Cultural Democracy at the Frontiers of Patronage: Public-Interest Art versus Promotional Culture

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Abstract: In *Brave New World Revisited* Aldous Huxley observed that 'genius has been the servant of tyranny and art has advertised the merits of the local cult' (Huxley 1958). Regarding the complex relationship between art and society, Huxley argued that democracies need to identify good art in the making rather than retrospectively. Drawing also on Raymond Williams' analysis of the

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limits imposed on dialogue by representative democracy (Williams 1980), this article considers the data from our pilot ethnography on the prospects for cultural democracy in the arts. Private patronage and largely unaccountable interests presently influence the use of public money; spending is guided towards the logic of individual or organisational self-promotion and an overwhelmingly promotional culture which serves different types of governance, whether authoritarian or democratic. By incorporating private patronage and non-western gift-economics many critical dialogues springing from the arts are contoured by their origins in elite social and political courtship (Bourdieu 1977; Burke [1790] 1997; Schiller [1794] 1994). Here we show how aesthetics remain a key to twenty-first century statecraft. Noting the effects of top-down patronage, whether in the direct manipulation of dialogue or in the more indirect tailoring of critique, the premise of our research is that if widening participation in the arts matters, it matters first and foremost in decision making about spending. Our study tests the deliberative capacities of randomised citizen juries as patrons financially empowered to commission public-interest arts projects on controversial themes and across contested frontiers of sovereignty or cultural identity. We consider our initial findings from the comparison of deliberation in non-randomised control groups and in randomised juries. We discuss the potentially positive role of randomised citizen juries as 'jolts' of equality and pluralism at the level of cultural governance (Connolly 2017). We also outline the main political, institutional, and professional blockages and impediments to the democratic integration of such empowered dialogical encounters.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Cultural Democracy, Elites, Spiritual Aristocracy, Statecraft

> Genius has been the servant of tyranny and art has advertised the merits of the local cult. Time, as it passes, separates the good art from the bad metaphysics. Can we learn to make this separation, not after the event, but while it is actually taking place? That is the question.
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> Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited* (1958, 53)

Introduction: Patronage, Aesthetics, and Statecraft

George Orwell (1903–1950) was fascinated by the violence and the hard powers described in his nightmarish 1948 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; however, Britain's other famous dystopian writer Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), author of *Brave New World* published in 1932, regarded the softer powers of manipulation and 'the arts of selling' to be the real danger to democratic development (Huxley 1958, 47 ff.). This article concerns the combination of hard and soft powers, and the impediments facing dialogue and democratic deliberation in and about the arts. We introduce aesthetics as an arm of modern Statecraft, and discuss the way randomised public juries might counteract a history of aesthetics and despotism and instead deepen democratic deliberation.

It is worth pointing out first that Orwell's novel portrays a world ravaged by warring geopolitical blocs, or super-States, while Huxley's fictional dystopia is governed by a world-State. Their different visions correspond, respectively, with the opportunistic alliances of Europe's ancient regime, and the modern rules-based system which led towards the creation of the League of Nations and then the United Nations after the Second World War. However, as its critics point out the modern order veils the hypocrisy and rule-bending of the victors' justice; the UN Security Council's right of veto protects those major powers from prosecution and disguises the survival of the old-fashioned logic of geopolitical alliances and proxy wars fought on the opportunistic basis of common causes rather than just causes (e.g. Falk, Kim & Mendlovitz 1991; Hirst 2001; Kennedy 2007). Both Orwell and Huxley simplified geopolitics for the sake of selling different fictional dystopias, and each corresponds with distinctive fears of governance on the part of the public. Although Huxley was still convinced that soft powers mattered more than violence and compulsion, he was able to elaborate on the complexity of the issues raised by his novel in the later non-fictional book quoted above where he recognises that something socially important is missing from the arts. However, neither Huxley nor Orwell were much interested in the kinds of agreed procedures which mean that fundamental conflicts over norms, both within and between societies, might instead assist internal cohesion and international cooperation.

The ten-nation multi–authored study, *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict & Mediation in Pluralist Societies,* which reported to the Club of Rome in 1998, suggests that dialogical procedures and mediations are essential for societies to consider the twin key questions of who are we and how we are to live together. As the sociologist Peter L. Berger (1929–2017) argues in conclusion to that volume, while concrete dialogical procedures are attractive, both as an intellectual proposition and in use (e.g., in Germany's social market or in post-apartheid South Africa), they depend upon a certain 'normality' that is never permanent. Moreover, across the ten nations examined a highly secularised cultural elite is seen to conflict with more religiously inclined populations (Berger et al. 1998, 358–368). More generally, as Berger recognises, established conflict resolution procedures that rely upon 'negotiating elites' may create other fractures between those 'elites and their followers who are left out of the mediating process' (Ibid., 367).

Modern culture can never be reduced to the religious identities found within societies, even when one religion might still be very closely interwoven with the formation and authority of the State (e.g., Israel or Iran), so there are good reasons why cultural elites tend towards a more cosmopolitan, or secular standpoint, registered by Berger. After all, culture and the arts are widely expected to be spaces for dialogue and mediation. A more radical question concerns the purpose of cultural elites in the first place. Elsewhere in civil society, in labour relations, for example, desire for durable and binding agreements on all sides creates elites with the degree of social trust and political authority to negotiate such agreements. The management of culture is more fluid and diffused so the social formation and authority of cultural elites is much more open to question. As might be gleaned from the quotation above about the arts and tyranny, Huxley saw a lot of nonsense in the professionally and politically convenient faith in the arts and letters as a pillar of liberty and democracy. During the Second World War, influential writers and artists of Huxley's generation pioneered this informal contract with the State. Cyril Connolly (1903–1974), editor of the influential cultural journal *Horizon*, summed up the project in a 1943 editorial: Britain had to rescue European culture from totalitarianism, and to do so attitudes to art had to be altered. As he wrote, 'we must give art a place in our conception of the meaning of life and artists a place in our conception of the meaning of the State which they have never known before. Never again must our artists be warped by opposition, stunted by neglect, or etiolated by official conformity' (Connolly 1943, 6). This nominally liberal project promoting the arts as an ally of democracy raised the prospect of all kinds of supposedly autonomous or critical works glorifying the liberal State.

