Anna Stenina (BA hons)

Augmenting the agency of marginalised members of society within the semiotic authority of narrative form.
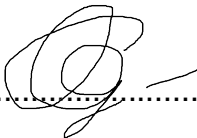
Director of Studies: Dr. Marilyn Allen

This research was undertaken under the auspices of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and was submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of a Masters by Research Degree.

Date: 14/04/2019

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....06/12/2019...

STATEMENT 1
This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.   A bibliography is appended.

Signed .... (candidate)

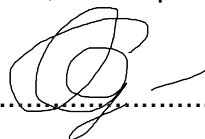Date ....06/12/2019......................................

STATEMENT 2
I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....

STATEMENT 3
I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for deposit in the University's digital repository.

Signed .... (candidate)

Date ....06/12/2019.......................................

Abstract

This practice-based research investigates the effects of the semiotic authority that underlies the symbols and stories of a dominant culture. This research investigates the effects of the everyday mythologised body of 'reality' that arguably manifests itself in situations of symbolic abuse (referring to Barthes' ideological abuse. Barthes, 1957: 10), and explores the abusive nature of that which resides in what-goes-without-saying (Barthes, 1957: 10). The project investigates the more commonplace manifestations of semiotic authority such as mundane behavioural protocols, societal norms and stereotypes. It considers the effects of these on the agency of members of society.

This study offers the hypothesis: If the social phenomenon of symbolic abuse manifests itself within quotidian life through the environment of the semiotic authority of narrative form, then the input of both the artist and the viewer can augment the agency of marginalised members of society by developing an epistemic engagement around the subject of symbolic abuse.

The research locates, deconstructs and analyses the symbolic abuse portrayed through the visual practice and case studies presented. Barthes' semiotic analysis is applied, as are Butler's performativity theory and Bakhtin's theory of Carnival in order to examine the semiotic authority of the dominant culture.

The findings suggest that art practices such as those presented provide an environment for reflection upon the mundane ritualised objectification found within stereotypical acts. Art can provide a discursive platform that addresses symbolic abuse and increases awareness of the subject. A visual practice that reflects upon the dominant culture from the perspective of marginalised members of society has the potential to generate alternative meaning-making that destabilises the meta-narrative authority of the dominant culture.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my Director of Studies, Dr. Marilyn Allen, for her ability to read my mind and her firm guidance and direction through the vast and sometimes overwhelming interdisciplinary currents. Her swift rigorous feedback is so artful I was tempted to print it and put it on my wall.

I would also like Dr. Catrin Webster, for her support and encouragement during the course and especially her help through the very intense period of preparation for the MRes exhibition *What Would Mother Say?*

Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Benesek Monk, for his support; his exceptional technical support and most of all his patience, his countless daily sacrifices and domestic support that has made this journey possible.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1   *End of Empire*, 2016, Yinka Shonibare, Installation view

Fig. 2   *The Mule*, Anja Stenina, 2018, Film still

Fig. 3   *No Man Is An Island*, 2002, Jesper Just , Film still

Fig. 4   *Almost there…* Anja Stenina, 2018, Film still

Fig. 5   *Nanette*, Hannah Gadsby, 2018, Film still

Fig. 6   *Congratulations!* Anja Stenina, 2018, Film still

Fig. 7   *Untitled* (We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture),1983, Barbara Kruger

Fig. 8   *Untitled* (Your Body is a Battleground),1989, Barbara Kruger

Fig. 9   *Wheels of Abuse*, Anja Stenina, 2018, Installation view and film still

Introduction

> The oppressed is nothing, he has only one language, that of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his language is rich, multiform, supple, with all the possible degrees of dignity at its disposal: he has an exclusive right to meta-language. The oppressed makes the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language; the oppressor conserves it, his language is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is Myth. (Barthes, 1972:150)

In his text, Mythologies, Roland Barthes discusses everyday objects and situations that act as signs; which are subsequently transformed into the mythological body of 'reality' and how these myths prevent diverse and political discourses from forming. The myths and signs of everyday objects take us on associative journeys that shape our quotidian life. The proposed research acknowledges that the 'mythologist' needs to recognise the signs and myths that are arguably obscuring real social issues.

Hypothesis:

If the social phenomenon of symbolic abuse manifests itself within quotidian life through the environment of the semiotic authority of narrative form, then the input of both the artist and the viewer can augment the agency of marginalised members of society by developing an epistemic engagement around the subject of symbolic abuse.

Symbolic abuse

The visual component of this practice-based research comprises a series of short films and sound works examining the symbolic abuse that resides within our everyday lives and that arguably formulates a new mythology through the language of the mundane. The work is positioned within the structures of fairy tales, games and song and attempts to test the resilience of these symbolic expressions of authority. This research will explore the potential for cultural assumptions to modify our behaviour and will examine how everyday cultural tropes can affect the wellbeing of members of society. The phrase 'symbolic abuse' will be used throughout this text to refer to Barthes' reference to ideological abuse (Barthes, 1957:10). The research is, in effect, a continuation of Barthes' narratological investigation of, and search for, 'ideological abuse' inside "the decorative display of *what-goes-without-saying"* (Barthes, 1957:10). The phrase 'symbolic abuse' refers to the 'ideological abuse' in the prefatory writing of Barthes' *Mythologies*:

> The starting point of these reflections was usually a feeling of impatience with the "naturalness" which common sense, the press, and the arts continually invoke to dress up a reality which, though the one we live in, is nonetheless quite historical: in a word, I resented seeing Nature and History repeatedly confused in the description of our reality, and I wanted to expose in the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying the ideological abuse I believed was hidden there. (Barthes, 1957: 10)

The existence of symbolic abuse within the semiotic authority of narrative form may be considered to simultaneously describe and locate mundane symbolic abuse within our mythologised daily life. This working definition maps the influence and quotidian

impact of a dominant Western culture and its narrative system. Barthes states that narrative, "is simply there like life itself. . international, […] transhistorical, transcultural" (Barthes, 1977:79).

Archetype

The archetypal story pattern, 'The Hero's Journey' developed by Joseph Campbell, has influenced decades of narrative form. Campbell adapted the concept of the archetypes into the his story pattern (Campbell, 1949). This narrative model prevails within performative and mythologised daily life and reinforces the stereotypes of dominant culture.

Semiotics; ''the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation'' (Oxford, 2018), paired with *authority* within narrative form constitutes the power of the myth: the meta-narrative entity. It is the myth that animates these symbols into archetypes "definite forms in the psyche" and collective representations (Jung, 2014:42). Carl Jung also described archetype as "the introspectively recognisable form of a priori psychic orderedness" (Jung, 2015: 347). This research employs a post-constructionist approach to the archetype and, for the purpose of this research, examines the archetype as a historical, cultural and imaginary construction. The role of 'common sense' knowledge will be reviewed within Barthes' conception of *what-goes-without-saying.*

The effect and the dynamics of symbolic representations within dominant culture that affect quotidian life will be reflected upon through Judith Butler's analysis of social symbolic constructions, and their effect on the creation and sustainability of gender and colonial identities.

Protocol

Judith Butler describes gender as "the tacit collective agreement to perform produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions" (Butler,1988:522). She goes on to say that it "is obscured by the credibility of its own production" (Butler,1988:522). This research will use the term protocol as an umbrella term to describe various manifestations of the unwritten social rules within situations of quotidian life.

> The authors of gender become entranced by their own fictions whereby the construction compels one's belief in its necessity and naturalness. The historical possibilities materialized through various corporeal styles are nothing other than those punitively regulated cultural fictions that are alternately embodied and disguised under duress.(Butler, 1988: 522)

The 'duress' that Butler speaks of is the structural resilience that this research examines. Semiotic frameworks and narratological approaches highlight the symbolic nature of mundane interactions and the indivisible location of the viewer within this authority. The discourse surrounding marginalisation (jingoism, lad culture, nationalism, hedonism *et al.*) may be said to reside in the inherent, the implied and the assumed: an assumed majority consequently creates an assumed minority. This research analyses the structural relations of both the inequality and domination that

4

arguably reinforce social marginalisation. This practice-based research examines examples of symbolic abuse within everyday life; its connection to cultural memory and its role in the quotidian meaning-making and stereotyping, applying Barthes' semiotic analysis to a contemporary context. The context of symbolic abuse becomes the content for the visual practice component of this research.

Encratic language

   The practice-based research within this study serves to articulate some of the mechanisms of symbolic abuse within a system of visual representation which typically reinforces a dominant cultural ideal. The research adopts a narratological and post-structural approach to Barthes' 'encratic language' and applies it to the potential agency of arguably marginalised social groups; examining 'encratic boundaries' and the creation of 'the encratic path' within the quotidian semiotic field.

> Encratic language (the language produced and spread under the protection of power) is statutorily a language of repetition; all official institutions of language are repeating machines: schools, sports, advertising, popular songs, news, all continually repeat the same structure, the same meaning, often the same words. (Barthes, 1975 :40)

The encratic language of the myth and its dominant nature resides within a dialogic system.

Dialogical approach

The research will focus on the socio-cultural textuality of language in order to maintain sociological focus on the semiotic authority of narrative form. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin states that:

> Language - like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives - is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualisations that fill it, and in isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is characteristic of all living language. Actual social life and historical becoming create within an abstractly unitary national language a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems, within these various systems (identical in the abstract) are elements of language filled with various semantic and axiological content and each with its own different sound. (Bakhtin, 1982:271)

The artistic material in this research adopts a 'dialogic' reading and employs an "internal dialogism of the word […] that penetrates its entire structure, all its semantic and expressive layers" (Bakhtin, 1981:279). This research explores the 'word' as a part of the wider system of communication that contains semiotic history and in the form of utterance contains an anticipation of response or action.

Intertextuality

The socio-cultural interaction between meanings and meaning-making will be a focus area of this research. Julia Kristeva expanded the dialogic view on the word with the concept of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980). Kristeva extended the 'expressive layers' of dialogism with the semiotic layers that intersect textual and socio-cultural fields, she terms text a ''translinguistic apparatus" (Kristeva, 1980:101). She describes the fluidity of the text and word, reflecting that "each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (Kristeva, 1980:66): "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text," (Kristeva, 1980: 36). For the purpose of this research the concept of intertextuality will be employed in the general framework of the deconstruction of the semiotic authority.

Performative utterance

The socio-interactive and expressive elements of speech within the artworks generated as part of this research will be analysed through the exploration of the concept of utterance. This analysis will begin with Bakhtin's idea of speech being an utterance: the "individualised embodiment of speech-act" (Bakhtin, 1982:272), and the notion of the 'respond' embedded in the utterance: "Any understanding of live

speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive [...]. Any utterance is a link in the chain of communication " (Bakhtin, 1986: 68, 84).

Performativity theory explored by Butler will be applied to contextualise and analyse the performative and ritualistic nature of everyday conversations within the visual practice. The way ritual is "affecting the experience of identity" will be explored in connection to Jan Koster's examination of ritual (Koster, 2003:3).

