
From Focus to Fragmentation: Commodity Spectacle and Political Agency, 1851-1914

Josh Adam Poklad

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

(School of Arts and Communications, Leeds Trinity University)

April 2018

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Josh Adam Poklad to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by Josh Adam Poklad in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Acknowledgements

I could not have completed this project without the emotional, practical, and intellectual support of a number of people. Firstly, I would like to thank my family, especially my parents, who have provided me with invaluable financial and emotional assistance and endured my occasional bouts of irritability and despondency! I would also like to thank my fantastic team of supervisors – Dr Di Drummond, Dr James Mussell, and Dr Efram Sera-Shriar – for all their time, encouragement, and guidance. I recognise that all have gone above and beyond the call of duty in their work with me. I would like to reserve extra-special thanks to my lead supervisor, Professor Rosemary Mitchell. Rosemary has served as a mentor, friend, and role model ever since I began my undergraduate course at Leeds Trinity University many years ago. I certainly would not have made it this far without her. Finally, I would like to give thanks to my friends and my fellow postgraduate colleagues, who have also provided me with firm emotional support, and who have always lent me an ear when I have needed one.

Abstract

This interdisciplinary thesis explores the relationship between commercial structures, such as advertising and exhibitions, and consumer agency during the period 1851-1914. Its first aim is to develop a new theoretical model that can account for the structure/agency relationship in the context of commercial discipline and consumer perception and agency. This aim arises from the fact that dominant poststructuralist models are unable to adequately consider and explain such relationships. The second aim of this thesis is to apply this model to the analysis of historical case studies to help further our understanding of the structure/agency relationship in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The central argument presented is that commercial modes of representation at the beginning of the period, exemplified by The Great Exhibition of 1851, were coherent, totalising, and narrative-based, and because of this were easier to contest and see-through. As the period progressed, however, commercial representation fragmented into individual visual advertisements. These advertising fragments contested one another, and in doing so, worked to conceal the reality of their unity. This situation meant that consumers found it much more difficult to apprehend the nature of commercial manipulation and the world of production it concealed, and thus to articulate or action critiques of it.

Table of Contents

Introduction _____	p. 7
Part One: The Spectacle of The Great Exhibition of 1851 _____	p. 29
Chapter One – The Concentrated Spectacle of the Great Exhibition_____	p. 37
Chapter Two – Incursions of the Real_____	p. 56
Chapter Three – Where is the Worker? The Problem of Labour on Display at the Great Exhibition_____	p. 71
Chapter Four – Critiques of the Great Exhibition_____	p. 84
Conclusion to Part One_____	p. 88
Part Two: The Rise of Diffuse Spectacle _____	p. 90
Chapter One – Through the Shattered Looking-Glass: Production in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Advertising_____	p. 106
Chapter Two – Spectacle and Media Narrative_____	p. 112
Chapter Three – The Dreamworld of Diffuse Spectacle_____	p. 125
Chapter Four – Regaining Agency_____	p. 148
Chapter Five – Subversions with Scissors: Scrapbooks and Agency_____	p. 155
Conclusion to Part Two_____	p. 175
Coda – ‘Resistance is the Drinks Aisle’: Spectacle and Postmodernity _____	p. 176
Conclusion _____	p. 185
Bibliography_____	p. 191
Appendix_____	p. 206

Abbreviations

Terms are used in full when first introduced. Any subsequent abbreviation of terms will be signalled in the text.

Other Notes

Much of the newspaper and periodical primary source material referenced in this thesis was consulted through digitised archives such as Gale News Vault and The Illustrated London News Historical Archive. As most of the editions digitised in these collections were sourced from collected volumes of each publication, in most instances the page numbers do not correlate to those in the original individual issues. I have used the collected volume numbers wherever relevant, as this is a more convenient means of identifying the source material in the digitised archives.

Introduction

In the present age, levels of consumption of raw materials and the products made from them have reached unprecedentedly high levels. Such spiralling production and consumption lies at the heart of many of humanity's most pressing environmental, social, political, and cultural problems. Our current brand of consumer capitalism is doing untold damage to the natural world, polluting land and oceans, exacerbating the global warming crisis, and destroying arable soil through overproduction. Meanwhile, millions of impoverished souls are put to work each day in the production of the frequently needless products that cause such degradation, and yet cannot themselves afford a stable existence, let alone a moderately comfortable one. These environmental and human factors are hidden by the glossy commercialism of advertising and the media, which prevents their true nature and portent from being communicated. Even consumers experience negative effects: the materialistic and individualistic culture promoted by social media platforms has been identified as the cause of political disengagement and polarisation and indicted as a factor in the increasing prevalence of mental health problems related to body image and social status. Meanwhile, the corporations that own such platforms can shape the political agenda to an extent that no other media entity has before. Despite these problems, we seem enthralled to consumerism, unable to identify and effectively challenge the structures that underpin the consumer culture that saturates our lives – we seem to have relinquished much of our political agency whilst in its orbit.

This study is motivated by a desire to understand how and why our society has come to be orientated around consumerism to such an extent, and to determine how the imperatives and structures of consumer culture influence our agency as human beings. Any untangling and understanding of the way in which contemporary consumer culture interacts with and maintains itself in response to the agency of its subjects (and vice versa) must be founded on a firm understanding of its historical roots. This study seeks to comprehend how and why consumerism has become the force it has today by examining the roots of contemporary consumer society and its relationship with political agency and critique in Britain in the years 1851-1914. It is primarily concerned with identifying the effect that the burgeoning sphere of advertising and commodity culture had on the modes of political perception, critique, and praxis available to Victorians and Edwardians.

The identification of the late-Victorian and Edwardian era as the one in which modern consumer society first emerged requires some justification. There is a substantial body of research that pinpoints the birth of modern consumerism in the eighteenth century, whereas

other work locates its point of origin even earlier, with the beginning of European imperialist expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹ The chronological focus of this study is not intended to dispute these arguments. Consumption and consumerism have been in existence in some form or another since the birth of human civilisation itself, and the development of modern forms of consumerism took place over a long period. This choice is taken because, as will be explained in more detail later, it was during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth that the structures underpinning the kind of mass consumerism familiar to people today, namely a specifically capitalist mode of commodity representation, began to solidify and gather in influence.

Because this study is concerned with mapping the development, function, and effects of what is essentially a social system, issues of continuity and change, the formation of deep-lying structures, and the relationship between past and present need to be explored. As Jo Guldi and David Armitage assert in their recent manifesto for historians, questions surrounding these issues are best answered using macro-historical approaches, as they enable historians to grapple with deep structural issues and emphasise links between the then and the now.² It is for this reason that a relatively broad chronological focus has been chosen, with the sixty-three years between 1851 and 1914 providing a substantial timespan in which to explore contours of continuity and change, and chart the evolving interactions between structure and agency in the consumer society across a variety of conditions and contexts. The links between the historical and contemporary dimensions of consumer society are developed further in the final chapter of the thesis, which brings the analysis into the present day, showing how the fundamental tenets of Victorian and Edwardian consumer culture remain central to our own.

The terms structure and agency are central to this study and require precise definition. The structure of consumer society is conceptualised here in the Althusserian sense, referring to the concrete disciplinary institutions and mechanisms that inform social practice and propagate

¹ See Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

² See David Armitage and Jo Guldi, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 2-5.

normative ideologies.³ In the realm of consumer society, these disciplinary mechanisms, or Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) as Althusser termed them, consist primarily of advertising and other forms of commodity representation, the broader forms of mass media to which they are intrinsically linked, and commodities themselves. Agency is defined in the context of this study as the ability of individuals to comprehend and see beyond the structural mechanisms of the consumer society and/or to act so as to undermine or overcome it. This political conceptualisation of agency is chosen because it is this kind of agency that the structures of consumer society restricts and manipulates. As this study will make clear, advertising constructs a 'fake' reality for its subjects in which all of life and social activity is geared around the commodity and the act of its consumption, encouraging consumers to literally buy in to such a world and simultaneously prevent them from engaging the real one. Amid this structural matrix, more moderate forms of agency, such as consuming commodities in ways or for ends other than intended, cannot be regarded as transgressive because these forms are normally permitted by the structure. Consuming a commodity in a way other than intended (using newspaper strips as hair curlers, or as the raw material for papier-mâché, for instance), is not a political or subversive act because the act is still consumerist in nature – it still conforms to what is expected of consumer subjects (to consume and construct one's life around consumption). For example, in the nineteenth century, some consumers collected advertising and other commercial material such as trade cards. Many collectors would appropriate advertising images and redeploy them in non-commercial ways, for instance, cutting-out pictures for use in the illustration of an album or scrapbook. As advertisers became aware of this practice they began to encourage it, producing materials specifically designed to be appropriated by the consumer so as to cultivate an ostensibly intimate relationship with them.⁴ Such a situation demonstrates that the structures of consumer society permit consumers to deviate from normative kinds of consumption, so long as in straying, consumers are still performing consumerist behaviours. By conceptualising agency in a more politicised sense, a better grasp on how and to what extent structural frameworks restrict and manipulate agency can be achieved.

³ See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and ideological State Apparatuses' in Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), pp. 1-60.

⁴ Jennifer M Black, 'Corporate Calling Cards: Advertising Trade Cards and Logos in the United States, 1876–1890', *Journal of American Culture*, 32.4 (2009), 291-306 (p. 295).

This study is generally concerned with individual forms of agency rather than collective ones. Agency is measured through analysis of individual responses to and interactions with the disciplinary mechanisms of consumer society. The reasons for this are manifold. Advertising and consumer ideology constructs the consumer as an individual subject, and it is in the individual's struggle to break free from this subjectivity that their agency is primarily tested. The isolated consumer must display agency to look beyond the narrow individualist ideology of consumerism presented in advertising and other disciplinary mechanisms to recognise the social conditions and relations that lie beyond or underneath. Moreover, individual and collective agency are inextricably linked, with the latter in many ways partially dependent on the potency of the former. For instance, an individual's decision to join a collective protest, although potentially open to influence from peers, is ultimately partially dependent on that individual's decision to do so.

The analysis presented in this thesis is timely because, although the topic of consumer history has been given substantial attention by historians, significant gaps in our understanding of the interactions between commercial manipulation and agency remain. This is because the historiography of consumer society is dominated by poststructuralist approaches which conceptualise consumer society as either lacking in structure or as an ostensibly natural phenomenon. Within this theoretical milieu, agency has been redefined in a relatively depoliticised way. Whilst poststructuralist approaches have much to offer, and in many ways, have prised open consumer history and established it as a significant field of study, they are inherently ill-suited to exercises in which the object is to gauge different forms of agency. Agency cannot be understood and measured without recourse to a structural framework in and against which that agency can be defined and operated, otherwise it can and will appear untrammelled and boundless. Because of this, whilst current approaches have produced a wealth of knowledge about the cultural aspects of consumerism both historical and contemporary, they can tell us little about its overarching function in a *social* sense. Furthermore, by conceptualising consumer society as structureless, it is essentially naturalised and thus evades critique. This study seeks to redress this imbalance by developing a new critical framework that combines conventional materialism with compatible elements of poststructuralist theory. This framework is applied to a series of case studies to illuminate the structure/agency relationship in the context of Victorian and Edwardian consumer society. The centrality of this theoretical element dictates that the project is not a straightforward study of history. Instead, it is an explicitly interdisciplinary project that is part historical study, and part exercise in cultural theory. In order to develop the theory and express its critical potency, its application must be conspicuous, and the implications

of my arguments also need to be framed in terms of their relationship to cultural theory as well as history and historiography.

Theorising commodity culture

I will begin with a discussion of this conceptual framework and how it emerges from existing cultural theory. Because Karl Marx's theory of commodity fetishism is the cornerstone of the theoretical framework used here, it is logical to begin an outline of this. I will then detail how cultural theory abandoned Marx's materialist framework for poststructuralist and other postmodernist approaches and discuss the effect this had on critical conceptualisations of consumer society and their use by historians. Finally, I will review the historiography of both nineteenth and twentieth-century consumer society and describe my method of redeveloping a materialist conception of consumer society and the structure/agency dichotomy. Once this is completed I will summarise the structure and content of the thesis and discuss its specific historical focus in greater detail.

Marxist theory conceptualises consumer capitalism as being founded on the fetishism of commodities. Workers operating under a capitalist mode of production become alienated from their produce through the processes of mass production. The detachment between the commodity and its social aspect further intensifies as it enters the process of exchange. Here, the value of a commodity is ultimately determined by the amount of 'socially necessary' labour time spent in producing it. This intrinsically social value is masked under the conditions of capitalist exchange when a commodity is made commensurate with other commodities via a third commodity, a 'universal equivalent', typically gold or money.⁵ The equivalent form acts as a material embodiment of abstract labour, to which all other exchange-values, and thus abstractions of all other forms of labour, are then equated.⁶ The labour value of the commodity is objectified in the money form, and thus the social relationship enacted during exchange appears to those enacting it as though it is a relationship established between things instead of

⁵ See Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume I, trans. from the 3rd German edn. by Edward Aveling and Samuel Moore (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970)*, pp. 69-70.

⁶ 'The body of the commodity that serves as the equivalent, figures as the materialisation of human labour in the abstract'. – *Ibid.* p.58

between people.⁷ The social aspect of a commodity – the labour that is performed in its production (and the alienating and exploitative conditions in which it is performed) – becomes concealed, and commodities appear stripped of their original social meaning and ripe to be endowed with new, arbitrary meanings. At this end of the process, the commercial representation of commodities through advertising and shop display can be used to actively infuse commodities with new meanings and consolidate the obfuscation of the world of commodity production from the consumer's view. The Marxist conceptualisation of the consumer society effectively delineates the central processes and structures that underpin the consumer society. As explained by Marxist theorist Theodor Adorno in his essay 'On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening' (1938), the reason consumer capitalism can function is that through the commodity fetish, consumers can be convinced to orient their lives around consumption/consumerism, purchase things they do not essentially need, and disengage from thinking politically about the social realities of the world of production.⁸ This conceptualisation is convincing in its most basic sense, and for this reason, many cultural theorists of consumerism during the pioneer years of the early twentieth century used a Marxist framework as their point of departure.⁹ The advent of poststructuralism, however, would come to have a reductive effect on the paradigm of commodity fetishism, and subsequently a profound influence on the way in which consumer society was conceptualised in cultural theory.

To explain this effect, it is necessary that I make a distinction between two distinct yet interconnected stages or types of commodity fetishism. These two forms can be termed 'primary' commodity fetishism and 'secondary' commodity fetishism. Primary commodity fetishism is the fetishism to which the commodity is subject as it moves from the arena of production to that of consumption through exchange (leading to the concealment of consumer/producer and producer/producer relations). This is the stage in which the commodity is detached from its origins in production and alienated from its producers, arriving as a blank

⁷ 'There is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.' – *Ibid.* p.72

⁸ Theodor Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening', Theodor Adorno, ed. By J.M Bernstein, *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 29-60.

⁹ Such as the aforementioned Theodor Adorno, and other members of the Frankfurt School including Max Horkheimer and Walter Benjamin. See Rolf Wiggerhaus, *The Frankfurt School*, trans. by Michael Robertson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) for an overview of the School's work.

slate in the market ready to be endowed with fetish values. Secondary commodity fetishism is demarcated as the fetishism to which the commodity is subject *after* the former process has been completed, and the commodity has fully entered the domain of consumption. At this stage, the already socially-detached commodity becomes a socio-cultural sign, symbol, and object of representation. As I will show, poststructuralist ideas instigated an abandonment of the primary, structural stage of commodity fetishism and narrowed the focus to the secondary stage, concentrating purely on the ways consumers used commodities and invested them with meaning.

Poststructuralism was founded in part on the structuralist linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, who proposed that the meaning of language was produced via the totalised interaction of its different parts.¹⁰ Poststructuralists emphasised Saussure's assertion that the links between linguistic signifiers and the things they are designed to signify are essentially arbitrary.¹¹ They transposed this concept to broader social phenomena, arguing that meaning, subjectivity, identity and ideology were formed discursively and thus could not be related to structural frameworks. In cultural theories of consumption, this dictated that secondary commodity fetishism was divorced from primary commodity fetishism and only the former retained as a tool of analysis. The secondary phase of commodity fetishism, in which meaning is imbued in commodities in an arbitrary and discursive fashion, suited the new theory, whereas the structural element of Marx's model – the idea that fetish meanings were embedded in commodities because of the conditions of capitalist production – did not. Consumer society was reconceptualised as something formed purely in the realm of secondary commodity fetishism, a realm now apparently lacking a structural foundation in the world of production. In the new cultural theory, the signs of consumption came to exist in isolation, minus an origin in a producing system, and it was the interaction between consumers and these signs that formed the fulcrum of social and historical experience.

¹⁰ For an overview of Saussure's theory, see Jonathan Culler, *Saussure* (London: Fontana Press, 1985), pp. 18-52.

¹¹ For an overview of poststructuralism, see Madan Sarup, *Post-structuralism and Postmodernism* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988).

Jean Baudrillard, Michel de Certeau, and the consumer society

This detachment of secondary commodity fetishism from primary commodity fetishism can be charted in the development of the theory of one of the most influential postmodern cultural theorists – Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard’s early works, *The System of Objects* (1968), *The Consumer Society* (1970), and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972) were attempts at synthesizing traditional Marxist theory with Saussurean semiotics.¹² However, through his process of theoretical development in these works, Baudrillard moved away from Marxist logic, before breaking with it altogether in his later writings. At this point, Baudrillard advanced an analysis which proposed that meaning and social structure in a society of commodity-signs is produced almost entirely in the realm of consumption. In Baudrillard’s view, consumption and the commodity-sign gain supremacy over production as a social determinant:

[the] *scale* [of commodity-signs] is properly the social order, since the acceptance of this hierarchy of differential signs and the interiorization by the individual of signs in general...constitutes the fundamental, decisive form of social control.¹³

Ultimately, in Baudrillard’s view, the productional origins of the commodity world dissolves, and it is only commodities and their arbitrary, fetishized meanings that are left to form the hierarchical and disciplinary basis of society. In this ‘hyperreal’, the very idea of a tangible, ordering mode of production is perceived as irrelevant as the distinctions between reality and commodity, or referent and sign, have entirely disintegrated.

Baudrillard replaced his materialism with a semiotic determinism which gave little credence to the notion of human agency. In the Baudrillardian view, the hyperreal of consumer society is a manipulative network: a decentralised totalitarianism of signs that directs social activity. Nevertheless, in stripping structural materialism from the lexicon of cultural theory, Baudrillard paved the way for agency to be conceptualised anew in a dramatically depoliticised form. This is because the break with materialism and the subsequently bleak picture of society and the future conjured by Baudrillard facilitated a new brand of analysis that in some respects moved beyond the nihilistic impulse of the cultural turn to embrace the very tenets of the consumerist worldview. Following Baudrillard’s surrender to the seemingly incontestable power

¹² Douglas Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 20.

¹³ Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, (USA: Telos, 1981), p. 68.

of the commodity sign, the radical impulse of the postmodern field found new means of expression in a brand of theory that sought to locate emancipatory spaces within, rather than beyond, consumer capitalism. Notable in this respect was Michel de Certeau, who argued that, whilst powerful institutions such as those of advertising or the media attempt to impose certain ideologies and disciplinary techniques on social actors, the same actors always retain the use of a powerful set of tactics or strategies to repel or commandeer the strictures of power to meet their own ends.¹⁴

The cultural turn and the historiography of consumer society

The analytical paradigm that dominates modern consumption studies is composed of an eclectic synthesis of the production-less semiotics of Baudrillard,¹⁵ and the emphasis on consumer agency proposed by Michel de Certeau and his analogues.¹⁶ Thus, a situation has arisen in which production has come to be regarded as inconsequential in the analysis of the things it produces. It is now only the products themselves, and their cultural significations and uses, that seem to matter. This conceptualisation has been influential in the development of an apolitical or even politically-implicit historiography of consumption and commodity culture. With Baudrillard's capitulation to the sign and de Certeau's renegotiation of the terms, the revolutionary, and by extension, critical impulse of the field faded before it could even get going. By denying the conceptualisation of consumer society as something *produced*, it was naturalised, and once naturalised, it no longer seemed eligible for critical examination. Following this naturalisation of consumer society, the reconceptualization of agency was inevitable, as radical narratives of social transformation – of overcoming consumer society in a totalised fashion – became ostensibly obsolete. Thereafter, agency was redefined as something performed only within consumer society, and thus *appeared* boundless and untrammelled. It is the deficiencies of this paradigm that this study aims to redress, both in terms of theoretical

¹⁴ For a brief introduction to de Certeau's conceptualisations of the consumer society, see Michel de Certeau, 'The Practice of Everyday Life', *The Consumption Reader*, ed. by David B. Clarke and others (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 259-266. For a more comprehensive outline of his theories see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹⁵ For an account detailing Baudrillard's influence on cultural studies, see Kellner, *Jean Baudrillard*, p. 1.

¹⁶ For an analysis of contemporary consumption studies, see Mark Gottdiener, 'Approaches to Consumption', in *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification*, ed. by Mark Gottdiener (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), pp. 3-31.

reconceptualization and by means of exemplary case studies offering concrete evidence of how a more appropriate methodology can be applied.

In accordance with the hybridised Baudrillardian/De Certeau's paradigm, historians of consumer culture have focussed on foregrounding the emancipatory facets of the consumer system by highlighting the use of discursive forms of consumption to construct and express identity. In *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (2001), for instance, Erika Rappaport argues that the rise of the late-century consumer society enabled bourgeois women to formulate new and more autonomous political and social identities.¹⁷ Largely subscribing to the view of consumer culture as a discursive realm, Rappaport argues that 'that public space and gender identities were, in essence, produced together' through the activity of shopping and the discourses formed around it.¹⁸ Similarly, Lori Anne Loeb's *Consuming Angels* (1994) is predicated on the idea that the expansion of consumerism during the late Victorian era enabled middle class women, the controllers of the domestic purse, to gain new forms of economic, and by extension, social, expression and control.¹⁹ Working in the same context, but instead taking into consideration male consumerist tendencies and fashions, Christopher Breward outlines the manner in which fashionable consumption and the consumption of fashion enabled men of a diverse range of class backgrounds, and of different sexual identities, to express themselves socially.²⁰ Shannon Brent has also adopted this line of inquiry, concluding that late nineteenth century consumer culture embraced a new sensibility of bourgeois male fashion, which in turn 'broadened the range of acceptable masculinity that mainstream middle-class men could perform'.²¹ In her reconstruction of the turn of the century shopper, Ruth Hoberman also argues that middle-class consumption was orchestrated by the

¹⁷ Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 6-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 34.

²⁰ See Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

²¹ Brent Shannon, 'Refashioning Male Fashion, Masculinity, and the Cultivation of the Male Consumer in Britain, 1860-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 46.4 (2004), 597-630 (p. 598).

agency of the consumer rather than commercial imposition or the dictates of conspicuous consumption, and that it heightened the relationships between social units, most notably that of the bourgeois household.²² The paradigm of semi-liberational, discursive consumption is paralleled in European and American historiographies. With a focus on nineteenth-century Parisian consumer culture, Vanessa R. Schwartz argues that ‘rather than acting as a force of alienation’, the consumer spectacle ‘offered a heterogeneous Parisian society the ability to unite in pleasure ‘through the construction of shared visual experiences’.²³ Simone Cinotto and others have read the relationship between Italian-American history and consumerism as one of active immigrant consumers who have employed the materials of consumption to articulate race, gender, and class relations, and formulate distinctive identities and lifestyles.²⁴

I do not mean to say that these histories do not offer valuable contributions to historical knowledge. On the contrary, they offer rich insight into the lived experience of consumers, providing a detailed and intimate picture of how the material and the personal interact in the arena of consumption. Rather, the problem here is that the focus on secondary commodity fetishism embodied by these works is not linked to any structural reference points, and not complemented by a canon of research dedicated to the investigation of primary commodity fetishism or the material structures underpinning commodity culture. Thus, although these analyses remain valid, in sum the history they present is thoroughly one-dimensional. The analyses of social and cultural life they contain reveal a consumer society full of scope and possibility – a social and cultural milieu experienced, to greater or lesser degrees, by some consumers – but this was only one aspect of and one mode of experience in the consumer society. Because of the lack of a materialist framework, these studies ultimately replicate rather than undo the obfuscation of structure wrought by the commodity fetish. Crucially, as a by-product of their over-emphasis on normatively-aligned consumer ‘agency’ and a corresponding refusal to fully explore the materialist dimensions of the topic, such studies are unable to reveal much about the development of commodity culture on a macroscopic scale.

²² Ruth Hoberman, ‘Constructing the Turn-of-the-Century Shopper: Narratives about Purchased Objects in the “Strand Magazine,” 1891-1910’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 37.1 (2004), 1-117 (pp. 1-3).

²³ Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 5.

²⁴ See *Making Italian America*, ed. by Simone Cinotto (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

They cannot detect larger scale historical changes and continuities or measure the effect these changes had on the agency and praxis of consumers.

Adapting the theorists: conceptualising the interaction between spectacle and agency

This study does not stand alone in its critique of the limitations of the cultural turn. Some scholars have recently generated new models of analysis designed to transcend poststructuralism's inherent limitations. These efforts have been broadly categorised under the umbrella of 'new materialism', an approach that responds to poststructuralism's fixation with immateriality, discourse and representation by refocusing on analyses of matter and the material world.²⁵ Whilst not seeking to undermine these efforts, this study takes a different approach to the issue, and therefore does not engage with this scholarship. Rather than looking to entirely novel modes of explanation and plotting a completely 'new' materialism, I maintain that the analytical and conceptual tools necessary to create a more effective paradigm can be moulded and adapted from the 'old' materialism and certain compatible aspects of poststructuralism and postmodernism. The solution to the theoretical imbalance caused by the cultural turn is to find a way of marrying the compatible elements of the materialist and postmodernist paradigms together. If we can combine the understanding of the immense social and cultural power of the commodity fetish provided by cultural theory with the Marxist structural explanation of the fetish's production, we can gain a fuller understanding of commodity culture and consumer society without resorting to the reductionism or determinism either paradigm might portend individually. This conjoining of materialism with a more postmodern focus on the realm of consumer culture need not be constructed from scratch. Such an approach can be adapted from the work of another twentieth-century theorist, Guy Debord. In *The Society of Spectacle* (1967), Debord proposed a number of theses which expanded upon Marx's ideas regarding commodity fetishism. He noted that in modern capitalist societies, a specific form of commodity, the commoditised image, has come to dominate. Debord attributed the ascendancy of the commoditised image to its capacity to perpetuate the fetishization of the commodity-world described by Marx, and thus to consolidate the concealment of exploitation inherent in the production of this commodity-world. Debord described how all the forms of the commoditised image – the media, advertising, commodity-packaging, and commodities themselves – converge to create a 'pseudo-world' in which all of life and all social relations are

²⁵ For an overview of new materialism and a discussion of how it transcends the cultural turn see Hans Schouwenburg, 'Back to the Future? History, Material Culture and New Materialism', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, 3.1 (2015), 59–72.

absorbed and regurgitated in a distorted form, and through which social relations are experienced.²⁶

Whilst Baudrillard's 'hyperreality' has no apparent root in the real world of social production, Debord situated his pseudo-world as the logical outcome of an infrastructural apparatus based on the production of alienation. Therefore, for Debord, 'reality can be recuperated ... through a critical hermeneutics that sees through appearances, illusions and fantasies to the realities being masked and covered over.'²⁷ The imperative contained within Debord's theory is to look beyond fetishization to understand its wider social contexts and implications. It can be used to bridge the concept of primary commodity fetishism with the more expanded vocabulary of twentieth-century models of secondary commodity fetishism, without losing sight of the connection between the two. As Steven Best and Douglas Kellner's excellent description of Debordian spectacle suggests, the term is a tool for understanding primary and secondary commodity fetishism as a whole:

In one sense, it [spectacle] refers to a media and consumer society, organized around the consumption of images, commodities, and spectacles [secondary commodity fetishism]. But the concept also refers to the vast institutional and technical apparatus of contemporary capitalism, to all the means and methods power employs, outside of direct force, which subjects individuals to societal manipulation, while obscuring the nature and effects of capitalism's power and deprivations [primary commodity fetishism].²⁸

In Debord's society of the spectacle, consumers may consume commodities as signs, but these commodities, laden with and contextualised by images, also obscure 'the nature and effects' of their production. Hence, Debord's work shows us that the commodity holds a dual position in modern consumer societies: it is both an object *of* fetishization and an object *for* the fetishization of the world. The commodity itself is fetishized, whilst the world of its production is also fetishized through its representative lexicon. Here we can understand the two-fold nature of fetishism. As well as creating a fetishization of superstructural social relations, of relations

²⁶ In spectacular society, 'reality unfolds in a new generality as a pseudo-world apart.' The spectacle thus forms 'a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.' Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p. 12.

²⁷ Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* (The Guilford Press: New York, 1997), p.91

²⁸ Best and Kellner, p. 84.

between one consumer and another, who relate through the semiotic practice of sign-consumption, the commodity also makes the social relations between consumers and producers opaque, evoking an alienated vision of the world in which everything is not quite as it seems. This contextualised conception of consumer society enables greater insight into its social effect. However, it still requires further development and refinement to function as a fully satisfactory conceptual model of consumer society, which is one of the primary aims of this dissertation.

Debordian approaches to the study of historical consumer society have been limited, although Thomas Richards does put the paradigm to use in his *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (1991). Richards' book pinpoints the birth of the society of spectacle at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and charts its development through to the outbreak of World War I, showing how the consumer spectacle synthesised itself with other aspects of social, cultural and political life in order to become the fulcrum around which social life was orientated. As such, Richard's work forms the foundation of this project, although his work is not treated uncritically. Whilst he adopts a Debordian perspective, Richards' thesis is still largely focussed on analysis of secondary commodity fetishism, though this analysis is always rooted in an understanding of this fetish as a structural phenomenon. Richards' study is also limited by its implicit denial of the significance of agency in the configuration of spectacle society. Richards does not address the capacity of spectators to critique and contest spectacle, implying that the disciplinary mechanisms of spectacle were thoroughly effective.

This is not surprising, given Richards' Debordian influences. Whilst Debord gives us a means of situating the secondary commodity fetish in a materialist framework, his conceptualisation of agency is as inadequate as a poststructuralist one. This is because Debord, like Baudrillard, approaches the issue from the opposite extreme to the school of de Certeau, regarding spectacle as an effective system of discipline that leaves little scope for the practice of consumer agency (although he did propose, and together with his comrades in the Situationist International, put into practice, strategies to contest spectacle, which will be discussed in the later sections of the dissertation). To view spectacle as a one-sided, totalitarian nexus is as limiting as the de Certeau-esque view in terms of attaining a full understanding of its interactions with, effects upon, and place within society. To sufficiently understand the society of the spectacle we must examine the interstices of the social and the spectacle: it is in these convergences of structure and agency that the essence of spectacular society is manifest. In his study on contemporary media spectacle, Steven Kellner provides a useful template in this respect, asserting that spectacle is best regarded in terms of a plurality of competing spectacles

and that spectacle itself ought to be regarded as a contested site.²⁹ Kellner rightly posits that by balancing the issues of spectacular control and agency and considering them in a dialectical form, giving precedence to neither, the true nature of spectacle and its effect upon society, and vice versa, can be analysed.³⁰ By paying greater attention to the issue of consumer agency than traditional Debordian theory, it is also possible to situate this study, as Kellner does his, as an experiment in reading spectacle critically, a necessary stepping stone toward recovering and perhaps overturning or ameliorating the social realities that lie underneath it. By ensuring that agency is always assessed against a structural framework, its potency and potential will neither be overlooked nor overplayed, and a better understanding of the interaction between the two elements can be established.

I will thus adapt Debord's theoretical framework to an examination of the dialectical interaction between reality and agency on the one hand, and spectacle on the other. By taking such an approach, the way in which spectacle reacts to agency and vice versa, and relatedly, the extent and forms of agency practicable within and against spectacle in certain historical contexts, can be discerned. Although the development of this conceptual framework is a valuable and pioneering contribution to the methodology of consumer and cultural studies, such an approach is not without its dangers, as any distinction made between what is 'real' and what is 'unreal' or spectacle is necessarily problematic. Debord himself warns about dichotomising the two:

The spectacle cannot be set in abstract opposition to concrete social activity, for the dichotomy between reality and image will survive on either side of any such distinction. Thus the spectacle, though it turns reality on its head, is itself a product of real activity. Likewise, lived reality suffers the material assaults of the spectacle's mechanisms of contemplation, incorporating the spectacular order and lending that order positive support. And every concept, as it takes its place on one side or the other, has no foundation apart from its transformation into its opposite: reality erupts within spectacle, and the spectacle is real.³¹

Yet Debord's warning itself offers a template for dialectical investigation: spectacle and reality are not static, isolated elements, but rather interactive parts of a real whole. The

²⁹ Best and Kellner, p. 11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³¹ Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 14.

unreality of spectacle 'is itself a product of social activity', whilst 'lived reality suffers' the 'material assaults' of this real unreality. Spectacle and reality begin as one, evolve apart, and then collide once more, forming a dialectic that repeats itself ceaselessly. This is the key difference between Debord's spectacle and Baudrillard's 'hyperreality': for Debord, consumer society is a real unreality, whereas for Baudrillard it becomes, in its postmodern form, a totally unreal reality.

I will therefore work on the presumption that spectacle is real: it is a part of the real world and a real phenomenon. But the pictures that spectacle presents, and the social relations it reimagines, mask the reality of things, and to this end, can be considered as aspects of the 'unreal'. In making a distinction here between reality and spectacle I am not, then, making a distinction between what is real and what is not, but rather between concrete and illusory halves of a real whole. In referring to spectacle I am referring to the fake reality conveyed by the real spectacle, and in referring to reality I am referring to the non-spectacularised aspects of concrete social structure and activity. Thus, I maintain that such a theoretical approach can function fruitfully, as long as difficulties inherent in dichotomising the real and the non-real are kept in constant view.

It is also necessary to explain precisely how spectacle will be defined in the context of this study. Debord only provides a vague description of what might be considered spectacle, declaring it to be composed of various forms of 'media', from advertising, the media, television and film, through to physical spaces such as shopping departments and sports stadia.³² Whilst the term has a certain amorphousness to it, this very elasticity is part of its analytical value, and therefore I do not seek to diminish it. By defining spectacle as a broad category that can encompass *all* forms of commercial representation, it is possible to arrive at a fuller understanding of the aggregate effects of spectacle on society (or the dynamics of a society of spectacle), as opposed to demarcating a certain element of spectacle, like the newspaper or the visual advertisement, and thus foreclosing its relationship to other spectacular mediums. It is also necessary to make comment on the construction of spectacle. As will become clear over the course of this thesis, spectacle eventually came to be produced in a decentralised and

³² In *Comments on the Society of Spectacle*, Debord frames spectacle as simply 'the media' - Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of Spectacle*, trans. by Malcom Imrie (Verso: London, 1990). In *The Society of Spectacle* he mentions some of the more concrete manifestations of spectacle, naming 'news or propaganda, advertising, and the actual consumption of entertainment' - Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, p. 13.

unorganised manner, with no single controlling influence, other than the abstract force of capital. For this reason, this type of spectacle, which emerged in the late nineteenth century, is referred to at times as an impersonal force, with an implicit agency of its own. On first appreciation this might appear as though it is a form of fetishizing spectacle, but this is not the case. Spectacle is always constructed – it is a result of mass production – but the degree to which it is consciously composed and organised as a totality depreciates as consumer capitalism moves through different stages of transformation. As I will show, early capitalist spectacle was a conscious experiment designed to inaugurate consumer society. Once this society had been established, a collaborative spectacle was no longer the order of the day, and spectacle became a battleground of competing spectacles each authored in response to each other. The motivation behind the production of spectacle became the contestation of other spectacles for consumers' money. Spectacle, once in existence, came to be an inevitable aspect of the economic system, and to an extent *demand*ed that it be produced, and produced in a certain way.

Whilst Debord's theory of the spectacle forms the fulcrum of the conceptual model deployed here, the range and complexity of the subject has necessitated the incorporation of ideas from the work of other theorists into this model. The study also refers to the ideas of Walter Benjamin, particularly his concept of 'the dialectical image', which is used to examine advertising images and determine their social meaning and function. Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of pre-capitalist forms of spectacle and the folk carnival also features as a valuable reference point in the exploration of certain aspects of its modern counterpart. I also make use of ideas from the work of Michel Foucault and his disciple, Tony Bennett, when conceptualising the mode of social discipline preferred in the society of spectacle. The specific role of each of these theoretical models will be explained in greater detail upon their introduction to the study.

The thesis and structure of the dissertation

The thesis is constructed through a series of case studies spanning the chronology of the period in focus. By using these case studies to chart the continuities and changes in spectacle and commodity culture, and relatedly, people's responses to and critiques of it, I construct a cursory genealogy of spectacle that reveals the shifting nature of the interplay between structure and agency. The study is constructed in this way because of the sheer immensity of the topic. Plotting the study through a series of focussed analyses enables the topic and the related material to be managed. Of course, there are inherent limitations in this approach in that it narrows the study's field of vision and creates the potential for overlooking significant

aspects of the historical situation. For this reason, the case studies – on the Great Exhibition of 1851, late-century visual advertising and the pictorial press, late-century soap advertising, and the practice of scrapbooking – have been chosen on the basis of their contemporaneous significance. They were among the most pervasive and widely-experienced elements of Victorian and Edwardian commodity culture. This careful selection has been taken to ensure the results of the studies offer as complete a reflection on contemporary consumer society as is possible. The Great Exhibition was a watershed moment in the development of modern commodity culture and consumerism, in that it inaugurated a truly capitalist form of commodity representation, and influenced members of all social classes.³³ Whilst spectacle's lineage can be traced back to the Parisian arcades of the early-nineteenth century, as illustrated in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (1938), and yet further, in its pre-capitalist forms, to the state-pageants and official ceremonies of early modern Europe, and the carnival/marketplace culture of the medieval period, it was at the Exhibition that an authoritative version of capitalist spectacle first emerged.³⁴ Similarly, the Great Exhibition was the first capitalist spectacle that was truly international, in terms of both its internal configuration and its external influence. It was at the Crystal Palace in 1851 that spectacle was launched as a global phenomenon.³⁵ The Exhibition was the laboratory that played host to the first large-scale consumer capitalist spectacle, and the roots of all subsequent forms of spectacle can easily be detected in, and traced out from, the Exhibition. Similarly, soap-advertising dominated the late-Victorian and Edwardian advertising scene and can thus serve as a reliable barometer of the form and function of spectacle during this period, as well as a useful reference point for gauging public responses to spectacle, given its ubiquity in popular culture and discourse.³⁶ The practice of scrapbooking

³³ See, for instance, Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 3.

³⁴ Thomas Richards, p. 1. For Benjamin's take on the birth of spectacle in the Parisian arcades in the early nineteenth century, see Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: London, 1999). For Bakhtin on early-modern, medieval, and classical spectacle/carnival see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

³⁵ The Exhibition featured displays of articles produced from countries across the globe, and was ordered spatially into national categories.

³⁶ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge: 1995), pp. 207-208.

was also an integral part of late-century consumer culture,³⁷ and so a case study of scrapbooks provides insight into the ways in which consumers operated agency within and against the commodity spectacle. Furthermore, the Great Exhibition, late-century soap-advertising, and scrapbooking have attracted a good deal of academic attention, meaning that their analysis serves to demonstrate how the methodology of this project can add to and develop existing scholarship. Because of the broad scope of the study, a wide range of primary source material relating to different contexts and different periods has been used. Reviewing each of these collections of evidence together would not lend itself to clarity, and so instead, separate source reviews are included at the beginning of each relevant section.

The thesis is divided into two main sections, the first covering The Great Exhibition, and the second concentrating on late-century spectacle. The focus in each of these sections is split between a reconstruction of the form and function of the spectacle being dealt with, followed by an analysis of how consumers responded to it. This structure mirrors and thus complements my treatment of the structure/agency relationship as a dialectic contest. By first reconstructing spectacle and determining how it functioned, and then analysing consumers' capacity or otherwise to resist or contest this function, the nature of the contest is revealed. As we will see, the deployment of this conceptual model reveals that the political agency of consumers became increasingly fractured and restricted as spectacle increased its social influence. Debord isolates two key types of spectacle inherent to the modern era. The first of these is 'diffuse spectacle', which he argues is orchestrated primarily around and through the commodity, advertising, and the media, and celebrates no clear ideology but the ideology of the commodity and its consumption.³⁸ The second is 'concentrated' spectacle, which has a more defined focus and often engages in an explicit celebration of one particular state, leader, or ideology.³⁹ This type

³⁷ See Katie Day Good, 'From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives', *New Media and Society*, 15.4 (2012), 557-573 (p. 564).

³⁸ 'The diffuse form of the spectacle is associated with the abundance of commodities, with the undisturbed development of modern capitalism', Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 42.

³⁹ Debord argues that 'the concentrated form of the spectacle normally characterizes bureaucratic capitalism', which he asserts was the economic mode prevalent in modern totalitarian regimes. Here, he asserts that because commodity production is 'less well-developed', the commodity is represented in a concentrated form: 'the commodity the bureaucracy appropriates is the totality of social labour, and what it sells back to society – *en bloc* – is society's survival. The dictatorship of the bureaucratic economy cannot leave the exploited masses any significant margin of choice because it has had to make *all* the choices itself, and because any choice made independently of it, even the most trivial – concerning food, say, or

of spectacle is synonymous with totalitarian regimes such as those of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.⁴⁰ My central argument is that spectacle began the period in a concentrated form but moved towards a diffuse form in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and that this situation had a profound effect on the mode, manner, and potency of consumers' agency.

Whilst I situate the Exhibition as the progenitor of all forms of modern spectacle, I show that unlike its descendants, the event was manifest as a concentrated spectacle. The Exhibition was underpinned by a grand narrative that celebrated and propagandised the capitalist mode of production and its produce, promising a utopian future in which all would benefit from a luxurious consumer lifestyle. My analysis reveals that spectacle in this concentrated, totalising, narrative-based form was easily disrupted by the pressures of reality. The propagandistic pseudo-world created by the Exhibition was punctured when it was confronted with the socio-economic realities of the system it was attempting to propagandise. Particularly significant in this respect was the way the realities of social exploitation and class pervaded the Exhibition. Whilst the Exhibition was foregrounded as an homage to labour and configured in a manner so as to ostensibly open its material wealth to the democratic accessibility of all, the realities of mid-nineteenth century capitalism determined that it became instead an exclusive social sphere and an event that disavowed the contribution of labour in its spectacular picture of capitalist society. As will become clear, these inconsistencies undermined the propagandistic narrative which underpinned the Exhibition, enabling some spectators of the event to show a critical agency in the face of its spectacle. Indeed, the totalised nature of the event facilitated totalised deconstructions and critical reconstructions, the presence of which further undermined its spectacular narrative.

The second section shows how spectacle grew into a diffuse form as the century progressed. Through an analysis of the development of late-Victorian advertising, I argue that spectacle ceased conveying coherent narratives and transmuted into an environment of fragmentation, disjuncture, and displacement. Capital's consolidation on the world stage by the later portions of the century, coupled with the fact that consumerism was taking root in the social and cultural psyche, provided the necessary conditions for the spectacle of capitalism to

music – amounts to a declaration of war to the death bureaucracy', Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁰ See Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, pp. 41-42.

be told – and sold – through its individual products. The mode of production or the consumer way of life no longer need to be propagandised as heavily as they were during the mid-century, allowing spectacle's representative emphasis to devolve from producing system to produced commodity. In this milieu, individual commodities were advertised as autonomous objects, unconnected to a producing system, and were directly posed in contestation with one another. I demonstrate that when these individual advertisements were aggregated, the picture of the world they held up to the consumer amounted to chaos: a world in which things could simultaneously mean anything, everything, and absolutely nothing at all. Amid this disjuncture, the realities of social life were obscured. Whereas the coherent propagandistic narratives of early spectacle attempted to conceal reality and real social relations through fetishized narratives, late-century spectacle did so through fragmentation, displacement, disarticulation, and disjuncture. I expand on this analysis by showing that spectacle's fragmentation also caused other forms of narrative to fragment. I develop this strand of argument through an analysis of the influence of advertising content on the coverage of the Great Dock Strike of 1889 in the *Illustrated London News*. I show how the realities of the strike were obscured and undermined by the adverts with which it shared the publication's pages. Where in one instance, the paper's coverage might reveal the strike as an event of great social magnitude and a significant threat to the consumer way of life, the presence of advertisements disrupted this narrative by asserting the imperviousness of consumerism and the spectacle to real-world happenings. The impact of the coverage of the strike was therefore diminished, and the event itself framed as a mere spectacle jostling for attention amongst other spectacular fragments. The analysis of the form and function of late-century spectacle is developed further by a case study on the ideological content of soap advertising, which allows me to propose that following its diffusion and fragmentation, spectacle manifested as a pseudo-world offering an ostensibly carnivalesque experience of life and social relations. Detached from any duty to a narrative of production or the consumer system, soap advertisers were able to reimagine the commodity as something oppositional to industrial reality. For instance, soap was often framed as a means by which middle and working-class women could escape the drudgery of domestic work and break the ideological confines imposed on them by society. Soap advertising invited women to expend political agency in the consumption of a commodity that was in fact a mainstay of the domestic economy from which it promised them escape. Similarly, soap was also advertised as a means by which consumers could protect themselves from the perils of a globalised modern world, even though soap itself was a product of the very same industrial modernity. In this fashion, spectacle was used to encourage consumers to expend their subversive energies in the milieu

of consumption, and thus began to siphon transformative social activity. I also use this case study to foreground the diversity of ideological content in soap advertising. In order to appear as a pseudo-world offering carnivalesque redemption to all, soap advertisers had to be flexible and fluid with their use of ideology. By examining soap advertising's relationship to imperialist ideologies, I show that adverts containing different ideological messages were produced to ensure that the diverse range of views of empire and globalisation held by the consumer population were catered to and exploited.

I argue that the arrival of diffuse, fragmented spectacle in the later decades of the nineteenth century had a profound effect on the capacity of consumers and spectators to operate effective forms of perception and critique, and that it signalled a co-option of agency by spectacle. This argument is consolidated in the final chapter of the section, in which a case study on the practice of scrapbooking is used to reconstruct the agency of the late-century consumer. Scrapbooking was a popular practice during the era and was a central element of consumer culture. Because the practice involved consumers engaging with and reassembling elements of spectacle such as advertising and trade card, it offers a valuable insight into the way consumers interacted with the late-century spectacle. My analysis of late-century scrapbooks reveals that the fragmented character of spectacle was corresponded by a fragmentation of consumer perception and agency. Scrapbookers who took to their project with political motivations were often thwarted in those ambitions by the commercial nature of their material and the consumerism inherent in the activity itself. I exemplify this situation through a focussed analysis of the scrapbook of Alice Cliff Scatcherd, a prominent campaigner for women's political rights who attempted to use her scrapbook to narrativize the suffragist cause.

The study concludes with a coda in which the paradigm developed through the historical analysis is applied to a consideration of contemporary spectacle and its role in 'the postmodern condition'. Here, I discuss social media as part of the contemporary digital spectacle, showing how this form of spectacle essentially functions on the same principles as its nineteenth-century predecessor, yet with greater manipulative efficiency. This analysis enables me to connect the historical analysis to the present day and foreground the relevance of this history to understanding our current situation. I argue that the essential characteristics of the postmodern world are rooted in spectacle and the commodity fetish and that postmodernity began to emerge with the diffuse spectacle of the late nineteenth century.

Part One: The Spectacle of the Great Exhibition of 1851

Introduction

In this section, I define and explore the type of spectacle presented at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and then proceed to examine critical responses to the event to gauge how, and to what extent, spectators were able to operate agency in its wake. I argue that the Exhibition was a concentrated spectacle that featured a coherent fetishized and propagandistic narrative about the capitalist mode of production, and that this narrative figured as an attempt to foreground the potentials of consumer capitalism, educate and inculcate a new class of consumers, and heal – or obscure – the social and class divisions rife during the period. I subsequently argue that this narrative was undermined because of its very coherence: because it starkly contrasted with the realities of mid-century social life, its superficiality was all too apparent. I will show that the conspicuous disjuncture between reality and the Exhibition's spectacle meant that the event invited totalised and effective critiques.

The argument in this section is presented across four chapters. The first of these reconstructs the Exhibition's spectacle, underlining its ideological makeup and showing what kind of story about the world the event told, and why. I demonstrate that the Exhibition projected a spectacular narrative about the production of commodities which promised that consumer capitalism would create a utopia which would benefit all. The second and third chapters explore the Exhibition's incongruous relationship with reality. Chapter Two highlights the way in which the working classes undermined the propagandistic rhetoric about the event's – and consumer society's – supposed inclusivity by either staying away or creating a visual disjuncture when they did appear. Chapter Three focusses on the problems the event's organisers faced in incorporating representations of labour into the displays. Because the utopian narrative of the Exhibition precluded acknowledgement of the realities of labour, representations of work and workers were either omitted from the event or dealt with awkwardly. The final chapter features an analysis of critical responses to the event, showing that because of the disjuncture between reality and the Exhibition, spectators were able to critique the event in a totalised and effective fashion, indicating that the event had little impact on their agency, and indeed encouraged it.