Only a few socialists in Britain saw this as a worrying substitute for social-democratic reforms in education and the economy, reforms they supposed should lead more naturally towards a richer popular culture wherein artists and writers would have less need for State patronage. No doubt some of the dissenters, such as the essayist and poet Julian Symons (1912–1994), who turned his hand to crime stories, were naive about the fracturing of cultural dispositions (Symons 1945, 1990). Yet they had good grounds for distrusting any contract forged between aesthetics and political power, democratic or totalitarian, and in the British case, to be governed by a mixture of 'old boy' networks, elite lobbying, and artistic reputation markets (Jenkins 1979; Witts 1998). Nor were things very different in a United States less dogged by European class structures. The former New York Times journalist, John L. Hess (1917–2005), recounts power-elite dynamics in The Grand Acquisitors (1974) and in his 2003 memoir, My Times, A Memoir of Dissent. Looking back on a kind of conceit shared by Donald Trump and the managers of great institutions such as the New York Metropolitan Museum's director, Tom Hoving (1931–2009), Hess says that 'their tales about the art of the deal and the deal in the art can tell us a lot about the world we live in, as long as we don't believe a word of what they say' (Hess 2003, 137). Nevertheless, the advantage of a career in arts management is that, unlike

Trump, Hove was given ample media opportunities to defend mendacity itself, and to promote the idea of being a 'dictator in the arts'.[2]

A highly rhetorical opposition is often made between money making and true art. The dichotomy lends itself to much myth making in already opaque reputation markets (Bourdieu 2008). As the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) shows in his studies begun in Algeria of symbolic capital and the good-faith economy, the appearance of cultural discernment and benevolence is a key to maintaining an otherwise fragile hold on power (Bourdieu 1977, 172 ff., Bourdieu & Darbel 1991). Even the best financial investments can turn bad, the status quo might be overturned, friendly governments may be ousted, and so on, but establishing charitable foundations, or making substantial gifts to cultural institutions opens other doors. Organisations operating in reputation markets offer an unusually resilient sort of influence, often passed down the generations to sons, daughters, or grand-children as trustees or board members. Trustees are supposed to protect the public interest but, nepotism aside, are they equipped to do that? As Hess argues, trustees readily give way to the specialist education and experience of professionals who implement institutional policy. Indeed, some trustees might be chosen precisely for their mixture of conceit and practical ignorance, in which case they probably feel honoured as members of a spiritual aristocracy, 'the lords of creation' as one of Hess's informants sarcastically calls this cultural elite (Hess 1974, 30). Investigative journalists like Hess offer the checks and balances to soft power but as his *Memoir of Dissent* shows, the liberal basis of critique is extremely fickle and too open to influence from above.

In Europe, art critics from several countries claim a central role in mediating the dialogue between artworks and publics, creating 'a space open to debate' (Apollonia 2005, 3). Notwithstanding good intentions, there is still an echo of the eighteenth century when Royal Courts determined that space. So, while these modern critics posit the independence of art as a normative ideal, they give very little consideration to the independence of criticism. In this sense cultural critics separate themselves from the problems of press freedom occupying investigative journalists like Hess who pose questions that few arts critics entertain if they care for their jobs. Not surprisingly then, the journalistic investigation of culture is starved of professional time and resources, and the snippets from less demanding forms of criticism are the bargaining chips when artists and writers search for support and investment. The transactions may be less blunt, less obviously corrupt, than those portrayed in Honoré de Balzac's (1799–1850) account of criticism in *Illusions perdues* (*Lost Illusions* 1837–1843) – today trust and predictability are the currency of artistic reputation markets

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[2] See the end of Hove's interview on Charlie Rose, 19/03/93, and eight other appearances on the same talk show at https://charlierose.com/videos/14283. Accessed on October 2022.

– but none of this is any less significant when it comes to politics and commerce. When corruption exposes systemic fragility, elites habitually appeal to the riches of cultural heritage as rightful inheritors. As Hess (2003) points out, governments in many parts of the world can be called corrupt in the pages of the *New York Times*, but not the government of New York, the self-proclaimed 'cultural capital of the World.'

The sort of conceit we have introduced here is very much in keeping with the birth of that branch of eighteenth-century European philosophy confusingly named 'aesthetics'. The founding thinkers, in what amounts to a modern developmental discourse, concerned themselves with the kinds of dialogue, public knowledge, and emotions which might underpin the successful State. Philosophers such as the Anglo-Irish Edmund Burke (1729–1797) in Britain and Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) in Germany were beneficiaries, if not disciples, of so-called *enlightened despotism* (Israel 2013, 275–301, Scott 1990). The somewhat self-contradictory term is applied to European rulers and patrons such as Frederick the Great (1712–1786), who recognised that if regimes were to be viable and durable, traditional hard powers, (armed conquest, serfdom, slavery, torture, etc.) were of limited value; greater powers of socio-economic persuasion and surveillance would be required. This strategically nuanced thought became far more relevant with the pressures and burdens of the global Seven Years War (1756–1763). Serfs and mercenaries make unreliable armies, so strong incentives for reform were in place to make the nobility more commercial and the peasantry more efficient, meaning too that war alliances could move from common causes based on naked territorial ambitions, to more ideologically sophisticated just causes of national unity and emancipation.

One of the greatest losers in the Seven Years War was *ancien regime* France. In 1789, the Comte de Mirabeau (1749–1791), who played a leading role in the French revolution later in the same year, observed the relatively favourable situation in Germany; he wrote that 'princes and the men of letters now restrain each other; and if that is not the best state of affairs, it is at least a thousand times more preferable than that which lasted for centuries' (in Blanning 1990, 276). Schiller's *Letters on The Aesthetic Education of Man,* penned for his patron Prince of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, and first published in 1794, offers a theory of personal dialogue and power in which distrust turns into mutual respect (Schiller 1994, 75). Schiller became a semi-official ideological touchstone for a range of States, including Nazi Germany, which produced the 1940 biopic *Der Triumph eines Genies* (The Triumph of a Genius). If interrogated merely as a history of ideas, enlightened despotism is no less paradoxical than some of its radical philosophical opponents. An interesting example is the ambiguous mixture of German cultural nationalism and universalism espoused by the influential preacher and philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder

(1744–1803) in his search for spiritual authenticity. So here it is worth recalling Edmund Burke and a concrete example of ethics and geopolitics during this period. It was late in Burke's life when he attempted, unsuccessfully, to impeach Warren Hastings of the East India Company (EIC) for 'high crime and misdemeanours' connected to the company's corruption and military campaigns (Hastings 1786). Burke was a remarkably precocious aesthetician and had a religious and teleological faith in Leviathan-like authority and patronage weaving a politically 'well-wrought veil' of culture to be passed down the generations (Burke 1790, 86–122). However, during the impeachment trial which ran from 1787 to 1795, Burke's published ideas about what we now call 'soft power' were effectively turned against him. While Burke showed that Hastings and the EIC had done 'very reprehensible things' the Houses of Parliament also saw that violence and political excesses might be off-set by patronage and good-works (McCauley 1841, 255).