In *Excitable Speech: a Politics of the Performative*, Butler, referencing John Langshaw Austin (the British philosopher of language who introduced the theory of speech acts), talks about utterances being ritualistic or ceremonial (Butler, 1997:3): She refers to Austin and Althusser in order to link a ritual dimension to the utterance:

> Austin's view that the illocutionary speech act is conditioned by its conventional, that is, "ritual" or "ceremonial" dimension, finds a counterpart in Althusser's insistence that ideology has a "ritual" form, and that ritual constitutes "the material existence of an ideological apparatus:" Ritual is material to the extent that it is productive, that is, it produces the belief that appears to be "behind" it. (Butler, 1997:25)

Austin refers to certain types of speech as ''performative utterance[s]'' that ''indicate that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action'' (Austin, 1962:6). He gives the example of the bride saying yes to the groom (Austin, 1962:5). In this type of speech the utterance does not just state facts or describe something, it performs an action.

This research will explore the semiotic authority of the everyday performative utterance and the way this potentially affects marginalised members of society.

Myth as a system of communication

Barthes describes the Myth as a "system of communication" (Barthes, 1993:109). Barthes asserts that "myth is a type of speech" or a "message" (Barthes, 1993:109). Myth is created out of signs: The sign is an "associative total of the" signifier, [sound, word or image] and the signified [concept, idea] (Barthes, 1993:112). He describes myth as a "second-level semiological [semiotic] system" (Barthes, 1993:114) that uses signs as signifiers to create a second layer of meaning - the *signification*, "the signifier of myth presents itself in ambiguous way: it is at the same time meaning and form [...] " (Barthes, 1993:117).

The research will consider the continuous dialogue between all forms of communication, allowing cultural and social readings of language, myth and ritual in everyday life; taking into account social and historical circumstances affecting our experience.

Instrumental and Relational art

The role of social engagement and the role of the viewer will be explored through the framework of instrumental and relational art. This body of practice does not conform to conventional definitions of participatory and relational practice; however, the deconstructive intentions implicit in the work make reference to aspects of social

engagement. The paradigm of social engagement in art spans wider than this research can cover however, for the purpose of this research the discourse on social engagement will be located within the approach of ''relational aesthetics'' and the role of social context explored by Nicolas Bourriaud (Bourriaud 2002). This thesis will explore how the associative journeys and the reflections that artworks arguably produce are able to create a space for a "collective elaboration of meaning". (Bourriaud 2002:15)

 The artworks presented in this body of research are not directly instrumental in themselves; the instrumentality is performed through the viewers' reflection, this is where 'difference' is potentially produced. Difference happens when the viewer steps outside the generality of a meta-narrative binary logic.

Deconstruction

The location, deconstruction and analysis of symbolic abuse within the field of study will be integral to the wider methodology for the demystification of the structural resilience of myth. For this research, a deconstructionist method will be utilised in the semiotic analysis of narrative contexts. Jacques Derrida, in his text *Positions*, discusses deconstructing 'hierarchical oppositions' suggesting that:

> we are not dealing with the peaceful co-existence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand, occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. Deconstruction does not consist in passing from one concept to another, but in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated (Derrida,1981:41).

With deconstruction, Derrida derails systems and hierarchies and leaves space for ambiguity, play and difference. He reminds us that hierarchies and binaries are not fixed, that they are constructs. He shows us that there is fluidity, dialogue and intertextuality within the artist and audience. The meaning-making and the interchangeable, self-referential, interactive nature of language enables the deconstruction and remaking of the myth.

Role of repetition and difference

Repetition, sanctioned by social protocols, acts as an inherent cultural method of procreation. This implied repetition of sanctioned acts is *what-goes-without-saying* (Barthes, 1957:10) in quotidian life. Repetition of these acts is so inherent that it comes to be accepted as natural. Repetition becomes a generality that ''belongs to the order of laws'' (Deleuze, 1994:2); the naturalness becomes the myth. In order to un-make the myth, the artist needs to actively engage with the repetitive act that has naturalised the social phenomena. This research applies the method of deconstruction to highlight the power dynamics within mundane acts of repetition and, through visual practice, attempts to create a "possibility of [a] different sort of repeating" (Butler, 1988:520).

Performativity and Normative violence

This research will apply an interpretation of Butler's "normative violence" (Butler,1993:125) and will expand the application of gender construction to the wider scope of identity construction in order to cover a wider area of marginalisation within identity normalising practices.

Butler defines "normative violence" as "mundane violence performed by certain kinds of [...] ideals" (Butler, 1999:11). Butler refers to the "heterosexual project", as the "constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealisations" (Butler, 1999:11). Butler sums up the landscape of normative violence in her introduction to her essay *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*:

> I will try to show some ways in which reified and naturalised conceptions of gender might be understood as constituted and, hence, capable of being constituted differently. In opposition to theatrical or phenomenological models which take the gendered self to be prior to its acts, I will understand constituting acts not only as constituting the identity of the actor, but as constituting that identity as a compelling illusion, an object of belief. In the course of making my argument, I will draw from theatrical, anthropological, and philosophical discourses, but mainly phenomenology, to show that what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo (Butler, 1988: 520).

This research will deconstruct the "naturalised conceptions" of identity practices and ''social sanctions'' that enforce "normative violence". The performativity of behaviours are regulated by unspoken everyday protocols. This creates the patterns and common tropes within mundane interactions that increase the likelihood of symbolically abusive situations.

Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. If the ground of gender identity is the stylised repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style (Butler, 1988: 520).

This mode of belief and the arbitrary relations are the mythologised/stylised protocols of everyday situations that this research investigates through the visual practice and case studies. This research will analyse the constitution and agency of marginalised identity within the dominant culture using Butler's analysis of identity construction:

gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time-an identity instituted through a stylised repetition of acts (Butler, 1988: 519).

The cultural "strategies" that enable marginalisation will be analysed applying Butler's conception of "gender [as] a project" to the wider identity constructing practices (Butler, 1988: 522):

The notion of a 'project', however, suggests the originating force of a radical
will, and because gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, the term 'strategy' better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs (Butler, 1988: 522).

Methodology and critical analysis

Chapter I: *Undoing of the myth*

Case study: Yinka Shonibare, *End of Empire*, 2016

Fig.1

Deconstruction of the myth

> Truth to tell… the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an artificial myth: and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs language of something, why not rob myth? All that is needed is to use is as the departure point for a third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term of second myth. (Barthes, 1993: 135)

This practice-based research effectively constructs a series of artificial myths and methods to 're-write the myth'. This visual practice adopts the methodological approach of deconstruction where the dominant culture is challenged. The critical theory of deconstruction introduced by Derrida is used as a methodological approach within a wider framework of semiotic analysis of narrative contexts. Deconstruction serves as a method for dismantling and demystifying 'untouchable' areas within dominant culture and, as such, provides a potential space for the empowerment of marginalised groups.

In the work of Yinka Shonibare the colonial myth and the myth of the citizen of the world is deconstructed. Shonibare playfully deconstructs colonial discourse and states that:

> My work comments on power, or the deconstruction of power, and I tend to use notions of excess as a way to represent that power - deconstructing things within that (Downey, 2005).

End of Empire and Carnival

End of Empire challenges the established narrative and history of the First World War. Yinka Shonibare portrays two 'globe-headed Dandies' swinging on a steel Victorian-style seesaw. The artist addresses ideas of identity, race and socio-economic power dynamics. Shonibare does not present his work with the viscerally grotesque connotations, commonly present in the Carnival (Bakhtin, 1984: 35), but rather he utilises the elements of "the world turned inside out" (Bakhtin, 1984: 370), that lie at the core of the carnivalesque.

> Another common ritual within Carnival was the de-crowning of the king and the crowning of the fool. (Bakhtin,1984: 139)

Shonibare crowns the figures of the Dandies with globe heads. Shonibare's sculptures are often dismembered, usually left headless or wearing masks. In *End of Empire*, the figures have globes instead of heads, giving them both an imperial and a global context. In past works, the artist has beheaded his sculptures, playfully commenting on the beheading of aristocrats in the 18th Century; losing their heads from imperial rigour. With his parodic revisionist approach, Shonibare addresses the empowerment of marginalised post-colonial identities by symbolically decapitating colonial archetypes while crowning them with new globe heads.

> For Bakhtin, the primary carnivalistic act is the mock crowning and subsequent de-crowning of a carnival king. Crowning and de-crowning is a 'dualistic ritual' that typifies the inside-out world of carnival and the

'joyful relativity' of all structure order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position. (Resseguie, 2005: 76)

Shonibare explores the narrative of WWI with a Bakhtian 'non-seriousness'. In his book, *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin explores the concept of laughter as a tool that can transport a person into the folk carnival utopia. Laughter ,moments of small, everyday frivolity and a carnivalesque approach can free one from the seriousness of authority of the grand narratives that overshadow us with their serious stature. Bakhtin talks about the culture of laughter, the culture of carnival and the carnivalesque. He describes the emancipatory power of humour:

> In carnival, everything is rendered ever-changing, playful and undefined. Hierarchies are overturned through inversions, debasements and profanations, performed by normally silenced voices and energies.[...]. The authoritative voice of the dominant discourse loses its privilege. Humour is counterpoised to the seriousness of officialdom in such a way as to subvert it (Robinson, 2011).

Shonibare uses Bakhtin's 'non-seriousness' concept as a method to destabilise hierarchical systems through the demystification of colonial myth. He uses subversive humour to tackle the politics of representation with an exaggerated symbolic play.

Un-making of the colonial myth

Shonibare talks about the role of theatricality in his work and how it highlights the fictional nature of all representation.

> The main preoccupation within my art education was the construction of signs as outlined in Roland Barthes's Mythologies. So the idea of the theatrical for me is actually about art as the construction of a fiction, art as the biggest lie. What I want to suggest is that there is no such thing as a natural signifier, that the signifier is always constructed - in other words, that what you represent things with is a form of mythology. Representation itself comes into question. I think that theatre enables you to really emphasise that fiction. (Downey, 2005)

End of Empire echoes the maximalism of a kingdom in its last days and resonates with a contemporary global climate with its aesthetic of excess. This work encapsulates the thrill of standing at the turn of the Century; at a new beginning and at an end. The seesaw stands on the threshold between two centuries, reminding us of the repetitive nature of history. The repetition, in Shonibare's case, is an ambiguous 'warning' of the repetitive nature of history and by highlighting this repetitive nature the artwork creates a potentiality for difference within the mind of the viewer. The reading of the work contains a recognition of the repetition of the historical cycle that in itself contains a potential reading of difference. In his interview with *Culture Trip*, Shonibare describes his sculptures as 'visual poetries'. There is a certain theatricality to this work, indeed, *End of Empire* appears as a Postcolonial performance suspended in time, that presents the viewer with a more poetic layer of political history - a personal multi-layered experience of the un-making of the colonial

myth. Shonibare challenges the essentialism that shaped the rigid construction of colonial identity with its subtext of racialism as the fiction of a biased political history. The artist is revisiting the history of the empire and contaminating it with the bittersweet playfulness of post-colonial crossbreeding. The artist challenges the role of history and in his interview with Anthony Downey for BOMB Magazine he talks of this 'demythologising' of colonial history: "I am creating fantasies of empowerment in relation to white society, even if historically that equilibrium or equality really hasn't arrived yet" (Downey, 2005).

