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Ken Neil, Gray's School of Art

INSTITUTIONALISED FINE ART RESEARCH AS STIGMATISED KNOWLEDGE

ABSTRACT

Looking back to the The Arts and Humanities Research Board's (AHRB) September 2003 Response to Consultation entitled The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and Research in the Creative and Performing Arts *and looking forward to the 2008 RAE audit itself, this essay is concerned with some aspects of the contentious discourse which surrounds research by creative artwork, specifically, in the following sections: i) the fundaments of the antagonism between those who believe fine art practice to be research in itself and those audit managers who do not; ii) the potentially perilous status for fine art research within the institution as a result of that antagonism; and iii) the objectifying pressure of imputed institutional need prescribed by audit managers which sustains the antagonism.*

In treating the institutional discourse which surrounds research by creative visual artwork as essentially bound up with the construction and management of knowledge, select theorists and commentators are brought to bear. Section i) references Euan McArthur's recent critical response to the AHRB's Consultation paper, and also the work of Michael Crozier on bureaucracies; section ii) imports terminology used by American academic Michael Barkun to describe the status of knowledge held by

marginal groupings, and, by way of illustration of Barkun's ideas, Stephen Farthing's estimation of how art is made; and section iii) applies American philosopher Barry Allen's concept of a disabling counterproductivity brought about by the excessive knowledge and information generated by a disciplinary power which manages imputed need. Because of the running inquiry into the construction and management of knowledge, all three sections are informed by Michel Foucault's thinking on power/knowledge dynamics. A brief Conclusion takes stock of the Foucauldian strategy of analysis and reflects on the essay itself as an example of instrumental research authorised by the machinations of an auditing bureau.

I.   PRELIMINARY ANTAGONISMS

The AHRB September 2003 *Response to Consultation* usefully heightened the debate in UK schools of art over the validity of research by creative artwork. For most Fine Art academics the paper will have by now formally justified the lingering fear that creative visual artwork cannot in itself be automatically seen as valid research within the terms of judgement exercised by both the AHRB and the RAE. The *Response to Consultation* has made this standpoint very clear: 'We do not believe that a creative, performance, or practice-led output should be allowed to stand on its own as a record of research activity'.[1]

In which case, of course, supplementary non- creative, performance or practice-led materials have to accompany the artwork if it

is to have any credibility within the remit of the auditing and funding bodies in question. It is, primarily, this demand for auxiliary material that so rankles defenders of research by creative visual artwork; a demand which, again, is made in no uncertain terms in the AHRB's document: 'We believe that any research output submitted to the RAE should have associated with it a record or "route map" of the research process'.[2]

Euan McArthur in his antagonistic response to the AHRB's paper (*JVAP* 3:1 2004) takes issue with this requirement, declaring that creative works can indeed be seen to be credible outputs of research in their own right for 'that is precisely what they are if it is true (and the [AHRB] paper says it is) that new knowledge (however defined) can be embedded or incorporated in creative works'.[3] Underlying the position that upholds the fundamental primacy of the artwork in an assessment of possible research worth (what I call hereafter the 'in-itself' position) is the rather *a priori* belief (conspicuous as a sub-text in McArthur's rejoinder) that the object of art does indeed contain a revelatory form of knowledge, independent of any auxiliary critical text or accompanying explication. In this view, clearly, the work of art is a non-instrumental contribution to new knowledge which by definition must resist the type of secondary, instrumental rationalisation called for by the AHRB and RAE.

The consultation paper affirms that evidence of a credible research *process*, in the estimation of the AHRB, might very well be found in creative works, embedded or incorporated, but there is no explicit corollary statement, however paradoxical it may seem, as to the possibility of such evidence being regarded as new knowledge or *bona fide* research (if they are the same thing) without the support of attendant explicatory

items. In any case, realistically, this issue of the research status of that which is or is not embedded or incorporated in the work is, for better or for worse, a moot point, as the AHRB publication tentatively but deliberately implies.

Whilst McArthur may be right in his reading of the document (and assuming that the AHRB is right in making the statement [if indeed they did] that new knowledge could potentially be embedded and incorporated in the work itself), the current (and future) fact of the matter is that the burden of proof is still incumbent on the researcher by creative artwork irrespective of what new knowledge is believed or even known (by either the artist or the auditor) to be self-evidently present in the creative work. In other words, even if a vigorous defence of the primacy of the art object in the context of audit convinces the AHRB and RAE of the intrinsic research content of the work of art, these executive bodies will *still* ask for parallel critical accounts of that content.

The intense frustration felt by defenders of visual artwork as research in itself, those who see parallel summative pro-forma commentaries as time-consuming and redundant, demonstrates that the fundamental antagonism between non-instrumental and instrumental in this context is but one specific institutional manifestation of a profound and deep-seated antipathy between the Creative and the Bureaucratic, between notional free-will and the supposed shackles of centralised administration; a perennial struggle summarised by French academic Michael Crozier in his prescient text *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (Chicago 1964):

On the one hand, most authors consider the bureaucratic organization to be the embodiment of rationality in the modern world, and, as such, to be intrinsically superior to all other possible forms of organization. On the other hand, many authors – often the same ones – consider it a sort of Leviathan, preparing the enslavement of the human race. Optimism and pessimism are mixed in various ways. Whatever their proportions, there is always a double belief in the superiority of bureaucratic rationality – in the domain of efficiency, and in its threatening implications in the domain of human values.[4]

At the heart of the in-itself position is a charged emotional resistance to the perceived meta-problem of the bureaucratisation of life no less, felt most acutely when creativity, of all things, appears under threat from the inexorable momentum of managerialism. That said, it is important to note that the in-itself researcher does not propound indiscriminate antagonism towards the AHRB/RAE principle of peer review, nor does he suggest that audit should be dispensed with, but he does retain strong reservation about the relevance to his subject discipline of a quintessentially managerial system of audit which cannot configure itself to attempt a summative assessment of the value of practice in-itself..[5]