According to Burke's case for prosecution, the House of Lords should perform as a transnational court, above Britain's local and national interests represented by the House of Commons. In his defence, Hastings brought witnesses from India and argued that the EIC needed to adapt its operations to the despotic standards of India's traditional rulers, since sovereignty in Asia was based on nothing else, he claimed. Burke revealed this to be a crude misrepresentation of India's traditional jurisprudence and argued that in any case British imperialism required the guidance of natural law and universal values, not a false 'geographical morality' shaped by the acquisition of territorial governance rights (Burke 2000, 94; Mukherjee 2005, 610). In the most damning terms, Burke also attacked the sincerity and quality of one of Hastings' pet educational projects, a Calcutta college churning out degrees in record time. Yet forced by his own philosophy to rely only on sarcasm, Burke permitted the principle that patronage and charitable works could make amends for wrong-doing and become avenues for Hasting's personal redemption (in Bond 1861, 730–731). Hastings was acquitted in the House of Lords and went on to become a Privy Councillor. At this point in European history, the horizons of a heavily armed gift-economy begin to come into view.

Patronage and gift-giving are, of course, expressions of discernment. The aesthetic overlap of hard-edged political economy and soft-edged culture underpins State formation we argue. Much of its emotional fervour was broadcast worldwide in 2022 immediately after the death of Queen Elizabeth II. A distant African viewer commented sceptically that only the British could turn a civil event into a military ceremony.[3] But it is precisely the combination of Leviathan-like powers and the benevolence of noblesse oblige that Burke (1790) regarded as the sublime 'veil' of culture which needed to be handed down generations because, as he admitted, its immediate benefits were merely hopes for a better future. Burke is silent about precisely what was actually veiled, namely hard political economy as the British peasants and their children moved from the land into factories. If Burke's veil of culture still exists, its contemporary contours are shaped by the patronage politics and gift-economics of many different countries today (cf. Giridharadas 2018). Historically and spiritually, generosity is universal but the socio-economic conditions for egalitarian dialogue, debate, and deliberation are not (Dehejia 1992, 44 ff). Traditional charity survives but in terms of civic voluntarism, top-down patronage ensures that 'NGO-ism' is made far more attractive to an educated and democratically inspired social cadre than trade unionism and workers solidarity (Folorunso, Hall, Logan 2012).

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[3] From personal communication.

While the relationship between aesthetics and Statecraft we have briefly introduced here hinges on theories of meaningful dialogue, they usually lack democratic procedure. So, doubts about aesthetics as a developmental discourse must also apply to any hopes for a spirit of dialogue which might in, or of itself, democratise representative democracy. Immanuel Kant's idea of the Enlightenment was that open public debate was contingent on a clerical loyalty to private contracts. In the words of Frederick the Great, 'argue as much as you please, but obey!' (in Kant 1784). Voltaire (1694–1778), who enjoyed Frederick's patronage, eventually baulked at the terms of his own contract, but Voltaire only advocated free speech for an educated elite class. It is only when workers sought speech rights as part of the process of self-organisation, and to bite the hand that fed them, that we begin to see the democratisation of free speech (Harrison 1974). Because many powerful organisations today, from the World Bank down, promote dialogue and participatory decision making as a means of strengthening democracy, we ought to stress the obvious: there is such a thing as fake consultation and harmonious inequality. Sincere dialogues too, are always infused with power relations and types of political or socio-economic courtship which determine who is talking to who, when, and where, and about what. However, the randomised public juries we discuss later may be a useful democratic corrective and a form of dialogical mediation which anticipates the crisis of normative conditions which Berger rightly points out can never be guaranteed to last.

As we go on to show, there are connections between the lack of speech in one area and the inflation of speech in another; an imbalance reinforced in the US by the 1976 Supreme Court Judgement on free speech, (Buckley v. Valeo) which found that 'money is speech' (Barnett 2003, 122). Theoretical ideal types designed to protect an epistemological integrity connected to the word *dialogue* – rather than its normal dictionary definition – can obscure many important questions concerning its management and manipulation. The world systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein (1930–2019) argued that while we live in a capitalist world economy with its history, structures, and contradictions, many in the humanities only study the effects implicitly and it would help everyone if scholars reflected on what they are really doing (Wallerstein 2011, 226). With this in mind, we argue that face-to-face encounters and deliberation organised in civil society can lead to better social solutions than those offered by political leaders, and might positively influence governance and international relations, but this depends on their democratic credibility, dogged by issues of accountability and transparency (c.f. Barber Rowell 2021). Nor should the fundamental democratic right of people to kick out their government ever be forgotten. However, if authoritarian plebiscitary-style democracies are to be avoided, significant democratic deliberation should not be confined to elections and referendums. A plebiscitary democracy created along those lines is more than capable of veiling women for the sake of misogyny or allowing torture and war crimes for the sake of liberalism – provided that the dignity of immense profits and inherited wealth are also protected. For the sake of open deliberation we borrow the example of justice systems using randomised selection to assemble juries – in this case to finance public-interest arts projects. The theoretical question of who produces the critical meaning and value of artistic projects and products is already complicated – authors, publics, or both? Based on the initial findings of our comparative study of face-to-face deliberation in randomised juries, we will argue that the public interest might be carved out by such independent members of the public in a practically productive dialogue with each other and with cultural producers, and also open to comment from the wider public. However, to consider the potential of such dialogical and democratic procedures we must first address issues of territory.

Perspectives on Territory: Raymond Williams, Norbert Elias, Martha Nussbaum

The influential cultural and literary historian Raymond Williams (1921–1988) is also known as a champion of cultural democracy. His working-class origins in Wales sensitised him to education systems which offer personal emancipation via institutions of socio-economic segregation. His own personal mobility across frontiers of class and nationality between Wales and England influenced his highly reflexive standpoint. In a 1980 lecture, on 'Representative Democracy' he began focusing attention on the concentration of powers which typically produce the monopolistic 'all purpose representative who (…) represent[s] our views on everything' (Williams 1980). He pointed out that the same monopolistic logic extends to the appointments of experts and public representatives to the boards of cultural institutions. Williams insisted that 'if you are taking the notion of representation seriously, (…) you have to have much more diverse assemblies' (Ibid.). He anticipated communications technology leading to the devolution of decision-making powers and assisting public deliberation. With the benefit of hindsight, Williams might be accused of naivety when in fact his arguments about the political abstractions connected to territory and constituency explain why, more than four decades later, and with all the advances in communications he anticipated, open debate and deliberation are eroded by a technologically managed infrastructure of echo chambers. The impulse to use communications technology to reach ever greater numbers of people on the basis of a mathematically registered similarity, or to identify new similarities, is perfectly in keeping with the arbitrary territorial logic of the constituency that Williams critiqued. However, what he failed to foresee was the technological expansion of a promotional culture based on easy praise from the bottom-up. Our capacities to communicate our preferences worldwide in almost infantile terms of 'likes' also change the experience of actual childhood in many contexts where growing up appears to be increasingly orientated towards a training in consumer preferences and identities.

