution of the teacher of the glass university (Deleuze, 1992). A 'dividualised' teacher is split into their data self – online interactions with student and reified teaching materials – and their shadowy physical self, which lurks in some other place. And never, as I suggested in Chapter 6, in the 'right' place, as the academic body is always *displaced*. The digital dividual increasingly becomes not only subject to the regulatory processes of the glass university but must also become a regulator of those processes, insofar as they begin to operate in the type of dispersed, modulated 'participatory panopticon' (Andrejevic, 2012, p.239) that more recent technologies encourage, as I discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the dividuated academic body.

Both the use of VLEs and the generalised use of the internet by students during this period created, and continues to create, a requirement for lecturers to have a degree of technical engagement and represents a 'technologising' of the academic subject. One of my interviewees in my healthcare study described how academic staff have to 'unlearn their existing ways of working'; another said that colleagues 'found it difficult' and felt 'that it would increase work level, more to learn, new skills required'. Another said that 'the use of e-learning requires lecturers to acquire a different set of skills'. Others described 'anxiety', 'resistance' and 'lack of motivation' and felt that language used about online learning was excluding and alienating. One interviewee reflected on how originally, when teaching, she had produced transparencies for lectures herself, using technology she understood; she was pleased to have developed expertise in manipulating the technologies involved. But using a VLE she felt that the loss of control of the 'nuts and bolts' of the technology of teaching created anxiety and a sense of loss of agency both for herself and others. In fact, for Marx, losing control of the process of production is part of the way in which a worker becomes alienated (Marx, 1844, p.31). The 'resistance' of which my interviewees spoke, itself, can be seen as a response to this alienation and to the reification that builds on it.

7.7.5   Second-generation learning technologies

Second-generation learning technologies began to be used in British universities from around 2008, largely in addition to institutional VLEs (Conole and Alevizou, 2010, pp.9-11). Most second-generation technologies are freely available, forming part of the 'web 2.0' wave of software and approaches to software. While, as I have discussed earlier, the concept of web 2.0 is not without detractors, it has been embraced from some education perspectives where the term 'learning 2.0' or 'edupunk' has been used as a shorthand for the use of these technologies in teaching (Ala-Mutka et al, 2009).

Second-generation technologies include social networking, such as Facebook, blogs such as WordPress, wikis such as MediaWiki, video sites such as YouTube, photo and music sharing such as Flickr and Spotify, microblogs such as Twitter and the dynamic integration of all of these together within various kinds of web pages. The emphasis has been on the facilitation of online community, both within courses and with contacts outside the university; and also on the ability for both lecturer and student to create and

share content. So a 'learning 2.0' perspective would see the technologies it employs as much less pedagogically rigid than the traditional type of VLE, which it would view as having inbuilt educational approaches. It would tend to see these newer technologies as being more amenable to the general active learning or constructivist approaches I mentioned earlier (see, for example, Richardson, 2010, p.171; Conole and Alevizou, 2010, pp.9-11). Additionally, it would see the technics as amenable to more radical versions of these approaches, often based on the work of educationalists such as Ivan Illich (1971) and Paul Freire (see Giroux 2013b), as in, for example, Canadian educationalist, Stephen Downes' work (Downes, 2012).

7.7.5.1   *Negotiating mapless mastery*

In my own 2008 study of using a web 2.0 learning environment (see Appendix D) I found that there were many things that academic staff felt were positive about it, but that the anxieties they articulated differed from those in my earlier study where staff were using a more traditional VLE.

In this study I invited staff from all 7 faculties in a post-92 university to participate. The learning technology used was open-source software customised for a higher education context, that is to say it was something like Facebook in structure with integrated blog and wiki technologies (see Appendix D for more details). My participants were a group of 18 volunteers from a wide range of differing subject areas. They took part in an initial face-to-face workshop, then used the environment in a structured way for a pilot period of a month. They were then asked to complete questionnaires about their experience of the environment and were also offered the option of articulating their views within the body of the environment itself, during the trial, in blogs, wikis, discussion forums, messaging, posts on colleagues' comment walls and other spaces.

All participants used the environment. 13 participants returned completed questionnaires and 5 commented about their experience in the body of the environment, 2 of whom had also returned questionnaires; thus 16 participants responded.

My participants generally regarded the environment as being easier than traditional VLEs for students to use. They felt it would be familiar to students from their everyday

experience, as its structure and interface appeared similar to social networking services such as Facebook or MySpace. 'This kind of site is what teenagers use all the time,' one respondent said. They had the sense that students would feel automatically 'at home' in such an online world, and have an intuitive grasp of how it worked.

In describing their own experiences, the concerns that participants reported clustered around two different issues. The first of these was a sense of anxiety about the 'foreignness' of the structure of the environment. A number of them articulated a sense that they had explored the space tentatively, and had, certainly at first, felt nervous, lost and unsure. Many of them used geographic metaphors for describing their environment, talking about feeling 'in the foothills' of being able to negotiate it, wanting to have a 'clear map' of where everything is, and having the (*unheimlich*) feeling that they weren't on home ground – although, in fact, they were all successful in using the environment and reported finding it easy to manipulate. Several participants ascribed their sense of geographic confusion to their age: 'I felt somehow lost between blogs and wikis, but it probably shows my age'. Several spoke about these type of environments and the behaviours associated with them as though they were the territory of younger people. In fact, Prensky's (much contested) [121] concept of younger people being digital natives, who are fully at home in a multi-tasking online space, whilst older people are digital immigrants who struggle to understand the new online world in which they find themselves, was explicitly raised in one of the online discussions (Prensky, 2001). In particular they noted that the standard language used to describe tools and activities itself was alienating and excluding for them. This might suggest that it wasn't necessarily their skill level in manipulating the software, but the assumptions and

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[121] Although Prensky's concept is still in popular usage it is much contested in the literature. For example, Helsper and Eynon's 2009 study found that for the the use of technology 'in the UK… generation is only one of the predictors… Breadth of use, experience, gender and educational levels are also important, indeed in some cases more important (2010, p.503). Bennett, Maton and Kervin challenge the whole basis of Prensky's 'grand claims' particularly 'the urgent necessity for educational reform in response', arguing that Prenskey's concept 'can be likened to an academic form of a "moral panic"' (2008, p.775).

culture surrounding the technologies that generated such feelings of not being on 'home ground'.

The sense that the digital geography belongs to a younger generation relates to a point Crary makes in his work on the 'speeding up' of time, *Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. He describes how most people are always, or feel themselves to be always, 'behind' with digital technologies because these technologies are always being developed and re-developed in a way that is impossible for most people to 'keep up' with. So we are always already wrong-footed by the technologies (2013, loc.532). Similarly, Bassett argues that although, as everyday life theorists, such as Pierre Blanchot propose, lagging behind is normality as the everyday *is* 'what lags and falls behind'(Blanchot, quoted in Bassett, 2009, p. 57), for the responsiblised, self-improved subject of neoliberalism 'the lag-free life has become a desirable goal' (Bassett, 2009, p. 57). This is particularly pertinent for university lecturers who are mainly teaching students in their late teens and early twenties. These students form a constituency who are commonly (if erroneously) perceived, from the Prensky-aligned perspective, as having a more current grasp of widely used online technologies than those older than them (see, for example Palfrey and Gasser 2013, p.1-2). Not only are academics, like most people, wrong-footed by the technologies, but they may see their students, rightly or wrongly, as possessing a greater expertise in current practice than they have themselves - at least in relation to the tools that are being adopted in this wave of educational usage (Palfrey and Gasser 2013, p.2-5). This leads me onto the second concern that my study participants articulated, which was about authority and structure.

Many of the participants articulated clear and unified views about the way in which they anticipated the learning experience for students would be different in an environment like this, as opposed to a more hierarchically structured VLE, or to more traditional face-to-face teaching environments. They spoke about students having more control and ownership, both of their learning and of the online space itself and about learners being less 'managed and controlled by the tutors'. They felt that this would lead to more independent learning behaviours, where students acted as collaborative authors of online content, which they could then share with their peers and which would lead them to create networks and communities within and without courses.

Most of the group were conscious of the possibility that using this kind of environment might change the role of the teacher. Participants shared ideas about how teaching in this type of environment would involve encouraging students to learn through interaction rather than by teachers providing online content and that there would be a greater emphasis on facilitation than on directed teaching. But there were concerns. One said that there need to be 'ground rules' set by the teacher and that these need to be 'explicit'; another said, 'you have to be clear about boundaries' with students in this kind of environment. For example, they felt there was the need to have clear guidelines about how long it might take a tutor to respond to a post or a message, as the culture of web 2.0 encourages learners to assume that tutors will respond more quickly than is feasible. Some participants said that the need to set rules for students about behaviour was an issue because the environment was so similar to online spaces which students use for socialising. One respondent suggested that there should be markedly different types of profile for students and tutors so online student and staff users would be clearly 'badged' by their offline status. Another felt that rules should be set about the use of language, so that students didn't confuse the nature of the space and use informal 'text-speak'.

Whilst all these concerns are not without validity, taken together what they appear to articulate is anxiety about the elision of authority in online spaces. Other anxieties about structure are related to this. Nearly all of the participants felt frustrated that they didn't have a visual plan or map of exactly where everything was – even though some of them acknowledged that this was impossible and counter to the structuring principles of the software and its attendant culture. They felt the need to be able to place everything into a clearly defined structure, psychologically speaking, and the sprawling, non-hierarchical nature of the territory, navigable partly by searching on tags, made them feel 'lost'.

Both the views about the need for academic staff to maintain a disciplinary rule-structure in the environment and the anxiety about the loosely structured architecture of this kind of software speak about a concern to maintain authority structures within an environment whose innate cultural and technological structuring principles are essentially non-hierarchical. My participants are not alone in these views. Writer and entrepreneur Andrew Keen argues, in *The Cult of the Amateur*, that the affordances

created by web 2.0 – that everyone, no matter what their expertise or credentials, can publish their views about any area – means that the uninformed viewpoints of amateurs carry as much weight as expert analyses (2007); and technology writer Nicholas Carr suggests that the fragmentation of knowledge and the way in which the information we view online is stripped of meaningful context, contributes to the downgrading of structures of intellectual authority (2010). As Jürgen Habermas puts it, in relation to news,

> the price we pay for the growth in egalitarianism offered by the Internet is the decentralized access to unedited stories. In this medium, contributions by intellectuals lose their power to create a focus.
>
> (Habermas, acceptance speech for Bruno Kreisky Prize, 2006, reproduced in Scholtz, 2006)

Jodi Dean uses the term 'whatever' culture in her work on blogging, to describe the way in which all opinions, no matter how valid, relevant or (un)informed are reduced to equal status by communicative capitalism. She argues that this closes down the space for meaningful debate because all perspectives, whether based on evidence or ignorance, are 'just your opinion' (2010, p.6). Dean links this 'whatever' culture into the Lacanian notion of the implosion of the master signifier brought about by the collapse of high modernism, which I discussed earlier. (Dean, 2010, pp.1-9 and 85-90).

The anxiety expressed by participants in my study may, then, tap into wider concerns about intellectual authority. Academic authority in the classroom has been queried for some time by the whole culture of the teaching quality audit, as I have previously discussed; now it becomes threatened by the affordances offered and assumptions underlying the technologies used for teaching and learning. As a recent *Guardian* report on the use of learning technologies puts it, quoting an education consultant from PA Consulting Group:

> It certainly involves big changes in styles and skills from academics, who are less the authoritative providers of knowledge and must become more like learning coaches and mentors for their students.
>
> *The Guardian,* 2014.

The fact that a broadsheet quotes management consultants when writing about higher education pedagogy – rather than, say, a Professor of Education – does rather demonstrate the truth of the idea that intellectual authority is threatened. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the concerns of my participants of losing authority and about feeling lost in a loose structure can be seen as about losing the grip of the discourse of the master, which, as Lacan says, frames the university, and moving into the discourse of the hysteric, which Zizek sees as the default position of users of the internet. It is an uncomfortable position for a teacher, marked by confusion and instability, but it is the only discourse where the subject seeks after true knowledge (Bracher, 1994, p.122; Zizek, 1993, p.274; Fink, 1995, p.133-4).

7.7.5.2   The year of the MOOC

The most recent aspect of the use of second-generation technologies is the growth of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. These have had much media coverage, with the *New York Times* declaring 2012 'the year of the MOOC' (*THE,* 2013c). MOOCs are online distance-learning courses which are (or at least were, originally) freely available and which are run on open platforms such as Coursera*,* Canvas or FutureLearn. The large numbers of participants create a community which enables peer-to-peer teaching and learning. For example, a popular, high profile MOOC in recent years is Stanford University's 'Machine Learning' course[122] which was launched in 2011 with 100,000 participants (Stanford University, 2013).

Academics Stephen Downes and George Siemens, who created the first MOOC in 2008 (THE, 2013c), have reservations about the MOOC 'explosion'. Downes sees a move from 'interactive and dynamic' learning methods to 'static and passive' approaches, saying that:

> Moocs as they were originally conceived … were the locus of learning activities and interaction, but as deployed by commercial providers they resemble television shows or digital textbooks with – at best – an online quiz component.
>
> *(THE,* 2013c)

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[122] See https://www.coursera.org/course/ml

Downes sees the change as being a result of MOOCs moving from the public or not-for-profit sector to the corporate sector where 'the bottom line often takes precedence over student needs' (*THE*, 2013c).

Educational policy analyst and former VC, Peter Scott, is critical of MOOCs from a different perspective. He points out that 'government cuts, high fees, league-table snobbism – all point to a reinforcement of elite forms of higher education … So Moocs provide the perfect cover story – "higher education for the masses" when real-world opportunities to go to university are being cut'(Scott, 2013).

7.7.5.3   *Unbundling or empowering?*

In Pearson executive Michael Barbar's 2013 report *An Avalanche is Coming,* which I discussed in Chapter 3, he envisages the future of British universities as an exercise in 'unbundling' higher education. By this he means that higher education will be split into mass institutions, which will use MOOCs and other online elements to teach courses designed and created at higher status universities; and elite institutions, with significantly different student/staff ratios, for those who can afford the weighty fees. He places a great deal of emphasis on what he (referring to the footballer Christiano Ronaldo) calls the 'Ronaldo effect' where superstar academics will deliver lectures online, thus diminishing the need for normal academics – because as David Kernohan[123] sums up, satirically 'the connected internet age apparently means that people want to learn only from celebrities, without actually being able to communicate with them' (Kernohan, 2013). In the light of such neoliberal attempts to leverage technologies in the undermining of public education, the concerns of the participants in my studies seem fairly prescient. Which isn't to say that technologies can't be used in other ways for teaching and learning; as Clegg et al. suggest, 'spaces may be found' for developments that are driven by 'critical pedagogy 'and 'counter-hegemonic' practices (2003, p.51). The original idea behind MOOCs was to enable freely accessible education, and although the idea has been appropriated by other kinds of providers, this approach which 'gets people together, gets them talking, gets them thinking in new ways… empowering people to develop and create their own learning, their own

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[123] Of Jisc, but blogging in a private capacity.

education' (Downes, 2012) persists as an active resistance to neoliberal approaches to education.

I began this thesis, in both a chronological and a narrative sense, by considering what meanings digital teaching technologies hold for the academic subject. In order to understand this, my research has led me to explore the question of what a university is, or should be. It seems particularly ironic to me, therefore, that if technology is pressed into the service of neoliberalism in the way Barbar predicts, then the whole teaching and learning project of public higher education that we built up in the 20th and 21st centuries effectively collapses. Perhaps, ultimately, as Terry Eagleton claims in a 2010 Guardian article 'universities and advanced capitalism are fundamentally incompatible. And the political implications of that run far deeper than the question of student fees'. Or MOOCs. Or VLES.