But the intrinsic obstinacy and pessimism which rightly or wrongly inform this resistance to managerial bureaucracy are dangerously close to being read as partly constituting, by those who share the opinion of the AHRB on this matter, a pre-modern, nostalgic attitude of non-reason, one which can be easily discounted by any rational establishment. In addition, fatally, the characteristics inherent in this inflexible attitude are understood by the governing bureau to be ever-present in the very works of art which are put forward to audit as examples of research in-itself; as if to say that fine art is customarily produced by a suspension of rationality as a manifest liberation of the human spirit. This struggle inevitably diverges towards its extreme components, vacating any common ground which

might have supported dialectical progression. The putative rational efficiency of the auditing bureaucrat is irresistibly defined in contradistinction to the putative pre-modern non-reason of the in-itself creative practitioner, and, in an identically simplistic way, *vice-versa.*[6]

In practice this contradistinction precipitates what Crozier convincingly described as a 'displacement of goals':

> The discipline necessary for obtaining the standardized behaviour required in a bureaucratic organisation will bring about a displacement of goals. Bureaucrats will show "ritualist" attitudes that will make them unable to adjust adequately to the problems they must solve. This will entail the development of a strong *esprit de corps* at a group level and create a gap between the public and the bureaucracy.[7]

The ritualistic character of a national audit must demonstrate a will to standardise, and thus, notwithstanding compelling argumentation from the in-itself camp, the problem of research by creative artwork is formally solved, not by an ongoing substantive engagement with the intellectual ins-and-outs of the philosophical viability of creative artwork as research in-itself, but by an ongoing clarification of the bureau's standards - through policy statements, consultations and responses to consultations, each layer putting blunt pressure on those 'pre-rational' groups who resist the enslavement of their transcendent agenda.[8]

This enduring model of struggle can be illuminated by Foucault's thinking on the way in which authority of all kinds is dependent on a conscious or unconscious complicity on the part of the subject of the authority's attention. Considered against that model, the in-itself position adopts and is given the role of focus of the bureaucratic authority's attention within the administration of the standardising RAE. But, with

guidance from Foucault, rather than effect a productive dialectical antagonism, the in-itself position can be seen to paradoxically inform, authorise and sustain the domineering criteria of the audit.

Crucial to this possibility is Foucault's conception of power as fluid and not statically situated in the hands of any one authoritative agent or any one concomitant antagonist; 'power is employed through a net-like organization' it is 'something that circulates'.[9] In this way, rather than the enterprise of the RAE audit being embattled by reactionary polemic, it is empowered: for the antagonistic position, using Foucault's model, cannot be external to the defining net-like arrangement of for-and-against power dynamics which it helps to define. In playing to an argument of counter-veracity, the in-itself position stays well within the power configurations of the mutual antagonism: it does not convey anterior insights and ultimately plays a foundational role in sustaining its bureaucratic other.

This fact has much to do with the requirement of the antagonistic polemicist to always foreground the assumed mistakes of his discursive enemy. In describing polemic action in order to explain his dislike for the strategy, Foucault stated in interview:

> The polemicist proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance and will never agree to question. The person he confronts is not a partner in the search for truth, but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful and whose very existence constitutes a threat. His final objective will be, not to come as close as possible to a difficult truth, but to bring about the triumph of the just cause he has been manifestly upholding from the beginning.[10]

In this discussion, the antagonistic position will hold little hope for the auditing interlocutor becoming a partner in a search for the truth of the intrinsic value and wider worth of research by creative artwork; the auditor

is instead always an agent of error who practises harmful assessments of the cause represented by his inextricably linked argumentative opposite.

Joseph Rouse develops Foucault's idea of the matrix-like generation and perpetuation of predictable power/knowledge positions, and emphasises the point that :

> Power is not possessed by a dominant agent, nor located in that agent's relations to those dominated, but is instead distributed through complex social networks. The actions of the peripheral agents in these networks are often what establish or enforce the connections between what a dominant agent does and the fulfillment or frustration of a subordinate agent's desires.[11]

With this elaboration, Rouse might very well have described the central authority of the standardising audit bureau, with its network of peripheral agents who oversee the application of criteria locally, contributing their part to the cyclical antagonistic equation.[12] But, once again, the in-itself practitioners can themselves be seen to be peripheral agents, playing their own role in a system of, in their view, overall frustration, for, as Rouse goes on, 'even in situations in which we might characteristically describe one person as having or exercising power over another, that power depends upon other persons or groups acting in concert with what the first person does.'[13] As we will see, to act in a predictably oppositional manner to the networked authority of audit brings about a marginal position for the dissenters whilst maintaining the familiar hierarchy which gave rise to the antagonism. This connectedness of the factions of antagonism (central elements, local ones *and* the antagonees) can, then, restrict critique generated by any one faction to the limits of the net which encloses the respective power/knowledge dynamic.

As a crucial part of his history of sexuality, Foucault proposed his own critique as one which does in fact obtain an external critical outlook; one which can perceive the shifting orientations of the surrounding discourse which contains and controls the contested truths. This type of *supra*-critique, intimated by Rouse's summary, can help to better understand the nature and consequence of the antagonism between the in-itself practitioner and the standardising auditor without necessarily meeting head-on the self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating problematics of the value judgement dilemma over the credibility of research by creative artwork.

Clarifying this particular strategy of criticism in *The History of Sexuality Volume I,* Foucault wrote:

> The object, in short, is to define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our part of the world. The central issue, then (at least in the first instance), is not to determine whether one says yes or no to sex, whether one formulates prohibitions or permissions, whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects, or whether one refines the words one uses to designate it; but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue, briefly, is the overall "discursive fact," the way in which sex "is put into discourse."[14]

The contestatory nature of the debate which accompanies standardising statements such as the AHRB's Response to Consultation is usefully seen in this way, for it allows the discursive fact of the antagonism to become a discreet focus. As exemplification of this discreteness, thus far it will have been noted that I offer no unequivocal value judgement apropos the validity of embedded content as research in itself, nor do I seek to in what follows. Rather, the Foucauldian critical perspective is explored for its

particular yield. It might be argued, however, that this Foucauldian discreteness is, in the last analysis, an evasive strategy, and one which has the look of a quintessentially bureaucratic manoeuvre – for it resists becoming entangled in the internal principles of the specific debate which sits within the discourse to be reflected upon.