Alongside Raymond Williams, our study is inspired by the historical sociology of Norbert Elias (1897–1990), a Germen-Jewish refugee to Britain, who also harboured deep suspicions of the way representative politics deploys myth to herd citizens (Mennell 1989, 15). His classic *longue durée* study, *The Civilizing Process* (Elias 2000), shows how peace developed hand-in-hand with the externalisation of violence and how the process can work in reverse, turning back in on itself as in the decivilising case of Nazi Germany. Elias saw the need for genuine controversy as a safeguard against civilisational arrogance and our pilot research stress-tests his idea of 'civilised controversy' (Law 2018). We argue that the time is right to experiment with a form of cultural democracy, revisiting Elias's ideas about constructive controversy by empowering randomised public juries to commission arts projects. In some cases, randomised juries might be assembled from more than one population group, with the intention of bridging contested ideas of sovereignty. The critical premise of our research is that if widening participation in the arts matters, it matters first and foremost in decision making about public patronage (Logan 2017). Later we discuss our initial comparative findings on the effects of randomisation as a form of encounter that might assist social integration from below.

Elias was particularly critical of 'reality-blind institutions' devoted to the promotion of their professions, disciplines, or discursive missions (Law, op.cit). When it comes to culture, great works by artists and writers have long been measured against the supposedly universal moral or psychological standards they reach and might convey to the public. An influential voice promoting the arts as a means of encouraging feelings that are appropriate to democracy is the University of Chicago's professor of law, Martha Nussbaum. In *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters to Justice*, Nussbaum (2013) finds humanity too politically abstract and, following the arguments of Giuseppe Manzzini (1805–1872), she regards patriotism based on dialogue and mutual respect between fellow citizens to be a surer, more practical route to the global common good. Nussbaum's prescriptions about what we may call 'emotional territory' do not ignore the dark side of the arts; in fact she is rather censorious, but, having been disenchanted by the United Nations, her disengagement from the issues of democratic internationalism , means that she bypasses increasingly charged issues of sovereignty and frontiers by positing morally correct patriotic sentiments instead. If Nussbaum suffers from reality blindness, its degree is directly proportional to the fact that the richest countries spend at least twice as much on constructing obstacles to migration than they devote to tackling climate change (Brand et al. 2022). Numerous important studies detail how successful artists and writers articulate emotional compensations for the faults and shortcomings of their nations and varied systems, even when appearing to challenge those systems, (e.g., Bourdieu 1984; Carey 1992; Golomstock 1990; Hauser 1982; Milosz 1980; Williams 1958 & 1989). Nussbaum's assessment of unselfish patriotism neglects the historical and political burdens carried by the arts.

We find conventional wisdom about the role of the arts in public enlightenment deeply flawed on two counts here. The first corresponds with the externalisation of conflict as seen by Elias's historical studies of internal pacification processes. The brutal political and economic history of the East India Company is a striking example, and artistic expression is implicated. Take Charles Dickens, some of his best-known books will always be held in high esteem as insightful pleas for social justice and peace at home. Nevertheless, it was the same Dickens who, in criticising the East India Company, also articulates his own willingness to exterminate the pagan masses of the Indian subcontinent (in Robins 2012, 195). Similarly, his criticism of slavery as the root of a spirit of violence in the United States still repays attention (Dickens, [1842] 1972, 269–284). But Dickens also believed that emancipated slaves should not be allowed to vote (Colander et al. 2006, 87). One of the effects of patronage is that such a paradoxical artistic social conscience is not always directly connected to the kind of imperialist and racist beliefs which tempted Dickens. A contemporary example of externalisation is the Gulf Labor Coalition, an artist-led campaign begun in New York and focused on the abuse of migrant workers in Abu Dhabi, where a branch of the Guggenheim Museum is planned. The campaigners describe and illustrate how the museum project is 'constructed and maintained on the backs of exploited employees' deprived of workers' rights (Ross 2015). Their campaign gained moral and material support in the art world, and in 2015 it was presented at the Venice Biennale as an ongoing socially engaged arts project. However, criticism has been shaped by the project's own targets, when a deeper analysis would raise questions about political courtship and the influence of patronage on the campaign. The focus on workers' rights in far-off Abu Dhabi is extremely one-dimensional given corporatist labour laws in New York State which prohibit strikes in the public sector, including of teachers or lecturers employed in the arts and humanities. The draconian New York laws even enforce supposedly voluntary duties. This repressive labour regime was stabilised under the governorship of New York State by Nelson Rockefeller (1908–1979), one of the most famous patrons of the arts. Regarded as a progressive democratically minded Republican in the United States of the late 1960s, Rockefeller lent his support to military government in Latin America. A mirror image of this Janus-faced geopolitics appears in one of the most questionable ideas to have been floated by US trade union leaders in recent years, namely, the outsourcing of strikes. In this scenario, workers from poorer countries are to take the risks in confronting employers while unions in 'advanced' countries follow partnership policies and submit to laws that politically handcuff trade unionists (McCallum 2013, 5). Solidarity is traditionally understood as a risk shared; Gulf Labor's externalisation of the issue of workers' rights appears to have been shaped, consciously or unconsciously, by the corruption of that principle.

We have given two brief empirical examples of externalisation to support our first objection to the conventional wisdom that artists and writers might psychologically embody universal values and convey enlightenment. Thought and communication processes are much more complicated and morally ambiguous. As Nussbaum admits, compassion is its own worst enemy because people too often address structural injustices in ways which gratify themselves emotionally, in the process creating in-groups and out-groups while reinforcing the status of second-class citizens for others (Nussbaum 2013, 6ff.). Our second objection is more theoretical and concerns *readiness*. Here the paradoxes of artistic discourse require a deeper analysis informed by sociological poetics. In the eyes of Williams and others working in this theoretical tradition, the public is never an empty vessel awaiting enlightenment or revelation, no matter how much some people might feel that their own encounters with art or literature were mind-altering or even life-changing experiences. Sorely neglected by that neo-religious account of communication are the social and temporal questions of resonance and readiness, which apply equally to authors and readers, artists, and viewers. In this sense, it is surprisingly difficult to differentiate the producers and consumers of culture involved in a dialogical process. While emotions that begin in society may be well captured by individuals with sharpened perceptions, their audiences are influenced by the same feelings and both groups are shaped by institutional or social structures and their historical situations. Broadly speaking, this is what Williams meant by the term 'structures of feeling' and 'deep cultural forms' that perpetuate or play on stereotypes rather than interrogating their basis (Williams 1989, 186–187). This issue of the social readiness for certain genres or types of cultural expression is mixed up with both establishment and fringe points of view, so rather than only undermining ideological crudeness and providing exits from echo chambers, representation in the arts and letters also streamlines and circumscribes representative politics, as our examples of Charles Dickens and Gulf Labor demonstrate.

