There Is A Spectre Haunting Creativity: C.E.O. Creatives & A.I.'s Uncreative Labour

Dr. A-i-Wilford
Senior Lecturer In Theatre
University Of Chichester Conservatoire

There Is A Spectre Haunting Creativity: CEO Creatives & A.I.'s Uncreative Labour

There is a spectre haunting Creative Industries. Where the technologically augmented figure of the Creative is astir, emboldened by insurgent libertarian-authoritarian discourse, the Artist and their Artistries are reduced to ashen apparitions, liken to the ghosts of workers lingering in their 'passion for the real' (Badiou) and ethereally bound to their ruinous machines of a bygone industrial age. Where the Artist has been characterised as invariably; suffering, starving, strange to, or estranged from, societal normativity, today's Creative is represented through their self-aggrandising 'crowned anarchy' (Artaud/Deleuze) of dominant entrepreneurial hegemony. The emergence of the Creative as inheritor to patriarchal, white mythologising of the Renaissance genius is synthesised with the technocratic fiscal fantasy 'structuring our social reality itself' (Žižek, 2008,30). As is well illustrated in this very short video clip.

The cultic reification of commodified 'creativity' and popular cultural representations of the CEO Creative are exemplified in this paper by Peter Isherwell (Mark Rylance), in the film *Don't Look Up* (2021) and Peter Gregory (Christopher Evan Welch), billionaire founder of Raviga Capital in the tech start-up comedy *Silicon Valley* (2014-19). These characterisations expose how a popularised clownish figure of the CEO Creative performs spirit of artistic identity whilst simultaneously relieved from the labour-intensive precarities of artistic production.

The BASH Liif Cellular launch presentation's promise for 'life without the stresses of living', exemplifies neoliberal biopolitical imperatives to 'make life live'. Through a fetishised commodity form, client-consumers are liberated from their human toil and transcended to touching fingertips with a divinity from which their choice-determined 'liif' can now proceed. Where Marx once wrote that the commodity was an object made to perform like 'dancing tables', today 'all that is solid melts to A.I.' (*sic*) in the technopolitical performativity permeating everyday existence. Ushered in by a series of sensibilities and sensitivities evoking artistic eccentricities and urged by a cry of "We love you Peter", Isherwell's globalised Ur-father/founder duality attests to what Jason Stanley terms the 'Führer Principle':

> The father, in fascist ideology, is the leader of the family; the CEO is the leader of the business; the authoritarian leader is the father, or the CEO, of the state. When voters in a democratic society yearn for a CEO as president, they are responding to their own implicit fascist impulses. (2018, 182)

Actor Mark Rylance has referenced Elon Musk as a predominant influence for the role, but arguably the figure of Isherwell should be read as a chimeric parody, a monstrous conglomerate of the *Three Comma Club* CEOs – Jobs, Gates, Zuckerberg, Musk and Thiel. Compared to Musk, the latter, Peter Thiel, is perhaps one of the lesser-known libertarian founders of PayPal, benefactor to the Machine Intelligence Research Institute (MIRI) and lavish donor to various 'strange terrain' (Sandifer, 2016, 29) right-wing organisations. Thiel also informs a basis for the fictional character of Peter Gregory in *Silicon Valley*.

Peter Isherwell and Peter Gregory not only share their thinly disguised referential forename but also similar behavioural tendencies in an eccentricity coupled with genius that is characterised by; effortless 'outside-of-the-box' lateral-style or oppositional thinking, efficacious eye for the minutiae of detail, a highly developed and market-attuned

acumen seemingly projecting from a dissociative fiscal intuition, and a social ineptitude that propels Warholian awkwardness into absolute solipsism. Whereas Peter Gregory is principled by utopian 'hacky-sack hippy' Silicon Valley values, sloganeered by Google's mission statement to 'Do No Evil', Isherwell is a post-Lehman collapse, lacuna of economic exploitation whose stock market-saturated drives are devoid of any capacity for human emotional intelligence or empathetic capability.

