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Diffracting Through Media:
An exploration of the performative and a diffractive reading of media texts

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the development of the notion of performativity. This exploration is used to develop and apply a diffractive methodology to media texts in order to assess the usefulness of the diffractive method in its application to Media Studies. In the first part of this thesis, a review of literature on various interpretations of the performative notion is conducted. In the second part of this thesis, elements of these interpretations are brought together to construct a diffractive methodological framework. This diffractive methodology is then tested on the work of two authors of media texts, the magazine *Adbusters* and the street artist Banksy, in order to gauge its effectiveness when applied to texts which incorporate elements of diffraction. In the third part of this thesis, the diffractive methodology is applied to news media outlets' interpretations of the media event *The Moment of Truth*, a press conference aimed at revealing the truth to the public about government mass surveillance in New Zealand. The fourth part of this thesis assesses how effective the diffractive methodology was in this application, and the questions that arise from the use of this method. Whilst there are some concerns about the responsible use of the method by researchers, the application of a diffractive methodology to these media texts was successful in creating new readings and insights, and provides an alternative to traditional methods within media studies.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of performativity in academia is seemingly far removed from Austin's introduction of the concept in linguistics. Many theorists such as Butler and Barad have developed the concept of performativity and applied it within a myriad of different disciplines, with some of these applications having significant impact on both academic theory and the way we view the world. Situating my research within this body of work, I plan to further develop the concept of performativity in order to explore a different means of interpretation and method of analysis for media. I will then test this method, applying it to the case study of news media, and consider whether or not this means of analysis is useful for the purpose of engaging with news media.

In order to do this, it is necessary to look at previous discussion surrounding the topic. Regarding performativity, it is important to look at what it is and what it is not, what it was and what it has become, and how it can be applied to varying circumstances and disciplines. However, when analysing the work of Austin, Butler, Barad, Lamontagne, it becomes clear that further understanding and development of the performative is inherently linked to other concepts and theories. For instance, Lamontagne's thoughts on the performative relationship between the human and non-human (Lamontagne, 2012) warrants further investigation, which leads to the idea of active externalism as discussed by Clark & Chalmers (Clark & Chalmers, 1998). Furthermore, in order to better understand performativity as a paradigm of sorts, it is important to also look at representationalism, to provide both context and counterpoint to the performative as a way of thinking. Barad's work on post-human performativity (Barad, 2003) raises questions about intra-action, phenomena and apparatus. The work of

DeLanda (DeLanda, 2006) and Bryant (Bryant, 2014) addresses both of these, expanding on the representationalist approach as opposed to the performative, and expounding upon the ontological connotations of these frameworks. Both DeLanda and Bryant provide a more holistic alternative to the coupling of phenomena and apparatus in the form of assemblage (DeLanda) and the machine (Bryant). The assemblage and the machine are DeLanda's and Bryant's respective names for the concept that includes all entities, living and non-living.

However, performativity and assemblage are not the only two important concepts that inform my own theory. Barad's work leads to the idea of diffraction, which is an approach based on the notion of light passing through a slit and creating an outgoing pattern different to the incoming one. Barad uses this concept as a metaphor for the coupling of apparatus and phenomena, and this metaphor (though under different names dependent on the theorist) is present throughout much of the theory surrounding performativity, representationalism and assemblage. Diffraction is not only something that informs the theoretical basis of my own work, but also the method in which it is implemented. This is illustrated by van der Tuin in her reading of Bergson and Barad, in which she uses a diffractive method to propose new interpretations of existing theory (van der Tuin, 2011).

At its core, the purpose of my study aligns with van der Tuin's intentions of proposing new interpretations with diffraction. Though a diffractive methodology is something that is most often referred to in philosophical disciplines, it is rarely discussed in regards to media. The aim of this research is to make the case for the use of a diffractive methodology in analysing and interpreting media, using the case study of a particular news media event. I feel

that a diffractive methodology presents, an option that is simple in its application and significant in the results it produces. Diffractive methodologies have been applied throughout other disciplines, such as philosophy, physics and gender studies, by the likes of Barad (2003) and van der Tuin (2011). I feel that a diffractive methodology when applied to media has great potential to produce new kinds of readings as opposed to the visual, discursive or semiotic analyses that media is more often read through. The diffractive methodology provides an option that takes the intra-action between assemblages into account, providing a means of analysis that allows for greater contextual interpretation of performances. My role, my performance as a researcher, is to develop, investigate and apply these new options. First, the methodology will be tested on non-news media, a trial run of sorts simply to gauge its general effectiveness, as well as focusing on particular aspects established by the theoretical alignments that I have developed.

This approach makes my study more able to identify whether or not the methodology is only successful when applied to some specific forms of media, or whether it can be applied more generally. The subjects I have chosen for this are anti-capitalist, non-profit organisation Adbusters and the anonymous street artist Banksy. I have chosen these specific case studies as I feel that my methodology can be effective when applied to them, due to the performative, intra-active and diffractive nature of the approaches taken by this organisation and artist respectively.