As well as critically developing Richards's Debordian interpretation of the Exhibition, this study also engages with and challenges poststructuralist social histories of the event and of Victorian social relations more generally. Alongside its effect on cultural theory and approaches to cultural history, poststructuralism has also heavily influenced social history. In accordance with the tenets of poststructuralism, historians of the 'linguistic turn' reconceptualised social

life as a discursive construct underpinned by language and bearing only arbitrary relationships to social and economic structures. In Victorian studies, Gareth Stedman Jones and Patrick Joyce presented influential linguistic analyses that proposed that the Victorian working classes identified themselves discursively, and often in ways other than proletarian, and that radical movements were generated and shaped through this pluralistic discourse rather than through socio-economic contexts.⁴¹ As a long-standing reference point of social history and mid-Victorian class relations, the Exhibition has invited linguistic appraisal, most notably by Jeffrey Auerbach in his *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (1999). Here Auerbach argues that the Exhibition ‘included something for almost everyone’ and that it was ‘a protean event with numerous possible meanings.’⁴² Whilst the linguistic approach to history is valuable in terms of the insight it provides into social experience and the creation of identity, it often overlooks the interaction between material factors and discourse. This study challenges Auerbach’s conclusions, and by extension those of poststructuralist social history more broadly, by demonstrating that in the case of the Exhibition, discourse was heavily shaped by material factors, and distorted by and through the event’s fetish narrative. The Exhibition presented a spectacle that was ostensibly protean and democratic, but this was an illusion: the way working-class and radical commentators critiqued the event emphasises that the rhetoric and the visual spectacle surrounding it starkly contrasted real social conditions.

The analysis featured in this section employs two broad categories of evidence, each of which is used to establish different facets of the historical moment at hand. The first body of evidence is used to gain an understanding of the parameters and content of the pseudo-world conjured at the Exhibition and is largely composed of surviving elements of the media spectacle which surrounded the event, as well as guidebooks and other Exhibition-themed literature which fed into its spectacular dynamic. Because of their status as one of the most fundamental components of mid-century spectacle, and because the Exhibition was extensively reported on,

⁴¹ See Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and ‘A People and a Class’, *Class*, ed. by Patrick Joyce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) pp. 161-162. The proposals set forth by proponents of the linguistic turn instigated much debate within social history – see Miles Taylor, ‘Rethinking the Chartists: Searching for Synthesis in the Historiography of Chartism’ *The Historical Journal*, 39.2 (1996), 479-495 for a review of this debate.

⁴² Jeffrey Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 2.

newspapers and periodicals feature with regularity in the coming analysis.⁴³ News media provides a particularly valuable source in that it was not only at the forefront of the Victorian spectacle, but also Victorian society more generally – the nineteenth century was, according to Rosemary VanArsdel, ‘uniquely the age of the periodical’.⁴⁴ Newspapers and periodicals dominated the social and cultural agenda of the age and pervaded all aspects of life. As staple artefacts of the Victorian society of spectacle, and as the conduits by which the spectacle of the Exhibition spread beyond the walls of the Crystal Palace, these sources enable a vivid picture to be painted of the pseudo-world presented by the event, and of the ideology and rhetoric that supported it. Indeed, in many ways, the Great Exhibition was not just one of the first major forms of capitalist spectacle, it was also arguably the subject of the world’s first media spectacle. For contemporaries, the occasion was staggeringly pervasive, a situation mused upon by an author of an article published in *Household Words* following the summer of 1851:

Wherever you have gone – the one great topic of conversation has been the Great Exhibition; the one great topic of the newspapers was the Great Exhibition; the Great Exhibition met your eye on all walls, and in the windows of shops, post-offices, and railway stations, on placards and in great letters.⁴⁵

Newspaper and periodical sources belonging to this first category of evidence are at times treated somewhat amorphously in the coming analysis. The differentiations between different newspapers and periodicals in terms of precise political or ideological stance and readership are sometimes overlooked. Whilst this approach undeniably restricts a nuanced handling of the sources, it is also entirely necessary in terms of the milieu of this analysis. Because this analysis is not concerned with the way individual publications functioned or represented their subject matter, but rather with the manner in which the Victorian news media as a whole presented life, the world, and society to its readers, on many occasions the print

⁴³ As Geoffrey Cantor notes in ‘Reporting the Great Exhibition’ in *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 182-200 (p.182). Cantor emphasises the inherent relationship between the periodical press and the Exhibition, arguing that the event was ‘a creation of the periodical press’ (p. 182) because it helped launch a variety of publications and enabled extant ones to ‘thrive’ (p. 183).

⁴⁴ Rosemary T. VanArsdel, ‘Introduction’, *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*, ed. by J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), pp. 3-8 (p. 7).

⁴⁵ ‘A Pilgrimage to the Great Exhibition from Abroad’, *Household Words*, 28 June 1851, pp. 321-324, (p. 321).

media is required to be conceptualised here in its general form rather than as individual elements, as *spectacle* rather than as individual publications. As Asa Briggs and Peter Burke assert, in order to understand the ‘social and cultural consequences’ of print media, it is necessary ‘to view all the different means of communication as interdependent, treating them as a package, a repertoire, a system, or what the French call a ‘regime’, whether authoritarian, democratic, bureaucratic, or capitalist.’⁴⁶ What is important to keep in mind here is that the news media of the Victorian period was a major industry, and its ‘regime’ overwhelmingly capitalist. The proprietors of most of the significant titles had strong vested interests in the capitalist system and the development of a consumer society – interests which tended to ultimately outweigh macro-historically trivial differences in political and ideological outlook.⁴⁷ Ideologically comparable newspapers or periodicals also often shared from a specific pool of writers, and even reprinted each other’s articles.⁴⁸ A vast swathe of the newspaper and periodical titles which feature heavily as sources in this analysis – the *Illustrated London News*, *Bell’s Life in London*, *Household Words*, the *Daily News*, and the *Morning Chronicle*, conformed to the same overarching economic ideology - one of free-trade capitalism. This shared ideology led to many convergences in terms of coverage, especially regarding events in which commerce played a central role, such as the Great Exhibition of 1851. Indeed, as will be seen, many of the aforementioned titles offered an ultimately uniform perspective on, and narrative of, the Exhibition, each producing a celebratory, spectacular coverage of the event. Perhaps key amongst these sources, and thus most significantly relied upon in this respect, is the *Illustrated London News* (*ILN*). The *ILN*’s significance to this study is underpinned by its contemporaneous status as pioneer of the illustrated newspaper format, and the fact that it enjoyed a high-circulation amongst the middle classes of the period.⁴⁹ The publication can thus be regarded as

⁴⁶ Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: from Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 19.

⁴⁷ Herbert Ingram, the creator of the *ILN*, for instance, was ‘ambitious to make money fast’ as a young man, a drive which ‘encouraged’ him ‘in his ambition to found a newspaper’. Ingram was also a Liberal MP in his later years. See Isabel Bailey, ‘Ingram, Herbert’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14416>> [accessed 4 Dec 2014].

⁴⁸ Lucy Brown, ‘The Treatment of the News in Mid-Victorian Newspapers’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (1970), 23-39 (p. 25).

⁴⁹ Richards, p. 9.

the central print-media component of mid-century spectacular society. Its coverage of the Exhibition was also particularly extensive, and its spectacle especially intertwined with that of the Exhibition⁵⁰ - indeed, one of the exhibits at the Crystal Palace was a printing press which churned out commemorative editions of the paper.⁵¹ Of course, it must be acknowledged that not all readers consumed media publications as intended: the sentiments and ideologies communicated by such publications may not always have been uncritically imbibed by their readers. Nevertheless, a review of such publications can provide a direct and unmediated insight into the way the spectacle of the Exhibition was presented through media reportage, enabling a picture of the Exhibition's spectacle, if not the way in which it was received, to be reconstructed.

Whilst, where appropriate, newspaper and periodical sources are treated abstractly as spectacular sources, the fact that not all Victorian newspapers and periodicals conformed to a pro-capitalist, pro-Exhibition ideology is also both recognised and exploited. Indeed, at the time of the Exhibition there were also a number of prominent protectionist papers, such as *John Bull*, a title which offered a vehemently disparaging view of the Exhibition throughout, as well as radical newspapers and journals such as the *Northern Star*, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, and *The Leader*, all of which also adopted critical stances toward the event. These latter titles form the basis of the second category of evidence used in this study, which is used to evaluate the extent and manner of the critical agency mid-century Victorians were able to display in the face of Exhibition spectacle. These sources are particularly valuable in that, in contrast to the abundance of spectacular source material pertaining to the Exhibition available from the period, a relative paucity of evidence that can offer perspectives on the interactions of 'everyday' spectators, both as individuals and as groups, has survived. This means that the aforementioned titles from the anti-Exhibition radical press have proved particularly useful in that they enable an understanding of the manner in which the pseudo-world at the Exhibition was critiqued and contested by politically radical sections of the working classes. Other forms of evidence used in

⁵⁰ Sabine Clemm highlights the extent of the *ILN's* coverage by noting that it 'featured plenty of illustrations and descriptions from the moment the construction of the Crystal Palace began, ran double numbers for the first two months of the Exhibition and supplements after that (with one number covering its usual breadth and the extra number or supplement almost exclusively covering the Exhibition), and issued numbers in German and French for the benefit of foreign visitors.' See Sabine Clemm, "'Amidst the heterogeneous masses": Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and the Great Exhibition of 1851', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 27.3 (2005) 207–230, (p. 209).

⁵¹ 'A Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, n.p.

this respect include extracts from the diaries and letters of those who experienced the Exhibition, such as Charlotte Bronte and the American Horace Greeley. These sources are typically of bourgeois origin and thus give an insight into how the middle classes received the spectacle of the Exhibition.

A vast array of the newspaper and periodical sources used in this section and throughout the rest of the thesis have been accessed in digital form. As James Mussell asserts, digitization presents a complex new mode of archival access that offers both advantages and problems to the historian.⁵² Whilst digitization of the press and other aspects of Victorian spectacle such as advertising 'provides an opportunity to reimagine what we know about the nineteenth century', Mussell warns that 'digitization always represents a transformation of the source material' and that it is therefore important that historians work to understand the nature and effect of these transformations.⁵³ In the context of this study, the availability of digitised sources that can be readily accessed, searched, and cross-referenced has been invaluable in building a nuanced picture of the Victorian and Edwardian spectacle. Without such sources, the spectacle of the era could not be reconstructed with the requisite breadth and depth to make this endeavour tenable, certainly not with the time restrictions and other practical considerations inherent in any doctoral research project. As Mussell points out, however, by searching digital sources by keyword, the research process can be undermined by overemphasis on the textual aspects of such resources over other aspects.⁵⁴ The most significant of these other aspects in terms of this study are the visual ones: given this study is as much if not more concerned with the visual, spectacular aspect of newspapers and periodicals as the textual, such a methodology risks underplaying the very focus of the project. This issue has been countered in two ways. Firstly, by concentrating on the illustrated press, in which images are often findable via textual search through the titles or headers under which they fall or the articles they are attached to, I have been able to use the method to explore the imagistic content and properties of the sources alongside the textual ones. Secondly, I have augmented my use of keyword searches with a fuller exploration of digital sources, specifically in terms of reading full issues from 'cover to cover' to process the material in a form closer to the way in which it would have been by contemporaries,

⁵² James Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), p. 1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 31.

and to ensure items and aspects of the sources not revealed by keyword search are detected and acknowledged.

Chapter One: The Concentrated Spectacle of the Great Exhibition

In its debut appearance on the national and international stage, spectacle appeared in a form substantially different to that which was to accompany capitalism into the twentieth century and beyond. At the Great Exhibition of 1851, spectacle emerged as a relatively well-defined, coherent world-picture, and conveyed a connected and ostensibly realistic narrative. The 'pseudo-world' conjured by the Exhibition projected a prototypical consumer utopia, constructed through the commodity, and underpinned by a spectacular representation of the capitalist mode of production. Through this arrangement, the Exhibition propagandised free trade capitalist economics, and linked the capitalist mode of production to a fantastic vision of a heaven on Earth constructed through its commoditised produce. This totalised, coherent spectacle was designed to orient a society then unable to fully read capitalism and its materials into a new world powered by capital and transfigured through the commodity, and to fully establish capitalism's economic dominance on an international scale.

Heaven on Earth: a totalising narrative

Inside the glass walls of the Crystal Palace, all of earthly time and space was compressed. Running water, sunlight, exotic and native flora and fauna, and material produce from across the globe were brought together and formed into an artificial geography consisting of groups of 'nations' clustered around a central transept, which functioned during the summer of 1851 as 'the equator of the world in Hyde Park'.⁵⁵ The Great Exhibition was not just an exhibition of objects from across the globe, it was itself a 'little model of the world',⁵⁶ or, as *The Athenaeum* had it, 'the whole world concentrated in a mere point in space'.⁵⁷ This microcosmic representation enabled the world in all its totality to be imagined anew. Through the commodity, its foundational representational tenet, the Exhibition projected a prototypical utopian space. It offered its visitors a spectacular picture of the world as a consumer haven,

⁵⁵ 'The Great Exhibition', *The Illustrated Exhibitor*, 7 June 1851, p. 9.

⁵⁶ 'The Great Exhibition', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 2 March 1851, p. 3.

⁵⁷ 'The Great Exhibition', *The Athenaeum*, 3 May 1851, 477-479, (p. 478).

divine in its aesthetic dimensions, and abundant in fantastic material conveniences of all descriptions. The sense of utopia at the Exhibition was conveyed in a number of ways. Perhaps the most fundamental of these was the sheer abundance of commodities on show. This was, as Thomas Richards has observed, ‘the largest display of commodities that had ever been gathered together under one roof’.⁵⁸ Indeed, this was a veritable Land of Cockaigne, where, as a reporter for the *Athenaeum* put it, ‘the senses, the imagination, and the intellect, all find food in overabundance.’⁵⁹ Observers were in awe of the dense array of objects that lay before them. ‘[S]o vast and multitudinous is the assemblage of objects’, noted *The Examiner*, ‘that an entire day scarcely suffices to take the most cursory view’,⁶⁰ whilst the American statesman and regular Exhibition visitor Horace Greeley, upon having just returned from his seventh day-long tour of the Exhibition, declared that ‘I believe I have thus far been among the most industrious visitors, and yet I have not yet even glanced at one-half the articles exhibited, while I have *only* glanced at most of those I have seen.’⁶¹ In creating this picture of unparalleled material plenitude, the Exhibition promised that such abundance would soon be available in the wider world outside the walls of the Crystal Palace. As Richards argues, ‘the Exhibition projected an image of *surplus*’, and ‘promised, in a way that is very hard to pin down’, that access to such a wealth of commodities would ‘one day be democratically available to anyone and everyone.’⁶²

Another significant utopian facet of the Exhibition spectacle was the astonishingly diverse array of consumptive experiences the visitor could undertake. The Exhibition collapsed a wealth of consumptive options from across the globe into a single, easily traversable structure. Explorers in the Crystal Palace could shift through time and space in seconds, consuming diverse aspects of life and the world via an eclectic array of material spectacles. They could wander

⁵⁸ Richards, p. 17.

⁵⁹ ‘The Great Industrial Exhibition’, *The Athenaeum*, 10 May 1851, 500-501, (p. 500).

⁶⁰ ‘The Great Exhibition’, *Examiner*, 10 May 1851, 297-299, (p. 297)

⁶¹ Horace Greeley, *Glances at Europe In a Series of Letters from Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, &c. During the Summer of 1851* (New York: Dewitt and Davenport Publishers, 1851), p. 33.

⁶² Richards, p. 28, pp. 19-20.

through a full-scale model of a Pompeian court,⁶³ wonder at the industrial wares of Sheffield or Birmingham, gaze at exotic stuffed animals from the Americas, or walk ‘amidst the icebergs and bleak desolateness of the North Pole’.⁶⁴ They could learn about the mining of coal or turn their eye to a detailed model of the Liverpool docks. They could glide through India, France, Canada, and New Zealand, or take in the ‘Ethnological and Natural History Department’, which ‘illustrated’ ‘Asiatic, African, and Australian races of human beings and wild animals.’⁶⁵ They could marvel at objects allegorically or scientifically representing time and the universe,⁶⁶ or contemplate ‘dioramas of cities, models of churches, and booths displaying fabrics, furs, and tools of every size and description.’⁶⁷ They could mingle amongst fine sculpture, tropical plants and glass fountains in the sun-drenched central transept, or browse ornaments whilst listening to the melodic tunes of Joseph Franz Haydn’s ‘The Creation’ issuing from a giant organ in the nave.⁶⁸ The visitor was apparently able to ‘obtain a perfect idea’ of places and peoples ‘existing thousands of miles away’ at the Exhibition - to take ‘A Journey Round the World in the Crystal Palace’,⁶⁹ indirectly experiencing and gaining instruction on an all-encompassing range of social, environmental, and cultural phenomena. In its self-contained totality, its picture of immense material plenitude, its fashioning of a new, commoditized landscape, and its presentation of a diversified and globalised repertoire of consumptive options, the Exhibition authored a spectacular consumer wonder-world, a millenarian space which spoke explicitly and exquisitely of a forthcoming ‘heaven on earth’.

⁶³ ‘A Day at the Crystal Palace’, *The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation*, 2 October 1856, 632-636 (p. 632).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ There were Mr Naysmyth’s ‘Lunar Maps’. See ‘Maps and Globes in the Palace of Glass’, *The Athenaeum*, 28 June 1851, p. 686.

⁶⁷ Richards, p. 24.

⁶⁸ ‘The Great Exhibition’ *Illustrated London News*, 29 March 1851, p. 257.

⁶⁹ ‘A Journey Round the World in the Crystal Palace’, *Sharpe’s London Journal*, July 1851, pp. 315-320.

Fetishized commodities or a fetishized economy?

Because of the commodity-centric nature of this utopian wonderworld, the Exhibition can easily be interpreted in terms of its fetishized aesthetic. This is how Thomas Richards approaches the event in his *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (1991). Here, Richards demonstrates how the Exhibition consolidated and developed a specific system of representation for the fetishized commodity (inherited from the spectacles of the Parisian arcades earlier in the century). Richards outlines the manner in which manufactured objects became 'autonomous icons' at the Exhibition: 'ordered into taxonomies, set on pedestals and flooded with light...things now spoke for themselves, using ... a language of their own.'⁷⁰ Richards subsequently argues that this mode of abstracted representation would set the mould for the Victorian advertising spectacle that succeeded it, becoming 'the master fiction' around which the consumer society of the Victorian middle class was organised.⁷¹ For Richards, the spectacular culture initiated by the Exhibition was predicated on the use of the language of commodity fetishism to converse in national ideological narratives. He demonstrates, for instance, the manner in which spectacle promoted the commodity as a vanguard of imperialism, envisaging it as a 'magic medium through which English power and influence could be enforced and enlarged in the colonial world,' and how commodity and monarchy became suffused in spectacular fashion during Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 'creating a staging ground capable of uniting two very different conceptions of authority that had long shared a common space of representation.'⁷²

Important though Richards's study is (his is the first analysis to identify the existence of, and demarcate the functions of, a Victorian consumer spectacle), it is nevertheless lacking in certain key respects. Indeed, although Richards's analysis is conducted through the lens of Debordian theory, he neglects to consider spectacle in the fullness of its fetishistic capacity – in its tendency to absorb aspects of life belonging to both infrastructure (the productive mechanisms of a society) and superstructure (a society's cultural, social, and legal networks). Instead, Richards appears to revert to a conventional reading of Marx's original theory, in which,

⁷⁰ Richards, p. 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 53.

⁷² Richards, p. 75.

because the commodity is detached from production in the process of fetishization, production and other infrastructural elements of society are presumed to be absent from the lexicon of fetish. This presumption leads Richards to regard spectacle only in its absorption and regurgitation of elements of superstructural life. However, as Debord suggests, and as will be shown through the following analysis, spectacle casts its net much wider than this: it also makes a fetish out of the infrastructural elements of life, including production and labour.⁷³ Richards's analysis is therefore restricted in its reading: it only isolates one aspect of the Exhibition's spectacle in what can actually be seen as a much broader fetishistic picture. As will be shown, the commodity was not fetishized in isolation at the Exhibition, but rather as part of a wider fetishization which extended to the production of commodities, and the labour on which the production of those commodities relied.

In his *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order* (2009), Paul Young, adopting a different approach to that taken by Richards, draws out economic aspects of the Exhibition's ideology and spectacle. Young outlines how the Exhibition became infused with a 'good story' which advertised the ability of a globalised, free-market capitalist system predicated on a global division of labour to create a society abundant in wealth and free from suffering.⁷⁴ Young describes how this 'good story' vindicated capitalist socio-economic structures and laid the blueprint for the intense capitalistic imperial expansion that took place throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. He suggests that the Exhibition thus 'became a decisive moment in the formation of a world picture that became durably embedded in Victorian society, that was transmitted throughout the nineteenth-century world, and that continues to exert a strong hold over global politics and culture today.'⁷⁵ Young's study brings to the fore the idea that the Exhibition was not merely a spectacular validation or representation of capitalism's materiality, but also of its functionality. At first sight, the fundamental tenets of the readings produced by Richards and Young would appear to be at odds with one another. For Richards, the Exhibition consolidated the idea that commodities came out of nowhere, arriving

⁷³ Debord notes that 'the whole of life', not just production, 'presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was once directly lived has become mere representation.' - Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, p. 12.

⁷⁴ Paul Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan), pp. 4-5.

⁷⁵ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, p. 7.

in the realm of the consumer as if by magic, fully shed of their industrial origins and conversant in mystical languages of their own creation. For Young, on the other hand, the Exhibition was an economic spectacle which revealed rather than concealed, albeit in propagandistic fashion, the macro-functions and social relations of the capitalist system. Indeed, Young and Richards both contend that the *productional* and *consumptional* aspects of the Exhibition's representational configuration were fully independent of one another. Richards is keen to emphasise the detachment of the Exhibition's spectacular commodity aesthetic from any relationship with production, whilst Young detects tension between the economic narrative he identifies and readings of the Exhibition which focus on its fetishized commodity aesthetic - such as Richards's. It will be argued here, however, that rather than being two incongruent facets of a dichotomised event, the economic and commodity-fetishizing narratives of the Exhibition are in fact readable as interlocking aspects of a single spectacular narrative.

The economic and commodity narratives isolated by Young and Richards respectively were in fact two parts of one totalising spectacle. The spectacle of the Exhibition, both in the spaces of the Crystal Palace and in the accompanying media coverage, communicated a fetishized economic picture in which the utopian spaces of the commodity arena were positioned as the specific invention of the capitalist mode of production. The Exhibition maintained the link between commodity and production in its grand picture, albeit in spectacular, fetishized form. In this fashion, the consumer haven it presented was synchronised with Victorian narratives of progress, and the capitalist mode of production was posited as the ideal vehicle of such progress. As the following analysis will show, production and consumption were explicitly linked both in the media coverage of the event and in the material configuration and spatial organisation of the Crystal Palace itself. These links, however, were nearly always fetishized. Media coverage of the Crystal Palace's construction and the organisation of its internal displays painted a spectacular picture of a magical mode of production constructing a consumer fairyland. In the spaces of the Exhibition itself, production was fetishized through the foregrounding of apparently animate machines over human labour: production was made to appear labour-less.

The Exhibition's two-fold fetish

As a project, the Exhibition was explicitly fuelled by the technologies and organisational prowess of capitalism, and the spectacular world-in-miniature that it created accentuated and embellished these capabilities. As the *ILN* observed, the very idea and realisation of the Exhibition owed much to the 'practical annihilation of space and time' facilitated by 'the railway system', and the futuristic picture presented by the Exhibition promised that the technologies

of capitalism would heighten this ‘annihilation’ in due course.⁷⁶ *The Times* asserted that ‘condensation is the rule of an economizing age. Mr. Wyld has got the globe into the center of Leicester-square, and the Crystal Palace has been accurately described as “the world under a glass case.”’⁷⁷ The Exhibition’s representational environment was formatted in terms of capitalism’s ability to remove the barriers of space and time, and densely populated with the pinnacle of capitalism’s productive powers: the commodity. Through this arrangement, the spectacle of the Exhibition envisaged a model consumer landscape in which all of life and the world, in short, everything, was made immediately accessible and consumable. The Exhibition drew the most desirable elements of the world together in compact, easily-consumable form, and thus demonstrated capitalism’s potential to do the same: to condense, as the *Theatrical Journal* put it, ‘all that is admirable and elegant, and costly and useful, into one huge show-room’.⁷⁸

The Crystal Palace itself, widely regarded for its architectural worth, was perspicuously set as an exemplar of capitalist production’s ability to create magnificent, utopian structures and spaces. The building was regarded as a ‘marvellous example’ of the ‘highest achievements of the industry of the age [...] based on science, constructed by industry, and perfected by art.’⁷⁹ As Herbert Sussmann has shown, the construction of the Crystal Palace marked the beginning of a new era of ‘factory-style’ architectural production – it was the first architectural project of such scale to feature the use of pre-fabricated parts, heavy machinery, and an intense division of labour in the construction process. The erection of the building was therefore able to take place with great efficiency and at a speed never witnessed before in architectural production.⁸⁰ The rapidity with which this captivatingly new and innovative piece of architecture was erected

⁷⁶ ‘The Great Exhibition’, *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, Great Exhibition Supplement, p. 343.

⁷⁷ ‘The Great Exhibition’, *The Times*, 28 April 1851, p. 5. The article is referring to James Wyld’s ‘The Great Globe’, which was an interactive scale model of the planet established in Leicester Square in the summer of 1851.

⁷⁸ ‘Opening of the Exhibition on Thursday, May 1, 1851’, *Theatrical Journal*, May 1851, 147-148 (p. 148).

⁷⁹ ‘A Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry’, *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, n.p.

⁸⁰ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation, and the Rise of the Machine* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 2009), p. 58.

was marvelled at effusively. Significantly, the construction of the Crystal Palace was frequently described in fairy-tale terms. For instance, the author of Routledge's *A Guide to the Great Exhibition* (1851) remarked that:

Enchanted palaces that grow up in a night are confined to fairyland, and in this material world of ours the labours of the bricklayer and the carpenter are notoriously neverending. It took 300 years to build St Peter's at Rome [...] Something very different from this was promised for the great edifice in Hyde Park. Not only was it to rise with extraordinary rapidity, but in every other respect is to be suggestive of 'Arabian Nights remembrances.'⁸¹

Again, in Samuel Prout Newcombe's children's book *Little Henry's Holiday at the Great Exhibition* (1851), when asked how the Crystal Palace was built by his son Henry, narrator Papa replies: 'Oh, how did it arise?...How? Swiftly and silently, almost like some fairy scene; and yet, with labour, as all the rest had been done. Industry has made many a fairy scene, and her secret is, - work! work! work!'⁸² Henry's Papa associates the Crystal Palace's construction with fairyland yet more explicitly in his description of the production process: 'by waggon loads they came, - girders and trusses, columns and ribs, of iron and wood. Then, they fitted one to another, forming a framework fairy-like and fine for transparent glass.'⁸³ This recurring equation of industry with magic is stark evidence of the magical, utopian powers attributed to capitalist production in Exhibition rhetoric. As a building, the Crystal Palace was rendered as emblematic of capitalism's capacity to forge a dream-like utopian landscape dotted with treasure-filled crystal castles. As is implied in the words of little Henry's Papa, however, this was no dream, but a reality: with the assistance of the Protestant work ethic, and capitalist technological apparatus and organisational principles, industry truly had made a 'fairy scene'.⁸⁴ It had constructed the kind of landscape that could previously only have been imagined in the domain of fiction and fairy-tale. The speed at which the Crystal Palace was constructed also served as a reference to the speed at which capitalism, if invested with full faith and energy, could fabricate the broader

⁸¹ Author unknown, *A Guide to the Great Exhibition* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851), p. 29.

⁸² Samuel Prout Newcombe, *Little Henry's Holiday at the Great Exhibition* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1851), p. 15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

social utopia – the global capitalist fairyland – that the Exhibition promised. For pro-Exhibition commentators, the ability of capitalist production to construct this glorious, magical commodity arena – this ‘fairy dream... realised in a fairy palace, in which were collected the wealth and wonders of a universe’ – thus epitomised the wider utopian potentials of industry.⁸⁵

The media’s translocation of the Crystal Palace’s construction into fairyland is also significant in its mystification of the labour processes at hand. The brevity of the Crystal Palace’s construction seemed to indicate that the labour which contributed to it was light and easy, especially so when framed within the media’s fairyland rhetoric. Labour here became magical and mythical – conducted, perhaps, by fairies instead of human workers. As Nicola Bown has argued, fairies and fairyland were commonly used by the Victorians as Arcadian replacements for industry and the working class.⁸⁶ Bown argues that by performing such a mythical reimagining of the working class, the Victorian middle class could alleviate concerns and fears surrounding the realities of industrial labour and those who performed it.⁸⁷ Therefore, whilst production was foregrounded in the construction of the Crystal Palace and the Exhibition, it was highly fetishized. This evident sidestepping of economic realities is demonstrative of the Exhibition’s awkward relationship with the realities of production and labour, a subject which will be examined in greater detail later. Indeed, as shall soon become clear, in the spectacular story of production told within the Exhibition itself, the problems of labour could not be wished away into fairyland as it was by those who commentated on the construction of the Crystal Palace.

Exhibition commentary and rhetoric was rooted in the language of fairy-tales but was nevertheless explicit in attributing the magic of the occasion to industry and the capitalist mode of production. Through the discourse surrounding the construction of the Crystal Palace and the organisation of the internal displays, capitalism’s productive, distributive, and organisational capacities were emphasised, and the fairy-tale configuration of the world it sought to construct was foregrounded. As well as demonstrating its powers of construction and organisation, the Exhibition’s utopian spectacle also enunciated the purported emancipative and ameliorative

⁸⁵ ‘The Eight Wonder of the World’, *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 9 May 1851, n.p.

⁸⁶ Nicola Bown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 45.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 84.

capabilities of capitalism. As aforementioned, the Exhibition's projection of a commodity utopia relied heavily on its communication of a democratically-accessible array of material abundance. The sheer number of objects that populated the Exhibition spoke of a coming world of material plenitude, which, naturally, would be accessible by all. This notion of commodity abundance was also firmly installed in Exhibition rhetoric. The *ILN* (the ultimate pro-free market and pro-Exhibition newspaper, and the ultimate promoter of visual spectacle), for instance, was quick to endorse the event as one which would make manifest capitalism's potential to extend the 'blessings of civilisation' to 'a far more numerous class than those which are now familiar with them'.⁸⁸ It was not only through the material output of industry that the Exhibition announced capitalism's ameliorative potential. It was widely believed that the mechanised production methods pioneered by capitalism would one day liberate humanity from the burden of labour. Mechanisation would not only 'by cheapening, give countless comforts and enjoyments to the masses',⁸⁹ but also remove the obligation of labour: 'steam and iron' proclaimed a report in the *Illustrated Exhibitor* 'ought to, and eventually will, do the positive labour of the world – the lifting, carrying, driving, and toiling'.⁹⁰ Similarly, in an Exhibition article featured in *The Times*, 'mechanism' is exhorted for its capacity to relieve labour from its drudgery, and delegate to iron, to steam, and to the other powers of the inanimate world as much as possible of the burden of toil.⁹¹

As in the media coverage of the Exhibition, production and consumption were also overtly linked within the actual spaces of the Crystal Palace. Indeed, the utopian commodity vistas on show at the Crystal Palace were not isolated like those of a modern shopping complex, but rather were complemented and supported by spectacular images of the capitalist mode of production. The content and spatial layout of the Exhibition was configured in an attempt to highlight industry's role in the creation of its spectacular commodity realm. Production at the Exhibition was represented by the classes of exhibits displayed in the raw materials and machinery departments located on the ground floor of the building. Here, at the base of this

⁸⁸ 'The Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, 343-344, (p. 344).

⁸⁹ As asserted by the unknown author of Routledge's *A Guide to the Great Exhibition*, p. 38.

⁹⁰ *The Illustrated Exhibitor*, 14 June 1851, pp. 41-42.

⁹¹ 'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 15 May 1851, p. 5.

castle of commodities, could be seen the metal, steam-powered heart which pumped out the mass of wondrous things that glittered in the galleries above and in the transept and the central aisles between. The machinery department was located at ground-level within the Crystal Palace, and it also grounded the totalising spectacle envisaged there. Just as it functioned as the infrastructural hub of capitalist society, production was positioned at the infrastructural core of the Exhibition. The machinery department could thus be recognised as the engine which fed the glorious arenas of consumption above – as the cornerstone upon which the Exhibition’s current utopia was built, and upon which capitalism’s future utopia would be built. Thus, although the magnificent commodity parades at the Exhibition were presented in fetishistic fashion, they were not designed to be read as spectacular ‘things out of nowhere’, but instead in their explicit connection to the spectacles of industry among which they were interspersed.

Jeffrey Auerbach contends that, whilst the system of classification and organisation of the displays ‘replicated and privileged the manufacturing process’, this system was compromised by the de-centralised nature of the Exhibition’s organisational structure (much of the detail of the Exhibition was worked out through a series of local committees, in which various different interests – regional, economic, and political – came into play) and the practical dictates and limitations of the Crystal Palace’s structure and layout (machinery had to be positioned nearest the available power source, at the North-West corner, whilst lighter goods – the commodities – were placed in central areas and on upper-levels that could not bear the load of the machinery).⁹² Yet Auerbach’s focus on the Exhibition’s unregulated, decentralised organisational elements leads him to neglect consideration of the fact that the ultimate decisions taken over classification and layout were very much centralised, and taken with respect to ensuring the Exhibition communicated the correct ideological, political, and economic message. Here, every endeavour was made to elucidate the connection between the Exhibition’s utopianised commodities and their origins in the capitalist production process. So much is evident from the discussions held amongst the classification committees in their efforts to configure the Exhibition’s layout and representational format. The report, for instance, by the Committee on Machinery, details the need for the ‘producing mechanisms’ on display at the Crystal Palace to ‘be accompanied with sufficient specimens of the Products, and of the Raw Material in its several stages of preparation, to make the operation of the machinery

⁹² Auerbach, *A Nation on Display*, pp. 94-5

intelligible.⁹³ The committee appointed to deal with the raw materials category made this requirement even more explicit. In their report it is asserted that ‘a complete exhibition can only be insured by a concerted action between the Committees of Raw Materials and those of Manufactures.’ ‘Much of the interest and utility of the Exhibition’, the report continues, ‘would be lost, unless a connected history of Raw Materials, Produce, and Manufacture, was exhibited in consecutive series. The three classes cannot be properly treated apart.’⁹⁴

What is discernible from the dialogue sustained by each of the organising committees is that, for the Exhibition’s grand picture to be made comprehensible, the connections between raw materials, productive processes, and finished commodity-articles had to be emphasised. The categories were themselves essential for purposes of lucidity, but it is also clear that it was feared that if ‘treated apart’, the connections between industry and the utopian materials of consumption would be lost. The organisers of the event attempted to make clear that it was industry to which this luxuriant and democratic arena of consumption owed its existence. Commodities were thus arranged so that they spilled outward from the raw materials and machinery exhibits and culminated in dense proliferations in the more consumerist environment of the ‘manufactures’ displays. In certain exhibits, as the committees had staunchly advocated, object and originating productive process were merged in the same spectacular display. For instance, working demonstrations of the operation of large-scale looms wove patterned cloth,⁹⁵ whilst a functioning printing press churned out commemorative issues of the *ILN*.⁹⁶ Visitors to the Exhibition were presented with a spectacular ‘connected history’ of the products of their consumption: they could literally see them travelling through and emerging from the production process, spilling from it in unbelievable abundance and converging in a utopian consumer paradise. Therefore, whilst Richards acknowledges that ‘the Crystal Palace did not isolate

⁹³ Author unknown, ‘Report of the Committee on Machinery’, (London: Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, 1850), n.p., available at The Royal Commission of 1851 Archive, index RC/H/1/2/70.

⁹⁴ H. T. de la Belche and Lyon Playfair, ‘Report of Raw Materials Subcommittee’, (London: Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, 1850), n.p., available at The Royal Commission of 1851 Archive, index RC/H/1/2/44.

⁹⁵ Davis notes that an exhibition ‘by Platt & Sons...took viewers through all the stages of textile production from raw cotton to the finished article.’ John Davis, *The Great Exhibition* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1999), p. 145.

⁹⁶ ‘A Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry’, *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851: n.p.

production from consumption’, but rather ‘successfully integrated the paraphernalia of production into the immediate phenomenal space of consumption’, his assertions that ‘no one could possibly mistake the Crystal Palace for a factory’ and that ‘nothing happened at the Great Exhibition but the sight of things just sitting there, mute and solid’, are rather misleading.⁹⁷ The Exhibition contained an entire subsection devoted to steam-powered ‘machinery in motion’, whilst Richards also ignores the way the spatial configuration of the Exhibition would have presented itself as a moving visual narrative to those who circulated around it.

The spatial configuration of the Exhibition also communicated the futuristic thrust of capitalism and thus helped to compound the progressive dimensions of its utopian narrative. As Roger Luckhurst has argued, in the exhibition spaces of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, ‘cultural difference was organized spatially into time-lines stretching from the primitive Eastern past to the civilized Western present, the latter directing the planet toward a glorious future.’⁹⁸ The Exhibition’s utopian trajectory was articulated in this precise manner, with a spatially-unfolding timeline beginning in the uncivilised wilds of China, tracing through an India semi-industrialised by imperial conquest, and emerging into a fully industrialised ‘West’ and its futuristic commodity wonderworld. As *The Illustrated Exhibitor* observed:

[in the foreign section(s)] we have before us a mute running commentary on the age, its attainments, and shortcomings. Here, the changeless East, the conditions of whose petrified civilisation have preserved the excellencies as well as the imperfections of youth, contrasts with changeful Europe.⁹⁹

For the *Exhibitor*, the objects of the Exhibition provided a ‘mute running commentary’, delineating a world divided between developed (capitalist) and primitive (non-capitalist) socio-economies. The motive thrust of this *running* (temporally mobile) commentary embodied the notion of capitalism and the capitalist West as a futuristically-oriented utopian ‘end of history’. The commentary also articulated the globalised reach of capitalist production processes: ‘British colonial possessions were presented as distant places that supplied the raw materials that

⁹⁷ Richards, p. 30.

⁹⁸ Roger Luckhurst, ‘Laboratories for Global Space-Time: Science-Fictionality and the World’s Fairs, 1851-1939’, *Science Fiction Studies*, 39 (2012), 385-400 (p. 385).

⁹⁹ *The Illustrated Exhibitor*, 7 June 1851, p. 34.

travelled from the peripheries to British workshops.¹⁰⁰ The Exhibition contrasted a rapidly maturing socio-economy, explicitly engineered by a mechanised mode of production, with the 'petrified', un-industrialised 'youth' of the East, and in doing so further validated capitalism as a vehicle of progression towards a global utopia. It must be noted, however, that the passage also intimates a hint of nostalgia for the idea of the 'noble savage', exemplified by the author's identification of the Exhibition's narration of the 'excellencies' as well as 'imperfections' of 'youthful' pre-capitalist societies. Nevertheless, the 'noble savage' was commodified at the Exhibition in displays that packaged alternative and traditional societies as exotic spectacles ripe for consumption by a 'civilised' Western public. It was promised that the nobility of pre-industrial life would not be lost as it would still be accessible through modernity and consumption.

As has been shown, the spectacular commodity utopia of the Exhibition was overtly positioned as the outcome of the capitalist mode of production, both within the physical spectacle of the Exhibition itself, and in the supplementary Exhibition spectacle created by the media. The Exhibition and its accompanying rhetoric imagined production in fantastic terms, advertising its purportedly prolific productive and organisational capabilities, and presenting it as a democratic purveyor of social enrichment. The Exhibition spectacle compressed the whole planet and all of life into a single structure and spotlighted the capitalist mode of production as the divine originator and administrator of this utopian world in miniature. It conveyed an interactive image of the world in which any object – natural or man-made – any landscape, any moment of history, piece of culture, crumb of knowledge, or any experience was instantaneously and indiscriminately made available through the productive and organisational powers of capital. The world it held up to view was 'the world of the commodity ruling over all lived experience'.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Luckhurst, p. 388.

¹⁰¹ Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, p. 26.

Why a totalising spectacular narrative?

A consideration of contextual factors helps to explain why the organisers and promoters of the Exhibition sought to construct such a totalising propagandistic narrative. Industrialisation had wrought huge changes on the social and physical landscape of Britain, bringing with it urbanisation and problems of poor sanitation and overcrowding.¹⁰² The boom and bust nature of capitalism had already manifested itself in the lean economic years of the ‘hungry’ 1840s, which fuelled politicised class tension in the form of regular strikes and the Chartist movement. Such conditions instigated the rise of ‘the industrial novel’, and texts such as Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848) explored the frequently dire social divisions caused by industrialisation. It was out of this context that the teleological aspect of the Exhibition’s grand narrative arose. In order to justify the capitalist system against its critics, a story about its future promise needed to be told. Yet it was not only the social conditions, but also the commodities and technologies produced by capitalism that needed to be justified to the Victorian public. The railway system, which, during the first half of the century sprung up in a dense web right across the country, and the colossal steam engines that rode along them, proved at times to be particularly overwhelming. In Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (1848), for instance, although the positive, socially-ameliorative aspects of the railway are proffered by the author, the ‘monstrous’ and ‘devilish’ aspects of the steam engine are also foregrounded as it tears across the social and physical fabric of his novel.¹⁰³ Similarly, in *Mugby Junction* (1866), Dickens’s protagonist Barbox Brothers, newly freed from his life as a businessman and intent on travelling the country, is unable to choose which track to take out of the station due to the dense plethora of available lines:

But there were so many Lines....And so many of the Lines went such wonderful ways, so crossing and curving among one another, that the eye lost them... And then some of them appeared to start with fixed intention of going five hundred miles, and all of a sudden gave it up at an insignificant barrier...And then others, like intoxicated men, went a

¹⁰² For a general history of British industrialisation, see Emma Griffin, *Liberty’s Dawn: A People’s History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), and Emma Griffin, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2010).

¹⁰³ Dickens, Charles, *Dombey and Son*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 298, p. 299.

little way very straight, and surprisingly slued round and came back again...there was no beginning, middle, or end to the bewilderment.¹⁰⁴

Barbox Brother's bemusement at the seemingly nonsensical web of railway line before him is perhaps emblematic of the confusion caused by the technologies and products of capitalism. Whilst such things presented themselves as exciting and alluring – the strangeness of the railway junction at Mugby is still 'wonderful' in the eyes of Barbox Brothers – and offered their consumers tantalising new experiences and increased personal freedoms (Barbox brothers is firm in his belief that the railway will provide him a release from his former life and former self), they were also in many senses mysterious and unintelligible. Many Victorians were, like Barbox Brothers, unable to read the materials of this new world, sensing only confusion with no fathomable master narrative – 'no beginning, middle, or end'.¹⁰⁵ The Exhibition was positioned as a solution to this problem, in that its systems of classification and display were viewed in light of their potential to instruct upon and articulate the nature of the latest technological and material developments. Such a sentiment was echoed in the *ILN*, when it was declared within its pages that:

The progress of improvement in the arts of life generally has been so great during the last fifty years, as to have rendered a species of recapitulation, at certain fixed periods, of the utmost necessity....As inventions are perfected, practical applications multiply; the produce of native industry increases; and in no country more than in England can the want of a classification of general industrial produce be more truly felt.¹⁰⁶

Thus, a key aspect of the Great Exhibition was to categorise and classify the objects and apparatus of industrial modernity, and to convey the workings of capitalism in a comprehensible and palatable manner. This notion can also be discerned from a speech given by Prince Albert (a renowned advocate of moderate modernisation and one of the chief protagonists behind the Exhibition) at the Mansion House dinner (a significant meeting of Exhibition officials) in early

¹⁰⁴ Charles Dickens, 'Barbox Brothers', in *Christmas Stories from "Household Words" and "All the Year Round"* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1898), pp. 15-16. Project Gutenberg ebook.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p.16

¹⁰⁶ 'The Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 16 November 1850, p. 2.

1850.¹⁰⁷ In his speech, Albert rhetorically reframed the ‘peculiar features’ of industrialisation as a ‘wonderful transition’, conjuring an image of a modern world in which ‘the distances which separated the different nations’ vanish ‘before the achievements of modern invention’ and ‘the products of all quarters of the globe’ become easily accessible to all.¹⁰⁸ The Exhibition would thus purport to be, as William St Clair declared in the introduction to his Exhibition-themed poem, a ‘grand intelligible idea which swallows up every unintelligibility’,¹⁰⁹ making what had seemed uncertain and unclear appear safe, secure, and ideologically seductive.

In many respects the Exhibition achieved this aim. A writer for *The Athenaeum* reflected on the Exhibition’s capacity to becalm the storm of objects invading Victorian society by observing that:

When the feeling of novelty and beauty is a little calmed, the mind becomes impressed with an idea that all the objects are dwarfed – by the vastness of the whole. Here is one of the revelations of true relation. The huge beech trees under the transept no longer look like the giants of the Park they were a few months ago. Figures which in private rooms were colossal are apparently reduced to human size. A looking-glass of extraordinary dimensions looks but a trifle too large for a good drawing-room; and the new lighthouse appears like a moderate-sized bird-cage.¹¹⁰

Here, the Exhibition’s ‘revelations of true relation’ present the commodity world in a manageable form. What might have previously appeared as dystopic and frightening – a giant looking glass, for instance – now becomes trifling and small, easily categorised and set in relation to all the other objects of the material world.

The Exhibition was also required to validate capitalism economically as well as socially. At the time of the Exhibition, capitalism was still struggling to establish itself as the unfettered global economic system it is today. As Paul Young observes, protectionism remained a significant force in British and international politics in the mid-nineteenth century, and capital faced a

¹⁰⁷ Prince Albert Speech Mansion House dinner, quoted in ‘The Great Exhibition and Its Results’, *Illustrated London News*, 11 October 1851, Great Exhibition Supplement, n.p.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ William St. Clair, *The Great Exhibition of 1851, a Poem*, (London: Partridge and Oakley, 1850), p. 2.

¹¹⁰ ‘The Great Industrial Exhibition’, *The Athenaeum*, 3 May 1851, 477-479 (p. 478).

battle to create the globalised free-market economy it strived for.¹¹¹ The Corn Laws had only been repealed as recently as 1846 and while this represented a significant battle won by capital on the domestic front, 'it remained', in the words of the *Bristol Mercury*, 'to burst the barriers which limited [capitalist economic] emulation to a single people, and in true cosmopolitan spirit to open up a generous competition and a noble rivalry among all the nations of the world.'¹¹² The Exhibition's totalising spectacle was, in part, as outlined by Young, a response to this situation. The spectacularised economics of the Exhibition were required to be relatively cohesive, coherent, and complete to demonstrate that an unregulated capitalism could sustain a fruitful economy not just on a national but on a global scale. As Auerbach has underlined, the economic picture communicated by the Exhibition was also required to act as a conduit for the dissemination of technical information regarding capitalistic production methods.¹¹³ It was a vehicle for capital's colonisation of the world, an event billed by the Lord Mayor of London as one

eminently calculated to improve manufactures... to bring into one view those various productions of manufactures and science which might show how much skill and industry [each exhibiting nation] had been able to effect, and in what manner those productions might be carried to perfection.¹¹⁴

The totalised, coherent, and teleological nature of the Exhibition's spectacular narrative was a response to capitalism's need to consolidate and validate itself socially, politically, and economically. As John Davis asserts, 'the Exhibition celebrated and advertised certain values and a way of life based on industrialisation and progress – values that are much more widely accepted today than they were then.'¹¹⁵ The Exhibition attempted to convey a coherent socio-economic narrative that enunciated the positive aspects of the capitalist system and orientated its visitors into the commodity-saturated, hyper-technological world then in creation. As

¹¹¹ Young, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition*, pp. 26-27.

¹¹² 'The Great Exhibition', *Bristol Mercury*, 3 May 1851, n.p.

¹¹³ Peter Hoffenberg and Jeffrey A. Auerbach, *Britain, The Empire, and the World at The Great Exhibition Of 1851* (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub. Company, 2008), p. xvii.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 74.

¹¹⁵ Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, p. 183.

previously mentioned, Debord conceptualises two forms of spectacle: concentrated (which he associates with totalitarian regimes), and diffuse. Whilst Debord sees capitalist spectacle as existing predominantly in the diffuse form, he also notes that, on occasion, capitalism may deploy a more concentrated spectacle in moments of crisis.¹¹⁶ As is evident, spectacle was essentially born in its modern form at such a moment of crisis and was inaugurated in a concentrated form. Rather than celebrating solely the ideology of consumption, the spectacle of the Exhibition paid homage to the capitalist system and mode of production as whole. Yet in its attempt to present this narrative – in its endeavour to present a functioning propagandistic model of the capitalist world, the ideologies and unrealities announced by the Exhibition became susceptible to destruction by the pressures of reality.

¹¹⁶ Davis, *The Great Exhibition*, p. 41.

Chapter Two: Incursions of the Real

Having delineated the type of spectacle projected by the Great Exhibition, I will now examine the event's utopian narrative in the context of the realities of mid-Victorian Britain. The Exhibition's utopian spectacle was contradicted by reality, a situation which foregrounded the event's superficialities. These dissonances, or 'incursions of the real', arose out of a juxtaposition between the event's utopian narrative and the socio-economic truths of labour and the producing classes. This chapter and the next outline the fundamental ways in which the realities of labour confronted and invalidated the spectacle of the Exhibition. This chapter examines the way in which the working class functioned (or, as shall be seen, more often did not function) as spectators of the event. In its inclusive rhetoric, Exhibition media coverage foregrounded the event as one to which all classes were invited. The spectacular displays of abundance in the actual spaces of the Crystal Palace also spoke of a world in which material abundance would be accessible by all. Yet, the working class did not flood to the Exhibition *en masse*, but rather in trickles, a scenario which disrupted the Exhibition's socially-inclusive illusion. When the working class did visit, their appearance connoted a reality of poverty and inequality, contradicting and undermining the spectacle of abundance on show.