Shonibare's signature use of 'African' fabric is loaded with the symbolic weight of colonial history. These brightly patterned fabrics are the Dutch wax batik, a colonial invention - first discovered and made in the Dutch Indonesian colony, then exported through England to West Africa. After being 'naturalised' in Africa, the 'empire-made', new, stereotyped design is now sold in Brixton, where Shonibare buys his fabric; where British/African people buy them to connect with their 'home' identity adding another symbolic layer to this 'faux African' 'Dutch wax' pattern. The historical hybridity that is embedded in the wax pattern of the fabric is a watermark, a symbolic phantom of the colonial experience; an imperial double standard, and with its soft cotton 'voice' it whispers about multiculturalism and postmodern doubt.

Shonibare's work reflects the nostalgia of Victorian narcissism by mimicking the period Dandy attire. Dandies were the Byronic or Shakespearian heroes of the authoritarian class whose symbolic capital was never fully accessible to the people from the colonies, only in the form of imitation and play. In his essay *The Painter of*

Modern Life Baudelaire suggests that "Dandyism is a setting sun; like the declining star, it is magnificent, without heat and full of melancholy" (Baudelaire, 1981: 421). Dandyism reverberates throughout Shonibare's work; ghostly Victorian hedonistic archetypes playing aristocratic games whilst wearing the epaulettes of the colonial people.

WWI was a war not between nations, but a war between empires, colonies fighting on behalf of their European owners. In *End of Empire* cheerful Dandies are riding a steel seesaw; the perfect iron bridge, a magic leap - the heart and soul of the 19th Century: the age of steel was both the present and the future. The colonies played a vital role in the age of industrialisation. The last Century started with the establishment of Capitalism and the Steel Age enabling the development of electricity, communication, and transportation; comparable to the contemporary Age of the Internet with its overabundance and acceleration in communication and trade - another swaying swing of progress. The seesaw resembles at the same time the scales of the judicial system: Justice, balance, conflict, and dialogue. The seesaw reminds us of the current role of the financial markets in the global power dynamic. Shonibare employs the Bakhtian language of the Carnival and Marketplace, a dialogue that tries to redistribute the symbolic weight of power.

> familiar language of the *marketplace* became a reservoir in which various speech patterns excluded from official intercourse could freely accumulate. (Bakhtin, 1984: 17)

Ursula Le Guin said that there are always areas of silence in any culture, and part of an artist's responsibility is to go into those areas and come back from the silence with

something to say (Le Guin, 2008: 101). Shonibare's work responds to these areas of cultural silence. While challenging the imperial heroic gesture and dismantling imperial rhetoric, Shonibare looks into the narrative identity of the contemporary global man - the citizen of the world. *End of Empire* is a symbolic playground standing at the crossroads in an age of change; it references the past while commenting on the present and offering us an insight into the end-game.

Visual Practice

The Mule, **1'8" film, 2018, Anja Stenina**

http://benesek.wixsite.com/anjastenina/film

Fig.2

The Mule:

    The silhouetted figure of the mule in the video is recounting the story of *Pinocchio*

where he tells his unfortunate tale of becoming a donkey and being sold to a circus

and forced to perform for the circus owner:

> Know, then, that, once upon a time, I was a wooden
> Marionette, just as I am today. One day I was about to
> become a boy, a real boy, but on account of my laziness

and my hatred of books, and because I listened to bad
companions, I ran away from home. One beautiful morning,
I awoke to find myself changed into a donkey-long
ears, gray coat, even a tail! What a shameful day for me!
I hope you will never experience one like it, dear Master.
I was taken to the fair and sold to a Circus Owner, who
tried to make me dance and jump through the rings. One
night, during a performance, I had a bad fall and became
lame. Not knowing what to do with a lame donkey, the Circus
Owner sent me to the marketplace and you bought me.
(Collodi, 1996: 155)

The story is told through the interwoven voices of child, man and woman. The voices

speak in a confessional, arguably traumatised tone. The silhouetted,

anthropomorphised figure appropriates the anonymous victims' tale of the

confessional. The aesthetic of 'victim' reportage within the context of the fairytale

arguably readdresses the function of the cautionary children's tale into a wider

commentary on the role of the victim.

The Situationist International technique of deceptive détournement is employed in the

film *The Mule.*

Deceptive détournements are when already significant elements
such as a major political or philosophical text, great artwork or work of
literature take on new meanings or scope by being placed in a new context.
(SI, 1958)

Détournement relies on appropriation in order to produce new meanings.

Détournement - a diversion, a detour, a seduction, a plagiarism, an
appropriation, even perhaps a hijacking - is the integration of present and past
artistic productions into a construction that surpasses them. (Wark, 2009:145-
146)

The Mule contains two layers of appropriation, the story of *Pinocchio* and the familiar victim's reportage setting (the disguised figure in the video in an anonymised interview context), that are being 'détourned' by their relation to each other: the figure of the mule, the character from the fairytale juxtaposed with the silhouetted figure of 'the victim'.

The film utilises anthropomorphisation, a fundamental tool of storytelling, to avoid the rigid labelling of marginalised groups. The mule character, as a depersonalised figure with the symbolic association of the burden of servitude to an outside authority, speaks to all.

The merging of the familiar anonymous victim confessional interview technique and the fairy tale text exposes the very familiar but unspoken story of those suffering from the abuse of symbolic expressions of authority. *The Mule* employs an intertextual approach to the appropriation of dominant culture in order to destabilise the authority of the dominant narrative. The figure metaphorically represents marginalised members of society, telling a story of mundane symbolic abuse.

Symbolic abuse is arguably a symptom of structural resilience. It is intended to represent the unconscious affirmation of values that occur within the anomalous zone between experience and reflection. It can present itself through word or action. It resides inside the mundane field of "what-goes-without-saying" (Barthes, 1957:10). The confession of 'The Mule' is one that attempts to break the silence that surrounds mundane symbolic abuse.

Chapter II : *Conceptual androgyny*

Case study: Jesper Just *No Man Is An Island*

Fig. 3

The film *No Man is an Island* by Jesper Just questions the role of male archetypes within the stereotypical narratives that are arguably embedded in the viewer's cultural knowledge.

No Man is an Island focuses on the interaction between two men from different generations. In the film, an older man is dancing in a busy city square whilst another man sits on a bench, crying as he looks at him. The passers-by stop and look at the two men, one child decides to participate in the dance and stops when he observes his peers judging him. This unstaged element in the film creates an additional dimension to that of the central narrative; a comment upon the audience/viewer relationship. The music played is *La piu bella del mondo* (The most beautiful in the world) and contributes to the scene's cinematic association, conveying an ambiguously romantic, paternal, spiritual or possibly fraternal affectionate display. A little boy dances with the old man, until he exchanges looks with his peers and consequently becomes self-conscious of his dance and then stops altogether when more people come to watch the spectacle. This unspoken judgement of the crowd; the unstaged visualisation of judgement is the only decipherable scenario.

The title of the film adopts a line from the poem by English poet John Donne, who wrote in 1623:

> No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.
> (Donne, 1923: 98)

In the scene depicted in the film, the people that are watching the men are the only

fixed archetypes - they behave in an anticipated manner, that of the crowd. The

crowd represents the silent authority of the dominant culture where the weeping and

dancing males are considered 'other'. The film is a glimpse into a story in which

narrative escapes a definite explanation; it is not clear why these men are doing what

they are doing or what their relationship is. It is not important for the artist. In his

interview, Just states that a viewer can walk in at any moment of the film, catch the

end or the beginning (Just, 2013). The film utilises the cultural memory of cinema that

an audience possesses and the stereotypical conventions associated with climactic

form; Just deconstructs the viewers' shared constellation of cultural narrative

knowledge. Just appropriates the stereotypical narrative devices from Hollywood

cinema, transmitting a familiar atmosphere through the conventional setting of scenes

and features, while maintaining a certain motive camera effect that engages the

viewer by giving him a 'God's eye view'; his film connects mainstream

cinematographic and theatrical dramatic devices. While he is setting the scene in a

traditional manner his characters do not follow the same predictable routines; they

'misbehave' or appear ambiguous.

Deconstruction is part of the overall approach to the re-making of the myth of

masculinity in Just's film. In this work Just questions the archetypes of masculinity.

The unruly archetypes in *No Man Is An Island* may be viewed not only as an

exploration of the bias surrounding masculinity, but also as a device to unsettle any

archetype; any stereotyped body, group of people or generation. The unsettling

device in this film is the ambiguity of the characters; they do not conform to the

archetypal tropes of masculinity or patriarchy but rather form an almost conceptual

androgyny. The ambiguity of his characters is used as a method to unsettle the narrative hierarchies and therefore function counter to the rigid stereotypical roles. The 'classical hero' is absent in Just's film, leaving the stage free for the performance of an ambiguous masculinity. Just suggests that *No Man is an Island* performs a departure from the expected trajectory of cinematic form: It performs ambiguity. Just suggests that you can leave it to the viewer to decide on the type of relationship presented (Just, 2018). The viewer can decide for himself whether the two men are partners, father and son, teacher and student or something else. Just also states that he likes to play with viewer's expectations towards the actions of the characters (Just, 2018). The repetition of formulaic narratives, especially with regard to gender and identity stereotyping, results in a cultural expectation for pictorial tropes and characteristics to be performed and re-performed *ad infinitum.*

The scene translated into words would read as follows: A man is crying and another man is dancing. It sounds like a joke without a punchline. It is ambiguous. Just uses ambiguity to access viewers' cultural knowledge of male archetypes.

Just may be described as a Zeitgeist artist, he relies heavily on the cultural memory and experience of the viewer. He questions the viewer's assumptions and the social stereotyping surrounding masculinity, while relying on the viewer's inherent ability to recognise patterns, archetypes and tropes within the film, while simultaneously leaving the audience without the resolution of classifying his characters.

A functionalist view of society presumes the division of people into roles and, with the help of propaganda, into archetypes. Just's characters are transgressive in that they

break the silence of stereotyping. His work invites viewers to question the search for familiarity within narrative and invites the potentiality of 'not knowing' and the possibility for difference. The impossibility of annexing Just's male characters to the established social groups prevents their location within cultural memory, undermining the myth of the heroic narrative of masculinity. For Just the viewer is the actor that brings the spectacle with him: they become both artist and viewer simultaneously. This experience demystifies the process and the experience of perspective calibration (the deconstruction of the archetype through ambiguity) for the viewer.