Unfortunately, the role of the arts in streamlining dialogue and preparing the emotional territory of representative politics and Statecraft is increasingly neglected by the continual promotion of its 'impacts' upon society. The obsession with creative leadership means that cultural policy tends to be guided more by the desires and requirements of spiritual aristocracies rather than a critical understanding of the relationship between artists, patrons, and publics. The latter critical understanding (capable of discarding what was highly praised and marketable, or praising something previously unpromising and unwelcome) typically arrives after key historical events, and usually too late to make a difference to anything but artistic styles and fashions. Essentially, this is the issue Aldous Huxley raised when he proposed that 'time separates the good art from the bad metaphysics [of power, and therefore] we need to find another means of making the same separation' (op.cit).

Crossing Frontiers: *Five Broken Cameras*

Anna Baltzer is a respected Jewish-American activist and former Zionist. She now promotes the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Disinvest and Sanctions movement against Israel. At a debate sponsored by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at the New School in New York in 2012, Baltzer criticised the liberal preference to invite Jewish speakers like herself to talk critically about Israeli policies. She compared this tendency unfavourably with the feminist movement of the 1960s to point out the patent absurdity if male speakers had been preferred to women as the promoters of women's rights. When it comes to opposing Israeli policies today Baltzer condemned implicit racism and said it should not be 'about Jews leading the way, it's about Jews getting out of the way'. She went on to argue that 'as Jews we can use our voices to help lift up the voices of Palestinians that have been silenced for so long (...) but what's really needed is a complete paradigm shift (...) we must make sure that Jewish-American voices are not, as they have been in the past, regulating the terms of the discussion'.[4] We will now look at this geopolitically charged debate through the lens of cultural democracy and with the benefit of hindsight.

There are some remarkable and commendable attempts to rethink the terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the most critically acute and historically balanced efforts generate great controversy and often have to battle against censorship.[5] However, the example we consider here is important for different reasons which address the patronage and ownership of internal critique envisaged by Cyril Connolly in Britain in 1943 and quoted in our introduction. It is the award-winning documentary film 5 Broken Cameras released in 2011 and nominated for an Oscar in 2013. This film was co-directed by the Palestinian farmer/film-maker Emad Burnat, and the Israeli film-maker Guy Davidi. Their film punctures the myth that Palestinians are more deeply implicated in the use of violence than Israelis, and that non-violent action would be a more rational or effective expression of Palestinian rights. Conservative Israelis accuse Davidi of betrayal. The unmistakably Palestinian film charts the non-violent protests against an Israeli settler land grab in the Palestinian village of Bil'in. However, when nominated for an Oscar for the best feature documentary, the film was itself territorialised in the media when the Israeli Embassy in Washington claimed the film would represent Israel at the Oscars.

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[4] See Baltzer's debate with Norman Finkelstein filmed at the Vera List Centre on 10/06/12 at C-Span, https://www.c-span.org/video/?309751-1/knowing-much#!. Accessed on October 2022).

Davidi and Burnat rejected Israeli claims for the symbolic ownership of their film.[6] Burnat explains that when he approached Davidi to collaborate 'it was not a political decision' about making an Israeli-Palestinian film, rather Davidi supported him in making 'a Palestinian film'.[7] Both filmmakers also stress the importance of Burnat's personal account of his family life in the midst of non-violent protests that met with increasingly violent Israeli repression against the families in Bil'in. In the film's voiceover Burnat returns repeatedly to his torn feelings about his children's future and the imperative to make them politically aware for their own safety. In the process everyone's childhoods are erased. Burnat also makes acute remarks on political opportunism in the film:

> The Palestinian Authority doesn't consider my accent to be resistance-related. If you don't fit the resistance image, you're on your own. Lots of people use symbols for political profit. Whether it's a symbol of Bil'in, or the Palestinian State. Bil'in is attracting politicians of all

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[5] For a discussion of the issue of censorship, see Edward Said's discussion of his book The Last Sky in 'Edward Said, The Last Interview', by Charles Glass (2003) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxW0uJBWVIY. Accessed on October 2022).

[6] See *Huffington Post* article by Danny Shea, 11/02/13, *Five Broken Cameras' Directors: 'This Is A Palestinian Film',* https://www.huffpost.com/entry/5-broken-cameras-director_n_2662614 . Accessed on October 2022).

[7] *Five Broken Cameras*, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZU9hYIgXZw. Accessed on October 2022).

> stripes. I film Adeeb [a friend of Burnat] observing them from behind. I'm sure he doesn't like it. I'd rather be with the real rebels.

Davidi expands on the Israeli response to the film in a magazine interview:

> The Israeli Left likes to see 5 Broken Cameras as a film that points the finger of blame at Israeli society. This is also the strategy of Palestinian society, to point the finger at Israel. So, the whole discussion of the occupation is about guilt, which is very destructive. I'm saying there is no room for guilt. There is only room for taking responsibility. A lot of Israelis say it's so great that Israelis and Palestinians are working together – but then they go off and cry [about the occupation]. There is no place for tears and guilt here. Only taking responsibility.[8]

The issue of taking responsibility raised here cannot be confined to the rights and wrongs of this particular conflict, and we argue that it demands a paradigm shift about cultural decision making itself. The spurious dispute over the symbolic ownership of nationalist self-critique was made more complicated because the production and distribution of *5 Broken Cameras* was supported by an international network of organisations eager to share the credit for a documentary praised as a work of art. But what if the film had *not* been commissioned by an opaque group of film-funders, nor even by one of a very small number of self-consciously responsible and peace-loving mixed communities created in Israel; what if the making of the film had instead been supported by a jury made up of Israelis and Palestinians randomly assembled on the basis of their willingness to call for public-interest arts projects? Might the *readiness* of society we have discussed become more than a private commercial or stylistic question, but a fundamentally democratic one open to debate and further public deliberation? As academic commentators such as Berger and Nussbaum argue, the creation of artworks, including new symbols and memorials, may be significant dialogical mediations (Berger 1998; Nussbaum 2014), yet very little attention is given to the procedures that lead to their commissioning. Nor is there enough consideration of the very real difficulties in making audacious creative decisions. More than once it has been suggested that the tragic irony of *The Satanic Verses* affair was that Salman Rushdie and his supporters were persecuted and attacked by some of the very people Rushdie would have regarded as ideal readers, and with whom he wanted to create a dialogue (Fletcher 1994, 1–2). Therefore, we think the arts are a fitting place to test dialogical capacities, precisely because the history of

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[8] See 972 *Magazine* article by Lisa Goldman, 24/02/13, '5 Broken Cameras' director: There is no room for guilt – only taking responsibility. Available at: https://www.972mag.com/director-of-5-broken-cameras-there-is-no-room-for-guilt-only-taking-responsibility/. Accessed on October 2022.