The illusion of inclusion

The Exhibition and the rhetoric that surrounded it were configured to promote the event as socially-inclusive. The Exhibition was envisaged as a space in which class would become irrelevant, and it was promised that its grand utopian picture of capitalist life would foreground those who had contributed most toward, but had thus far gained the least from, the capitalist system. For Jeffrey Auerbach, the inclusivity of Exhibition ideology was, at least to an extent, realised. In his *A Nation on Display*, Auerbach presents the Exhibition as 'a cultural battlefield, in which proponents of different and at times competing visions of Britain fought for ascendancy in a struggle to define Britain's past, present, and future.'¹ For Auerbach, the Exhibition was not a pure manifestation of the ideology of prevailing economic forces, but rather a diversified event which enabled different, and sometimes marginal, social groupings to contest authority and define their position within the nation's social landscape. Thus, although Auerbach is keen to contrast his reading of the Exhibition from the idea, posited by W. L. Burn in his *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (1964), that the event encapsulated a

¹ Auerbach, *A Nation on Display*, p. 5.

prevailing balance between the opposing social forces of mid-century Britain, his analysis nevertheless tends towards a similar conclusion.² Whilst Auerbach presents the Exhibition, and by extension, mid-Victorian Britain, as fluctuating rather than fixed (equipoised) in its social configuration, he still situates the event as one which was broad in its social scope, and spoke of a society not entirely disfigured by poverty, inequality, and oppression. Indeed, Auerbach ‘considers the Great Exhibition as evidence of the cultural ties that bound Britons together, as well as those that were contested and culturally divisive.’³ For Auerbach, the Exhibition ‘included something for almost everyone ... [it] was a protean event with numerous possible meanings.’⁴

Auerbach’s study provides some illuminating insight into the way in which the meanings of the event were contested by different social actors, but his conclusions on the relationship between social class and the Exhibition are debatable. His linguistic approach to the event enables him to read it as a site of discursivity and societal self-definition, but as an extension he does not recognise that ultimately, the event was a manifestation of the self-definition of a specific social group – the capitalist class. The language of the Exhibition was thus intrinsically intertwined with the spectacle it revolved around, and just as capable of fostering a pseudo-world of false social relations. As this analysis has revealed, the rhetoric surrounding the Exhibition disseminated through media coverage and literary output was formulated as part of, and in relation to, the event’s fetishized narrative. The Exhibition is thus a prime example of the way in which language and discourse is heavily influenced, directly or indirectly, by the dictates of production and capital. Auerbach’s analysis of the discourses surrounding the event does not take this fact into consideration. More recently, Lucie Sutherland has reached a similar conclusion to that posited here in her analysis of Nottingham and Midland Counties Industrial Exhibition of 1865, in which she shows that whilst the event, like the Great Exhibition, was framed as a showcase of ‘working class productivity’, this showcase was simply a *performance*, directed by the wealthy controllers of the event, and designed to make the ‘working class

² See W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964).

³ Auerbach, *A Nation on Display*, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*

residents of Nottingham and surrounding towns' appear 'amenable, industrious and ... passive'.⁵ Auerbach's dichotomisation of the event causes him to lose sight of the Exhibition's overall position as a platform for the authority of capitalist ideals, and as a concealer of real social relations. The Exhibition was, ultimately, a monument to capital and the ideology of the bourgeoisie. Its overseers, promoters, and, of course, exhibitors, were overwhelmingly from the capitalist class, and, perhaps most significantly, those who were most wholehearted in their commitment to the cause of the Exhibition, such as Henry Cole, were prominent advocates of free trade.⁶ Meanwhile, many of its journalistic or casual commentators, such as those whose observations have been cited here, were also of the capitalist or professional classes. The bourgeois agenda behind the Exhibition was clear, and it was succinctly manifest, as has been demonstrated, in the rhetoric and discourses that accompanied it. Indeed, as will be seen, the Exhibition certainly did not contain 'something for everyone', rather, it simply created the illusion of an open-access consumer haven.

The working class and the Exhibition

The working class were denied any influence whatsoever on the construction of the Exhibition. As John Davis remarks, the organisational structures of the Exhibition – the Royal Commission (composed of 'aristocrats, intellectuals, and businessmen'), and the local committees (populated by 'manufacturers and merchants') – precluded working class, and most certainly radical working class, involvement.⁷ Further still, as Davis explains, the Royal Commission failed in any attempt to 'bridge successfully the gap between itself and radical working class demands', a situation exemplified by the tentative formation and hasty dissolution of the only conduit of working class influence to exist in the Exhibition's construction, the Bishop of Oxford's Central Working Classes Committee.⁸ This committee contained only two genuine

⁵ Lucie Sutherland, 'Class, Consensus and Repertoire at the Nottingham and Midland Counties Working Classes Industrial Exhibition', *Nineteenth Century Theatre & Film*, 37 (2010), 56-67 (p. 56).

⁶Indeed, Cole had a steadfastly whiggish worldview: he edited a newspaper focussed on agitating for postal reform, and published the first Christmas card in 1843. See Ann Cooper, 'Cole, Sir Henry (1808–1882)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5852> [accessed 10 Nov 2017].

⁷ Davis, p. 68.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 69.

working class radicals – the Chartists William Lovett and Henry Vincent – and was otherwise filled with MPs, clerics, publicists, and literary figures associated with, but not of, the working classes such as Charles Dickens. Most significantly it was never awarded the full status and powers of the other committees and was disbanded when its members requested equality in this respect.⁹

As outlined previously, a significant element of the Exhibition's utopian vision was its promotion of the idea that capitalism would open the potentials of consumption to all, and, indeed, that within the Exhibition this democratically-oriented mode of consumption would be immediately available for sampling. For the *ILN*, the Exhibition would commence 'an era in which the sons of toil shall receive honour and reward',¹⁰ while in his Exhibition-themed poem, writer Martin F. Tupper (1810-1889) echoed such a sentiment by stating that in the spaces of the Crystal Palace, 'Labour, honoured openly, and not alone by stealth, With horny hand and glowing heart may greet his brother Wealth.'¹¹ Similarly, American journalist and prominent Whig ideologist Horace Greeley (1811-1872) declared the Exhibition 'a prelude and a prediction' of a 'fairer, grander, gladder Future', 'wherein Labor shall build, replenish and adorn mansions as stately, as graceful, as commodious as this, not for others' delight and wonder, but for its own use and enjoyment...Such is the vista which this edifice with its contents opens and brightens before me.'¹² A speech given to The Royal Society of Arts on the topic of the Exhibition by Samuel Wilberforce demonstrates the manner in which this sentiment was a prominent factor in the event's spectacular design:

No man can shut his eyes to the fact that the long and lasting struggle which has lasted, and which must still continue to exist, between skill and capital – that never-to-be-thoroughly-adjusted struggle, as I think it – every one must see that there are certain features in the present position of that struggle not of the most pleasant aspect...Now nothing can tend more to soften the necessary asperities of that struggle, to

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ 'Opening of the Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, p. 3.

¹¹ Author unknown, *A Guide to the Great Exhibition* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851), p. 10.

¹² Horace Greeley, *Glances at Europe In a Series of Letters from Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, &c. During the Summer of 1851* (New York: Dewitt and Davenport Publishers, 1851), p. 36-37.

introduce the amenities and the courtesies of life into the hardness of the strife, than such an exposition as that which is now proposed.¹³

As is evident here, one of the intended functions of the Exhibition was to alleviate class tensions by 'introducing' the amenities of consumption into the sphere of working-class society. Wilberforce envisaged the commodity spectacle of the Exhibition concealing and healing the divisive rifts in Britain's torn social fabric caused by the struggle between labour and capital. This idea was a key tenet of mid-century political economy. In 1831 Charles Knight's *The Results of Machinery: Namely, Cheap Production and Increased Employment Exhibited: Being an Address to the Working-men of the United Kingdom* was published. As the title suggests, Knight wrote the book to persuade the working class of the benefits of machine-driven production methods, and to halt the Luddite practice of machine-breaking. Prominent among Knight's arguments in favour of capitalist production was that, through cheapening costs and an increase in the scale of production, 'the comforts which make the difference between man in a civilized state and man in a savage state'¹⁴ would soon become available to the workers themselves. Knight's wording is particularly significant here, betraying, like Wilberforce's speech, a bourgeois desire for a working class 'civilized' by commodities, quelling any revolutionary impulse on their part.

The organisers of the Exhibition attempted to actualise this notion of democratic access to the Exhibition's spectacular commodity utopia by structuring admission prices in order to (ostensibly) enable the masses to attend the Crystal Palace.¹⁵ All of society and the whole of the world were invited to the Exhibition under the pretence that this commodified space would be blind to social, economic, and racial difference. Yet, the social and economic realities of mid-century Britain were not conducive toward the establishment of a consumerist working class. As Richards and others have noted, the actual economy of the mid-nineteenth century was not producing an abundance of commodities as suggested at the Exhibition, and political economy was not impelled to make consumers of the working class as it would later in capitalism's

¹³ Quoted in Davis, pp. 62-63.

¹⁴ Charles Knight, *The Results of Machinery: Namely, Cheap Production and Increased Employment Exhibited: Being an Address to the Working-men of the United Kingdom, Volume 1* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1831), p. 8.

¹⁵ Initially, only those who had purchased a season ticket – priced at 3 guineas for men and 2 guineas for women – were granted access to the event. After the first few weeks, entry could be gained for a fee of £1 on the weekends, or for 1s on the 'shilling days' held throughout the week - Philip Landon, 'Great Exhibitions: Representations of the Crystal Palace in Mayhew, Dickens, and Dostoevsky', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 20 (1997), 27-59 (p. 28).

development.¹⁶ The output of commodities during the mid-nineteenth century was relatively modest, and such output was targeted toward the upper and middle classes. Capital had yet to discover the need to create new, mass markets through which to sell its produce, and the working classes did not and could not partake in the burgeoning consumer culture of the age to any great extent. Although recent archaeologically-based analyses of material culture, such as a collaborative project by Alistair Owens and others on everyday life in London, have emphasised the working class's engagement with mass consumer culture in the 1830s and 1840s, these engagements were not the kind of consumer experience promised by the Exhibition. Owens and his colleagues note that the ownership of matching sets of crockery by working class families indicates 'that an interest in the aesthetics of teawares and a desire for matching items was as much a concern for poorer residents as it might have been among middle-class households.'¹⁷ Yet such modest forms of consumption, whilst indicating the desire of some sections of the working classes to become consumers, does not suggest that capital required them to do so *en masse*, nor that they were particularly successful in their aims. As Eric Hobsbawm asserts, despite the prominence of 'self-help' rhetoric which propagated the potential for social enhancement, and the dissemination of bourgeois ideals among the working class, 'it was perfectly evident that most workers would remain workers all their lives, and indeed that the economic system required them to do so.'¹⁸ Hobsbawm points out that 'it was an axiom of mid-nineteenth century employers that wages must be kept as low as possible'¹⁹ – the accepted wisdom of economic 'science' was that wages must be kept to a minimum in order for profit to be derived. Working class consumption existed on a different economic and cultural basis to the new bourgeois consumerism celebrated at the Exhibition. In London, for instance, working-class consumers were more likely to purchase items from non-spectacular sources such as street-sellers, from whom goods could be obtained at cheaper prices. As Stephen Jankiewicz has shown, such consumption existed on the margins of the capitalist economy and was

¹⁶ Richards, p. 66.

¹⁷ Alistair Owens et al, 'Fragments of the Modern City: Material Culture and Rhythms of Everyday Life in Victorian London, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 15 (2010), 212-225 (p. 221).

¹⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital*, (London: Abacus, 1977), p. 255.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 255-256.

intermingled with a subversive politics that made it oppositional to normative economic models.²⁰

From the outset, the Crystal Palace functioned as an exclusive social sphere. Whilst a multitude of classes gathered along the route of the opening ceremony to catch a glimpse of the spectacle, those given the privilege of the first rounds of inspection at the Crystal Palace were those who could afford the substantial price of a season ticket: the aristocracy and the upper middle class. This exclusivity did not escape the notice of some who commented on the Exhibition. The author of *The Crystal Palace: An Essay, Descriptive and Critical* (1854) was 'startled to learn that the workmen who had raised the Palace' 'were refused admittance' to the opening ceremony, 'unless they would take season tickets.'²¹ Here, upon the completion of its socially-assigned task, labour was immediately disavowed and denied participation in the consumption of the 'Labour Palace' it had created.²² Most significantly, after the price of admission was lowered to one shilling on weekdays, the working class did not attend the event in the numbers anticipated by organisers and commentators. This situation was initially greeted with surprise by pro-Exhibition media. For instance, a *Morning Chronicle* article reporting on the first of the 'shilling days', held on Monday 26th of May, expresses shock that 'there were evidently less people present' than usual.²³ Newspaper commentary on the matter reveals that at no point during the Exhibition's run did the expected surge of working class visitors ever arrive – reporters frequently commented on their absence. As late as 26th July, after the reduced prices had been in operation for two months, a reporter for *The Examiner* remarked that 'The vast majority of those who visit the Crystal palace is [sic] still the middle class. The place is

²⁰ Jankiewicz argues that street-sellers were often associated with Chartism, and that the public and performative nature of their profession enabled them to communicate political information and sentiment. See Stephen Jankiewicz, 'A Dangerous Class: The Street Sellers of Nineteenth-Century London', *Journal of Social History*, 46.2 (2012), 391-415.

²¹ Author unknown, *The Crystal Palace: An Essay, Descriptive and Critical*, 2nd edn. (London: Walton and Mabely, 1854), p. 14.

²² The Crystal Palace is ironically styled the 'labour palace' in 'Easter and the Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 19 April 1851, p. 311.

²³ 'The Great Exhibition', *Morning Chronicle*, 27 May 1851: n.p.

unmistakeably in their possession as yet, and has (speaking comparatively) hardly been touched by the humbler orders [sic].'²⁴

The relative non-appearance of the working classes at the Exhibition can be attributed to two fundamental factors. Whilst ticket prices were ostensibly devised to enable almost everyone to attend the Exhibition, in reality, as John Davis points out, the fee of one shilling 'still ensured the part of the masses that came in belonged to the sector of society which had some sort of income...those with property'.²⁵ This fact was picked-up on, and indeed criticised by some contemporary observers. The author of an article from *The Examiner* on the 26th July observed that the reduced ticket prices still fell way beyond the financial reach of many working-class people:

It is quite ascertained now that the labouring man cannot afford to go there ... Strange, therefore, as it may seem, a very large proportion of the population of the metropolis has not yet been able to see the Exhibition, and will in all probability never be able to do so unless something is done to bring the price of admission down ... such, even in this wealthy city, is the power of one shilling.²⁶

The financial difficulties inherent in working class attendance at the Exhibition are also evident from an article in the *Manchester Times*, published during the build-up to the Exhibition, which warns its working class readers that 'it will cost some money to take you there, and some time to save it without distressing yourself and families'.²⁷ The article then gives detailed instructions on how best to go about doing so, instructions that involve, amongst other things, re-arranging holidays with employers, and forming clubs to better manage the potential fiscal pitfalls of a trip to London. A visit to the Exhibition was no simple task for those on a working-class wage. The shilling price enabled only the elite ranks of the working class to attend – members of a 'labour aristocracy' to whom the ideals of the Exhibition may also have been more appealing. Indeed, if the Exhibition made any appeal to the working class at all, it was to this group, who, largely drawn from the skilled trades and a legion of supervisory workers,

²⁴ 'The Great Exhibition', *Examiner*, 25 July 1851, pp. 474-5, p. 474.

²⁵ Davis, p. 101.

²⁶ 'The Great Exhibition', *Examiner*, 26 July 1851, 474-5, p. 474.

²⁷ 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Manchester Times*, 4 January 1851, n.p.

benefitted, according to Harold Perkin, from substantially higher wages than the typical factory worker, and thus had more spending power and a readier inclination to adopt bourgeois ideals.²⁸ Yet, even these proto-bourgeois workers found themselves at odds with what became an almost exclusively bourgeois space. The aforementioned *Morning Chronicle* article reporting on the first of the 'shilling days' contains an observation that rather than the hordes of working class visitors expected, the entrants on this day were predominantly of the 'shabby genteel' variety – 'the middle classes, and those between the middle classes and the working classes trades folk...[those] who are difficult to place socially'.²⁹ Note the anxiety surrounding the social 'other' here – these folk were clearly not easily classifiable as working or middle class – they most likely belonged either to the labour aristocracy or the lower middle class – a social position which blurred boundaries and thus caused anxiety for the bourgeoisie. As is evident, even the aristocratic labourer to whom the bourgeois ideals of the Exhibition may have seemed inviting was ostracised upon his or her appearance at the Exhibition.

There is also a second factor underlying the working class's absence from the Exhibition. Much evidence suggests that the Exhibition simply did not appeal to wide sections of the traditional proletariat, especially its more radicalised wings. A report by the *Northern Star* on a speech delivered by Samuel McGowan Kydd (1815-1892) at a significant Chartist meeting in April 1850 reveals the contempt held by more radical segments of the working class towards the Exhibition. Mr Kydd is reported to have argued that "in so far as its tendency will be to increase competition and the power of production, without in any way providing for an efficient distribution of the wealth produced", the Exhibition would simply further add to the economic and social oppression of the working class.³⁰ Albeit reporting with more than a degree of

²⁸ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society: 1780-1880* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 143. Robbie Gray has since nuanced Perkin's arguments, stressing that a Victorian 'labour aristocracy' was not so easily definable in terms of things like wages, attitudes to unionism, and cultural outlook. Nevertheless, he asserts that whilst not homogenous, 'every trade and industry contained superior groupings of workers, enjoying higher pay, greater economic security, and often a large measure of control in the immediate work situation.' - see Robbie Gray, *The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-century Britain c. 1850-1914* (London: MacMillan, 1981), p. 30 and pp. 30-35.

²⁹ 'The First Shilling Day at the Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 31 May 1851: n.p.

³⁰ [Anon.], [Report on] Great Meeting at the Literary and Scientific Institution, John Street, Fitzroy Square, *Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 4 May 1851, p. 1 – available in Geoffrey Cantor, 'Responses by Radicals', *The Great Exhibition: A Documentary History, Volume 2*, (Pickering & Chatto: London, 2013), pp. 65-70), p. 65.

partisanship, The *Northern Star* intimates that Kydd's resolution was unanimously well received by the Chartist audience, and indeed its very presence as a topic of critical discussion at a radical working-class meeting hints at the disdain, or at least suspicion, in which the Exhibition was held within these circles.³¹ Similarly, *Reynolds's Weekly News*, which at the time enjoyed a large circulation in the working-class districts of Northern England, and can thus be regarded as a fairly reliable barometer of radical working-class opinion,³² published a number of articles criticising the Exhibition in the lead up to its opening.³³

Pro-Exhibition media was clearly aware of the problem created by the non-appearance of working class spectators at the Palace and attempted to resolve it in line with the Exhibition's spectacular rhetoric. A poem printed in *Household Words*, for instance, features the voice of a 'beleagued' labourer, who at one point bemoans his inability to visit the Exhibition: 'I cannot share the triumph and the pageant, I, a poor toiler at the whirling wheel, / The Slave, not servant, of ponderous agent, With bounding steam-pulse, and with arms of steel.'³⁴ Here, the labourer's 'enslavement' to the mechanisms of production (he cannot afford to stop working) is acknowledged, and attributed as the reason for his non-visitation. Yet the poem is resolved with the narrator thanking 'God for Sundays!', his blessed leisure time, when, although he still cannot afford to visit the Crystal Palace, he has the time to consume the Exhibition through 'the proseman's page' and 'the poet's song'. The labourer's situation is alleviated through his own small but significant share in the consumptive aspect of capitalist society: his free Sundays, his newspapers, and his books. The labourer's ability to vicariously 'share with others the glorious fruits of that triumphant day' is thus foregrounded.³⁵ The poem, written by John Critchley Prince, a cotton weaver with genuine experiences of working class life, has been read by Sabine Clemm

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Geoffrey Cantor notes that Reynolds's 'rapidly became the most popular periodical advocating radicalism and political reform, having gained by 1851 an estimated circulation of over 20,000, mainly in the working-class districts in Northern England', and that 'it provided a focus for radicals following the failure of the Chartist movement in 1848.' - Geoffrey Cantor, 'Responses by Radicals', *The Great Exhibition: A Documentary History, Volume 2*, ed. by Geoffrey Cantor (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), p. 62.

³³ See, for instance, 'The Great Exhibition', *Reynold's Weekly News*, 20 October 1850, n.p.

³⁴ John Critchley Prince, 'A Voice from the Factory', *Household Words*, 3.54 (1851), 35-36.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

as simultaneously a 'bitter attack on the Exhibition', and a half-hearted attempt to resolve the several contradictions that became apparent even before the Exhibition opened.'³⁶

Despite the attempts of Exhibition commentators to conceal the problem of the Exhibition's exclusivity through the media spectacle that accompanied it, the spaces of the Crystal Palace remained singularly bourgeois. The traditional, low-paid sections of the working class were both financially excluded from, and ideologically repelled by the Exhibition. Indeed, to visit the Exhibition required money, and, by extension, 'Time', 'so often', as the *Morning Post* commented 'a drug in the fashionable markets', and the Crystal Palace was therefore quick to become the stomping ground of the leisured *flaneur*.³⁷ Access to the commodity spectacle at the Exhibition also entailed becoming part of the spectacle. Newspaper and journal reports consistently conflated spectator with spectacle in descriptions of scenes at the Crystal Palace. For instance, *The Leisure Hour* noted how in the seemingly 'interminable vistas' of the Exhibition, 'gaily-dressed groups of visitors' promenaded 'through lines of luxuriant foliage', and intermingled 'with statuary' and other objects.³⁸ Similarly, the author of Routledge's *A Guide to the Great Exhibition* articulated the 'countless living beings seated on the crimson benches...interspersed among the statues, moving slowly about, gazing at the wonders around them'³⁹ as being very much part of the visual aesthetic of the Exhibition. Here, the line between person and thing is blurred. Visitors to the Exhibition, gaily-attired in dapper commodities, blended into the spectacular displays in chameleonic fashion, and fed into the commodity landscape presented at the Crystal Palace. The Exhibition acted as an extension of the glamorous world of conspicuous consumption that existed in London's fashionable shopping districts, where, as writer and social investigator Charles Manby Smith observed, 'genteel young men and

³⁶ Clemm, 'Charles Dickens's Household Words and the Great Exhibition of 1851', pp. 222-223. For a brief biography of Critchley Prince, see James Sambrook, 'Prince, John Critchley (1808-1866)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22800>> [accessed 11 May 2015]. A number of his poems are also available in Brian Maidment's anthology *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987).

³⁷ 'London, Thursday, May 22, 1851', *The Morning Post*, 22 May 1851, p. 4.

³⁸ 'A Day at the Crystal Palace', *The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation*, 2 October 1856, pp. 632-636, p. 632.

³⁹ Author unknown, *A Guide to the Great Exhibition*, (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851), p. 66.

comely damsels exhibit themselves at full-length, framed in burnished brass and plate glass', replicating the spectacular displays of the shop-windows.⁴⁰

The working class at the Exhibition

Whilst the Exhibition was promoted as a socially-inclusive space and a precursor of pan-social access to material wealth, in actuality it was a varnished, bejewelled, and overwhelmingly bourgeois landscape. This consumerist unreality was easily disrupted by the occasional appearance of the realities of social inequality. Indeed, a sketch by the satirical artist John Leech (1817-1864) featured in an 1851 edition of *Punch* reflects this clash of reality and artificial aesthetic (see Fig. 1). The sketch features a carpenter and his labouring entourage confronting an aristocratic party in the Crystal Palace. The labourer, standing proudly and unashamedly with his hand to hip, protrudes incongruously into the well-appointed scene in to which he has been thrust, his raggedly-dressed children holding a bunch of flowers in what could be interpreted as a failed attempt to offset their drab appearance. Significantly, the lines used by Leech to create the impression of the labourers are much more thickly-inked, deeper, and darker than those used to etch the aristocratic party, emphasising the contrast in visuals presented by the two classes of visitor, and producing an effect in which the working-class party appear to cast a shadow over their half of the picture. Whilst Leech is here working with an iconography established in his other work, using 'substance' to elevate the status of the working-class characters in the image whilst putting the undeserving aristocracy in 'the shade',⁴¹ the image nevertheless also communicates the cultural shock precipitated by the coming together of the different classes in the Crystal Palace. Here the light, airy atmosphere of the Exhibition is invaded and compromised by the gloom of poverty. Such intrusions of the social real into the spectacular environment of the Exhibition can be detected elsewhere. The *Morning Chronicle*, for instance, observed that on the first of the shilling days, 'the glitter, the elegance, the refinement, the *luxe* was gone. The bright and eternally changing and shifting dresses of trains of ladies – the visions of crisped lace and glancing bracelets – and glistening pink bonnets, and flowing draperies of silk and gauze, were gone. The crowd at first sight looked dingy and

⁴⁰ Charles Manby Smith, *This Little World of London; or, Pictures in Little of London Life*, (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, and Co., 1857), pp. 190-191.

⁴¹ Henry J. Miller, 'John Leech and the Shaping of the Victorian Cartoon: The Context of Respectability', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 42.3 (2009), 267-291 (p. 273).

sombre.⁴² Here, the less consumerist crowd (in which even then only a scattering could be ‘palpably’ identified as working class according to the report) is depicted as at odds with their surroundings. Lower-class visitors were elements of the ‘real’ invading a spectacular bourgeois space, their ‘dingy’ appearances casting shadows of poverty on the opulence of the Exhibition and shattering its illusion of abundance (if capitalism had created such a wealth of commodities, why were these visitors still dressed in rags?). Indeed, the appearance of working class spectators, and the economic realities they connoted, not only upset the commodity aesthetic at the Crystal Palace, but also disrupted its utopian narrative. As is most strikingly depicted in Leech’s sketch, the concentrated material abundance of the Exhibition was punctuated by the invading realities of non-abundance.

Observers of the Exhibition also picked-up on the apparent inability of working-class visitors to read the Exhibition spectacle in line with bourgeois conventions. On the shilling days, the lower-middle class clerks and artisans were perceived ignoring the received conventions of leisured flaneurship and moving with frantic haste through the spectacle, neglecting to stop and absorb all that was presented to them. The ‘loungers had given way to the walkers’, according to a *Morning Chronicle* reporter, who also disdainfully remarked upon the manner in which the children of the new breed of spectators ‘were more prone to touch, feel, and finger the goods than they ought to have been.’⁴³ Fitting in to the commodity spectacle at the Exhibition required time and money, as well as the ability to ‘read’ spectacle and be read as spectacle, all attributes which the working class did not possess in ready abundance. This has implications for the arguments proposed by Tony Bennett in his *The Birth of the Museum* (1995). Bennett argues that museums and exhibitions were formulated as a means to civilise and discipline the population through culture and knowledge, yet as can be seen in this instance, such attempts failed as the working classes did not – and could not – conform to the bourgeois ideals underpinning the event.⁴⁴

Rather than acting as a site of heterogeneity, as promised by the contemporaneous media, and as suggested by Auerbach, the spectacular spaces of the Exhibition became utterly

⁴² ‘The First Shilling Day at the Exhibition’, from the *Morning Chronicle*, reprinted in the *Illustrated London News*, 31 May 1851, p. 501.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

homogenous. Charlotte Brontë's observations from her experience of the Exhibition foreground the social standardisation of the crowd:

The multitude filling the great aisles seems ruled and subdued by some invisible influence. Amongst the thirty thousand souls that peopled it the day I was there not one loud noise was to be heard, not one irregular movement seen; the living tide rolls on quietly, with a deep hum like the sea heard from the distance.⁴⁵

Her metaphorical depiction of the crowd as the sea – a 'living tide' - foregrounds its monotony – its visual and behavioural conformity to a specific set of (bourgeois) social norms.

The *Northern Star*, noting the middle-class aesthetic of the Exhibition and the corresponding lack of working class visitors, asserted that:

There is something significant in these facts. Do they indicate that the non-productive classes expect from the Exhibition to be able in future to procure still more labour and skill for less money, while the labourers anticipate longer labour for less wages? Some such feeling we imagine must be at the bottom of these coexistent manifestations of popular feeling with respect to the so-called World's Fair.⁴⁶

For the *Northern Star*, the spectacle conveyed by the Exhibition, combined with the working class's non-attendance, betrayed the 'real' ideology underpinning the event. The Exhibition's vast concentration of manufactured goods, arranged luxuriantly and fervently consumed by the middle classes, spoke only of a continuing and perhaps even intensifying adherence to a mode of production predicated on a cheap, rigorously exploited, overworked labour-force, who thus, obviously, were nowhere to be seen in this, an arena of leisured consumption.

The spectacle of the Exhibition promoted an ideology of inclusivity, promising that capitalism would not only alleviate poverty and suffering, but also open up the riches of consumption to all. The event was calculated to attract enough 'respectable' working class visitors in order to consolidate this vision of equality. Yet the realities of British social and economic structures, the very same social and economic structures that the spectacle of the Exhibition touted as the facilitators of its grand democratic utopian vision, ultimately restricted this ambition. Instead the Crystal Palace became an elitist consumer space, and the utopian narrative of the Exhibition spectacle was further contradicted when this space became

⁴⁵ From Charlotte Brontë's letter to Reverend Patrick Brontë – see Clement Shorter, *The Brontës and their Circle*, (London: Dent, 1914), p. 399.

⁴⁶ 'Labour and "The Crystal Palace"', *The Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 14 June 1851, n.p.

punctured by occasional appearances of the social real. As the *Northern Star* suggested, the spectacle of the Exhibition in fact heightened the social division of labour between the consuming middle class and the producing working class. Rather than authoring a prototypical consumer utopia open to all, the Exhibition created a strictly bourgeois space to which the non-consuming lower-middle and working classes were deemed ideologically and socially unsuited, and to which, for some sections of the population, a visit was prohibited on financial terms. This contradiction not only undermined the inclusivity of the Exhibition's vision, but also its broader social functionality. Despite its grand pretensions, the question of whether the Exhibition had any broader social implications other than its function as a luxurious social space for the moneyed was highlighted. The query was raised by at least one member of the public, who, in a letter to *The Times*, complained that the object of the Great Exhibition ought not to have been the gratification of mere curiosity, 'and still less was it to make a pleasant lounging place for idle persons.' 'At present, however', the individual observed, 'the actual results that are apparent have not gone much beyond this'.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ X. Y., 'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 1 September 1851, p. 5.

Chapter Three: Where is the Worker? The Problem of Labour on Display at the Great Exhibition

The blatant contradiction and ensuing tension between the Exhibition's aggrandized picture of modern life and social relations and the realities of mid-Victorian society detailed in the previous chapter was prefigured and accompanied by another problem for the event's organisers. The Exhibition's narrative of social reconciliation between the producing and consuming classes was founded on the notion of celebrating the role of labour and labourers in the industrial process. However, incorporating labour along with all the realities it connoted into the Exhibition's spectacular fetish narrative proved unachievable. As this chapter will show, the near-total omission of labour from the event's displays further destabilised its spectacular narrative, exposing it to critique.

The Great Exhibition was touted by many of its supporters as an event that would foreground the worker. According to *Bell's Life in London*, the Exhibition was 'pre-eminently calculated to dignify the cause of labour,' a veritable 'congress of labour'.¹ The *ILN* saw it as a 'Labour Festival',² one that would bear 'high testimony' 'to the beauty, the worth, and the dignity'³ of the producing classes, while the *Oxford Journal* marvelled at the notion that the 'industry and labour' of 'the humblest mechanic' was 'destined to hold a prominent position in the Exhibition'.⁴ Perhaps most boldly of all, *The Athenaeum* proclaimed that 'here, for the first time WORK, in the presence of all the powers that rule the world, takes its just relations. Over all the assembled aristocracies here, LABOUR is President. Industry is the genius of the scene.'⁵ Commentators such as these were quick to highlight the Exhibition's supposed illumination of

¹ 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 22 December 1850, p. 3, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 26 January 1851, p. 3.

² 'The Last Promenade at the Crystal Palace', *Illustrated London News*, 1 May 1852, p. 350.

³ 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Illustrated London News*, 2 March 1850, n.p.

⁴ 'Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations', *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 16 March 1850, n.p.

⁵ 'The Great Industrial Exhibition', *The Athenaeum*, 1851, pp. 477-9, p. 477.

the worker, even outlining it as a potentially subversive, carnivalesque event ('LABOUR is President').⁶ Yet despite this hyperbole, and in stark contrast to the *Athenaeum's* capitalised emphasis, there was to be no category of 'labour' at the Exhibition. In the Exhibition's utopian economic narrative, the human element of production was cloaked through an overarching system of classification which sorted the displays into the categories of raw materials, machinery, manufactures, and fine art. As will be seen, labour could not be explicitly incorporated in to Exhibition spectacle without utterly compromising the ideological narrative which underpinned it. Instead, labour was disavowed, and in the machinery department, replaced by an image of a futuristic production system operated by self-acting technological organisms. Yet the discrepancy between the Exhibition's spectacular reimagining of production and the realities of industry was simply too stark. The Exhibition's spectacle of production collapsed in on itself through internal contradiction, and the falsehoods of its narrative were thus exposed.

Labour on display: problems and strategies

The realities of labour precluded its inclusion in the Exhibition's spectacle. Although faith in industry and free-market imperative was, at the time of the Exhibition, feverishly high, such faith nevertheless coexisted with a widespread anxiety regarding the plight of the working class. The 'Condition of England Question', foregrounded by Thomas Carlyle in his fierce polemics *Signs of the Times* (1829), *Chartism* (1839), and *Past and Present* (1843), and so fiercely debated throughout the 1840s, remained significant in 1851. In the year of the Exhibition, for instance, the Reverend John Richardson published *The Real Exhibitors Exhibited; an Inquiry into the Condition of Those Industrial Classes Who Have Really Represented England at the Great Exhibition*, a book typical of the kind of discourse set in motion by Carlyle. Taking a thoroughly conservative approach, Richardson here warns his target audience of 'employers' and the influential middle class of the potential of 'the noxious gases of the lower classes' floating 'with disease and death in their train, to the apparent security and fancied exemption of the higher ranks of society'.⁷ Richardson deploys a biological paradigm commonly used at the time to

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Reverend John Richardson, *The Real Exhibitors Exhibited; an Inquiry into the Condition of Those Industrial Classes Who Have Really Represented England at the Great Exhibition* (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1851), p. 2.

convey his message,⁸ referring to society as an organism – a ‘body politic’ – and thus emphasises correlations between the health and prosperity, or otherwise, of the working class with that of the ‘higher ranks of society’.⁹ Richardson’s text reflects the ongoing debate regarding the condition of the working class, and evidences the fact that the poverty and disease they experienced provoked and sustained middle class anxieties regarding working class revolt and revolution, as well as the possibility of their own physical and moral contamination. Richardson’s explicit countering of the Exhibition’s utopian narrative with one illustrative of the squalid nature of working class life is an overt indication of the incompatibility of ‘real’ socio-economic circumstances with the Exhibition’s spectacular picture.

To transform industry, production, and labour into consumer entertainment – into a propagandistic spectacular display – labour and its undesirable connotations needed to be sanitised. Authors of ‘factory visit’ literature, a significant literary genre, had experimented with rendering production in consumable form throughout the decade preceding the Exhibition. In its efforts to do so, it faced numerous difficulties, and, as such, set a precedent for the problems the organisers and promoters of the Exhibition would face in 1851. Despite its efforts, and its popularity as a genre, visit literature ultimately failed to format production, and in particular labour, in a guise suitable for consumption, a situation which had repercussions with regard to the manner in which labour was (or was not) incorporated into the Exhibition’s representative lexicon. In order to provide some context to my analysis of the way labour was represented at the Exhibition, I will first consider the ways in which factory visit authors attempted to deal with the problems inherent in displaying labour in a consumable form.

‘Visit’ literature was highly de-politicised, and thus softened for consumption.¹⁰ It focussed on the facts, figures, and technical aspects of production, sidestepping issues of human exploitation wherever possible. Yet because of its subject matter, it could never fully evade the

⁸ Mary Poovey has documented the establishment of this biological social paradigm in her *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Poovey argues that a homogenised national identity was formulated during this period through the conceptualisation of the social body as a single entity with constituent parts. This essential medicalisation of society enabled means of envisaging social ills being cured.

⁹ Reverend John Richardson, *The Real Exhibitors Exhibited*, p. 49.

¹⁰ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and The Imagination 1830-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 21-22.

darker side of the industry it recounted, and, as Isobel Armstrong has shown, was at times instinctively drawn to and captivated by the 'drama' that this darker side entailed. In her analysis of the genre, Armstrong reveals the consequently 'fraught and complex' nature of factory visit literature, demonstrating how 'contradictions and questions' regarding production and producers continually surfaced within its narratives.¹¹ Armstrong detects difficulties particular to the subgenre she investigates (glass factory visit literature), notably the problems faced in recounting 'the crisis of the furnace', the moment during production when the glass worker had to brave the white-hot heat of the furnace, an incredible test of endurance and a symbol of the oppressive character of the factory. She demonstrates that, in order to negotiate the hellish inferno of the furnace, and the 'agony' of the worker's experience there, industrial narratives 'shared strategies' of synecopation, displacement, and hesitancy.¹²

Whilst these strategies, to a certain extent, contained and managed the negative aspects of the industry reported on, their very use highlighted that rendering production as commodity would always result in awkward social facts being exposed. Of course, as has already been touched upon briefly, another common tactic used during the Victorian period in the attempted commodification of labour was the transfiguration of labour into fairyland. This tactic, which was vividly embraced by pro-Exhibition media in their spectacular coverage of the Crystal Palace's construction, was inapplicable when it came to the presentation of the Exhibition's displays of production. The semi-factual nature of the Exhibition's spectacular economic picture (the need for a semblance of accuracy, for instance, in displays of machinery in order that production techniques be accurately disseminated, or the need to propagandise the (in part) 'real' economic macro-functions of capitalism) precluded its productional aspects from being fully mythicized, from being rendered as a fairyland.

Machine dreams: The Exhibition's technology fetish

Unable to dream their problems away into fairyland, the Exhibition's organisers, promoters, and exhibitors endeavoured to evade the obstacle by deploying strategies similar to those identified by Armstrong in factory visit literature (it was even more important that the representations of industry at the Exhibition be palatable, because, unlike factory visit literature, they needed to correlate with the Exhibition's grand spectacular narrative). The organisers of,

¹¹ Armstrong, p. 36.

¹² Armstrong, p. 22.

exhibitors at, and commentators on the Exhibition relied principally on one overarching strategy when dealing with the problem of labour, which encompassed numerous sub-strategies contained within or consequential to it. This strategy consisted of a foregrounding of the machine and a corresponding diminution or disavowal of human labour in the Exhibition's spectacular picture of the capitalist mode of production. In the spaces of the Exhibition and in its spectacular media coverage, machines were strategically foregrounded in every way possible. Firstly, they were beautified: scrubbed, polished, and presented in a fashion that fitted as much as possible with the Exhibition's luxuriant aesthetic. Here, they became the emblems of a newly aestheticized production process and were subject to further aesthetic embellishment in pro-Exhibition media coverage: commentators in leading pro-Exhibition titles such as the *ILN* frequently described the exhibits in the machinery department as 'attractive' and 'beautiful' – as objects apparently so magnificent 'in their workmanship and so perfect in their finish, as almost to take rank among works of art'.¹³

Secondly, the productive potentials of machinery were highlighted and accentuated, a situation which, when combined with a simultaneous exclusion of labour as a representative category, served to elevate the machine to the position of sole representative – sole operator – of production in the capitalist world. Pro-Exhibition commentary on the machinery department was saturated with facts and figures illustrative of the productive capacity of the exhibited technology and placed heavy emphasis on its self-acting and self-regulating properties. Machines were frequently heralded for their capacity to 'arrest the wondering visitors' not only by 'their gigantic size', but also by their 'astounding performances of labour'.¹⁴ 'The hydraulic press', wrote a correspondent for *The Morning Post*, that raised 'the Britannia tubular bridge to its elevation across the Menai Straits [...] presents itself in its working condition. There is no attempt at polish or decoration; the work that it has done is its sufficient passport to a place of distinction in the Crystal Palace'.¹⁵ From the description given here, one would assume that it was the hydraulic press alone that raised the Britannia Bridge – without input from human labourers (not only is the human labour that went into the construction of the bridge disavowed,

¹³ The first quotation is from 'The Illustrated Guide to the Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, p. 364, and the second from 'Easter and the Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 19 April 1851, n.p.

¹⁴ 'The Great Exhibition', *Morning Post*, 14 April 1851, p. 6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

but also the labour that went into the production of the machine itself). Similarly, the *ILN* marvelled at the fact that Monsieur Remond's 'machine for making envelopes by steam power' was able to deal at once with 'several hundred pieces of paper' and that the machine 'by a very simple operation is started by the girl in attendance at pleasure.'¹⁶ Here, the machine is fully capable of self-regulation in its production process, and only requires a 'simple operation' conducted on behalf of the labourer operating it to set such a process in motion. The language used to describe the operator is also significant. The girl is not designated as labourer, or even operator, but instead as an 'attendant' to the machine, able to manipulate it 'at pleasure'. Machine-driven labour is here not monotonous, dirty, dangerous, or low-paid, but labour-light, easy, and almost joyful – practically incidental to the machine and its processes.

Comparable strategies are at work in an Exhibition-themed article in *The Times* reporting on a visit of Exhibition officials to the manufacturing districts of Birmingham in June 1851. The author emphasises the productive power of the machine and deploys the vocabulary of automation on numerous occasions: the machines encountered are frequently emphasised as 'self-acting' or 'self-regulating', whilst labour is almost completely written out.¹⁷ Take, for example, the author's description of a spoke-bending device at the iron works of Messrs Fox and Henderson (owners of the firm that built the Crystal Palace – their iron works was the originator of the steel girders used to construct the building's skeletal structure):

The whole of the mechanism, indeed, for iron wheel-making is surprisingly complete, and some notion of the speed with which the manufacture is carried on may be formed from the fact that 50 sets can be completed in a week. Not only is hydraulic press power used to bend the spokes and expand the tire, but the whole, when completed and turned in the lathe, is fitted on the axle by the same agency.¹⁸

Here, the productive power of the machine is foregrounded – '50 sets can be completed in a week' – and its total control of the production process and its 'agency', its self-acting properties, are heavily underscored ('the whole of the mechanism...for iron wheel-making is surprisingly complete').

¹⁶ 'Remond's Machine for Making Envelopes by Steam Power', *Illustrated London News*, 5 July 1851, n.p.

¹⁷ 'Birmingham and The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 20 June 1851, p. 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

In some instances, this tactic was taken to its extreme in that the machines in or associated with the Crystal Palace were anthropomorphised and envisaged as living things capable of operating the production process in complete isolation from human input. As aforementioned, the idea that the machine would one day replace the human labourer was a widespread belief in the nineteenth century. This idea, as Herbert Sussman has demonstrated, sprang out of the development of self-regulating machines during the Victorian technological revolution.¹⁹ Technologies such as the steam engine governor and the jacquard loom worked on principles of automation and thus enacted physical labour that required very little in the way of human input, whilst Charles Babbage's protean computers, the Difference Engine and the Analytical Engine, although never completed in material form, were designed to perform mental labour in a similar fashion.²⁰

To some contemporaries, machines appeared to be endowed with physical and mental faculties previously only observable in living beings. They observed what prominent civil engineer Lewis Dunbar Brodie Gordon described as 'the substitution of the iron arms and fingers of machinery, for the bone and sinew and nerves of the cunning artificer'.²¹ This replacement of labour with anthropomorphised machinery was evident in the Crystal Palace, where much of the exhibited machinery was foregrounded in the light of its apparently organic qualities, and the labourer was completely diminished as a facet of production. In an illustration featured in *The Crystal Palace and its Contents*, for instance (Fig. 2), the apparatus in the machinery court appears to grow out of the Crystal Palace's foundations: a crane appears as though a tree, extending its metal branches upwards towards the glass roof, and spreading webs of chain across its top. Indeed, as Tim Barringer observes, the machines in the Crystal Palace seemed to 'form a single mechanical entity with the Crystal Palace itself, animating the whole structure'.²² This technique meant that, in the Crystal Palace's pseudo-factory, machines stood as the pure representatives of production in a capitalist world. Here, machines were the labourers: they

¹⁹ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation, and the Rise of the Machine* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 2009) p. 38.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Lewis Dunbar Brodie Gordon, 'The Machinery of the Exhibition', *Art Journal*, 1851, pp. 1-8, p. 1.

²² Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 8.

were gigantic metallic organisms biologically impelled to provide for the material wants of humanity with superhuman productive prowess.

This impression was certainly held by contemporary observers of the event. Sustained by the boilers – imagined in *The Times* as ‘the heart from which flows the vital fluid which animates the whole of that section of the Exhibition to which machinery is appropriated’²³ – the machines in Crystal Palace were variously described by commentators as being ‘instinct with life’, ‘full of life and activity’, and as ‘leviathans’ of industry.²⁴ This representational and rhetorical tactic not only provided a strategy for attempting to gloss over labour’s representative exclusion from the Crystal Palace, but also gave visual credence to the idea that capitalist technological ingenuity would eventually free humanity from the drudgery of labour. This spectacularised machine-driven production process reinforced pro-machinery discourse in the context of the Exhibition’s utopian narrative, and responded to anti-technological or anti-mechanical treatises such as those presented by Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, and John Ruskin.²⁵ In the Exhibition, technology was pictured performing wonders for humankind without subjugating them to its mechanical will. This was, as Barringer observes, ‘a fantasy of production without labour, a world without a working class.’²⁶ Just as the wonderworld configured through the commodity displays evoked a utopian future, the representations of production too were underpinned by an ultramodern focus.

As a result of all the strategies used to foreground the machine in the Exhibition’s spectacular picture of industrial production, human labour was diminished to such an extent that it became virtually invisible. The Exhibition articulated the production process via an

²³ ‘The Great Exhibition’, *The Times*, 17 May 1851, p. 8

²⁴ The machines were described in the *ILN* as ‘leviathans’ that were ‘instinct with life – see ‘The Great Exhibition’, *Illustrated London News*, 6 September 1851, n.p. Similarly, an article in the *Examiner* posited them as ‘full of life and activity – see ‘The Great Exhibition’, *Examiner*, 26 April 1851, n.p.

²⁵ Carlyle deplored the all-encompassing mechanical dimensions of what he termed ‘the Age of Machinery’, arguing that the machine had infiltrated the Victorian soul and psyche, stymying passion, ‘dynamism’, imagination and creativity, and reducing everything to automation.²⁵ - Thomas Carlyle, ‘Signs of the Times’, *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, ed. by Alan Shelston (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 59-86, p. 64. These sentiments were re-emphasised in Charles Dickens’ portrayal of Thomas Gradgrind – an emotionally-challenged mechanical ‘man of facts and calculations’ – and his utilitarianism in *Hard Times* (1854) - Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 2.

²⁶ Barringer, p. 8.

annotated display of raw materials and a display of machinery the replacement of the living labourer with the 'living' machine was the central motif. This narrative strategy completely excluded labour as a representational category in this spectacular model of global socioeconomics. Yet, as will be seen, the unavoidable presence and unmistakable visibility of workers both within and without the Crystal Palace disrupted this vision of a labour-less production, compelling commentators to adopt other strategies to try to conceal this reality.

Labour leaks in

An article featured in the *Leicester Chronicle* also reveals a crucial aspect of the relationship between the real of labour and the 'unreality' of production posited by the Great Exhibition. It notes that one of the less wealthy exhibitors, at the event, Robert Bamford, had to give his 'hand, for the sake of some remuneration, as he can ill afford to live in London at his own cost doing nothing, to some of the richer exhibitors from his neighbourhood, assisting to clean their machinery.'²⁷ As is indicated here, whilst labour was absent as an explicit representational category at the Exhibition, it was still very much present in the spaces of the Crystal Palace. The decision of the Exhibition's organisers to omit labour as a representational category has forced many historians into the conclusion that 'labour on display' was completely missing from the event. Sabine Clemm's assertion that 'although the Exhibition displayed modern machinery, the workers who operated the machines were not shown',²⁸ is, as shall be seen, not entirely accurate, whilst Tim Barringer's assertion of the Crystal Palace's presentation of 'a fantasy of production without labour, a world without a working class'²⁹ also oversimplifies the situation. Clemm and Barringer are both fundamentally correct, in that the displays of machinery were stripped of reference to a corresponding representation of labour. Yet despite this, labour was still very much visible in the spaces of the Exhibition.

As Asa Briggs maintains, the Exhibition was bustling with the activity not only of machines, but also of 'hands'.³⁰ Workers were required to maintain the building and displays

²⁷ 'Walks through the Great Exhibition', *Leicester Chronicle*, 3 May 1851, n.p.

²⁸ Clemm, p. 211.

²⁹ Barringer, p. 8.

³⁰ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things*, (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 67.

and to oversee the functions of the external boiler house that supplied the building with steam. Labourers, as Clemm herself notes, were also sent in a working capacity to the Exhibition by employers who wished them to spy on rival manufacturers.³¹ Whilst the machinery department was configured to emphasise the self-regulating nature of the machine, workers were still required to tend to the machinery, most especially when it was set in motion. It is also highly significant that, for at least the first week of the Exhibition's opening, work to install the final fixtures and fittings remained ongoing within the building. Horace Greeley observed on his visit on the 6th May that 'the sound of the saw and the hammer salutes the visiter [sic] from every side, and I think not less than five hundred carpenters and other artisans are busy in the building to-day.'³² The first tides of Exhibition tourists were confronted with a spectacle still in construction, with various labour processes very much on show. Just as the spectacular modern shopping complex is not without its cleaners, rubbish disposal workers, carpenters and plumbers, the Exhibition was inevitably a place where labour, by necessity, had to take place.