Visual Practice

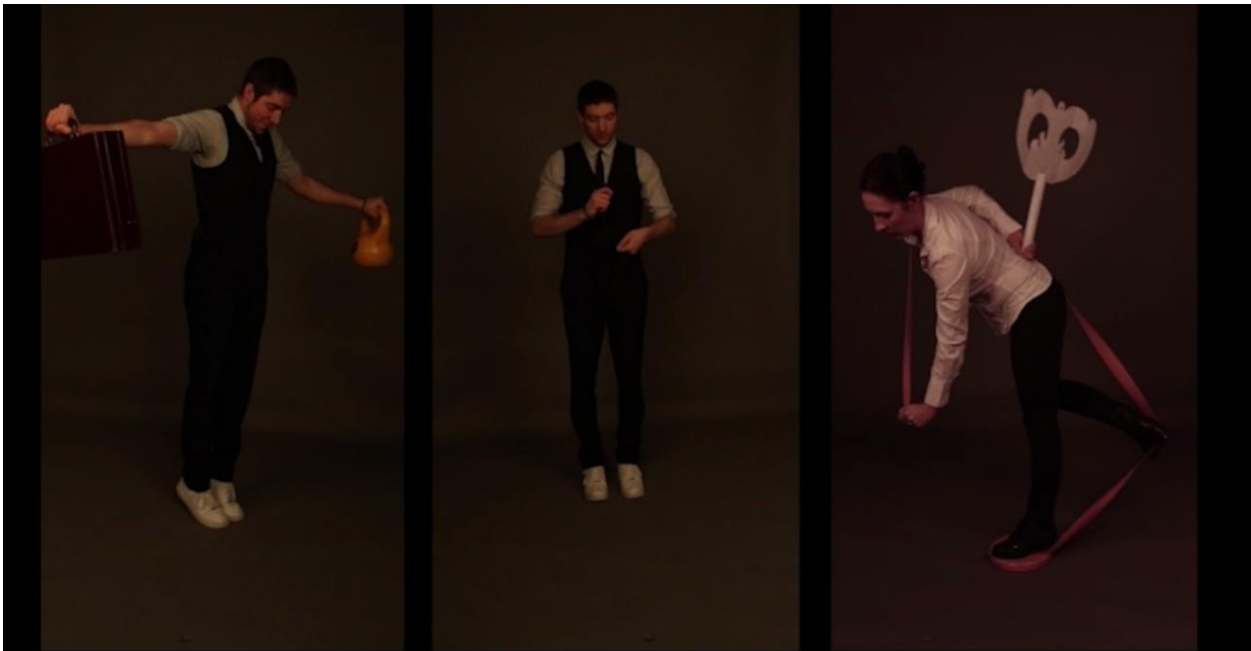*Almost There...* 1'35" film, Anja Stenina, 2018

http://benesek.wixsite.com/anjastenina/film

Fig.4

Almost there... articulates the disconnect of stereotypical cultural tropes with the everyday burden of living in contemporary society. The video visualises the impact of archetypal representations upon social identification. The work attempts to highlight the construction of the hero narrative and its effect on cultural wellbeing. 'Performative sculptures' of a musical box, ballerina and drummer boy present a narrative of contemporary conflict. The work comments on the performativity of gender, as both male and female are put under tension within symbolic, stereotypical modes. The work reflects Butler's concept of gender as a "repeated corporeal project" (Butler, 1988: 522).

Butler talks about conformity to the "historical idea of a 'woman' as a repeated corporeal project" that is taken for granted by dominant culture:

> To compel the body to conform to a historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project (Butler, 1988: 522).

The heteronormative binary of the characters highlights both their performativity, and the hegemonic division within the hero narrative. In the film, at first glance, the figures appear to be static; but upon closer examination, the viewer may notice that the figures are balancing the tension of maintaining uncomfortable positions. The soundscape accompanying the visual components is a mix of the sound of a toy drummer boy, the sound of a musical box and the ambient sounds of a contemporary gym. The work questions the semiotic authority of the heroic narrative and the way aspirations shape our behaviour.

The practice explores the perceived innocence of mundane symbolic abuse and the idea that the good citizen can be deconstructed. The film *Almost there…* presents the gendered and stereotyped archetypes of a businessman in a suit and businesswoman; both figures are presented under tension; the male is balancing a kettlebell and a suitcase while standing on tiptoes; in the second screen the male figure is frozen in the position of a drummer boy; in the third screen a female figure is balancing on a gliding disc while stretching a yoga strap and trying to turn the key that is attached to her back.

The second order semiological signifiers such as the drumming music, signifying drums of war; and the musical box's lullaby signifying peace, are put together to signify another layer of contemporary existence: The layer that demystifies the binary war and peace aspiration.

The video is played on a loop: The tension the figures are placed into, attempts to mirror the constant narrative of conflict inherent in the conformity to roles demanded by the dominant culture.

The sound of the war drums and lullaby are employed to symbolise glory and innocence; the sound of the gym is a reference to the contemporary aspirations of strength and body image. The sound of the work is mixed binaurally and presented through headphones in order to produce an immersive spatial experience.

The Shoelace

it's not the large things that
send a man to the madhouse.
death he's ready for, or
murder, incest, robbery, fire, flood...
no, it's the continuing series of small tragedies
that send a man
to the madhouse...

not the death of his love
but a shoelace that snaps with
no time left …

(Bukowski, 2012:202)

Chapter III : *Representational burden and the burden of selfhood*

The casual nature and perceived triviality of mundane symbolic abuse creates the

possibility for the creation of certain 'alibis' from the dominant culture. As Barthes

states in his book Mythologies: "Myths play the role of an alibi that covers the truth

and justice'' (Barthes, 1972: 49).

Hannah Gadsby, *Nanette*

Fig.5

Hannah Gadsby's stand-up comedy act that was released on Netflix in the

summer of 2018 and quickly became a phenomenon of social commentary. Not only

in the expected area of LGBTQ issues but also addressing wider issues of the agency

of the minority performer. Gadsby also demystifies the comic technique of 'creating

tension and release' and by incorporating serious insights into her personal traumatic

experiences intertwined with feminism; she transgresses the format of the genre. Gadsby also proclaims the ending of her career as a stand-up comedian and explains the reasons behind it.

Complicity of the viewer

This chapter analyses the constructed role of the Spectator and the implications of this construction on the actor. Debord articulated in detail how the passivity of the viewer is constructed within consumerist culture:

> Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the outcome and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not something added to the real world not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society's real unreality. In all its specific manifestations news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment the spectacle epitomises the prevailing model of social life. It is the omnipresent celebration of a choice already made in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice. In form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system. It further ensures the permanent presence of that justification, for it governs almost all time spent outside the production process itself. (Debord, 1994: 6)

The Spectator is a "punitively regulated cultural fiction that [is] alternately embodied and disguised under duress" (Butler,1988:522). Duress in this case is the consumerist strategy of creating the culture of consumers. This research acknowledges that the naturalness of the Spectator's role needs to be challenged. The complicity of the viewer manifests through his participation, on behalf of a consumerist dominant culture, where the Spectator embodies the semiotic authority of the dominant culture.

Gadsby stepped outside of the actor's role and into the role of the whistleblower. She

transgressed the protocol of the Spectacle, by acknowledging on stage the

dysfunctional relationship between herself, her stage archetype and the expectations

of the audience.

> I built a career out of self-deprecating humor. That's what I've
> built my career on. And… I don't want to do that anymore. Because, do you
> understand… [audience applauds] …do you understand what self-
> deprecation means when it comes from somebody who already exists in
> the margins? It's not humility. It's humiliation. I put myself down in order to
> speak, in order to seek permission… to speak. And I simply will not do that
> anymore. Not to myself or anybody who identifies with me. [audience
> cheers] .(Gadsby, 2018) [sic.]

Gadsby explained symbolic abuse on stage where self-deprecating humour caused

humiliation. She broke the silence that surrounds the representational apparatus

affirming Butler's assertions that "identity is a performative accomplishment

compelled by social sanction and taboo" (Butler, 1988: 520).

In the Situationist tradition of destabilising the protocol of the Spectacle, Gadsby took

the play to the streets. Gadsby staged an intervention that enabled viewers to reflect

on the constructed passive role of the viewer, and their complicity in the reproduction

of this role. She described the duress with which the audience affects the actor,

describing the representational burden projected from the audience. The expectation

to conform to the role of advocate for the LGBTQ/feminist cause meant that she took

on the role of mascot for the marginalised group, and this itself became a form of

symbolic abuse.

> I got a letter… on Facebook recently. And I say "letter," 'cause I'm
> very bold. Controversial. But I call it a letter, because it said, "Dear

Hannah," comma, new line… Bit of feedback. And it said, "You owe it to your community to come out as transgender." All jokes aside, I really do want to do my best by my community. I really do. But that was new information to me. I'm not… I don't identify as transgender. I don't. I mean, I'm clearly "gender not normal," but… I don't think even lesbian is the right identity fit for me, I really don't. I may as well come out now. I identify… as tired. I'm just tired [...] (Gadsby, 2018)

The authority of the spectator is not passive. Within a dominant consumerist culture, the customer is put on a pedestal - their opinion is a valued commodity and customers are aware of this authority. The audience's demands and judgement shapes the roles of actors like Gadsby to the point where they dictate the script: "You owe it to your community to come out as transgender" (Gadsby, 2018).

Guy Debord describes the notion through which the Spectator becomes passive within the apparatus of the spectacle:

> The spectacle manifests itself as an enormous positivity, out of reach and beyond dispute. All it says is: "Everything that appears is good; whatever is good will appear." The attitude that it demands in principle is the same passive acceptance that it has already secured by means of its seeming incontrovertibility, and indeed by its monopolization of the realm of appearances. (Debord, 1994:12)

Jacques Ranciere responds to this claim with the concept of the emancipated spectator. He argues that we cannot just give a diagnosis of passivity of the viewer (Rancière, 2009: 2-3). And that this diagnosis concludes that "to be a spectator is to be separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act" (Rancière, 2009: 2).

Gadsby identified herself as *tired* and thus she presented a new archetype. The tired archetype could be argued to embody the experience of the most marginalised

members of society. Gadsby described the scenario of symbolic abuse, where the cause of the abuse was the pressure of the audience. This pressure, the *duress* in Butler's words, is the abusive semiotic authority exercised upon the actor. Gadsby presents a case of archetypal transgression that was performatively exercised on stage. This exhaustively illustrated transgression within the semiotic authority of narrative form creates a precedent and, as such, a tool for difference and the potentiality for reclamation of agency for marginalised members of society. Gadsby's performance creates an 'agency gap' within the unspoken social contract between the actor and spectator by highlighting the symbolic abuse and complicity of the viewer in the perpetuation of the symbolic abuse.

Visual Practice

***Congratulations!* 2'29" film, Anja Stenina, 2018**

http://benesek.wixsite.com/anjastenina/film

Fig. 6

The video displays a 'buzzer game' where a disturbing voice sounds if the ring touches the metal. In the film, an anonymous figure is playing the game, and upon contact the buzzing sound appears with an authoritative voice (male, white, American) proclaiming:

> Congratulations! You are no longer a virgin!
>
> Congratulations! You've got the job!
>
> Congratulations! You've got the promotion!

The symbolic authority of such phrases as "Congratulations!" is portrayed with the help of the buzzer toy that is intended to add tension to these phrases, highlighting their authoritative and encratic nature. The setting within the naïve context of a childhood game is intended to disarm the viewer. This prepares the ground for a critical reflection on the non-childlike topic of symbolic abuse: Playfulness is used to enable the viewer to deconstruct the vignette without duress.

In his text *S/Z* Barthes discusses the cultural codes that are intertwined with shared bodies of knowledge. The ''Gnomic code'' is the code of clichés, they reside within common sense, common wisdom representing the voice of the dominant culture (Barthes 1974: 18). The voice in the film represents the voice of a dominant culture that speaks in the ''gnomic code'' as Barthes describes it: the "collective and anonymous voice originating in traditional human experience" (Barthes 1974: 18).