Richard Rorty has been most critical of this equivocal aspect of Foucault's strategy of critique and has pinpointed, as well as its widespread influence, the double-bind which it tends towards:

> When asked for a utopian sketch of our country's future, the new leftists reply along the lines of one of Foucault's most fatuous remarks. When asked why he never sketched a utopia, Foucault said, 'I think that to imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system.[15]

Although Rorty is gracious enough to go on to say that 'Foucault [was] a lot better than these unfortunate remarks would suggest',[16] he identifies the difficulty inherent in Foucault's being critical of an antagonistic power dynamic from the outside, for to contribute criticism in the manner of McArthur, under the net as it were, extends the present system, so the Foucauldian ought simply to desist. Nonetheless, based on accumulated anterior insights gathered with guidance from Foucault, and cautioned by Rorty and McArthur, something unequivocal might be ventured about the machinations and effects of audit – without, perhaps, championing existing antagonistic standpoints, or engaging explicitly with the philosophical difficulties which relate to the in-itself argumentation and that of the auditors.

Suffice it to say for now, the fundamentally divisive nature of the disagreement outlined above contextualises what follows, and compels the

critique temporarily outwards, for concentration on the enmity of truths alone does, as Foucault's practice implies, shield many important points about the ways in which the power/knowledge movements of the discourse in question shape the nature of the disputing factions and describe, in advance, the consequences for both.

In the next section, with reference to the work of American political scientist Michael Barkun, I elaborate on a perilously antagonistic scenario which results from the persistent impasse between the in-itself and instrumental positions whereby participants in, and apologists for, research by creative visual artwork will inevitably and unwittingly bestow upon themselves (with the tacit support of some research administrators no doubt) the strategically disadvantageous role of guardians of *stigmatised knowledge*.

II.   MARGINALISATION AND STIGMATISATION

The type of antagonism between the in-itself camp and the auditors' bureau is, as seen from a Foucauldian stance, not a simple or stable stand-off; it is a volatile condition of power dynamics. The supra-critique which examines these dynamics illuminates the ways in which the position spoken to by Euan McArthur is inevitably steered by the power/knowledge machinations which arise from antagonistic arguments of truth and counter-truth: steered, in this case, to a site occupied by *stigmatised knowledge* claims.

Michael Barkun, writing about various paranoia and conspiracy theories in contemporary USA, explains his term stigmatised knowledge to mean, in short, 'claims to truth that the claimants regard as verifiable despite the marginalization of those claims by the institutions that conventionally distinguish between knowledge and error'.[17] In *A Culture of Conspiracy* (2003), he sets out five strands of stigmatised knowledge: *forgotten*, *ignored*, *rejected*, *suppressed* and *superseded*. Anterior insights into the struggle between the creative, in-itself researcher and the bureaucratic auditor can be gained from the particular applicability of 'ignored', 'rejected', 'suppressed' and 'superseded'.[18] Important to Barkun's analysis is the dual nature of these five strands. They are types of knowledge, yes, but also states of mind for those who uphold those types of knowledge.

Barkun offers the phrase stigmatised knowledge as an augmentation of two overlapping terms in his field. The first, 'rejected knowledge', was coined in the 1970s by historian of European occultism James Webb to position occultism against the findings of standard authoritative institutions.[19] Barkun makes note that Webb's term (in line with Foucault's analytical strategy) 'refers less to the possible falsity of knowledge claims (though they may indeed be false) than to the relationship between certain claims and the so-called establishment'.[20] Upholders of knowledge (be it true or false) which has been rejected by the powers that be, quickly form themselves, Webb concluded, into sub-cultures and underground movements (with a characteristic *esprit de corps* no doubt) so that support for the rejected beliefs might be collectively engendered. The second term, 'cultic milieu' was introduced also in the

1970s by British sociologist Colin Campbell to describe in a more general way the domain which accommodates and supports the rejected knowledge of not just the occult, but all so-called deviant belief systems and practices.[21]

Setting to one side as planned the veracity of any specific claims to knowledge, Barkun's five point developed analysis of Webb's and Campbell's foundational ideas bears scrutiny here, for, like certain other marginal, alternative or reactionary belief systems, the ontological assertion that the creative artwork itself is research in itself customarily carries with it the concomitant series of antagonistic states of mind: that this *surely true* claim for the profound work of art is (i) customarily 'ignored' (not taken as a given by, in this case, governmental auditors, therefore, to quote Barkun, 'upheld only in marginal groups') (ii) often 'rejected' (regarded as 'utterly false from the outset' by instrumental researchers and auditors) and (iii) most sinisterly, 'suppressed' (known to be probably true by auditors but suppressed 'because the institutions fear the consequences of public knowledge, or have some selfish motive for hiding the truth'). Ultimately, if these three beliefs prove to be true, or at least if the series comes into effect, the knowledge and wisdom which underpins the ontological assertion of the in-itself position is likely to be (iv) 'superseded' (wisdom which was 'once authoritatively recognised as knowledge' will be lost, to the institution of art in this case, by way of the pressures of ignorance, rejection and suppression, to be ultimately 'regarded as false or less valid than other claims'). [22]

These instances of anxious belief are inextricably linked to the essentialist in-itself defence and are made manifest in bureaucratically

rationalised organisations sometimes in a paranoid fashion, no doubt, and sometimes with good reason. Whatever the case, the display of these anxieties and the exercising of the forces of power/knowledge which cause them, lead to a clear marginalisation of the defenders of the in-itself retaliatory discourse. And from a marginal position within the institution it is but a small step to outright stigmatisation for that method of knowing proposed and practised by the marginal group.

Progression from centre to margin to stigmatised status involves not just the designed oppression by auditors who choose between knowledge and error but also the dogged resistance of the defenders of that which is being marginalised – Foucault's idea of a symbiotically sustained power play, one extreme baiting and begetting the other. This vicious catalysing of designed oppression (authority-stigmatisation) and dogged antagonism (auto-stigmatisation) produces a spiralling negative effect on certain forms of knowledge and the sub-cultures which support these forms.