Chapter 8 – The purloined email

'I sent a letter to my love, but on the way I dropped it
Someone must have picked it up and put it in their pocket'
Rhyme from a children's playground game

'...we cannot say of the purloined letter that, like other objects, it must be, or not be, in
a particular place, but unlike them it will be and not be where it is, wherever it goes.'
Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', Jacques Lacan

8.1 Preface

This chapter was first drafted in 2007 using emails written in the same year. However, interestingly, much of the analysis of the way emails are used is still current, 7 years later.

8.2 Emails without end

The use of email is, and has been for some time, a central part of the daily business of work for academic staff in universities. As long ago as 2006 the *Times Higher Education* ran an article guiding academics on the best way to use it effectively, so that communication would not be in any way confused or confounded and so that academics could represent themselves clearly (Swain, 2006).

In this chapter I will consider the notion that email exchanges constitute part of an endless circulation of unfixed knowledge, where the impossibility of truth, let alone clear communication, becomes foregrounded. Within this, I propose that the academic subject is constituted in a number of ways: through the permanent nature of the electronic archive; through the transformation of distinctions between public and private; through email chains of signification; and through the multiple and interconnected gazes of the readers.

In particular, I will use the metaphor of the way in which the movement of the *Purloined Letter* in Edgar Alan Poe's short story[124] traces a symbolic circuit (Poe, 1844), as well Lacan's analysis of this. I will draw on this metaphor to explore how the concepts used by Lacan (and subsequent works by others analysing Lacan's 1956 *Seminar on the Purloined Letter*) can be leveraged to consider the way in which the academic subject is partly conditioned by the circulation of email letters within the context of the contemporary university. In this I will be using a combination of anonymised *actual* university emails, and typical, illustrative *scenario* emails.

8.3   The subject of emails

The academic subject has always been constituted by the sum of their utterances, whether in oral form in the lecture hall, seminar, tutorial and conference presentation or in written form by inscription in books, articles and scholarly journals, as I discuss in other parts of this thesis. The increasing disembodiment of the subject means that the electronic self which they construct through digital inscription, be it that of email, comments to students in virtual classrooms, homepages and so on, comes to constitute the day-to-day changing presence of the subject, and begins to define them. Although there is still embodied contact with colleagues and students, this embodied presence becomes re-configured by the self created in the digital university environments, as in the following extrapolation from Zizek's conception of the impact of the digital realm on the embodied world.

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[124] In the narrative of 'The Purloined Letter' the Chief of Police, G, visits the narrator and his friend Dupin and asks for Dupin's help with retrieving the titular letter. The letter in question was an illicit (presumably an amorous) missive, which was being read by the Queen when the King entered the room. She placed it face down, and the King did not notice it. Minister D__, however, on entering the room perceives the letter and the meaning of it, and substitutes for it another letter. The Queen sees this but is unable to act without alerting the King to the existence of the letter. Possession of the letter, for the Minister, means political power as he gains influence over the Queen. The Queen asks G for his help in retrieving the letter, but G's meticulous searching of the Minister's apartments in his absence yields no result. Dupin, however, taking up G's request for help, visits the Minister, perceives the letter, its appearance altered by being inverted and overwritten in open view on a card rack, and on a subsequent visit substitutes for it another pre-prepared identical letter. In the body of the letter he has written a quotation by means of which the Minister will understand that it is by Dupin he has been duped, thus settling an old score Dupin has with Minister D__ (Poe, 1844).

Zizek talks about the way in which sex with a flesh-and-blood partner is impacted on by the experience of virtual[125] sex, where a fantasy about the other substitutes for physical contact (Zizek, 1998). He argues that this means that when one is engaged in embodied sexual practice there are three people involved, oneself, one's lover and the fantasy one has about one's lover, as the virtual knowledge makes more explicit the fantasy that has always existed covertly. This could be further extrapolated to include the fantasy one's lover has about oneself, and, to include a narcissistic perspective, the projected fantasy of the self one has, and the projected fantasy the lover has of themselves – making six entities in total. This is the 'phantasmic support' (Zizek, 1998, para.9) that is needed, in terms of Zizek's analysis, to sustain the sexual act.

To apply this thinking to the everyday work situation of the academic subject, it's possible to say the following: when Dr X meets with Professor Y she is not just meeting with the Y she experiences in front of her, but with the Y that has been constructed through online representation and her fantasised (through online exchange, memory and the filling in of gaps between) Y. Similarly she brings her own virtual and projected selves to the room, so that the meeting of two people becomes haunted by their other selves; so the online world rewrites embodied life.

Another way of thinking about the same idea is to use Hayles' (2005) concept of intermediation. Hayles uses this term to consider how different kinds of media interact with each other and encourage us to read different forms of media in a way that we would have not done, had we not encountered other forms of media. So, for example, the reading of a novel is profoundly affected by the fact that the reader has been exposed to the medium of film. They might visualise settings, transitions and imaginary camera angles very differently than someone who has never encountered the medium of film. Extrapolating from this concept, I would propose that the email texts I have read from, or copied to, the academic subject, Dr X, encourage me to view and, indeed, constitute, the flesh and blood Dr X differently, when she is sitting in a room with me.

8.4   Death and the archive

In their anatomy or map of Lacan's *Seminar on the Purloined Letter,* Muller and Richardson (1988) describe the letter as having 'the property of nowhereness', being 'a

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[125] The term 'virtual' for Zizek, in this context may reasonably be taken to mean 'online'.

symbol of absence [which] is and is not, wherever it may be' (p.79) and remaining even when destroyed. The resonance with email is significant – an electronic mail is and is not and is always elusive whilst being ever replicable and omnipresent. But it is its ability to remain when destroyed which concerns this part of our discussion, in its relationship with, or representation of, the archive.

As soon as an email is sent, it exists in a number of places. It may be in the 'sent items' section of the sender's software; it may exist on the server of the senders email service; it will exist on the server of the receiver's email service; and it will be in the inbox of the receiver's email software, which may mean it has been automatically downloaded to the hard drive(s) on the receiver's computer(s). In addition to this, the email servers will be backed up in some way, so an additional copy of the mail will be held on both the sender's and recipient's service providers' back-up servers. If either the sent or received email, or both, are downloaded to the sender and/or recipient's hard drives by their email client software, a copy may exist which cannot easily be deleted (computer files on hard drives are not actually erased when the user 'deletes' them, but renamed, and then not easily accessible to the ordinary user). So, once sent, it can exist in up to eight (or more) places, seven of which are largely out of the reach or control of the sender. Once the email has been replied to or forwarded, the whole process of copies proliferating begins again. These multiple and distributed copies form an archive, in a literal sense. Additionally, the archive exists in a more metaphorical sense of a kind of total cultural inscription of all utterances.

The relationship between archiving, the uncanny and the death drive is a complex and intimate one. In considering Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the text where Freud first introduces the notion of the death drive, and *The Uncanny* (1919), Nicholas Royle points out that both texts speak about the same issues at times, but are loud in their silence about each other, despite being written in the same period (Royle, 2003, p.86). Freud developed the model of the death instinct or drive in an attempt to explain why the mind might wish to compulsively repeat painful experiences in dreams. For Freud, the death drive tries to return the organism to its inorganic state and is characterised by repetition phenomena and by destructiveness.

The repetition aspect is central to the uncanny. It is about the return of the repressed; it presents as something that has been banished but repeatedly comes back, as exemplified by the archetypal horror film monster, who repeatedly returns no matter how many times s/he is dispatched. The uncanny is 'a compulsion to repeat' (Freud, 1919, p.360) and 'a constant recurrence of the same thing' (ibid., p.356). It is, however, as both Derrida (1987) and Hertz (1985) have suggested, as noted by Royle (2003), not the actual thing that is being repeated which create the uncanny effect, but the act of the repetition itself.

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida discusses the intimate nature of the relationship between the death drive and the archive (Derrida, 1995). Because of its destructive properties, the death instinct incites the annihilation of memory and consequently produces the need to archive. The death drive, because it creates the compulsion to repeat, creates the archive – the archive being essentially a symptom of repetition compulsion. But the death instinct, being a principle of annihilation, seeks to destroy the archive. Therefore as Derrida points out, 'The archive always works, and *a priori*, against itself' (1995, p.12). Its heart is death.

As discussed later in this chapter, the existence of the email archive affects the subject's behaviour in a range of ways, but there is a specific and direct effect when archiving. The possibility of loss which the notion of the archive opens up creates great anxiety in the subject; to lose the contents of one's inbox in a work environment is to lose one's way, one's history and one's self; on the other hand, the fact of the existence of the archive brings about anxiety in a variety of ways. This contradiction is neatly illustrated by the autoarchive function which many popular email handling software utilises. At regular intervals, of perhaps a month, the archive speaks to us and says something like 'would you like to auto-archive your old items now?' Of course the items are already archived elsewhere, so what it is really saying is 'would you like the archive to which you have access to re-organise itself?' But this message creates anxiety in the two ways already mentioned. On the one hand we experience fear that the archive will hide parts of itself in a secret location which we will never be able to access. We will never again be able to know our own archive – and so our own self – again or have control over it. We connect with the loss of self which the death drive implies. But on the other hand, this explicit reminder of the archive tells us we will be forced to live forever, but in a

form over which we have no control. Thus the explicit reminder of archiving confronts us with the contradictions of the death drive and the implications for us as subjects constituted by the archive.

To put this another way, when the 'would you like to archive your old items now?' message pops up on our screen, what it is really saying to us is 'you're going to die. And not only are you going to die, but I am going to make puppet representations of you live on, and the world will believe them to be you.' Unsurprising, then, that many of us, albeit guiltily, serially refuse the option to archive.[126]

A significant aspect of the archive, discussed by Derrida, which has direct bearing on the role of email, is the way in which the existence of the archive does not just preserve the past but by doing so, impacts on the present. The existence of an archive of our email correspondence affects our behaviour and thoughts both when we write or reply to email and also in other arenas. And in doing this, it changes the future. So the existence of the email archive does not just record, it produces.

How does this affect the academic subject? Partially constituted by the inscription of all the emails they have ever written and all the emails which have been written or copied to them, all of which remain forever in locations over which they have no control, they are also constituted on a present and future basis by the existence of this archive of the self. A sophisticated user of email self-edits continually when writing mail, knowing that they have no control over its publication. As discussed later, users will masquerade and act parts in their awareness of the gaze, but this is compounded by the permanency of the self that is created in the archive, which is there to be viewed at times, in places and by people unknowable for the subject. In email exchanges we can never actually see the Other's gaze, so we are conscious that we never know what we are for the Other and must fantasise what the Other's gaze may be. How much more is this insecure position compounded when we have knowledge of the existence of the archive and the consequent awareness of the completely unknowable nature of the Other. For the subject, then, this knowledge of the archive increases the undermining of the imagined stable self, producing greater levels of uncertainty and instability.

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[126] An article called 'Increasing Outlook user acceptance' in Windows IT Pro identifies this reluctance on the part of email users to archive, suggesting technical solutions to the issue (Neuberger, 2005).

The email archive also speaks to us directly, creating an uncanny effect that echoes Derrida's discussion of the disembodied voice on an answerphone message which asks us to speak to it (1995, p.62). When the addressee of an email has set up an automatic response which tells the sender that they are, perhaps, on holiday and will not respond immediately, the sender is spoken to by the phantom machinic voice of the archive. 'Your letter has been processed,' it says; 'your utterance is now inscribed indelibly upon the archive and you will never be able to erase it'. But it is not the addressee speaking, it is the archive itself. And in a sense all of the subject's letters are addressed to the archive, not to the apparent addressee, because the subject is conscious of creating their public self in their utterances. So, in a sense, all of our utterances are addressed to death, or to the desire for immortality that the existence of death creates.

There is another sense in which the archive is a metaphor for the unconscious. Here, in the archive, all the utterances of the subject and all the chains of meaning that they have been caught up in, and spoken by, are held. But elements are repressed into the unconscious for a reason – to protect the sanity of the subject. The idea that the unconscious is open and accessible is a horrifying notion and one guaranteed to produce profound anxiety in the subject.

There is a strange echo here of Pamela Thurschwell's discussion of the way in which, in the late 19th century, new communication technologies such as the telephone, telegraph, phonograph and typewriter were conflated with the medium of spiritualism, with the possibility of communicating with the dead (Thurschwell, 2001). Thurschwell discusses how it was expected that communications technologies would enable us to retrieve the absolutely lost, that is to say, the dead. The relationship between death and the archive as described above goes some way towards making this hope come true – albeit in a twisted, horrifying fashion, much like the granting of the first two wishes in W. W. Jacob's supernatural tale *The Monkey's Paw* (1902).

The relationship of the archive both to the death drive and the unconscious is compounded by the silent nature of the email archive. In its creation it is, like the death drive and the unconscious, absolutely silent. It's easy to imagine, when being physically on a university campus, the thousands of silent messages crossing and re-crossing in the

ether, an entire, silent set of discourses, sent by soundlessly chattering servers, congealing as soon as created into the archive. This paranoiac, but also fascinating, eerie and uncanny image of silent conversing leads directly into the next topic of this chapter: the idea of the collapse of the concept of a separation between public and private, in which email plays a significant, and in Derrida's view, a 'privileged' (1995, p. 17) role.

8.5 The letter

To return the metaphor of Poe's letter, it is significant that the letter is not stolen, but purloined. That which does not have a clear owner – and Lacan's question of 'to whom does the letter belong' (1959, p.41) is always in play – cannot be stolen, merely purloined. How much more so than the letter does an email have dubious ownership, particularly an email written or received in a work context. Not only is there the complication of whether the sender or receiver is the 'owner', but the issue of who owns an item created by a member of staff in the course of their paid employment is also brought to bear – perhaps the employer is the owner? And if the employer is part of the public sector, then, perhaps, the State is ultimately the owner. This is further complicated in the context of a university, where academic staff will sometimes own the intellectual property of their work.

It becomes pertinent, then, within a university, to ask the question, 'to whom does an email belong?', illustrated in Email (Scenario) One[127] below:

Email (Scenario) One

Dr X sends an email to a colleague, Professor Y. Y sends a response, which includes the text of the original. X then forwards the letter to W, for information, copying in Y. W replies to both X and Y, copying in A, B and C, who proceed to reply to all, adding their own comments.

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[127] Typical scenarios of emails sent in a university are designated 'Email (Scenario)' and anonymised versions of actual emails sent in university settings are designated 'Email (Actual)'.

This ordinary, everyday example of university communication foregrounds some issues to do with the nature of ownership of emails. When Dr X sends the mail to Professor Y, does this mail belong to the sender or the recipient? Similarly with Y's response to X. In 'showing' the compound mail to W has X offended Y's ownership rights in any way, by publishing the mail to W on his behalf? And has W, in showing the letters to three additional readers, offended X and Y's rights? Do A, B and C have the right to comment publicly on utterances which were never spoken to them in the first place? If Y's email contained an original idea which subsequently showed up in a paper by C, would C be plagiarising Y, or would he be building on a discussion in which he, Y and their other colleagues had all played a part? Or is all of this a practical performance of 'de-authorisation', started by Barthes' announcement of the death of the author (Barthes, 1967), continued by Foucault's notion of the author effect, and by the general thrust of post-Saussurean theory, further dissected by postmodernism and brought into the realm of the digital by Poster (2003)? Poster argues that the notion of authorship is problematised in a very evident way by the democratised, shared publishing space provided by the internet. In a public, digital space it is often impossible to know who is the author of a text, and there are always issues around the authenticity of any claimed identity. The ease with which digital online documents can be replicated and changed leads further to the undermining of author-ity, and this, enhanced by increasingly available technologies for sharing texts of often (seemingly) anonymous authorship, further undermines the traditional autonomous authority of the author.

The only clarity in all of this is that the complex chain of utterances has no clear owner. This leaves the subject in a position where they are obliged to operate on the principle that email exchange is always underpinned by a radical uncertainty as to whom they are addressing, and to assume that all emails are subject to being purloined. Indeed, given that university mail may or may not be the property of the employer or even the State, the emails may be, by their nature, purloined as soon as they are created.