 The voice in the game (male, white, American) attempts to mimic Barthes' "encratic language", "the language produced and spread under the protection of power" (Barthes, 1975: 40). The computer generated voice creates the distancing effect and an official context reflecting on Barthes' language of "all official institutions" such as "schools, sports, advertising, popular songs, news" (Barthes, 1975: 40). The way in which the phrase *Congratulations!* repeats through the game reflects the "language of repetition" that "repeat[s] the same structure, the same meaning, often the same words" (Barthes, 1975: 40).

Congratulations! chronicles the journey of transgression. As Michel Foucault said: "transgression is an action which involves limit" and "the limit and transgression

depend on each other" (Foucault, 1999: 60). The game is an assessment of the

hazards of dominant culture. It is a conceptual experiment, a 'hands-on' visualisation

of the hypothetical journey of difference across the rituals that accompany the

attainment of social goals. It measures common manifestations of the structural

resilience of the dominant system. The game attempts to symbolically narrate the

social ritual of following a cultural normative protocol. Jan Koster describes the social

dynamic of ritualised actions:

> This is exactly what ritual provides: a set of stereotypical actions that
> either reduce or destroy the semantic layers of full individuality or that bring about a switch from individual awareness to strong collective awareness.
> (Koster, 2003:16). [...] and leads to exclusion, stigmatisation, conformity and the marginalisation of dissent, discrimination of "the other".
> (Koster, 2003:19)

Congratulations! explores the role of mundane social rituals and their effect on the

agency of marginalised members of society. *Congratulations!* articulates the

mechanisms of symbolic abuse within mundane ritualised situations. The work

attempts to demystify the everyday social protocols of semiotic authority through the

reversal of the ritual of social climbing. By adopting a conceptual approach to *The

world inside out* (Bakhtin, 1984: 370), the film performs an illogical reversal of

semiotic authority in which failure in the game results in *Congratulations!* thus

confusing the milestones of success and fulfillment imposed upon individuals by

contemporary society.

The game is transgressive, the underlying rules are: the player remains a virgin, does

not get a job, does not get a promotion. The game's rules could continue endlessly

naming various cultural expectations that reside in the *what-goes-without-saying*

category: those categories that hold authority and thus add an element of tension to the game. The tension that an individual could be said to experience if she/he/other tries to avoid fulfilling some cultural criterion that is expected of her/him/other.

Normative violence

Social stereotypes are also social expectations and ideals, social expectations are platforms for identities which are rehearsed and performed, social stereotypes are shaped by cultural norms and the stigmatisation that occurs when those norms are not met. These homogenising routines of dominant culture are the "normative violence" (Butler, 1999: 11) that is explored in the work *Congratulations!*. *Congratulations!* portrays identity normalising practices that "suggest [...] performativity is beset by an anxiety that it can never fully overcome, that its effort to become its own idealisations can never be finally or fully achieved" (Butler,1993: 125). In ritual, the 'confirmed' strive to embody characteristics of their idol, or ideal, such as a Christian would strive to embody the virtues of Christ. Butler argues that: "Gender is an impersonation . . . becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits" (Kotz, 1992). This notion of impersonation of the ideal is close to the concept of the "the burden of selfhood" in ritualistic behaviour (Koster, 2003:5):

> The need for regenerating ritual is one of the most persistent factors of human civilization and as soon as a ritual framework declines and is seen as outdated, new forms to cope with the individual's fear, loneliness and alienation emerge almost immediately (Koster, 2003: 5).

> The religions of the world differ in many respects, but all seem to provide means to escape – "transcend," if you will – the individual "self" in one way or another.
> (Koster, 2003: 6)

Ideals are never really inhabited, but the effects of stigma are. Stigma is implied within the social protocol because transgression is stigmatised. Stigma is the stick to the carrot of conformity inside the hierarchical construction of symbolic order. Transgression within the ritual is also stigmatised: "otherness and distinctiveness, individual or otherwise, internal or external, is the natural enemy of the ritual mode" (Koster, 2003: 5). It may be suggested that *Congratulations!* embodies a certain solidarity verging on oppression; the ritual that is the "most effective set of techniques to manipulate identities for the sake of tribal loyalty" (Koster, 2003: 5).

> [Ritual] is potentially totalitarian because the big enemy of ritual discourse is otherness and it does not tolerate dissent. (Koster, 2003: 19)

Butler states that: "[...] for Althusser one is entered into the "ritual" of ideology regardless of whether there is a prior and authenticating belief in that ideology." (Butler, 1997: 24). Butler reflects on Althusser's theory of subject creation and the concept of 'interpellation' - "the subject-constituting power of ideology", that by the means of "the speech act [...] brings the subject into linguistic existence" (Butler, 1997: 31, 24). Butler expands on the Althusserian concept of interpellation by adding a discursive dimension to it (Butler, 1997: 32, 31). *Congratulations!* attempts to reflect the socially established act of interpellation.

The mark interpellation makes is not descriptive, but inaugurative. It seeks
to introduce a reality rather than report on an existing one; it accomplishes this introduction through a citation of existing convention. (Butler, 1997: 33)

The phrase Congratulations! arguably changes the dynamic from a mundane to a heroic narrative: It attempts to convert the individual journey into the grand-narrative of dominant culture. Functionalist contemporary idols such as success and productivity are highlighted through the declarative sound of the word 'congratulations'; the voice of the dominant culture.

Congratulations! highlights the value put on symbolic capital and signifies the arbitrary but socially approved positions we are expected to assume. *Congratulations!* is the recognition of this power and the acknowledgement of the duties and responsibilities these positions demand. Symbolic boundaries (boundaries of status domination) create 'the encratic path' within the quotidian semiotic field that has rigid social protocols. The game played within the film *Congratulations!* subverts the rules and highlights boundaries.

ritual effects a transition from the realm of the profane to that of the sacred (Staal cited in Koster, 2003: 3).

Bakhtin's Carnival is a mocking of the system and of the self (social self) that perpetuates the system. It is portrayed through the crowning of the fool (Bakhtin,1984: 139). The dominant semiotic authority in Bakhtin's case is the monarchy; in *Congratulations!*, it is the contemporary culture of aspiration. The work demonstrates the illusory nature of the resolution of a goal, "idealisations [that] can never be finally or fully achieved" (Butler,1993: 125).

The subversive use of goal reversal reflects on the possible agency gaps and the

pressure contained within them and gives a realistic picture of transgression within

semiotic authority. The active role of the viewer is in their reflection upon both sides of

the game: the dominant culture that confirms aspirations of success and the

existence of an alternative perspective within that semiotic authority.

Chapter IV : *True words, new names*

Barbara Kruger

Untitled (We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture)

Fig.7

A black and white photograph of a woman with leaves on her eyes is juxtaposed with bold text: *We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture*. The woman's face is portrayed upside-down in an 'unnatural' pose. The bright lighting on her face resembles the style of forensic photography, or the aesthetic of the early cinema. The leaves on her eyes could be said to resemble ancient burial rites. The text in contrasting black and white, arguably highlights the dichotomy of the historical separation of the genders into Nature and Culture. The performative subtext of the phrase is very direct: Signifiers of the 'victim image' are juxtaposed with the protest phrase *We won't play NATURE,* condemning the 'playing of nature'. The word Nature in the work reflects many aspects of post-structuralist thought concerned with hegemony. The concepts of nature and naturalness lie at the heart of identity politics, in this simple gesture, Kruger rewrites the dominant culture's anthem into a protest slogan.

Barbara Kruger

'Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)' 1989

Fig.8

'Your Body is a Battleground' was created by Kruger as an advertising poster for the Pro-choice march on April 9, 1989 (Lichtenstein, 1996:198). The work "conveys an image of a stereotypical woman: a white, middle class housewife who has possibly achieved the 'American dream'." (Lind, 2008: xii). The narrative of conflict is denoted by the contrasting black, red and white colors and bold typeface. A vertical axis splits/joins the half image of the woman's face with its negative counterpart.

This two-faced mask effect recalls the double mask of Greek tragedy. The mask wearing person, an actor, a stage player, are the etymological roots of the word hypocrisy (Merriam-Webster, 2018). The literal translation is "an interpreter from underneath" that refers to the way actors were interpreting "the story from underneath their masks" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). This theatrical subtext of Kruger's poster evokes the performative burden that the woman's role entails. Kruger uses pronouns such as 'I', 'you', 'we' in her work. In an interview she talks about the notion of 'direct address':

> Direct address was a motor of my practice since the very beginning of my practice, whether it appears through the gaze of an image looking back at you or whether it is a text forthrightly addressing you (Kruger, 2016).

The pronoun 'your' in the *Your Body is a Battleground* echoes the public appeal devices from the history of propaganda posters. This effective advertisement technique assists to promote the message behind the poster.

> Do you know why language manifests itself the way it does in my work? It's because I understand short attention spans. (Kruger, 2013)

The positive and negative sides of the portrait reflect upon the composed binaries of gender identity construction. Kruger's work cuts directly into the intersubjectivity of the dominant culture.

> I mean, making art is about objectifying your experience of the world, transforming the flow of moments into something visual, or textual, or musical, whatever. Art creates a kind of commentary. (Kruger, 2011: 16)

> I think I developed language skills to deal with threat. It's the girl thing to do-you know, instead of pulling out a gun. (Kruger, 2016)

Kruger reflects on the interpretative role of the viewer in her interview: "I am interested in the multiple meanings that are produced in my spectators" (Kruger, 2016). Kruger in her interview reflects on the role of cultural exchange:

> I live and speak through a body which is constructed by moments which are formed by the velocity of power and money. So I don't see this division between what is commercial and what is not commercial. I see rather a broad, non-ending flow of moments which are informed if not motored by exchange. (Kruger, 1991: 435)

Kruger utilizes the *Situationists International* technique of Deceptive Detournement. She uses the language of the consumer culture to target aspirations of dominant culture and interrogate critical topics. With detournement, Kruger articulates the manipulation of dominant culture and the dynamic between agency and semiotic authority .

> I see my work as a series of attempts to ruin certain representations, to displace the subject and to welcome a female spectator into the audience of men. (Kruger 1987: 40 - 43)

Her work foregrounds the inherent addressivity that media culture asserts and then she subverts this addressivity with culture's own language.

> All art contains a politic, as does every conversation we have, every deal we make, and every face we kiss. Whether producing collectively or individually. We are responsible for the meaning which we create. (Kruger, 1987)

Your Body is a Battleground connects the viewer's understanding of dominant culture with the alternative narrative of abuse that resides within that culture. Kenneth Goldsmith divides art into two groups distinct from each other in the quality of the viewer's experience.

> Useful analogy is Picasso as a candle and Duchamp as a mirror. The light of the candle draws us to its warm glow, holding us spellbound by its beauty. The cool reflectivity of the mirror pushes us away from the object, throwing us back on ourselves. [...] . Duchamp's action is generative - spawning worlds of ideas - while Picasso's is absorptive, holding us close to the object and close to our own thoughts. (Goldsmith, 2011)

This quality of the generative art that "spawns worlds of ideas", Goldsmith further describes as an "object that doesn't require a viewership as much as it does a thinkership" (Goldsmith, 2011). Kruger's work is generative and arguably creates a 'thinkership'. *Your Body is a Battleground* as an artwork is also instrumental for its political applications within the field of social activism.