As Barkun explains, there exists a spiralling effect on the status of marginal knowledge towards stigmatisation because of the way in which the 'suppressed knowledge category tends to absorb the others'.[23] As soon as normative authority is seen by marginal groupings to be perniciously standardising knowledge and behaviour, claims of suppression arise and, in due course (this is where Barkun specialises) conspiracy is declared.

> Because believers [in marginal knowledge] assume that when their own ideas about knowledge conflict with some orthodoxy, the forces of orthodoxy will necessarily try to perpetuate error out of self-interest or some other evil motive. The consequence is to attribute all forms of knowledge stigmatization to the machinations of a conspiracy. Conspiracy theories therefore function both as part of suppressed knowledge and as a basis for stigmatisation.[24]

Barkun makes clear in this analysis that the propensity to believe in a conspiracy is fuelled by the recognition of the stigmatised status which attaches to the knowledge believed to be true by the conspiracy theorist. To believe in a conspiracy theory on top of a belief in stigmatised knowledge necessarily compounds the issue and reinforces the marginal position of the believer. The 'error' in this model is defined and pronounced by the authority of orthodoxy and attributed to the marginal group – for who could take stigmatised knowledge groups seriously if they appear to trade irrational stories of complex conspiracies by way of rationalising their stigmatised status? From the perspective of the marginal-to-stigmatised group, the error lies with the authority and its network of collaborators for erroneously suppressing the truth of the marginal position.

With regard to the RAE and the AHRB's *Response to Consultation*, it is not suggested here that error is strategically defined and attributed (or internally countenanced) by these organisations. That said, a similar in kind power/knowledge effect to that meted out to Barkun's marginalised group results from the auditing authority's avoidance of detailed engagement with the truth potential of the in-itself argumentation. Put another way, the rendering of that argumentation moot, as detailed in the previous section, constitutes perpetuation of the kind detailed by Barkun, if, that is, those who uphold the marginal in-itself position believe that the audit conspiratorially suppresses or deliberately subordinates the possibility of the truth of their marginalised knowledge for the sake of a

goal of self-interest – in this case, the disciplined ease of standardised audit. Barkun continues:

> At one level, conspiracy theories are an example of suppressed knowledge, because those who believe in conspiracy theories are convinced that only they know the true manner in which power is held and decisions made. The conspiracy is believed to have used its power to keep the rest of the populace in ignorance. At another level, conspiracy theories explain why all forms of stigmatized knowledge claims have been marginalized – allegedly the conspiracy has utilized its power to keep the truth from being known.[25]

Whilst nobody within the in-itself camp would readily accept the tag of conspiracy theorist, Barkun's application of what is a Foucauldian take on the mutually formative outcomes of opposing opinions firstly reinforces the described fundaments of the pivotal antagonism and, secondly, reveals something practical of the power dynamics which proceed from that antagonism.

In practice the tactics of power available to networked local agents of institutional audit include, as Barkun suggests, to ignore and to reject the knowledge claims of the in-itself grouping and, also, to propose other criteria of knowledge and evaluation which might supersede the equivalents held true by in-itself proponents. To operate in these ways, clearly, a net-like authority must have a vested interest in the unfettered efficiency of bureaucratic momentum, even at the expense of marginalising existing and potential research of the kind which cannot be easily reckoned. The momentum of bureaucratic rationalisation is inversely proportional to the certainty with which the in-itself belief/knowledge is held – and, according to Barkun's dynamic model, marginalisation is perverse proof of the veracity of the knowledge protected by marginalised and stigmatised groups.

The connections between Barkun's discursive context and the debates surrounding research by creative visual artwork can easily be stretched too far. After all, his chief concern is the relation between stigmatised knowledge claims and conspiracy theories which relate to, amongst other things, ufology, the Illuminati and the lost world of Atlantis. But what lingers from the comparison is this critical and instructive connection between the attitudes of the defensive fine art researcher and those of Barkun's subculture conspiracy theorist: both faithfully believe in the verifiability of their practice despite and *because of* spiralling marginalisation toward stigmatisation.

Take as illustration of Barkun's Foucauldian assessment of this spiralling cooperation of power, Stephen Farthing's opinion on art making. Whilst not uncomplicatedly representative of the opinions of the in-itself camp, Farthing's ideas do reveal an extreme version of the in-itself contention anathema to standardising auditors. His position also demonstrates aspects of Barkun's Foucauldian thinking, for Farthing describes a belief which, in the manner of auto-stigmatisation, comprises both a faithful and strident knowledge of its own methods and a defensive anticipation of its *other*, namely, the kind of normative criticism which would marginalise such a passionately committed creativity. Farthing pronounced:

> When I paint I simply decide one day to start work, rather as if I were setting out to create a meal. I then work with the resources I have immediately to hand, shaping each image while working directly onto the canvas. There is (some) research, but no formal design process; the end result should appear fresh and hand-made. This approach relies on putting the whole image down quickly and then, over a period of time (usually months rather than days or years), reorganising and refining its first form by adding a bit here and removing a bit there. If the piece is a success it turns into something that appears to me new and

unfamiliar. This is my experience, but I have no reason to assume that it is very different for other artists.[26]

Farthing has, then, subtly assimilated a knowledge of the institutional criticisms of 'pre-rational' fine art making in the drafting of his own *modus operandi*; of course visual art is based on a degree of research, he says, and even though that research is subordinate to the artist's (painter's) creative engagement with the material of his art, the success of the work can nonetheless be measured by gauging newness (new knowledge?) and unfamiliarity. So, whilst at the same time as upholding inspirationally driven non-instrumental approaches to creative artwork, as opposed to production by premeditated instrumental research and design, Farthing lays claim to a means by which an artwork could be rationally judged, and to further waylay any auditing bureaucrats' criticisms of isolated subjectivism, he aligns his practice, as Barkun predicted via Webb, to that of others he perceives to be potentially in his marginalised group, for how could all members be misguided?