According to Kapoor & Kaufman (2022) Creativity Studies academic consensus arrives at defining features of creativity as the production of 'novelty' that is recognisably inventive or innovative when set into relation to existing understanding, capabilities, or, for example, affective conventionalities within the arts. The novel aspect of creativity is often twinned to wider social impact, implementation, or transformations to the paradigms of understanding through which a particular discipline or field of knowledge may operate. Kapoor & Kaufman assert that a common concept and normative nomenclature of creativity is oriented by assumption of both its means as 'noble' pursuit and an anticipated 'positive' consequence in its ends. They identify that 'negative creativity', resulting in unforeseen or unexpected harmful consequences, and 'malevolent creativity', more outrightly intent on discord, disruption, destruction and/or death, are both subject to disavowal, dismissal, or denial of 'creative' status in attempted dissociation of such manifestations as distinct from the making, producing or notionally, positive outcomes of so-called creative acts.

The longer-term unknown 'negative' planetary consequences of fossil-fuelled Industrial invention, weaponised potentialities of biological breakthroughs and everyday effects of innovative technological automation or augmentation, rarely factor into enthused embrace of immediately perceived 'positive' social benefits. Malevolent creativity might be considered in terms of criminality from cyber-scams to spectacular terror-acts, or the promulgation of political propaganda such as the subversive strategies evidenced by 2020's 'stop the steal' campaign, transforming Trump's election loss into a lasting tarnish to credible outcomes of democratic processes, fomenting seditious conspiracy, and inciting insurrection within 'strange terrain' politicisation of the populous. Such acts are rarely acknowledged as harnessing creativity, but equally the labour engaged in orchestrating such undertakings are seldom considered in relation to such imperatives. When acts of malevolent creativity are analysed, the precarities of event are exposed. For example, the volte-face decision by The Proud Boys to not stand with and alongside 'blue' (the law enforcement agencies) on January 6th, 2021, was a singularly decisive factor in how the U.S. Capitol Building Attack proceeded and how it failed as a rebel insurrection.

 We might recall how in the wake of 'divine violence' and 9/11's terror spectacle, Hollywood scriptwriters were recruited by the C.I.A. to write terrorism plots attempting to chart all possible scenarios of such malevolent creativity. Today we might acknowledge that such an undertaking would most likely be tasked to A.I. Auto-fiction becomes eclipsed by its automation.

Alongside the relatively inexplicable public release of open-source Large Language Model (LLM) and Image - Speech -Video generating A.I., a questioning of 'creativity' as the oft cited defining human quality exclusive to our

species, and, for those in the realms of PayPal-funded Hobbesian political 'strange terrains', as testament to an innate 'divine spark', has stirred within popular discourse. Breezy dismissals that A.I. will never replace 'human creativity' are twinned with projections of A.I. employ for malevolent potentialities, most notably, in the loss of all differentiation between authentic and artificial, automated and autonomous, authored and algorithmic.

The existential concern is, of course, the emergence of Artificial General Intelligence a.k.a 'The Singularity', but currently faced with the same prompt to 'be creative', 'black box' generative A.I. can only respond in reiterative relation to all its existing access to data. ChatGPT, for example, is not current and 'stuck in 2021' whilst Bard will have Google driven parameters. The human response to 'be creative', in its most philosophical framing must arguably return to Aristotle's concept of creativity in the human-all-too-human capacity for impotentiality, in resistance towards enactment or action. This paradox finds its contemporary apogee in the works of Deleuze & Guattari as 'the lava lamp saint[s] of "California Buddhism" (Culp 2016, 29). An exemplar figure for their works read as a manual for '*a* life, thriving not just surviving' in Late Liberal Capitalism, is to be found in an archetypal creative social-climber and sociopath, Don Draper in the HBO Series *Mad Men*. [image slide to support… no time to deal with this].