True names and new words: bestowing semiotic authority.

Giving something a name, for example, a label for some abusive phenomena, can be revelatory for the marginalised; however, in order to give an abusive phenomena a name, the symbolic abuse needs to be described, showed through an example or illustration. Knowing the name of something can defeat and yield power traces back across the centuries of folklore all over the world, and across diverse cultures. Starting from a relatively contemporary story such as *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin, in which the knowledge of someone's true name gives the wizard control over this person or object. The knowledge of the true name also gives a wizard the ability to change the balance of 'Equilibrium' in the world (Le Guin 2012: 51). In Egyptian mythology the story of Isis and Ra or the *True name of Ra* is where the sun god Ra is tricked by his daughter Isis into telling her his name so she can have power over the god and ensure the legacy of her son Horus to the throne (Pinch 2002: 69-71).

> Gaining power over a supernatural being by discovering it's secret name ''true name'' is a constant theme of Egyptian magical and funerary texts [...] (Pinch 2002: 69-71).

In her book *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable* Beverley Skeggs discusses the role of knowledge:

> knowledge [becoming] more than just a matter of power and legitimation. Legitimation becomes a matter of struggle over interpretation but it is impossible to impose (normalise, legitimise) ideas if they have no explanatory purchase (Skeggs 1997: 24).

The knowledge of the experience and explanatory power of this knowledge can

produce a discourse and possibilities for empowerment.

> When feminism tried in its earliest guises to reclaim, validate and
> provide space for women's experiences, it brought with it the baggage of
> individualism and immediately entered into the epistemological space for
> the battle over whose experiences count as knowledge. (Skeggs 1997: 24)

Beverley Skeggs states that: "feminism began the moment women started talking to

each other about their experiences" (Skeggs 1997: 25). In order to be able to talk

about an experience, the marginalised need to have names for their experiences

such as symbolic abuse.

Artistic works have the ability to articulate situations of symbolic abuse. The viewer's

experience of this allows for the labelling of the situation as abusive, and therefore

gives them the ability to process the event in a new way. This processing of

experience into meaning creates a potential space for a new dialogue with an

expanded lexicon.

> And feminist theory developed as a way of understanding these
> articulations: it produced new and different explanations which could more
> adequately encapsulate the experiences of women. (Skeggs 1997: 25)

> From this base began moments of shared ontological recognition
> such as 'it happened to you too' and from these recognitions interpretative
> frameworks were proffered which came to be known as feminist
> theory.(Skeggs 1997: 25)

These interpretative practices and frameworks were "named as standpoint

epistemologies" (Skeggs 1997: 25).

Visual Practice

The Wheels of Abuse, 1'32" film, Anja Stenina, 2018

http://benesek.wixsite.com/anjastenina/film

Fig. 9

The nursery rhyme tune for the 'The Wheels on the Bus' is appropriated and reimagined through the words 'The Wheels of Abuse', installed using a children's karaoke set. The intimate sound of a maternal voice sings the song with the lyrics changed into a darkly comic soundtrack that articulates the scenarios of symbolic abuse that are commonly encountered in everyday life. The *Wheels of Abuse* is a microcosm of manifestations of dominant culture, a contemporary mythology; it is an example of the reinforcement of a socially constructed reality.

The wheels of abuse go round and round
round and round
round and round
The wheels of abuse go round and round
all day long

The chivalrous man says let me help
let me help
let me help
The chivalrous man says let me help
all day long

The patriotic man asks where are you from
where are you from
where are you from
The patriotic man asks where are you from
all day long

The mother on the bus says boys don't cry
boys don't cry
boys don't cry
The mother on the bus says boys don't cry
all day long

The lady on the bus says isn't she cute
isn't she cute
isn't she cute
The lady on the bus says isn't she cute
all day long

The men on the bus say smile smile smile
smile smile smile
smile smile smile
The men on the bus say smile smile smile
all day long

The wheels of abuse go round and round
round and round
round and round
The wheels of abuse go round and round
all day long (Stenina 2018).

Détournement and mundane rituals

The familiar song is used to get across a very different message. The *Situationist International* technique of *Détournement* has been used in this artwork:

Short for "détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements." The integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of those means. In a more elementary sense, détournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which reveals the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres. (SI 1958)

Detournement [...] is the fluid language of anti-ideology. [...] Detournement founds its cause on nothing but its own truth as critique at work in the present. (Debord 1994: 207)

Detournement is used to highlight the 'not-so-trivial' trivialities of mundane interaction. When these ritualistic acts are performed within the context of a children's song, they invite the viewer to look from a certain innocent, fresh perspective. From the place where social constructions have not yet formed; from within the formative place of the viewers' reflection.

Wheels of Abuse provides a metaphor for the abusive daily tropes, within the everyday narrative and the performative nature of social life. Displaying these mundane rituals within the Karaoke format helps to highlight the performative nature of these tropes, and invites the viewer to see the seemingly 'natural' everyday situations or phenomena as 'constructed'. The imperative and functional nature of the original song, where fundamental aspects of a child's environment are reinforced

56

through repetition, is subtly deconstructed and repurposed to demonstrate how these constructions can take on an oppressive nature where what is considered harmless from the dominant perspective reinforces an abusive construction for the recipient. The mundane and personal experience that is highlighted in *Wheels of Abuse,* transforms private experience into political experience, by putting forward an example of abuse. The phenomenon loses its label of 'naturalness' and becomes a potentially discursive object: the naturalness of mundane ritualistic acts becomes political.

The phrase *Isn't she cute!* is a phenomena of 'damning with faint praise' that does not have any other purpose than to affirm the status of the praised. Timothy Morton (British philosopher of object-oriented thought) described this notion as ''sadistic admiration'':

> Putting something called Nature on a pedestal and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of Woman. It is a paradoxical act of sadistic admiration. (Morton 2009: 5)

Sadistic admiration in the context of this body of practice is a type of symbolic abuse.

When symbolic abuse is reclassified into euphemism, or into something that rewrites the genuine meaning of the experience, it arguably reinforces the structural resilience of the dominant culture. Becoming desensitised to the phrases that contain abusive semiotic authority may be considered a part of the cycle of symbolic abuse. The myth protects itself by labelling abusive agents in euphemistic form: for example, a racist remark may result in the abuser being labeled as patriotic by the seemingly

benevolent dominant culture. A man that has a need to exert his dominant position through obligating the 'other' (in this context the female) to receive unnecessary help can identify himself as chivalrous, thus perpetuating the notion of symbolic abuse. In *The Wheels of Abuse*, the chivalrous man and the patriotic man are situated alongside their abusive language, highlighting the symbolic abuse. In this situation the labelling of the acting party becomes an articulation of the source of the abuse. The repetitive character of these utterances pronounces their provocative and invasive nature.

The problem of style

If "identity is the stylised repetition of acts through time" (Butler 1988: 520) and if the style of social protocols and social rituals is dictated by the dominant culture and then labeled as natural, this naturalness of the style (the myth) arguably needs to be problematised. Identities are instituted by the semiotic authority of dominant culture and the "possibility [for identity] transformation" to be found in the "arbitrary relation between" performative identity acts of the person in character and the "mundane social audience" that is the dominant culture (Butler 1988: 520).

Guy Debord discusses the spectacle being iterative and self-conceiving; the production and the product are equivalent.

> The spectacle is essentially tautological, for the simple reason that its means and its ends are identical. It is the sun that never sets on the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire globe, basking in the perpetual warmth of its own glory. (Debord 1994:13)

The scenarios on the hypothetical bus in *The Wheels of Abuse* navigate within the repetitive nature of representation; their language oscillates in the oversaturated

'overtold' silence of symbolic abuse. Therefore within the spectacle, the audience (dominant culture) is complicit in perpetuating the co-dependent exchange of the dominant style, through the expectation of the performance.

The spectacle contains the audience in its utterance as the text presupposes an addressee (Bakhtin 1981: 279). This seemingly natural cycle is the mundane 'vicious' correspondence of semiotic authority that is reflected in the verse:

> The wheels of abuse go
> round and round
> round and round
> round and round

The audience of the metanarrative story of the myth is society, a society that perpetuates the myth by consuming it. The song is a direct attempt to intervene with the dominant cultural matrix in that it attempts to deconstruct the dominant social protocol.

Smile!

    Rituals are often systems of tact and etiquette, they are social protocols that

enforce social norms. Mundane rituals as trivial as the 'Good Morning!' salutation

imply a presupposition of response; in this case, answering Good Morning! in return.

A phrase such as Smile! presupposes a response that affirms social identity and

position. It mimics the ritual in nature of animal displays of dominance and

submission. Just as an alpha animal elicits a response from his 'others' to reaffirm the

social hierarchy of the group: The proxy alpha of dominant culture (in this case, the

man on the bus) demands the reinforcement of societal norms (the young woman

must provide a physical response to reassure him of his own privileged place within

society, and that the rule of society is safe).

> Many nonhuman primates have a submissive facial display,
> called a grimace, a grin, or a silent bared-teeth face. The display resembles
> the human smile, and in all species in which it occurs, it seems to have the
> function of deflecting hostile behavior of more dominant animals. (Hooff,
> 1979: 1540)

> The bared-teeth display, also referred to as the fear grin, or
> grimace, is one of the most conspicuous and well-studied facial
> expressions in [...] variety of mammalian species [...] . (Parr & Waller, 2006:
> 221–8)

The voice of dominant authority is presented through the intimate mother's voice (the

matriarch), echoing the voice that a person hears in their formative years. It arguably

creates a connection to the false naturalness of mundane 'abusive' tropes that are

consumed like mother's milk. Myth legitimises the myth-maintaining practices such as

social protocols, etiquette and ritualistic acts that shape identities under the alibi of

naturalness and historical heritage. "Normative violence" is "pathologizing practice [...] that consecrates its claim on originality and propriety" (Butler,1993: 125).

Marginalisation is not a single act: It is a quotidian system of semiotic dominance, the pressure of mundane mythologized life. 'Agency' is under constant erasure through acts of symbolic abuse. *Wheels of abuse* describes this casual erasure of agency through the examples of challenging the autonomy of the marginalised.

> If the police is always waiting in the wings, it is because conventions are by essence violable and precarious, in themselves and by the fictionality that constitutes them, even before there has been any overt transgression, in the first sense of to pretend. (Derrida 1972: 105)

Mansplaining - articulation of the symbolic abuse

A case in which the creative work of a writer spawned the creation of a new label for abusive behaviour can be made with the phenomena of 'mansplaining'. 'Mansplaining' is a new word that was created in response to Rebecca Solnit's (American writer) essay *Men Explain Things to Me.*

In this essay Solnit gives an example of the situation where a man explained the contents of the book she wrote to her, ignoring the attempts of her friend to say that she was the author of the book he was discussing (Solnit 2008: 1-3). This description created a precedent in the cultural consciousness invoking various discourses around

this phenomenon. Following the viral spread of the term, it was entered into the

Oxford online dictionary. This action has fossilised the new word (Flood, 2008) :

> Mansplain (v.): (of a man) explain (something) to someone, typically a woman, in a manner regarded as condescending or patronising (Oxford Dictionaries).