Knowing full well that the AHRB and RAE and their agents have no truck with the stand-alone qualities of work produced by creative meandering, Farthing flirts with the power/knowledge frisson which stems from protecting that which is, institutionally at least, fast becoming stigmatised. In the manner of Barkun's conspiracy theorist, Farthing takes strange comfort from the fact that his view is regarded by today's instrumental art operators as anachronistic and unaccountably subjective - his claim to truth is marginalised by the institutions that conventionally distinguish between knowledge and error, and that marginalisation partly determines the delineation of his claim.[27] Of course, introducing caution

by way of Barkun's model, Farthing may very well be right in his identification of how good art should be made, but one thing is certain, despite his anticipation of his own reflective assessment of the completed artwork, his creative output does not lend itself well to rational audit.

Barkun's terminology is useful, then, in establishing an exterior perspective on the arrangements and consequences of Foucault's power/knowledge dynamics and Crozier's displacement of goals; especially the way in which auto-stigmatisation plays itself out in contradistinction to the viewpoint of the agent of authority, thus sustaining the mutual connectedness of the fundamental antagonism.

The next section is concerned with some specific strategies of ignorance, rejection, suppression and supersession which contribute in a serious way to the authority-stigmatisation of the in-itself faction, and how, under the thrall of authority-stigmatisation, the upholder of the in-itself position can find herself arranged and objectified by the administrative regime.

III.   OBJECTIFICATION THROUGH IMPUTED NEED

The above sections combine to show, firstly, the divisive nature of the antagonism between the in-itself position and the auditing bureau, and, secondly, how that divisiveness can lead within a bureaucratic system to certain symbiotic forms of auto- and authority-stigmatisation. Thus far, then, something of the discursive fact of the in-itself case has been revealed, and to continue with that tactic of critique this section asks: how

does the authority and its agencies see that certain knowledges are ignored, rejected, suppressed and superseded, and, once pressure from authorities has placed him/it (artist/topic) there, how is the subject of the in-itself camp confined to a stigmatised position?

It is the case that certain institutionalised antagonists are wont to be forever just that, whatever the argument at issue; siding with the perceived authority seems to them always untenable, perhaps because it is held, in this context, that the positivist historical proviso of fine art making is for it to be a practice antagonistic to established internal forms and external systems.[28] It is also the case, however, that the networked outposts of the authority's agents impute a powerfully coercive sense of need on those occupying stigmatised territory less resolutely antagonistic to the demands of authority. To do this the audit offices must exercise a pervasive form of bureaucratic control and, as an inevitable consequence of the way in which this is done, the central RAE industry corroborates Foucault's observation that 'the exercise of power creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information'.[29] These new bodies of data, which contain at their core the ongoing documentary clarification of the standardising criteria, are transmitted throughout our institutions of art in order to establish a need on the part of the individual researcher by creative artwork – a need to act irrationally, by the terms of Farthing's and McArthur's practice, in order to react rationally to their studio practice so that, in turn, administratively effective auxiliary materials might be appositely packaged for instrumental service: there ensues, ultimately, a shift of the expertise of the creative practice of art making to the uncreative practice of making art into institutional expertise.

The researcher's accumulation of new objects of knowledge and new information at the behest of administrative bureaucracy coupled with the bureau's accumulation of information and tabulated rationalisation as part of the responsive audit, shows us, as Foucault asserted, that 'knowledge of all sorts is thoroughly enmeshed in the clash of petty dominations, as well as in the larger battles which constitute our world'.[30] The petty (only in so far as it is but one instance of many) domination of a marginal group carried out by the generation of bureaucratic knowledge as part of a management of need might be seen, with reference to Barry Allen and his mentor Ivan Illich, as an endemic counterproductivity; a condition which restricts the generation of real knowledge[31] and which, in agreement with Foucault, reveals much about the constitution of our administered culture. This latter prospect is increasingly likely if the vantage point of exterior insight shifts further to regard the AHRB and RAE as not central bureaux, but merely peripheral agents of a much grander insidious instrumentalisation-of-everything in a general economy.

In preparing the way for his analysis of the ways in which managed need is crucial to the successful petty domination of a marginal group, Barry Allen explains his take on Foucault's combination of power/knowledge:

> The point of speaking of power/knowledge is not to say that knowledge *is* power, or that there is nothing more to knowledge than service to power, or anything of the sort. The point is to emphasize the reciprocity which obtains between those specific forms of knowledge which 'discipline' makes possible and the exercise of disciplinary power over conduct, an exercise of power which is extended and refined through the further growth of that knowledge.[32]

In discussing need in these terms Allen homes in on 'the professional, disciplinary power/knowledge of those who impute needs to others for whom they alone have the right to prescribe', logically going on to connect disciplinary power/knowledge and governmental politics:

> Secure in a discipline's self-certified rationality and epistemological warrant, accredited experts typically receive the presumption of others (bureaucrats, magistrates, police, primary teachers, and so on) with whom they share some interest in the political governance of conduct. Such knowledge can be and routinely is an instrument for political effects of government, especially through the strategy of imputed needs.[33]

Knowledge-as-instrument is recognisable in the operations of the AHRB and RAE, for national standardising is indeed approached through the management of need (that of agents' *and* antagonists') and not through an authoritative settling of the criteria proposed by McArthur and his like – nor for that matter through an essential exposition of the intellectual basis of any fundamental abstract criteria of audit: knowledge is formed instead into units of instrumental technical expertise and is necessarily displaced from fluid discursive practices of knowledge generation.

This difference is demonstrated by the fact that the AHRB's Response to Consultation is less aggressive towards the philosophical validity of research by creative visual artwork than McArthur's antagonism would suggest, for the paper is careful to set out what constitutes research with reference only to what the AHRB as an auditing organisation needs for audit – thus, by imputation, what the creative artwork practitioner needs as an adjunct to her studio production. This may seem like a tautological point, but the operative sleight of hand sees the list of essential argumentation against creative artwork as research in-itself

slipped from the discursive table, to be substituted with a similar-in-form list of the agent's technical needs. Stylistically the AHRB's document performs that ruse in this way: stating, promisingly, that '[t]he first requirement of any set of criteria for the assessment of research is that they should articulate clearly what constitutes research', the authors follow immediately with, instrumentally, '[s]ince 1999, the AHRB has required all applicants for research funding to specify clearly…'[34], and then go on to list the four requirements which are needed by the AHRB before research submitted to them can be considered as such.[35] The dislocation of the heralded but missing explanation of what actually constitutes research from the subsequently present pragmatic explanation of auditors' needs encapsulates the structure of the antagonism at work here and sets in train the practical management of the audit through the necessary dissemination of those tabulated needs. The bureau's goal, then, is to so efficiently disseminate knowledge of its needs that that accumulation of new functional information takes the place of primary criteria and becomes the imputed need of all individuals institutionally engaged in the final reckoning.