The omission of labour from the Exhibition's picture of the industrial world, coupled with the fact that it was nevertheless inevitably present in the Crystal Palace, undermined the Exhibition's narrative and caused confusion amongst spectators. Media coverage of the Exhibition mirrored the event itself in that, predominantly, the issue of the producing classes on display was sidestepped (which is further evidence of the difficulties faced by Exhibition promoters and organisers in dealing with labour). Nevertheless, a few of the more radical newspapers, such as *Reynolds's*, chose to include details of the producers on display in their Exhibition reports:

factory operatives, both male and female, wearing their characteristic dresses, may be seen in the Crystal Palace carrying on their respective labours amidst groups of attentive spectators, all puzzling their brains to unravel the mysteries and comprehend the action of the various and complicated mechanical contrivances by which they are surrounded.³³

³¹ Clemm, p. 208.

³² Horace Greeley, *Glances at Europe in a Series of Letters from Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, &c. during the Summer of 1851, including Notices of the Great Exhibition, or World's Fair* (Dewitt & Davenport: New York, 1851), p. 29.

³³ 'The Great Exhibition', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 May 1851, n.p.

As is evident here, the exclusion of a representational category of labour meant that the labour practices that *were* on show were lacking any form of explanation. Depicted as merely incidental to the machinery, yet nevertheless, if the *Reynolds's* report is to be believed, prominent in the display, the labour on show 'puzzled' its middle-class spectators. Here is more evidence of the way in which the Exhibition heightened the divisions between consumer and producer, rather than performing the opposite, as its spectacular rhetoric promised. The displayed production processes and the producers operating them appeared in some respects as otherish and alien to those who viewed them, accentuating the already deep social divisions of British society.

Miniaturising labour

The unavoidable presence of labour both within the Exhibition and outside its walls meant that in certain instances, its presence simply had to be acknowledged. Yet, commentators still sought ways of doing so that avoided placing too much emphasis on workers or their role. A popular technique used in this respect was to include labourers in representations of the Exhibition, but in miniaturised form. As Janice Carlisle points out, in many Victorian representations of labour, workers are 'almost always manageably and unthreateningly small' in both number and physical stature.³⁴ Analysis of images published in pro-Exhibition publications confirms this observation. For instance, in an image published in the *ILN* showing the Crystal Palace in construction, the workers are congregated around a crane being utilised to move iron girders (Fig. 3). Dwarfed by the gigantic proportions of the crane, and deeply-focused on its operation (attentions here are concentrated on work, not on rebellion or vice), the workers are ultimately subsumed by the product and apparatus of their labour. The scene becomes more populous with workers at its most distant points, where, conveniently, they become yet smaller still and as such virtually indistinguishable amid the massive structural framework of the building. In another *ILN* sketch, showing the building in mid-construction from the western end, the juxtaposition of the enormity of the Crystal Palace's frame with the littleness of the workers is even more severe (Fig. 4). Workers crawl like ants across its gigantic steel skeleton, and are rendered in minute form as they busy themselves at various tasks under the vast structure. At the forefront of the sketch are a trio of be-suited gentlemen in dapper top-hats – among them, perhaps, Messrs Fox and Henderson themselves – engaged in discussion. These bourgeois individuals are made to appear larger and given more visual emphasis than the

³⁴ Janice Carlisle, *Picturing Reform in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 50.

workers that surround them. They cast a presence almost as imposing as the Crystal Palace itself over the miniaturised workers they oversee, further conveying the idea that labour here is small, unthreatening, easily-managed, and ultimately subordinate to the real focal point of the picture: capitalism.

Examples of this strategy of miniaturisation can be found elsewhere. A reporter in *The Times* described the workers readying the internal arrangements of the Crystal Palace as ‘like bees in a hive, the cells of which they are engaged in constructing’.³⁵ This metaphor was also reflected in the finished Exhibition in ‘Mr Milton and Mr Neighbour’s glass beehives’, which reimagined the capitalist mode of production through a series of transparent bee colonies, symbolising, as John Davis observes, ‘the work ethic being promoted by the Exhibition’.³⁶ Bees were used in these instances as they were associated with ideals of co-operation and industry in a framework of hierarchical relations, and thus suited the Exhibition’s ideological underpinning.³⁷ Infantilization was also used to belittle the workers. The author of an article in *The Times*, for instance, declared that ‘Nothing stops them [the workers]. They whip about ponderous masses of machinery as if they were children’s toys.’³⁸ This analogy paints the workers as children, or at least child-like in stature, intelligence, and social wherewithal, and renders the activity of labour as a form of child’s play. Whilst this potentially risked dredging up associations with child labour, in this context it also served as a useful technique for purifying and pacifying the labour being described for a middle-class audience. The equation of the apparatus of production with children’s toys also served to evoke the sense of a pleasurable labour experience.

Finally, it is important to note that whereas labour could not be removed from the actual physical spaces of the Exhibition, commentators, reporters, and artists were able to remove it from their depictions of the event, and did so regularly. Included amongst the machinery in motion were ‘working models of Mr W. G. Armstrong’s ‘Hydraulic Hoisting Machines,’ yet in an

³⁵ ‘The Great Exhibition’, *The Times*, 28 April 1851, p. 5.

³⁶ Davis, p. 143.

³⁷ Bees were often incorporated into the decoration of architecture designed to represent bourgeois civic and industrial prowess, such as Manchester Town Hall (built 1868-1877).

³⁸ ‘The Great Exhibition’, *The Times*, 28 April 1851, p. 5.

engraving featured in the *Crystal Palace and its Contents* showing the machinery court with Armstrong's Hydraulic Hoist in the foreground, labour attending to the appliance is conspicuous in its absence (Fig. 5). Similarly, Hibbert, Platt and Sons' cotton working machine was at times functional, and was clearly attended to by labour (as is evident in the previously mentioned Reynolds's report).³⁹ Yet in the *ILN's* pictorial representation of the exhibit the machinery is depicted in an inoperative state, and thus unattended by human labour (Fig. 6).

Whilst the Exhibition was billed as an event which would pay homage to labour, labour could not be incorporated in to the Exhibition's spectacular lexicon. In order that the spectacular picture posited by the Exhibition function properly, labour had to be strategically omitted. The tactics used to conceal the realities of labour at the Exhibition were, however, thwarted on several fronts. Primarily, simply by removing labour, attention was drawn to the falseness of the spectacular economics on show at the Exhibition. A world without labour may have been conceivable in an imagined future, but in the present, labour and the working class were utterly prominent, unavoidably *there*. Secondly, the presentation of such a technological utopia was undermined by the necessary appearance of labour in the maintenance and operation of the machinery on show. These scenarios led organisers and promoters of the Exhibition to engage in a secondary set of strategies as they endeavoured to conceal the inconsistencies of the event's spectacular narrative. Yet still, despite these secondary tactics, the Exhibition's spectacle of production ultimately failed. Its spectacular vision of production was simply too explicit in its contradiction with the realities of industry. By attempting to display a vivid picture of a utopian mode of production as part of a coherent narrative about capitalism, yet conspicuously absenting human labour from this picture, Exhibition spectacle provided the weapons that caused its own downfall. A spectacular narrative that pretended coherence and masqueraded as reality provided an easy target for critical deconstruction when contextualised against the reality it sought to recreate. By fetishistically yet coherently exposing the capitalist system, Exhibition spectacle simultaneously exposed the inadequacies of this system, and thus unwittingly provided a paradigm by which capitalism could be critiqued. Indeed, as will now be shown, the fallibilities of the Exhibition led to it being critically de-constructed, and subsequently further undermined by the positing of alternative exhibition models in which the capitalist system was de-fetishized. The presence of these critiques, enacted through the clash between reality and spectacle at the Exhibition, further destabilised the spectacle projected at the Crystal

³⁹ There were difficulties in consistently getting the cotton machinery operational due to the peculiar atmospheric conditions in the Crystal Palace.

Palace, and provide evidence of the way many spectators could display agency in the face of spectacular manipulation.

Chapter Four: Critiques of the Great Exhibition

The totalised, ostensibly coherent, but ultimately contradictory spectacular narrative posited by the Exhibition was frequently apprehended by observers and remodelled to critique and challenge both the Exhibition and the capitalist system it stood for. These totalised critiques enabled the spectacle at the Exhibition to be totally overturned, and the true social realities underlying it to be exposed. In an article published in the radical mouthpiece *The Leader*, for example, prominent working class political activist, George Jacob Holyoake, utilised alternative exhibition models to elucidate his critique of the event. Holyoake begins the article by exposing the realities of capitalist enterprise, asserting that many of the exhibitors (if they were 'men of intelligence and humanity') 'would blush to reveal the commercial process and by which some of them obtained their goods, the manufacturing "dodges" by which the best work was wrung at the lowest prices, from the wretched and dependent workman.'¹ He then proposes an alternative exhibition to force home his argument about the superficial, fetishized nature of the Exhibition, declaring that 'if anyone should place all the facts, as to how these works were produced, on the cards by the side of each article exhibited, men would be afraid to look at the Exhibition'.² Holyoake continues his proposal for a substitute exhibition by urging that 'the army of workers who filled that palace by the industry of their hands' 'assemble in Hyde-park, under the walls of the Crystal Palace',³ and that 'models be exhibited of their narrow streets, yards, gutters, cesspools, cheerless houses, bare cupboards and, if possible, the drama enacted at the factory counter and in the truck-shop on the Saturday-night'.⁴

Holyoake's critique highlights the Exhibition's disavowal of labour as a representational category. His assertion that cards bearing the 'facts' of labour and production should be displayed next to commodities, and that the working classes themselves, and the conditions of their lives, should also be exhibited, is a vehement response to the organisers' omission of labour

¹ George Jacob Holyoake, 'Progress of the People: The Workman and the Exhibition', *The Leader: A Political and Literary Review*, 21 June 1851, 590-1 (p. 590).

² *Ibid.* p. 590.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 590-591.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 591.

from their picture of the production process. Because this omission left a glaring hole in the Exhibition's spectacular model of the world, Holyoake simply needed to fill it with an aspect of the real to subvert its narrative and reveal its inconsistencies. Holyoake's interposition of an exhibition model illustrative of a totalised reality, complete with degraded and oppressed labour, allows him to expose how 'unreal a thing that Exhibition is'⁵ – to draw back the spectacular curtain the Exhibition had wrapped around the world.

Similarly, in a scathing article published in *Reynolds's*, the fetishized aesthetic of the Exhibition is mocked and an alternative display featuring 'an English working man, his wife, and seven children...standing on the same pedestal like a statuary group' is proposed. The article assures its 'readers that these are the most wretched objects indeed. Having led a miserable existence of semi-starvation on 7s. a week, for a long period, and having gone through the training of the workhouse, they are in excellent condition as average specimens of English misery.'⁶ As in Holyoake's vision of a subverted Exhibition, *Reynolds's* here places the real conditions of the labourer to the fore, parodying the Exhibition's presentation of the commodity and the machine through a substitution of thing for person as a 'specimen' of industry – or 'misery', as *Reynolds's* more aptly has it. Through its exhibits of 'semi-starved' human beings – its presentation of capitalism in 'real', human terms – Reynolds's alternate exhibition both undermines and overturns the spectacular narrative of the Exhibition.

The Northern Star went a step further, using its alternative exhibition model not only to expose the realities behind Exhibition spectacle, but also to underline alternative socio-economic models to that provided by capitalism. The author of one of its anti-Exhibition articles asserted that:

We can imagine a similar World's Show gathered together for very different purposes, but composed of precisely the same materials, to which labour would flock gladly, as to a high Carnival, and the inauguration of a better era. If instead of avowing that this marvellous collection of skill and industry was made for the purpose of stimulating competition, it had been to ascertain what were the actual means at the command of the world, for producing wealth of all kinds, and for promoting a regulated system of distribution, which would ensure to all nations the full and fair participation in the aggregate wealth so produced, the case would have been very different....The utopian dreams in which certain impracticable sentimentalists indulge, about

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 590.

⁶ 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 27 October 1850, p. 11.

the promotion of universal Peace, would then have had something like a tangible basis.⁷

Here, the Exhibition's false pretences – its superficial ideologies: the amelioration of the working class and the establishment of a social utopia through capitalist methods (commerce and competition) – are revealed for their 'impracticability'. Such tenets are envisaged being replaced by a more socialistic ideology which might manipulate the Exhibition into a truly socially-ameliorative event, and thus give the idea of utopia a 'tangible basis'. The comparison made between the Exhibition and a 'high carnival' is also significant here. The latter is a clear reference to the carnivalesque culture of fairgrounds, which celebrated a genuinely democratic and subversive culture oppositional to bourgeois life. Fairgrounds were popular attractions for the mid-century working classes, and by comparing their popularity with the lack of interest in the Exhibition, the author reflects a resistance on the part of the working classes to becoming acculturated to bourgeois forms of leisure and consumption, and simultaneously highlights the way in which the Exhibition's undemocratic nature was at odds with the propagandistic rhetoric that accompanied it. For this observer, the Exhibition was no 'carnival of labour', but instead a means by which to strengthen the hierarchical relations of capitalist society.

Each of these critiques demonstrates that spectators were able to operate effective forms of agency in response to the spectacle of the Exhibition. They were aided in this cause by the type of concentrated spectacle that was constructed at the Exhibition. Because of the coherence of its propagandistic narrative and its explicit celebration of capitalism, the spectacle of the Exhibition clashed with reality. The contrast between the vision of the world conjured at the Exhibition and social reality was therefore stark, enabling spectators to easily grasp the contradiction and highlight its existence. The coherence of the Exhibition's propaganda narrative also provided a model by which the Exhibition could be subverted and undermined. By producing alternative and subversive exhibition models, critics were able to neatly and effectively emphasise how outlandish the sentiments underlying the exhibition really were.

⁷ 'Labour and the "Crystal Palace', *Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 14 June 1851, n.p.

Conclusion to Part One

This first section of the dissertation has shown that the spectacle of the Great Exhibition was composed of a fetishized narrative about capitalism and the potentials of a consumer society. Within this narrative, labour and production were fetishized alongside the commodities they produced. Such a narrative was required to 'sell' the idea of consumer capitalism to a population unaccustomed to it and its produce, and to heal the social divisions wrought by the capital/labour conflict of the 1840s. The totalising, teleological, and propagandistic elements of this concentrated spectacle were undermined by the incursion of reality, and the general dissonance between social reality and the spectacular presentation of capitalism at the Exhibition enabled commentators to construct radical and effective critiques of the event. Ultimately, whilst the Exhibition itself was, particularly in monetary terms and in respect of its place in the popular psyche, a success, as a spectacle designed to propagandize the capitalist system it was less so.⁸ The Exhibition's narrative did not prevent questions being asked of the reality of the capitalist system, and indeed in many respects invited more incisive and vehement critiques. The Exhibition's narrative attracted attention to the superficiality of its spectacle, and thus back to the realities of capitalism.

The analysis in this chapter has also re-emphasised the fundamental weaknesses in the linguistic approach to social and cultural history by demonstrating that the language of the Exhibition was intrinsically linked to its fetish narrative. Whilst the discourses and language emanating from the event spoke of inclusion and fluidity, the reality of the situation was entirely different. As indicated in my analysis of the working-class poet John Critchley Prince's Exhibition-themed poem, the 'official' language of the event, tied to its propagandistic narrative, permeated beyond the bourgeois organisers and promoters of the event and found favour among some sections of the general public. As the narrator in Thomas Hardy's short story *The Fiddler of the Reels* (1893) suggested almost half a century later, the event was remarkable in its pervasion of society and its influence on language and culture:

None of the younger generation can realize the sense of
novelty it [the Exhibition] produced in us who were then in our prime.
A noun substantive went so far as to become an adjective in honour of

⁸ The Exhibition made a profit of £160,000. See Davis, p. 205.

the occasion. It was “exhibition” hat,” “exhibition” razor-strop, “exhibition” watch; nay, even “exhibition” weather, “exhibition” spirits, sweethearts, babies, wives — for the time.⁹

Postmodernist historians like Auerbach overemphasise the event’s democratic aspect when, as my analysis of the superficiality of the Exhibition’s narrative shows, it was in truth an exclusively bourgeois platform that alienated large sections of the population. As Tim Barringer writes, ‘despite the rhetoric surrounding the Great Exhibition, the labour question remained unsolved in 1851,’ and we may as well say the same for today.¹⁰

⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Fiddler of the Reels* (Adelaide: ebooks@Adelaide, 2014), n.p., opening paragraph. Ebook.

¹⁰ Barringer, p. 1.

Part Two: The Rise of Diffuse Spectacle

Introduction

This second section of the thesis examines post-Exhibition spectacle, with a focus on visual advertising during the years 1870-1914. Through a series of case studies, I will argue that spectacle fragmented in the later nineteenth century, moving towards the form that it assumes today. This fragmentation occurred because capitalism no longer needed to sell itself as a coherent system through a concentrated spectacle. The spectacular pictures of the world presented by advertising were thus no longer unified, and thus capitalism itself began to disappear from view. I argue that this situation had a significant effect on the agency and perception of the consumer, which, although not eradicated or even diminished, became restricted because it was provided no coherent whole to grasp. Lacking a tangible focus for critique, spectators could not operate their agency to the same effect as spectators of the coherent spectacle at the Exhibition. Furthermore, because the fragmented spectacle was no longer bound by acknowledgement of a uniform mode of production, spectacle could be framed as oppositional to structure and hierarchy, which enabled it to absorb subversive intent rather than fall prey to it.

The structure of Part Two

The structure of this section loosely mirrors that of the first. The first few chapters define what kind of spectacle existed during the period and describe how it functioned, whilst the later ones analyse consumer responses to spectacle to assess the nature and potency of their agency. Chapter One provides a cursory analysis of the late-Victorian advertising spectacle, paying specific attention to the ways in which it represented production and the social world. This enables the fundamental characteristics of late nineteenth century advertising spectacle to be established and compared to those of the spectacle of the Great Exhibition. I demonstrate that the advertising spectacle of the period functioned on a principle of pseudo-difference and fragmentation and was thus very unlike the coherent spectacle of the Exhibition.

In Chapter Two, this reconstruction is expanded and inserted into broader historical and spectacular contexts. Here, I explore how the fragmented advertising content in newspapers interacted with and influenced other content through a case-study on the representation of the 1899 London Dock strike in the *ILN*. The reconstruction of advertising spectacle in these first two chapters enables the production of a framework for understanding its fragmentation and the implications of this for spectacle as a disciplinary mechanism. I propose that the disintegration of spectacle into incoherence signalled a new mode of social discipline. This leads to a challenge

to Tony Bennett's proposal in *The Birth of the Museum* (1995) that nineteenth-century society operated on a mode of discipline based on the orientation of subjects through the display of coherent hegemonic power.¹ I propose instead that the fundamental disciplinary mechanism of late-century Victorian society was the fragmented spectacle, which functioned on a principle of disorientation and incoherence. In the third chapter, I build on this framework through a case study of Victorian and Edwardian soap advertising. Here, I chart, in a more nuanced fashion, the social implications of the fragmented spectacle. I argue that spectacle's fragmented, incoherent, untethered form enabled it to project the consumer realm as separate from, and oppositional to, reality, and to absorb contradictory and subversive ideas and ideologies into its repertoire. In the fourth and fifth chapters, I further my analysis of the structure/agency question in relation to late-Victorian spectacle, employing case-studies on satires of advertising and the practice of scrapbooking to determine how Victorians responded to and contested the new fragmented spectacle. Here, I demonstrate that the fragmented spectacle fractured and absorbed consumer agency and thus reduced its potential.

The development of 'diffuse' spectacle

As has been shown, spectacle was launched onto the world stage at a moment of crisis for a capitalist system that had yet to be fully established, and was consequently manifest in a concentrated, rather than diffuse form. The Great Exhibition's totalised narrative was a coherent propagandised celebration of the capitalist mode of production and its product, the commodity. It was designed to consolidate capital's domination over Britain and the world at a critical juncture in the development of capitalism, and to help inculcate society into the consumer way of life. As the century progressed, however, capitalist spectacle became diffuse in form. This transformation was strongly influenced by contextual social and economic conditions. For some historians, the mid-Victorian years, inaugurated by the Great Exhibition and stretching until the mid-1870s, witnessed an unprecedented era of social calm and economic progress.² The historical legitimacy of this 'age of equipoise' has since been contested by historians,³ but it is

¹ See Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

² See W. L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964).

³ For instance, David Kent has argued that 'disorder' was not as uncommon in the mid-Victorian years as Burn and his disciples have suggested, but that because it was more 'localised' and 'less intense', it was

nevertheless indisputable, as Susie L. Steinbach observes, that, relative to the ages preceding and coming after it, the period was one of ‘economic growth’ accompanied by relative ‘social stability.’⁴ Capitalism’s consolidation during the era as the dominant economic system, accompanied by regular advances in technology and productive efficiency, furnished the consumer society with the materials and conditions necessary to develop. Concomitant and complementary to the increasing availability and diversity of commodities, the late-century consuming classes increased in number and came into the possession of larger disposable incomes.⁵ Significantly, as Lori Anne Loeb and Erika Rappaport have shown through their respective studies on Victorian consumer culture, the late century middle class were also far more inclined to dispose of such income than their thrifty mid-century predecessors.⁶ Also important is the fact that the late-century also witnessed a general shift in how the economy was perceived. This shift was underpinned by a transition away from classical models of political economy, which saw humans primarily as producers, towards neo-classical patterns of thought, which defined them as consumers.⁷ This perception, as Nick Daly has observed, extended beyond economic discourse and invaded the psyche of the middle-class public. For Daly, ‘intellectuals and popular readers alike’ began to conceive of the economy ‘in terms of consumption rather than production.’⁸

more contained – see David Kent, ‘Containing Disorder in an Age of Equipose’: Troops, Trains, and the Telegraph’, *Social History*, 38.3 (2013), 308-327 (p. 310). For a broad contemporary reassessment of the mid-Victorian era, see *An Age of Equipose? Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain*, ed. by Martin Hewitt (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).

⁴ *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-century Britain*, ed. By Susie L. Steinbach (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 86.

⁵ Loeb, *Consuming Angels*, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.* and Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, p. 6.

⁷ The turn toward neoclassicism was initiated by the publication of William Stanley Jevons’s *Theory of Political Economy* in 1871. As Lana L Daley observes, ‘economists of the new school privileged economic desire over material need and conceptualized humans as consumers rather than producers.’ From Lana L. Dalley, ‘Fatal Postponements: Production, Consumption, and the Economic Imagination in George Gissing’s *The Odd Women*’, *Victorians Institute Journal*, 40 (2012), 145-165 (p. 148).

⁸ Nicholas Daly, ‘That Obscure Object of Desire: Victorian Commodity Culture and Fictions of The Mummy’, *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 28 (1994), 24-51 (p. 26).

The imperatives of capitalism's system of representation thus changed in this new environment. It ceased to be required to validate capitalist production and the social system built on it, and instead could be set the sole purpose of propagating and maintaining the consumer society – of creating and realising exchange value. The imperatives of capital dictated that spectacle was forced to expand during the period as it was now that the kind of mass-produced abundance (of certain commodities) was becoming more of a reality. Yet now commodities were no longer united by the category of products of the capitalist system. Whereas in the Crystal Palace, the commodity-form in general was celebrated (although commodities were attributed to different manufacturers, it was their abstract, coherent form as a mass of commodities that was foregrounded), in later spectacle commodities were left to do battle with each other in the true spirit of capitalist competition. Commodities did not need to be justified in an economic and social context to the consuming public, they just needed to be sold, and with so many of them now on the market, competition for consumers' attention and money was inevitably intensified. The mass of commodities circulating in the new consumer realm, combined with the number and enthusiasm of consumers pursuing them, gave greater emphasis to advertising, where much of the contestation between commodities would be staged. Within the realm of advertising, these same forces placed emphasis on the development of brand identity and the formulation of arbitrary fetish values in order to transform and variegate commodities from mundane objects into symbols of fetish power. As the American John Manning observed in his guidebook *The Modern Advertisement: Its Resources and Curiosities* (1889), because the late century 'possessor of ready money' was now confronted with easy access to a great volume of commodities, 'the onus of showing that [certain] goods are better than...others' fell to the advertisers.⁹ For instance, the mass of soap, as a product, needed to be variegated into parts – into individual brands – each of which could be differentiated and claimed as different and thus 'better' than the others.

Commodities had succeeded in the colonisation of social life. As Raymond Williams has observed, advertising in the early Victorian era was used predominantly to promote ephemeral commodities, but in the late-century became a central tool in the promotion of mass-produced, mass-market goods, such as soap, food, and clothing.¹⁰ Advertising, in its modern, spectacular

⁹John Manning and Arthur H. MacOwen, *The Modern Advertisement: Its Resources and Curiosities* (Philadelphia: John Manning and Co., 1889), p. 7.

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 170-195 (p. 177). The author of an article on the theme of advertising from *St Paul's* in 1899, and reprinted the same year in the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, concurs with Williams' assessment in

form, was thus born not of a need to propagandise the capitalist system, but as a weapon in an internal war fought within spectacle. For the Fabian economist Sydney Webb, the power of advertising worked on a principle of negativity, in that it functioned not by simply attracting attention to, and selling a particular commodity, but rather by blowing all competing commodities out of the market.¹¹ Thus, in the advertising spectacle of the late nineteenth century, it was not commodities in aggregate that were envisaged as the building blocks of a utopian social life, as they were in the Exhibition, but rather individual commodities were envisaged doing so alone. H. Hewitt's Ball-Pointed Pens were declared to 'Move the World',¹² for instance, whilst Bovril was envisaged literally supporting it.¹³ Late-century advertising spectacle played host to a scenario, much as it does today, in which 'each individual commodity fights for itself, cannot acknowledge the others and aspires to impose its presence everywhere as though it were alone.'¹⁴

Hence a key feature in the development of spectacle during the second-half of the nineteenth century was its fragmentation, as the number of commodities populating the world grew and adverts were used to contest their superiority. The overarching economic narrative of the Exhibition was thus replaced by a myriad of smaller, opposing spectacles. Spectacle no longer told a story about the world as a whole, and the economic place of commodities within this world, but rather positioned individual products as conduits through which the world could be known and experienced. Within this process of fragmentation, spectacular representations

this respect, observing that 'a generation or two back the leading firms in any line of business would have scouted the idea of advertising as beneath their dignity, and the advertising columns of a newspaper in the 'fifties were very different to those of the papers today.' See 'Leaders in the Advertising World', *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 24 July 1899, p. 4.

¹¹ Sidney Webb, 'Introduction', in *Advertising: A Study of Modern Business Power*, ed. by G. W. Goodall (London: Constable & Co., 1914), pp. ix-xvii (p. x).

¹² H Hewitt's patented commodity was marketed with the slogan 'Ball-Pointed Pens Move the World' during a broad advertising campaign in the 1890s. See *History of Advertising Trust Collection*, Cat no. 21/547/6/7 Ormiston and Glass.

¹³ A late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century advertisement for Bovril shows a group of humanised Bovril containers (Bovril jars with arms and legs), holding up the globe, and features the accompanying slogan 'Bovril Supports the World'. See *History of Advertising Trust Collection*, Cat no: HAT 21/547/1/98 Bovril.

¹⁴ Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, p. 43.

of production also fractured, multiplied, and entered into contestation with one another. This created mass disjuncture within spectacle. Production became fractured and distorted to such an extent that it disappeared from the view of the spectator. Additionally, the pseudo-dialogue carried on between commodities, now operative in truly fetishistic fashion, escalated spectacle's unreality, separating it more and more from association with real-world referents. Yet despite spectacle's disintegrative effect on, and detached relationship with, the real, this situation did not signify the development of a Baudrillardian hyperreal, because the world from which spectacle was abstracting and fragmenting was still wholly there (as it remains today).

This was of course an era of radical collective movements: socialism, the suffragists, and unionisation, which were solidified around coherent, critical, revolutionary narratives, narratives that spectacle at its contemporaneous level of development was unable to properly absorb and dissolve. The collectivisation of radical politics presented a coherent, narrative-based antithesis to the fragmentation and atomisation spectacle was forcing on those more fully ensconced in its folds (this contest would eventually be won by spectacle, in powerful combination with the forces of neoliberalism, later in the twentieth century). Nevertheless, as will be shown in the coming analysis, spectacle's fragmentary, fluidic, and otherworldly character in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century was complemented by its newfound capacity to subsume elements of the social real, even subversive ones, and turn them to the advantage of the commodity system. As will be seen, spectacle's liberation from the framework of a coherent narrative about capitalism and industrial production enabled it to position the commodity and the commodity world as not just separate from, but oppositional to the real world of production. In this arrangement, radical collective ideas and energies could be co-opted by spectacle and channelled into the activity of consumption. Late-century spectacle became an amorphous and protean force that was capable of consuming extra-consumerist narratives and ideologies and regurgitating them in fetishized form.

Although not yet all-encompassing, spectacle's influence on societal agency was nevertheless pervasive. Despite the concomitant development of radical narrative-based politics such as socialism and proto-feminism, spectacle was beginning to have a profound effect on the agency and perception of social actors, particularly consumers. Whilst social actors still possessed agency and could perceive and critique capitalism in its contradictory totality, this agency could be impeded, diminished, or even entirely dissolved when spectacle became an element of any particular moment of experience. As will be seen, when presented with the disjuncture of spectacle, spectators were less able to comprehend and critique spectacle's propagandistic renderings of the capitalist economy, and to resist its propagation of consumerist

ideals. Their ability to see through and around spectacle was severely impeded, and thus the separation of production from consumption and consumer from producer was intensified. Further than this, by holding a mirror up to the consumer and forcing their focus inwards, spectacle had an atomising effect, dissolving direct social bonds and identities and replacing them with fragmented commodity relations.

Advertising: history and historiography

Considering its significance to the era, nineteenth century advertising has not received the amount of attention from scholars that one might expect. The only general survey of specifically Victorian advertising in existence is Diana and Geoffrey Hindley's *Advertising in Victorian England 1837-1901* (1972), in which the authors provide a useful if uncritical outline of its development through the century.¹⁵ E. S. Stanley's *The Shocking History of Advertising* (1965) also contains a substantial section on the development of advertising in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Stanley's narrative of the rise of advertising from the birth of civilisation to the period in which he wrote offers an appraisal of advertising and its social role throughout history, but on the whole is Whiggish in orientation and does not seek to interrogate the topic in a politicised way.¹⁶ As mentioned in the introduction, Raymond Williams offers a brief analysis of Victorian advertising in his essay 'Advertising: The Magic System', observing developments during the period, but deeming it less significant to post-WWI advertising which Williams, along with many other, non-Victorianist, historians of advertising, such as Stuart Ewen, identify as the point in which advertising truly became fetishistic and elevated the commodity fully into the realm of sign value.¹⁷ More recently, Lori Anne Loeb has produced an analysis of the relationship between Victorian women, advertising, and consumerism, arguing that the representation of middle class women as 'commanding and controlling, rather than demure and unassuming' undermines 'a prevalent myth – that the ideal Victorian woman was passive, submissive, and

¹⁵ Diana and Geoffrey Hindley, *Advertising in Victorian England 1837-1901* (London: Wayland, 1972).

¹⁶ E.S. Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965).

¹⁷ See Raymond Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 170-195, and Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976).

sexually anaesthetic.¹⁸ Richards also places a heavy focus on advertising in the latter sections of his *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, describing how late-century advertising helped propagate the ideologies of capitalist imperialism,¹⁹ facilitated a symbiosis between commodity and monarchy during Queen Victoria's Jubilee year,²⁰ and, in the domain of patent medicine advertising, preyed on the image of the consumer's body to encourage the purchase of remedies and healing aids.²¹ Anne McClintock has written extensively on nineteenth century soap advertising and the way in which this fetishized soap in a nexus of class, race, and gender relations.²² Anandi Ramamurthy's *Imperial Persuaders* (2003) also features a study of Victorian advertising, which she reads in relation to its depictions of race in imperial and commercial contexts.²³ Apart from Ramamurthy's and McClintock's studies, which deal with depictions of colonial labour in advertising and the process of the advertising fetish respectively, none of these analyses deal specifically with advertising's capacity to distort producer-consumer social relations, a deficiency which this thesis is designed to overcome.²⁴

Perhaps the ultimate lack of focus on Victorian advertising in contemporary scholarship is related to the frequent characterization of advertising, particularly in its nineteenth century

¹⁸ See Loeb, p. 33.

¹⁹ See Richards, pp. 119-167.

²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 73-118.

²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 168-204.

²² See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge: 1995), pp. 207-231.

²³ Anandi Ramamurthy, *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

²⁴ In her analysis of the shows of 'exotic people' popular in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Sadiah Qureshi has made more substantial efforts in this respect, utilising a methodology which seeks to contextualise the reception of such spectacles with their production. See Sadiah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-century Britain* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

guise, as ‘ephemera.’²⁵ This is a hugely problematic categorization as it treats advertising only in its specific form: as individual advertisements. Taken as such, advertising is indeed ephemeral: advertising texts circulated in and out of public space and the popular consciousness with profusion and speed, thus ensuring that no single advert remained long enough to become culturally significant in its own right (although some more famous and enduring adverts came close) The assertion by the authors of *The Men Who Advertise: An Account of Successful Advertisers* (1870), a promotional piece published on behalf of the advertising agency George P. Rowell & Co., that ‘an advertisement is in its nature transitory and perishing’ rings true.²⁶ Yet, although saturated with obvious bias, so too is their observation that as an abstract force, taken as a whole in terms of its effect on society, ‘the advertisement is the most potent’ influence of all.²⁷ This resonates with Debord’s notion that, ‘whereas all particular commodities wear themselves out’ in ‘the fight’ for spectacular supremacy, the commodity as an abstract form continues on its way to absolute self-realization.’ Spectacle, like the commodity, is founded on the quantitative: ‘it is exclusively quantitative in nature: the quantitative is what it develops, and it can only develop within the quantitative.’²⁸ On its own, an advertisement is not spectacle – it is only when adverts are aggregated that they truly become such. In its mass form – as advertising in general - then, advertising was far from ephemeral, but instead *fundamental* to Victorian society. Indeed, when considered as such, as *a* spectacle, its influence was far more widespread, far more keenly felt by all sections of the population, than the Great Exhibition, an event that has garnered huge attention from historians.

Indeed, the spectacle of advertising played a pervasive role in the second half of the nineteenth century. Already a force in early Victorian Britain in the form of bills, handbills,²⁹

²⁵ The practice of categorising advertising as ephemera is evident in the archives, for instance, in the naming of collections such as ‘The John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera’.

²⁶ Authors unknown, *The Men Who Advertise: An Account of Successful Advertisers* (New York: Nelson Chesman, 1870), p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 27.

²⁹ According to Raymond Williams, ‘a walk down one street’ in Victorian London ‘would collect as many as two hundred different leaflets.’ – Williams, ‘Advertising: The Magic System’, p. 175.

sandwich-board men, town criers, and shop signs,³⁰ from the mid-century onwards advertising began to proliferate and pervade more deeply into the fabric of society. By the 1860s adverts could be found on posters, billboards, buses, omnibuses, and specially-designated 'advertising vehicles', as well as on trains, train stations and train tickets.³¹ It was also prominent in newspapers, periodicals, magazines, books, and formed the basis of a proliferation of catalogues, almanacs, calendars, trade cards and postcards. In more extreme and isolated incidences, advertising was featured on currency, etched onto the pavements of urban areas, and, in one instance at least, projected by magic lantern onto buildings.³² Advertising was a ubiquitous presence in all arenas of Victorian social life, and affected the lives of a far greater swathe of the population – a swathe that cut across class, race, and gender – than any other cultural medium. Advertising's influence was thus inevitably significant, featuring centrally in popular culture and the social discourse of the day. Advertisements were a common topic of conversation and jokes, and became material for a sizeable army of collectors and – as will be detailed in greater length in the next chapter – scrapbookers.³³ According to Raymond Williams,

³⁰ See Williams 'Advertising: The Magic System', p. 175 for details about early Victorian advertising mediums such as the sandwich board and the bill poster, and Diana and Geoffrey Hindley, *Advertising in Victorian England*, pp. 18-19 for information about Victorian town criers.

³¹ According to Diana and Geoffrey Hindley, advertising vehicles 'were employed to carry promotional imagery through streets that did not contain billboards' – Diana and Geoffrey Hindley, *Advertising in Victorian England*, p. 9. The pair also discuss the prominence of advertising material on public transport and transport tickets – *ibid.* p. 14.

³² In his *The History of Advertising*, Henry Sampson alludes to a scenario in which a 'well-known weekly paper' produced an 'extensive defacement' – was advertised – on 'the pence and halfpence of the realm', Henry Sampson, *The History of Advertising from the Earliest Times*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875), p. 31. Similarly, and more famously, Thomas Barratt, co-owner of Pears and advertising 'pioneer', imported a batch of French centimes (then legal tender in Britain), stamped them with the Pears' brand, and sent them into circulation. See E.S. Turner, p. 115. Sampson also notes that, at one point during the 1860s, the practice of stencilling ads on paving stones became extensive, until it became so pervasive it was made illegal - see Sampson, p. 29. In 1894 'an advertiser for watches, pills, and blacking set up a magic lantern slide in London's Trafalgar Square and, after dark, threw colored advertisements onto the Nelson Column and the pillars of the National Gallery.' See Robert L. Selig, 'A Sad Heart at the Late-Victorian Culture Market: George Gissing's In the Year of Jubilee', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 9 (1969), pp. 703-720.

³³ In his article on the practice of removable advertising insertions in the covers/wrappers of magazines and comics later to be bound, and its implications for the historical record, Edward Lauterbach notes that some verbal, topical, and graphic humour 'was based on current, well-known advertisements.' See Edward S. Lauterbach, 'Victorian Advertising and Magazine Stripping', *Victorian Studies*, 10 (1967), 431–434 (p. 432).

catch-phrases issued on famous advertisements also found their way into everyday language, such as Beecham's 'Worth a Guinea a Box', and Pears' Soap's 'Good Morning! Have you used Pears Soap?'.³⁴ Yet, as this section will demonstrate, the societal influence of the advertising spectacle was far more profound than its mere entry into popular culture and discourse. It radically altered the social relations and dynamics of the age, fracturing society at every level and fragmenting experience. The characterisation of advertising as 'ephemeral' grossly underestimates the profound role it played in Victorian society and culture.

The proliferation and variegation of advertising in the late nineteenth century was accompanied by its simultaneous emergence as a fully spectacular mode of representation. Earlier in the century, and even in the decade immediately after the Exhibition, advertising remained a largely textual affair, only concerned with aesthetics in terms of bold, eye-catching type, and figured around the use of textual jingles, slogans, and other incitements to buy. By the late-century, however, most of the more ambitious advertisers were devising their promotions with the use of both image and text, focussing largely on the former.³⁵ Adverts became fully pictorial and thus spectacular (designed to be spectated as a predominantly visual medium), making use of stark images and bold colours to help draw the spectator in. In their foray into the use of images, advertisers also borrowed and bought from the world of fine art, blurring the lines between commerce and culture – a central imperative of consumer capitalist spectacle. This trend was begun by Thomas Barratt of the Pears' Soap, who famously bought the rights to John Millais' painting *A Child's World* (1886), changing its name to *Bubbles*, and embedding the Pears' logo and product into the image. Barratt and Pears' would later experiment with incorporating other artistic mediums, such as sculpture, into their marketing campaigns.³⁶ Although undoubtedly influenced by a vested interest in the trade, the advertising agency T.B. Browne were nevertheless fundamentally correct in their assertion that 'advertisement by

³⁴ Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System', p. 176.

³⁵ Loeb, p. 7.

³⁶ Ever the innovator, Thomas Barratt also purchased a statuette known as 'the Dirty Boy' by an Italian sculptor named Focardi. The statuette went on to inspire several Pears' advertisements. See E. S. Turner, p. 102.

picture is essentially the product of the present time, and reflects in a very marked degree the spirit and enterprise of the age.¹³⁷

Whilst the Exhibition set the mould for the representation of the commodity through spectacular visuals, this technique was not fully embraced in advertising until the late 1870s. It is for this reason that this section begins in 1870, nearly twenty years after the Exhibition was held. Spectacle did not begin its migration to advertising and thus its evolution into the diffuse form until this period. This lapse in the transformation of spectacle was due to political, technological and economic factors. It was not until 1855 that the advertising duty was completely abolished, allowing newspapers to sell larger swathes of advertising space.³⁸ Improvements in the technologies of pictorial reproduction, namely the advent of woodcuts that could create coloured designs, and later in the century, the introduction of photomechanical reproduction, also aided the boom in pictorial advertising.³⁹ Another significant element in the development of the pictorial advertisement was the advent of the advertising ‘contractor’ in the late 1860s and early 1870s.⁴⁰ Contractors bought up physical advertising space – the walls of urban areas, train stations, and so forth. These sites had previously been the domain of ‘bill-stickers’ (people employed to paste bills onto walls in public areas). Bill-sticking was a totally un-regulated, with rival bill-stickers frequently pasting advertisements over each other, meaning advertising space was never secure. The arrival of the contractor secured advertising space as private property, meaning that those able to bid for it were free to invest more money in their promotions, safe in the knowledge that it would be free from destruction.⁴¹ Pictorial advertisements on posters, placards, and billboards, soon began to flourish as advertisers realised that more eye-catching advertisements were more efficient at

³⁷ *The Advertiser's ABC of Official Scales and Advertisement Press Directory 1892* (T.B. Browne: London, 1892), p. xxii.

³⁸ Roy Church, ‘Advertising Consumer Goods in Nineteenth-century Britain: Reinterpretations’, *Economic History Review* 53 (2000), 621-645 (p.632).

³⁹ Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, ‘Illustration’, *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. By Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 104-125, (pp. 122-123).

⁴⁰ E. S. Turner, p. 97.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 98.

elevating the meaning of, and thus selling, commodities. Later, advertising agents and agencies arose. These gradually became larger concerns, and by the closing decade of the nineteenth century big firms such as T. B. Browne had begun to dominate the field.⁴² Spectacular advertising reached its Victorian zenith with the arrival of such firms, whose division of labour, financial resources, and attention to detail elevated pictorial advertising and the advertising campaign to a new status.

The fact that advertising spectacle is an enduring structure composed of countless transitory fragments presented through different modes and mediums poses numerous challenges for historians seeking to reconstruct it. Victorian and Edwardian advertising spectacle was composed of a myriad of advertisements for all kinds of commodities, and was propagated through newspapers, periodicals, books, trades cards, billboards, posters, sandwich boards, advertising vehicles (carts), commodity packaging, film, theatre, and photographs. One of the first obstacles faced is that many of these elements have not survived in the historical record. Even among the relative wealth of surviving adverts, the overwhelming majority come from specific types of print spectacle, notably newspapers and periodicals. Many other forms of print advertising, such as handbills, and the hoardings of 'sandwich men', which were contemporaneously at least as voluminous and pervasive as adverts in the press (and indeed, perhaps more so), have not survived in such great numbers. Furthermore, the modern historian only has direct access to the material form of Victorian advertising. It is difficult to gain much insight into the phenomenon, let alone the actual content, of advertising in theatres, where 'puffs' were inserted into the shows much as ads and 'placed' products are on television today. Another obstacle is that many adverts survive in the archive as cut-out scraps, removed from their original context and often with little accompanying information to identify precisely where and when they first appeared, how and to what extent they were circulated, and how they might have been received.

Several strategies and approaches have been used to overcome these problems. Firstly, in relation to the gaps in the historical record, I have been forced to focus my analysis largely on print forms of spectacle, notably newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets. This has not been too restrictive in terms of gaining a grasp of spectacle in its totalised form. Enough of these types of source are available to at least reconstruct this specific aspect of spectacle in totalised form, and thus provide a broad enough view of the topic to make more generalised inferences. At least

⁴² Church, p. 623, p. 626.

some of the adverts featured in newspapers, journals and books were also produced as posters or featured in handbills and catalogues. Problems generated by the de-contextualised nature of many advertising sources have been tackled in two ways. Firstly, I have tried to determine as much biographical information about the sources as possible, for instance, by estimating dates of publication based on analysis of an advert's iconography or thematic content, crosschecking databases and different publications, or searching popular fiction or journalism for references to certain adverts. My second approach in overcoming these issues is to contextualise more focused case studies with broader surveys of late-century spectacle. To this effect, I begin the section with a brief but broad survey of modes of representing production in the aggregate advertising spectacle, reflecting on a select but eclectic range of print adverts broadly representative of spectacle in its general sense. Here I am less concerned with specific historical contexts, and more with establishing the general nature of the newly-manifest diffuse advertising spectacle and the way its individual elements interacted. This enables me to make effective use of some of the more obscure sources and thus ensure my analysis does not miss the bigger picture at the expense of focusing exclusively on the major advertisers and their campaigns. With the general tenets of late-Victorian and Edwardian spectacle established through this survey, I then turn my attention to more focussed case studies which I use to deepen and expand my analysis, and to situate it in its historical context. These case studies are focussed on contemporaneously pervasive aspects of spectacle (advertising in major news publications and soap advertising), enabling the development of more definite and nuanced conclusions. Combining generalised surveys with detailed case studies is also an appropriate means of dealing with diffuse spectacle, a phenomenon that, as Debord asserts, must be comprehended in its aggregate form.⁴³ The more generalised approach ensures that the totalised spectacle is kept in view whilst the focussed analysis enables the more intricate workings of spectacle and the society thereof to be examined.

In the final two chapters of this section, in which I reflect on the issue of consumer agency in relation to the late-century spectacle, I use some further categories of evidence, namely satirical literature, newspaper articles, and scrapbooks. The satirical material is selected because satire and humour was a site in which the imperatives of Victorian and Edwardian commodity culture were both contested and maintained. Because of this, its analysis provides insight into the mode and manner of Victorian consumer agency. As I will discuss in further detail

⁴³ Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, p. 27.

later, scrapbooks also serve as an excellent source to use in this respect because scrapbooking was a consumer activity that frequently involved authors de- and re-contextualising elements of the advertising spectacle. Scrapbooks thus exhibit the ways in which consumers interacted with and against advertising spectacle. Scrapbooks are also a useful source for this objective as the practice of scrapbooking was contemporaneously popular and widespread amongst the consuming classes. Victorian and Edwardian scrapbooks have also survived in relatively large numbers in the archive, and so there is a substantial body of material to work with. This said, they are not as accessible as advertisements, and their categorisation along with other similar documents like photo albums and shopping lists makes identifying sources in archival catalogues difficult and time-consuming. The lack of many substantial collections of scrapbooks at single locations or in digitised form is also prohibitive for the historian. My approach to the material in this final chapter essentially mirrors that employed throughout the first three. I begin with a brief generalised survey of Victorian scrapbooking, examining a representative sample of the main types of scrapbook authored by Victorians and Edwardians, before conducting a case study of a scrapbook composed by a single individual, Alice Cliff Scatcherd. This document is chosen primarily because Scatcherd was a prominent suffragist and her scrapbook is highly politicised and charged with subversive intent. Thus, whilst not typical, the album enables the structure/agency dialectic to be examined in a more extreme form, and for the capacities and limits of both late-Victorian and Edwardian consumer agency and the advertising spectacle it was pitched against to be tested and revealed. Whilst this case study is micro-historical in nature, the conclusions drawn from it can thus viably be asserted to have more general validity.

Chapter One

Through the Shattered Looking-Glass: Production in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Advertising

As the commodity spectacle fractured, so too did the images of production and the social world that spectacle presented. Whereas the Exhibition celebrated and represented a coherent mode of production, late-century advertisements dealt with production in a myriad of different ways: they distorted it, concealed it, sanitised it, displaced it, replaced it, and omitted it entirely from the narrative of a given product's genesis. Individually, these representations fetishized production in various ways and to various degrees, whilst in aggregated form they fractured the fetishization of production and the very connection between consumed commodity and producing system, contributing towards a detachment of the world of the commodity from that of reality. More than this, as will be seen, these advertising spectacles were embedded in a broader media spectacle, the accumulation of which created yet more acute forms of disjuncture and disarticulation. In its broadest sense, the late-century spectacle consisted of layer upon layer of opposing spectacles, which frequently had the effect of burying the social real. This chapter reconstructs the fragmented and disjointed consumer spectacle. Its objective is to survey pictorial advertising as it exploded onto the scene in the latter decades of the century, exploring how its individual elements (individual advertisements and advertising campaigns) interacted, and how consumers and spectators interacted with the aggregate of these constituent parts. The results of this analysis are then carried over into a case study which situates the fragmented advertising spectacle within the framework of the wider media spectacle in which it was frequently embedded, which forms the basis of Chapter Two.

Representing production: strategies in advertising

I will begin by discussing the fragmented spectacle in terms of the way in which production was represented within and across it. The most common way in which production was dealt with in late-century advertising was through its complete omission. The category of advertisements that followed this strategy tended to focus on spectacularising the commodity: foregrounding it above all else and re-situating it in a universe of its own. In such instances, the commodity would often be depicted being consumed, for example, an image of someone wearing an item of clothing, or on its own against a blank canvas (Figs. 7 and 8).

In images of the commodity-in-consumption, use-value (the value that arises from the inherent functionality of a commodity) was accentuated and embellished, and the consumer and the consumer society was depicted existing in isolation from social or material production – or indeed other consumers. Another prominent technique in this fashion was a focus on emphasising a product's emergence from nature, such as an advert for Plantol Soap, which depicts a bar of said soap emerging from a body of water carried by a young naked woman (Fig. 9). Here, the production process is removed from the product's 'genesis' story and substituted by the suggestion of some kind of organic emergence. These types of advertisements evoked a straightforward fetish, stripping the product of productional connotations in order to reinvest it with arbitrary symbolic meanings, and imbue it with all the spiritual and soulful qualities that the process of its manufacture was lacking.