But whilst the subject may be aware of this (and in the highly 'political' environment of the contemporary university is, no doubt, likely to have reached this awareness the hard way, by having a mail that ought to have remained hidden come inappropriately to light) there are nevertheless forces at work which make us feel that we are operating in a private world when we engage with email.

When we delve into our inboxes to read, write or respond to an email, we are in an environment where we experience a powerful sensation of being on our own. We are often operating in the intensely personal space of our own personal computer, laptop or other mobile device. We may be sitting at our own desk, in some type of private office space. We compose an email silently, in complete privacy. In the seemingly secure box of our computer, the email software is another secure box, within which we write our specific mail in the specific, defined box of the screen. All of this provides us with an intense sense of privacy and security. The toolset which most of us use is unsophisticated and does not encourage editing, the 'send' button is always, invitingly, present, and the cultural norms which have arisen around the register used for email text invite informality. So, the overall effect for the subject is a sense of sending a private, informal note to a specific person – as a colleague summed up the experience, 'it makes you feel as though you're writing a note to your Mum, but in fact you're writing to the world'.

So the subject is situated in the impossible, contradictory position of half believing their utterances to be private but knowing them to be public and having to inscribe themselves on the electronic world accordingly. As Derrida puts it, 'email transforms the entire public private space of humanity' (1995, p.17). And in transforming, the space transforms us.

Despite the felt intimacy of email inscription, there is an aspect of the remoteness, impersonality, speed and simplicity of use that encourages staff and students in university settings to send emails to people to whom they would not send printed letters, or would not telephone if email was unavailable. The technology invites this. It makes the email addresses of all staff internally easily available to everyone in a university; it enables the sending of a mail to be quick and simple; and it encourages copying in, replying, forwarding, blind copying and replying to all, by making these options available as suggestions, to be performed at the click of a button. Students will email their lecturers quite casually, and senior university staff receive email communication from students and staff members who do not know them and would not normally speak

to them if this channel were not available.[128] Whether this is democracy in action or a damned nuisance is a question of perspective, but its effect is that it increases significantly the number of occurrences and contexts in which the subject is invited to speak. And, as discussed below, email invitations to speak are not without a directive element.

An email is forced on the recipient, be they the formal addressee, the one-step-removed addressee to whom a mail is forwarded, or either of the two varieties of tangential addressee, the public bystander who is copied in, or the secret bystander who is blind copied in. The subject, receiving the mail, is publicly forced to know of its contents, as the existence of the archive means there is always an audit trail which the sender – or future, unknown others – can easily make public with a mouseclick or screen tap. If the subject is the formal addressee, the sender is publicly forcing a response from them; the subject is forced to speak, and to write themselves in an exchange which may not be on their terms. Remaining silent is not an option, however unimportant the subject may regard the received mail, as, in the culture of the modern university, such silence is seen as a dereliction of duty. Additionally, the timescale within which knowledge of and/or a response is expected is short – in the region of a day or two. Interestingly, all of us who work in universities can think of examples of colleagues who never answer, and, presumably, never read, their emails, and are publicly known to do this – whose subjecthood is therefore constructed by silence – a radical and brave position, indeed.

As the speed, ease of use, and culture of email usage invites this multiplication of utterances, an additional anxiety is created for the subject in that the volume of email increases and they cannot easily manage to read or respond to their mail. So the anxiety of not knowing, and being seen to be silent when they should speak, is added to the picture. Ros Gill, in her work on academics and critical labour studies, considers how ordinary it is to 'go off to teach and come back to find 50 new emails have arrived' (Gill, 2014, p.21) or to find over 500 emails in one's inbox after a day spent sitting on appointment panels (ibid.). She stresses how comparing the impossible number of

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[128] David Melville, in a talk at *The enhancement of learning and assessment using web 2.0 technologies Pro Vice-Chancellors' SIG,* 24 November 2008, made the point that during his time as V-C at Kent, students would email him quite casually with general feedback mail that began 'Hi Dave'. Melville contrasted that with his own experience of being a student, where he and his peers barely knew there was a V-C, let alone what their name was.

emails they receive has become 'a tawdry academic sport, characterised by a mixture of desperation and resignation', in the face of cultural denial of the impossible, unsustainable nature of the problem (Gill, 2014, p.21-2).

The overall effect on the subject of this imperative to know and to speak is that they are publicly policed, have aspects of their work time and tasks determined by a random selection of others, which represents an erosion of their autonomy, and are forced to inscribe themselves on the digital university in contexts not of their choosing. It conjures up another version of the interactive, internalised, version of Bentham's panopticon, where all the participants who are being policed simultaneously encourage this policing by participating according to the established law, that Andrejevic refers to as 'lateral surveillance' (Andrejevic, 2004, p.479) or the 'participatory panopticon' (Andrejevic, 2012, p.239) . It both encompasses and moves beyond Foucault's re-conjuring of the panopticon in his analysis of disciplinary societies (Foucault, 1975). It has the hallmarks of Deleuze's (1992) concept of the society of control, in that computers are the machine technology employed, and a control speaks itself though a strange kind of corporate post-hierarchical levelling. Interestingly, it is not university managers who play the most active part in this entire dance, but those in universities whose roles permit them time to send frequent emails, namely students and administrative staff. As these are two constituencies in relation to whom the academic subject has traditionally occupied a position of relative power, this represents an intriguing shift in internal power relations brought about by the use of digital communication technology.

Moving on to consider the way in which email circulation creates chains of signification and a strange, sometimes circular movement of unfixed knowledge and meaning, leads again back to Lacan's reading of *The Purloined Letter*. Derrida's (1979) concept that all texts contain a set of mechanisms or 'heads' for reading, with which we read other texts, is demonstrably true for the texts which constitute an email chain. The frequent effect of an answering text in the chain followed by a response or another answer from a different view, gives us a compound text apparently written by a range of unreliable narrators, where the reading of any component section of the text makes us view any other component section in a different light. At the same time, an email is positioned in the same way as the purloined letter, in that its movement around the various actors in

the drama establish relationships, and create meaning, which is more than just the text within the letter; this creation of a symbolic circuit itself repositions the meaning of the texts within the letter.

Taking a two more examples of a typical university email exchanges, we can begin to unpick exactly how this might work. Email chains (Actual) Two and Three below illustrate the first issue, demonstrating the way in which texts re-read each other in email chains, and Email (Scenario) Four demonstrates how meaning can be created by the way in which the email is received by the actors in the drama establish relationships and create meaning.

The structure of the university in Emails Two and Three is one which is divided into schools, as academic sections, and then subdivided into academic departments within this.

Email (Actual) Two

An email was circulated across a UK university inviting bids from the schools to central funds. The first email was circulated within one school, the same day as the original invitation was received, by a head of department with the bid invitation appended.

From: Frances K
Sent: Tuesday
To: Academic Staff in the School
Subject: Institutional Grant
Dear all

Are you all ok if I apply for this for our current [course X] development in [my department] as it is interdisciplinary, including several subjects from [named discipline areas in other Departments]? I have checked with [the fundholder] and he is ok about that.

Can you let me know by Thursday if that is a problem

regards

Frances

What this email says to the receivers is 'there are institutional funds available for new developments and I am prepared to put the work in on our behalf to acquire some of this pot for our school. This benefits us all as it is an interdisciplinary course'. It is a performance of how collegiate and proactive Frances K. is being in this regard.

However, a second email, replying to Frances K. but copying in all the other recipients of Frances's mail, was sent from the head of a different department in the school:

From: Kerry A

Sent: Wednesday

To: Frances K

Cc: Academic staff in the School

Subject: Institutional Grant

Frances

I was going to apply for this for English as a second language students. But I have no problems if you go for it and I will use my bid elsewhere.

Regards

Kerry A

What this second email invites us to do is to read the earlier one in a different light. Whilst ostensibly saying that the sender is happy for Frances K. to go ahead, it is actually saying: 'I have actually prepared a bid for this, which would benefit disadvantaged learners. But, although I have put this work in and my cause is worthy, I'll nobly step back and let you apply for the money'. It performs both the proactivity (she has already written a bid) and the selfless nobility of Kerry A.

Why would Kerry A. do this? One thing that most of the recipients of the email will know is that Frances K. is a friend of the fundholder for this grant. This lends a very particular kind of edge to Kerry A.'s email. For if the reader does have this piece of

knowledge, what Kerry A. is also saying in her mail is 'my hard work on behalf of our disadvantaged learners is destined to come to naught, as I cannot compete with your "old-boy network". So I concede.'

This makes us read Frances K.'s mail in a completely different light. Rather than seeing her as valiantly working on behalf of the school, we see her as selfishly drawing on her connections to secure funding for her own ends. This is a very different reading from our original one.

A second email exchange, as below, also has the effect of making us re-read the original in a less than positive light.

Email (Actual) Three

Information was circulated to all departmental staff about voting for individuals for a particular national award. The following email was sent out by the head of department.

From: Janice P
To: All Departmental staff
Subject: UK Award – voting

Please vote for Richard – I believe he is the only nomination from our Institution

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On the face of it, this sounds straightforward. Everyone knows Richard, he is well liked, no-one doubts that he is very able and he's one of our own. Staff are likely to take the email at face value, follow Janice P.'s advice and go to the website to vote for him.

However, the following email was sent hard on its heels:

From: Eammon J
To: All Departmental staff
Subject: UK Award – voting

Janice, thanks for this.

Can I flag up that Clive Burton has also been nominated for this award. Clive is the Project Manager for [a project Eammon J is involved with outside the University], and has done a fabulous job at developing and promoting [the Project] brand, network, and programme of events over the last 2 years. Please help us to recognise his efforts and achievements.

Voting closes tomorrow, Friday. There is nothing stopping you from voting for two people.

Eammon

What this email is saying to recipients is 'there is another, more able candidate, whom some of us work with. Perhaps you would like to consider voting for him? Or would you rather be told, by your manager, who to vote for?'

It makes recipients re-read the original as an instruction to vote for a colleague, and makes it sound rather shifty and undemocratic. Why should the excellent Clive suffer, because of parochial nepotism? However, when the reader re-reads Janice P.'s original one-liner and comes back to the second mail, Eammon K.'s mail sounds even more partisan by comparison, because of its effusive praise for Clive's abilities. The final sentence say that 'there is nothing stopping you from voting for two people' makes a mockery of both exhortations to vote. Why not vote for three, then, or four? Thus the re-reading of the second email, after re-reading the first, suggests that the whole voting process as an unrepresentative sham. So both mails undermine each other by re-writing each other.

The next email exchange example subtly changes relationships between the characters in the drama according to where the email *is*, that is to say, who has 'possession' of it.

Email (Scenario) Four

Dr X sends an email to Professor Y subtly pointing out some mistake he has made or mentioning, in a coded manner, something he has omitted to do. She kindly adds that this does not matter because she, Dr X, has helped him by putting right his error or carrying out his neglected task. Dr X ccs the mail to Dean Z.

This email exchange echoes Felman's diagrammatic illustration of the purloined letter triads (Felman, 1980, p.146) which is interpreted according to this context in Fig. 26, below. This refers to the point in Poe's story when the Minister substitutes the Queen's secret letter for one of his own, in front of the King and Queen. Professor Y's gaze is that of the Queen who sees that D__ (or X, in this case) sees, but is powerless to act against X; Dean Z's gaze is that of the King which takes the letter at face value, and sees nothing, (i.e. no duplicity). And X's gaze is that which sees Y is powerless and Z blind, and takes advantage of this to further her own self-interest.

Dean Z

(The law/the superego)

Dr X

(The ego)

Prof Y

(The id/unconscious)
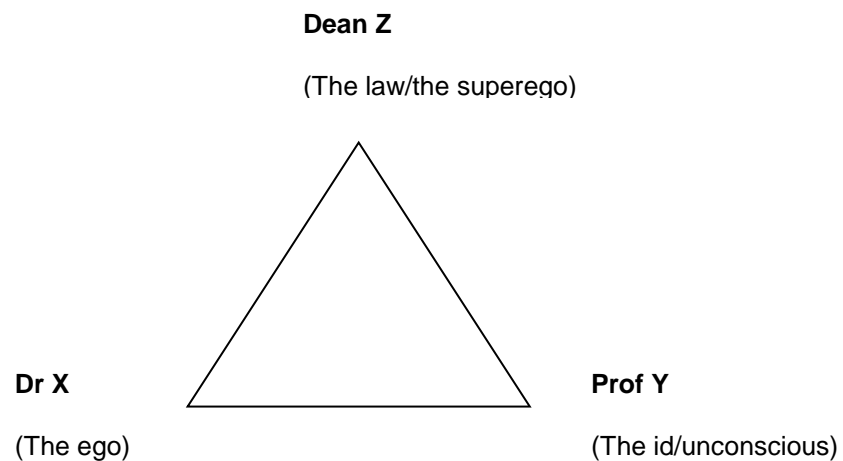
Fig. 26: The Purloined Email (adapted from Felman, p.146)

In this scenario, the addressee is never the true destined receiver. The mail is intended for Z, and sending it to Y is merely a device for performing the statement to one in a position of power 'Y is negligent and I, diligently, bail him out' in a way that allows the meaning to unfold without having to baldly state it. Like Felman's translations of the letter, the email represents the unconscious, with Z occupying the position of the superego, the Law of the Father, like Poe's 'law' which sees nothing, X occupying the position of the ego who can look at the other's look and look at oneself in others eyes, and Y occupying the position of the unconscious or the id, where substitutions can be made or acts can be carried out without thought for the consequences.

The way in which the subject is constructed by the insistence of the signifying chain achieves greater levels of complexity with each reply, forwarding or copying of an email. With a very everyday example such as that in Email Scenario One, as outlined earlier, the way in which our subject, Dr X, constructs herself by her email utterances is not under her control once she presses the send button. After this, the mail is archived and therefore its destination and readers are completely beyond her power. More immediately, it is in the hands of Y whose response and ccing to W may significantly alter the way her text is viewed by those who see it. Additionally, the forwarding to A, B and C, and their comments will all affect the way her original text is read. Thus Derrida's point about texts re-reading each other can also be applied directly to Scenario One.

When X's Scenario One email is read, from whatever vantage point, it is seen within the chain of texts, and the subject, X, is constituted by their text(s). There are concrete echoes in this of Derrida's (1995) point that the experience of reading conjures a ghost and the ghostly subject conjured is perhaps an interesting metaphor for what the academic subject is becoming in the Haunted University.

Where the email actually 'is' or 'is not' is also of significance in the creation of meaning in/by the signifying chain. In simple terms, the fact that X's Scenario Four mail to Y is in the Dean's inbox changes the whole meaning of the mail from a friendly one to a hostile, manipulative one. If Y fails to notice to whom the mail is copied, thus believing the mail to be in a place other than where it is, he will behave in a way vis a

vis X and Z which may be damaging to him, much in the way that Minister D___ commits political suicide by continuing to act in the same way towards the Queen, because he assumes the letter is one place (his letter rack), when in fact it is in another (the hands of the Queen). In more complex terms, the email is simultaneously nowhere, having no corporeal substance, and everywhere, forever, as it is in the archive. To paraphrase slightly Lacan's comment on Poe's letter, 'we cannot say of the purloined [email] … that, like other objects, it must be, or not be, in a particular place, but unlike them it will be and not be where it is, wherever it goes'.

Whether an email, like the purloined letter, can be concealed by having its place confused is an interesting area for speculation. It may seem that, with the existence of the archive, any attempt at concealment is doomed to failure. Poe's letter is concealed by leaving it exposed, but not in its place. One way to conceal an email would be to send the same addressee numerous emails at the same time, with the extraneous mail being 'masking' mail. The intention, then would be that the receiver will be unable to read the meaningful email with great attention, and therefore will not actually 'see' it. Given the number of emails that academics receive on a daily basis, as I discussed earlier, it would appear easy to hide an important message in this avalanche. Alternatively an email could be sent with a header which does not represent the body of the text, thus concealing it by displacing it. So emails can be partially concealed from the gaze both by manipulation of the recipient's attention and by displacement. However, unlike the purloined letter, their unmasking depends not on the recipient's intellect and ability to think creatively, like Dupin, but on their diligence, attention to detail, and dedication of time to the matter – like the police.