Imputed need is for Allen, 'needing stimulated by another who imputes a need or identifies and prescribes for a personal deficiency'.[36] With substantive analysis of criteria having being replaced by a checklist of auditors' needs - which serves from the moment of its announcement to suppress, in Barkun's extended sense of the term, any unaccountable knowledge garnered by those practitioners of research by creative artwork - it could be argued that there is a classic, 'Enlightened' bureaucratic turn from the vicissitudes of actuality to the rationality of practicality. Allen

engages this complex discourse with reference to the domination of individual needs by the authority of the mission of the 1st century church meted out by its evangelical peripheral agents.

> At a time when a filigree network of clientage linked the men who governed the far-flung cities of the late Roman empire, Christians translated people's real need for patrons and friends into an imputed need for an invisible power, as in the cult of saints, the theology of sacraments, and pastoral care.[37]

The proto-Christian turns his attention away from actual need to embrace his version of a collective need for pastoral care and salvation. This social model of an invisible power compelling agents to perform pastoral kindness in its name in return for a shared and resigned understanding amongst lowly citizens of the collective lot, creates a curious (and now familiar) power/knowledge dynamic, as Allen explains:

> Those who are drawn into a pastoral or caring relationship thus enter into a peculiar relationship of power: putatively salvific, continuous and coextensive with life, simultaneously individualizing and totalizing, linked to the production of knowledge of individuals which is cultivated for the sake of comprehensive social government, governing *all* by governing *each one*.[38]

Such a system of social governance requires the proliferation of experts who can represent and distribute the necessary body of knowledge (and gather it from individuals) required to support the seemingly redemptive inculcation of the imputed sense of individual mortal deficiency. Citing the inspirational work of Ivan Illich,[39] Allen writes:

> Wherever there is a profession there must be a clientele; wherever there is a disciplinary profession otherwise free or indifferent potential clients become a laity. What defines these new disciplinary professions is their effective

presumption 'to define a person as a client, to determine that person's need, and to hand the person a prescription.[40]

In the case of evaluative diagnoses, as it were, issued by the AHRB/RAE, all need is predetermined by the standardised bullet-pointed prescription of the type seen in the Response to Consultation. Individual researchers by creative practice are invited to adopt given needs to ameliorate their professional deficiencies so that, in time, their units of production might be exchanged for money which will then be distributed by the central authority to its peripheral agents in order to facilitate the next cycle of information accumulation and audit. In this programme each individual researcher is assimilated into larger congregations to assist the streamlined compilation of information conducive to the ultimate audit, and, according to bureaucratic logic, to ensure that no one individual is out with a prescribed intellectual community (administrative net). As Allen's analogical example relates, self-governance according to imputed needs is strictly encouraged by the resident or itinerant canonised expert so that the submitted lay community might be collectively successful come judgement day. The salvific element in the RAE is, of course, the divine reward of income – which comes only to those clients who have dutifully defined their achievements and needs with reference to the right sacraments.

But this conventionally ethical behaviour of the community of individuals (in the eyes of the arbitrating bureau) embodies what Allen sees as the 'disabling' effects of too much knowledge. This time taking the discipline of the health profession as model, he explains why the Foucauldian accumulation of new objects of knowledge and information

in the process of establishing authoritative power can, paradoxically, bring about a crippling counterproductivity:

> The pragmatist's wish to secure a practical difference between real knowledge and what is false, wrong, inappropriate, or otherwise unfit for the honor of knowledge by reference to intelligent creativity in the resolution of problematic situations comes to grief when the right to define better or worse passes from the client to the disciplinary provider of care.[41]

Specifically, Allen sees with regret the petty domination of individuals by an aleopathic authority that prescribes needs in advance of diagnoses, thus removing, or at least terminally problematising, the right of the individual-now-client to deviate from the carer's authority. Too much knowledge is counterproductive, indeed disabling (and likely by the design of authority-stigmatisation), for it ensures as a necessary part of its genesis and accumulation the marginalisation of any credible and incredible alternative. Extending the medical model, Allen continues:

> The disabling effects of knowledge include the production of counterpurposive imputed needs, which transform differences into impairments and motivates efforts to remake the bodies of those rich enough to demand professional care or too poor to say no. Nonprofessional, vernacular care is discredited if not actually made illegal, while the practical capacity and nondisciplinary knowledge required for self-care is laid to waste'[42]

As Campbell and Barkun told us, such alternative thinking, all of which will not be wrong, is ignored, rejected, suppressed and superseded by the knowledge and information of the canonical authority. In the long term, paradoxically, the alternative non-disciplinary, at least non-disciplined, in-itself knowledge might be disestablished from the institution and sent to seek pastoral care from Arts Councils and other bodies who privately support the alternative medicine proposed by the creative visual arts.

This exponential rise of the dominant authority is assisted by a bureaucratic strategy related to the ruse contained within the AHRB's position paper. As Allen explains: 'professional prescriptive knowledge claims to be self-disciplining, which in practice makes it self-certifying, leaving the discipline free to define the quality of its service in accordance with its own practitioners' satisfaction with the result'.[43] The subject is objectified by the knowledge of the professional discipline and, under very real pressure as noted, performs to the imputed needs of the self-certifying bureau. The practitioners in this instance are peripheral agents of authority, all of whom have the standard-issue yardstick of income generation as a means to measure institutional satisfaction with audit outcomes.

The salvific judgement which rules on the distribution of capital in the aftermath of audit, compels individuals-now-groups to adhere to imputed needs and thus mitigates, in theory, against Crozier's prediction of the displacement of goals within bureaucratic organisations. What with this type of salvation at stake, the institution of art and design must perpetually tend its given sacraments.