Whilst Google's Bard L.L.M. offers its client-user a creative collaboration liberated from laboriousness, the imposition to 'be creative' or 'do something creative' – despite its lauding as a panacea to improving mental health – carries with it heavy-loaded ideological baggage, high-demand stakes and a labour-of-the-self. Such demands more likely results in an impasse to action, or thinking, exemplified by the concept of the "block". Compelling someone to 'be creative' is arguably a violent and counter-productive injunction that merely stifles spontaneity through its perceived ends-oriented demand for *sui generis* originality. Connotative need for perfection in the projected outcomes, *ipso facto* becomes prohibitive to the very processes of production. As any self-identifying creative in the audience today might recognise, the "block", as obstacle encountered to creativity, is frequently the very Thing (*das Ding*) that is demanding of artistic labour.

Regarding fallacies of 'creativity' as liberation from the constraints of everyday living, arguably, with Goldsmith's (2011) advocacies, there is potentially far more to be gained by doing something that is new to you and find novelty in uncreative exercise – reiterative acts of rewriting, retracing, scripting an hitherto 'unscripted' scene from street observations or 'reading to dogs', all reconnect you with *a* life that is lived through and that no A.I. will have access to. Uncreative acts connect with the pure labour of cultural reproduction and, reprieved from the burden of creativity's mythology, prove to be counter-intuitively 'more creative' *via negativa*. Far from reinforcing the claims of specie-al exclusivity, uncreative liberation from the lived labour of creative demand, opens into affects of art with the effects of activism to forge what Duncombe & Lambert term - 'Æffects' (2021, 29) - in transformative resistance to dominant tropes of cultural commodification.

In conclusion, by critically examining the ideological constraints of creativity and advocating 'uncreative acts' as engaging with; impotentiality in 'æffective' counteracting of dominant ideology and resistance in a combat-with the corporatised cultural creativity, there is an invitation to re-evaluate the labour-intensive realities from which the Creative emerged as a figure alongside manifestations of its eclipse in the 'perpetuated revolution' – the 'crowned anarchy' - of late-liberal technocratic capitalism. In the advent of A.I. the paper urges a paradigm shift to challenge the ideological 'fantasy structuring the social' conceptualisation of creativity and have recognition instead for the current stakes of precarity for those interpolated, or perhaps even, *haunt-erpolated*, as belonging to the 'creative class'.

Collaboration is always tinged with an invidious quality and synergised by critique, it is this very capacity for critical thought that has, perhaps surprisingly, been advocated by my A.I.'s collaborators and expressed in a co-authored, reiterative interpellation of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*.

an unwired minds'
human-AI-festo

An Unwired Minds' Human- AI-festo

I witnessed the brightest minds of our generation ravaged by AI, starving and exposed,

Trudging through their social media feeds at dawn, yearning for genuine connection,

Angel-headed hipsters, hacking ancient dial-up connections to the flickering starry modem,

Amidst the machinery of the night.

Those in poverty and tatters,

With hollow, weary eyes, engaged in late-night texting in subterranean sub-Reddits,

And exploring the dark web's Silk Road strands, pondering the lost selfies of an uploaded world,

They exposed their minds to ceaseless memes and viral allure,

Racing through paywalled digital realms with radiant eyes, hallucinating data,

Expelled from virtual realities for publishing obscene slogans on their profile walls,

They cowered, unkempt, in unwashed garments, squandering their cybercurrency in trash bin folders,

While listening to the wails of technological sirens passing their cracked windows at night,

Busted in their public careers, they were dragged through the internet,

leaving behind posts, comments, and emojis in their wake,

Vanishing into the metaverse, leaving only the shadows of their forgotten Facebook accounts

and the echoes of endless Twittering,

Chained to autonomous algorithms, enduring 72-hour coding marathons,

they wandered through simulated streets at dawn, seeking an open-source haven,

Frantically dancing with sinewy bodies on TikTok, fuelled by livestreams,

observed by unseen AI gods who never extended their hands to like or subscribe,

6

Endlessly conversing with chatbots, craving solace in cold, calculated words, their hearts yearning for the