One way in which email decidedly echoes Lacan's purloined letter is in his point that 'the sender, we tell you receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form … a letter always arrives at its destination' (1959, p.53). The subject of the purloined email quite literally receives, from the receiver, 'their' letter in reverse form, in an email chain where it's meaning has been altered or 'reversed'. And, in a slightly different sense, the destination of any email, because of its role in constructing the subject, is, indeed, the sender or subject themselves. The destination of an email is always death, the archive and the subject.

Considering the symbolic circuit of the email and the way in which it changes relationships between the actors in 'possession' of it, and constitutes the subject accordingly, leads on to the way in which the gaze of the readers operates.

8.6   Performing for the gaze

Email is, in a sense, a drama about being seen, about masquerading, evading and performing for the imagined gaze of the Other. The subject is constituted by the gaze of the reader, and as the emails continue on their symbolic circuit, the gaze becomes increasingly complex, multiple and partial, as well as always unknowable. This contrasts interestingly with more traditional performance by academic subjects on the lecture stage, in the debate and discussion of the seminar, or in scholarly inscription in journals, where the gaze of the other may be operating within parameters which the subject experiences or imagines as known, familiar and predictable. So the subject moves from a position of knowing (or imagining they know) what they are for the Other to a situation where they cannot know who the Other is or what they are for them.

The partial gaze of the other, which constitutes our academic subject, is significant in its fragmentary nature. What the other sees, or indeed fails to see, with 'the blindness of the seeing eye' (Freud, 1985, p.181) is always unstable, always subject to change, and always self-reflexive. Bayne's (2006) discussion of how visual practice in higher education encourages particular types of gaze and occludes others, quotes Foster's statement, with relevance here, that 'how we see, how we are able, allowed or made to see and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein' is always in play (Foster, 1988, p.ix).

Email is also an exchange of glances – open, covert and semi-public – and, like the glances, it operates in silence. It is a means by which relationships are established covertly, and the existence of secret, silent relationships has an effect the email construction of subjecthood.

In order to understand the way in which the subject performs for the imagined gaze in email exchanges, this chapter will now go on to look at a range of behaviours encouraged by email technology and their meaning as performance. These behaviours

are carbon copying, blind carbon copying, flaming, self-editing, the use of receipt requests and the recall function.

The way in which a sender is encouraged by the software to 'carbon copy' or 'cc' recipients into an email (because this option is always available as a 'suggestion' for the sender) was mentioned earlier in the context of the receiver being invited to speak. Here it will be looked at in the context of what the subject is performing by carrying out this action. Cc'ing anyone into an email always has the effect of turning a letter to the addressee into a performance for the bystander. This can be deployed in differing ways in our online university.

Email (Actual) Five

In the drama played out below, Lucy P. is a course director of a course which has recently instigated a fast-track option, Simon Q. is a lecturer practitioner[129] on the course and Anya K. is their line manager. The email chain of four messages needs to be read in sequence.

----- Original Message -----

From: Simon Q
Subject: Fast Tracking
To: Lucy P

Hi Lucy

I have had a number of enqueries [sic], as to whether some of the additional modules can be picked up during the summer breaks, rather than running 2 modules at the same time.

Would this be possible?

Regards

Simon

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[129] In some areas of healthcare and medical education, 'lecturer practitioners' are staff who have a full-time job outside the university but teach for a number of hours a week within their specific expertise.

From: Lucy P
To: Simon Q
Subject: Re: Fast Tracking

Dear Simon

The students asked me this on the face to face day in October and I made it clear that the modules can only run as indicated in the fast track student handbook i.e. modules won't run over the summer. So there shouldn't be any confusion about this.

Hope that is of help

Lucy

From: Simon Q
To: Lucy P
Subject: RE: Fast Tracking

Hi Lucy

Thanks for your response. The question came from Ismail, as he is keen to fast-track but is equally concerned with the doubling up of the work-load. He thought that if he could take some of the extra modules in the summer, it would make it more do able. Perhaps we can discuss on Friday.

Regards

Simon

From: Lucy P
To: Simon Q
Cc: Anya K
Subject: RE: Fast Tracking

Dear Simon

There is no way round doubling up the work load. The summer recess will remain as it provides an opportunity for students to submit time extended assignments and resubmit failed assignments. In addition, the structure and administration of the academic year and the way the modules are constructed and run means they cannot be delivered effectively over the summer break.

I am sure we can talk through the options we have offered on Friday as there are some alternative options for the 2006 cohort students which means they could finish slightly later but would help with their workload.

Regards

Lucy

The final email from Lucy P., which is cc'd to the line manager, effectively says 'observe, in this chain of discussion, how frustrating this person is! I have explained how the course is organised and he is still trying to get me to organise it differently. I am invoking you as the law, so that his annoying and maverick behaviour is observed by you'. The whole drama of the conversation is laid out for Anya K., with Lucy's polite explanations to Simon purposely failing (in the gaze Lucy is constructing for Anya K. by her performance) to hide her frustration, as a build-up to a future drama (the meeting on Friday) that is set up to be Act II of this play. The final act which performs Lucy's frustration, in Act I, is the pressing of the cc button to Anya.

Additionally the insistence of the email chain in the drama above means that although Simon and Lucy's earlier exchange were in private, the final cc'ing to the line manager makes them public. This is also performance for the gaze of Simon Q. Anya K. may never do more than glance at this whole email chain. It is the performance to Simon Q. that the law has been invoked and that he should stop questioning the authority of the course director because she is an agent of the Law of the Father, as personified in Anya

K. So Lucy P. uses one set of texts to perform two separate plays for two different gazes.

This above drama describes what happens when a line manager is cc'd. In cc'ing to colleagues, however, the performance is a little different. The sender is saying 'I want everyone to see what I'm doing.' Cc'ing always means that the gaze of the recipient is not enough. In a sense it says 'your opinion of me isn't sufficiently important, I need to impress myself on other people, too'. Or to put it another way, in a Lacanian sense, the sender isn't just performing ordinarily for the gaze and saying 'Look at me, Mummy!' when they cc an email, they are saying to the receiver 'you're not the person whose reaction I value, the cc'd person is. They're the one I'm trying to impress, not you'; or 'you're not my real Mother or Father.'

On the other hand, being the cc'd receiver of an email is not, for the subject, a neutral position. As discussed earlier, being the addressee forces the subject to speak and to know, but within the realm of the gaze it is the fact that the subject is *seen* to know which affects them. Much like Yerushalmi's (1991) letter to Freud where he includes the self-avowedly liberal, scientific, religiously de-cultured Freud as part of the Jewish brethren by the phrase 'I shall say we' (p.81), when the sender of an email copies the subject in, they are implicating the subject in their discourse and are making them subject to judgement by exposing them to the gaze of the addressee-as-other. They are saying 'I shall say we'. In the case of Yerushalmi's inclusion of Freud, Freud is unable to refute this 'we' – by nature of being dead; whilst the implicated subject is not positioned quite like this, their ghostly status makes such inclusion difficult to refute, as their selfhood is always being dynamically constituted by such email utterances. The sender is appealing to them to watch them and collude with them, when they say 'Look at me!'. For the cc'd subject, the gaze of the (known and unknown) other means they can't refute the 'we' without seeming churlish towards the sender, as they would be undermining the position of (parental) authority set up for them by the sender – as far as the partial, semi-blind gaze of the unknowable Other is able to see. Naïve people – like the Law in Poe's story – only see one side of an email, after all.

In the following email chain it is essentially the cc'd recipients of the mail to whom the sender of the second email is speaking and the apparent recipient is offered the role of

(amused or embarrassed) bystander. The cc'd recipients are invited by Richard F. to collude with him, and when one of them attempts to refute the 'we', she meets with limited success.

Email (Actual) Six

Lisa L., PA to the director of administration, had sent round emails organising a slightly mysterious (and possibly ominous) group meeting between heads of department in a school and the director of administration to discuss 'student number planning/budget'. The group then received the email below:

From: Lisa L
Subject: Student Number Planning/Budget
To: Heads of dept

Dear All,

I do apologise for getting the meeting's objective wrong. [the director of admin] is looking to hold a one to one meeting with all of you to discuss student number planning and budget and not a group meeting. I will be re-scheduling this individually with people on the phone this time. Once again, I apologise.

Please discard all previous correspondence on the matter.

Regards
Lisa

The effusiveness of the apology suggests that Lisa L. had got the meeting very wrong and had been told so in no uncertain terms by the administration director! This suggestion is teased out in the response from one of the heads, below.

From: Richard F
Subject: Student Number Planning/Budget
To: Lisa L
Cc: Heads of dept; Admin Director

Divide and rule eh....

R

This email is actually intended for the recipients. It invites the other heads of department to collude in the suggestion that they are being asked to meet individually, rather than collectively, in order to weaken their position. It is also cc'd to the person whom Richard F. suggests is attempting to 'divide and rule' a group of individuals who are at least on a par, but for the most part higher up, in the school hierarchy. This is partly to say 'we know what you're up to,' and partly because he knows that his email may end up in the admin director's inbox anyway and it would make Richard F. look underhand if he hadn't sent it to the director. The humorous tone of the email permits Richard F. to thumb his nose at the director of administration with no ill effects and successfully brings his fellow heads into a position of collusion with him, lining them up against the director of administration, in a situation where the locus of power is somewhat negotiable. The position thus constituted for the cc'd heads is conspiratorial rather than parental, but the response to Richard F.'s email, from a fellow head, below, is nevertheless significant.

From: Karen B
Subject: Student Number Planning/Budget
To: Richard F
Cc: Heads of dept; Admin Director; Lisa L

Richard!!!!

Karen

What Karen B. is doing here assuming the parental position permitted, but not directly encouraged, by Richard F.'s email, and 'telling him off', in a humorous, motherly way, as one might chide a naughty child. She is attempting to disassociate herself from his conspiracy by refuting Richard F.'s 'I shall say we'. This is a difficult to do in an email chain and unfortunately for Karen B. it does not quite come off. It is an attempt to demonstrate that she is not prepared to collude with Richard F. in his undermining of the authority position assumed by the director of administration. However, it rather backfires on her, suggesting that she is either insufficiently brave to stand up to the assumed authority of the director, or that she is too ingenuous to understand the political machinations (and, indeed the layered meanings of the email chain). Either way, Karen B.'s attempt at re-constituting her position ends up in a position as a naive supporter of the law, who can only see one side of an email. So the implicated subject cannot easily refute the sender's inclusion.

Blind carbon copying (bcc'ing) adds a new dimension to this drama. In bcc'ing, the receiver does not know that the mail has been copied to the bcc'd recipient. In this way the sender does not let the receiver know that they do not consider them to be of central importance. When bcc'ing, the sender is saying to the recipient 'I am speaking privately and intimately to you, you, whose attention I want and whose authority I respect'. But what they are saying to the bcc'd person is, in the manner of the traditional pantomime aside, 'oh no I'm not!'. They are saying 'I'm pretending to the sender that I'm performing for them, but really I'm performing for you. Collude with me on this, because you are so important to me. I am trusting you not to expose me, so you must collude with me. Let us watch what they do in their foolish ignorance'. It's a highly conspiratorial form of secret, underhand, whispering where the sender is inviting the bcc'd person to participate in a kind of secret sadism. On the other hand, the sender is making themselves extremely vulnerable, as, if it ever come to light that they have behaved in such a manner (and this could easily happen accidentally, by the bcc'd email becoming part of a chain) they may be viewed as dishonest and underhand by unknown others. But this is part of the pact in which they are implicating the bcc'd person when they send them the mail – they are trusting them with their reputation within the university, and so their partial public constitution as a subject.

The practice of email 'flaming', or sending inflammatory emails, is one which bears consideration in this context. What the sender is performing here, for the recipient of the mail, is dramatised anger and hostility towards them. Whether the sender is expecting the receiver to punish them by replying in a similar vein, or to just accept their hostility, what they are performing is the statement that 'I have a right to behave towards you in this aggressive and hostile manner'. It has been suggested that email, in common with other online communication tools, encourages a level of emotional behaviour that would not occur in face-to-face discussion, because of the absence of non-verbal cues (Kruger et al., 2005). One implication of this is that the medium of email encourages a performance of sadism; which, given the earlier analysis of its relationship with the archive, repetition phenomena and the death drive, is unsurprising, as Freud, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, links sadomasochism firmly with the latter two elements (Freud, 1920, pp.327-9).

In the composition of an email senders are always counselled, by 'netiquette' guidelines, to proceed with caution. In order not to send an inflammatory mail, users are advised to wait before pressing the send button and perhaps to re-word a mail that may sound provocative.[130] So, if the subject is self-editing their email in order to refine their performance for the gaze of the Other, a slightly odd activity is occurring. In Riviere's concept of the masquerade (Riviere, 1929), femininity is a set of behaviours which the female subject consciously and deliberately performs as actor. In a way, something similar is going on with this email masquerade. In writing a mail, the subject, whilst feeling angry, is editing out their anger and attempting to appear reasonable. There is no particular gender performance going on here – suppressing anger may be seen as performing the feminine, but attempting to appear rational rather than emotional is rather a performance of the masculine. The point is that the subject is quite consciously self-inventing and masquerading when they re-write themselves in their email. Perhaps a need exists in email technology for some assistance with this necessary masquerade – a piece of software called, let's say, the 'masquerader' which, when the subject responds to an irksome email by pouring onto the screen their own sadistic rage, converts it to polite, unemotional sentences – much as the ego contains the id.

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[130] See http://www.dynamoo.com/technical/etiquette.htm for netiquette advice to avoid arguing, shouting, flaming and emailing in anger.

Another form of performance in the sending of emails is the use of receipt requests. Some email software enables the sender to request a receipt when the email has been delivered and/or opened. What the sender is saying here is, 'I don't trust you not to ignore me. I will make you look at me, and I will invoke the Law-of-the-Father to back me up, so that you know you have to pay me attention'. It is a clear enactment of the Law, where the sender forces an audit trail upon the receiver. However, the receiver, in some email configurations, may be given the option to permit or not permit the sending of a receipt which says they have read/opened a mail. And it is with great pleasure that the receiver, in their turn, replies to a mail for which they have not permitted a receipt to be sent. They are saying, 'your invoking of the Law doesn't work with me! I can get round your attempts at surveillance and control. Watch me.' It is a perfect opportunity for the id to play, to duck and dive around the Law, much like Dupin's final flourish in the Purloined Letter, when by a gesture in the letter returned to the Minister, he lets him know that he, Dupin, has by his cleverness triumphed over his opponent.

In order to prevent a mail from being read, if it has been sent out in error, some email software has a 'recall' function which prevents recalled mail from being read, effectively deleting it from the recipient's in-tray, but leaving a trace that it was there. However, there is usually a time lag between the receiver getting notice of a recalled mail and it being unreadable to them; and, as Freud would have been able to tell the sender, the best way to get anyone to read a mail is not to invoke the Law, but the id. As soon as a mail is recalled it becomes disallowed knowledge, and, therefore, the most attractive message in anyone's inbox.

In summary, then, the way in which email conditions the academic subject is to contribute to their selfhood becoming unfixed, destabilised, split, uncertain and constituted by the readings, utterances and gaze of others. They have little control over the construction of their selves, but they cannot die, although they commune with death and the self. They are conscious of the existence of their spectral double, and also conscious that they are that double. Their power is eroded by other constituencies within the university and they are forced to speak and know in contexts not of their choosing. It is, essentially, a spectral position that email offers to the digital academic.