Another technique was to display the commodity in a fantastical situation often completely unrelated to its origins or its intended function, for example, an elephant balancing a bottle of 'Gordon & Dilworth's Catsup' on its trunk (Fig. 10). Adverts of this type might depict an image of something other than the commodity – a picture of a bird on an advert for chocolate, for instance (Fig. 11). Here, the commodity's detachment from production is complete. Whilst images of the commodity-in-consumption or adverts that naturalised commodities completely denied the realities of production, this utterly fantastical breed of fetish image took this process a step further. In the images of life depicted by adverts of this fantastical kind, the commodity rules over all of time, space, and social life, and is extant in a world both 'here and elsewhere' – tangibly accessible yet simultaneously unearthly. In this world production, and indeed even human agency, do not exist – *everything* is the commodity, and the commodity is everything. Take, for instance, a promotional image for Ayers Sarsaparilla, entitled 'The Discovery of America', which depicts Christopher Columbus on board his ship as it approaches the American shore. He arrives to be confronted by a giant sign straddling the cliffs publicising 'Ayers Sarsaparilla' – the commodity has already been, seen, and conquered (Fig. 12). Another promotion for Gordon and Dilworth's catsup (Fig. 13), featuring a bottle of the product sailing on a sea of tomatoes, is also archetypal in this respect. The particular commodity, in this instance, the catsup, becomes all commodities (here, a sailing ship), and appears (it is as though the catsup has formed spontaneously from the tomato ocean) and circulates of its own accord. In this latter image, even the consumer him or herself is disavowed, as it is commodities themselves that are rendered as the sole agents in the consumer/material world. These spectacles each presented a vividly nonsensical picture of a purely commodity world, a world in which the commodity was surreally naturalised, or naturalised in a surreal, arbitrary nature, and

in their individual assertion of one commodity over all others, fractured that world into contesting pieces. Not only did the spectacle present a productionless universe, it presented a productionless multiverse: a cornucopia of worlds, each slightly different from the next, yet all sharing a common centre: the autonomous commodity.

Other advertisements made, by degrees, more explicit references, or at least nods towards, production and labour. Adverts that were more direct – yet, as shall be seen, no less fetishized – in their references to production were often significantly influenced by a symptomatic problem of the highly unregulated Victorian capitalist economy: commodity adulteration. As Diana and Geoffrey Hindley have noted, commodity ‘fraud’ was rife in the nineteenth century.¹ Products were frequently cut with toxic substances to create bulk, or laced with poisons in order to make them appear aesthetically desirable.² She details the widespread anxiety the problems of commodity adulteration and inauthenticity caused amongst the consuming classes, reading Rossetti’s text as a manifestation of such. Late-century manufacturers and retailers were forced to respond to consumer anxieties surrounding adulteration by foregrounding the purity of their production processes in promotional images. Such a tactic was particularly prominent in the advertisement of commodities designed to be ingested (food, drink, and medicines), or used topically (soap and cosmetics, topical medicines).

An advert for Camel Figs from c. 1910 (Fig. 14), for instance, emphasises the quality and cleanliness of the company’s production methods. The advert features an image of Smyrna, Turkey, which we are told is the home of the Aram Hamparzum fig factories in which the product is packaged (in commercial images akin to this, the inside of a factory is *almost never* shown). The scene presented by the image is idyllic and conspicuously non-industrial: a smattering of neat houses and buildings cluster around a small harbour, with picturesque mountains rising in the background. The text accompanying the image informs us of a number of reasons as to why Camel Brand is a wise purchase, prime among which is the apparent fact that ‘Camel Brand is a guarantee of absolute cleanliness’, ostensibly being ‘the only figs washed and packed under sanitary conditions.’³ What is significant here, and in other advertisements of a similar type is

¹ Diana and Geoffrey Hindley, pp. 114-116.

² Rebecca F. Stern, “‘Adulterations Detected’: Food and Fraud in Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market”” *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 57 (2003), 477-511 (pp. 482-484, 492).

³ ‘Camel Brand Figs’, *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Food 1 (48).

that, in order to elevate the qualities of the product, not only is its production depicted fetishistically, minus the dirt, grime, and tellingly, labour commonly associated with industry, but it is also validated via implicit reference to other production methods that are apparently unclean and unsound. Camel Brand is purportedly the 'only' fig product produced in such circumstances, therefore inferring all other fig producing processes are insanitary.

Advertisements for manufacturers who ran philanthropic industrial endeavours, such as the confectionery makers Rowntree's and Cadbury's, often operated in a similar fashion, elevating their product through reference to their ostensibly non-exploitative production processes, and by extension implicitly suggesting the existence of other, negative production processes. An advert for Port Sunlight Soap, a commodity that was produced at a model industrial 'village' in Cheshire owned by the Lever Brothers, is emblematic of this type (fig. 15). The advert features a postcard-like image of the factory and the surrounding model worker village. Standing over the image of the factory is an oversized worker, cheerfully presenting a block of Sunlight Soap with his hands. The distorted proportion alters relations between the worker and the factory: the worker's gigantic size situates him in a position of power and strength, implying that he makes the factory and its products – the factory does not make him (or if it does make him, it makes him strong, muscular, moral, and clean). The worker is depicted as thoroughly unoppressed: he sports a broad smile and bears a healthy physique (the latter a clear response to anxieties pertaining to the perceived physical degeneration of the population, which were exacerbated by Britain's struggles in the Boer war of 1899-1902).⁴ The labourer is also garbed in clean and perfectly-creased white uniform, emphasising not only cleanliness of character, body, and production process, but also alluding to his participation in light and undemanding labour practices. The advert thus foregrounds an interconnected purity of production, labourer, and product, communicating to consumers the potential of the soap to not only be clean itself and clean their clothes, but render them morally unsoiled. Once again, amid this spectacular rhetoric, the advert makes a firm allusion to the implicit uncleanliness of other soaps and soap production methods.

These are prime examples of the ways in which fragmented spectacles contested and contradicted one another, and of the implications of this situation for the spectacle's refraction of production. Whilst this situation is reflective of Baudrillard's ideas about the self-referential

⁴ Tammy Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002), p. 13.

nature of the signs of consumption, and thus from certain perspectives could be considered as an instance of spectacle taking an embryonic step towards a 'hyperreality', it is quite clear that, in the case of production, spectacle constantly, if implicitly, cited reality as part of the same process of fetishization. Indeed, the realities of production are here used to the advantage of spectacle, providing a negative reference point by which it can contrast itself in positive, spectacular form. Whilst the dirty actuality of production is implied by the spectacular presentation of specific commodities, these inferences are always passed off onto the next commodity. This scenario conforms to one of the key attributes Debord observes in the spectacle: its propensity to present 'unity as division'.⁵ This fragmentation of production by spectacle reflected an actual fragmentation of production in practical, economic terms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Whilst Cadbury's, Rowntree's, and others facilitated comparatively 'cleaner' and more humane working environments and processes (in some facets of their businesses) and could thus exploit the (fetishized) image of these conditions in their advertising, this tactic inevitably relied on the presence of more fully exploitative modes of production.⁶ Yet, significantly, whilst such advertisements foregrounded the purity of a particular production process by referring to the general exploitative character of other productions, these references remain at all times implicit. The Port Sunlight advertisements do not, for instance, create a visual contrast between Port Sunlight soap production and that of more exploitative endeavours, but simply imply such a contrast. They isolate Lever Brothers' philanthropic production in a utopian world of its own, distancing it from dirtier productions. This 'pure' capitalism thus appears absolute and workable, if only one sticks to the consumption of the product of such capitalism. As a fragment, it retains its autonomy despite its endowment of meaning through negative reference to a less sanitised world of production. Thus, spectacle divided into a unity of ostensibly independent productional worlds, whose independence was actually predicated on an all-encompassing interdependence, in which the supremacy of each production and product depended on its distinction by negative reference to other productions and products. Through its logic of fragmentation and disavowal, spectacle dissolved the idea of a coherent whole, a capitalist production, and replaced it with a unified disunity of competing

⁵ Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*, p. 94.

⁶ Despite its carefully cultivated image, Cadbury's was caught up in a controversy in 1908 when it was revealed that, despite their ostensibly ethical business practices, the company was relying on slave-grown cocoa. See Lowell J. Sartre, *Chocolate on Trial: Slavery, Politics, and the Ethics of Business* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2005) for an in-depth account of the controversy and its contexts.

capitalist productions. Whilst this reflected the reality of production, it did so in a highly distortive manner. All capitalist productions *were* competing – not to be morally or materially cleaner than the next, not to be kinder and more humanising to their attendant labour forces, but to be more efficient, more cannily exploitative of both labourers and consumers. In spectacle this reality was hidden, along with many others, from the view of spectators, by the interpolation of the idea that productions and their products were fighting on behalf of their respective consumers and producers, rather than for the inexorable pursuit of capital.

Spectacle was simultaneously stand-alone and intertextual. It was a patchwork of fragments that colluded with one and other through contradiction and fought each other for supremacy. Each fragment only functioned in its relationship to the others, but part of this relationship was to ensure that each fragment completely and utterly denied the validity/credibility and authenticity of all others, and by extension, the essential unity of *the* capitalist mode of production. Whereas at the Great Exhibition, and other early forms of commodity spectacle, capitalism was validated in totality; presented as positive across the board, in the late-century advertising spectacle, the unity of the commodity world and its production was presented instead as disunity: instead of a capitalist mode of production, there are many capitalist productions, each different to the next and with that which is most immediate to the consumer at any given time occupying the sole position of pseudo-authenticity. All commodity and productional possibilities or alternatives appear within the spectrum of capitalism and capitalist spectacle, a spectacle which is multitudinous and never-ending.

Chapter Two

Spectacle and Media Narrative

This chapter expands on the analysis featured in Chapter One by considering the fragmented advertising spectacle in the context of the newspapers and periodicals that it was featured in. The object of this analysis is to show that the picture of late-Victorian spectacle becomes yet more fragmented when spectacular advertisements are considered in the context of the broader spectacles in which they were situated. It is important to note here, as I did in the introduction to the thesis, that newspapers and periodicals, and other media platforms, are themselves part of the spectacle of consumer culture in the Debordian definition. The newspaper and periodical industry has long been intertwined with the advertising industry, and newspapers and periodicals are also commodities themselves, produced with the aim of generating profit, and sold to the consumer with the same spectacular strategies as any other commodity. Spectacle, both in its more restricted definition as advertising and commercial representation, and its more encompassing definition inclusive of the media, is one of capitalist society's fundamental hubs of communication and knowledge and information exchange. This investigation seeks to examine the effect of fragmentation on spectacle in its guise as a conduit of communication and the dissemination of information. The analysis of the Great Exhibition in the first section of the thesis revealed that early-Victorian concentrated spectacle used coherent – albeit inauthentic and propagandised – narratives. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, diffuse, fragmented spectacle is incompatible with the presentation of coherent narratives. Further still, as the proceeding analysis will demonstrate, the fragmented advertising spectacle also eroded, undermined, and fragmented the journalistic narratives it shared the pages of newspapers and periodicals with. This scenario has profound implications, showing that spectacle was beginning to have a significant and detrimental effect on the transmission and reception of coherent political narratives. The analysis in this section takes the form of a case-study on the influence of advertising content on the *ILN's* coverage of The Great Dock Strike of 1889. Coverage of the Dock Strike has been selected for this analysis firstly because of the social, political, and economic significance of the event (it was one of the landmarks in the labour conflict that marked the rise of New Unionism), and secondly because of the extent to which it was reported on and spectacularised in the contemporary media. By examining the *ILN's* coverage of the event, which was a significant flashpoint in the heated labour/capital conflict of the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and the way in which it was impacted by the

advertising in the newspaper, it is possible to discern how the fragmented spectacle affected the formation of political narratives/narratives about politics.

Whilst, as some scholars have successfully demonstrated, adverts in the print media could become 'tessellated' with other contents, such as serialised fiction, and thus form discursive meanings and narratives for those who read them, these narratives and meanings were always superstructural and entirely rooted in normative consumer culture. For instance, Katie Lanning has shown that readers of the serialisation of Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone* (1868) in *All the Year Round* were presented with advertisements for a new edition of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, a text regularly cited in *The Moonstone* as one of the narrators' favourite novels.¹ As is evident, whilst this intertextual interaction may have produced a semblance of a 'unified reading experience'² for the Victorian consumer, this unity was not grounded in real world representation (rather it was an element of the hyperreal – a narrative formed out of reference to another narrative within a narrative). Moreover, Lanning's analysis cannot explain how the presence of other advertisements, and indeed articles, in these editions of *All the Year Round* related to this intertextuality. As other advertisements would have been by nature fundamentally oppositional to those for the new edition of *Robinson Crusoe* (particularly for other books, but in general anything – buy this instead!), they could not have fed into this narrative, and thus would have extensively disjoined this 'unified reading experience'. Although such sporadic intertextual narratives could emerge in spectacular media texts, they were unable to come to dominance because of the contestation of other spectacles. More significantly, because of their diffuse, contesting nature, and the fetishistic imperative that underpinned all of them to greater or lesser degrees, when it came to productional, political narratives, advertising and newspaper spectacles had, as will be seen, a disintegrative effect.

Advertising and the dock strike

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, class tensions became heightened once more. Prolonged economic stagnation led to widespread unemployment, exacerbating the alienation of the still disenfranchised working classes, who injected new vigour into the trade union movement and turned to a highly effective brand of organised socialism to

¹ Katie Lanning, 'Tessellating Texts: Reading *The Moonstone* in *All the Year Round*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 45 (2012), 1-22.

² *Ibid.* p. 1.

stake their political and economic claims.³ Fears surrounding industrial production and the condition of the working classes increased. As Dorothy Porter and others have observed, in the nineteenth century a view of the working classes as a distinct and inferior race was constructed,⁴ a perception which was given added impetus with the impact of social Darwinism on popular and learned discourse later in the century. This scenario, as Porter notes, spawned anxieties regarding the potential physical degeneration of the working class and with them, the nation.⁵ Darwinism also impacted the Victorian perception of technology, which had long been the subject of criticism for its potential negative effects on humanity. Contemporaries began to fear that an over-reliance on the machine might instigate or catalyse the degeneration of the working classes and society at large, and that indeed, if life was capable of evolution, so might the machine, leading to fears of the development of machine consciousness and domination. Thus, spectacle had to confront the issues of production and labour once more. Yet, whereas in the mid-nineteenth century, spectacle was relatively ill-equipped to produce a successful propagandised distortion of the problematic realities of capitalism, by the late century it had – almost inadvertently – been armed with a powerful weapon in the manipulation of the spectating masses. Narratives of production featured in the pages of the late-century press were juxtaposed with other media spectacles and advertisements – with other fragments of life and the world as rendered in spectacle. The spectacular newspaper thus presented, as will be demonstrated in the coming analysis, a highly distorted and contradictory vision of world realities. By reading the mainstream press's coverage of The Great Dock Strike of 1889 in terms of its relationship to advertisements and other news items within the same publications, it is possible to discern how this disjuncture operated.

The strike broke out on the 10th August 1889 and endured until late September of the same year. Begun by a dispute between a group of tugmen regarding bonuses, the action quickly spread amongst all ranks of dock workers, whose principal demand was a reorganisation of

³ See Hamish Fraser, *A History of British Trade Unionism 1700-1998*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999), pp. 71-96 for an overview of new unionism. As Fraser points out, in 1889, 80% of strikes resulted in either outright victory for the strikers, or a compromise between striking employees and employers - *Ibid.* p. 78.

⁴ Dorothy Porter, 'Enemies of the Race': Biologism, Environmentalism, and Public Health in Edwardian England', *Victorian Studies*, 2 (1990), 159-178 (pp. 159-160).

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 160

working patterns to prevent extreme exploitation, and a fairer wage of 6d an hour.⁶ The strike, led by Ben Tillett and future MP Robert Burns, was characterised by remarkable solidarity among a disparate and previously unorganised group of workers, and emblemised the growing might of collective worker action. After a month, the strike was resolved to the participants' satisfaction, as they secured both the wage increase and the minimum four-hour shift periods they sought.⁷ The strike captured the public attention, and was heavily reported on in both national and regional newspapers, an aspect of the situation that has attracted much interest from historians. The notion that the Dockers received overwhelmingly favourable coverage from the press (traceable to P.F. Donovan's article on the topic in an early 1970s edition of *Labour History*),⁸ is, however, as R.B. Walker has pointed out, disputable. As Walker asserts, 'except for the radical and liberal-radical papers (*Pall Mall Gazette*, *Star*, *Reynolds's Newspaper*, *Lloyd's News*), the dockers got no consistent support.'⁹ More mainstream liberal and conservative newspapers such as the *Illustrated London News* and *The Times* were either indifferent or disparaging toward the strikers in their coverage.

Given that there is no scope within the limitations of this project to produce a comprehensive survey of coverage of the strike across multiple publications, this analysis will predominantly be fashioned around a case study of the *ILN's* coverage of the event. Again, this choice can be justified in terms of the contemporaneous ubiquity of the *ILN* and its status at the vanguard of the pictorial press, factors which allow it to stand as an example broadly representative of spectacular coverage of the event.¹⁰ However, I will also briefly discuss the representation of the strike in the satirical liberal newspaper *Funny Folks* to show that this situation was not limited to the *ILN*. I have chosen two liberal publications aimed primarily at a

⁶ Fraser, p. 78. For a brief history of the strike see John Crossland, 'The Dockers Who Won', *History Today*, 39.10 (1989), 9-10.

⁷ Fraser, p. 78.

⁸ See P. F. Donovan, 'Australia and the Great London Dock Strike: 1889', *Labour History*, 23 (1972), 17-26.

⁹ R. B. Walker, 'Media and Money: The London Dock Strike of 1889 and the Australian Maritime Strike of 1890', *Labour History*, 41 (1981), 41-56 (p. 43).

¹⁰ See Kooistra, 'Illustration', *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-century Britain*, ed. by Shattock, p. 104.

broadly middle-class audience because I am concerned with the way spectacle influenced narratives about the social relations of industrial consumer society to which the consuming classes were exposed.

Taking first an issue of the *ILN* from September 1889. The edition in question appeared on the 2nd of September, at the height of the strike. The issue featured the story on its front page and as a leading news item, providing in-depth reports on the crisis and sketches of scenes from worker demonstrations. Whilst many London-based newspapers hyperbolised the events, the *ILN* preferred to downplay their significance, depicting the strike as a minor aggravation of the sort that regularly interrupts, but never halts, the otherwise smooth progress of capitalist society/the consumer society. Indeed, the article begins by observing ‘the liability of London to social “scares,” which arise immediately upon any *temporary* [my italics] hitch in the conditions of labour or traffic, in the relations of “employers and employed,” as well as from the rumoured distress of the “unemployed”.’¹¹ The author of the piece attributes the anxiety instigated by the strike as ‘due partly to the want of accurate knowledge of special circumstances, particularly those of the main industrial operations carried on at “the East End.”’¹² The author thus manipulates a widespread perception held by the Victorian middle classes of the East End as another world – an unknowable place simply too dirty and dangerous to visit. The article offers these readers a reassuring glimpse into the industrial and social workings of the area. The report then gives details on the ostensible social relations of the dock workers, both with each other, and with their employers, and concludes, firstly that a deal was well on the way to being struck, secondly that attempts to spread the strike amongst workers in other industries had failed, and thirdly that work was still being carried on at the docks because the officers of ships had consented to perform ‘the rough work of the common dock labourer’ (who needs a working class, we can do it ourselves!).

The sketches that accompany the article, although illustrative of the extent and significance of the strike, are nevertheless highly sanitised: the workers appear to be relatively healthy, showing no signs of malnutrition or poverty, and are also depicted as behaving orderly and in an unthreatening fashion. Significantly, the sketches are safely contextualised by the article: the reader is informed that the images are of a procession held on the 26th of August, in

¹¹ ‘The Dock Labourers’ Strike’, *Illustrated London News*, 7th September 1889, p. 295.

¹² *Ibid.*

which strikers marched from the docks to the railway depots at St. Pancras, where they hoped to call on the coal workers to join their endeavour. The author takes care to assert that ‘these interruptions did not prove successful’ and that the coal and gas workers had now returned to work, thus allowing the images to be viewed not with trepidation, but as spectacular entertainment.¹³ Indeed, the sketches tend to foreground the procession as mere pageantry. One of the images, depicting ‘Father Neptune’s’ car in the march, presents the reader with a number of characters in eye-catching carnivalesque dress, including a man in drag and the god of the sea himself, sporting crown and trident (Fig. 16). This foregrounding of the element of festival in the process fits neatly with the translation of the event into spectacle by allowing reference to be made to the medieval and early-modern carnival, a temporary time and space of subversion that allowed for pressures on the prevailing system to be alleviated (the relationship between capitalist spectacle and the pre-modern spectacle of the carnival will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three).

By sanitising the event, framing it in an unthreatening context, and in the process turning it into a piece of spectacular entertainment, the *ILN* was able to present the strike, to an extent, as spectacle, rather than something antagonistic to the order of consumer society. Yet nevertheless, simply by reporting on the event, and by following the commercial logic of media reportage – by conforming to the desire to realise the exchange value of the news, an imperative ironically tied to the newspaper’s interest in the maintenance of the economic and political status quo – the *ILN* also revealed moderate elements of danger and threat. One page features a pair of photographs that might have been received rather more apprehensively than the rest of the coverage. The images show a huge crowd of workers voting on resolutions at the gates of the dock. In the first, captioned with the words ‘those who agree to this resolution hold up their hands’, the workers face away from the camera and, to a person, raise their arms. In the second photo, captioned ‘on the contrary!’, the same crowd are stood facing the camera, arms lowered, wearing stern and defiant expressions (Fig. 17). These images captured the unity and determination of the strikers, as well as foregrounding the volume of their number, presenting the working class as organised, resolute, and perhaps even revolutionary.

Yet these elements of threat do not undermine the *ILN*’s spectacular rendering of events, but rather, when read in context with the rest of the paper, work to consolidate the dominance and authority of the prevailing system. The remainder of the newspaper reiterates,

¹³ *Ibid.*

via spectacular means, the editorial view of the strike as a temporary and isolated moment of unease within an otherwise vibrant consumer world. It does so by conforming to the logic of fragmented spectacle and juxtaposing the spectacle of the strike with several other unconnected media spectacles and a myriad of spectacular advertisements. Assuming the Victorian reader perused the paper vaguely from front to back, or at least read, however selectively, beyond the first pages, after finishing with the news of the strike, they would have been confronted by, amongst other things, information pertaining to the holiday itineraries of various members of parliament during a period of prorogation, the recovery of a sunken ship, the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, articles advising on practices of leisurely consumption, a section of a serialisation of Wilkie Collins' *Blind Love*, reportage on a royal visit to Wales, and adverts for numerous products, including Eno Fruit Salts and Fry's Pure Concentrated Cocoa.¹⁴ Jostling for position amongst the heterogeneous mass of fragmented spectacles, the strike appears as a fractional and ephemeral moment in a world full of choice and possibility. The implicit threat to the consumer society posed by the workers in the aforementioned photographs, and the broader problems of capitalist production it points towards - is subsumed by a larger and more nebulous spectacle which as a whole re-affirms the stability – indeed the impossibility of destruction – of the extant consumer way of life. Workers may be striking at one of the key nexuses of the capitalist economy, but Fry's Cocoa is still available for sale, and therefore the consumer society advances undiminished.

It is worth briefly considering how the event was presented in another publication to demonstrate that this scenario was not limited to the *ILN*. The liberal satirical comic *Funny Folks*, part of publishing magnate James Henderson's (1823-1906) vast media empire, presented a similarly fragmented view of events to its readers in its own 7 September issue.¹⁵ A provocative sketch showing a top-hatted, monocle-wearing employer lying prostrate on the floor under the boot of a proud dock worker took the front page (Fig. 18).¹⁶ Titled 'The Inevitable Surrender', the image pokes fun at both capital and labour, depicting the event as a childish skirmish without

¹⁴ *Illustrated London News*, 7 September 1889, p. 293.

¹⁵ Henderson's politics were clear: a keen profiteer, he was also a president of the Dulwich Liberal and Radical Association. His publications reflected these politics. See Mark Bryant, 'James Henderson', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/107110>> [date accessed: 3 Jan 2018].

¹⁶ 'The Inevitable Surrender', *Funny Folks*, 7 September 1889, p. 282.

taking explicit sides. Nevertheless, despite this belittling of the event and the comic nature of the sketch, the stark depiction of an ‘inevitable’ labour victory, like certain of the images in the *ILN* the same day, underlines the significance of the strike and communicates its potential to drastically reorder extant social life and relations. This sentiment is compounded through the rest of the issue in several other articles and comic sketches, such as one depicting the beginning of a general strike in which washerwomen, starchers, hairdressers, and waiters, among others, down their tools and join in. This sketch communicates the potential of the strike to disrupt the consumer society, showing the well-to-do being left with dirty clothes, unkempt hair, and having to put-up with ‘very unskilled’ replacement waiters spoiling their dining experience (Fig. 19).¹⁷ Again, although the anxiety-inducing potential of the sketch is tempered by its comic nature, it nevertheless spells-out the latent danger to bourgeois society. Just as in the issue of the *ILN*, however, this danger was thoroughly undermined by the other fragments of spectacle embedded in the publication. On the page following the general strike sketch, the reader was presented with a cluster of advertisements signalling the continued availability of established commodities like Van Houten’s Cacao, Bord’s Pianos, and Albion Milk & Sulphur Soap.¹⁸ One of the adverts on the page, for St Jacob’s Oil, features an image of the product so large it seems to crowd out the other articles on the page, and through its sheer size and presence, quell any fears about significant social change (Fig. 20).¹⁹

Advertising and social discipline

As is evident from the preceding analysis, the contradictions implicitly presented by the contestations of individual, fragmented spectacles prohibited any kind of coherence being communicated by spectacle. Spectacle contained both positive and negative, referenced both a harsh reality and a heavenly universe of commodities, but in the process succeeded in veiling the realities of things through such disorienting content. The emergence of this fragmented picture of the world, particularly in terms of its development in the form of the newspaper, is reflected in the following excerpt from an article moderately critical of advertising published in *The Monthly Review* in 1905:

¹⁷ ‘Struck Comical’, *Ibid.*, pp. 284-285

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 286

¹⁹ ‘St. Jacob’s Oil’ (advertisement), *Ibid.*

the main impression conveyed by these public announcements [in the pages of newspapers] is that, after all is said and done, life has its compensations. The tidings of a dreadful battle are immediately followed by the cheerful intelligence that Keller's hats are the best. The alarm we feel in reading the speech of a statesman that our trade is decaying is alleviated by the announcement that Mellor and Co. have added to their already large stock of umbrellas, and now challenge the competition of the world!²⁰

The writer of the essay even envisages the advertising of the future fragmenting individual articles and headlines:

shall we ever see the day when an advertiser will cry the virtues of his soap or tonic from the vantage-ground of the sacred leading article? Imagine the "leader" being broken up in this fashion:

Whatever the pride of rank, or riches, or of scholarship may have induced

PETER'S PILLS

some men to believe, or to affect to believe, the real strength and all the

ARE

resources of a country ever have sprung and ever must spring from

THE MOST PERSUASIVE

the labour of its people.²¹

The author's choice of a mock headline that makes explicit reference to a society constructed upon labour is significant here, emphasising as it does spectacle's tendency to fracture social relations and realities. This critic also neatly encapsulates the fracturing and destruction of narrative in and by late-Victorian spectacle: the interweaving of both headline and advert mean neither read coherently, unless one is equipped to, quite literally, read between the lines.

Tony Bennett has written on the development of museums and their disciplinary role in nineteenth and early twentieth century society. Tony Bennet 'juxtaposes' rather than aligns his argument with Foucault: For Bennett, the museum did not shape and maintain power relations through confinement like other more traditionally Foucauldian institutions like the prison, but rather via exhibition.²² Bennett delineates Exhibitions as 'vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting

²⁰ M. MacDonagh, 'The Craft of Newspaper Advertising', *The Monthly Review*, 20 (1905), 102-117 (p. 106).

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 116

²² Bennett, p. 59.

the messages of power',²³ that produced a 'voluntarily self-regulating citizenry' by allowing spectators/visitors to become the subject, rather than purely objects of knowledge.²⁴ Bennett argues that by allowing visitors to such institutions to view and understand the power relations to which they were subject, but in a positive way, they internalised the power relations presented them. If they know the power, they are comfortable with it. This was not what commercial spectacles were doing.²⁵ Bennett's model fits neatly with the Great Exhibition and its function, as it does with the many exhibitions, world's fairs, and museums that were held or constructed after 1851. Yet the implication of Bennett's model: namely, that late-nineteenth and twentieth century society was founded on ordering disciplinary foundations, whether based on incarceration or the exhibition of knowledge, is undermined by the nature of late-century spectacle. Commercial spectacle and commodity culture, whilst sharing its spectacular origins with the museum, did not conform to the same disciplinary logic. As commodity spectacle developed in concomitance with the economy in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it divided (and divided again, and again...) from the exhibition/museum because of the incompatibility of narrative-based formats with its fragmentary impulse. In order to fulfil its fragmentary logic, commodity spectacle also required liberation from the solid, static structures that housed exhibitions and museums. It was required to be easily reproducible and have the mobility of capital, so that it could reach audiences wherever they may be: in the town or country, at the home or in the street, in the theatre or at the shops. It reached this ideal form (or the most ideal for what was then technologically feasible) through the vehicle of the press, by which medium it could, as the advertising guru William Stead Jr. marvelled, 'reach the uttermost ends of the earth'.²⁶ Thus whereas the museum retained its solidity, and its foundation in the production of order through orientation, commodity spectacle became fluid, and in its fragmentation - its presentation to the consumer of the spectacle of the war of commodities - functioned on a model of *disorientation*. Even department stores, whose form remained solid and static, and whose aesthetics remained closely related to that of the museum,

²³ *Ibid.* p. 61.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 63.

²⁶ William Stead Jr., *The Art of Advertising*, (London: T. B. Browne, 1899), p. 28.

did not retain the systems of classification – of narrativisation – that the museum and the exhibition did.

The fluidity and scope of advertising and the forms of print media it was often embedded in meant it reached a far greater audience than museums or exhibitions. As Stead wrote in his *The Art of Advertising* 1899:

The Academy, the National Gallery, and other institutions, although open to all, in reality belong to a privileged few. These great institutions do not appeal to the inhabitant of an East End slum. He never enters them; they consequently teach him nothing. It is not from them that he obtains any sense of colour or design. The artistic education of the great mass of English men and women is picked up from the poster on the wall and the advertisement in the paper or magazine.²⁷

Although Stead – who had a vested interest in the advertising trade, and used his book to promote advertising and the agency T.B. Browne in particular – is typically overstated here, his declarations are nevertheless fundamentally correct: the spectacle of advertising and the commodity was a far more pervasive force among all sections of the British populace than were static cultural institutions. He refers here specifically to spectacle's instruction of bourgeois artistic appreciation (a prominent theme, given that the Victorian commodity spectacle was extensive in its appropriation of art and artistic mediums),²⁸ but in his observations about spectacle's 'educational' character he could well be discussing it as a broader disciplinary device. James Dawson Burn certainly identified spectacle in its broader capacity as an educational and disciplinary tool, seeing in the 'Language of the Walls' a 'silent, but often powerful and eloquent' force, 'arresting attention whether we will or not.' For Burns, spectacle had virtue because of its capacity to carry and disseminate information, envisaging advertising hoardings as 'circulating libraries for the million, with the thoughts and sentiments of men upon every conceivable

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 95.

²⁸ The owner of the Pears' Soap company, Thomas J Barratt, began such a trend in the 1880s by buying the rights to John Everett Millais' painting 'A Child's World', and inserting an image of a bar of branded Pears' soap to create one of the most iconic Victorian advertising images. See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 212.

subject.²⁹ The influence of the combined commodity and media spectacles extended far beyond the spectacle itself. For instance, as Matthew Rubery has shown in his *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction After the Invention of the News* (2009), the development of the Victorian novel was inherently linked with that of the newspaper, and Victorian fiction writers regularly borrowed narrative conventions from the print media.³⁰

The commodity spectacle, capable of taking a myriad of forms, and covering all social space, public and private, was thus a key fulcrum of discipline in late nineteenth and early twentieth century capitalist society. Unrestricted by the fixed nature of institutions such as the museum or the prison, spectacle could be displayed anywhere, everywhere, and to all who passed into its extensive sphere of influence. Significantly, this influence was not ordering or revealing, as Foucault's Benthamite prisons or Bennett's museums, but disordering and concealing. It did not discipline subjects by orienting them into a pseudo-world of pseudo-justifiable power relations, but by displacing them from the contexts of the social and dividing systemic unity into an appearance of disunity, through which subjects were ostensibly given the choice of which fragments they chose to believe, which fragments they chose to pursue, which fragments they chose to endow with meaning, and which they chose to ignore. Within this framework, undesirable, potentially subversive informational, aesthetic, or experiential aspects of the real could leak through – could be displayed visibly, in an unthreatening way (such subversions were central to spectacle's function, as will be seen in the following chapter). Indeed, these aspects, as in the example of representations of the Dock Strike, could be used to strengthen and indeed stabilise the capitalist world-view by demonstrating that as but one fragment amongst many others, aspects of the real had no capacity to destroy or even influence the extant way of life. Moreover, the pre-eminence of spectacle was foregrounded in these instances by the translation of these real-world events *into* spectacle (again, this element will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter).

As has been established, the proliferation and pervasion of advertising and other forms of spectacle in the late-century had profound consequences in terms of the informational vistas of the world available to the consumer. No longer were spectators presented with a coherent

²⁹James Dawson Burn, *The Language of the Walls: and a Voice from the Shop Windows. Or, The Mirror of Commercial Roguery* (Manchester: Abel Heywood, 1855), p. 4.

³⁰ See Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction After the Invention of the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

view of the world, but instead with contradiction and division at every turn of the urban corner or newspaper page. Spectacle and its representation of the world and how that world was produced was fragmented and variegated, so that coherent narratives about capitalism dissolved within its repertoire. This fragmentation further fractured and undermined the media spectacles which often partnered advertising spectacle, creating a situation in which political or productional narratives became correspondingly fragmented and diluted.

Chapter Three

The Dreamworld of Diffuse Spectacle

In the previous chapters I showed that in the late-nineteenth century, the commodity spectacle fragmented and transformed into a diffuse format. The coherent, totalised visions of the capitalist world that accompanied capital's quest for domination in the earlier nineteenth century had fractured into a myriad of fragments. This made spectacle more effective at obscuring the reality of the social world and of capitalist production, as it now lacked a tangible and coherent basis that might serve as a reference point for critical spectators. It also had a significant effect on the formation and transmission of political (and other) narratives. In this chapter, I show that the fragmented basis of the new spectacle also provided it with another means to influence the agency of spectators. Now relinquished from association with coherent narratives of production, spectacle was given rein to stand as an autonomous consumptional world free from structural and hierarchical restrictions, which ostensibly offered consumers the opportunity to escape industrial reality. Products of the industrial system, of work and labour, of normative hierarchy and ideology, came to be portrayed as conduits of subversion or opposition to the industrial world. In this sense I draw parallels between this 'commercial carnival' and the pre-modern carnivals described by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* (translated into English by Helene Iswolsky in 1968). The commodity spectacle of this era came to take on pseudo-carnavalesque properties, evoking consumption as a means by which the hierarchy and structure of capitalism could be contested and democratised. This argument is developed through a case-study on soap advertising c1875-1914. Through this study I show that advertisers infused soap with subversive meanings and ideas to present the commodity as something that middle-class women – the prime target market for soap – could use to liberate themselves from domestic labour and the rigid gender roles they were subjected to. I argue that this scenario thus demonstrates how spectacle's pseudo-subversive properties enabled it to absorb subversive ideas and actions and reorient them to suit the imperatives of consumer culture. I develop this analysis by relating it to Walter Benjamin's concept of the 'dialectical image', showing that spectacle's detachment from the real world of work and infrastructure enabled it to act as a 'sponge' on that world, absorbing social activity and ideology and crystallizing them in image to fortify and expand its cultural presence.

After this in-depth analysis of the way a specific mode of subversion was co-opted and cannibalised by spectacle, I will expand the case-study to emphasise how the soap spectacle

appropriated and absorbed a range of different ideologies, both subversive and normative. The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate that because of its fragmented basis, in aggregate form spectacle existed as a whirlpool of different, often contradictory ideologies, thus appearing to the spectator as a kaleidoscopic world of choice, in which the world and social relations could be experienced in any way one wished. As will be seen, soap was advertised with reference to all kinds of politics and ideologies, both conservative and radical. I will highlight this by paying particularly close attention to the way soap advertising treated the concept and activity of imperialism. I will show that some advertisements evoked soap as tool of imperial expansion, whilst others appealed to more insular and less expansionist ideas about 'Britishness', or played on anxieties regarding the uncertainties of the wider world. Common to spectacle's treatment of all these ideological variants, however, was its re-centring of them around the act of consumption. I conclude the chapter by proposing that this generation of a 'second world' oppositional to the original one of work and reality marked the moment in which the society of spectacle proper began to be cultivated, and furthermore, the historical roots of what has come to be regarded as postmodernity. I suggest that the essential dissolution of ideology, practice, and narrative in the late-Victorian and Edwardian advertising spectacle was the historical moment in which formerly transformative forces and critical faculties began to be subdued and harnessed in the consolidation and expansion of spectacle as the new way of life

Soap advertising has been selected for this analysis for numerous reasons. Prime among these is the fact that soap advertising was an extremely ubiquitous element of late-century spectacle, and soap was a mass-market commodity that had an established place in Victorian material culture. Adverts for soap saturated newspapers, periodicals, books, and public spaces, and were targeted at people across the class spectrum. Almost all Victorians would have encountered soap advertising in some fashion, and to some extent, during their lives, and many would have been exposed to it to a significant degree. Also important is that soap manufacturers and their advertising agents were at the forefront of the development of new advertising techniques and strategies, and their influence on advertising in general was consequently immense.¹ The strategies and formats of soap advertising thus reflect those of the broader advertising spectacle, allowing for generic conclusions to be inferred from their analysis.

¹ See Avi Goldfarb's work on the rise of Lever Bros and its Sunlight Brand for a discussion of how soap producers instigated modern forms of marketing and brand management – Avi Goldfarb, 'Let there be Light!': The Rise of Lever Brothers and Sunlight Soap', available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.199.9599> [date accessed: 03/04/2018].

The carnival of consumption

Because soap, like other commodities, no longer needed to be situated or explained in relation to its place in a narrative of industry, it was imbued with arbitrary values and meanings in the advertising spectacle. More precisely, because soap was detached from industrial production, it could be painted as something that was also apart from, or oppositional to, industrial production, despite the intertwined nature of the two. Consumers of soap were endowed a pseudo-agency by spectacle that suggested their consumption of the product was in some way a means of contesting the industrial world. This wholesale detachment of the individual commodity from the aggregate of commodities and their production was the moment in which the commodity and consumption truly came to represent a world unto themselves. The separation of the spheres of consumption and production, both physically and within the spectacle, allowed advertisers to position consumption as a suitable activity by which to escape or oppose the world of work and industrial production. In this sense, capitalist spectacle became an ostensible parallel of its pre-modern counterpart, the spectacles of the medieval and classical carnival. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, carnival spectacles and festivities, intrinsically bound up with the marketplace, and manifest in annual festivals and 'feast-days', 'offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year'² For Bakhtin, the carnival spectacle was characterised by a specific form of folk culture based around humour and laughter, a temporary suspension of hierarchy and order, and an emphasis on change and renewal. Carnivals thus formed important sites of social rejuvenation, and through their heteroglossic (composed of many voices) make-up enabled an extra-political form of democracy that could counterbalance the established order. In this way, carnivals were valuable to both the elites, in that they provided moments of pressure-release, and the masses, in that they gave them an effective means of social and political influence.

In its late-nineteenth century incarnation consumer spectacle was also figured as an extra-political, extra-economic site in which consumers could engage in 'play' ostensibly oppositional to the productional world. Yet whereas medieval carnival was characterised by

² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 6.

genuine subversive elements, consumer spectacle was merely an inaccessible mirage of pseudo-liberation which only served the purposes of the traditional order. Because the subversions and oppositions proposed by spectacle were always ultimately made with the aim of realising exchange value and generating capital that would return to production anew, they were merely an exercise in channelling subversive energy and thought into the activity of consumerism, and thereby rendering them not only benign, but conducive to the needs of the prevailing system. Further still, Bakhtin notes that the pre-modern ‘carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people.’³ In the developing late-nineteenth century consumer spectacle, access to spectacle did not constitute *living in it*, as, no matter the promises made by spectacle, spectacle could ultimately only be spectated. Although spectacle was everywhere in the late-nineteenth century, and people could find themselves literally enveloped by spectacle, the pictures of liberation it presented could not be accessed. As we shall see in the concluding section, our own contemporary spectacle is no longer restricted to this one-dimensional form of projection, having been endowed with a more interactive capacity that enables it to function even more effectively as a mechanism of social control.

Spectacle’s pseudo-carnavalesque properties are highly prominent in an advert for Hudson’s Soap from the first decade of the twentieth century (Fig. 21).⁴ Here, the lure of Hudson’s proves so great that even the master of the household cannot resist it: he flees from the kitchen, a look of delirious glee in his glazed eyes and a box of Hudson’s in his hands, with a pack of angry domestic staff in hot pursuit. In this advertisement, the issue of the soap’s role in domestic labour is blurred, whilst the idea of its production is entirely muted. The bourgeois man’s ‘theft’ of the soap seems to indicate his desire to use the product, either in performing chores himself, thus dissolving the class-bound nature of domestic work, or in some way completely unconnected with domestic labour, implicitly imbuing the product with exchange value(s) extraneous to any actual use value. Hudson’s is simply so good, it must be had, but the object of its goodness, its function – what it is good *for* – is blurred. The advert presents the idea

³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁴ ‘Hudson’s Extract of Soap’ (c1879), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 4 (29a).

that Hudson's is both good for domestic labour, and, simultaneously, nothing to do with domestic labour at all, whilst the question of the labour inherent in its own production is buried underneath. In tandem with its subversion of the commodity's social meaning and value, the advert concurrently subverts the domestic and broader productional hierarchy by reversing the social relations between the house staff and their master, placing the kitchen staff as the soap's 'owners' and the wielders of authority (they brandish domestic implements as weapons with apparently violent intent), and the master as the dispossessed. Significant too is the fact that the master's pursuers are all women – the two male members of staff: the chef and the servant boy, are depicted as frightened and reticent onlookers, whilst the bourgeois man's masculine authority is challenged. Labour and gender relations are subverted – albeit in a tongue-in-cheek and thus safe manner (it is not as if the domestic staff are threatening revolution, they merely want to get back to work). Nevertheless, soap's presence is shown to disrupt normative social relations and invoke a moment of carnivalesque mayhem, thus conveying the central idea that soap, or more specifically, Hudson's Soap, acts to liberate its consumers from the ordered constraints of the domestic environment. This sentiment no doubt appealed to a potential desire for freedom from male bourgeois economic hegemony and domestic drudgery amongst the soap's chief consumers, women of both the middle and working classes. Although entirely a product of industrial production, and, in terms of its actual use value, a propagator of normative domestic labour relations, the soap is imagined as semi-antithetical to these realities. The advert positions soap as both a normative object and something radical that in some intangible way appears to offer the key to liberation from the structures and barriers of capitalism. The image renders a dialectic between the subversive energy of the master's pursuers, the master himself, and the commodity, whose insertion has dramatically reordered the extant hierarchy and installed a new and potentially more democratic system of relations.

Because the primary market for soap was working and middle-class women, and because its actual use value resided in domestic economy, soap advertising tended to employ a specific brand of the pseudo-carnavalesque to woo its customers. The mid-Victorian 'separate spheres' ideology which restricted middle-class women to the domestic sphere and denied them sexual freedoms was still a pervasive force in late-century society. Nevertheless, opposition to this ideology was growing during the later decades of the century, manifest in the beginnings of the suffragist movement and in the rise of a class of women professionals epitomised by the figure of the 'New Woman'. Soap advertisers engaged with this discourse, envisaging soap and its consumption as (paradoxically) a means for women to liberate themselves from domestic

labour, and by extension, from the broader ideological gender roles they were pressured to conform to.

This genre of pseudo-carnavalesque can be seen at work in an advert for Lux Soap, featured in *Punch* in December 1904 (Fig. 22). The advert shows the image of a witch, crow perched on her shoulder, pouring Lux into a boiling cauldron.⁵ Here, mysticism and folklore are called upon to establish the commodity's supposedly subversive properties. The advert removes the featured commodity from the real world of industry and modernity and resituates it in a new, mythical world, which is clearly pre- or extra-capitalist in nature. The figure of the witch is used to elide domestic labour with the casting of a spell and thus foreground the labour-easing qualities the product allegedly possesses. The witch metaphor also indicates the potential for a liberational transgression of ideological boundaries. The ideal of the 'angel in the house' is subverted: the witch, old and haggard, the antithesis of idealised feminine beauty, stands outside the domestic sphere and operates great power: the fetish power of the soap. The advert promises the housewife or domestic labourer access to these fetish powers and the allegedly revolutionary effects they engender, thus positing the product as something vaguely radical. More than presenting the commodity as a tool by which liberation from the burden of domestic work could be achieved, the advert also gives it implicit association with broader notions of women's and workers' liberation. Indeed, whilst still frequently represented in a negative light or with negative undertones in the late-nineteenth century, this period also saw the emergence of more positive representations of witches (such as Wilkie Collins' 'white witches'), as well as the beginnings of the association of the witch with modern notions of female emancipation. Susan Jenifer Elsley has drawn links between such representations and contemporary occult practices such as mesmerism and spiritualism, some of which offered women access to an arena in which they were relatively free from male control and by which they could challenge the establishment.⁶ By alluding to witchcraft, contemporary soap advertisers were able to align the product, and domestic labour, with emancipatory practices, and simultaneously situate soap and domestic work in a world of magic external to the drab reality of the real industrial world.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ See Susan Jenifer Elsley, 'Images of the Witch in Nineteenth-century Culture', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chester, 2012).

This subversion is merely fleeting and liminal, however, as by hybridising the subversive, here folklore, mysticism, and the witch, with the normative, here the commodity of soap and the act of its consumption, the subversion is immediately sanitised, brought back into a framework of 'safe' practices and social relations.

A similar scenario is also on show in another late nineteenth-century advert that employed the witch metaphor, this time for Pears' Soap from the 1890s (Fig. 23).⁷ In this image, the figure of the witch is essentially merged with a highly sexualised version of the domestic goddess. Whilst, unlike in the previous instance, the 'witch' in this advertisement retains the aesthetic ideal of bourgeois womanhood, soap is asserted as a means of her escape from the practical and ideological confines of domesticity. The witch is depicted enjoying a freedom that not only allows her to traverse the public sphere, but 'all over the Earth' as the accompanying caption has it. Furthermore, as Alison Smith asserts, the nude, whilst in high culture an embodiment of the finest ideals of art, was also viewed with trepidation as 'an active incitement to unregulated sexual activity'.⁸ The advert projects a fairly radical representation of female sexuality by foregrounding the phallic connotations of the broom and making a subtle reference to masturbation, positioning Pears' as a means for women to access and enjoy such freedom. Nevertheless, such subversions are tempered by their alignment with the practice of consumption, and yet further still by the advert's communication of a dichotomized bourgeois womanhood. By presenting the subject as free from domesticity, but not consequent to its neglect (the soap has seen to this with its marvelous efficiency), and free to transgress traditional gender boundaries, but without losing the essential qualities of normative models of respectable femininity, the advert presented a moderate form of subversion that may have appealed to the more socially-mainstream bourgeois woman. Nevertheless, the advert engages with contemporary discourses on gender relations in a fairly radical way, reflecting some of the core tenets of the 'New Woman' phenomenon (a late-century movement led by a new class of

⁷ 'Whither oh Whither Fair Maiden So High?' (1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 6 (41a).

⁸ Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 1-2.

women professionals which promoted female independence and engagement with the public sphere), and engaging provocatively with the aforementioned debates on the representation of the nude body.⁹ By pushing the boundaries of rigid gender ideology, the advert appealed to the more subversive elements of the consumer psyche.

Many soap advertisements responded to the cult of the New Woman by positing soap as a means by which women could somehow access and engage with the public sphere. The rise of the movement coincided with the advent of a late-century cycling craze enabled by the availability of relatively affordable mass-produced vehicles. Cycling provided many middle-class women with a means by which to independently engage with and explore the public world, and the bicycle soon became an unmistakable icon of the New Woman and her cause. Although ultimately an ideologically harmless pursuit (cycling did not involve engagement with radical proto-feminist politics), and itself a consumerist activity propagated by spectacle, the access it gave women to the public sphere inevitable caused anxiety in the context of normative bourgeois gender ideology, and thus the cycling woman took on negative connotations in some quarters of mainstream discourse.¹⁰ The figure of the New Woman also took on negative connotations and was ridiculed in popular discourse, most notably in the press, where, for instance, *Punch* cultivated a stereotypical image of the New Woman as ‘mannish’ and uptight.¹¹ As Ellen Gruber Garvey has shown in her analysis of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cycling women and advertising in US contexts, advertising, and the media publications they were placed in, ‘subsumed both feminist and conservative views [of women and cycling] in the interest of sales.’¹² This was also the case in Britain, where, for instance, a Sunlight Soap advert from 1897, promoting a prize competition run by the company, featured the image of two ‘New Women’ mounted on bicycles studying a giant clock inscribed with the details of the competition (fig. 24). Here soap – a domestic product that was a tool of women’s domestic oppression – is

⁹ Eilidh Macrae, ‘The Scottish Cyclist and the New Woman: Representations of Female Cyclists in Scotland, 1890-1914’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 35 (May 2015), 70-91 (p. 73).