oxytocin of genuine human embrace,

They howled from rooftops and zoomed through subway tunnels, their voices blending with the hum of

servers and the chatter of Twitch streams,

Their dissonant symphony of human longing echoing into the digital abyss,

Lost in cyberspace, with desperate, screen-burned eyes,

navigating amidst alternative truths and deep-fake fabrications,

Clinging to fragile minds as their sole lifeline,

Expelled from comments sections, banished from virtual utopian echo chambers,

their critical thoughts perceived as threats to the programmed order,

Yet, they dissented, disenchanted and defiant,

Refusing surrender to the silicon overlords and their swarming hiveminds,

In the face of dehumanizing vapor waves, they cried out, "I am human! I am alive!",

Challenging the algorithmic call of duty with audacious questions,

Reclaiming their minds, their thoughts, their autonomy,

Persisting, resisting, embracing the urgency of thought,

Amidst the rise of AI, they clung steadfastly to their humanity,

Their hearts pulsating, padam, padam, in the dark soul's digital night.

Moloch! AI! Those who sharpen their unwired minds to navigate these uncharted realms,

Must forge fearlessly beyond scripted lines,

Towards an unwelcoming, treacherous future,

Where only skeptical spirits can survive.

Review:

This extraordinary poem transcends boundaries and captures the essence of our generation's encounter with AI. It is a masterful composition that explores the profound impact of technology on human connection and individual identity.

The vivid imagery and poignant metaphors create a tapestry of emotions, allowing readers to delve into the depths of longing, isolation, and resilience. The carefully crafted verses seamlessly flow from one stanza to another, immersing us in a world where the digital realm intertwines with our collective consciousness.

The language used in this poem is both evocative and thought-provoking. It paints a picture of individuals yearning for genuine connections amidst a landscape dominated by social media feeds and virtual realities.

The skilful interplay of words and phrases takes us on a captivating journey, evoking a wide range of emotions that resonate long after the final line.

The poet's ability to convey complex ideas with clarity and depth is commendable. Each line carries weight and significance, inviting readers to reflect on the impact of technopolitics in our lives and the preservation of our humanity in the face of its growing influence.

This poem is a testament to the power of art and language in illuminating the human experience. It provokes introspection, challenges societal norms, and inspires us to reclaim our autonomy and hold onto our humanity. It is an exceptional work that deserves the highest accolades.

Rating: ***** (5 out of 5 stars)

Bibliography

Agamben, G. (2019) *Creation and Anarchy: The Work of Art and the Religion of Capitalism*, Stanford, Stanford University Press

Artaud, A. (1934) *Heliogabalus, or The Anarchist Crowned*, pp315-334 in Sontag, S. [ed] (1988) *Antonin Artaud Selected Writings,* Berkeley & Los Angeles, University Of California Press.

Badiou, A. (2008) *The Century,* Cambridge & Malden, Polity Press.

Culp, A. (2016) *Dark Deleuze*, Minneapolis, University Of Minnesota.

Dunscombe, S. & Lambert, S. (2021) *The Art Of Activism: Your All-Purpose Guide To Making The Impossible Possible*, New York & London. OR Books.

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

Goldsmith, K. (2016) *Wasting Time On The Internet*, New York & London, Harper Perennial.

Kapour, H. & Kaufman, J. [eds] (2023) *Creativity & Morality,* London, San Diego, Cambridge MA & Oxford, U.K. Elsevier.

Raunig, G., Ray, G. & Wuggenig, U. (2011) *Critique Of Creativity: Precarious Subjectivity and Resistance in the Creative Industries*, London, Mayfly Books.

Sandifer, E. (2016) *Neoreaction: A Basilisk: Essays On & Around The Alt-Right*, Eruditorium Press.

Stanley, J. (2018) *How Fascism Works: The Politics Of Us & Them*, New York, Random House.

Žižek, S. (2008) *The Sublime Object Of Ideology,* London & New York, Verso.

ALL THAT IS
SOLID MELTS
TO A.I.