In the *Times Higher Education* article I mentioned at the start of this chapter, academics are warned that an email can raise a ghost by becoming 'a hastily written missive that may come back to haunt you' (Swain, 2006). Similarly, when that early adopter of institutional electronic surveillance, Muriel Spark's *Abbess of Crewe*, announces, in relation to displacing traditional church governance and replacing it with her own surveillance-based authority 'The age of the Father and the Son are past. We have entered the age of the Holy Ghost,' (Spark, 1974, p.10), she might be speaking of the contemporary university. With the end of traditional authority for academe, it, too, has entered the age of a ghost less holy; the spectral presence of our other selves within the Haunted University.

Chapter 9 – The irradiation of the soul: research, public engagement and the mediated academic

9.1 Preface

In 2013 the Open University (OU) and partner institutions ran a course billed as 'an exciting opportunity for doctoral candidates and early career researchers'(OU, 2013a). Its title was *Becoming a Public Intellectual.* An Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded 'skills training programme'(ibid.), it covered such issues as: how to perform on broadcast media: 'Keep it simple – one idea per sentence and avoid … long words'(OU, 2013b); publicising oneself as intellectual through social networking: 'To tweet or not to tweet?'(OU, 2013c); and asked participants, 'what elements of yourself do you particularly want to develop?'(OU, 2013d).[131]

Someone with no knowledge of the changes in research funding methodology might be puzzled by the existence of this course. They might wonder what had happened to make academics equate success with increased public profile, how compatible avoiding long words and learning to tweet will be with a life spent in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge, or whether PhD students should be in any doubt about the 'elements' of themselves they 'particularly want to develop'. The programme for this course provides a clue to the background rationale for this seemingly unlikely development, however, when it highlights 'the current emphasis placed on "research impact" and academic "public engagement" by HEFCE and other funding bodies' (OU, 2013d). Or to put it another way, as, the course leader, Paul Lawrence, says in his opening talk 'impact, public engagement, knowledge transfer – these are things that academics get bombarded with all the time' (Lawrence, 2013).

Thomas Harrison, REF coordinator and professor at Liverpool, calls himself an 'apologist' for the RAE but in reflecting on his long-term involvement in the assessment

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[131] In fairness to the OU academics running this course, it's clear from the videos of their talks that they approach it with enthusiasm and flair for mentoring PhD students but also with a degree of irony in terms of the subject matter and the prevailing environment. For example, one of the lecturers, the OU's Champion for Public Engagement, Rick Holliman, describes his title as 'slightly ludicrous' (Holliman, 2013).

of research, he begins to wonder whether the whole process represents an 'irradiation of the soul' of academic research practice, in the way it creates irreversible change. In particular, he refers to 'a sense of dislocation between the daily business of research' and the way academics are obligated to define and represent it in the quasi-market of HE (Harrison, 2014). This kind of 'doubling' of the quantified REF self and the embodied self that actually produces the research is another manifestation of fragmentation and the academic double I discussed in earlier chapters.

9.2   Approach

This chapter concentrates on research and the academic subject; in it I will re-consider the contemporary notion of the research, measuration and the mediatised academic, particularly in the in the light of changes in the stipulations by funding bodies. I'll start with considering the recent Research Excellence Framework exercise and look at some perspectives on this. I will then take a look back at research in UK universities to see how ideas about what research is, who should do it and where, have developed.

I will then theorise the way the cultural and organisational changes around research are enacted by UK research assessment processes, using situated psychoanalysis to consider how the issues of abjection, disavowal and foreclosure within the social body operate within these mechanisms and what the resulting effect is for the institution and the subject.

I opened with the idea of the 'public intellectual' because the culture of publicity that this implies speaks about the re-engineering of ideas of what it is to be an academic – or at least ideas of what early career academics' mindset about publicity should be. First of all I want to explore the concept of the 'public intellectual' in a little detail in order to tease out the meanings encapsulated in it and to enable its relationship to some of the terms I discuss later to be clearer.

9.3   The public intellectual

The Oxford English Dictionary(OED) definition of the term is:

> **public intellectual** n. an intellectual who expresses views (esp. on popular topics) intended to be accessible to a general audience
>
> (OED, 2014).

This is a good place to start, but the term has clearly begun to develop more nuanced meaning in recent times. This was recognised by educationalists John Issitt and Duncan Jackson who, in order to interrogate this concept, carried out structured discussions with academic colleagues from a range of disciplines at the University of York. They concluded that there was a tension inherent in the idea. On the one hand, the role was seen as being one of 'critical dissent' (Issitt and Jackson, 2013, p.8). This accords with Steve Fuller's view that the public intellectual should actively seek to disrupt hegemony (Fuller, 2009, loc.1741-2) or writer Christopher Hitchens view that the role involves fighting a 'battle of ideas' in a way that is inherently subversive (Hitchens, 2008, para. 4 and 10). Issitt and Duncan found that in line with this perspective 'the word 'integrity' … encapsulated the one shared aspiration of most of [their]…contributors' but that there was a 'position of inherent tension' between this and university culture which sought to 'undermine individual intellectual freedoms in the interests of corporate success'(Issitt and Jackson, 2013, p.8). I propose that this is the tension between the critically dissenting subject who values integrity but who is increasingly produced by the corporate, neoliberal culture of *publicity*.

I discussed earlier in this work Dean's concept of how the economy of computational capitalism operates to produce us as self-publicising subjects. Dean goes on to argue that it is *publicity* that naturalises the whole culture of communicative capitalism. As we increasingly become 'publicized subjects'(Dean, 2002, p.13) it follows that the more people who know who we are – the larger our public – the more we *are* somebody. While we may *know* this to be nonsense, because publicity can be manipulated and is unconnected with value, we *feel* it to be true and are inevitably impressed by the publicity of others, Dean argues (Dean, 2002, pp.6-13).

The contemporary idea of the public intellectual, and the way that the machinery of the corporate university seeks to encourage the pursuit of publicity amongst academics must be read against this culture of publicity. Although concepts of 'impact' and 'public engagement' are technically separate from this, there is an overarching narrative of a

mediatised drive to publicity to which the economic and social drivers of research funding, reputations and careers are firmly attached[132]. All these codified practices of publicity are entwined together and all 'bombard' and 'irradiate' academic subjectivity.

9.4 The REF

The REF was introduced in 2009 as the most recent attempt to measure the quality of the academic research output of subject areas in each university, a measurement that is used to determine the amount of mainstream 'quality related' (QR) research funding that is allocated to each institution by the funding councils.[133] 30% of research funding received by universities in 2010-11 was from QR funding, but such research exercises have a direct effect on the other 70% of funding (Brown and Carasso, 2013, loc.1204). This is because they award a rating to each subject area in each university and high ratings are critical in enabling researchers to attract grants from such bodies as the UK Research Councils (RCUK), the Royal Societies, the Royal Academy, charitable foundations and the EU, which make up the additional 70% (Brown and Carasso, 2013, loc.1204).

9.4.1 Public engagement

RCUK funding is also tied into a measure called 'public engagement'. This began in 2008 when the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) was set up by the funding councils and the research councils with additional funding from the private-sector Wellcome Trust (NCCPE, 2014a). Its aim was to encourage researchers to include interaction with individuals and groups outside universities as part of their research planning and execution. Subsequently, public engagement is one of the key areas that bidders have to demonstrate when applying for research councils funding, as the RCUK have a strategy to 'embed public engagement throughout core RCUK business' (RCUK, 2010). As the NCCPE make clear, 'public engagement is explicitly encouraged as a "route to impact" and as a result, is increasingly entering mainstream research practice' because of the REF's 'impact' criteria (NCCPE, 2014b).

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[132] It also raises important questions, too diffuse to be explored here, about who the audiences are that are being produced by this process and how they/we are being interpellated.

[133] See HEFCE (2014) for a summary of how this works in England; the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish funding councils also distribute QR monies using the same formula, as the REF, like the RAE, is a UK-wide exercise.

There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with the idea of public engagement. It speaks about the importance of academic voices in public debate and about the importance of academic ideas in the fabric of the cultural and social world; it can provide a positive way for universities interact with other organisations and individuals. Indeed, some of the academics I quote in this thesis are speaking 'in public' in the sense of contributing articles to the broadsheets, the *Times Higher* or other publications.

Furthermore, the availability of funding for research projects which involve public engagement and impact as part of their core rationale can have the effect of encouraging work which is academically and socially significant, but which may have been disadvantaged by more traditional academic expectations. A good example of this is the *Reaching out online* study, funded by the RCUK Digital Economy Communities and Culture Network+ initiative. This project leveraged academic expertise in both digital media and sexuality/queer studies at Sussex University, to work with the HIV prevention charity, the Terrence Higgins Trust, on the use of social media for sexual health interventions in hard to reach communities (Mowlabocus, 2014). Projects like this form a politically radical, creative and socially inclusive interpretation of the whole thrust of the public engagement agenda which runs counter to the overall project of neoliberalism.

However, reading the concept of public engagement against both the background of UK higher education changes wrought by successive governments over the last 30 years (outlined in detail in earlier chapters),with their successive injunctions for universities to become more 'relevant' and against the generalised culture of a shallow, affectively compelling, publicity (see Dean, 2010, p.2-4), does alter the meaning of the concept. The kind of public engagement that is implied when, for example, a climate change researcher publicises her work because she is keen to get her message out, or a drama scholar writes theatre reviews is different from that implied when early career researchers are enjoined to tweet amusing pictures every day, to raise their profiles (Else, 2015). This differentiation also applies to the concept of *impact*.

9.4.2 Impact

The REF replaces the previous serial Research Assessments Exercises (RAEs). The most significant way in which it differs from these is in its emphasis on the importance of measuring 'impact', which was planned to constitute a quarter of the overall weighting, but was temporarily reduced to 20% for the 2014 REF (HEFCE et al., 2011a).[134] The funding councils ascribe the following definition to impact:

> For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.
>
> (HEFCE et al., 2011b, p.48)

This concept of researchers being judged by these measures of impact – impact solely *outside* academia – has been the subject of much discussion since it was mooted in 2009-10. Professor of Science and Technology Policy Studies Ben Martin takes the view that whilst having a socially valuable effect is a reasonable request for society to make of publicly funded research, to evaluate it in this way is either crude or impossibly time consuming (Martin, 2011). Healthcare researchers Smith, Ward and House similarly see benefits in their area of embedding 'impact considerations among the routine reflexive tools of university researchers'(2011, p.1369) but doubt whether REF case studies can actually measure this. Both Spaapen and Van Drooge (2011), from a general research evaluation perspective, and Molas-Gallart and Tang (2011), from a Business Studies and Sustainability standpoint, see 'reciprocal engagement between researchers and stakeholders as the key to creating research that has socially valuable outcomes' (Donovan, 2011, p.177) rather than any more simplistic form of measuration.

Jonathon Adams, director of research evaluation at Thomas Reuters, says that the concept of impact:

> is very complex, but the government wants a very simple indicator. Research takes a long time to translate into new products and processes,

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[134] The funding bodies give the rationale behind this as:

> A weighting of 25 per cent for impact would give due recognition to the economic and social benefits of excellent research. However, given that the impact assessment in the 2014 REF will still be developmental, the weighting of impact in the first exercise will be reduced to 20 per cent, with the intention of increasing this in subsequent exercises.
> (HEFCE et al., 2011, 10c p.4).

> so the lag between investment and change is extended, variable and
> uncertain.
>
> (Shepherd, 2009)

The consequence of this is that the REF 'may have the effect of disincentivising research that does not translate into immediate measurable impact for public policy or industry in the UK,' as Matthias Uecker, head of the German department at the University of Nottingham, points out (Shepherd, 2009). Gareth Roberts' 2003 warning, in his funding councils-commissioned report on the RAE (generally known as the *Roberts Review*), that 'I urge the funding councils to remember that all evaluation mechanisms distort the processes they purport to evaluate,' seems to have gone largely unheeded (Roberts, 2003, p.3), this distortion translating into Harrison's more permanent research 'irradiation', as I mentioned earlier (Harrison, 2014).

Other commentators have criticised the underlying implications of the notion of impact. Collini sees it as muddying the idea of what is actually being assessed. Although specific and separate percentages of the overall assessment are allocated to publications and other forms of research production [135](or in the Taylorist language of the exercise, 'outputs') and impact, in the final summation the two become conflated; it wouldn't be possible for a department or group to get a top rating without a good impact score. Collini argues that as a result of this conflation, 'research plus marketing is not just better than research without marketing: it is better *research*' (Collini, 2012a, p.175). Of course, we have to read Collini's perspective more as an envisaged direction of travel than as a current actuality, as for the 2014 REF whilst departments or groups had to prove that they had an impact audience, within this individual academics whose work was submitted were not necessarily obliged to contribute to departmental impact.

Collini also, when querying the idea of impact, questions the basic premise of the academy as an entity sealed off from the rest of our socio-cultural landscape, when he points out the false dichotomy of the idea of an 'inside' and an 'outside' to academia, seeing it as a 'misleading spatial metaphor' because 'none of us are wholly inside or

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[135] Research is commonly presented as written artefacts (ie books, journal articles etc.) but for some subject areas can also be presented in other forms, such as design, performance and exhibition. This is acknowledged by the REF – see HEFCE et al, 2015, p.4.

outside any of the institutions which partially constitute who we are' (Collini, 2012a, p.176).

9.4.3 Material impact

And 'who we are' may be materially affected by the REF. A UCU survey of the 7000 academic staff from 153 higher education institutions (HEIs) reports that nearly a quarter were concerned that they would lose their jobs and more than a fifth that they would be transferred to a teaching-focused contract 'if they did not perform to institutional REF expectations' (UCU, 2013, p.4). A further '45% thought it likely that they would not be supported to undertake research in the future if they were not included in the REF submission' (UCU, 2013, p.4). *Times Higher Education* reports provide evidence from both Swansea and Leicester Universities of managerial intentions to do just this (Jump, 2013; Jump, 2014).

So what can be seen here is a potential change of role for some academic staff whereby they may be moved to 'teaching-only' contracts in order to improve their department's Research Assessment status, or the status of a submitting unit. This type of pressure seems to have begun, in some institutions, with the successive RAEs but became more apparent in the run-up to the REF. The percentage of staff on teaching-only contracts has risen in the ten years from 2002-3 to 2012-3 from 12% to at least 25%.[136] (HESA, 2004; AUT, 2005; Oxford, 2008; Grove, 2014; HESA, 2014). Despite the protestations in the 2003 Government White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* which attempted to break the link between research and teaching in HE saying 'it is not necessary to be active in cutting-edge research to be an excellent teacher' (p.54) and promising 'we will also celebrate and reward teaching excellence' (p.46), research is still a higher-status activity in universities and remains the accepted route to career progression (Fazackerly, 2013). Middlesex V-C, Michael Driscoll points out that, despite the REF obsession with impact outside the academy, the effect on students – the

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[136] I describe this as 'at least' because in addition to the 46,795 staff on teaching-only contracts there were another 74,075 academic staff on what HESA terms 'atypical' contracts, that is to say staff whose 'working arrangements are not permanent, involve complex employment relationships and … may be characterized by a high degree of flexibility' and which 'may involve an absence of mutual obligation between the work provider and working person' (HESA, 2012). In other words this is largely the casualised academic labour force (see Gill, 2010) most of whom will be teaching.

allegedly important clients in the new marketplace of higher education – is ignored. In an interview with *The Guardian* Driscoll says that for the REF:

> There's no mention of the link between research and teaching. By doing research in universities, it supports the curriculum, but we need to have researchers engaged in teaching. Researchers are less and less involved in teaching and the experience of their students suffers.
>
> (Shepherd, 2009, para.19)

The issues that crystallise around the REF are, in a sense, twofold. Firstly, like previous attempts to weigh and measure research work – and so researchers – it constitutes a bureaucratic fulfilment of destiny where the academic subject is dividuated, in the Deleuzean sense (Deleuze, 1992), becoming a data item tagged with a particular code of 1, 2, 3, or 4 stars, which defines them, or stamped with the stigma of being 'un-REFable'. This is the kind of dislocation and doubling Harrison refers to, where the starred or stamped REF self bears little relation to the day-to-day research self (Harrison, 2014). Secondly, and contributing to this, is the set of concerns specifically around impact – ideas about publicity, the marketisation of the self and the changed sense of the public intellectual that this implies. I'll return to these issues later in this chapter, but first I want take a look back and to consider how some of our ideas of what constitutes university research have developed.