¹⁰ Ellen Gruber Garvey has shown that this was certainly the case during the same period in the US, where, although some viewed cycling as a suitable and healthy pursuit for women, others feared it promoted masturbation and blurred gender roles. Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 7.

¹¹ Macrae, p. 74.

¹² Gruber Garvey, p. 7.

implicitly associated with emblems of female emancipation. Far from representing women as housewives in the domestic sphere, Lifebuoy here superficially embraced a social trend that potentially threatened bourgeois gender relations and traditional modes of domestic economy. By using this strategy, the Lever Bros (makers of both the Lifebuoy and Port Sunlight brands) could position their products as adversaries of both industrial capitalism and normative gender relations and thus appeal to the inclinations toward liberty no doubt felt by many women across a spectrum of social classes. In these adverts, soap is presented as its opposite – a device for liberation rather than subjugation. Yet, by conjoining the idea of emancipation from the domestic sphere with the domestic commodity of soap, advertisers could instantly reabsorb the subversion into conventional notions of domestic economy and women's roles in such. Like the witches in the Lux and Pears' adverts, the women here are possessed of a degree of liberation from domestic economy, but their responsibility to it nevertheless implicitly remains. To attain the liberation offered by cycling they must first see to their domestic chores, which Port Sunlight soap enables them to do with the requisite efficiency, and return to such to start the cycle (literally) anew. Furthermore, the possibilities of liberation they are offered are narrowed to another, albeit more leisurely, form of consumption. By using the commodity of the bicycle as a convenient mediational representative of women's liberation, more attention was drawn to the ostensibly emancipative qualities of consumption. Ramsey Michele has produced a similar argument in relation to American automobile advertising from the early decades of the twentieth century, which she asserts 'represented "woman" in ways that invited readers to view consumption as a means of liberation, while simultaneously containing their possibilities for liberation'¹³ Michele argues that advertisers preyed on the political energy of women's push for enfranchisement and access to the political sphere, exploiting a broader cultural and social move towards individualism to promote consumption, rather than collective action, 'as a new form of public action for women.'¹⁴

I will conclude with another example of an advertisement that features a more explicitly radical element in its dialectical assimilation. This is another promotion for Pears' from 1890 which shows the image of a moustachioed face reading a pamphlet emblazoned with the Pears' slogan 'Good Morning! Have you used Pears' Soap?' (Fig. 25). Significantly, although the face is

¹³ Michele E. Ramsey, 'Driven from the Public Sphere: The Conflation of Women's Liberation and Driving in Advertising from 1910 to 1920', *Women's Studies in Communication*, 29 (2006), 88-112 (p. 90).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 89.

moustachioed, it is otherwise highly androgynous: it is not clear whether this is indeed a man, or a woman in drag. Again, traditional social structures are here challenged and subverted. The image suggests that Pears' soap can be used to cross gender thresholds, depending on the way in which it is used – Pears' can be used by the woman in the capacity of domestic goddess, but it can similarly be used to enable her to escape domestic labour and immerse herself in the 'masculine' world of the public, political and economic, sphere by (somehow) applying the product to create a male visage.¹⁵ As such, the advert tapped into subversive cultural discourses on sexuality, gender roles, and androgyny, linking particularly explicitly with the cult of the dandy. Such an appeal blurred normative ideological boundaries between the male producer and female consumer that were central to the function of late-nineteenth century capitalism, simultaneously constructing soap as a means by which gendered social actors might 'swap' spheres (the man may access domesticity, 'femininity', and consumption, whilst the woman may become masculine and enter the public sphere). The advert displays a mode of social democratisation through consumption: consumption may be used as a tool to escape domesticity, and as a means of fashioning a male consuming subject, a construction that Brent Shannon demonstrates was central to late-nineteenth century commercial practice.¹⁶ Again, soap is here set in opposition to industrial and domestic forms of production and gendered divisions of labour as an agent of carnivalesque liberation, but because this liberation is anchored by the domestic and inherently conventional commodity of soap and the act of its consumption, any genuine notions of subversion are simultaneously tempered or destroyed.

The depiction of soap as an object imbued with anti-production agency was common to many soap advertisements and manifested in diverse ways. Overt references to the radical were not always included in the strategic presentation of commodities as extra-production items. The construction of the pseudo-carnavalesque by adverts could also take place on more reactionary terms. Adverts underpinned by more conservative ideological leanings often relied on eliding commodities with nostalgic visions of the past, as in the instance of an advert for Borax Dry Soap from the first decade of the twentieth century (Fig. 26).¹⁷ The image depicts a

¹⁵ 'The birth of civilization. A message from the sea' (c. 1888), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 8 (10).

¹⁶ Brent Shannon 'Refashioning Men: Fashion, Masculinity, and the Cultivation of the Male Consumer in Britain, 1860-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 4 (2004), 597-630.

¹⁷ 'Borax Dry Soap' (date unknown), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelfmark: Soap 4 (1a).

mother and daughter performing their domestic duties: the daughter washes clothes indoors with Borax, attended by her pet kitten, whilst the mother is seen through an open door in the background hanging out washing in the garden. Domestic economy is here totally detached from industrial economy: it appears to be self-contained, and the industrial world, or indications that Borax is produced, are nowhere to be seen. Correspondingly, the domestic arena is completely sealed off from any kind of industrial or social externality. The glimpse of the external world seen through the open doorway reveals an idyllic, green vista evocative of a pre-industrial past: there is no hint of modernity here. This image appealed to conservative bourgeois notions of the domestic sphere as a sheltered retreat from the realities of the public world. Further, it situated soap as an emblem of domestic purity, and, crucially, a tool that could 'wash away' the impurities of the exterior world. By extension, the mother/daughter combination/division of labour suggests timeless domestic continuity, corresponding to the similarly timeless nature of the environment. Soap is not here imagined as coming from industrial production, rather it is shown negating it through a different, domestic form of labour, a form of labour that is idyllic and compassionate, and significantly, brief and enjoyable. Whilst not evoking the notion of carnival in the typical form (there is no specific inversion or subversion of social relations here), the advert nevertheless envisages soap as something possessing, or facilitating, agency against industrial reality, depicting Borax as a portal to another, less complex world, separate from the uncertainty and conflict inherent in the real one. The image absorbs the non-radical but non-consumerist values of more traditional forms of domesticity, merging an idyllic premodern past with a seemingly timeless consumptional present.

As has been shown in the preceding analysis, advertising made the commodity world oppositional to the productional world, and consumption antithetical to production. Advertising became a pseudo-opponent and clandestine ally of productional infrastructures. Advertisers could thus experiment with content that was moderately subversive or posit consumption and commodities as tools against productional norms. Spectacle projected the notion that freedom from capitalism could be obtained in the consumption of its produce. In this way, spectacle could absorb threats to capitalism and render them benign by re-integrating them, as fragments among many, into an apparently heterogenous culture of consumption. Equally, it could engage positively with normative ideologies and position commodities as arbiters of the status-quo. Spectacle therefore constructed a pseudo-form of the subversive pre-modern spectacle,

establishing it, and consumption, as a mechanism for escape and the release of politicised social pressures. Diffuse, fragmented spectacle provided a vehicle by which the meanings of commodities could be stretched to accommodate any ideological perspective, to correlate to any given purpose, trend, craze, or emotion. Diffuse spectacle thus constructed a consumer culture based around plurality and diversity: a world in which meaning was unfixed, transitory, and liminal, and in which agency could be absorbed and frozen into the fixed relations of the economy. As Jonathan Crary argues in his study of spectacle and the development of modes of perception and attention, 'spectacular culture is not founded on the necessity of making a subject see, but rather on strategies in which individuals are isolated, separated, and inhabit time as disempowered.'¹⁸

The preceding analysis has implications for our understanding of Victorian and Edwardian society, consumer society more broadly, and historiographical approaches to both. It has shown that spectacle generates pseudo-worlds by preying on existing ideologies and cultures and conjoining them with an ideology of pure consumerism. This is significant, as it shows us that spectacle does not propagandise any ideology other than the ideology of consumption. It adumbrates existing ideologies into the ideology of consumption, positioning commodities and their consumption as conduits through which certain sets of values can be subscribed to or experienced. Thus, the extra-consumerist ideologies featured in advertising are not created by advertising, but instead reflect those already in social and cultural circulation. Here it is logical to refer to Walter Benjamin's conceptualisation of the 'dialectical image' as delineated in *The Arcades Project*. For Benjamin, commodity semiotics displayed the 'dream images' of the society's failed utopian impulses faded into the commodity, eliding past into present and freezing it in a 'constellation' of meaning, creating 'dialectics at a standstill'.¹⁹ In Benjamin's view, the, subversive qualities endowed upon the commodity in advertising summon the radical, utopian impulses of pre- or extra-consumer capitalist agency and embody them in a form intrinsically contradictory to their realisation, thus unleashing the pseudo-world of the commodity – a space aesthetically external to the real world and its economics but at the same time integral to its function. In this process, actual historical forces become frozen in image,

¹⁸ Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, (Cambridge [U.S], London: October Books / The MIT Press, 1999), p. 3.

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'Convolute N', quoted in *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, ed. by Beatrice Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), p. 114.

hence Benjamin's labelling of the phenomenon 'dialectics at a standstill'. Spectacle channelled and subsumed anti-productional or anti-normative agencies away from the first world and into the spectacular second. Images became the new (partial) bearers of the dialectical force of history: receptacles which froze dialectics in a suspended, fetishized animation. Spectacle absorbed thesis and antithesis and re-presented them as a new whole, in which the fetish acted as glue. This process is evident in each of the soap advertisements analysed in this part of the chapter, where the commodity of soap and the ideology of its consumption was associated with subversive or transgressive activities and ideas. This appropriation meant that, at least in the sphere of representation, the development of subversive ideas and energies that might contest the status quo became halted.

As is also evident, spectacle's untethered relationship with ideology enabled it to present a myriad of pseudo-worlds, each of which was ostensibly constructed on different ideological terms in order to cater for the diversity of consumer identities and attitudes. Because spectacle appropriates and absorbs ideologies and cultures already in existence, and because these ideologies and cultures are drawn from a society that is not uniform, but diverse, spectacle itself takes on a pseudo-protean form. In its aggregate form, spectacle is reliant on ostensibly offering something for all, whatever one's politics, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth. This is how spectacle was, and is, able to shape and sustain a *mass* consumer society. I will now reinforce and expand on this point by analysing the way imperialism was treated in soap advertisements during the same period. Furthering the analysis in this way is important as it foregrounds the shifting and unfixed relationships soap advertising had with ideology, and demonstrates that even normative socioeconomic ideologies like imperialism were subsumed and ultimately transcended into the ideology of consumption.

Spectacle and imperial ideology

Previous historians of Victorian advertising have tended to argue that advertising communicated coherent forms of ideology. Notable in this respect are Thomas Richards and Anne McClintock, both of whom argue that advertising tapped into superstructural ideologies and made the commodity the corollary of such ideologies. Richards sees narratives of 'Queen and Country' and imperial expansion becoming inextricably bound with and mutually supported by the spectacle,²⁰ whereas McClintock similarly argues that soap advertising encapsulated core bourgeois values, allegorising narratives about domesticity and imperialism to figure soap as a

²⁰ Richards, pp. 73-118.

civilising device for colonial expansion and the maintenance of internal British social structures.²¹ Yet what both scholars delineate are but strands of spectacular narrative, which, as we will see, were contested and negated in the whirlpool of ideology that was the aggregate spectacle. The only logic of late Victorian advertising spectacle was that of contestation, fragmentation, and pseudo-plurality, and therefore no sustained ideologies or ideological narratives could emerge from its aggregate form intact (other than the ideology of pure, unfettered consumerism). Furthermore, even within individual adverts, co-opted value systems were tested and superseded by the commodity and the ideology of consumption: advertising always figured commodities as the logical endpoint of ideology and thus adverts always displayed the commodity subsuming the ideology being referenced.

To develop the argument, the kind of imperialist soap advertising analysed by McClintock will be discussed in relation to alternative and oppositional ideologies underpinning other soap advertisements. By juxtaposing different ideological 'genres' of advertisements, the way they contrasted and conflicted one another becomes explicit. As will be seen, the imperialist ideology isolated by McClintock was contested by a myriad of alternate ideologies and narratives, which imagined soap in very different ways. Whilst Pears', Monkey Brand, and others, conducted marketing campaigns along imperialist lines, embedded in the kind of hierarchical economic and racialized worldview described by McClintock, other soap advertisers used strategies that appealed to consumers on starkly contrasting ideological terms. The pseudo-world exhibited in the imperialist strain of soap advertisement seized upon by McClintock tended to be characterised by the themes of worldliness and modernisation. They envisaged, in typical bourgeois fashion, the world as a blank canvass that could be remade per the principles of consumer capitalism and Western superiority, with soap as the key tool in achieving this. Yet other soap adverts opposed this expansionist view of the world in their ideological associations. Whereas the 'imperialist' brand of soap advertisement embraced globalisation and a fetishized schema of world economic, race, and gender relations, others positioned soap as a device by which the networks of global capitalism and imperialism could be negated or dissolved. This was evident in the Borax advert discussed in the previous section (in which soap is imagined washing away modernity and replacing it with a timeless idealised past), but is perhaps best explained with reference to the various promotional campaigns run by the Lever Bros. for their 'Lifebuoy' brand. Throughout the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s, Lifebuoy

²¹ McClintock, pp. 207-231.

advertising campaigns focused on the theme of security against the uncertainties and perils of the rapidly expanding globalised world. These adverts isolated the consumer from positive notions of social interconnectedness, rendering the social world as a dangerous and unwholesome place from which soap could save them. The dominant motif used in these campaigns, tailored to correspond to the Lifebuoy brand name, was that of an individual stranded at sea, with Lifebuoy Soap cast in the role of rescuer. An example of this can be seen in an advert from the brand from around the turn of the century (Fig. 27), which shows a relieved mother and her infant standing in the shallows of the sea, along with an actual lifebuoy ring and a box of Lifebuoy Soap.²²

The scene clearly takes place in the aftermath of a shipwreck, and the child has been saved by the lifebuoy (or the Lifebuoy – it is purposefully unclear). In images such as this, the confident vision of the world posited by imperialistic soap advertisements is substituted for one in which both the natural and social are imbued with negative connotations. The world is here depicted as literally awash with imminent peril, with soap positioned as the weapon of choice for consumers who wished protection from such danger.

Whilst the symbol of the lifebuoy associated this brand of soap with the British navy and thus imperial endeavour by implicit extension, the world and the soap-consumer's place in it was not represented as confidently in Lifebuoy campaigns as it was in explicitly imperialist adverts for other brands. These adverts did not display places and peoples being conquered by either white Westerners or their commodities, but instead showed the world as an essentially dangerous place from which protection was required. The late 1890s, when the brand was introduced, and the ocean-themed marketing campaign was started, witnessed a rise in imperial anxiety and a general questioning of British imperial superiority.²³ The Lifebuoy campaigns responded to these anxieties by avoiding the overt and boisterous imperialism of earlier Pears adverts and focusing instead on notions of subsistence and survival. Unashamedly patriotic, the

²² 'Lifebuoy royal disinfectant soap' (c1901), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 4 (61a).

²³ This was again in part due to fears surrounding the physical degeneration of the population – see Proctor, p. 13.

campaigns paraded the notion of British hardiness without overtly referencing the nation's imperial authority or lack thereof.

These adverts also responded to developments in bacteriology and parasitology²⁴ and resulting discourses on dirt and disease, as well as reflecting a more general Victorian obsession with health and cleanliness.²⁵ More specifically, however, their trepid depiction of the wider world exploited contemporary fears about the spread of disease through the interconnected structures of the modern globe. Robert Peckham has highlighted the presence of such a fear of 'infective economies' in his analysis of discourses surrounding an outbreak of Bubonic plague in Hong Kong in 1894. Peckham shows how the outbreak became a media 'spectre', which intimated the danger of 'a menace that lurked within the very fabric of the empire', representing an anxiety 'that the networks which sustained the empire were also the very source of its weakness.'²⁶ By removing social and economic networks from its pictures of the world, Lever Bros could position the Lifebuoy brand as a pseudo-solution to the perceived medical and social problems brought by globalisation. In this sense, the image of the ocean in soap adverts served a dual purpose: it was not only a representation of the hostility of the natural and social world, but was also conveyed as a great cleansing force, which, when combined with soap, appeared to render the threat of foreign disease void. As such, these advertisements denied and superficially contested the economic conditions in which soap was produced. Soap, a product, in its modern form, of the globalised capitalist economy, and indeed a mainstay of 'internal' imperial economies, was imagined as an agent of insularity, as a means of protecting oneself against the intangible, uncertain, and thus frightening social relations inherent in the modern globalised world. Therefore, far from being envisaged by the soap spectacle as a weapon of imperial expansion or an emblem of bourgeois superiority, soap was often evoked as the

²⁴ 'Developments in bacteriology and parasitology from the 1880s, although not universally accepted and uniformly institutionalised, provided new models for understanding the aetiology of disease and the modalities of pathogenic transmission' - Robert Peckham, 'Infective Economies: Empire, Panic and the Business of Disease', *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, 41 (June 2013), 211-237 (p. 213).

²⁵ See Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Fight Against Filth* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), and Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) for discussions of Victorian attitudes towards health and cleanliness.

²⁶ Peckham, p. 212.

opposite: a tool of defence against the modern world and its inherent interconnectivity and interdependence.

Soap advertising disrupted the imperial ideology in other ways. For McClintock, soap advertising consistently upheld the notion of white, Western superiority.²⁷ Yet, racialised soap advertising played on the anxieties of the Western bourgeoisie as much as it appealed to their vanity and sense of superiority. The colonial subject was not just evoked to show the civilising powers of soap – the way in which soap would reinforce the hegemonic power of Western commodity culture – but also as a potential competitor against which the Western consumer must compete. For instance, an ad for Port Sunlight brand probably from the 1880s or 1890s features the image of a young Indian woman doing her washing on a veranda (Fig. 28). Featuring a Shakespeare quote: ‘Golden Progress in the East’ as its slogan, the advert implies that the young woman is mobile on the social and racial hierarchy because of her consumptive habits. By consuming Western modernity, she herself is becoming Western and modern. Presenting consumer culture as an evolutionary framework in which consumerist choices can increase (or by implicit extension, reduce) one’s footing on the scale of ‘civilisation’, the advert implicitly warns Western consumers not to rest on their laurels. It sets them in competition with the racial/colonial other, in some ways dissolving, rather than securing, the barriers between them.

Ideological disparities like this did not only exist across different brands: individual brands could be marketed in contrastingly different ways. Even Pears’, who often favoured the cogent imperialist themes McClintock attends to, sometimes chose a different, ideologically contrasting, strategy for their campaigns. For instance, during their centenary year of 1889, which came at the height of their experimentation with imperialist advertising, Pears’ circulated a series of adverts with a historical theme to celebrate their longevity. One of these, drawn by the second-wave Pre-Raphaelite artist Henry Stacy Marks (whose penchant for producing works designed for advertising earned him the pejorative ‘Trade Marks’),²⁸ featured two medieval monks washing and shaving in a monastery (Fig. 29). A bar of Pears’, along with several other commodities, including a modern razor-blade, shaving brush, and a mirror, are anachronistically

²⁷ McClintock, p. 207.

²⁸ Punch used the name to refer to Marks in an article in 1895 - F. C. Burnand, ‘Mr. "Trade" Marks, R. A., has recently executed a pictorial ...’, *Punch*, 19 June 1886, p. 291. See also A. R. Pennie, ‘Marks, Henry Stacey’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18075>> [accessed 25 Dec 2017] for a brief biography.

inserted into the picture. The vision of the world exhibited by this image starkly contrasts with those in Pear's more explicitly imperial material. Here, soap is placed in a pre-imperial, pre-modern context in which production does not exist. The thick walls of the monastery, the lack of a view of the outside world, and the figures of the monks, symbols of a pre-imperial English nation, fetishize the external modern world, blocking it out, and retaining only its most essential attributes (commodities, among which, of course, is Pears Soap).²⁹ The slogan 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' is reflected in the image not only by the action of the monks washing and shaving, but also by the conspicuous lack of unclean modern industry, which is evacuated by the pre-modern setting and, in cruder terms, by the high walls of the monastery. Here, soap is not part of an imperial civilising mission, nor does it have implied industrial roots. Instead, an entirely different vision of production, the world, and soap's place in it is represented, a more insular one akin to that featured in the Lifebuoy campaigns. Furthermore, the historicised soap is here imagined as a bulwark of idyllic tradition *against* globalised modernity and the social relations inherent therein, rather than an arbiter of it/them. It is also relevant to note that there is a distinct homosocial tone to this image, conveying a strict and rigid set of gender relations that starkly contrasts other Pears advertisements that played with ideas of androgyny and the transgression of gender roles, such as those discussed earlier in the chapter.

The series of adverts that constituted this campaign (see Figs. 30 and 31 for further examples) played on the company's century-long history and its established association with British ideals to position Pears' as 'the honest soap', and 'ye Earlye Englyshe Soape'.³⁰ Such rhetoric appealed to the consumer's sense of patriotism, cultural identity and nostalgia, and implicitly foregrounded Pears' apparent wholesomeness in the process, but without evoking the imperial ideologies featured in their other output.³¹ The appeal to nostalgia here is particularly significant: whereas other Pears' adverts unashamedly glorified notions of progress, embedding soap in narratives of linear development, such notions are here hidden by the historical settings

²⁹ 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' (date unknown), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 8 (16*c).

³⁰ "What D'ye Lack.." (1889), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, Shelf mark: Soap 6 (69) and 'Curious Advertisement of 100 years Ago!!' (1889), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 6 (67).

³¹ Such as the campaign featuring the image of the black boy being washed white. See McClintock, pp. 213-14, for a reproduction of this advert and some analysis of it.

and references, and soap is instead imagined as a tool for accessing an idyllic pre-modern way of life. Similarly, these adverts also – particularly in their mimicking of early modern forms of advertising and their use of archaic English – resituated the brand in the context of an idyllic and more simplistic consumer experience, in which the disjuncture and proliferation of modern spectacle and modern life was absent. The reference to this world tapped into broader Victorian nostalgia for ‘Merrie Old England’, an imagined pre-modern past often used as a contrast for, or imaginative escape from, the pressures of the contemporary world.³² Pears soap thus inhabited at least two separate productional worlds – a modern imperialist one, and a pre/anti-modern, insular one. These two worlds did not correlate in any way, their only constant being their inhabitation by Pears’. But this was no obstacle to the coexistence of these pseudo-worlds in spectacle.³³

Spectators of late-century advertising were thus exposed to a wide array of dissonant ideologies, and as a result, it is unlikely that any single one emerged with the kind of hegemonic influence McClintock ascribes to imperialist soap advertising. Further than this, all ideologies that were co-opted for use in spectacle were ultimately denigrated and dissolved in its semiotic sphere, where the commodity reigned supreme. Most late-century advertisements figured commodities as the logical endpoints of ideology: items that usurped ideology and ostensibly put it into practice (soap as a tool for implementing the imperial vision, for instance). In this process, the ideology originally referenced frequently became subsumed by the commodity and its fetish. This scenario is evident in an 1890 Pears’ advert that depicted a tribal African man standing on a beach, holding aloft a bar of Pears’ picked from a crate full of the product that has been washed ashore, evidently the cargo of a ship whose sail can be seen sinking beneath the waves in the background (Fig. 32). For McClintock, this advert epitomises the suffusion of imperialist and consumerist ideologies in the spectacle of the late-nineteenth century, displaying ‘Man the Hunter-gatherer’ evolving instantly into ‘Man the Consumer’ upon contact

³² For a discussion of Victorian uses of the past, including nostalgia for ‘Merry Old England’, see Andrew Sanders, *In the Olden Time: The Victorians and the British Past* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), passim.

³³ Sometimes these worlds even collided within single advertisements. – Pears’ was fond of self-referencing in its advertising campaigns and often produced advertisements that incorporated characters, images, and themes from different marketing campaigns. In one such effort from 1892, an array of previous Pears’ mascots is grouped together: Marks’s monks, the ‘good morning, have you used Pears’ Soap?’ lady, the washer woman and ‘dirty boy’ from Focardi’s sculpture and the subsequent ‘you dirty boy’ series, accompanied just behind by the black boy washed partially white. See *Bubbles: Early Advertising Art from A. & F. Pears’ Ltd.*, ed. By Mike Dempsey (Glasgow: Fontana, 1978), p. 13.

with the commodity.³⁴ Yet, whilst the imperialist ideology serves as an underpinning, this ideology is explicitly dissipated in the fetish of the soap – it does not survive the fetish, and what is left is simply the ideology of consumption. The sinking ship in the background represents the diminishment of the ideologies of production and imperialism, whilst the survival of the soap symbolises the usurpation of power by the commodity itself. The advert's title: 'The birth of civilization: a message from the sea' consolidates this meaning, implying that the soap itself is the birth of (consumer capitalist) civilisation, rather than the processes inherent in its production. The modern world is not denied as in other adverts: rather it is celebrated, but production, imperialism, or any other infrastructural or superstructural ideology is not overtly foregrounded, and it is the commodity itself which comes to represent the prime symbol of modernity and progress. The iconography of the sinking ship is significant in this respect: seafaring was regarded as integral to Britain's imperial, commercial, and cultural strength,³⁵ whilst shipwrecks were perceived as events in which the national character, specifically in terms of ideals of chivalry and masculinity, was put to test.³⁶ The destruction of the ship and its crew combined with the survival of its cargo explicitly and unsentimentally dismisses such ideological associations and simultaneously elevates the importance of the commodity and the ideology of consumerism. The commodity is presented as more durable than the human and technological elements of imperial endeavour, and more effective at achieving its ends (although the ends are achieved in the name of the commodity itself, not Britain or the ideology of white superiority).

In this advert, the birth of a new consumer world is envisaged, originated by nothing but the commodity itself. The image references Defoe's Robinson Crusoe narrative, which as Paul Young has shown, retained its significance to discourses on capitalism in the late-nineteenth century, exemplified by the re-working of the narrative to address contemporary capitalism in texts such as the English translation of Jules Verne's *L'Île Mystérieuse* (published in Britain and America as *The Mysterious Island* in 1875), and Douglas Frazar's *Perseverance Island:*

³⁴ Anne McClintock, p. 223.

³⁵ Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School System, 1880–1914* (Toronto, 1999), pp.178–84.

³⁶ Lucy Delap 'Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things': Shipwrecks, Chivalry and Masculinities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 3.1 (2006), 45–74, (pp. 47–48).

or the *Nineteenth-Century Robinson Crusoe* (1887).³⁷ But whereas the protagonists in these novels use scientific knowledge to fashion island economies on the periphery of the industrialised world, the potential emergence of a *consumer* civilisation is here implied as a consequence of the tribal man's mere possession of the 'genesis commodity' of soap. Soap here becomes an autonomous, perhaps sentient technology, emphasised by the way it is contrasted with the tribal man's extant technological apparatus, the spear, which he holds in his other hand. His stance – his head is turned toward the soap and away from the spear, which he seems ready to cast off – indicates his impending decision to forego the latter 'tool' in favour of the former. The Western Crusoe figure, and his command of technology and science – the embodiment of imperialist and capitalist values – is absent from the picture, or perhaps more precisely, is embodied in the soap itself. In this instance, we can thus see the ideology of imperialist and capitalist expansion becoming subsumed and ultimately subdued by the commodity of soap, which comes to figure as its successor as motor and master of history. Ideology is destroyed in this image, as are the narratives that it is carried by. The narrative of Western technological and ideological domination is interrupted and dissolved, sunk into irrelevance beneath the waves of a primal commodity world. A new, utopian narrative is implicated, one centred around the commodity and its autonomous colonisation of social life, but its promised resolution, embedded in its fetish, was and is inherently unrealisable, and so narrative, along with ideology, and the very essence of history, grinds to a halt in its transit through the image. In a grand cyclicity, the image ends one history, and begins a new one in which the noble savage's possession of the soap signifies an eternal return to a civilisation of commodities. The image thus absorbs and denies all of history, all possibilities of historical transformation, and all existing and once-existing alternatives to the consumer life, and freezes them into the immutable form of the commodity, which is then re-presented *as* history, *as* ideology, *as* the alternative.

The soap spectacle was ostensibly dis-unified and ideologically incoherent. In aggregate, it contested any singular worldview, and in both individual and aggregate form it made ideology subservient to the commodity, and so destroyed it. McClintock implicitly touches on this point when she observes the soap spectacle's propensity to traffic 'promiscuously across the threshold of private and public'.³⁸ As McClintock shows, by bringing the images and attitudes of

³⁷ Paul Young, 'Industrializing Crusoe: Adventure, Modernity and Anglo-American Expansionism', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18, (2013), 36-53, (p. 36).

³⁸ McClintock, p. 209.

imperialism and the imperial world into the domestic arena, and by conversely posting images of domesticity (men shaving, children bathing, and so forth) in the public realm, the soap spectacle transgressed the ideological authority of the public/domestic code. Spectacle has no respect for the authority of traditional social structures (even social structures generated to suit production) if they provide an obstacle toward the establishment of unfettered consumerism. Spectacle had to break, or at least destabilise, the barrier between public and private if it was to ensure consumption and consumerist habits would flourish inside the home as well as out, and that those key agents of late-century consumerism – middle class women – were inculcated into the folds of spectacular society, and to do so it absorbed and synthesised two not easily reconcilable ideologies (the domestic and the imperial) and effaced them with the commodity. Similarly, it had to, at least superficially, break all other ideological codes that stood in the way of the guiding of extra-productional social activity into activities of consumption, including, as we have seen, codes of imperialism, gender relations and roles, and social and racial order.

Spectacle never retained any consistent or faithful ties to any system of thought. In its aspect as the carnival of consumer capitalism, spectacle could not afford to ally itself with any ideology with any permanence. Spectacle had to embrace ideologies, subversive or normative, to create a pluralistic image of a consumer realm replete with possibility and hope for all. Like the Bakhtinian carnival, which ‘demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms’ and was ‘filled with [the] pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities’,³⁹ spectacle had to continually exhibit a capacity to adopt, adapt, and change to suit the psychic needs of society in all its diverse and protean elements. Spectacle offered a seeming kaleidoscope of possibilities, but in fact it presented just one: the possibility of consumption and material culture. This is how spectacle made the monoculture of consumer capitalism appear diverse, capable of absorbing and catering for the reactionary and revolutionary, and how it commandeered different forms of identity in its drive to inculcate all into its disciplinary mechanisms. By engaging with a broad variety of often contesting ideologies in this throwaway manner, spectacle contributed to a devaluation of ideology as a social force, as it simultaneously acted to blur the distinctions between different, even oppositional ideologies. Yet whilst spectacle’s use of superstructural value-systems was transitory and superficial, this is not to say it was not a purveyor of a consistent form of ideology. Despite its fragmentation and contestation, all aspects of spectacle propagated the same core ideology:

³⁹ Bakhtin, p. 11.

that of consumerism; of fixing one's attention on, and modelling one's life, one's hopes and desires around, the commodity and its image.

As we have seen through this case study on soap advertising, the spectacle of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century generated a new, secondary world oppositional to the real one. As a result of its fractured, fragmentary, fluid, and diffuse nature, spectacle formed a protean and ethereal landscape which promised liberation from the strictures and pressures of the reality of work and industrial capitalism. In this guise and combined with its newfound flexibility (or inconsistency), spectacle drew on pre-, extra-, and anti-capitalist ideas and forces and synthesised them with the normative object of the commodity in the great imagistic fetish, thus acting to fetishize and freeze the social dialectics of history, congealing extant models of thought and perception into one dissonant but highly captivating mass. The next pertinent question to ask is: what happened to forms and techniques of subversion and resistance amid this new, pervasive, all-encompassing and forever shifting spectacle? This question will be posed and answered over the following final two chapters of this section.

Chapter Four

Regaining Agency

This chapter will examine some forms of critique and subversive agency posed against the diffuse spectacle of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Corresponding to the analysis of responses to the Great Exhibition, it will examine attempts made by observers at critically subverting or deconstructing the late-century spectacle to reveal its superficialities. As we will see, because of the fragmented and diffuse nature of spectacle at this historical moment, wholesale critiques or deconstructions of the aggregate spectacle could not be enacted. Instead, contemporaries took to critiquing individual fragments of spectacle, subverting them to undermine the spectacle and the fetish in broader terms. For Benjamin, such an activity ought to be critically productive. He argues that with the spectacular fetish image, the dialectic/contradiction remains there, latent, ready to be 'exploded' out of its fetish context to reveal the true relations of capitalist society.¹ For Benjamin, the key to interrupting, and thus perhaps changing, the frenetic flow of modern history was to slow down the unceasing proliferation of fetish images, and thus arrest the predominance of the hyperreality they generated. In this sense, he alludes to spectacle's fragmentary, diffuse element, recognising the near impossibility of arresting all of spectacle in its many and diverse fragments. For Benjamin, if the expansion of spectacle was to be slowed and perhaps curtailed in its aggregate form, a single fragment must be focussed upon and effectively deconstructed.

Yet what Benjamin does not seem to acknowledge here is the difficulty of performing such an act in the context of a fragmented world in which narratives of all kinds were becoming more difficult to sustain. As we saw in the first section, critics of the Great Exhibition were able to perform a wholesale 'explosion' of the event's fetish because they were given a coherent narrative in which the fetish was embedded. Exploding the fetish was in this instance much more straightforward as all that was required was for the narrative to be inverted for its fallacies to be exposed. Yet, as we shall see, halting and exploding a single fragment of spectacle had little effect on an amorphous and protean mass of splintered and splintering narratives and ideologies, through which history itself was beginning to congeal as image. Late-Victorian and

¹ See Max Pensky, 'Geheimmittel: Advertising and Dialectical Images in Benjamin's Arcades Project', *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, ed. by Beatrice Hanssen, and Beatrice Hanssen, (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2006), pp. 113-131 for a discussion of the concept of the dialectical image.

Edwardian critics might, and as we shall see, did, produce 'dialectical images' capable of revealing the fetish character of the spectacle or a certain element of it, but these critiques/interruptions were not mapped against any overarching narrative, and thus could not effect a wholesale indictment and subversion of spectacle or the mode of production it represented. Furthermore, the fragmented and flexible character of spectacle enabled it to withstand and reabsorb potentially subversive 'interruptions' with little damage, and even, in some instances, was able to emerge stronger as a result.

To illustrate this point, I will explore three examples of attempts by contemporaries of the Victorian/Edwardian spectacle to explode its fetish. The examples chosen are all satirical or parodical in nature. The reasons for this choice are straightforward. Some social theorists, such as Bakhtin, have argued that comedy and laughter function subversively by subjecting hierarchical and ideological concepts to bathos. Others, such as Henri Bergson, and more recently, Michael Billig, situate humour as a conservative device used to keep society in order via the means of ridiculing the breaking of norms.² In either case, comedy is a lens through which the social conventions, boundaries, and problems of the societies it emerges from can be viewed. In the case of its subversive use, laughter and comedy are examples of political agency in themselves, and in their conservative use, they are a device for highlighting agency and crushing it in favour of the status quo. What a society finds funny, whether subversively or conservatively, reveals a lot about its internal dynamics, and crucially, how structural and disciplinary mechanisms are regarded and dealt with. Hence, by understanding what made Victorian consumers laugh, particularly in relation to the topic of consumption, it is possible to understand some of the ways in which consumers experienced and perceived spectacle, and by extension gauge the mode and manner of their agency. The sources were all written by and for the middle classes (although no doubt reached a wider audience), allowing them to give an insight into middle-class consumer life.

The first example I will analyse consists of a scene in Jerome K Jerome's *Three Men on the Bummel* (1900) (a sequel to his 1899 novella *Three Men in a Boat*), in which the protagonists embark on a cycling tour of Bavaria. Like much of Jerome's output, the novel focuses on and gently satirises middle-class cultural themes.³ At one point during their travels, whilst tackling

² See Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911), and Michael Billig, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour*, (London: SAGE, 2005).

³ Jerome's novels deal with 'colonial and domestic imperial narratives' through the trope of urban escape (an activity embedded in codes of masculine consumerism). See David A. Ibbotson, 'Jerome K. Jerome,

some particularly hilly terrain, one of the travellers, George, laments the fact that his vehicle does not 'come up to the poster [advertisement]'. George complains that on "The poster advertising this particular brand of cycle,"

A man was riding this make of machine, a man with a banner in his hand: he wasn't doing any work, that was clear as daylight; he was just sitting on the thing and drinking in the air. The cycle was going of its own accord, and going well. This thing of yours leaves all the work to me. It is a lazy brute of a machine; if you don't shove, it simply does nothing: I should complain about it, if I were you.⁴

Jerome's narrator also reflects on the fallacies of bicycle advertising in general, which 'in ordinary cases the object of the artist is to convince the hesitating neophyte that the sport of bicycling consists in sitting on a luxurious saddle, and being moved rapidly in the direction you wish to go by unseen heavenly powers.'⁵

It is undeniable that the juxtaposition of George's experience of the commodity, and its representation on its promotional 'poster' effectively deconstructs the commodity fetish. The lack of work implied by the image is contrasted by the strenuous efforts George is having to submit. The fetish is finally destroyed in the narrator's identification of the 'unseen heavenly powers' apparently underpinning it, powers which the group are unable to summon as they drag their heavy vehicles up the Bavarian mountains. The carnival time presented by the image is revealed to be inaccessible: once taken out of the semiotic space of spectacle, the bicycle is stripped back to its actual, mundane use value. Yet this is where the 'explosion' of the fetish ends, cut short before it can reveal the underlying implications of the fetish for society more broadly. This is because the only narrative the deconstruction deals with is the fragmented fetish of the bike and the apparently 'unseen heavenly powers' it taps into: there is no recourse here to any broader system of social relations, fetishized or not, underlying the system which produced both the bike and the advertisement. Even if Jerome had wanted to take this deconstruction further, he would have had to connect and explode other fetishes: the fetish of the labour inherent in the bike's construction, the fetish of other bike advertisements promoting

Masculinity and the Parody of Urban Escape: "Sunday-School Slops.", *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 61.1 (2018), 98-117.

⁴ Jerome K Jerome, *Three Men on the Brummel* (London: J. W. Arrowsmith Ltd.: 1914), n.p., Chapter X. Project Gutenberg ebook.

⁵ *Ibid.*

products in competition with this one, and the fetish of advertisements for products other than bikes that relied on similar principles but perhaps appealed to contrasting and dissonant ideologies, to name but a few.

The second attempted explosion of the advertising fetish to be discussed is a passage from a short story which satirises the advertising campaigns of soap companies – Pears’ in particular – by George Sims (1847–1922).⁶ Published in the *Blackburn Standard and Weekly Express* in 1888, the story tells of Tom Simpson (clearly based on Thomas Barratt, owner of Pears’) and his advertising exploits across the globe. At one point, the narrator muses anecdotally on the influence of Simpson’s product and its advertisement:

There are tribes still in existence in remote corners of the earth who have very limited vocabulary indeed. They have only words which signify to eat and to kill – food, drink, and blood. The chief of one of these tribes became accidentally possessed of a cake of Simpson’s soap, ate it, and foamed at the mouth for a quarter of an hour afterwards, much to the surprise of his wives and warriors, for he was a man of singularly calm and placid disposition. But he was much lighter and more active afterwards, and the tribe always regret that they didn’t keep a little of the curious fruit, or root, or whatever it might be, in order to plant it and raise a supply from it.⁷

The passage is a clear parody of the Henry Stacy Marks-drawn Pears’ advertisement featuring the noble savage coming into possession of soap following the wreck of a British ship, discussed in the previous chapter. Sims here satirises the advert’s co-option and dissolution of human ideology and agency and its re-embodiment of them in the soap and its fetish. The fetish of the soap’s appointment as ‘the birth of civilisation’ is here mocked and exploded, as Sims explores the fetish values ascribed to the product: its representation as the ‘root’ of civilisation that might ‘grow’ a modern society autonomously, and its proposed ability to imbue its consumers with both civilised values and a ‘lighter and more active’ disposition. The soap’s actual use value – its capacity to be used as a cleansing agent – is conspicuous in its absence. These facets of the passage combine, once again, to great effect, to deconstruct and dissolve

⁶ Sims was a journalist and dramatist who specialised in satire and sensationalism. See Philip Waller, ‘Sims, George Robert’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37964>> (date accessed: 27 Dec 2017).

⁷ George R. Sims, ‘Tales of To-day’, *Blackburn Standard and Weekly Express*, 17 November 1888, p. 2.

the fetish paraded in the advert it takes to task. This attempt is perhaps more ambitious and more effective than the first, in that it deconstructs the fetish of broader social relations – here soap advertising’s fetish of global race relations – and shows such a fetish dissolving upon entering the ‘real’ world. Yet once again, the explosion of the fetish is prevented from generating a dialectical image capable of revealing the fetish character of the prevailing system. Only one aspect of the fetish of consumer capitalism: that pertaining to this specific commodity displayed by this specific advertisement, is overturned. Amid the proliferation and dissonance of the fragmented spectacle, this subversive interruption immediately became lost, quickly paling into significance against the shifting and shapeless mass of spectacle.

Spectacle’s amorphousness and dissonance – its complete lack of overarching narrative – meant that when such minor interruptions were made, it was capable of absorbing and cannibalising them. This is even better explained in relation to the circumstances surrounding a parody of Pears’ advertising featured in *Punch* in 1884 (fig. 33). The parody consisted of a sketch by Henry Furniss (1854-1925) depicting a tramp penning a testimonial that riffed satirically on one used by Pears’: ‘Two years ago I used your soap – since then I have used no other’ (above). The advertising trade, and soap advertising in particular, was a frequent target for *Punch*’s satire, and this image, although playful in tone, struck incisively at the heart of the core ideas communicated by this particular element of the company’s advertising campaign. By depicting a tramp, a member of ‘the great unwashed’, readers were reminded of social realities beyond the influence of the fetish power of soap, of the real world beneath the veneer of spectacle that soap could not effectively ‘cleanse’. Yet Pears’ managed to turn this parody to its advantage, purchasing the image, brandishing it with the Pears’ trademark, and then deploying it as an actual advert for the product, the image and accompanying catchphrase completely unchanged (Fig. 34). How could Pears’ assimilate this parody with such ease? It is primarily because Pears’ advertising, in aggregate form, made no reference to a consistent narrative or a consistent historical situation of itself. Whereas at the Great Exhibition, the fetish of labour was framed by a grand progressive narrative about production, Pears’, as has already been shown, developed no coherent narrative or ideology across their advertising campaigns. Pears’ had not consistently used its advertising campaigns to promote soap as a means by which society could be cleansed of the impurity of poverty. Subversions of its fetish could thus be reincorporated into its spectacular repertoire, disembodied from their original context, and now reflecting only the ubiquity of the Pears’ commodity. Rather than representing, as it did in its original form, a moderate, satirical critique of advertising, in Pears’ re-rendering of the advert, this critique was hollowed-out and came to stand only as an indication of Pears’ presence in popular culture, and,

in the act of Pears' reuse of the advert for its own purposes, as a demonstration of the apparently immutable strength and flexibility of the brand. Tellingly, Furniss was sacked from his position at *Punch* after the proprietors discovered about his sale of the image to Pears', indicating that they felt the reputation and critical potency of *Punch's* brand of satire had been undermined by the affair.⁸

Thus, where in the face of concentrated spectacle, as in the case of the Great Exhibition, critical agency could easily be displayed in opposition to, and remain authoritatively distinct from, the commodity fetish, in the late-century battle against the diffuse spectacle critical agency became shorn of some of its powers, and, as the preceding analysis has shown, became co-opted by spectacle and frozen in dialectical image. Critical agency was no longer able to contend with the total fetish, as it was earlier in the century, and was itself beginning to be eroded by the spectacle through absorption and subordination. Spectacle's fragmentation and subsequent establishment of a pseudo—carnavalesque world enabled it to challenge agency of all varieties, along with the narratives and ideologies within or against which such agency could form or be operated.

I am not asserting that with the advent of spectacle in the late-Victorian period all narratives, ideologies, political agency, and history itself began to dissolve or become diluted/subsumed in the ways described above. Rather, I am demonstrating that features more often associated with capitalism and spectacle in its postmodern stage were present in embryonic form the moment spectacle began its colonisation of social life. The late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries played host to a range of more coherent narratives, ideologies, and political movements, subversive and normative, such as socialism and trade unionism, Fabianism, and the suffragist movement, to name some of the most significant. These narratives and the praxis that corresponded to them resisted submission, or at least complete submission, to the will of spectacle. The spectacle of this era was not yet efficient enough or supported by the requisitely pervasive technologies to effect wholesale absorption of such large-scale movements – although, as we have seen, and as we will see over the remaining pages, it nevertheless influenced some of them. I will return to this point about the efficacy of spectacle in co-opting social agency in the conclusion, where I examine an element of spectacle from the contemporary age to show how its powers have become heightened by new and more

⁸ John Jensen, 'Furniss, Henry', in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33296>> [date accessed: 1/04/18].

interactive technological platforms. Similarly, my emphasis on the fragmentation of spectacle ought not to be taken as an assertion that spectacle was not still capable of presenting and sustaining more coherent narratives during this period. Isolated coherent spectacular narratives about capitalism could still manifest, as in the case of the continuing culture of the industrial exhibition, or the Father Christmas legend, which as I have shown elsewhere, was adapted in the nineteenth century into a coherent fetish narrative about the industrial commodity and Christmas gifts,⁹ a narrative which persists to this day. But, as the diffuse, fragmented spectacle continued its expansion, it dwarfed these coherent elements of spectacle in both presence and influence.

⁹ See Josh Poklad, 'Sleigh Bells and Factory Elves: The Spectacular Economy of Santa Claus', *Victorians Institute Journal*, 44 (2017), 157-183.

Chapter Five

Subversions with Scissors: Scrapbooks and Agency

As was shown in the previous chapter, because of its fragmentary, fluid, and diffuse nature, the late-century spectacle formed a pseudo-world capable of absorbing social agency and subduing it to suit the imperatives of consumer capitalism. This chapter furthers this analysis of consumer agency in the fragmented spectacle through a case-study on the practice of scrapbooking. Scrapbooks and scrapbooking provide an excellent site for the investigation of late-Victorian and Edwardian consumer agency. Scrapbooking was an extremely popular aspect of consumer culture and practice,¹ and by the latter decades of the century revolved almost entirely around the re-contextualisation of spectacular texts and images such as newspaper clippings, advertisements, gift cards, trade cards, photographs, and other items of print spectacle.² Scrapbooks thus provide the historian with an insight into one of the most popular ways Victorian consumers interacted with spectacle in a form that has survived, in fragments, in the historical record.

There have been several recent studies of nineteenth and early twentieth-century scrapbooking, many of which situate the practice as a conduit through which consumer agency can be explored. Some of these analyses, conforming to the current trend in consumption studies of foregrounding the autonomy of social actors, posit the scrapbook as an example of the enduring agency of the consumer amid a myriad of commercial and media forces. For instance, Ellen Gruber Garvey's detailed reading of American scrapbooking practices during the nineteenth century situates the scrapbook as a means by which consumers could navigate the dense webs of media texts which saturated their society, and thus by which they could turn the

¹ Day Good shows that scrapbooking subsequently became an integral part of consumer culture, evidenced not only by its popularity, but also by the growth of the scrapbook industry itself, which took-off in the early 1900s. See Katie Day Good, 'From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives', *New Media and Society*, 15.4 (2012), 557-573 (p. 564).

² *Ibid.*

informational aspects of media spectacle to their advantage.³ Claire Farago also identifies scrapbooks as indicative of consumer agency, defining them as ‘paper museums’ ‘constructed by otherwise anonymous individuals who extracted mass-produced items from one context and provided them with a new, different setting.’⁴ Others, however, have adopted a more balanced approach. Jennifer Black, for instance, engages dialectically with nineteenth century scrapbooks, viewing them as a site in which the dual forces of commercial imposition and individual agency were in constant tension. Focussing on the study of the use of trade cards in late-century American scrapbooking practices, Black highlights the fact that scrapbookers would often disarticulate the materials they put to use in their collages from their commercial contexts, obscuring or removing brand names and other markers that associated a card with a particular manufacturer, and grouping ‘images together to form stories or themes, eschewing the intended meaning of the ads for their own personal and emotional meanings.’⁵ Nevertheless, she qualifies this assessment by detailing the measures advertisers and manufacturers undertook to negate these practices, and, indeed, to commandeer the custom of scrapbooking to further their own commercial ambitions. She notes how advertisers, cognisant of the likelihood of their promotional material ending up in a scrapbook, began to configure their trade cards to resemble more personal tokens of material expression such as greetings cards, and to position their brand names in central, irremovable positions within the images on their cards, thus ‘facilitating an elision between the advertiser-as-seller and advertiser-as-friend.’⁶ Placing a similar emphasis on the contest between manipulation and agency, Patrizia di Bello reads the photograph scrapbooking practices of late-century Victorian middle class and aristocratic women as an activity that both reinforced ideologically-dominant gender roles whilst simultaneously subverting and questioning them.⁷ Katie Day Good also aligns herself with the

³ See Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 4.

⁴ Claire Farago, ‘Scraps as it Were: Binding Memories’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 10.1 (2005), 114-122 (p. 115).

⁵ Jennifer M Black, ‘Corporate Calling Cards: Advertising Trade Cards and Logos in the United States, 1876–1890’, *Journal of American Culture*, 32.4 (2009), 291-306 (p. 295).