State formation means that the words 'art and politics' fall together rather too easily. The couplet is casually adopted at the expense of the more incisive issue of art and democracy which poses radical questions about management, patronage, education, and self-promotion, not least for the New School in New York where Anna Baltzer made her acute comments.

The Prospects for Cultural Democracy

Given the historical fluidity of culture in the displacement of peoples, changes to territorial control and in commerce and trade, it is very doubtful that the public interest in the arts can still be narrowly defined by the local cults referred to by Huxley (op. cit). Moreover, existing research on public support in Britain for the randomised selection as a counterbalance to representative politics, points in a more ideologically complex direction. It is argued that the rise of right-wing populism signals the need for a return to the ancient democratic instrument of randomisation to protect modern democracy and the public interest (Chwalisz 2015). Rather than only voting or appointing people to positions of authority, the use of random selection by lot is recorded in Athens and in later political communities as an expression of equality. Various degrees of randomisation are thought to counteract the negative effects of competition for popularity and authority (Lopez-Rabatel & Sintomer 2020). In the UK, levels of public support for randomised selection in 2015 were generally above 50%, with the exception of traditional Conservative voters, and they also fall beneath 50% among the top and bottom earners in society (Chwalisz 2015, 40–60). The rich feel they lack time, while the disadvantaged lack confidence. About the latter, the research funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust argues that proper remuneration and other incentives are required, though no consideration is given to egalitarian educational reform.

We can begin here by defining culture as communication and process. Values are created through a variety of social processes, including performance, types of ritual and forms of dialogue. Many of these processes are instigated by educational institutions and cultural organisations or foundations developed from the eighteenth century onwards. Notwithstanding good intentions, political and financial patronage exposes values such as respect for civil and political liberties to what Darrow Schecter, a European political philosopher, calls 'exchange-based forms of politicisation' (Schecter 2000, 186). Schecter critiques liberalism's conflation of competition and equality, as if competition is an expression of equality and equality is only meaningful in relation to fair competition. The result, he argues, is that modern States defuse meaningful dialogue by legally codifying liberties in order to regulate competing private interests. In this process, liberties are stripped of much of their radical and public content. Anyone doubting the applicability of theory here might consider torture and other abuses discussed by Britain's former Law Lord Tom Bingham (1933–2010) in his (2010) book, *The Rule of Law*. Another valuable study is *What Price Liberty*?, Ben Wilson's acute historical analysis of Britain's legal steps forward, typically followed by larger steps backwards. Worth considering here for a moment, as an example of exchange-based politicisation, is the way censorship regimes have regulated and balanced the commercially competitive spiral between sex and violence. A certain sense of emancipation from sexual repression in the 1970s was squeezed back into a semi-illicit industry of pornographic self-exploitation, while the increasingly explicit representation of extreme violence was almost universally mainstreamed according to artistic standards. The result is countless celluloid hymns to violence and war. The 'Me Too' campaign exposed the normalisation of sexual harassment in the censorious creative industries, but only a tiny fraction of the public are aware of critical media research revealing how the defence and intelligence organisations mould thousands of film and TV scripts in return for assistance and access (Alford 2010; Alford & Secker 2017). The big question is how localised civil society responds to the State's codifying of liberties according to the logic of competing private interests played out at the international level.

As part of our pilot study examining the prospects for cultural democracy, a jury was randomly assembled from members of the public in Newcastle-upon-Tyne to commission a public-interest arts project. The jury was assembled by a member of the research team approaching every tenth passer-by at different points in the city, in relation to different social classes and ethnicities, until a minimum number of volunteers confirmed their willingness to serve as jurists over the extended and, at that point, rather uncertain period of the pilot project. This pilot project involves two face-to-face day-long jury meetings more than twelve months apart. No jury is a perfect representation of a society or a population, and according to our diversity scale – running from Type A (Very Homogenous) to Type F (Very Diverse) – the Newcastle jurors make up a Type E, (Moderately Diverse) jury.

At their first meeting, the jury of twelve adults decided by majority vote to commission a public-interest arts project on the theme of Video/Computer Gaming. Other possible themes the jury was asked to consider were Disease or the Ecosystem. Such meetings are facilitated by two members of the research team, who are careful not to promote their own opinions in the decision-making process. At the first jury meeting the facilitators introduced the three possible public-interest themes to the jury for their deliberation. However, in line with our methodology, the Newcastle jury were also asked to consider a hypothetical request for funding, designed by the researchers to stress-test public deliberation comparatively. Intended to be controversial, such hypothetical proposals also have the effect of 'warming up' the jury for further discussion and debate about real funding decisions. Because the hypothetical proposals are also debated by relatively homogenous focus groups included in our study, they allow us to make direct critical comparisons between the discussions of those groups, which include relatively expert groups, with the discussions of randomised public juries. Without such a comparative methodology, claims about the merits of expert or elite decision making versus the deliberative capacities of lay people cannot be tested, and would lack credibility.

On this occasion, our hypothetical proposal for comparative purposes concerned a municipal gallery exhibition devoted to Leni Riefenstahl's (1902–2003) commercially successful but critically controversial photo-essays about the traditional life of the Nuba people in Sudan. It has been forcefully argued that Riefenstahl's approach to Africans is consistent with her earlier Nazi propaganda work, particularly her ideas about Nuba beauty and superiority in comparison with other Africans (Sontag 1980). The two facilitators in Newcastle presented arguments for and against supporting Riefenstahl's exhibition, and so far, the same pro and contra arguments have also been debated by two focus groups; one was made up of immigrants and refugees in La Seyne sur Mer in France, and the other was a group of MA students in Creative and Cultural Industries Management in Newcastle. By comparison with the randomised jury, the focus groups were relatively homogenous in terms of their members' ages and in that they already knew one another and had shared interests, either because of their common situation as foreigners in France, or because of their specialist studies in England. Both focus groups voted very strongly and almost unanimously *against* hosting the Riefenstahl exhibition in a municipal gallery. By contrast the randomised jury from Newcastle voted almost unanimously *for* hosting the exhibition *on condition* that publicly employed curators should put Riefenstahl's work in a critical context. This option of critical curatorship was not one of those suggested in the pro and contra arguments we presented for the hypothetical proposal and emerged entirely from the jury discussion itself.