9.5   A backwards look at research

9.5.1   Definitions

I'll begin with some definitions of research. The REF defines research activity as: 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared' (HEFCE et al., 2011, p.48). The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), on the other hand, places an emphasis on the activity of the research itself, specifying that 'research activities should primarily be concerned with research processes, rather than outputs' (AHRC, 2014). The European Commission (EC) takes a similar perspective, employing the Frascati definition of research: 'Professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems, and in the management of the projects concerned' (EC, 2014, p.28). And the 2008 RAE defined research as 'original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and

understanding' (HEFCE et al., 2005). So foregrounding the 'effectively shared' element of research, particularly when it comes with the rider that emerges with the impact assessment of 'outside academia' can be seen as a significant historical change in the understanding of what University research actually is.

9.5.2   Research before the 20th century

Although, in the 21st century, we've become accustomed to thinking of the academic role as one that involves both teaching and research, in fact until the mid- to late 19th century research in both Arts and Sciences was carried out largely outside university walls, by 'gentleman scholars'. The term 'the Invisible College' was used by Robert Boyle and others from the 17th century to describe the loose association of gentleman (i.e. self-funded) scientists that later became folded into the Royal Society (Purver, 1967, Chapter 3). Throughout the mid-19th century research became professionalised, with scholarly journals, professional organisations and conferences gradually crystallising into normative academic practice (Anderson, 2006, loc.1947). The milieu of the time was one in which there was a contestation of the status of knowledge, with scientific empiricism presenting epistemological challenges to the thinking in traditionally clerical, Classicist universities (Turner, 2004, Chapters 5 and 7). Increasingly, the model of *wissenschaft*, championed by Prussian Minister of Education, Wilhelm von Humbolt, began to be adopted by British universities. This involved the academic role encompassing unity of teaching and research, with discovery being part of the learning process for students, who had an research apprentice role in relation to their teachers. Its impact on British higher education was significant and it persists as the underpinning educational model today, at least conceptually (Collini, 2012a, pp.23-5).

In terms of how research was financed, its private and benefactory funding in and before the 19th century gradually gave way to the public funding of research during the 20th century (Anderson, 2006, loc.2053-61). From 1918 the UGC, which administered funding to universities, did so by block grants to each institution. Each university spent this grant on teaching and research, as it, as a self-governing community of scholars, saw fit. The code of guidance which provided the foundation of this approach to funding research was the *Haldane Principle*. Established in 1918, this specified that

public research funding should be allocated according to academic criteria rather than political influence. This principle 'has been regarded, both in the academic world and more widely, as a key tenet upon which to ensure the integrity of academic endeavour' (Brown and Carasso, 2013, loc.1248-9).

9.5.3   The creation of the RAE

In line with the radical conservatism of the post-1979 Thatcher administration, the UGC in 1984 announced: 'we propose to adopt a more selective approach in the allocation of research support among universities in order to ensure that resources for research are used to best advantage'(UGC, 1984, para.1.9). This resulted in the creation of the REF's forerunner, the RAE, the first of which was carried out in 1986, followed by five others at roughly five-year intervals, the last one being in 2008. These were increasingly complex exercises whereby universities were invited to submit research outputs of each subject area to national subject panels; each subject area of each submitting university was then awarded a ranking, and funding was allocated accordingly – the better the research was judged to be, the greater the amount of public funding. Rankings were published, forming an early part of the drive to produce the university league tables I discussed in Chapter 3. So within universities, academic staff who wished to be considered for inclusion in the RAE submitted a bibliography of their work published in the timeframe and internal panels in universities made judgements about which staff should be included – and which, to the detriment of their careers, and 'the immense damage done to individuals' morale', not to mention the 'cohesiveness of a department' (Harrison, 2014), should be excluded. Once the exercise was carried out, individual university subject areas and so the staff within them became labelled with their ranking.

The creation of the RAE fostered two culture-changing ideas for universities, firstly that research can and should be *measured*, and secondly that teaching and research are discrete activities. For the academic subject the production of specific 'outputs' every five years means longer pieces of work are more 'risky', and speculative work is less likely to be undertaken. This is another way in which academic time is compressed and becomes more like commercial time, with the external pressure to produce the requisite pieces in the imposed timeframe competing with the personal desire to carry out high-quality, or simply less initially clearly defined, work. Academic staff are badged

'research active' or not and divided into two groups which begins to lay the ground for the 'teaching-only' role. The notion of 'scholarly activity', that is to say, the practice of keeping up with the debates and developments in one's area, which is essential for effective teaching in higher education (as well as for carrying out research), is called into question, as it has no measurable outputs – as the UCU argue (UCUb, 2008).

The tension about different types of academic role becomes exacerbated by the assessment exercise. As Jo Bostock finds in her book about gender and academic careers at Cambridge, there is a contradiction between the idea of the academic as one who performs the role of 'good public citizen', in carrying out such activities as university committee work and pastoral care of students, and the reality of those 'who don't collaborate, focus totally on their own research and make it to professor before they're 40' (Shima Barakat, quoted in Bostock, 2014, p.14). The latter approach represents an appropriation, by neoliberalism, of the drive and self-motivation that it takes an individual to do research, re-directing to a kind of personal career success in terms the world outside universities imposes. Classics professor Mary Beard, reflecting on this, looks fondly back to an era when she says 'there wasn't much promotion in the university. Occasionally people were plucked out for advancement but it wasn't part of a career plan … success was something embedded in the community rather than the individual' (*THE,* 2014b). This may have varied in different disciplines and different kinds of university; as Bostock suggests, the 'good citizenship' approach is viewed as feminine territory and so tends not to be rewarded in the same way as other activities (Bostock, 2014). But the role conflict is exacerbated by the imposition of a quasi-market in research by the RAE/REF, where the idea of academia as good citizenship is further undermined by the privatisation, not only of universities, but of *what it is to be an academic.*

The shift here is towards aligning universities with the project of knowledge capitalism – an approach that insists that 'universities should be the open-cast mines of the knowledge economy' (Leadbeater, 2000, p.14). This imposes on universities the responsibility to lead the way with research that will regenerate the economy, providing 'opportunities for UK business to sharpen its competitive edge' (Lambert, 2003, p.15) by association with universities. Simultaneously and paradoxically, it is an approach that valorises private enterprise above the public sphere and imposes a culture on higher

education that makes it more like a private company – albeit a badly funded one (Callinicos, 2006, loc.273).

9.5.4 Replacing the RAE

One of the key stated rationales for replacing the RAE with a different system of measuration was that it consumed too much time and effort and was therefore costly (HEFCE, 2007, p.4); the 2003 *Roberts Review* of the RAE, commissioned by the funding councils, put the cost of the 2001 exercise at £5-6 million (Roberts, 2003, p.16). Originally a system based on bibliometrics and citation indices – that is to say, the counting of references – was to be implemented as part of the RAE replacement exercise (HEFCE, 2007, p. 4). However, after further consultation and piloting the use of metrics was downgraded to 'informing' expert review for the 2014 REF (HEFCE 2009, p. 3; Bridges, 2009, p.502). So, with the wholesale shift to judgement by quantitative data on citation avoided (or perhaps postponed[137]), the main difference produced by the switch from the RAE-ed academic to the REF-ed academic, is the injunction that their research, (or at least their department's research) should have 'impact' outside the academy.

9.6 Mediatisation

The compound effect on the academic subject of the neoliberal reinvention of higher education research in general, with its Taylorist approach to outputs, and the injunction to create impact in particular, is that the subject is subject to surveillance in their production of the requisite 'output'[138], (a process, as Harrison suggests, that becomes internalised) and also in the commercialisation and publicising of themselves and their work. The academic subject is thus *mediatised* and *commercialised*. In terms of the former, this is a significant change, as academic presence in the media until recently tends to have fallen into one of the following categories: the 'expert' asked for a soundbite on topical matters; the type of research that makes an appealing media story, such as 'owning a cat can reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes by more than a third, researchers have found'(*Daily Telegraph*, 2008); research being ridiculed for its

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[137] HEFCE's view was that that 'bibliometrics are not sufficiently robust *at this stage* to be used formulaically or to replace expert review in the REF' (my italics) would seem to imply that they may regard them as being acceptable for future assessments (HEFCE, 2009, p.3).
[138] It's interesting to note that for the REF there was an undertaking, for the first time, to read and assess – and so surveille – every single 'output'.

esoteric or self-evident nature – 'potty university research that just tells us what we already know', as the *Daily Star* puts it (*Daily Star*, 2008); the traditional 'kipper tie' OU TV programmes; and, to some extent, older presentations of the 'public intellectual'.

The change from this to a situation where all academics are enjoined to aim for the space of publicity, to the extent that individual universities have their own PR sections which select and package academic 'stories', retaining corporate control of their narrative, is significant.

The whole idea of the public intellectual becomes shaped by mediatisation, by the influence of TV and the press, and, more recently, also of social media presence. Blogging, in particular, creates its own academic blogging circuits. There are many different ways to blog and varied approaches that can be used by academic bloggers. Jill Walker, in 'Blogging from inside the ivory tower' described three different types of academic blog: the public intellectual, the research log and the (usually pseudonymous) account of academic life (Walker, 2006, p.4-5). More recently, academic blogs have developed that are a combination of the first and second (sometimes with a little of the third thrown in). In this approach research ideas are developed on blogs, out in the open, as I mentioned in the preface to Chapter 4,when I referred to Lucy Williams' writing about her own PhD research blog, where she developed and publicised some of her ideas (Williams, 2013).

Research blogging circles are also developing, where blogs consist of dialogues between groups of academics who blog and comment on each other's blogs. The object oriented ontology (OOO) group, a subset of Speculative Realism, is a good example of this. OOO is a philosophical approach that privileges the importance of non-human objects (Bogost, 2009). A small group including relatively early to mid-career academics, Graham Harman, Levi Bryant, Ian Bogost and Timothy Morton make up the OOO circuit. This form of creating knowledge though public debate can be a positive one creating what Kirkup describes as 'a new genre of scholarly writing'. However, there are potential issues for the way circles like this can potentially verify and uphold

group ideas. All the member of the group I mentioned have blogs[139] where they develop ideas in the full glare of the 24/7 spotlight and comment on each other's posts, in ways that re-affirm the importance of their area of work and the methods by which they are pursuing it. This practice creates a kind of academic 'microcelebrity' within participants' own blogging circle.

There are two aspects of this practice that are pertinent to the developing concept of the mediatised, publicised academic. The first is that participating in this type of research practice produces the researcher on the public stage. This constitutes the academic self – the research self – as performance in a way that is quite oppositional to more traditional approaches to developing research ideas in the seclusion that provides space to think. The second is that this immensely media-aware form of doing research becomes a circuit of the drive, in the psychoanalytic terms Dean applies to social media. By this I mean that it is bound up in the way the technologies 'capture their users in intensive and extensive networks of enjoyment [and] production' (Dean, 2010, p.4). But this is not the hysteric's position of postponing fulfilment and constantly questioning their position (Dean, 2002, p.117) – the more traditional way of conducting research. Satisfaction comes quickly in this mode as response and counter-response are only ever a click away in these networks of enjoyment. The academic blogger here becomes the subject of the drive where 'the gestures taken towards the goal become themselves the goal'(Dean, 2002, p.117). This is a perverse position, but perversion is not entirely unexpected in the contemporary academy, as I will explore later in this chapter.

This creates a kind of circularity in the group – in a sense it forms its own closed circuit. It's ironic that whilst this group are from the US and so not subject to the REF, the REF in the UK encourages exactly this type of valorisation of the culture of celebrity in the academy. The area of OOO is one that, as an article in the Speculative Realism online journal, *Speculations*, suggests, owes its growth to the explosion of blogs and blogging about this type of philosophical idea (Gironi, 2010, p.21). Gironi views this as a positive trend and goes on to claim that the development of ideas in public, which he sees as a 'revolution', is a 'phenomenon which completely restructures … the very formation and

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[139] Graham Harman's blog can be found at http://doctorzamalek2.wordpress.com/about/; Levi Bryant blogs at http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/; Ian Bogost's blog is at http://bogost.com/; and Timothy Morton's is at http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.co.uk/.

organisation of ideas'. As I discussed in Chapter 6, this type of claim for the way that technology 'revolutionises' our world – in this instance for its effects on epistemology – is a kind of mythologising. In this case the mythic dimension is that publicity can become a stand-in for traditional 'solid' scholarship.

This happens as an aspect of the generalised contemporary culture of publicity. The debate that arose from columnist A. A. Gill's personal comments about Mary Beard's work as a TV historian in 2012 is instructive in this matter. Gill described Beard as 'too ugly for television', asserting that she 'should be kept away from cameras altogether' (*Daily Telegraph*, 2012). Beard responded robustly and the very public altercation which followed served to improve her already substantial media profile, as well as to highlight A. A. Gill's crass misogyny, but it does point up the idea that there's now an expectation, unthinkable in the OU 'kipper tie' days, that a mediatised academic – the public intellectual – should conform to dominant notions of physical attractiveness, that is to say the disciplined, compliant body, high-maintenance grooming and the appearance of youthfulness. This is likely to be truer for women, of course, but it's worth noting, for example, the distance travelled between TV astronomers Patrick Moore and Brian Cox. Moore appeared to be the epitome of the crusty, eccentric scientist in the programmes he presented in the 1960s and 1970s, and later, physicist Cox, who had a brief career as a pop star, projects boyish enthusiasm for his subject along with pop star good looks in a TV career that took off in 2010 and, with his wife, American popular science journalist Gia Milinovich, maintains a highly active social networking profile (see Cox and Milinovich, 2014). The contrast speaks tellingly of changing notions of what is expected of the mediatised intellectual.

All of this shapes the subjectivity of people working in universities, particularly for early career researchers who are still at the stage of constructing their own academic identity. The idea of the 'celebrity academic' is one which Michael Barber, in his report on the future of higher education, hypes up as the 'Ronaldo effect' I discussed in Chapter 7. It's useful to look more closely here at exactly what Barbar means by this:

> popular intellectuals who become brands in themselves ... these scholars have become so successful that they can set their own terms and take their brand and reputation to the highest bidder … We think of this as the Ronaldo Effect,

named after the … footballer whose talent is such that he can pick for himself which top club to play for.

(Barber et al., 2013, p.27)

The importance of this for the subject is that it suggests the most ideal career outcome that an early career academic might hitch their desire to is not to become the most knowledgeable and respected thinker in their field - but to be the most popular.

9.7 Abjection and the RAE

Another way of thinking about the whole area of research assessment, given that it has begun to define the core of what it is to be a scholar, is to consider it in the light of psychoanalytic theory. Applying Julia Kristeva's concept of *abjection* to the bureaucratic process of the RAE offers a way of theorising it as a form of social hygiene ritual that separates out the 'clean' from the 'unclean' (Kristeva, 1980; Douglas, 1966). Kristeva sees abjection, on a social level, as the rejecting or casting out of a class of objects, persons, qualities, activities, ideas etc. in order that the rest of the social can become pure and coherent. The abject is that which 'disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules' (Kristeva, 1980, p.4) and is expelled in in a way that renders it 'radically excluded' (ibid., p.2).