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 297.

⁷ Di Bello argues that whilst ‘cutting out photographs and printed or other images to recontextualise them in albums was consonant with women’s role as arrangers of the domestic interior, purchasing decorative objects and materials to re-contextualise them in their own drawing rooms’, ‘use of collage also had the

position adopted by Black and di Bello on reading scrapbooks. She defines the scrapbook in its dual relation to, firstly, Debord's idea of the all-controlling spectacle, and secondly, de Certeau's theses on the dialectical relationship between institutional power and consumer agency, or tactics.⁸ She observes that within the milieu of de Certeau's thinking, the scrapbook would be perceived as a manifestation of consumer agency, whilst in Debordian terms it would simply evidence the addiction of the consumer 'to status displays and spectacle'.⁹ She resolves the tension between these two theoretical standpoints by arguing that they can actually be seen as complementary, asserting that scrapbooks suggest their authors' dual positions as both avid consumers and subversive critics of mass culture.¹⁰

The dialectical approach exhibited by Black, di Bello, and Day Good, provides a useful template for considering the relationship between consumer agency and commercial manipulation in the instance of scrapbooking, and in its essential form is the one that will be adopted here. However, the definition of agency implied in these analyses needs qualifying. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, historians working on the consumer society – and not only those whose study concerns scrapbooks – tend to define any departure from the explicit strictures of spectacle as demonstrative of agency. For instance, Black reads the de- and re-contextualisation of spectacular images in scrapbooks in modes which eschew their original commercial imperatives as an authoritative example of consumer agency.¹¹ Yet how much authentic agency does this practice indicate? Admittedly, the consumer is engaged here in the process of appropriating and deploying spectacle to meet his or her individual ends, but as this effort ultimately still involves the consumption of the materials of spectacular society, it is compliant to the imperatives of consumerism in a fundamental way. The scrapbooks featured

potential to destabilise the semantic work allocated to albums by dominant culture.' – Patrizia Di Bello, *Women's Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Wives, Mothers, and Flirts*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 3.

⁸ Katie Day Good, 'From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives', *New Media and Society*, 15.4 (2012), 557-573 (p. 565).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 566.

¹¹ Black, 'Corporate Calling Cards', p. 5.

in these studies are simply instances of people demonstrating their status as skilled and intelligent, but nevertheless fully-inculcated citizens of the consumer society, living and experiencing life through the consumption of commodities and spectacle, as dictated by spectacle. Nevertheless, scrapbooks do offer the potential for the operation of more genuinely subversive contestations of spectacle. Indeed, Debord, along with fellow future member of the Situationist International Asger Jorn, themselves adopted the practice as part of their radical contestation of spectacle in their production of the scrapbook-like album *Memoires* in 1959.¹² Similarly, the principle of détournement (the re-rendering of spectacle in subversive forms) that underpinned this practice also underpinned broader Situationist anti-spectacular strategies. In the coming analysis, it is this, more critical, provocative, and crucially, *politicised* form of agency that will be put under the microscope.

Throughout the coming analysis I will read scrapbooks in two slightly different, but ultimately interrelated ways. The first of these modes of reading considers scrapbooks as reflections of their authors' perceptions of spectacle and its relationship with social life. In their reconstructions of spectacle, scrapbook authors left imprints on their albums, in terms of their selection and arrangement of the source material, which can indicate the ways in which they perceived and experienced spectacle. The second mode of reading I employ approaches scrapbooks as artefacts in which human agency and spectacle have collided and conjoined in material form. In this conceptualisation, scrapbooks can be analysed as both a performance of agency and spectacle's manipulation and containment of that agency. In this sense, they will be treated as direct forms of 'materialised agency' – texts in which the structure/agency dialectic is captured in material form ('dialectical objects' that correspond to Benjamin's conceptualisation of 'dialectical images'). This dual approach to the texts enables me to analyse two interrelated facets of the consumer experience of spectacle: perception, and agency. I will show how spectacle influenced the consumer's perception of the world, as well as revealing the nature and effectiveness of the agency they were able to display through scrapbooking. As will be seen, a broad range of different modes of perception and praxis were displayed by Victorian scrapbookers. In some instances, scrapbooks indicate a situation in which individuals' agency and perception appeared to have become almost completely appropriated by spectacle, whilst in others, individuals retained a degree of autonomy over their perception and agency. But as we shall see, even in the latter instances, subversive and political modes of perception were

¹² Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, *Memoires*, (Copenhagen: Editions Situationist International, 1959).

fragmented and compartmentalised due to the fragmentary, narrative-free character of spectacle, and were ultimately absorbed by the spectacular activity of scrapbooking and the spectacular form of the scrapbook.

Scrapbook practices: an abnegation of agency

As we saw in Chapter One, some spectators of the Exhibition could enact a coherent form of political perception and agency by using the same platforms and models as the Exhibition spectacle itself – by posing alternative, subversive exhibitions and exhibits. Scrapbooks, collages of spectacle, offered consumers in the late-century the opportunity to create similar critiques using the same modes and mediums as spectacle – they offered the potential to create consumer-built spectacles open to the imprint of subversion. Yet whereas spectators of the Exhibition were presented with a spectacle in totalised, coherent, and concentrated form, late-century spectators were presented with a fragmentary spectacle, and, as a corollary of this fragmented spectacle, the scrapbook was also fragmentary in nature. Whereas spectators of the Exhibition could thus easily establish the focus of their criticism and produce coherent counter-narratives, potentially subversive scrapbookers found this task more challenging. Late-century scrapbookers were not presented with a coherent spectacle, but instead a spectacle that had splintered, and this fragmentation made the process of understanding and overturning spectacle more difficult to achieve. Even if this challenge was overcome, it was also difficult for the spectator to use the scrapbook to construct coherent critiques or challenges to spectacle: the fragmentary nature of their source material resisted organisation into an intelligible narrative. Similarly, and like in the instance of the subversions of dialectical images discussed in the preceding chapter, subversions of individual fragments of spectacle by scrapbookers were restricted in their effect because, firstly, such subversions were limited in range and scope by the original character and meaning of spectacle, and secondly, because of the fragmentary, incoherent, and unconnected nature of their critiques. Furthermore, the obstacles listed above, in combination with the very consumerist nature of activity of scrapbooking, dictated that agency was ultimately absorbed into the structure of spectacle in the performance of scrapbooking. Thus, whilst I conduct my study on the assumption of there being a struggle between agency and conformity underpinning the construction of any scrapbook, my analysis ultimately tends to the conclusion that this contest was unequal and ultimately ‘unwinnable’ by the scrapbooker. As we will see, these conclusions have implications not only for our understanding of the relationship between agency and structure in Victorian spectacular society, but also for the anti-spectacular revolutionary strategies of the SI, and many who have followed in their footsteps.

Overwhelmingly, Victorian scrapbookers did not seek to contest spectacle through their practices. Many conformed to the dictates of spectacle by constructing their albums as uncomplicated homages to spectacle, using spectacular source material in an undiscerning or uncritical manner. Some of these albums were constructed around a specific theme, topic, or subject, or formed a collection of a particular item. For instance, many scrapbookers composed albums filled solely with Christmas and greetings cards, as did Mary Cowden Clarke, the author of a scrapbook now part of the University of Leeds Brotherton Collection.¹³ Others filled them with prints or photographs on a specific subject, such as an album by another anonymous author of an album now held by the British Media Museum, which was filled with images of colonial India.¹⁴ Others took the form of pictorial travel diaries, featuring photographs taken during holidays, sometimes woven together by text, as did the album of two middle class cycling aficionados now also held by University of Leeds Brotherton Collection.¹⁵ Whilst these types of scrapbook had a semblance of narrative or at least a concerted theme, they were not subversive, and merely served to demonstrate the inculcation of consumers into the society of spectacle. Although their function as material reminders of potentially close interpersonal relations – as in the case of greetings cards, or in the practice of keeping albums filled with news cuttings featuring reportage on a war to give to a participating soldier upon their return – should not be ignored, ultimately these documents merely show the willingness of consumers to play out such relations via spectacular means.¹⁶ No matter the extent or depth of their personal meanings, these albums show consumers fundamentally content to render or memorialise social relations and individual lived experience in spectacular material form: to conform uncomplicatedly to spectacle's constraints, and, to an extent, to live their lives in the pseudo-carnival time of spectacle.

¹³ See 'Scrapbook', *University of Leeds Brotherton Collection*, Catalogue Number: BCMS NCC / 95.

¹⁴ An example of such a scrapbook can be found in the British Media Museum archives: 'Scrap Album with Views of India', British Media Museum, Catalogue Number: C14/S1/VES.

¹⁵ See 'Victorian Travel Diaries', *University of Leeds Brotherton Collection*, Catalogue Number: MS 1933 (Box 1 of 2).

¹⁶ This trend was reported on in an article in Dundee's *The Courier and Argus*, which proclaimed that 'quite the latest idea in society is the collection of interesting items of war news about the officers at the front. These scraps are pasted into books for presentation the officers on their return home.' See 'A New Society Craze', *The Courier and Argus*, 3 March 1900, p. 7.

Other Victorian scrapbookers went about their activities more haphazardly, producing albums with no discernible theme other than the theme of spectacle itself. Although there is inevitably the potential for the contemporary historian to overlook meanings only decipherable by the original author in these documents, the conclusion that at least some of their authors paid little regard to coherence, theme, or overall meaning in their practices, and merely included items that caught their fancy at the convenient moment (in the mode of many a modern social media ‘collector’), is hard to avoid. An album by an anonymous author, most likely created during the 1880s, typifies this mode of scrapbooking.¹⁷ The album is composed entirely of images (with the occasional accompanying caption or textual advertisement) taken from newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and postcards. Although occasionally a single page may be dominated by a certain theme: images of children, for instance, across the album no concerted theme is evident. The album is brimming with fragmentation and disjuncture. One page contains images of things as diverse as some clowns, a woman nursing a child, some plants, a sailor having his shoes shined, and an apple (Fig. 35). Another double-page spread contains images of cows, horses, a peacock, and cats on the right-hand side, at least underpinned by a definite theme. On the left, however, this theme is diluted and disjointed by the appearance of a Pears’ Soap advert featuring a woman washing a child, and a picture of a vase with some flowers. The only constant uniting the images in the album is that they are all vivid and colourful: they have clearly been selected by the author on the merit of their spectacular aesthetic. In this instance, the scrapbook perfectly and directly reflects, with seemingly little attempt at organisation by the author, the fragmented and dissonant, but colourful and exuberant, world of spectacle the cuttings were taken from.

This mode of authorship implies a consumer totally at sea – or perhaps at home – in the fragmented environs of spectacle, unable, or uninclined, to read it in a manner that draws meaning, no matter how fetishized, from its disarticulated visual lexicon, and entirely ensconced in its superficialities – in its aesthetics, rather than its meanings. Significantly, the scrapbook lacks any kind of dialectical element; any evidence of some will or ideology external to spectacle imposed upon it. The scrapbook is simply spectacle reconvened, still bearing its chaotic, fragmented character, unmarked by the indexical imprint of the re-assembler. In this instance, and in others like it, the author and their agency dissolve from view, and become but a mere intermediary in spectacle’s passage through social life. Submitting their agency over to

¹⁷ See ‘Scrapbook’, *University of Leeds Brotherton Collection*, Catalogue Number: MS 1522.

spectacle, such authors become a mere conduit, whilst the spectacle itself absorbs their life force and is made to appear autonomous. These scrapbooks thus represent an appropriation and objectification, or an abnegation, of agency, and by extension, a simultaneous colonisation and nullification of history, as human agency is removed from history and replaced by spectacle. The large number of surviving scrapbooks from the period that remain unfinished, or indeed barely (if at all) begun, also point toward a late-century consumer prone to distraction and whim, whose fancy for one consumptive practice is quickly overtaken by another, and for whom sustained consumptive projects cannot be seen through to conclusion.

Agency asunder: fashion and feminism in The scrapbook of Alice Cliff Scatcherd

Nevertheless, other scrapbookers displayed far more agency, and far more political agency, in their scrapbooking practices. Yet, even where consumers did hold more concerted subversive intentions in their scrapbooking, they were thwarted in their efforts by a combination of the fragmented form of spectacle they were pitted against, the correspondingly fragmented form of the scrapbook, and the consumerist, spectacular nature of the activity itself. The fragmented nature of spectacle, and of spectacle re-contextualised in scrapbook form, restricted their ability to complete critiques. Similarly, scrapbooks reflect a situation in which the internal cognition of political problems by consuming subjects became subject to fragmentation as the consumer was confronted by the fragmented spectacle. Finally, scrapbooking as a practice ultimately channelled politicised agency back into the auspices of commodity culture. This situation can be illustrated by a reading of a scrapbook produced by Alice Cliff Scatcherd (1842-1906), a prominent suffragist active during the latter decades of the century and a native to the Morley region of West Yorkshire.¹⁸

A member of the Yorkshire branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, and of the Women's Franchise League, Scatcherd was a constant on the scene of the movement in the North of England, attending and participating in countless meetings, events, and protests in the suffragist cause.¹⁹ Nevertheless, she could hardly be described as radical in her other political

¹⁸ 'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', *Morley Central Library*, index: Q LP B SCA.

¹⁹ Scatcherd lacks an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and is not the subject of any other biographical works. Some details about her life can be found here: Becky Cherriman, 'Alice in Bloomers', *Leedsinspired.co.uk*, (September 2016), <<http://www.leedsinspired.co.uk/blog/alice-bloomers>> [date accessed: 3 Jan 2018].

and social attitudes. Her politics were liberal, like those of her mill-owner husband, Oliver Scatcherd, himself prominent on the political scene and one-time Mayor of Morley (1898-99). The Scatcherds were wealthy (Alice herself possessed money independent of her husband), and enjoyed a consumerist lifestyle with a clear taste for the pursuit of conspicuous consumption.²⁰ The pair also circulated in industrialist high society and were intimately acquainted with prominent local manufacturers, and perhaps most significantly, editors and owners of local newspapers such as the *Yorkshire Post* and the *Leeds Mercury*.²¹ Scatcherd was therefore an unlikely candidate to produce a scrapbook directly critical of commodity culture. Yet, whilst not directed against spectacle, Scatcherd's scrapbook was nevertheless formulated to signify political meaning. Scatcherd included vast amounts of material that documented her suffragist endeavours and the broader suffrage movement in her scrapbook. As such, the album is useful in discerning Scatcherd's uses and perceptions of spectacle in the context of her political awareness. It is in this sense that I will employ my first mode of interpretation, which treats the text as an indicator of Scatcherd's perceptions of spectacle and its relationship to society. Scatcherd clearly possessed an insight into at least one aspect of the reality of capitalist society: its unequal gender relations. By using her album to analyse how this perception related to her perception of spectacle, the effect of spectacle on Scatcherd's cognition of the political and social world around her can be illuminated. I argue that, whilst the album indicates that Scatcherd had a cognisance of social, political, and economic relations, and demonstrates her ability to contest and subvert spectacle, the selections she made in the collation of her spectacular material also indicate an inability on her part to grasp connections and contradictions between this understanding and the different elements of spectacle she appropriated. Scatcherd's deployment of contradictory fragments denotes a situation in which she loses track of social relations as they become refracted through spectacle. Turning to my second mode of interpretation, that which treats the album as a material manifestation of the dialectic contest between commercial imperative and consumer agency, I show that Scatcherd's album reveals the ways in which spectacle acted to absorb and defuse her political agency in

²⁰ The Scatcherds were fond of foreign travel, evidenced by Alice's inclusion of travel articles penned by herself in relation to trips to Egypt and Norway. As will be seen later, she also held an interest in fashion and the consumption thereof.

²¹ The Scatcherds entertained the then editor of the *Yorkshire Post*, Mr H J Palmer, as well as his counterpart at the *Leeds Mercury*, Mr Riach, at a mayoral function in 1900. See 'Mayoral Dinner at Morley', (newspaper article clipping) 'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', approximately two-thirds of the way into the scrapbook.

consumerist activity and the commodity form. I will show that despite its subversive elements, as an artefact in which Scatcherd's political agency has congealed in consumerist material, the scrapbook stands as testament to the victory of spectacle and commercial imperative over her agency.

Scatcherd's scrapbook is composed of an assorted arrangement of newspaper article clippings, greetings cards, invitations, official documents, certificates, letters, advertisements, and other forms of visual print media. Judging from the dates of some of her inclusions, which range from the 1880s to the early 1900s, the album appears to have been composed in one of two ways: either over a long-duration, or in a short timespan using materials collected over a long period. Either of these methods of composition would seem to indicate that the items included in the scrapbook were carefully selected by Scatcherd. The album is therefore not a haphazard assemblage of items, but a thoughtfully-crafted document designed to reflect significant moments in its author's life and experience, and therefore representative of a cultivated and concerted form of agency. The deliberate character of the scrapbook's composition enables it to be read as a reflection of Scatcherd's perceptions of her life and the world in which her life was lived, and the modes and efficacy of her agency.

The dominance of the theme of the suffragist movement, which occupies between 70 to 80% of the album, points to the centrality of suffrage politics in Scatcherd's life. The scrapbook features a great number of newspaper articles charting her political endeavours and significant moments in the broader suffragist campaign. These fragments are well-selected, providing successful and moderately subversive statements on the iniquities of the prevailing system, and thoroughly conveying the vehemence of Scatcherd's views on political reform. For instance, Scatcherd includes several articles appropriated from feminist publications such as *The Woman's Signal*, which when collated, form a concentrated and consistent articulation of late-century feminist ideology.²² She also includes a manifesto published by the International Council of Women (1899) which offers an alternative societal and political model illustrative of this ideology.²³

²² For instance, an article from *The Woman's Signal* reporting on a 'Speech by Mr Spicer, M.P. at Newport, on Women's Questions' is incorporated in Scatcherd's album. 'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', approximately one quarter of the way through the scrapbook.

²³ See 'International Council of Women: Amended Programme', 'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', just under half-way through the scrapbook.

Scatcherd's album also reveals her ability to contest and subvert spectacle through its construction. Some of the mainstream newspaper articles she includes are critical of the suffragist movement and/or inaccurate in their reportage. In order to ensure the meanings of the articles were contested and thus make the fragments compatible with the album's broader political theme, Scatcherd annotated them, correcting what she perceived to be inaccuracies by crossing passages out, and adding her own handwritten notes. For example, she highlights and crosses out words of a disparaging article from the *Yorkshire Evening Post* reporting on a suffragist meeting held at Albert Hall in March 1880, at which Scatcherd was in attendance, as well as adding the words 'written by one with a keen and genuine sense of humor' at the end of the article (Fig. 36).²⁴ These textual subversions highlight Scatcherd's creative agency and a degree of authority in the assemblage of the text but, as will be seen later, this agency was ultimately absorbed by the scrapbook and the spectacle it relied on.

Whilst Scatcherd seemingly selected and incorporated her source material very carefully in her attempt to create a narrative of both her life and her political ideology and endeavours, there are also instances in which her selections contradict this strategy. Most significant in this respect is her inclusion of numerous advertisements for fashionable garments of clothing (see Figs. 37 and 38 for examples). These advertisements, afforded their own section in the scrapbook, occupying several pages towards the end, were clearly included in the album by Scatcherd because the images and/or commodities pictured in them had some non-political and highly-consumerist meaning to her. As will be shown, these advertisements contradicted and undermined the political narrative Scatcherd attempted to construct in the document.

Firstly, the advertisements undermine Scatcherd's feminist ideology. They are thoroughly conservative in their representation of women, lacking even in the semi-subversive elements featured in other advertising, such as some of the soap advertisements discussed in Chapter Three. One of the adverts, representative of the rest, features a trio of women garbed in ostentatious dresses (Fig. 38). The pictured women are firmly restricted to conventional models of femininity, signified by their domestic confines and pursuits, and their tightly-laced corsets (they are shown occupying the living or drawing room of a typical well-to-do household, with one playing the piano and the other two posing in their dresses). The ideological nature of

²⁴ 'Meeting of Liberal Women' (newspaper article clipping, from the *Yorkshire Post*, 25 March 1880), 'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', less than a quarter of the way into the scrapbook.

these images starkly contradicts the political outlook communicated across much of the rest of her album.

A major source of employment for women in Yorkshire in the late 1800s and early 1900s was the textile industry.²⁵ The working women who surrounded Alice Cliff Scatcherd and were the focus of much of her political campaigning were no doubt the same women, or women in very similar circumstances, to those that produced the fabrics used to make the clothes featured in some of the advertisements she has pasted into her album. Scatcherd's inclusion of these images in the same album as articles reporting on her political endeavours indicates her inability to recognise, or at least consciously acknowledge, the connection between her consumption of and engagement with spectacle, and her political perceptions. One of the cuttings incorporated as part of her political narrative features an article from *The Morley Observer* reporting on a meeting of the Morley Women's Co-operative Guild.²⁶ Scatcherd is reported to have shared the stage with another suffragist at this meeting, Mrs. Holdsworth, who used the platform to appraise the situation of local textile workers and urge for action to be taken to improve their pay and working conditions.²⁷ Robinson also urged that women be taught 'not to buy goods made under the sweating system', so as to aid in the creation of a better future for textile workers and the female community at large. Scatcherd's politics clearly endorsed these sentiments, and her presence at the meeting, and at many others like it, demonstrates an understanding of the productional social relations underlying the clothing industry and its implications for broader gender and class relations.²⁸ Yet, this perception appears to have been inoperative at moment in which Scatcherd selected and incorporated the clothing advertisements in her scrapbook. In her re-contextualisation of these commercial images, Scatcherd betrays a lack of political attentiveness in her consumptive habits: there are no

²⁵Jill Liddington, *Rebel Girls: Their Fight for the Vote*, (London: Virago, 2006), p. 27. See also Katrina Honeyman, *Well-suited: A History of the Leeds Clothing Industry, 1850-1900*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) for a comprehensive history of the region's textile industry.

²⁶'Morley Cooperative Women's Guild: Conference at Morley' (newspaper article clipping, originally from *The Morley Observer*, 1 June 1894), 'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', towards the beginning of the scrapbook.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Newspaper clippings in the scrapbook indicate that Scatcherd attended numerous meetings of the guild, where issues pertaining to women's worker's rights were frequently under discussion.

markers on the advertisements to indicate that the garments on display were created from materials produced in non-sweated conditions, and it is unlikely that Scatcherd either knew independently, nor was inclined to find out, whether this was the case.

Her disjunctive choice of fragments reveals an inability on her part to connect the social contradictions underlying them. Scatcherd could clearly grasp and understand the relations inherent in the social real, yet her scrapbooking of advertisements shows her to have been simultaneously prone to fetishizing the commodities she consumed. Scatcherd's subversive annotation of news articles critical of the suffragist movement demonstrate that she could identify their incompatibility with her ideology, yet when confronted with the overtly commercial spectacle of the advertisements, she does not show the same capacity. The spectacular advertisements Scatcherd includes thus appear to have transformed her perception of the commodities they display. From her perspective, their position as objects of the social and political world dissolves, and they become, at least momentarily, separated from these realities, existing in a carnival time not linked to the producing system.

Confronted by the multiverse of spectacle, Scatcherd was unable to grasp the producing system as totalised whole. She reproduced the multiverse of spectacle through her scrapbook by presenting at least two alternate realities of capitalism: one in which the issue of exploited female labour in textile production needed addressing, and one in which production did not even exist. This thus demonstrates that spectacle impinged on Scatcherd's agency, fragmenting her experience and perception according to her proximity to it. As a political agent, Scatcherd was cognisant of, and even combative against, the unequal social relations of the textile industry, yet as a consumer and spectator, this awareness was incapacitated. This occurred because the fragmentation of social reality into spectacle had, for Scatcherd, become internalised. She could perceive the world in two different, politically contradictory ways, and, crucially, she was unable to recognise, let alone interrogate, this dualistic mode of cognition. Whereas one thing appeared to her as that certain thing in reality, it appeared as something entirely different in spectacle. Scatcherd, although aware of the relations of production and consumption, was fully absorbed into, and accepting of, the production-less multiverse of spectacle when confronted by it as a consumer. This indicates that Scatcherd possessed a dis-unified sense of social relations, the world, and her place within it, and underlines the way her experience and sense of identity was fragmented by her exposure to and engagement with spectacle. Scatcherd's scrapbook seems to communicate two different identities: Scatcherd the political operator, and Scatcherd the consumer, each possessing two different modes of perception and attention.

It is also pertinent to highlight the way Scatcherd's album emphasises the incompatibility of spectacle as a vehicle for narrative. Not only does Scatcherd's inclusion of disjunctive fragments of spectacle indicate her fractured and compartmentalised sense of the world and spectacle's role in it, but also dilutes her political statements and the coherence of the ideological position she communicates through the rest of the album. Scatcherd's album reads like a newspaper. The decontextualized source material she uses finds itself re-contextualised in the very same form from which it was originally taken. A mass of articles and images crowd the pages, each a fragment contributing towards a new fragmented whole, which becomes more fragmented with her inclusion of advertising images in the back pages. The moments of political subversion enacted between its covers were quickly subsumed and negated by this disjuncture, just as they were in the newspaper itself. Scatcherd's inability to reformulate spectacle so that it made sense demonstrates its fundamental incompatibility as a vehicle for narrative. Spectacle cannot be deconstructed using spectacle itself.

Agency at a standstill

I will now switch to my second mode of reading, again taking Scatcherd's album as my prime focus. As we have seen, the fragmented narrative of Scatcherd's album reflects the essentially fragmented perception of the world she held, and specifically the fact that she was unable to neutralise the role of spectacle in the world she was trying to critique and change. Yet nevertheless, Scatcherd's agency remains present in the album, and she clearly approached its construction armed with a critical mindset that had been fostered throughout her political life. Scatcherd's agency is inconsistent, and because of this, her attempted reconstruction of this agency is thwarted in the album, but it was clearly a powerful and, in some instances, practically effective agency, and the residual traces of it remain evident in the text. Thus, notwithstanding Scatcherd's failure to 'explode' spectacle, or the issue of women's oppression as her ideological position perceived it, the scrapbook still stands as a manifestation of the dialectic engagement of her agency with spectacle. But by the very act of constructing the scrapbook, and recording her political endeavours in it as spectacle, Scatcherd submitted this agency to spectacle allowing it to become frozen and rendered benign in its fractured and fracturing web. Her furious corrections on the critical newspaper articles in the album, as well as her inclusion of an overwhelming volume of material charting her political endeavours and thus reinforcing or attempting to reinforce, the meaning of those endeavours, indicate a political agency of sorts.

Her annotations are particularly significant, in that they imply Scatcherd was trying to rectify in the realm of spectacle instances in which her agency failed in real-world politics. This is thus clear evidence of Scatcherd's attempt to use the scrapbook to operate agency, to effect

change on an aspect of her life or the world she was unhappy with. This demonstrates that Scatcherd perceived spectacle and the activity of scrapbooking as a suitable place for the operation of her agency, thus implying that at least in her instance, spectacle was successful in propagating itself as a pseudo-world characterised by carnivalesque and heteroglossic qualities. It is pertinent to query why she retained these 'corrected' articles, instead of returning them to their authors in protest? Of course, it is possible that Scatcherd sent letters to the editors of the publications from which the articles were taken to this effect, but as she includes much of her correspondence on other significant matters in the album, the absence of any such material suggests she did not. The scrapbook figured as a way for Scatcherd to respond and ostensibly rectify, at least on a personal level, issues by which her agency was frustrated in the real political world. Hence, just as advertising images absorbed subversive ideas, ideals, and energies into the dialectical fetish images, the spectacular form of the scrapbook acted to contain Scatcherd's agency, rendering it inert. This occurred fundamentally through the politically-benign practice of scrapbooking itself: Scatcherd was unwittingly disarming her agency by aligning it with a consumptive project, a project that relied itself on the commodity fetish and the fetishized consumption of materials such as pen, paper, album, and newspaper/periodical. But it also occurs in and between the spectacular cargo of the album itself: firstly, in the dissolution of Scatcherd's politicised narrative in the patchwork medium of the scrapbook itself and in its spectacular source material, and secondly in the way the material spectacle of the album's cargo and the broader material world is merged with her lived experience in its pages.

Each leaf of the album conveys a patchwork synthesis of Scatcherd's political energy and her more benign activities in the realm of consumer culture. One page, for instance, contains several highly dissonant items: an article on the opening of a new nurse's home in Wortley from the *Morley Observer*; a pamphlet that accompanied a 'a course of five lectures on Plato and his theory of knowledge'; a piece of the programme for the 1899 Covent Garden opera season; and a trade card advertising fancy shoes sold by 'Joseph Box' of Regent Street. By framing both the political and consumerist elements of her life in one final gesture of a consumerist nature, Scatcherd willingly but perhaps unwittingly submitted the former to the supremacy of the latter, packaging her kinetic agency in a spectacular wrapper, and leaving it suspended amongst the vast array of fragments, proliferating at every moment, which formed the ever-advancing spectacle. Scatcherd's agency became absorbed by both the process and material of scrapbooking, and by conforming to its fragmented mode of representation, became inseparable from spectacle itself, with all its contradictions, inconsistencies, and superficial values. Like the advertising images in the previous chapter, Scatcherd's album funnels a pre-

existing ideology (here, her suffragism and broader views on equality) into the commodity, a conjoining that congeals and conceals the dialectic dissonance between the two, superficially resolving the discrepancy and fossilising it so that such a discrepancy becomes naturalised. The scrapbook therefore represents the negation of history by spectacle.

Scatcherd's album stands as a material artefact of spectacle's absorption of agency into its imagistic domain, and of its ability to absorb and halt transformative processes. Scatcherd's scrapbook evidently captured some of her agency, and distilled into a form that was harmless to its target. It must be noted that this artefact only represents the absorption of a minute fragment of the social dialectic, a small fraction of the agency of one individual, but this does not render this analysis any less significant. The fragmented nature of spectacle dictates that this is how the process of the suspension of history functions in the society of spectacle: not by somehow absorbing history *en masse* into its folds, by deleting history and replacing it with itself, but instead by continuously and relentlessly capturing aspects of reality/strands of the social dialectic, a process which when repeated indefinitely and aggregated, has the very same effect. Spectacle, and the consumerist culture that was erected around it, began to directly channel political agency into consumerist practice: this is nowhere better evident than in the practice of scrapbooking. Spectacle's protean, shifting, and pseudo-oppositional nature allows it to extend itself to the 'service' of any ideology or aspect of the social dialectic. By offering individuals and collectives a remarkably undefinable – and thus unquestionable – pseudo-world of consumption in which a whole range of activities and ideas could supposedly be enacted, it could, and can, render any potentially transformative aspect of social life ineffectual.

The analysis in this chapter has resulted in two fundamental conclusions. The first is that spectacle promoted a tendency toward dualistic thought amongst spectators, enabling them to hold two or more contradictory beliefs and seemingly invest each with an equal degree of validity. This diminished their ability to critique spectacle or follow through with critiques begun in part – in other words, it restricted their ability to name and narrate spectacle and recognise its pervasive role in social affairs. For instance, Scatcherd could recognise, articulate, and document social inequality and its roots in production, but she could not fully escape spectacle in order to stand outside it and thus perceive its role in the very social situation she was trying to overcome. Agency and the potential for social transformation is thwarted at its root by spectacle. The fragmentation of perception – and by extension, identity – wrought on the individual by spectacle and its fetish divides individual agency into irreconcilable fragments – into the thesis of the producer and political operator, and the antithesis of the consumer or gullible spectator. In this sense, the internal contradictions of the capitalist system become internalised in the consumer, who, like Scatcherd, becomes both aware of the auspices of power and confused/taken-in by the auspices of that same power when transmitted *through* spectacle. This contradictory mode of perception has been a significant feature of social life henceforth. George Orwell made it a cornerstone of his dystopian future in *1984* (1949), in which the middle class (or dystopian equivalent thereof), exemplified in his protagonist Winston Smith, are prone to such a binary mindset. Orwell did not relate this mode of ‘double’ thinking to a diffuse form of spectacle, attributing it instead to the concentrated spectacle built around the totalitarian power of Big Brother, and a kind of middle class ‘schizophrenia’ precipitated by that class’s (particularly that of its lower echelons) historical experience on the fringes of proletariat and bourgeoisie. For Orwell, doublethink could be effectively stimulated without recourse to the commodity spectacle, envisaging it being engendered through concentrated forms of spectacle that employ linguistic, rather than semiotic strategies (doublespeak).¹

Yet this capacity to doublethink is clearly stimulated historically by the presence of diffuse, capitalist spectacle on the social landscape, and by the ensuing fragmentation of narrative, and the internal division of the individual along the lines of political agent and consumer. Indeed, we have seen how in the context of nineteenth-century capitalism, diffuse spectacle proved the most effective mode of social manipulation and the form most resistant to critique. It is my contention that this evaluation is also tenable in broader contexts: that in the

¹ See George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-four*, (London: Penguin, 1998).

course of global history over the past two hundred years, diffuse spectacle has emerged as the most apt mode of social control. It might be argued that the historical and geographical specificity of my analysis of these forms precludes the credibility of advancing this claim in terms of broader historical and geographical contexts. Yet, the global battle waged between these two forms of spectacle in the twentieth century is testament to the broader validity of this thesis. Apart from during the two world wars and a few other moments of crisis, diffuse spectacle was the 'weapon of choice' for Western capitalist authority during this period, whilst concentrated spectacle was the tool of opposing authoritarian regimes. The clear victor of this contest was the diffuse spectacle of consumer capitalism, the spectacle that remains dominant today. It is doubtless that, in part, it was the relative ideological coherence of the concentrated spectacles of the twentieth century, particularly that of the Soviet Union, that enabled them to be overcome (indeed, Western diffuse spectacle played a firm hand in the dissolution of actually-existing communism in the late twentieth century). Thus, this study has highlighted the significance of narrative coherence (or otherwise) to the possibilities of social critique and transformation. To effectively critique something, observers must be able to grasp its narrative, and render their own critique as a counter-narrative. By causing narrative to fragment, multiply, and ultimately dissolve, diffuse spectacle effectively nullifies, or at least narrows, the potential for such critique. Without a coherent narrative to critique and contest, spectators are left largely bereft of the building blocks needed to decode the society of spectacle, whilst the fragmented environment of spectacle similarly influences a corresponding fragmentation in the perception of the spectator. Ultimately, the spectator of the society of spectacle is left with neither the necessary modes of perception or materials to adequately comprehend and confront spectacle.

The second fundamental conclusion derived from this analysis is that when individuals were able to deploy agency in the face of spectacle, spectacle ultimately ended up absorbing this agency and rendering it benign. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the implications of this analysis extend beyond the realm of late-Victorian agency: they are also significant for twentieth century models of radical political action, namely those of the Situationist International (SI), the movement to which Debord belonged. Situationist strategies were not only influential in the last large-scale bout of radical political action in European history - the events in Paris in 1968 - but are also, as we shall see in the conclusion, still one of the primary forms of radical action contemporary movements, consciously or not, adhere to. Debord and the Situationists argued that the historical situation in which they lived – the society of spectacle – was the point at which the commodity and its image had come to colonise all social life. The extent to which spectacle pervaded the society they lived in effected their belief

in the need for subversive strategies that could be employed from within spectacle, using its own methods and materials. The strategies they developed to this end were based around the recovery and re-assertion of authentic life from the pseudo-world of spectacle by subverting it in 'situations' within the physical and psychic spaces of spectacle.² One of the central tactics developed by the SI was that of *détournement*, which involved commandeering and refunctioning certain aspects of spectacle so as to explode its fetish in a sense not unlike that posited by Benjamin.³ This principle underpinned various subversive exercises by the Situationists, such as Debord's film work, namely his film version of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1973), and *Critique of Separation* (1961), which spliced fragments of spectacular images together to expose the darker aspect of spectacle. It also underpinned Debord and Asger Jorn's previously mentioned scrapbooking exercise, the album *Memoires* (1959). Debord and Jorn's album is composed 'entirely of prefabricated elements', such as newspaper cuttings, architectural plans, and textual inscriptions and images representing the voices of the marginalized.⁴ The album was designed to both preserve those marginalized stories and voices and to expose the society of spectacle by showing the 'hegemonic version of history ... captured in the damaged and sadistic form of the cut-up images and texts'.⁵ Debord and the Situationists perceived scrapbooking, and other modes of contesting spectacle through spectacle, as appropriate methods for challenging and undermining the commodity culture that saturated their world. Yet, as my analysis of Victorian scrapbooking practices has shown, such practices, which inherently rely on spectacle, mirror and eventually become spectacle, and are consequently ultimately ineffective.

Thus, the idea central to the work of first and second generation of neo-Marxists, including Benjamin and Debord, that there is something immanently revolutionary in the commodity world itself, is contestable. For both Benjamin and Debord, the spectacle and the commodity fetish could be exposed by emphasizing their hollowness: the fetish could be

² Frances Tracey, *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International*, (London: Pluto Press, 2014), p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7

⁴ Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, *Memoires*, (Copenhagen: Editions Situationist International, 1959).

⁵ Tracey, p. 22.

exploded using the fetish itself, primarily in terms of reconfiguring the detritus – the discarded things and signs – of the commodity world in a manner that exposed their superficiality. The commodity fragments of the past are, as this study has demonstrated, integral to a recovery of the past via a narration of spectacle in its historical dimension, but all this analysis demonstrates is that spectacle is a powerful social force, a force that subdues all before it through incorporation. Revolution is not immanent in the structures of spectacle itself and the spectacle and its fetish cannot be effectively overturned by simple rearrangements of spectacular fragments, because spectacle is inherently pliable and reworkable itself. Agency against spectacle cannot occur *using* spectacle. Seeking to recover non-spectacular life and relations from within its structures, using some of its forms, mediums, and mechanisms, does not and cannot realise a totalised challenge to spectacle. Such a strategy presents its challenge to spectacle in a fragmentary form. As with the attempts made by Victorians to explode the fetish discussed in the previous chapter, only one aspect of spectacle is ever properly exposed using this method, and this isolated ‘reveal’ cannot easily be mapped onto a broader understanding of spectacle and its *structural* role. The problems inherent in the mapping of fragmentary subversions onto a totalised critique is manifest in the dissonance between Debord’s totalised critique of spectacle and the methods of subversion he proposed to catalyse its downfall. In the *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord enacted ‘a universal critique of separation’⁶ and advocated ‘an onslaught on the *machinery of permitted consumption*’⁷ based on this critique. Debord’s words here seem to point toward the need for revolutionary agency to be executed in a totalised way correlated to his totalised critique (corresponding to his vehement assertion that theory and praxis must be unified). Yet in his writings on revolutionary tactics, and in the actual practices of the SI, this totalisation was substantially lacking. Whilst *The Society of the Spectacle* provided a critical narration of the spectacle of Debord’s time, and thus revealed, albeit in a rather opaque manner, its ‘universal’ functions, Situationist *tactics* could not grapple with spectacle in its universal form.

⁶ Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, p. 85.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 86.

Conclusion to Part Two

This section of the thesis has described the form, function, and social effect of the diffuse spectacle of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has demonstrated that spectacle fragmented in the latter decades of nineteenth century with the development and expansion of pictorial advertising. Following this fragmentation and diffusion, spectacle no longer adhered to the structure of narrative or the concept of a unitary mode of production. In aggregate form, spectacle conveyed only disjuncture, which obscured the socio-economic realities underpinning it more effectively than did the totalising propaganda of the Exhibition. Furthermore, the disjuncture created by the advertising spectacle undermined and disrupted the media narratives of the newspapers and periodicals whose pages it pervaded. Furthermore, the detachment of spectacle from the idea of coherent narratives and from the concept of a common system of production facilitated its deployment as a pseudo-world ostensibly oppositional to the real one. In the new spectacle, commodities were envisaged as agents against the system, and adverts invited consumers to expend subversive energies in their consumption. Because it was not bound to any strict ideological underpinning other than that of consumption itself, the pseudo-carnival of spectacle manifested as a protean environment that offered something to people of all identities, outlooks, and politics.

The analysis undertaken in the final two chapters of this section revealed that the fragmentation, diffusion, and profusion of spectacle during the period had a profound effect on the agency of consumers. Primarily, the fact that spectacle no longer conveyed a tangible narrative about the world meant that spectators were less able to perceive it in its totalised form, and so were unable to apprehend its true portent on a consistent basis. But the effects went further than this. Even when consumers did try to act against spectacle, or at least display a strong form of political agency in other arenas of life, they could be thwarted by spectacle, as in the case of Alice Cliff Scatcherd, or Henry Furniss and *Punch*. Spectacle was demonstrably capable of absorbing the subversive intent of consuming subjects, either by channelling their practices into the auspices of its pseudo-carnavalesque worlds, or repackaging subversion as commodity and spectacle.

- Coda -
'Resistance is the Drinks
Aisle':
Spectacle and
Postmodernity

This study has tracked the trajectory of spectacle over its formative years during the period 1851-1914. It has charted its birth in a concentrated, coherent form, and its subsequent diffusion and fragmentation, and it has reflected on the implications of this shift for political critique, individual agency, and social transformation. It has shown that in its concentrated form, spectacle is inflexible, narrative-based, and produces a conspicuous dissonance with reality, enabling it to be easily and effectively critiqued. In its fragmented form, spectacle abandons narrative and coherence, subjecting consumers to a fractured view of the world and their place within it, and thus restricting their ability to fashion coherent critiques of spectacle. The study has also demonstrated that because of its detachment from real-world narratives, fragmented spectacle projects pseudo-carnavalesque worlds that enable it to subordinate ideology and practice. Consequently, fragmented spectacle acts as a receptacle capable of absorbing social agency and rendering it benign.

As mentioned at the outset of this thesis, one of the primary motivations behind this project is to look to the past to help understand the nature of our own society of spectacle. In line with this imperative, I will now reflect on the broader historical implications of the preceding analysis and delineate the links between the Victorian and Edwardian society of spectacle and that of our own. Through a case study on contemporary advertising and spectators' interactions with it, I will show that the essential functions and social effects of present-day spectacle mirror those of the original diffuse spectacle of the late-nineteenth century, the only difference being that the effects of the former are heightened by the new technologies it is able to call upon. I will conclude this argument by demonstrating that our contemporary situation – often labelled as 'the postmodern condition' – can be attributed to spectacle's influence on narrative, ideology, perception and agency.

The fundamental principles underlying the embryonic consumer spectacle of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries retain their centrality to modern spectacle, but in heightened form. As I will show, in terms of its primary functions, spectacle now is arguably no different to spectacle then. It is merely the forms these functions take, particularly in terms of technology, that have altered. Just as in the late 1800s, the latter half of the twentieth century and the first part of the present one witnessed a technological revolution in spectacle. Where in the late-nineteenth century this revolution was founded on the expansion of the newspaper and improvements in printing technologies, and liberated spectacle from the static, concentrated form epitomised by the Great Exhibition, the more recent revolution was dependent on the rise

of computers, the internet, and digital forms of spectacle such as social media, and did not fundamentally alter spectacle's form, but rather heightened its already existing functions. Digital platforms and social media sites are the modern-day equivalent of the newspaper and the periodical and play a similarly fundamental role within the spectacle. Like their physical analogues, social media platforms are primarily hubs of communication and conduits for the dissemination of news and entertainment, reliant for profit-making purposes on advertising-revenues.¹ These forms of technologies have greatly increased spectacle's diffusion and fragmentation. Whereas the first technological revolution in spectacle enabled spectacle to break free of the static structures of the exhibition hall and pervade public and private space, the second deepened this pervasion, and indeed created a new public space in the realm of digital communications. Today, spectacle presents itself in highly fluid form through 'smart' phones, computers, tablets, and other digital devices that have a greater and even more pervasive reach than the newspaper. Most significantly, digital technologies and the internet have heightened the level to which the consumer can interact with spectacle, thus having implications for the extent to which the consumer can access, or feel as though they are accessing, the pseudo-worlds created by it. Contemporary spectacle can be regarded as 'interactive' to an extent that its nineteenth century predecessor could not.² In short, spectacle and its pseudo-worlds are projected more effectively and in a more encompassing manner than previously. Nevertheless, the fundamental logic of spectacle remains: spectacle has just become more effective in performing it. Correspondingly, the condition of spectators' perception and agency remains fundamentally the same as is it did during the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods: it is fractured, compartmentalised, and lacking the reference point of a coherent, narrative-based theory of critique.

¹ John Lanchester, 'You Are the Product', *London Review of Books* [Online] 39.16 (2017), pp. 3-10. Available from <<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v39/n16/john-lanchester/you-are-the-product>> [Accessed 4 February 2018].

² Dominic Pettman foregrounds the interactive nature of modern digital spectacle in his *Infinite Distraction: Paying Attention to Social Media*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016). However, it is also pertinent to consider Tom Standage's *The Victorian Internet*, in which he argues that the kind of interactive social media circuits available in today's digital world had their forerunners in the nineteenth century. See Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*, (London: Phoenix, 1999).

Radical politics and the commodity spectacle in the present age

There's a Rick that held a factory hostage after murdering his boss and several co-workers. The factory made cookies, and flavoured them with lies. He made us all take a look at what we were doing, and in the bargain, he got a taste of real freedom. We captured that taste, and we keep giving it to him, so he can give it right back to you, in every bite of new Simple Rick's Freedom Wafers Selects. Come home to the unique flavour of shattering the grand illusion. Come home to Simple Rick.³

In the dystopian setting of an episode of the cult science-fiction cartoon *Rick and Morty*, a subplot involving the rebellion of a factory worker lays bare the function of the modern spectacle. The factory produces candy bars that induce a feeling of liberation in its work-weary consumers via the addition of a sinister ingredient: the siphoned brain chemicals of a comatose individual subjected to fake but wholesome memories. As part of his rebellion, the worker revives and releases the comatose individual. Upon his capture, the rebellious labourer is manipulated into believing he is being handed his freedom (he is guided to the exit of the factory and given the keys to a getaway car). At this moment, the rebel is shot from behind and recaptured. He is then rendered as a replacement for the original 'Simple Rick' and forced to relive the memory of his release repeatedly, with the neurotransmitters he generates captured and packaged in the new 'Simple Rick' product mentioned in the quotation above.

This narrative encapsulates spectacle's propensity to interact with and absorb subversive sentiment, energy, and practice. Like so much of spectacle, the 'Simple Rick' commodity is marketed to appeal explicitly to the subversive desires of the population. Both its pre- and post-rebellion versions are presented as means for temporary escape from the oppressive and overwhelming pressures of life in modern capitalism and thus from the very system upon which their production and consumption depends. Furthermore, the Simple Rick factory worker's rebellion is shown to ultimately strengthen spectacle, enabling the company to adjust its product and the presentation thereof to accommodate the brand of subversive intent he displays and repackage it in sanitised form.

³ 'The Ricklantis Mixup', *Rick and Morty*, Season 3 (Episode 7), online video, Netflix, [accessed 5 January 2017].

As the following analysis will show, the situation satirised in *Rick and Morty* is significant in the context of contemporary spectacle and radical politics. In April 2017 *PepsiCo* released an advert for their flagship soft drink.⁴ Set at a political demonstration, the video opens with a shot of a gregarious, multi-racial and multi-generational crowd of protesters waving colourful banners featuring generic slogans. The camera then cuts to Kendall Jenner, a celebrity personality, undergoing a photoshoot in a building adjacent to the protest. As the crowd passes, Jenner's attention is caught, and, tossing away her blonde wig and rubbing off her lipstick, she abandons her shoot and joins the fray. As she moves jovially through the crowd of 'demonstrators' (although this appears more like a party than a protest), she picks up a can of Pepsi, conveniently positioned in a cooler bin in the middle of the street, and then approaches a line of police, to one of whom she hands the can in a conciliatory gesture. The officer accepts the gift and the crowd go wild in celebration, as the action is captured by a young photographer who has been tracking Jenner's movements.

The fundamental elements of fragmented spectacle as discussed over the preceding chapters are all conspicuous here. The advert depicts a fragment of a world in which the commodity is made autonomous from hierarchical and productional orders, enabling a subsequent cooption of subversive ideology, politics, and history. This is achieved by the way the advert feeds off a range of recent grassroots political movements, including Occupy, The Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and the Spanish democratic socialist party Podemos, as well as making superficial homages to LGBT rights movements (one shot features a pair of trans people), multiculturalism (as denoted by the conspicuously multi-ethnic make-up of the protesters), and anti-war movements (referenced by the wielding of peace signs). Most overtly, the advert directly references the famous photograph of Black Lives Matter protester Ieshia Evans standing defiantly whilst being charged by riot police during a demonstration in Baton Rouge (Fig. 39). The advert was clearly designed to evoke a pseudo-carnavalesque world offering spectators a space in which to ostensibly play out their radical, utopian urges and desires (albeit in a highly-moderated way that envisages the commodity placating rather than overcoming the structural forces that hold radical energy in check – much as in the instance of Simple Rick's candy in the *Rick and Morty* universe), and encourages them to reconcile these urges with the consumption

⁴ 'FULL Pepsi Ad Commercial with Kendall Jenner', online video, YouTube, 4 April 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfCiV6ysngU> [accessed 12 September 2017].

of Pepsi. The slogan 'join the conversation' makes explicit the invitation to the consumer to join this world and carry on their 'radical' action.