In her article *Our Words Are Our Weapons* Solnit talks about the importance of the

production of the new words. Solnit discusses how new terms such as 'domestic

violence' were coined in the 70s to replace 'wife-beating' and how this encouraged

discourse around the topic.

> So many of the words with which a woman's right to exist is adjudicated are of recent coinage: "domestic violence," for example, replaced "wife-beating" as the law began to take a (mild) interest in the subject. (Solnit 2014)

Solnit, by describing the symbolic abuse, created the potentiality for readers to create

a tool to reclaim agency within conversation. Her articulation of the phenomenon set

into motion a critical response from marginalised members of society. The response

materialised in the form of a new word that became a phenomenon, creating a stigma

around the abusive phenomenon of mansplaining. Solnit's act of *explaining things to*

the 'other' and to the 'mansplainers' gave agency to the marginalised members of

society.

Language as a 'combinatorial system'

Any dominant culture is constructed through the repetition of quotidian forms of communication, the sum of which maintain the resilience of the symbolic structure.

In his text *Words and Rules,* Steven Pinker speaks of language as being a 'combinatorial system'.

It is suggested that people do not simply voice isolated words but rather combine them into phrases and sentences, in which the meaning of the combination can be inferred from the meanings of the words and the way they are arranged.

> We talk not merely of roses, but of the red rose, proud rose, sad rose of all my days. (Pinker 1999: 4)

> When we combine words, their arrangement is crucial: [...] We all know the difference between young women looking for husbands and husbands looking for young women, and that looking women husbands young doesn't mean anything at all. [...] Inside everyone's head there must be a code or protocol or set of rules that specifies how words may be arranged into meaningful combinations. (Pinker 1999: 4)

The myth draws its power from the protocol that Pinker outlines. The archetypal inhabitants of the modernist myth such as the rigid identities of mother, man, child, etc. dictate the combinatorial protocol that is a symptomatic manifestation of structural resilience within the dominant culture.

> Modern linguists call it grammar, sometimes generative grammar to distinguish it from the grammars used to teach foreign languages or to teach the dos and don'ts of formal prose. (Pinker 1999: 4)

Through this generative nature of the rule new meanings and new words can be created.

> These rules, though crude, illustrate the fantastic expressive power made available by grammar. First, the rules are productive. By specifying a string of kinds of words rather than a string of actual words, the rules allow us to assemble new sentences on the fly and not regurgitate reassembled clichés - and that allows us to convey unprecedented combinations of ideas. (Pinker 1999: 6)

A combinatorial system allowed us to create the word 'mansplaining'. This research did not create the words for the 'symbolic abuse' but through the illustration of 'mundane symbolic abuse' it created the environment where new words could be created. Symbolic abuse in this research plays the role of a narrative punctum; the focal point for the quotidian story that needs to be designated by the audience.

Within the combinatorial protocol of meaning making, there are certain errors that have become fossilised - as such they are embedded within the process so that they are not easily identified. In linguistics, a fossilised error describes something that cannot easily be corrected - the whole process surrounding the error needs to be revisited and relearnt. Clichés may be seen as fossilised errors within the metanarrative. These fossilised semantic errors become mythological objects that take on a life of their own, and it is arguably impossible to stop them; confrontation may result in further symbolic abuse.

This research proposes that the fossilised error needs to be readdressed. Shonibare in his work *End of Empire*, literally re-dresses the figure of the Dandy in the construction of colonial identity. Through redressing them, he highlights the territory of

the constructed symbol. Clichés discourage critical thought and meaningful discussion about a topic, they provide seemingly simple answers to complex questions, and in doing so devalue the argument and discourage any potential discourse. This effective protocol is embedded in cultural memory under the labels of folk wisdom or 'common sense'. This conditioning is arguably a defense mechanism for the resilient structure of myth.

Common sense, "the norm of identity" complements good sense and "the norm of distribution of self" (Deleuze 1994: 133-134). Common sense provides a recognition model (Deleuze 1995: 133).

> […] 'recognition' of the object enables 'prediction' and the cancellation of danger (along with other possibilities of difference). To both common and good sense, Deleuze opposes paradox. Paradox serves as the stimulus to real thought and to philosophy because it forces thought to confront its limits. (Appelbaum 2013: 188)

> The most general form of representation is thus found in the element of a common sense understood as an upright nature and a good will [...] and orthodoxy. (Deleuze 1994: 131)

Instrumental art: production of difference within viewer's reflection

An environment for the potential creation of new tools for the reclamation of agency can be created with the help of 'instrumental art'. "Instrumentalism requires that art move people to act for the betterment of society" (Desmond, 2011: 45); art that serves as an "instrument for furthering a point of view that might be moral, social, religious, or political" (Desmond, 2011: 47).

Within this practice-based research the viewer's reflections 'complete' the artworks. The visual practice considers the viewers to be potential stakeholders in the remaking of myth. The instrumental aspect of this visual practice is produced through interpretations of social phenomenon that could be labelled as symbolic abuse. The boundaries of narrative structure are arbitrary. Narrative transgression creates a space for debate; the suggestive subtle transgressions of Jesper Just's *dancing man* and *crying man* are gently contravening social rules and narrative structures. Shonibare's sculpture highlights the constructed nature of colonial identity by embodying a postcolonial hybridity. The instrumental element of 'passing the talking stick' to the viewer comes with the 'potentiality' made possible by creating an environment for reflection upon the structure and critique of the rules of the myth-game.

To question the nature and reasoning behind the assumptions, and the resilience of those assumptions, contained within everyday clichés and tropes is a potential

method to disrupt dominant systems and provide a space for marginalised discourses to be voiced.

> To teach what one doesn't know is simply to ask questions about what one doesn't know. (Ranciere,1991: 30)

The reflective element of the artworks included in this research connects to the concept of 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud 2002) through the consideration given to notions of collective meaning making, participation and social engagement. Nicolas Bourriaud declares that "art is a state of encounter" and an "arena of exchange" (Bourriaud 2002: 18) and that it "produces a specific sociability" (Bourriaud 2002: 18). In his book *Relational Aesthetics*, he writes:

> an art form where the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the 'encounter' between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning (Bourriaud 2002: 15).

The encounter that the visual practice of this research provides is rooted in a wider cultural perspective and is internalised. The viewer experiences an encounter between their culturally constructed self and their individual self. Bourriaud elaborates this element of cultural exchange within relational art that:

> creates free areas, and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the "communication zones" that are imposed upon us (Bourriaud 2002: 16).

The notion of intertextuality democratises a text and alleviates the authority of the author. The role of the viewer or reader is therefore as important as the role of the author.

> [...] a text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was, but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination. (Barthes 1967: 5-6)

Because of the critical nature of the artworks, the major part of visual practice relies on the viewers' reflection.

> The potential intellect is not a thing. It is nothing other than the intention through which a thing is understood; it is not a known object but simply a pure knowability and receptivity. (Agamben 1999: 251)

The critical reflection of the viewer creates the potentiality for difference. The viewer engages with the familiar tropes referenced in the artworks discussed in this document and associative knowledge and memories are intertwined with new reflections. Giorgio Agamben suggests a narrative potentiality of the mind and the potential for producing both repetition and difference.

> Remembrance restores possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete and completing what never was. Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but, rather, their potentialization, their becoming possible once again. (Agamben 1999: 267)

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated in this thesis, there is a semiotic authority that resides within the symbols and stories of a dominant culture. All members of society perform constructed roles within this structure. All constructed roles within a dominant culture arguably contain symbolic abuse. This inherent symbolic abuse reduces the agency of anyone that differs from societal norms, and therefore symbolic abuse plays a significant role in their marginalisation.

The research summarises the contemporary post-structuralist literacy of identity politics and general postmodernist doubt in the essentialist ideas of any dominant culture through analysis of the semiotic authority of narrative form. The research has demonstrated that we experience our everyday mythologised reality through dominant meta-stories, while inhabiting rigid cultural archetypes and performing our identities in accordance with sanctioned social protocols.

The text draws the landscape of a mundane mythologized reality, where we play archetypal roles and tell the stories of the dominant metanarrative. The research has presented the way in which the generality of dominant culture can be called into question and the practice-based research has visualised the way in which stereotypical cultural traits that limit potentiality can be queried.

Semiotic authority has been examined through several different contexts: mythologized constructed reality, social ritual, performativity of identity, rigid

archetypes and the binary logic within dominant culture. The practice cited, including the author's own, indicate that art has the ability to address the notion of, and engage critically with, symbolic abuse. The artworks included in this study examine the potentialities contained within the destabilisation of binary power dynamics and provide an environment for reflection upon the phenomena of symbolic abuse.

It is proposed that the artworks included in this discourse hold the potential to disrupt the ritualised habits of the viewer. In the very resilience of the dominant semiotic structure, there is an impermanence that is guaranteed by its fictionality. This fictionality, in its various forms, is what the artists included in this text question, deconstruct and examine. The instruments for overcoming the pressure of semiotic authority are forged by both the artist and the viewer.

The practice that can augment the agency of marginalised members of society, can be summed up in the following framework of methods and techniques:

Addressing symbolic abuse:

- Demonstrating the effects/affects of the mundane performativity of gender upon the individual.
- Addressing residual symbolic abuse within ideas of identity and race through a carnivalesque 'hybridity'.

- Examining the pressure of the hegemonic heroic narrative upon social identification.

- Politicising the seemingly natural, abusive and mundane tropes through use of detournement, the carnivalesque and ambiguity.

- Applying labels such as symbolic abuse in order to create a discursive space around situations that contain the potential for marginalisation to occur.

Addressing semiotic authority.

- Exposing the constructed nature of representation by remaking myth.

- Examining hegemonic division within the hero narrative and its effect on everyday life.

- Proposing an alternative reading for the 'etiquette' of the dominant culture.

- Employing non-seriousness to subvert the officialdom of semiotic authority.

- Evaluating the encratic nature of mundane social rituals by subverting them.

- Employing ambiguity as a method to facilitate alternative readings of representation.

- Applying conceptual androgyny to provide a platform for open-mindedness and fluidity of reflection upon the rigid archetypes that perpetuate marginalisation within the heroic narrative pattern.

Artists, by foregrounding the symbolic abuse produced by the semiotic authority of a dominant culture of aspiration, highlight the transactional basis for how agency is both taken and reclaimed.

The visual practice reminds the viewer of their potential complicity in perpetuating semiotic authority by highlighting the unspoken judgement of the 'crowd' (the majority and therefore the dominant culture). Artworks that reflect on symbolic abuse transgress the dominant pattern of the spectacle and provide a platform for new social identifications. The visual practice invites the viewer to step outside the metanarrative story of dominant culture and proposes that viewers hold the ability to reclassify mundane ritualised objectification found within stereotypical acts. They can create an awareness of the everyday social protocols of semiotic authority.

Artworks create the potential for classifying the experience of symbolic abuse and artworks that describe symbolic abuse become an indicator of an area that needs to be addressed. Art has the capacity to play a role in evidencing abuse in the form of cultural referencing and parody; it can articulate scenarios of symbolic abuse that the viewer can easily relate to.