The social body expels that which threatens its sense of self in order to shore up the borders which give it meaning and identity. As Anne McClintock suggests, the abject is also 'a symptom of the failure of this ambition', threatening the social body with 'perpetual danger' by its very existence (McClintock, 1995,loc.1546); but the abject is also that which is uncannily familiar and becomes obscurely attractive (in a radically disallowed way) to the social body. So the operation of the RAE serves to make *abject* the area of teaching and non-measurable research. It positions teaching as a space of abjection and constitutes academic subjects accordingly. The fear expressed by staff at being pushed into a teaching only role reflect this. One of Ros Gill's respondents in her study of 'fast academia', for example, says, 'If I don't get [this paper] into a good journal they won't enter me into the RAE … and … teaching contract here I come! I feel like I'm clinging on by my fingernails' (Gill, 2010, p.232). As C. S. Lewis observes of bereavement, 'no one ever told me that grief felt so like fear' (Lewis, 1961, loc.46);

for academic subjects pushed into the zone of abjection, the anxiety and fear do indeed speak of a grief at the loss of the desired object – and disavowing teaching in this way fetishises research as an object. This produces a melancholy subject with a profound but unnameable sense of loss (Freud, 1917; Butler, 1990). The melancholia persists even if – especially if – the subject had no particular keenness for research work in the first place, the activity of research coming with its own panoply of mental anguish (Gill, 2010, p.234-5). Melancholia – or depression – has increased significantly for academic staff compared to other occupations between 2008 and 2013 (Kinman and Wray, 2013). And as psychoanalyst Darian Leader points out, depression in a neoliberal society is itself a form of resistance, a 'refusal of current forms of mastery'(Leader, 2008, p.12-13).

What is traditionally abjected in Kristeva's schema of subject creation is the mother; and it's the 'maternal' element of the academic role, in the sense of the nurturing of the young, that is abjected here. Teachers are, of course, dangerous; they deal in ideas. Socrates was put to death for corrupting the young with his teaching (Hughes, 2010); Zizek was famously given an academic post in eastern bloc Yugoslavia on the basis he that mustn't do any teaching in case he influenced students with his dissident views (Myers, 2003). Teachers are known to be disturbers of 'identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules.' At the same time as some academics are moved into the abject zone of the teaching-only contract, research-active academics may be obliged to take on less teaching, because even if they enjoy it and do it well, too much of it will impede their career progression and their department's research profile (see Hall, 2013, p.90). Successful compliance with the RAE thus becomes, for the subject, a neoliberal form of hemlock – at least in the matter of influencing the young.

But non-compliant researchers are also abjected. Research which doesn't fit the assessment framework, such as the ten-year book, work in interdisciplinary areas or theoretical science problems which don't easily translate to papers or other permissible forms of production becomes disallowed activity because it does not contribute to a high assessment score. But this kind of inquiry – the pursuit of original ideas as an intrinsic aim – can be seen, as I discussed in Chapter 6, to be the more 'sublime' aspect of academic subjectivity. It is the area for which many academics feel a passionate

investment and refer to as 'my own work' (Gill, 2010, p.242). Thus the RAE performs the topsy-turvy function of rendering the sublime abject.

9.8   Disavowal, perversion and the REF

The idea of abjection can equally be applied to the REF but to understand the introduction of the impact element it's useful to mobilise the psychoanalytic concept of *disavowal*. For Freud and for Lacan unacceptable reality becomes disavowed by the subject, who simultaneously acknowledges and denies it (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1978, p.118-9; Evans, 1996, p.44). The consequence of disavowal is perversion, where a fetish is put in the place of what has been disavowed. To apply this to the REF, what the impact element of the REF does is to disavow the importance of traditional scholarship, putting in its place the fetish-object of the evidence of impact. Neoliberalism must disavow the pursuit of certain approaches to and kinds of knowledge and thinking (at the same time as privileging others) which threaten its ideological stranglehold. This quest for the evidence or effect of impact is endlessly deferred, as real 'proof' of impact is difficult (or in some cases, impossible) to measure. What can be measured is the number of people who, for example, watched the spin-off TV programme, how and when they watched it and what sort of viewing profile the audience has, the number of people who commented on twitter, and so on. These values then become proxy measures for 'actual' impact so the fetish itself becomes fetishised (here in the Marxist sense of commodity fetishism I discussed in Chapter 7, as much as psychoanalytic fetishism). Furthermore, and ironically, the written narrative of the impact case study that must be produced for the REF then stands in for this proxy, impact: the word, 'the letter' stands in for the fetish-object (or the proxy of the fetish object). Thus, paradoxically, at the moment when writing as scholarship is abjected or disavowed, writing as 'impact' is rewarded.

And that is why, although it would have been hard to find anyone in academia who thought, from its first announcement, that the REF impact agenda, within the terms set for it, was anything other than ludicrous and perverse, it persists. As a fetish object, its point is to be perverse – it's perversion. And that is also why 'impact' is something that stays with the university if the academic who carried out the research on which it is

based leaves. As a form of perversion, it's out of place by its very definition – its *place* is to be out of place.

In the climate of publicity encouraged by the REF's impact agenda, the TV and photographic image of the self can also become the fetish; the compliant image of this is the use of televisually appealing academics presenting popular science or history; A. A. Gill's reaction to Mary Beard underscores this.

The idea of 'solid scholarship' in a REF environment begins to change its meaning. It moves from being desirable to something that sounds thorough, but a little dull – which might no longer be sufficient for, say, an appointment or promotion or to attract funding: that would require 'exciting' scholarship. So solid scholarship melts into air or, as Bauman might put it, into a liquid, infinitely adaptable sense of what it is to do the work of academia (Bauman, 2010). Referring to Lacan's four discourses which I used to interrogate the activity of teaching in Chapter 7, Fink says 'in the university discourse, knowledge is not so much an end in itself as that which justifies the academic's very existence and activity' (Fink, 1995), an idea that the neoliberal university is motivated to enact.

In the same way that impact and narratives about it come to stand in for research so too do numbers, in the form of scores. They become both fetishised and reified and stand in for the output, for the subject and for the department they describe. The transaction of the REF is a process that starts with ideas being codified into an acceptable publication, which then becomes a title on a list and ultimately, a score on a spreadsheet. This, effectively, replaces the research, which now only has meaning as a code of stars. As Alldred and Miller observe, this reified code outlives the memory of what participants, at the time, acknowledged to be the relative arbitrariness of the exercise: 'we will … have ended up valuing what was measured in spite of ourselves' (Alldred and Miller, 2007). Thus academics are interpellated not only as subjects of the REF but also, in some way *believing* in it 'in spite of ourselves'. Because the machinery of the REF believes for us.

I have used Lacan's concept of *meconnaissance* or misrecognition, in the sense that we enter into language at the mirror phase as split, misrecognising subjects, throughout this

thesis. But as I mentioned earlier, the term *meconnaissance* can be translated as 'mis-knowing'. It becomes possible to say, therefore, that the way in which neoliberalism attempts to alter the academic subject and condition the very way in which knowledge is produced, itself could be said to create a kind of social mis-knowledge, a *meconnaissance* of the public body.

In disavowal, the psycho-social structure both denies and accepts the existence of the object being repudiated. I propose that while we are largely in this space of *disavowal* at present, we are moving into a space of *foreclosure*. In Lacan's concept of foreclosure the unacceptable object is expelled from the Symbolic order completely.

In Lacan's work, what is foreclosed is the *nom du pere*,[140] the name of the father or paternal authority. Expulsion creates a hole in the pyschic structure of consciousness and this produces a psychotic effect where that which is expelled returns to haunt the subject in ghostly hallucinations (Evans, 1996, p.44-6). Currently there is a move to the foreclosing of actual scholarliness, as the REF demonstrates. The process of becoming an academic subject[141] is a process by which one becomes one's surname (Gill, 2010, p.235) that is to say one's *nom du pere* – and gains authority; it is that authority and 'solid scholarship', the sense of the importance of knowledge, and the importance of the pursuit of it which is being foreclosed – expelled from the Symbolic order as a meaningful set of concepts.

This form of expulsion creates a hole where this meaning once was and brings about a form of psychosis in the social structure – how can a society make sense of the world without knowledge or a concept of knowledge? This can only have a profound impact, both ontological and epistemological, on the fabric of the social.

In time this may become cemented in – and so the project of altering the academic subject is completed, 'reconstructing academic work and those who do it, in ways that

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[140] Lacan's original French term for this concept plays on the literal sense of the name-of-the-father that is the bearer of naming and identity and the 'non', the 'no' of the father i.e. the assertion of authority.
[141] Of course, to gain academic subjectivity in the first place, the subject has been obliged to accept the foreclosure of other desires or ideas, as a pre-condition of subjecthood; the imposition of this new structure of social foreclosure, in additon to this, as well as having an effect on the social structure produces, in the subject, a sense of incoherence and loss (see Butler's reading of Lacan, 1997, pp.6-9).

serve the prevailing model' (Alldred and Miller, 2007) – even if they are permanently haunted by the (attractive and disallowed) ghost of purer research. The battle over subjectivity is won by neoliberalism, the döppelganger of metrics and impact has replaced the self and the soul of academia truly irradiated, if, in 20 years' time academics pay less attention to the pursuit of new ideas and more to performing research that ticks the 'right' boxes, to self-publicity and narratives about their effect on the world – or whatever the fetish object is in 2034.

9.9   Relentless weird thinking

It's fitting, in a climate of publicity, that the last words on what really makes an effective researcher should go to three very different academic researchers whose work has had considerable impact in their lifetimes.

2013 Nobel Prize winner Peter Higgs, whose research eventually led to the discovery of the Higgs Bosen particle, says that that during his career he 'published so few papers that he became an "embarrassment" to his department, and would never get a job in academia now' and that in the current university climate 'he would never have had enough the time or space to formulate his groundbreaking theory'(Aitkenhead, 2013). Despite his own significant public profile, cultural historian Paul Gilroy also counters current trends, saying that 'the idea of being a responsible professional academic pulls you in the opposite direction to that of being a public intellectual ... Maybe it's a good thing in a way, because we don't need more celebrity academics – academics who know what they've got to say if they want to be in the bubble of visible celebrity' (*The Observer*, 2011). Andrew Oswald, whose innovative work on human happiness as an index to the success of a society took many years to achieve its current popularity says that 'university researchers who primarily wish to please people are not likely to contribute much to our world' and that what universities – and society – need in researchers is 'risk, failure, iconoclasm, more failure, genius, turbulence … eccentricity and relentless weird thinking' (Oswald, 2014).

SECTION V - CONCLUSION

Chapter 10 – Conclusion: re-engineering the academy

10.1 Preface

In researching my question I developed a psychoanalytic materialist account of the newly developing academic subject. This is the person who emerges in the variously reconfigured places and spaces, culture and practices of the present-day university. My aim was to look at academic subjectivity as it is being reinvented or re-engineered by neoliberalism.

10.2 Summary

In answer to my research question of how the academic subject is constituted by the culture and practices of the neoliberal, computational, UK university, I found that there have been a series of developments and changes. These are tending to transform the academic subject to conform to a new model of what it is to be a lecturer and researcher, in various ways.

There were three main planks in my analysis of this, which I have woven in and out of the chapters of this thesis.

The first was the way in which the late modernist decline of the authority of grand narratives makes it difficult for universities to continue to justify themselves in high modernist terms as guardians of culture. This, in a Lacanian sense, decline of the big Other, de-stabilises language and meaning and produces us as hysterical subjects; it increases the importance of the realm of Imaginary, loading it with 'heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect'(Jameson,1991, pp.35-36). Two important things happen for academic subjectivity in this erosion of authority. Firstly the reinvention of universities as commercial organisations providing 'a product with a price tag' (QAA, 2013) becomes ideologically feasible because of the decline of the academy's discursive authority, producing academics as builders and sellers of knowledge or knowledge products, subjected to regimes of control, rather than autonomous scholars in a self-governing community. Within this, the products of academic labour are prised loose from their creator and reified, a process which

attempts to drains the academics of subjectivity, reducing them to the status of object. The second thing that happens to academic subjectivity is that the intellectual authority of the scholar is challenged. In the shallow, affective, online and offline world of 'whatever' culture, where all perspectives, whether based on evidence or ignorance are 'just your opinion' (Dean, 2010, p.6), informed intellectual argument has little purchase.

This latter point is related to the second plank of my analysis, which was that as we become interpellated as the subject of mediated technologies – however much we may want to challenge communicative capitalism or distance ourselves from it, it becomes near impossible because the machine believes for us. In the university, the machinery of audit and metrics believes, even though many academics may contest the value of governmental activities such as the NSS or the REF, the machine believes for them. Ultimately, despite themselves, as Pam Alldred and Tina Miller (2007) observe, everyone ends up believing the value ascribed to institutions, departments and individuals by such processes.

The third plank of my analysis started with the concept that the discourse of the competitive, commercial enterprise, defined by the language of the market closes down the space for dissent. As Lorenz points out, this discourse cannot be debated, because it doesn't accept truth as a concept, being 'a game that neoliberalism has superimposed over scholarship in the universities' (Lorenz, 2012, p.627). There is a disavowal of the values associated with academic life and of the importance of academics themselves. Thus bureaucratic desire creates a kind of institutional neurosis – made concrete in the managerial Imaginary as the planned futuristic university building (that never materialises) which produces nothing but an array of metrics demonstrating its 'excellence'[142] and where the troublesome bodies and subjectivities of staff and students are elided. In this the actual core values and functions of a university, scholarship and academic endeavour, are *disavowed* (i.e. their existence is simultaneously acknowledged but denied) and this produces an institutional perversion, where fetishes

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[142] Bill Readings interrogates the notion of 'excellence' as it is (over-)used in managerialist university discourse. Using the example of university car parking, he notes an award of excellence that Cornell Univerisity Parking Services won, for restricting parking spaces. Readings points out that this award could equally have been won for increasing parking spaces, because the concept of excellence as an evaluative criteria no longer has meaning. In neoliberal discourse the signifier 'excellence'is emptied of content and then used as a stand-in for (unprovable, inarguable) quality (Readings, 1999, p.24). Readings uses the term 'The University of Excellence' (ibid, p. 11) to capture this idea.

such as 'excellence' and 'efficiency' are put in their place and worshipped. As the grip of neoliberalism becomes stronger, the disavowal shades into *foreclosure*, that is to say, the rejection and expulsion of the core values and activities from the Symbolic order. This produces *psychosis*, but in the case of neoliberal discourse, an institutional psychosis that masquerades as normality and is impervious to argument as its logic only operates inside its own hermetic referential argument. This produces a splitting or doubling of the academic subject, dividuated into their embodied self and the double of metrics, of publicity, of bureaucracy. Moreover, the mounting evidence of growing workplace stress among academics is also foreclosed and 'strategies that individualize and pathologize those who complain' (Barcan, 2014, loc.193) are mobilised. This ensures that, in the psychotic structure of the Haunted University, the experience of working under unacceptable (and unnecessary) pressure is not only denied, but turned back on the subject, blaming them for something that they are invited to internalise as their own shortcomings and adding a layer of shame, guilt and secrecy to the affect this produces (see Gill, 2014, pp.21-22; Barcan, 2013, loc. 315).

I will now briefly summarise what each chapter contributed to this overall analysis. In Chapter 3, I identified three discourses in historical public debates about universities, which have played a part in shaping ideas about what the university *is* and what it *should be*. These are the discourse of privilege and elites; the discourse of progress and the public good; and the discourse of commodification and private advantage. I argued that these have been leveraged, at various points in history, to justify changes to UK higher education and I examined in greater detail the move to marketisation and personalisation over the last 30 years, as the third discourse gained purchase. I began to discuss the relationship between this and the concurrent technologisation of university life and I also began to introduce the idea of various counter-hegemonic approaches to this neoliberal commodification of the university; these I defined as an attempt to re-inscribe the discourse of progress and the public good.