Overseen by peripheral agents, preparation for the periodic RAE audit is ongoing within institutions, and makes certain of what Foucault called with regard to the general auditing impulse of bureaucratic disciplinary powers, the introduction of 'individuality into the field of documentation...[in an] age of infinite examination and of compulsory objectification'.[44] Practically speaking, like the RAE audit proper, this ongoing micro-audit is *de facto* Foucault's 'examination':

> The examination leaves behind it a whole meticulous archive constituted in terms of bodies and days. The examination that places individuals in a field of

surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them. The procedures of examination were accompanied at the same time by a system of intense registration and of documentary accumulation.[45]

Foucault was thinking expressly about the power/knowledge conditions in 18thC French schools, but drawing an essential point from that context he concluded; 'the examination enabled the teacher, while transmitting his knowledge, to transform his pupils into a whole field of knowledge'.[46] The transmitted (imputed) needs of the audit bureau, and the didactic bureaux which it consults, become, through their being diligently tended, a professionalised body of knowledge which controls its subjects by standardisation and examination. It is hereabouts that the preliminary antipathy between the creative and the bureaucratic is at its most acute. In addressing the fundamental purpose of the exam, Foucault indirectly but definitively summarised the root cause of the AHRB/RAE's need for auxiliary explanatory materials, and thus the root cause of frustration within the in-itself camp.

> The examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests its potency, essentially, by arranging objects. The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of this objectification.[47]

For Foucault the examination is the primary practice of a disciplinary power, and a logical culmination of what he termed, 'hierarchical observation' and 'normalizing judgement'.

In a now classic scenario, Foucault's disciplinary power ensures that subjects are objectified by mechanisms which permit perpetual seeing,

so, for example; 'architecture is no longer built simply to be seen, or to observe the external space, but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it.[48] For us, the digital architecture of the live institutional intranet keeps a disciplined eye on subjects, and informs the building of the final panoptic database of the bureau's auditors.[49]

Under constant gaze, the institutionalised researcher is also subject to ongoing instances of normalising judgement which are exercised when it appears under observation that the rational organisation's imputed needs are not being adopted. The newly forming research hierarchy in schools of art is a means by which these petty judgements can take effect and by which individuals can subsequently be arranged: 'discipline rewards simply by the play of awards, thus making it possible to attain higher ranks and places; it punishes by reversing this process.'[50] Researchers compete for recognition as such, with the prospect of teaching-only places awaiting those who do not make the grade, or those who do not choose to take sacrament. Within these procedures of objectification, the individual, if not stripped of his actual need - as Allen might have seen in his model of religious conversion - has his self-identified creative needs suppressed through the objectifying processes of surveillance, penalty and examination, to the detriment of his own subjective agency. Even the collective *esprit de corps* of the members of the marginalised grouping is cold comfort for the individual's institutional stigmatisation.

IV   CONCLUSION

There persists, then, a deep-seated antagonism between the creative and the bureaucratic in institutions of art which pressurises the in-itself practitioner into a marginal position to be held there pending stigmatisation by a sustained power/knowledge dynamic which manages imputed need. Perhaps that is predictable, but hopefully the preceding discussion offered new outlooks on that antagonism and, thus, on the ways in which the in-itself position is thrown in(to) discourse. That said, there remains something unsatisfactory about all this.

As was hinted in the opening section, Foucauldian critique necessarily holds itself away from judgements about the essential contested tenets held by those groups implicated in a mutually sustaining power/knowledge dynamic. It might be fair to say that this essay with its Foucauldian pretences is consequently guilty of the Foucauldian evasiveness as enunciated by Rorty and, therefore, guilty also of a general bureaucratic sleight of hand more familiar to the machinations of the managerial auditor. As interesting as such an essay may or may not be as an in-house exercise in critical theory, its bureaucratic conceit is the turn towards the manner of the systematisation of the discourse at the expense of what it contains.

This puzzle, which is not innocuous, is lucidly summarised by sociologist Tim Dant, and that summary might help construct an endpoint for this essay. Echoing Barry Allen's position on disabling knowledge, Dant makes reference to Adorno's thoughts on the objectification of the human subject by bodies of conventional knowledge, and expresses an opinion which is usefully supportive of the in-itself agenda:

> What the positivist, uncritical, human sciences do is ignore the capacity of a society to know itself (and indeed act on that knowledge), and treat it as a mere object to be observed. Adorno accepts that the human individual can be treated as an object (by biological science, by medicine), but the subject of society is irreducible to the status of an object. It is the very thing that generates the knowledge of itself, and no methodology can take up a position outside of society and its lived relations to study it 'objectively'. A positivist methodology removes - or, at least, puts aside – the questions of value, of struggle, of how the world ought to be or could be.[51]

By default, a managerial bureaucratic methodology, one which exercises its ongoing surveillance in pursuit of standardisation and which relies on the broadest inculcation of imputed need, has to put aside, to marginalise, those practices of knowledge which cannot be expediently measured. The positivist impulse behind the power/knowledge dynamic of audit is here to stay, but, following McArthur's under-the-net antagonism, taking a lead from Dent, and acknowledging again the likely instrumentality of this essay, the debate might best return to address the subject driven lived relations of the production of creative visual artwork, and the knowledge thereby generated.

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[1] *Research Assessment Exercise and Research in the Creative and Performing Arts*, AHRB, Response to Consultation, September 2003:
http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/ahrb/website/strategy/policy/response/the_rae_research_in_the_creative_performing_arts.asp

[2] Ibid.

[3] Euan McArthur, 'Research in the creative and performing arts: A response to the AHRB Paper "The RAE and Research in the Creative & Performing Arts. Review of Research Assessment"'. *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 3: 1, pp. 75-80, doi: 10.1386/jvap.3.1.75/0.

[4] Michael Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964. First published in French 1963 by Editions du Seuil, Paris. Crozier analysed case-studies from French government and education, but the heart of his analysis was an abstract consideration of the nature of bureaucracy and power relations.