Classifying symbolic abuse, can become an 'utterance-act' that can augment the agency of marginalised members of society. The artwork can adopt the role of a prototype for the future conceptualisation of a new word, and when this new word and its semiotic chain enters the field of representation it creates a precedent that is difficult to erase.

The artworks in this text introduce the value of ambiguity into the dominant cultural perspective and propose an ambiguous narrative literacy. Ambiguous readings transgress the limits of semiotic authority thus allowing for different readings to take

place; different types of 'thinkerships' and different forms of dialogue. The practice-based research attempts to provide its audience with a contemporary toolkit for perspective calibration. The articulation of the widespread phenomenon of symbolic abuse can set into motion a critical and creative response from an audience. The artworks presented attempt to produce a discourse from the perspective of marginalised members of society and function to generate the production of alternative meanings, encouraging cultural negotiation and the exchange of meanings: This creates a propositional space for the creation of new knowledge. The undoing of myth resides not within the representation of the symbolic abuse portrayed in the visual practice but within the artworks' destination: the viewer.

> For the new - in other words, difference - calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable terra incognita.
> (Deleuze, 1994: 136)

Bibliography

Agamben, G., (1999), *Potentialities*, [Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen], Stanford, CA: Stanford university Press

Appelbaum, P., (2013), A Game and a Dare in *We Saved the Best for You: Letters of Hope, Imagination and Wisdom for 21st Century Educators*, ed. Kress T.M. et al., Springer Science & Business Media

Austin, J. L., (1962), *How to do things with words*, London:Oxford University Press

Bakhtin, M.M., (1986), *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Ed. Emerson and and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press

Bakhtin, M., (1984), *Rabelais and His World,* Indiana University Press

Bakhtin M.M., (1981), *The Dialogic Imagination*, Holquist, M., [Ed.], [Trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist], USA:University of texas press

Barthes, R., (1967), The Death of the Author, Aspen, 5/*6* Fall/Winter

Barthes, R., (1972)(1957), *Mythologies*, New York: The NoonDay Press

Barthes, R., (1974), *S/Z,* New York:Hill and Wang

Barthes,R., (1975), The Pleasure of the Text , trans. Miller R., Hill and Wang, New York

Barthes, R.,(1977), *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives*, Music, Image, Text, trans. Heat.,S , *New York*: Hill and Wang

Barthes R., (1993) *'Myth Today' in Mythologies,* New York: The NoonDay Press, 27th Edition

Baudelaire, C., (1981), *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, CUP Archive

Bourriaud, N., (2002) [1998], Relational Aesthetics, Trans. Pleasance, S.,Woods, F. and Copeland, M., France:Presses du réel

Bukowski, C., (2012), *The Pleasures of the Damned: Selected Poems 1951-1993*, Canongate Books

Butler J. (Dec., 1988) *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*, Theatre Journal, Vol. 40, No. 4, The Johns Hopkins University Press ,DOI: 10.2307/3207893, p. 522 , online: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893 -accessed 31/10/18

Butler,J., (1993), Bodies that Matter, NY Routledge

Butler, J., (1997), *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York & London: Routledge

Butler, J., (1999), *Gender Trouble,* New York: Routledge Press, Preface

Campbell, J., (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Pantheon Books

Collodi, C., (1996) *The adventures of Pinocchio*,NY:Scholastic

Debord G., (1994), *Society of Spectacle*,Trans..*Nicholson*-Smith., D.,New York : Zone Books

Derrida, J., (1981), *Positions*, Routledge, p.41

Derrida, J., (1972), *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, Evanston: Northwestern UP, p.105

Deleuze, G., (1994), *Difference and Repetition*, New York:Columbia University Press

Desmond, K.K., (2011), *Ideas About Art*, John Wiley & Sons

Downey, A., (2005),*'*Yinka Shonibare by Anthony Downey', *Bomb Magazine,* online: https://bombmagazine.org/articles/yinka-shonibare/-accessed 26/11/18

Donne J., (1923), *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, Ed. Sparrow J., Cambridge University Press

Flood, A., (2018), *OED's new words include '*mansplaining' but steer clear of 'poomageddon*', The Guardian*, (online), available at: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/30/oeds-new-words-include-mansplaining-but-steer-clear-of-poomageddon -(accessed 26/11/28).

Foucault, M., (1999), *Religion and culture*, J. R. Carrette (ed.). Manchester:Manchester University Press

Goldsmith, K., (2011) *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*, New York:Columbia University Press

Gadsby*, H.* (2018), [TV] *Hannah Gadsby- Nanette (Netflix), 2018, 69m*

Hooff, J., (1979), IN, Kraut, Robert E. and Robert E. Johnston (1979), Social and Emotional Messages of Smiling: An Ethological Approach, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Cornell University press, 1979, Vol. 37, No. 9, p.1540   Online: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bad0/fb1225b8e4b98ffbb89ca45488a9aa5fd4a5.pdf-accessed 25/11/18

Jung, C.G.,(2015),*Collected Works of C.G. Jung: The First Complete English Edition of the Works of C.G. Jung,* Routledge

Jung C.G., (2014), *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Collected Works of C.G. Jung,* Routledge

Just, J., (2018) IN , EXPO CHICAGO, [interview], *Jesper Just in Conversation with Dean Otto* (Artist, James Cohan Gallery) in conversation with Dean Otto (Program Manager of the Film/Video Department, Walker Art Center), Published on 22 Oct 2013 Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ja-46BGHK20-accessed 06/11/2018

Koster,J.(2003), Ritual performance and the politics of identity. On the functions and uses of ritual. University of Groningen (online) available from: http://odur.let.rug.nl/~koster/papers/JHP.Koster2.Edit.pdf

Kristeva, J. (1980) *Word, Dialogue,and Novel. Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art.* Leon S. Roudiez (ed.), T. Gora *et al* (trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Kruger, B., (1987), IN, Kamimura, M. ,1987, 'Barbara Kruger: Art of Representation', *Woman's Art Journal, 8*(1), 40-43. doi:10.2307/1358339

Kruger, B., (1991), IN, Mitchell W. J. T. ,1991, *An Interview with Barbara Kruger*, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Winter, 1991), pp. 434-448 (15 pages) Journal Article, The University of Chicago Press, Online: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343844 - accessed 21/11/2018

Kruger, B., (2013), IN, Bollen,C., 2013, *Barbara Kruger*,Online magazine: Interview, Online: https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/barbara-kruger- accessed 21/11/2018

Kruger, B., (2011),IN, Ludwig,L.K., 2011, *True Vision: Authentic Art Journaling*, Quarry Books

Kruger, B., (2016), IN, Rosen M.,2016*, American Icon Barbara Kruger Returns*,Mandatory Online: https://www.mandatory.com/living/1131065-american-icon-barbara-kruger-returns - accessed 21/11/2018

Kruger B., (2016), Video: Barbara Kruger: in her own words, National Gallery of Art, Published on 30 Sep 2016, Youtube, Online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xi9qQb2SHU- accessed - 21/11/18

Kotz, L. (1992), 'The Body you wand: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler', Artforum Online: faculty.ucr.edu/~ewkotz/texts/Kotz-1992-Artforum-BulterInt.pdf- accessed 21/11/18

Le Guin K. U., (2012) *Wizard of Earthsea* ,NY:Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Le Guin K. U.,(2008), IN, Freedman C.H, 2008, *Conversations with Ursula K. Le Guin*,., Univ. Press of Mississippi

Lind, A. et al, (2008) ,*Battleground: M-Z*, Greenwood Publishing Group, xiii

Lichtenstein,T.,(1996),*11 Images of maternal: an interview with Barbara Kruger,*ed. Bassin D. et al, Yale University Press

Morton, T. ,(2009), *Ecology without Nature,* Cambridge:Harvard University Press

Parr, L. A., & Waller, B. M., (2006), Understanding chimpanzee facial expression: insights into the evolution of communication. *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience*, *1*(3)

Pinker, S., (1999), *Words and Rules*,London:Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Pinch, G., (2002), *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*, Oxford:ABC-CLIO

Rancière, J., (1991). The ignorant schoolmaster, Stanford, California: Stanford Univ. Press

Rancière, J., (2009). *The emancipated spectator,* London: Verso

Resseguie J.L., (2005), *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids:Baker Academic

Robinson, A., (2011),'In Theory Bakhtin: Carnival against Capital, Carnival against Power', *Ceasefire Magazine,* 9(9), Online: https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-2/ - accessed 17/12/2018

Skeggs, B., (1997), *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable*, SAGE

Solnit, R., (2008) *Men Explain Things to Me*, Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books

Solnit, R., 2014, 'Our Words Are Our Weapons', *Guernica/a magazine of global arts & politics, Online:* <https://www.guernicamag.com/rebecca-solnit-our-words-are-our-weapons-2/>-accessed 26/11/18

SI (1958) *Internationale Situationniste #1* (June 1958), Transl.by Ken Knabb, Online: https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html - accessed 26/11/18

Wark, M. (2009). 'Détournement: An abuser's guide', Angelaki – Journal of the Theoretical Humanities, 14(1), 145-153, Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/09697250903006641 - accessed 17/12/2018

Dictionary:

Semiotics, (2018), Oxford University Press, Online:
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/semiotics -accessed 29/10/18 02:05

Mansplain, (2018), English Oxford living dictionaries, Oxford University Press,
Online: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/mansplain - accessed 26/11/18

Merriam-Webster, (2018), The Origin of *'Hypocrite*', Online: https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/hypocrite-meaning-origin - accessed 21/11/2018

Illustrations

Fig. 1, End of Empire, 2016, Yinka Shonibare, adapted from ArtRabbit, Yinka Shonibare MBE, *End of Empire,* 2016
Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London
Co-commissioned by 14-18 NOW and Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK,
Retrieved from URL: https://www.artrabbit.com/events/yinka-shonibare-mbe-end-of-empire - accessed 08/04/2019

Fig. 3, No Man Is An Island, 2002, Jesper Just , adapted from PERROTIN,
No Man is an Island, 2002, video, color, sound, 4 minutes, courtesy of the artist and Gallerie Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen
Retrieved from URL: https://www.perrotin.com/artists/Jesper_Just/41/no-man-is-an-island/16935
   -   accessed 08/04/2019

Fig. 5, Nanette, Hannah Gadsby, 2018, still image adapted from Netflix, *Nanette, Hannah Gadsby, 2018,* 1h 9 min.
Retrieved from URL:
https://www.netflix.com/search?q=nanne&jbv=80233611&jbp=0&jbr=0
   -   accessed 08/04/2019

Fig. 7, Untitled (We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture),1983, Barbara Kruger
72"x48", image adapted from Kamimura, M. ,1987, 'Barbara Kruger: Art of Representation', *Woman's Art Journal, 8*(1), 40-43.
Retrieved from URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1358339 - accessed 08/04/2019

Fig. 8, Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground),1989, Barbara Kruger
adapted from wikiart,
Retrieved from URL: https://www.wikiart.org/en/barbara-kruger/untitled-your-body-is-a-battleground-1989 -
accessed 08/04/20