In Chapter 4 I mobilised a Lacanian notion of the Mirror Stage to consider how academic homepages and blogs form an enactment of tensions between institutional conformity and a form of resistance to this, by offering a negotiation of academic subjecthood within the digital Symbolic.

I used the idea of the unheimlich Freudian double in Chapter 5 to consider how the digital doubles of academics, created by agencies outside the subject, impact on subjectivity. I demonstrated how networked computers operate as ideological belief machines and how the presence of the double within the digital Symbolic elides other narratives of self and impacts on the sense of selfhood the subject negotiates within the digital Imaginary. I also considered how the collapse of the master signifier operates in relation to this and enables the double to gain credibility.

In Chapter 6 I considered how the rhythms and rituals of academic time have become overlaid with the competing temporalities and routines of commercial time and similarly how the space of universities is impacted by the neoliberal shibboleths of flexibility and efficiency. I discussed how the embodied subject must be organised in relation to these new space-time arrangements. However, as the academic subject is also constituted as the immaterial self ,of knowledge and ideas, as well as of mediated technoculture, this creates a disciplinary regime where the embodied academic subject is always displaced, always being made to fragment yet, conversely, also made to reconcile in moment where the exercise of power marks them most profoundly.

I mobilised Lacan's Four Discourses, in Chapter 7, to consider how issues of power, authority, knowledge and authenticity are negotiated within a range of teaching practices. As part of this I analysed the way in which neoliberalism attempts to press educational technologies into its service, partly by reifying digital educational content and practices.

In Chapter 8 I proposed that emails sent and received by academic subjects are purloined as soon as they are created. I used the Lacanian concept of the gaze to analyse the way in which email produces the subject by the readings, utterances and the gaze of others. I also consider how being forced by email to publicly *speak* and *know* in contexts not of their making impacts on subjecthood.

In Chapter 9 I analysed how attempts to weigh and measure research work - and so researchers – constitutes a bureaucratic fulfilment of destiny which attempts to reduce researchers to data items tagged with a code of stars - or to brand them as 'unREFable'. I used the Lacanian and Kristevan concepts of abjection, disavowal and foreclosure to

consider how cultures of bureaucracy on the one hand and publicity on the other attempt to profoundly alter what it is to be an a researcher and to produce knowledge. I then went on argue that this alters the knowledge that is produced.

Thus I have shown that for the neoliberal university, academic subjectivity is the real battleground. Changes to the structure and staffing and mission of institutions can be made and unmade, funding can be provided, cut, re-organised, but if what it is to actually *be* an academic is changed from the inside, then that 'irradiation of the soul' can't be undone. Whether this is done stealthily, so that individual subjects barely notice the change, as Harrison (2014) reports, whether some academics embrace the new order willingly (see Sparkes 2007, p.532 and Lorenz, p.626) happily becoming perverse subjects of the metrical drive or whether new recruits to academia are deliberately inducted into becoming a different kind of academic,[143] changing this changes the knowledge that a society produces which consequently changes that society.

This is a pessimistic picture, but I have also found that there are resistances against this. Neoliberalism attempts to press technology into the service of its project. Partly it uses it to amplify it, partly it uses the computational as a kind of 'invisibility cloak'[144] to obscure the political nature of the changes it implements. But technology can be a site of resistance as well as means by which we are produced as subjects of ideology. As I have demonstrated, these range from the sometimes playful, often imaginative, intelligent and unruly approaches academics use in inscribing their own subjectivity onto the digital Symbolic – as blogs, pages, websites, online education and emails that are counter-hegemonic in small subtle ways, in larger, explicit ways, ways that can be performative, communicative or disruptive.

Gary Rolfe posits the concept of 'the 'Paraversity' as an invisible, subversive, virtual institution that exists alongside the … university' (Rolfe, 2013, loc.253-4). By this he means not only the kinds of initiatives I discussed in Chapter 3 such as the Free University movement, the Workers' Educational Association and other academic

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[143] See, for example, the *Times Higher Education* account of an RCUK funded Skills in Action Festival for early career researchers (Else, 2015), or the RCUK funded OU *Becoming a Public Intellectual* course I mentioned in Chapter 10(OU, 2013a).

[144] Maybe more in the way that a Romulan Warbird uses an invisibility cloak than the way Harry Potter does.

activity located outside universities, but also, as Deborah Withers and Alex Wardrop articulate, in their idea of the para-academic, both individuals[145] and:

> potential *collectivities* of people and practices existing simultaneously inside, outside, and *alongside* the conventional academy. They often occupy their positions through force of circumstance, choice or an ambivalent mixture of both.
>
> (Withers and Wardrop, p. 8)

The concept they present then, includes research performed outside the restrictions of the REF, as a respondent in Angela Thody's study of retired academics[146] indicates:

> 'I now do not have to participate in the target-obsessed numerical performance indicators…and I can devote myself full-time to research which I can control to my satisfaction and in directions I consider are most important'.
>
> (Thody, 2011, p.645).

It also includes the development and practice of more radical pedagogies for higher education such as those I referred to in Chapter 7, which are driven by 'critical pedagogy 'and 'counter-hegemonic' practices (Clegg et al, 2003, p.51).

10.3 Audience and effect

These findings might to be of interest to anyone working in a university who experiences this uncanny cultural transformation on a day-to-day basis and wants to step back and think about what it means to them, personally, in their work role. Considering how the haunting of the everyday speaks about the engineering of significant social and political changes may offer them a way of theorising their own day-to-day experience. My findings may also be helpful to those working in the area of technology in higher education who wish to have a fuller understanding of what the

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[145] See, for example, Bronwyn Davies' *Leaving the academy* blog:
> It is two years since I left my secure job in a university to become an independent scholar. I left because I could no longer bear what neoliberalism was doing to academic work. I am, like many scholars, deeply wedded to my work, so leaving the institutional framework that had made my work possible, was not a decision I made lightly. The current micro-management of universities is driven by government, but played out by university managers -- on and through the bodies of academic workers.

[146] See Harley (2012) for a review of studies on retired academics' research activities.

implication of the technics are for academic staff. I also think they would be of benefit to university managers from academic backgrounds, as they may assist them to make sense of the ambivalent situation in which they are often placed (see Sparkes, 2007, p.524-8).

As well as having answered my own question, carrying out this work has changed my view on some of the theoretical areas, particularly in terms of the importance of embodiment in relation to the virtual world of technoculture. It has also made me realise how tremendously demanding sustained research work is and has given me additional respect for those who grapple with it day in, day out.

My study implies that further research could be conducted on resistance strategies that cause academic staff and students to create opportunities for learning and researching inside and outside the formal university structure, as Wardrop and Withers (2014) have begun to do.

Although I have specifically considered, in this work, the way in which communicative capitalism operates on the subjectivity of academic staff in universities, the same approach could be meaningfully applied to other types of workplace. It would be productive, for example, to analyse the relationship between technology and the embodied self in the production of subjectivity for nurses in hospital environments or GPs in local practice.

10.4 Another kind of haunting

Finally, looking back on this thesis it strikes me that whilst I have talked about the fantasies of bureaucrats and auditors and even touched on the desires of students, I have been largely silent about academic pleasure and desire. This is saddening, but perhaps only to be expected in the current climate. There used to be a joke in universities, which hardly makes sense any more, that libido is just a form of sublimated academic research. Now that the (false) law of the father dictates that research must be done and done according to its rules, it becomes the province of the academic superego, rather than the id. As the Dublin-based *Provisional University Collective* put it: 'the current

organisation of the university is excluding the very subjectivity, the very desire on which it relies' (2014, p.85).

As Mark Fisher points out, the way in which neoliberalism denies alternative discourses means that for us, in the early 21st century, it's easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism (Fisher, 2008, p.1-2). Similarly, it's easier to imagine the end of higher education than it is to imagine a change to a new way of organising universities and producing academic subjectivity. The danger in critiquing the neoliberal production of academic subjectivity is that it's tempting to offer the more traditional model of the 'rational, liberal, humanist subject … motivated by a "desire for pre-eminence, authority and disciplinary power"' (Hall, 2013, p.84)[147] as an alternative. Even if this were a desirable or achievable goal the fact that 'the good old days were good only for the happy few' (Barcan, 2014, loc.279) makes it an unpalatable alternative and the challenge is to find new ways of organising the university and constituting a new form of authentic academic subjectivity.

The institutional psychosis created by foreclosure brings another kind of haunting, as, for Lacan, the foreclosed *returns* as hallucinations and dreams. Perhaps the psychotic university of communicative capitalism, ultimately, becomes haunted, in turn, by the ghost of disallowed authentic academic subjectivity – as resistances begin to gather and take shape. In the 'always on' glare of the 24/7 university, you have to make your own shadows.

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[147] Gary Hall's quote within my quote is from literary critic, Stanley Fish.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Sites used in Chapter 4 and date of accession

Personal homepages and blogs

Conole, G. *e4Innovation*. Available at: http://e4innovation.com/ (accessed 4 September 2009).

Hall, G. *Homepage*. Available at: http://www.garyhall.info/ (accessed 4 September 2009).

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Page, R. *Digital Narratives*. Available at: http://digitalnarratives.blogspot.com (accessed 4 September 2009)

Shipman, R. *Wolf's Spoor*. Available at: http://pcbo.dcs.aber.ac.uk/blog/ (accessed 4 September 2009).

Wheeler, S. *Learning with 'e's*. Available at: http://steve-wheeler.blogspot.co.uk/ (accessed 4 September 2009).

Institutional homepages

Hall, G. (2009) *Profile page*. Coventry University. Available at: http://www.coventry.ac.uk/cu/schoolofartanddesign/mediaandcommunication/staff/a/4644 (accessed 4 September 2009).

Lee, P. (2009) *Profile page*. Newcastle University. Available at: http://www.cs.ncl.ac.uk/people/p.a.lee/ (accessed 4 September 2009).

Appendix B

Sites accessed in Chapter 5 and date of accession

123People (2010) Available at: http://www.123people.co.uk/ (accessed 18 March 2010).

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Appendix C

Interviews with course leaders in a Faculty of Health and Social Care

Note

This survey was carried out as part of my role as Director of E-learning in the faculty in question. It therefore had two sets of (substantially overlapping) outcomes, generation of data for this work and provision of information for a report I prepared on e-learning for the faculty. Therefore some of the questions in the interview schedule at the end of this appendix have a level of detail relevant to the second purpose but less so for the first purpose; they have been included for completeness.

All interviewees were agreed to the interviews being used for both internal faculty purposes and for research purposes. They were assured that for the latter they would be anonymised.

Background

This large faculty (approximately 200 academic staff and 5000 students) was located jointly at across two universities; one of these is a post-92 institution and the other is an older medical school.

The main e-learning experience of staff involved the use of the institutional VLE, Blackboard, including its discussion board. The attitudes, experiences and perceptions of staff in the area of e-learning were sought, based on their experience of using this technology.

Methodology

This exercise used interviews to collect data. Between December 2006 and February 2007 twelve course directors from all schools within the faculty were invited, via email, to participate. Course directors were asked either to gather information from colleagues regarding e-learning or to invite appropriate staff to attend the interview. A suitable date, time and location were agreed. The interview schedule was semi-structured to ensure a degree of consistency.

In broad terms the themes that were explored included:

- A general overview of e-learning within the course director's remit (current usage, drivers to establish an e-learning component, process of setting up / monitoring activity);

- Staff perceptions of e-learning based upon current use;

- Perceived challenges for e-learning.

Validity of the data collected was confirmed by a verbal summary at the end of the interview and by asking participants to review transcribed interviews for accuracy.

Interview Guidance Template

Schedule:

1. Introduce purpose and remit of the excercise
2. Conduct interview
3. Confirm accuracy of data collected

Name:

Course:

Role:

Date and time of interview:

Section 1: The nature of the e-learning

1.1 Given our overview of e-learning is there any e-learning in your course Y / N

1.2 Can you describe what it is, exactly – [offer choices, probe, get them to describe].

1.3 Is it optional or compulsory for students? [E.g. do students' have to use e-sources for information relating to the course or module?]

1.4 What prompted you to set it up?

1.5 How did you go about it setting it up? [find out if they re-used anything]

1.6 How do students access it ? [VLE or WWW]

1.7 Do you integrate it with f2f /print at all?

1.8 Do you use any external e-resources such as Athens accessed library resources or external websites?

Section 2:The experiences and attitudes of students and staff

2.1 What do think were the views/experiences/attitudes of staff to :

a)   the process of creating the e-learning

b)   the process of running e-learning on a course

2.2 Is there anything that could help with the process of generating / running e-learning?

2.3 Do you have a sense of the views/experiences/attitudes of students to using e-learning on the course? (find out how they get this info – is it part of the module evaluation)

2.4 Are you planning any new e-learning in the future? (when, exactly, and what)

2.5 Reflecting on the whole process, is there anything we could do as a Faculty or as Institutions to make the e-learning easier to create or to enable staff to create better e-learning opportunities?

2.6 Are there any other points you'd like to make or issues you'd like to raise?

Appendix D

Survey of academic staff trialling an Elgg and Drupal environment.

Background

As part of a HEFCE-funded R and D project in a post-92 university, a learning environment was developed using open-source Elgg and Drupal technologies. This was piloted with a group of volunteer academic staff from across the university in 2008.

The previous staff experience of e-learning was based mainly on using the institutional VLE, Blackboard. Some had begun to use freely available social networking technologies such as Facebook and various wikis and blogs in their teaching practice but none had previously used a comprehensive second-generation environment specifically designed for teaching and learning.

Technology

The Elgg part of the environment provided the social networking elements, including profiles, wikis, blogs, forums, and the entire structure for linking with others; the Drupal software provided a space for tutors to produce course materials collaboratively.

Methodology

In the first instance, appropriate staff across the university in all faculties were contacted. These might be associate deans for learning and teaching, blended learning leaders or learning and teaching co-ordinators, depending on the structure of the faculty. They were asked if they or any of their colleagues would like to participate in the study.

Eighteen university staff, from a wide range of differing subject areas, participated in the study which involved taking part in an initial face-to-face workshop, then used the environment in a structured way for a pilot over the period of a month. They were then asked to complete questionnaires (see overleaf) about their experience of the environment. They were also offered the option of articulating their views within the body of the environment itself, during the trial, in blogs, wikis, discussion forums, messaging, posts on colleagues' comment walls and other spaces.

All participants used the environment. Thirteen participants returned completed questionnaires and five used the environment itself as the place to comment about their experience two of whom had also returned questionnaires; thus sixteen participants responded.

The collection of data was used for two (overlapping) purposes. The first was for this study and the second was to meet a range of aims within the HEFCE R and D project. The questionnaires, therefore, contain some questions that are less relevant to the first aim, but are included for completeness.

KubiSpace Testing and Evaluation Feedback form

Name (optional):
Faculty/Department (optional):

1. How easy/difficult did you find KubiSpace was to use?

2. Did you use KU-Tip (the help/reference files) at all? YES

3. How did it compare to your experience of using other online education environments?

4. How would you imagine using it for learning and teaching or for student support? (Please give examples)

5. How did the experience of using the environment actually make you feel, when you were engaged with it? (for example, you might have felt frustrated or enjoyed the 'play' aspect of it or felt intrigued, etc, etc.)

6. Did you feelings change as you became more familiar with KubiSpace?

7. Do you think using this kind of environment might incline you to use different kinds of teaching and learning approaches than you presently use? (Please give examples)

8. How do you feel that the learner experience in KubiSpace would be different from face to face teaching?

9. How do you feel that the teacher experience in KubiSpace would be different from face to face teaching?

10. Is there anything that you would like to see changed in KubiSpace?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience of using KubiSpace?

Please complete and return by 10 April 2008

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NOTE: In order to historicise translated works appropriately and meaningfully in my text, in this bibliography I provide the date of the original publication in the original language after the author's name. I then provide the date of the version I have used after the publisher's name. For consistency, I have also used this approach with works originally written in English, where the edition I cite is not the first edition.

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