Within our research team we have a variety of opinions or viewpoints, and we avoid influencing the outcome of such debates, whether they are hypothetical ones or real funding decisions. What is most intriguing about the jurors' deliberation in our pilot study is, first, the autonomy of their reasoning in relation to arguments we presented for and against a Riefenstahl exhibition and, secondly, the sharp contrast with the decisions of the two more homogenous focus groups that debated the same hypothetical proposal for a Riefenstahl show. *Comparison here suggests that open jury deliberation favours a critical public culture more than the governance impulse to censor, or the marketplace impulse to promote.* From our historical perspective as researchers, we note that authoritarianism dynamically combines censorship and self-promotion, and unfortunately criticism in the arts and letters swings back and forth with an unseemly haste to accommodate whoever or whatever is in power (Riding 2010; Saunders 1999). With this issue in mind, our initial research results give us some reason to believe that randomised juries could strengthen the critical autonomy, accountability, and relevance of cultural institutions if the assembly of such juries is more widely adopted and further developed.

After lunch, during the first jury meeting, the facilitators read out the background arguments for each of the three public commissioning themes, and an initial vote was taken before jurists went on to debate the merits of each. Although their initial vote to commission work on the theme of Video/Computer Gaming was confirmed in their second vote, it is worth noting that the jury included the general issue of the ecosystem in their call to artists, thereby combining two of the proposed themes. The jurors drafted a call to artists internationally for a creative project in any medium or form, (including game design itself) that

> compares power, domination and the glorification of violence in the invented worlds of gaming with everyday life and reality. Are malevolent invented worlds a consequence of a lack of control and collective material investment in the physical world we inhabit? How far do the invented realities of gaming actually underpin social isolation and ecological catastrophe?

The jurors' published call for artists' project proposals goes on to mention some of the background issues of the aesthetics of game design they discussed. At the time of writing this article, their international call for proposals is to be published online with an offer of £8000 to be awarded by the jury at their second face-to-face meeting.[9] The online portal for submissions provides members of the public and interested parties with the opportunity to comment on the commissioning theme or on artists' submissions. So instead of people acting behind the scenes to lobby expert appointees, experts and all interested parties might communicate their views openly to such public juries. To protect jurors from unwanted personal attention, they remain anonymous in this process, although in the interests of transparency and further discussion, details of the social make-up of the jury will be published at the time of their award.

Conclusion

Ultimately the development of the alternative communicative processes explored above, goes beyond personal or professional valuations of 'good art'. Rather, by defining the public interest dialogically, democratic ethics offer a fundamentally different and more critically reflexive basis for artistic and cultural work. Such democratic processes may generate vital jolts that combine equality and pluralism. In his book *Aspirational Fascism*, the US political scientist William Connolly (2017) argues that such jolts are needed to counter the temptations of an exclusionary plebiscitary style democracy in the United States, mobilised very effectively by Donald Trump. However, whether any jolts of equality and pluralism can be effective without a major egalitarian jolt to education remains an open question. Educational achievements, judged by the self-deceptive standards of meritocracy, dignify declining standards overall and perpetuation of class inequalities across generations (Young 1994). This egregious situation is the case in most countries beyond Scandinavia. Yet in those countries too, where militant labour movements made considerable egalitarian gains, a so-called 'halo effect' means that values of equality and pluralism are eroded as imagined, rather than actual contact, with ethnic minorities is turned into support for the far-right (Teitelbaum 2019). Studies suggest that a certain social and physical distance from *the other,* rather than actual contact and practical dialogue, heightens the politics of fear and distrust, hence the reference to a negative 'halo' around ethnically mixed communities and urban areas. Nevertheless, the now classic sociological study by Elias and Scotson (1965) looking at prejudices *within* a white English working-class community is much more telling. Their study shows how ethnically identical newcomers were unfairly disparaged by the older more established families in the district. Entitled *The Established and the Outsiders,* this study suggests that insider prejudices may be gradually replaced by new ones aimed at new outsiders, and in this way, communities lend themselves an internal moral coherency which they actually lack. These distortions at the level of territorial micropolitics are not disconnected from larger questions of sovereignty and international relations we have touched on. The same distortions are magnified by religious extremists and far-right movements, the latter adopting Renaud Camus's theory of 'the great replacement' – the thinly disguised racist polemic from France which may be readily interpreted as a call for civil wars (c.f. Chaouat 2019).

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[9] A webpage to facilitate public discussion of artists' applications for the commission is under construction by the BxNU Institute at Northumbria University at the time of writing. See hosting.northumbria.ac.uk/bxnugamecall.

Traditionally, trade unionism, socialist internationalism, and other egalitarian movements have sought to overcome self-defeating communitarian fractures, but even the most scrupulously organised parties or movements cannot effectively articulate the equality principle when people come together precisely because they share ideologies or values. If equality and deliberation are to be more meaningful, they cannot depend on such obvious self-selection and exclusions. For the jolts of equality and pluralism we have considered here as a form of cultural democracy to be effective, they need to be significantly multiplied. Scaled up and loosely connected they could support integration from below via practical and meaningful public decision making carried out by people with significantly different experiences, perceptions and standpoints.

Our initial findings substantiate previous research on opinion formation suggesting the importance of face-to-face encounters as opposed to online dialogues and surveys (Rutter & Carter 2018). With this proviso, which applies particularly to jury meetings, our research also corresponds with Elias's arguments for the necessity of civilised controversy as a means of countering civilisational arrogance. However, talking shops directed at citizens with time to spare do not begin to address the dialogues we envisage for genuine cultural democracy. Hence, we advocate for randomisation and reasonable remuneration for the time gifted by jurors. A major impediment to such democratic innovations, which otherwise enjoy considerable levels of public support, are the customs and habits of representation, intra-elite dialogue and patronage. These impediments are all reflected in the foundations of aesthetic philosophy, and they demand materialist investigation and analysis.