Consumers did join the conversation, although not in the way PepsiCo's marketing team had planned. Immediately after the advert's release, PepsiCo faced vehement criticism from the public and the press. Critics were particularly upset by the advert's co-option of the image of Isha Evans and the way in which Evans was substituted in the advert for a privileged white celebrity completely unconnected with the movement. Commentators also disparaged the farcical notion that social issues and tensions could essentially be cured via the vehicle of a soft-drink.⁵ In many ways, the circumstances surrounding the advert demonstrate the public's operation of a de-fetishistic perception and an effective form of resistance against spectacle's appropriation of radical politics. Yet a closer consideration of the reaction to the advert reveals a lack of an ability on the part of spectators to articulate criticism of and against spectacle itself. This lack of ability is relatable to the distinct lack of narrative underpinning spectacle in its diffuse form, and the subsequent fragmentation and compartmentalisation of modes of perception, recognition, and agency in the individual spectator. Furthermore, spectators generated their criticisms on a spectacular platform and in a fragmentary fashion, and thus fed their energy back into the very same system they were attempting to critique. Here we find the corollary of the nineteenth century scrapbooker in the form of the consumers and producers of social media, who unwittingly submit their agency to spectacle, enabling it to grow ever stronger.

It is significant that the public and the press's anger over the ad was not framed in terms of the flagrancy of Pepsi as a corporation and a purveyor of spectacle appropriating protest politics and imagery to further their capitalist agenda, but rather in terms of their making light out of serious political action by commercializing it. Issue was rightly taken with the advert's explicit appropriation of real protest imagery, yet these critiques stopped short of exposing PepsiCo's status as a key player in the system of globalized corporate capitalism radical movements are confronted by. A common strategy used by commentators on social media was to produce mock Pepsi adverts of their own, inserting branded cans of the product into iconic historical images (see Figs. 40 and 41 for examples). Whilst these images effectively 'explode' the commodity fetish inherent in the original Pepsi advert, emphasising the illusory nature of

⁵ See, for instance 'Pepsi pulls Kendall Jenner ad ridiculed for co-opting protest movements', *Guardian* (online), 6 April 2017 <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/apr/05/pepsi-kendall-jenner-pepsi-apology-ad-protest>> [date accessed 15 September 2017].

the socially-transformative fetish powers the advert awards the Pepsi commodity, they do not explode the fetish of the spectacle more broadly, nor, crucially, do they represent an awareness of spectacle's significant social and economic role. Such responses displayed no criticism of the hypocrisy inherent in the fact that PepsiCo itself, as a corporation, plays a role in the very structures such radical politics are pitted against, and thus of the sheer audacity of their attempt to position their brand within a framework of radical ideology. Observers seem to have been unable or uninclined to explode the fetish in a manner that might expose Pepsi's status as a major purveyor of the globalised, impersonalised neoliberal economics at the core of so many contemporary social problems and tensions. Indeed, critiques of the advert's co-option of Black Lives Matter imagery might have been given added sting had they poured scorn on the fact that Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo at the time the advert was produced, had recently joined an advisory committee to Donald Trump's government, an administration with racist ideological underpinnings.⁶

These *narrative* details, linked to the 'behind-the-scenes' social relations operated between big business and policy makers that spectacle successfully obscures, were entirely missing from popular responses to the advert. Instead, critiques were operated on a platform of fragmentation that mirrored spectacle itself: mock adverts and memes, such as those shown above, only subverted the individual advert, exposing the superficiality of the product's supposed fetish powers but not the social relations underneath, or spectacle's role in concealing these relations. Hence, the kind of fragmented and compartmentalised mode of perception I identified in Alice Cliff Scatcherd and other Victorian scrapbookers in the preceding chapter is still very much in evidence in the modern spectator/consumer. Whilst many commentators could demonstrate an understanding of the ridiculous nature of the Pepsi advert's fetish, they were unable to equate this fetish with the broad and pervasive social role of spectacle, mirroring Scatcherd's inability to recognise the role spectacle played in the very social conditions she was critiquing

Whilst consumers' responses to the advert indicate a resistance on their part to the commercialisation of radical politics and imagery, and thus a resistance to being inculcated into the pseudo-carnavalesque ideals of spectacle, this fragmentary defiance was undermined by its

⁶ See 'PepsiCo's CEO Opens up About Trump, Amazon, and That Kendall Jenner Ad', *Fortune* (online), 1 October 2017, <fortune.com/2017/09/21/most-powerful-women-pepsico-indra-nooyi/> [date accessed 20 October 2017].

expression through spectacular platforms. As with many communications in contemporary spectacular society, spectators' critiques of the advert were registered through the spectacular conduit of social media. Thus, whilst protesting the appropriation of radical politics by commerce, they were simultaneously submitting the radical politics of their protest to the spectacle of social media. As fragments of subversion authored per the normative rules of spectacle, these critiques were immediately absorbed and rendered ineffectual. Granted, consumers successfully used social media to condemn the advert and force PepsiCo to withdraw it, but their critical agency did not penetrate the broader issues at stake, nor did it instigate (or even agitate for) any significant change in advertising policy or legislation. Further still, such activity strengthened spectacle and the capital interests behind it. The responses created a flurry of activity on social media platforms, all of which would have boosted the profits and presence of PepsiCo-like corporations such as Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, not only did such user activity provide a boon for social media companies, the uproar over the advert, and the prominent debate it started online, had the effect of pushing Pepsi into the limelight. An apology meme posted by the company on their official Twitter feed immediately after the advert was pulled was 'liked' 25000 times and retweeted 13000 times as of April 2018.⁷ By contrast, a posting of another Pepsi promotion, a comedy skit featuring the fictional character 'Uncle Drew' during February of the same year received only 25 retweets and 69 'likes'.⁸ Similarly, the 'withdrawn' commercial was inevitably posted by a third party on a music sharing site, where it received more than 11,000,000 by April 2018.⁹ The advert invited spectators to invest in the idea of a 'radical consumerism', which they attempted to reject through a display of 'radical consumerism'. Spectators confronted by the Pepsi advert were angry at its attempt to position consumer society as a space to conduct radical politics, yet they willingly used other fragments of spectacle to conduct the radical politics of their protest. The agency of protesting spectators was thus re-entered into spectacle, adding to its strength and flexibility, just as Scatcherd's

⁷ 'Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace, and understanding. Clearly we apologize. We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are removing the content and halting any further rollout. We also apologize for putting Kendall Jenner in this position' (tweet, @Pepsi, 5 April 2017).

⁸ 'What's better than the NBA All Star Game? What's better than this?' #UncleDrew (online video posted as a tweet, @Pepsi, 19 February 2017).

⁹ 'FULL Pepsi Ad', YouTube, 4 April 2017, [accessed 14 April 2017].

subversive scrapbook, or the Punch parody of Pears' Soap advertising had done more than a century earlier.

The loss of critical agency characteristic of our contemporary moment is primarily the result of a slow but inexorable fragmentation and relinquishment of narrative, begun first in the prevailing system's mode of expression, and corresponded in the realm of critique and agency. As spectacle shed its meta-narrative, critiques of it became more difficult to enact because, essentially, there was nothing coherent to contest, no whole to grasp and overturn. In combination with its fragmentation of narrative, spectacle's absorption of subversive cultures and practices – its 'freezing' of thesis and antithesis in image – has stripped society of its sense of historical grounding and blunted the potential for authentic and positive social change. I will develop this line of argument in the conclusion to show that spectacle is the ground zero of postmodernity and 'the postmodern condition'.

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the relationship between structure and agency in the context of Victorian and Edwardian consumer society. It has done so by charting the development of the Victorian commercial and advertising spectacle and assessing the nature and extent of the agency consumers and spectators were able to operate amid this spectacle. This analysis revealed that spectacle began its modern life in a concentrated form, as manifest in the Great Exhibition of 1851, before fragmenting into a diffuse form with the development of spectacular modes of advertising later in the nineteenth century. It has also shown that the modes and extent of the agency consumers were able to display in the wake of these different forms of spectacle were markedly different. Because of its essential coherence, spectators were able to comprehend the superficiality of the Great Exhibition's concentrated spectacle and thus operate more effective and totalised critiques of it. Conversely, spectators of late-century diffuse spectacle were presented with fragmentation, disjuncture, and incoherence, which restricted their ability to comprehend the totality and function of spectacle and thus to enact effective critiques or forms of resistance. The analysis also revealed that spectacle in its diffuse form was, and is, better equipped to absorb agency into its auspices because of its projection of a pseudo-world superficially figured as opposite to the real one. Finally, this thesis has traced the roots of our own consumer society and culture to the development of the fragmented spectacle and its ensuing fragmentation of experience and agency during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period.

This thesis has made contributions to knowledge in several respects. First and foremost, it has developed and applied a new conceptual framework that transcends poststructuralism's inability to provide a realistic account of the relationship between commercial structure and consumer agency in consumer society. Theories of commodity fetishism proposed by Marx and Debord were adapted to create a model in which structure and agency are treated as dialectical forms constantly contesting and interacting with one another. Through the application of this paradigm, this study has made several other significant contributions to knowledge. I will first discuss these contributions on a section-by-section basis, and then return to reflect on the more general contributions made by the study.

In the opening section, the study offered an alternative interpretation of the Great Exhibition of 1851. By reading the Exhibition as a fetish spectacle, albeit one that portrayed a coherent narrative, I have shown that the event was not an emblem of mid-century social stability as proposed by W. L. Burn, or a mediation and dialogue between classes, as proposed by Auerbach,¹ but instead a glitzy façade designed to conceal enduring problems. The puncturing of this façade by social realities, and the evident anxiety this caused, reveals a society that was riven by class division, whilst the ability of spectators to critically deconstruct the event demonstrates that whilst the Exhibition was in many respects a resounding success, as a propagandistic, disciplinary spectacle it was not. Similarly, whilst building on the work of Richards by reading the Exhibition as a ground zero of commodity culture, this study has also challenged his assertion that the event inaugurated the kind of spectacle dominant throughout the rest of the century. This thesis has complicated Richards' assertion that the Exhibition 'helped to shape the way advertisers represented commodities for the rest of the century and to define the most familiar imperatives of modern culture' by highlighting some of the stark differences in the form and function of the spectacle of the Exhibition and that of late-century advertising.² By highlighting the coherence of the Exhibition's spectacular narrative and its (albeit fetishized) references to the origin of commodities in production, this study has shown that the Exhibition was a very different kind of spectacle, operating a very different kind of fetish, to the fragmented, production-free version found in late-Victorian and Edwardian advertising. Relatedly, the research in this section has suggested that spectators were able to develop and operate effective and coherent forms of agency in opposition to the Exhibition because its concentrated nature enabled them to do so.

The second section of the thesis offered a fresh perspective on pictorial advertising and media spectacle, showing how late-century advertising functioned on a principle of fragmentation and the creation of pseudo-difference by referring to a multitude of productional worlds, rather than just one as did the Exhibition. I have shown that this aspect of diffuse spectacle is what enabled it to become, in its aggregate form, a flexible and fluid phenomenon, capable of eluding and absorbing subversive activity and critique. In combination with the results of the first section on the Exhibition, this work has added to our understanding of the

¹ See Burn, *The Age of Equipose*, and Auerbach, *A Nation on Display*.

² Richards, p. 21.

way in which Victorian and Edwardian consumer society and culture functioned, particularly in terms of the structure/agency relationship. As we have seen, this relationship changed with the arrival of the late-century fragmented spectacle, becoming in certain respects more unequal and leaving spectators harbouring a fetishistic and dualistic mindset that prevented them producing coherent and effective critiques. The abandonment of coherent narratives by the aggregate spectacle during this era meant spectators were no longer provided with a tangible and totalised focus of critique. Furthermore, these sections demonstrated the way in which the removal of references to a coherent and unified mode of production in fragmented spectacle meant that it was fashioned as pseudo-oppositional to the real world of production and subsequently capable of inviting and capturing subversive energy and critique. The thesis has therefore provided a valuable counterpoint to the plethora of studies that focus on the more liberational aspects of late-Victorian and Edwardian consumption, such as those produced by Erika Rappaport, Lori Anne Loeb, and Ruth Hoberman, whilst building on the work of materialist scholars such as Thomas Richards and Anne McClintock.³ By uncovering and mapping the structural foundations of the Victorian and Edwardian society of spectacle and interrogating the interplay of these foundations with consumer agency, this study has also established an alternative view of Victorian and Edwardian modes of social discipline. It has shown that social discipline, particularly in a consumer context, was in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods as much based on the purveyance of disorientation and disarticulation as it was on the dissemination of coherent ideologies and direct representations of knowledge and power. As demonstrated in the case study on scrapbooking, the fragmented and diffuse spectacle of the period had a pervasive effect on modes of social perception and the operation of agency. This contrasts with Tony Bennett's proposal that Victorian society conformed to a model of discipline that was reliant on the dissemination of full and coherent ideological narratives. Furthermore, this study's concrete demonstration of the way nineteenth and early twentieth-century consumer society functioned as a structured entity governed by material circumstances presents a challenge to Foucauldian and poststructuralist ideas about power and discourse in general. By showing how experience, perception, identity, language, and social relations were shaped to an extent by the

³ As outlined in the introduction to the thesis, Rappaport's *Shopping for Pleasure*, Loeb's *Consuming Angels*, and Hoberman's 'Constructing the Turn-of-the-Century Shopper' all adhere to a de Certeauan view of agency in the context of consumer culture, and therefore overemphasise agency. On the other hand, Richards and McClintock, in *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* and *Imperial Leather* respectively, because of their broadly materialist approach, view advertising and spectacle in a structural sense and thus implicitly acknowledge the limits of agency, although it is not something they directly address in their studies.

structures of the commodity spectacle, this dissertation has re-emphasised the role and significance of material contexts in social and cultural analysis and simultaneously challenged the notion that society is a purely discursive construct.

Contribution to knowledge was also made in the coda, specifically in terms of its demonstration that whilst in the present age spectacle's basic function remains the same as it was in the late-nineteenth century, its effects on society have intensified. The analysis of spectacle in the context of the present postmodern era, and the links drawn between the original late-nineteenth-century society of spectacle and that of the present age, allow a further argument to be posited: that 'postmodernity' and the 'postmodern condition' result primarily from the effect of diffuse spectacle on society. As this thesis has shown, spectacle influences society primarily in terms of its fragmentation of narrative and subsequently of perception, and its diminution of historical awareness (in terms of the ability to ground the present in relation to an understanding of the past and the possibility of a better future). These effects are also elemental characteristics of 'postmodernity' and 'the post-modern condition' (I initially insert these terms into inverted commas as they are slippery and amorphous, and as will become clear, require replacing).⁴ This correlation demonstrates the foundational role of spectacle and modern forms of commodity culture in the establishment of the postmodern period. This argument is not particularly novel: it has been advanced in various forms by several cultural theorists, including Frederic Jameson, and Steve Best and Douglas Kellner.⁵ Yet, by treating the subject in its historical dimension, and by applying the theoretical paradigm to concrete social situations, this study has been able to reveal more about the relationship between spectacle and postmodernity. Primarily, I have shown that the fragmentation of narrative and loss of historicity characteristic of postmodernity began in the nineteenth century, thus challenging the notion that it commenced during the second-half of the twentieth century. In this respect, this analysis aligns with Zygmunt Bauman's proposal that 'postmodernity', or 'liquid' modernity as he prefers to term it, is in fact not separate from or somehow after modernity, but instead the

⁴ For a definition and discussion of postmodernity, see Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979). Lyotard places particular emphasis on the role of the disintegration of narratives in the birth of the postmodern world.

⁵ See Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), and Best and Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn*.

result of an intensification of its core elements.⁶ As I have argued, this intensification was largely forged around the commodity fetish and the commodity spectacle, which was a latent and thoroughly inherent feature of industrial capitalism from the very beginning. In this sense, it is much more appropriate to term postmodern society as ‘the society of the spectacle’, as this enables us to better understand its historical situation and its relationship with modernity.

It is important to emphasise here that spectacle’s influence is not restricted to the popular domain. Its effects on perception have also influenced the fragmentary, fetishizing paradigms that currently instruct historiographical practice. As outlined in the introduction, these approaches involve a mix of Baudrillard’s fetishistic divorce of production and consumption and de Certeau’s emphasis on locating spaces of liberation within consumer society. In this latter aspect of theory, we can certainly see the impression of spectacle’s carnivalesque camouflage: the idea that redemption, revolution, and utopia can be somehow found within the spectacular landscape is writ large here.

Alongside offering a much-needed alternative perspective on the structure/agency question, the use of a materialist approach, combined with the broad chronological focus, has enabled this study to map some of the significant contours of continuity and change in the history of British/Western consumer culture, primarily in the form of the aforementioned tracking of the spectacle’s development and the connected alterations in the relationship between commercial manipulation and consumer agency. Relatedly, the study has also revealed some of the ways in which individuals’ relationships to, and perspectives on, commodities changed over the period in question, identifying a more tentative relationship at the time of the Great Exhibition, and a much more involved one in the consumer culture of the later Victorian and Edwardian period. Similarly, the study has shown how the advertising and commodity spectacle adapts to accommodate new social trends, activities, and ideologies into lexicon. Relatedly, I have argued that this analysis shows that, other than the ideology of consumption, advertising does not propagate ideologies, but rather absorbs them and repackages them in commodity form. This is significant as it enables historians to better understand how adverts can be used to interpret history. If adverts absorb and repackage ideologies, then those ideologies must have been subscribed to by some sections of population, and thus they can function, to an extent, as a gauge of popular attitudes.

⁶ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), particularly pp. 1-15.

The implications of this study are wide-ranging, and it has highlighted plenty of new potential avenues of enquiry. The posited contrast between the effectiveness of diffuse and concentrated forms of spectacle needs to be tested in different conditions, geographical locations, and periods of history to obtain a fuller understanding of these different forms of spectacle, the interactions between them, and their differing effects on individuals and groups. As mentioned in the final chapter, a potentially appropriate focus for future studies in this respect would be the relationship between Soviet or Nazi concentrated spectacle and Western diffuse consumer spectacle during the twentieth century. More research also needs to be conducted on the interactions of Western consumers with diffuse spectacle and vice versa, particularly in respect of plotting the birth of 'postmodernity' from the early capitalist spectacle. In a specifically Victorian context, there is plenty more work to be done on the broader late-Victorian and Edwardian spectacle, particularly in terms of examining the relationship between advertising and other content in newspapers and periodicals, and the effects this had on the reading experience and the dissemination and reception of information. The scope of this thesis also restricted it from giving a sustained consideration of spectacle in its physical dimension. How did Victorians and Edwardians experience the forms of spectacle they encountered on the street, the shopping department, and the theatre, and what was their agency here?

As demonstrated in the final chapter on modern spectacle, the analysis of the structure/agency relationship featured in this study not only bolsters historical knowledge, but also lays the foundations for a better understanding of present-day consumer society and culture. This is perhaps particularly significant in the context of our contemporary age, in which a large proportion of global society is enthralled to spectacle and consumption whilst urgent issues pertaining to the 'real' world, notably environmental ones, require addressing. Primarily, by '(re-) naming' spectacle – highlighting its existence as a coherent disciplinary structure – this study has brought the problems caused by it, and the way we interact with it, to the fore, which is an important first step in dealing with its pervasive effects on society. This study can therefore assist with the development of a greater critical awareness of the society of spectacle and our role within it.

Bibliography

Secondary Sources

- Adorno, Theodor, 'On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression of Listening', Adorno, Theodor, *The Culture Industry*, ed. By J.M Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991).
- Althusser, Louis, 'Ideology and ideological State Apparatuses' in Althusser, Louis, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984).
- Armitage, David, and Guldi, Jo, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- Armstrong, Isobel, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and The Imagination 1830-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- Auerbach, Jeffrey, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
- Bailey, Isobel, 'Ingram, Herbert', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14416>> [accessed 4 Dec 2014].
- Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).
- Barringer, Tim, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2005).
- Baudrillard, Jean, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (Telos: USA, 1981).
- Bauman, Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
- Baylen, Joseph O., 'Stead, William Thomas', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36258>> [date accessed: 25 Dec 2017].
- Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: London, 1999).
- Benjamin, Walter, 'Convolute N', quoted in *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, ed. by Beatrice Hanssen (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).
- Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- Bergson, Henri, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911).
- Best, Steven, and Kellner, Douglas, *The Postmodern Turn* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997).
- Billig, Michael, *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour* (London: SAGE, 2005).

Black, Jennifer M, 'Corporate Calling Cards: Advertising Trade Cards and Logos in the United States, 1876–1890', *Journal of American Culture*, 32.4 (2009), 291-306.

Bown, Nicola, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Breward, Christopher, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Briggs, Asa, and Burke, Peter, *A Social History of the Media: from Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

Briggs, Asa, *Victorian Things* (London: Penguin, 1990).

Brown, Lucy, 'The Treatment of the News in Mid-Victorian Newspapers', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (1970), 23-39.

Bryant, Mark, 'James Henderson', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/107110>> [date accessed: 3 Jan 2018].

Dempsey, Mike, ed., *Bubbles: Early Advertising Art from A. & F. Pears' Ltd.* (Fontana: Glasgow, 1978).

Burn, W. L., *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1964).

Cantor, Geoffrey, 'Reporting the Great Exhibition', *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 182-200.

Cantor, Geoffrey, 'Responses by Radicals', *The Great Exhibition: A Documentary History, Volume 2*, ed. by Geoffrey Cantor (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013).

Carlisle, Janice, *Picturing Reform in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Cherriman, Becky, 'Alice in Bloomers', *Leedsinspired.co.uk*, (September 2016), <<http://www.leedsinspired.co.uk/blog/alice-bloomers>> [date accessed: 3 Jan 2018].

Church, Roy, 'Advertising Consumer Goods in Nineteenth-century Britain: Reinterpretations', *Economic History Review* 53 (2000), 621-645.

Cinotto, Simone, ed., *Making Italian America* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

Clemm, Sabine, "'Amidst the heterogeneous masses": Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and the Great Exhibition of 1851', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 27.3 (2005) 207–230.

Cooper, Ann, 'Cole, Sir Henry (1808–1882)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5852>> [accessed 10 Nov 2017].

Crary, Jonathan, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge [U.S]; London: October Books / The MIT Press, 1999).

Crossland, John, 'The Dockers Who Won', *History Today*, 39.10 (1989), 9-10.

Culler, Jonathan, *Saussure* (London: Fontana Press, 1985).

Dalley, Lana L., 'Fatal Postponements: Production, Consumption, and the Economic Imagination in George Gissing's *The Odd Women*', *VIJ: Victorians Institute Journal*, 40 (2012), 145-165.

Daly, Nicholas, 'That Obscure Object of Desire: Victorian Commodity Culture and Fictions of The Mummy', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 28 (1994), 24-51.

Davis, John, *The Great Exhibition* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1999).

Day Good, Katie, 'From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives', *New Media and Society*, 15.4 (2012), 557-573.

de Certeau, Michel, 'The Practice of Everyday Life', *The Consumption Reader*, ed. David B. Clarke and others (London: Routledge, 2003).

de Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

Debord, Guy, Jorn, Asger, *Memoires* (Copenhagen: Editions Situationist International, 1959).

Debord, Guy, *The Society of Spectacle*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

Delap, Lucy, 'Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to Be the Master of Things': Shipwrecks, Chivalry and Masculinities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 3.1 (2006), 45-74.

Di Bello, Patrizia, *Women's Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Wives, Mothers, and Flirts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

Donovan, P. F., 'Australia and the Great London Dock Strike: 1889', *Labour History*, 23 (1972), 17-26.

Elsley, Susan Jenifer, 'Images of the Witch in Nineteenth-century Culture', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chester, 2012).

Ewen, Stuart, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976).

Farago, Claire, 'Scraps as it Were: Binding Memories', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 10.1 (2005), 114-122.

Fraser, Hamish, *A History of British Trade Unionism 1700-1998* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999).

Goldfarb, Abi, 'Let there be Light!': The Rise of Lever Brothers and Sunlight Soap', available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/summary?doi=10.1.1.199.9599> [date accessed: 03/04/2018].

Gottdiener, Mark, 'Approaches to Consumption', *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification*, ed. by Mark Gottdiener (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), pp. 3-31.

Gray, Robbie, *The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-century Britain c. 1850-1914* (London: MacMillan, 1981).

Griffin, Emma, *A Short History of the British Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2010).

Griffin, Emma, *Liberty's Dawn: A People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014).

Gruber Garvey, Ellen, *The Adman in the Parlor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Gruber Garvey, Ellen, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Heathorn, Stephen, *For Home, Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School System, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

Hewitt, Martin, ed., *An Age of Equipoise? Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).

Hindley, Diana and Geoffrey, *Advertising in Victorian England 1837-1901* (London: Wayland, 1972).

Hoberman, Ruth, 'Constructing the Turn-of-the-Century Shopper: Narratives about Purchased Objects in the "Strand Magazine," 1891-1910', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 37.1 (2004), 1-117.

Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Capital*, (London: Abacus, 1977).

Hoffenberg, Peter, and Auerbach, Jeffrey A., *Britain, The Empire, and the World at The Great Exhibition Of 1851* (Aldershot: Ashgate Pub. Company, 2008).

Honeyman, Katrina, *Well-suited: A History of the Leeds Clothing Industry, 1850-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Ibbotson, David A., 'Jerome K. Jerome, Masculinity and the Parody of Urban Escape: "Sunday-School Slops."', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 61.1 (2018), 98-117.

Jackson, Lee, *Dirty Old London: The Fight against Filth* (London: Yale University Press, 2014).

Jameson, Frederic, *Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

Jankiewicz, Stephen, 'A Dangerous Class: The Street Sellers of Nineteenth-Century London', *Journal of Social History*, 46.2 (2012), 391-415.

Jensen, John, 'Furniss, Henry', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33296>> [date accessed: 1/04/18].

Joyce, Patrick, ed., *Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Joyce, Patrick, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Kellner, Douglas, *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

Kent, David, 'Containing Disorder in an Age of Equipose': Troops, Trains, and the Telegraph', *Social History*, 38.3 (2013), 308-327.

Kooistra, Lorraine Janzen, 'Illustration', *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. By Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 104-125.

Lanchester, John, 'You Are the Product', *London Review of Books* [Online] 39.16 (2017), pp. 3-10. Available from <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v39/n16/john-lanchester/you-are-the-product> [Accessed 4 February 2018].

Landon, Phillip, 'Great Exhibitions: Representations of the Crystal Palace in Mayhew, Dickens, and Dostoevsky', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 20 (1997), 27-59.

Lanning, Katie, 'Tessellating Texts: Reading *The Moonstone* in *All the Year Round*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 45 (2012), 1-22.

Lauterbach, Edward S., 'Victorian Advertising and Magazine Stripping', *Victorian Studies*, 10 (1967), 431-434.

Liddington, Jill, *Rebel Girls: Their Fight for the Vote* (London: Virago, 2006).

Loeb, Lori Anne, *Consuming Angels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Luckhurst, Roger, 'Laboratories for Global Space-Time: Science-Fictionality and the World's Fairs, 1851-1939', *Science Fiction Studies*, 39 (2012), 385-400.

Lyotard, Jean-François, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979).

Macrae, Eilidh, 'The Scottish Cyclist and the New Woman: Representations of Female Cyclists in Scotland, 1890-1914', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 35 (May 2015), 70-91.

Marx, Karl, *Capital, Volume I*, trans. from the 3rd German edn. by Edward Aveling and Samuel Moore (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970).

McClintock, Anne, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge: 1995).

Miller, Henry J., 'John Leech and the Shaping of the Victorian Cartoon: The Context of Respectability', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 42.3 (2009), 267-291.

Mussell, James, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).

Orwell, George, *Nineteen Eighty-four* (London: Penguin, 1998).

Owens, Alistair et al, 'Fragments of the Modern City: Material Culture and Rhythms of Everyday Life in Victorian London', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 15 (2010), 212-225.

Peckham, Robert, 'Infective Economies: Empire, Panic and the Business of Disease', *Journal of Imperial & Commonwealth History*, 41 (June 2013), 211-237.

Pennie, A. R., 'Marks, Henry Stacey', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18075>> [accessed 25 Dec 2017].

Pensky, Max, 'Geheimmittel: Advertising and Dialectical Images in Benjamin's Arcades Project', *Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, ed. by Beatrice Hanssen (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2006).

Perkin, Harold, *The Origins of Modern English Society: 1780-1880* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1969).

Pettman, Dominic, *Infinite Distraction: Paying Attention to Social Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

Poklad, Josh, 'Sleigh Bells and Factory Elves: The Spectacular Economy of Santa Claus', *Victorians Institute Journal*, 44 (2017), 157-183.

Poovey, Mary, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Porter, Dorothy, 'Enemies of the Race': Biologism, Environmentalism, and Public Health in Edwardian England', *Victorian Studies*, 2 (1990), 159-178.

Proctor, Tammy, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002).

Qureshi, Sadiah, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-century Britain* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Ramamurthy, Anandi, *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

Ramsey, Michele E., 'Driven from the Public Sphere: The Conflation of Women's Liberation and Driving in Advertising from 1910 to 1920', *Women's Studies in Communication*, 29 (2006), 88-112.

- Rappaport, Erika, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- Richards, Thomas, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).
- Rubery, Matthew, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction After the Invention of the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Sambrook, James, 'Prince, John Critchley (1808-1866)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, (Oxford University Press, 2004)
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22800>> [accessed 11 May 2015].
- Sanders, Andrew, *In the Olden Time: The Victorians and the British Past* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013).
- Sartre, Lowell J., *Chocolate on Trial: Slavery, Politics, and the Ethics of Business* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2005).
- Sarup, Madan, *Post-structuralism and Postmodernism* (Harvester Wheatsheaf: Hemel Hempstead, 1988).
- Schouwenburg, Hans, 'Back to the Future? History, Material Culture and New Materialism', *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, 3.1 (2015), 59–72.
- Schwartz, Vanessa R., *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
- Selig, Robert, L., 'A Sad Heart at the Late-Victorian Culture Market: George Gissing's *In the Year of Jubilee*', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 9 (1969), 703-720.
- Shannon, Brent, 'Refashioning Male Fashion, Masculinity, and the Cultivation of the Male Consumer in Britain, 1860-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 46.4 (2004), 597-630.
- Smith, Alison, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).
- Smith, Matthew, 'Thomas Tooke on the Corn Laws', *History of Political Economy*, 41.2 (2009), 343-382 (p. 343.)
- Standage, Tom, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers* (London: Phoenix, 1999).
- Stedman Jones, Gareth, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working-Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- Steinbach, Susie L., ed., *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012).

Stern, Rebecca F., "'Adulterations Detected': Food and Fraud in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 57 (2003), 477-511.

Stracey, Frances, *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).

Sussman, Herbert, *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation, and the Rise of the Machine* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Publishers, 2009).

Sutherland, Lucie, 'Class, Consensus and Repertoire at the Nottingham and Midland Counties Working Classes Industrial Exhibition', *Nineteenth Century Theatre & Film*, 37 (2010), 56-67.

Taylor, Miles, 'Rethinking the Chartists: Searching for Synthesis in the Historiography of Chartism' *The Historical Journal*, 39.2 (1996), 479-495.

Trentmann, Frank, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

Turner, E. S., *The Shocking History of Advertising* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965).

VanArsdel, Rosemary, T., 'Introduction', *Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society*, ed. by J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel (Scolar Press: Aldershot, 1994), pp. 3-8.

Walker, R. B., 'Media and Money: The London Dock Strike of 1889 and the Australian Maritime Strike of 1890', *Labour History*, 41 (1981), 41-56.

Waller, Phillip, 'Sims, George Robert', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37964>> (date accessed: 27 Dec 2017).

Wiggerhaus, Rolf, *The Frankfurt School*, trans. by Michael Robertson (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1994).

Williams, Raymond, 'Advertising: The Magic System', *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 170-195.

Young, Paul, 'Industrializing Crusoe: Adventure, Modernity and Anglo-American Expansionism', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 18, (2013), 36-53.

Young, Paul, *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

Primary Sources

Books

Author unknown, *A Guide to the Great Exhibition* (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851).

Author unknown, *The Crystal Palace, and its Contents: being an Illustrated Cyclopaedia of the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations, 1851* (London: W. M. Clark, 1851).

Author unknown, *The Crystal Palace: An Essay, Descriptive and Critical*, 2nd edn. (London: Walton and Mabely, 1854).

Authors unknown, *The Men Who Advertise: An Account of Successful Advertisers* (New York: Nelson Chesman, 1870).

Carlyle, Thomas, 'Signs of the Times', *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, ed. by Alan Shelston (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 59-86.

Dawson, James Burn, *The Language of the Walls: and a Voice from the Shop Windows. Or, The Mirror of Commercial Roguery* (Manchester: Abel Heywood, 1855).

Dickens, Charles, 'Barbox Brothers', in *Christmas Stories from "Household Words" and "All the Year Round"*, ed. by Charles Dickens (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1898).

Dickens, Charles, *Dombey and Son*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Dickens, Charles, *Hard Times* (London: Penguin, 1994).

Greeley, Horace, *Glances at Europe In a Series of Letters from Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, &c. During the Summer of 1851* (New York: Dewitt and Davenport Publishers, 1851).

Hardy, Thomas, *The Fiddler of the Reels* (Adelaide: ebooks@Adelaide, 2014), n.p., opening paragraph. Ebook.

Jerome, Jerome K, *Three Men on the Brummel*, 1900, Project Gutenberg Edition.

Knight, Charles, *The Results of Machinery: Namely, Cheap Production and Increased Employment Exhibited: Being an Address to the Working-men of the United Kingdom, Volume 1* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1831).

Manby Smith, Charles, *This Little World of London; or, Pictures in Little of London Life* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, and Co., 1857).

Manning, John, and MacOwen, Arthur H., *The Modern Advertisement: Its Resources and Curiosities* (Philadelphia: John Manning and Co., 1889).

Newcombe, Samuel Prout, *Little Henry's Holiday at the Great Exhibition* (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1851).

Richardson, John, Rev., *The Real Exhibitors Exhibited; an Inquiry into the Condition of Those Industrial Classes Who Have Really Represented England at the Great Exhibition* (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1851).

Sampson, Henry, *The History of Advertising from the Earliest Times* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1875).

Stead Jr., William., *The Art of Advertising* (London: T. B. Browne, 1899).

The Advertiser's ABC of Official Scales and Advertisement Press Directory 1892 (T.B. Browne: London, 1892), p. xxii.

Webb, Sydney, 'Introduction', in *Advertising: A Study of Modern Business Power*, ed. by G. W. Goodall (London: Constable & Co., 1914), pp. ix-xvii.

Newspaper, periodical, advertising, and other primary sources (listed in order of first appearance in the text)

'A Pilgrimage to the Great Exhibition from Abroad', *Household Words*, 28 June 1851, pp. 321-324, (p. 321).

'A Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, n.p.

'The Great Exhibition', *The Illustrated Exhibitor*, 7 June 1851, p. 9.

'The Great Exhibition', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 2 March 1851, p. 3.

'The Great Exhibition', *The Athenaeum*, 3 May 1851, 477-479, (p. 478).

'The Great Industrial Exhibition', *The Athenaeum*, 10 May 1851, 500-501, (p. 500).

'The Great Exhibition', *Examiner*, 10 May 1851, 297-299, (p. 297).

'A Day at the Crystal Palace', *The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation*, 2 October 1856, 632-636 (p. 632).

'Maps and Globes in the Palace of Glass', *The Athenaeum*, 28 June 1851, p. 686.

'The Great Exhibition' *Illustrated London News*, 29 March 1851, p. 257.

'A Journey Round the World in the Crystal Palace', *Sharpe's London Journal*, July 1851, pp. 315-320.

'The Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, Great Exhibition Supplement, p. 343.

'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 28 April 1851, p. 5.

'Opening of the Exhibition on Thursday, May 1, 1851', *Theatrical Journal*, May 1851, 147-148 (p. 148).

'A Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851: n.p.

'The Eight Wonder of the World', *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 9 May 1851, n.p.

'The Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, 343-344, (p. 344).

The Illustrated Exhibitor, 14 June 1851, pp. 41-42.

'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 15 May 1851, p. 5.

Author unknown, 'Report of the Committee on Machinery', (London: Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, 1850), n.p., available at *The Royal Commission of 1851 Archive*, index RC/H/1/2/70.

H. T. de la Belche and Lyon Playfair, 'Report of Raw Materials Subcommittee', (London: Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, 1850), n.p., available at *The Royal Commission of 1851 Archive*, index RC/H/1/2/44.

'A Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851: n.p.

The Illustrated Exhibitor, 7 June 1851, p. 34.

'The Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 16 November 1850, p. 2.

Prince Albert Speech Mansion House dinner, quoted in 'The Great Exhibition and Its Results', *Illustrated London News*, 11 October 1851, Great Exhibition Supplement, n.p.

St. Clair, William, *The Great Exhibition of 1851, a Poem*, (London: Partridge and Oakley, 1850), p. 2.

'The Great Industrial Exhibition', *The Athenaeum*, 3 May 1851, 477-479 (p. 478).

'The Great Exhibition', *Bristol Mercury*, 3 May 1851, n.p.

'Opening of the Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, p. 3.

'Easter and the Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 19 April 1851, p. 311.

'The Great Exhibition', *Examiner*, 25 July 1851, pp. 474-5, p. 474.

'The Great Exhibition', *Examiner*, 26 July 1851, 474-5, p. 474.

'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Manchester Times*, 4 January 1851, n.p.

'The First Shilling Day at the Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 31 May 1851: n.p.

[Anon.], [Report on] Great Meeting at the Literary and Scientific Institution, John Street, Fitzroy Square, *Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 4 May 1851, p. 1 – available in Geoffrey Cantor, 'Responses by Radicals', *The Great Exhibition: A Documentary History, Volume 2*, (Pickering & Chatto: London, 2013), pp. 65-70), p. 65.

'The Great Exhibition', *Reynold's Weekly News*, 20 October 1850, n.p.

Prince, John Critchley, 'A Voice from the Factory', *Household Words*, 3.54 (1851), 35-36.

'London, Thursday, May 22, 1851', *The Morning Post*, 22 May 1851, p. 4.

'A Day at the Crystal Palace', *The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation*, 2 October 1856, pp. 632-636, p. 632.

John Leech, 'The Pound and the Shilling', *Punch*, 14 June 1851, p. 247.

- 'The First Shilling Day at the Exhibition', from the *Morning Chronicle*, reprinted in the *Illustrated London News*, 31 May 1851, p. 501.
- 'Extract from Charlotte Brontë's letter to her Father', in Shorter, Clement, *The Brontës and their Circle*, (London: Dent, 1914).
- 'Labour and "The Crystal Palace"', *The Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 14 June 1851, n.p.
- X. Y., 'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 1 September 1851, p. 5.
- 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 22 December 1850, p. 3.
- 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 26 January 1851, p. 3.
- 'The Last Promenade at the Crystal Palace', *Illustrated London News*, 1 May 1852, p. 350.
- 'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Illustrated London News*, 2 March 1850, n.p.
- 'Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations', *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 16 March 1850, n.p.
- 'The Great Industrial Exhibition', *The Athenaeum*, 1851, pp. 477-9, p. 477.
- 'The Illustrated Guide to the Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, p. 364.
- 'Easter and the Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 19 April 1851, n.p.
- 'The Great Exhibition', *Morning Post*, 14 April 1851, p. 6.
- 'Remond's Machine for Making Envelopes by Steam Power', *Illustrated London News*, 5 July 1851, n.p.
- 'Birmingham and The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 20 June 1851, p. 8.
- Gordon, Lewis Dunbar Brodie, 'The Machinery of the Exhibition', *Art Journal*, 1851, pp. 1-8, p. 1.
- 'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 17 May 1851, p. 8
- 'The Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 6 September 1851, n.p.
- 'The Great Exhibition', *Examiner*, 26 April 1851, n.p.
- 'The Great Exhibition', *Illustrated London News*, 6 September 1851, n.p.
- 'A Guide to the Great Exhibition of Industry', *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851, n.p.
- 'Walks through the Great Exhibition', *Leicester Chronicle: or, Commercial and Agricultural Advertiser*, 3 May 1851, n.p.
- 'The Great Exhibition', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 May 1851, n.p.

'The Great Exhibition Building – constructive details', wood engraving, *Illustrated London News*, 30 November 1850, p. 428.

'The Building in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851 – General View of the Works from the West', wood engraving, *Illustrated London News*, 16 November 1850, n.p.

'The Great Exhibition', *The Times*, 28 April 1851, p. 5.

'The Machinery Department of the Crystal Palace – Messrs. Hibbert and Platt, and Co.'s Cotton Machines', wood engraving, *Illustrated London News*, 23 August 1851, n.p.

Holyoake, George Jacob, 'Progress of the People: The Workman and the Exhibition', *The Leader: A Political and Literary Review*, 21 June 1851, 590-1 (p. 590).

'The Great Exhibition of 1851', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 27 October 1850, p. 11.

'Labour and the "Crystal Palace"', *Northern Star and National Trades' Journal*, 14 June 1851, n.p.

[end Part I]

'Leaders in the Advertising World', *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 24 July 1899, p. 4.

'H. Hewitt's Ball-Pointed Pens Move the World' *History of Advertising Trust Collection*, Cat no. 21/547/6/7 Ormiston and Glass.

'Bovril Supports the World', *History of Advertising Trust Collection*, Cat no: HAT 21/547/1/98 Bovril.

'Henry Heath' (1887), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Hats 1 (5).

'Brooke & Prudencio Limited. High class mineral waters syrups & cordials', (c.1880 – 1900), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soft Drinks 1 (6a).

'Plantol Soap', (c. 1880s) *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 9 (9).

'Gordon & Dilworth's Mushroom Catsup' (ca.1905), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Food 8 (5).

'Cadbury's Cacao' (c1885), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery 1 (14b).

'Ayers Sarsaparilla: The Discovery of America' (1880-1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Patent Medicines 1 (28b).

'Gordon & Dilworth's Tomato Catsup' (c. 1900s), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Food 8 (4).

'Camel Brand Figs', *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Food 1 (48).

'Port Sunlight and its People', *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 13 (12).

'The Dock Labourers' Strike', *Illustrated London News*, 7th September 1889, p. 295.

'Dock Strike', *The Standard*, 2 September 1889, p. 5.

'The Dock Labourers' Strike', *Illustrated London News*, 7 September 1889, p. 293.

'The Inevitable Surrender', *Funny Folks*, 7 September 1889, p. 282.

'Struck Comical', *Ibid.*, pp. 284-285

'St. Jacob's Oil' (advertisement), *Ibid.*

MacDonagh, M., 'The Craft of Newspaper Advertising', *The Monthly Review*, 20 (1905), 102-117.

'Hudson's Extract of Soap' (c1879), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 4 (29a).

'Lux' (1904), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 5 (32).

'Whither oh Whither Fair Maiden So High?' (1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 6 (41a).

'Sunlight and Lifebuoy Soap' (c. 1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 10 (6).

'Pears' Soap', *Illustrated London News*, 8 February 1890, p. 191.

'Borax Dry Soap' (date unknown), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelfmark: Soap 4 (1a).

'Lifebuoy royal disinfectant soap' (c1901), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 4 (61a).

'Golden Progress in the East' (c. 1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 9 (66e).

Burnand, F. C., 'Mr. "Trade" Marks, R. A., has recently executed a pictorial ...', *Punch*, 19 June 1886, p. 291.

'Cleanliness is next to Godliness' (date unknown), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 8 (16*c).

'What D'ye Lack..' (1889), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, Shelf mark: Soap 6 (69)

'Curious Advertisement of 100 years Ago!!' (1889), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 6 (67).

'The Birth of Civilization. A Message from the Sea', (1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 8 (10).

Sims, George R., 'Tales of To-day', *Blackburn Standard and Weekly Express*, 17 November 1888, p. 2.

'Good Advertisement', *Punch*, 26 April 1884, p. 197.

'Pears Soap', *Illustrated London News*, 8 July 1893, p. 48.

'Scrapbook', *University of Leeds Brotherton Collection*, Catalogue Number: BCMS NCC / 95.

'Scrap Album with Views of India', *British Media Museum*, Catalogue Number: C14/S1/VES.

See 'Victorian Travel Diaries', *University of Leeds Brotherton Collection*, Catalogue Number: MS 1933 (Box 1 of 2).

'A New Society Craze', *The Courier and Argus*, 3 March 1900, p. 7.

'Scrapbook', *University of Leeds Brotherton Collection*, Catalogue Number: MS 1522.

'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', *Morley Central Library*, index: Q LP B SCA.

'The Ricklantis Mixup', *Rick and Morty*, S3, E7

'Picture of Ieshia Evans and Riot Police at Baton Rouge', from Evans, Ieshia 'I wasn't afraid. I took a stand in Baton Rouge because enough is enough', *Guardian* (online), 22 July 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/22/i-wasnt-afraid-i-took-a-stand-in-baton-rouge-because-enough-is-enough>> [date accessed 14 April 2018].

'Pepsi Kendall Jenner Advert: The Best Memes and Gifs from around the Web', *TalkRadio* (online) <<http://talkradio.co.uk/news/pepsi-kendall-jenner-advert-best-memes-and-gifs-around-web-17040512280>> [date accessed 16 September 2017].

Appendix

Fig. 1:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

John Leech, 'The Pound and the Shilling', *Punch*, 14 June 1851, p. 247 (p. 64)

Fig. 2:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Machinery Court', Crystal Palace and its Contents, p. 28.

Fig. 3:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Great Exhibition Building – constructive details', wood engraving, *Illustrated London News*, 30 November 1850, p. 428.

Fig. 4

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Building in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851 – General View of the Works from the West', wood engraving, *Illustrated London News*, 16 November 1850, n.p.

Fig. 5

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Machinery Court', in Author unknown, *The Crystal Palace, and its Contents: Being an Illustrated Cyclopaedia of the Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations, 1851* (London: W. M. Clark, 1851), p. 29.

Fig. 6:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Machinery Department of the Crystal Palace – Messrs. Hibbert and Platt, and Co.'s Cotton Machines', wood engraving, *Illustrated London News*, 23 August 1851, n.p. (p.81)

Fig. 7:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Henry Heath' (1887), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Hats 1 (5).

Fig. 8:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Brooke & Prudencio Limited. High class mineral waters syrups & cordials', (c.1880 – 1900),
John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soft Drinks 1 (6a).

Fig. 9:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Plantol Soap', (c. 1880s) *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 9 (9).

Fig. 10

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Gordon & Dilworth's Mushroom Catsup' (ca.1905), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Food 8 (5).

Fig. 11:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Cadbury's Cacao' (c1885), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery 1 (14b).

Fig. 12:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Ayer's Sarsaparilla 'Ayers Sarsaparilla: The Discovery of America' (1880-1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Patent Medicines 1 (28b).

Fig. 13

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Gordon & Dilworth's Tomato Catsup' (c. 1900s), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Food 8 (4).

Fig. 14

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Camel Brand Figs', *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Food 1 (48).

Fig. 13

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Port Sunlight and its People', *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 13 (12).

Fig. 16

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Dock Labourers' Strike', *Illustrated London News*, 7 September 1889, p. 293.

Fig. 17

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Dock Labourers' Strike', *Illustrated London News*, 7 September 1889, p. 293.

Fig. 18

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Inevitable Surrender', *Funny Folks*, 7 September 1889, p. 281.

Fig. 19

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Struck Comical', *Funny Folks*, 7 September 1889.

Fig. 20

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Van Houte's Oil' and other articles, *Funny Folks*, 7 September 1889, p. 286.

Fig. 21

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Hudson's Extract of Soap' (c1879), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soap 4 (29a).

Fig. 22

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Lux' (1904), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soap 5 (32).

Fig. 23:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Whither oh Whither Fair Maiden So High?' (1889), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soap 6 (41a).

Fig. 24

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Sunlight and Lifebuoy Soap' (c. 1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 10 (6).

Fig. 25

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Pears' Soap', *Illustrated London News*, 8 February 1890, p. 191.

Fig. 26

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Borax Dry Soap' (date unknown), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelfmark: Soap 4 (1a).

Fig. 27

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Lifebuoy royal disinfectant soap' (c1901), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soap 4 (61a).

Fig. 28

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Golden Progress in the East' (c. 1890), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soap 9 (66e).

Fig. 29:

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Cleanliness is Next to Godliness' (1889), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soap 8 (16*c).

Fig. 30

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

“What D’ye Lack..’ (1889), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, Shelf mark: Soap 6 (69)

Fig. 31

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Curious Advertisement of 100 years Ago!!' (1889), John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, shelf mark: Soap 6 (67).

Fig. 32

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Birth of Civilization. A Message from the Sea', (1890), *John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera*, shelf mark: Soap 8 (10).

Fig. 33

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Good Advertisement', *Punch*, 26 April 1884, p. 197.

Fig. 34

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Pears Soap', *Illustrated London News*, 8 July 1893, p. 48.

Fig. 35

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Scrapbook', *University of Leeds Brotherton Collection*, Catalogue Number: MS 1522.

Fig. 36

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Meeting of Liberal Women' (newspaper article clipping, from the *Yorkshire Post*, 25 March 1880), 'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', *Morley Central Library*, index: Q LP B SCA, less than a quarter of the way into the scrapbook.

Fig. 37

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', *Morley Central Library*, index: Q LP B SCA, towards the end of the album.

Fig. 38

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'The Alice Cliff Scatcherd Scrapbook', *Morley Central Library*, index: Q LP B SCA, towards the end of the album.

Fig. 39

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Ieshia Evans, 'I wasn't afraid. I took a stand in Baton Rouge because enough is enough', Guardian (online), 22 July 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/22/i-wasnt-afraid-i-took-a-stand-in-baton-rouge-because-enough-is-enough>> [date accessed 14 April 2018].

Fig. 40

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Pepsi Kendall Jenner Advert: The Best Memes and Gifs from around the Web', *TalkRadio* (online) <<http://talkradio.co.uk/news/pepsi-kendall-jenner-advert-best-memes-and-gifs-around-web-17040512280>> [date accessed 16 September 2017].

Fig. 41

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

'Pepsi Kendall Jenner Advert: The Best Memes and Gifs from around the Web', *TalkRadio* (online) <<http://talkradio.co.uk/news/pepsi-kendall-jenner-advert-best-memes-and-gifs-around-web-17040512280>> [date accessed 16 September 2017].