[5] Similarly, whilst supporting implicitly the programme of peer review, the 2003 Roberts Report includes recommendations for developing the purely managerial approach to measuring

institutional performance. It is identified that there is a 'need fully to recognise all aspects of excellence in research (such as pure intellectual [could that mean formal?] quality, value added to professional practice, applicability, and impact within and beyond the research community)'*Review of Research Assessment: Report by Sir Gareth Roberts to the UK Funding Bodies*, 2003, p. 3. http://www.ra-review.ac.uk/.

[6] As part of these definitions, myths of the reportedly anachronistic artist-as-individual are lazily referenced by those antagonistic to research by creative visual artwork, as if, by implication, clustering or networking individuals removes any likelihood of unaccountable individual creative expression.

[7] Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, p. 179.

[8] As has been widely reported, this pressure is very serious and can amount to the managerial bureau "moving to transfer weak researchers into teaching-only posts or make them redundant to improve scores in the next research assessment exercise". 'Staff at risk in RAE run-up', Anna Fazackerley, *THES*, May 21, 2004.

[9] Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, New York: Pantheon, 1980, p. 98.

[10] Michel Foucault in interview with Paul Rabinow in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), London: Penguin, 1984, p. 382.

[11] Joseph Rouse, 'Power/Knowledge' in *Foucault*, Gary Gutting (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 107.

[12] 'Locally' in this context means both the institution's bureau for the administering of the RAE compilation and submission, and also the subject specific panels themselves, which act as networked agents for the authority of the overarching audit. This latter form of localised power agency brings with it a standard which impacts directly on non-standard research content for it pressurises interdisciplinary activities: 'academics believe that the RAE does not value interdisciplinary work and that they have to play safe by publishing in core disciplinary areas'. Geoffrey Crossick, AHRB Chief Executive in 'Staff at risk in RAE run-up' *THES*, May 21, 2004.

[13] Rouse, 'Power/Knowledge' in *Foucault*, p. 106.

[14] Michel Foucault, 'We "Other Victorians"' in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley, New York: Pantheon, 1978, reprinted in *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow (ed.), London: Penguin, 1991, first published 1984, pp. 292–300.

[15] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, London: Penguin, 1999, p. 129.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

[18] In Barkun's system, 'forgotten knowledge' is knowledge which has been, it is argued, physically lost to us; 'knowledge once allegedly known but lost through faulty memory, cataclysm, or some other interrupting factor e.g., ancient wisdom once possessed by inhabitants of Atlantis'. Such knowledge and wisdom may or may not have been real, but the belief in it comprises part of a secondary realm of stigmatised knowledge. However, whilst the others obtain, it is the singular catastrophic nature of the extinction of this previously held knowledge which disconnects this category from the working analogy.

[19] See James Webb, *The Occult Underground*, LaSalle: Open Court, 1974 and *The Occult Establishment*, LaSalle: Open Court, 1976.

[20] Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, p. 9.

[21] See Colin Campbell, 'The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization' in *Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, No 5., London: SCM Press, 1972, pp. 119-136. As Barkun describes Campbell's model, the cultic milieu 'includes such areas as alternative medicine and healing, not normally considered part of the occult domain' (*A Culture of Conspiracy, p. 25.*)

[22] Ibid., p. 27.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, p. 27.

[26] Stephen Farthing, *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Art*, London: Duckworth, 2000, p. 13.

[27] 'Cultural rejection is clearly a powerful force that gives believing in the occult a certain frisson, and that same thrill of the forbidden is often found among conspiracy believers.' Barkun, *Culture of Conspiracy*, p. 24. Whilst there is a difference of magnitude of rejection between those who believe, like Farthing, in the method of performative non-reason for creative practice and those who believe in deviant spirituality, there is, as is being argued, a shared resigned comfort amongst groups who occupy stigmatised ground.

[28] Such an attitude of unchecked antagonism should not be dismissed by anyone other than the nervous bureau manager. Foucault's concept of 'parrhesiastes' – the constant speaking of the truth despite risks to the speaker – might be considered a noble and reckless endeavour (crucial to democracy). See Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, Joseph Pearson (ed.), Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001.

[29] Michel Foucault in Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge*, p. 51.

[30] Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, p. 6.

[31] Scientist Richard Bateman see this counterproductivity in the field of institutional science: 'Homogenous positivism has become a prerequisite for maintaining funding streams, encouraging received wisdom to supplant genuine intellectual debate. The result of this "new realism" is an increasing monotonous science base that's being shorn of its charismatic mavericks and its conceptual confrontations.' (*THES*, February 11th, 2005.)

[32] Barry Allen, 'Disabling Knowledge' in *The Ethics of Postmodernity: Current Trends in Continental Thought*, Gary B. Madison and Marty Fairbairn (eds.), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999, p. 92.

[33] Ibid.

[34] *Research Assessment Exercise and Research in the Creative and Performing Arts*, AHRB, Response to Consultation, September 2003.

[35] As a reminder: 'The AHRB has required all applicants for research funding to specify clearly: 1) the research issues, problems, or questions that will be addressed; 2) the context in which those issues, problems, or questions are located; 3) what research methods will be used; and 4) how the results of the research will be disseminated.' Ibid. To reiterate this crucial and obvious point: there is a credible difference between how the standardising bureau chooses to measure research and what research is in actuality.

[36] Allen, 'Disabling Knowledge' in *The Ethics of Postmodernity*, p. 93.

[37] Ibid. p. 94.

[38] Ibid.

[39] See especially Ivan Illich, *Towards a History of Needs*, Berkeley: Heyday, 1978.

[40] Allen, 'Disabling Knowledge' in *The Ethics of Postmodernity*, p. 97.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., p. 100.

[43] Ibid., p. 97.

[44] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Penguin, 1991, first published in French 1975, p. 189.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., p. 186.

[47] Ibid., p. 187.

[48] Ibid., p. 172.

[49] http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/submissions/

[50] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 181.

[51] Tim Dant, *Critical Social Theory*, London: Sage, 2003, p. 26.

Dr Ken Neil is Director of the MFA in Critical Social Art Practice at Gray's School of Art.