In this article we considered State formation through the lens of aesthetics as an integral, if underestimated, aspect of the modern Western model of democracy. The disintegration of long-established States is always a possibility. While the threat of disintegration may recede during prolonged periods of political stability, it does not do so all by itself. As with sport, the arts help consecrate national consciousness and are often deployed to cosmetically patch-up policy failures, or to rhetorically reconcile fractures of class, culture, or religion (Belfiore 2009). While this could be regarded as a relatively benign aesthetic function, it falls far short of the sort of integration from below that accompanied the historical development of labour movements. We should also bear in mind that political power is not a zero-sum game, the use of soft power does not necessarily mean that the use of hard powers and violence diminish. Whether a State is nominally democratic, authoritarian, or totalitarian, governments still need to manage, contain, or repress internal conflicts, and each response demands the incorporation of elites and the use of soft forms of power in culture and education.

Rather than distributing knowledge, dialogue can also be used to acquire knowledge and power over others. Therefore, the basic issues of who, where, when, and about what ought to be very carefully considered from an egalitarian perspective before lauding the accomplishments of dialogue. The history of aesthetics shows how important dialogues are problematically contained and streamlined by the arts and letters feeding into a wider promotional culture. Patronage tends to shape critique so that even the most valid and pertinent types of dialogue take the form of organisational or personal self-promotion. While this may be unavoidable in a capitalist world economy, it does mean that the management of dialogue ought to be a key critical question. For that to happen, a greater degree of intellectual modesty may be required from scholars who, otherwise, overload the word dialogue with a wholly positive theoretical significance not to be found in ordinary definitions of the word. However, if one accepts the management of dialogue as a key issue, the ancient principle of randomising representation and deliberation does hold out hope for the deepening of democratic culture in the twenty-first century. Such forms of dialogue are insufficient, but they are indispensable.

Coda: The Cult of Decisionism

Economists have registered the increasing concentration of wealth within the upper one percent of elite incomes. Thomas Piketty (2014) argues that available data corresponds with the return of a patrimonial form of capitalism. This merits interpretation in terms of patronage politics given that the resistance to progressive taxation, on the part of business leaders and the most wealthy, offers the economic elite the opportunity of a virtuous circle: Lower taxation means increased profit margins, which means increased capacity for giving, which means increased influence over public policy decisions (including matters of taxation). Such a virtuous circle represents a long-standing cult of decisionism – the historical obsession with powers of individual decision making and discernment. This deserves further attention since it represents a major impediment to a culture of democratic deliberation.

In his *Social History of Art* Arnold Hauser (1892–1978) outlines how the concept of 'genius' developed during the war-torn Italian Renaissance. The concept put the self-referential artist at one remove from both science and God, allowing him to become a quasi-sovereign power in his own right. In this historical context gifted artists could afford to be opponents as well as the accomplices of princes and popes (Hauser 1962, 59–61). Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) combined the notions of inspired artist and autocratic genius with the dictum; 'Rules are not the source of poetry, but poetry is the source of rules' (Ibid., 117). In the modern epoch, Huxley rightly treats with caution this long-standing artistic 'will to order', since it turns the artist's need for communication with a critical public into the public's presumed need for enlightenment by critical artists (cf. Huxley 1958, 22–23). Reinforced by the Enlightenment's rejection of superstition and criticisms of feudal inefficiencies, Western aesthetics spawned the possibility of creative decisions on the part of artists and writers assisting or even creating social harmony, just at the moment when universal male suffrage and a popular mandate in France threatened the entire hierarchy of decision making as it had been understood until then.

In 1797, the radical egalitarians Gracchus Babeuf (1760–1797) and his associates were put on trial for subversion, and once condemned they became the victims of their own revolution. Babeuf defended their proto-communist beliefs on the basis of the massive popular vote supporting the revolutionary Montagnard Constitution of 1793 suspended in the same year. They were all too clear about what they considered to be the source of subsequent anti-democratic restraints in their declaration: 'Let all the arts perish, if need be, as long as real equality remains!' (Buonarroti 1796). A little more than a century later this controversial statement became the polar opposite of everything fascism stood for, particularly the Italian Futurist's war-mongering manifesto to put art first and let the world perish (*fiat ars – pereat mundus*) (Marinetti 1909; cf. Benjamin1936). In an effort to bring art, advertising, and politics closer together, the Futurists pioneered a cult of decisionism which made sense in all three areas where the fascination with individual creativity and decisive leadership already existed. Although their political influence within Italian Fascism declined, the Futurists co-authored classical fascism, and artists from all creative practices helped to create a hybrid culture which outlived Fascism's defeat in 1945. In 1925 Mussolini had defined the totalitarian system as 'everything within the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State' (Morgan 2004, 97). Artists understood that if this corporatist State was to be culturally palatable it would have to draw in the energies of a range of fiercely competing interests: political energies had to be given opportunities to promote themselves, albeit only at a tightly controlled symbolic level. This classical fascist strategy is still articulated by CasaPound movement in Italy (see Froio et al. 2020). More significantly though, it remains a key to mainstream marketing discourse. Although marketers do not openly claim to incorporate everything and leave nothing outside the market, they do promise to make the egalitarian critique of markets marketable, or at least to adopt them as part of the promotion of institutions, organisations, and enterprises with their own niche market interests. This supposedly virtuous circle appears to lead to distrust and cynicism, since it may well be perceived as a vicious circle created by a self-serving liberalism operating at a symbolic level and stripped of social content. What is clear is that the political far-right regards public fatigue with a mixture of market-failure and State-failure as political fertiliser. In such conditions, beliefs in a plebiscitary democracy, led by decisive leaders exhibiting intolerance for minority rights, might be revived.

If the aesthetic history we have briefly summarised seems too abstract, we should remind ourselves of the vast sums of money spent on the smallest design decisions. For example, hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money are spent on civic logos, such as the now abandoned 'Belfast B.' The existence of such extraordinarily expensive and unpopular design projects is indicative of the depth of a cult of decisionism, adhered to jointly by elected representatives and professionals in the arts. A fraction of the public funds spent in these highly questionable ways could support the social design of countless public-interest arts projects based on the democratic principles we have discussed. In this sense one of the impediments to deliberation might be one of the means to overcome it. Now, more than twenty years since its publication, Naomi Klein's best-selling manifesto against consumer capitalism, *No Logo*, is viewed, at once, as an authentic radical statement of its time, translated into more than thirty languages, and an obvious political failure which possibly encouraged 'more tasteful shopping decisions' rather than more democracy.10 However, the egalitarian failure is not that PepsiCo reportedly expects to project its product logos into the night sky from outer space. Rather the lesson that might be drawn here is that apparently egalitarian and democratic manifestos flounder when their impact is measured by symbolic victories in publishing markets. An actual praxis of equality and pluralism is needed.

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10 See Dan Hancox interview with Naomi Klein in The Observer, 11/O8/19, 'No Logo at 20: have we lost the battle against the total branding of our lives?' at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/11/no-logo-naomi-klein-20-years-on-interview (Last accessed October 2022).

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