In regards to news media, I feel a diffractive methodology can play an important role in inspecting the way in which news outlets operate. I believe it can help researchers make observations in the way the news media performs a role informing the public on current events. Barad's diffractive metaphor and the

concept of the assemblage allow for a more distinct comparison between the assemblages of the actual events and the performance of those events, and the effect of that performance in changing the assemblage of the event, than a simple textual analysis would. The focus is not on what the report says, but on what the report does. In order to demonstrate this, I have taken three reports from three of New Zealand's largest media outlets on *The Moment of Truth* (2014), an event held by New Zealand political party the Internet Party. The event was aimed at exposing mass surveillance activities on New Zealanders by both domestic and international security agencies, specifically the New Zealand GCSB and the American NSA. The event took place just five days before the 2014 New Zealand general election, which naturally generated a significant amount of attention from both the media and the general public, and already suggests a motivation implicit in the utilisation of these reports. My research aims to look at how this event was performed in the media using a diffractive methodology, by analysing the reports on the event from television news and current events shows *Breakfast* and *Firstline*, and the newspaper *The New Zealand Herald*, through the lens of the original event, accessing it by watching the event in full in its original video form on YouTube, in order to find new interpretations.

I will then reflect on the outcomes of my research and how it is situated within the diffractive method. I will assess the effectiveness of the method in achieving the goal I have set, and whether or not that makes it a suitable option for application within media studies. I will also look at the role of the researcher and the way I utilised the diffractive method, from a performative stance. Furthermore I will examine the performance of the researcher as an agent in

developing ideas of performativity and diffraction, and the opportunities and limitations that are entailed within that performance.

In the first chapter, the literature review, I will explore literature related to theoretical approaches to performativity, including work on active externalism, assemblage, posthumanist performativity and onto-cartography. In the second chapter I will use this literature to construct a methodological framework based on some of the key elements in these various theories, and come to an understanding of where diffraction and the diffractive methodology fit within this theoretical frame. I will then test this methodology on the case studies of Adbusters and Banksy. These case studies are utilised to help recognise whether the diffractive method is a useful means of analysis for media, as both case studies use a form of the diffractive method in their own work. In the third chapter I will apply this diffractive methodology to a specific event in news media, that is the way *The Moment of Truth* was performed and diffracted by news outlets, and consider whether any new or significant readings have been discovered by applying a diffractive method to this case study. In the fourth and final chapter I will reflect on the success of my research, on the diffractive methodology and on my performance as a researcher; creating new patterns myself by diffracting and being diffracted by the research process.

CHAPTER ONE:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Performativity as an academic concept has developed rapidly since Austin (1967) first introduced the idea of a performative utterance in linguistics. Since Butler (1990) put forward the idea of gender performativity, an application of the concept focused on gender within feminist and queer theory, performativity has been used in a variety of contexts and disciplines. These include Lamontagne's work on wearable technology (Lamontagne, 2012) and the relationship between the human and non-human, to Barad's work on material discourse and the power of language (Barad, 2003). The idea of performativity is wide reaching and has the potential for varied applications. However, this kind of multiple application can also be problematic, clouding the definition of the concept and making it more difficult to grasp its full scope. It is useful to go back to the roots of what performativity suggests and analyze its merits in various applications in order to develop the underlying motivation and relate it to other frameworks that it confronts. Both the development of performativity by the likes of Barad and Lamontagne, and arguments involving a more representational motivation from the likes of DeLanda, must be explored. Concepts such as active externalism, assemblage and diffraction are directly related to these developments of performativity. Understanding these ideas is crucial in order to create a credible basis for constructing a framework that might suggest this different means of engagement.

1.1 Performativity: From Austin and Butler to Lamontagne and Barad

The concept of performativity has its roots in linguistics, with the idea of a “performative utterance” – where saying something meant doing something as opposed to just describing reality (Austin, 1967). To Austin, a performative utterance could be defined by a three-stage framework; locution (the words spoken), illocutionary force (the attempt to *do* within the locution) and the perlocutionary effect (the effect of the words spoken on the people being spoken to). However, it is outside of the linguistic field that performativity becomes truly active. In Butler’s application of performativity to gender, gender was the perlocutionary effect of certain actions or gestures instead of a corporeal affiliation that is set at birth. This kind of framework challenges conventional ideas of representationalism, also known as indirect realism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2001); where we perceive things as they are, altered only by our own material sensory limitations, such as the spectrum of light we can see and of sound we can hear, and our own immaterial and social representations of the *real* world in front of us – mediated by a simple *known, knowledge, knower* paradigm that is said to define how we perceive the world (Lehar, 2014). Butler disputes this by stating that we do not perceive things as they *are*, but rather as they *do*, a performative stance in which the active is the defining dynamic, as opposed to the more passive representationalist standpoint.

Butler’s application of this idea to gender was highly influential in a number of disciplines including gender studies, psychology, queer theory, philosophy and media. Butler’s exploration of the theory in *Gender Trouble* (1990), deconstructed the link between sex and gender, stating that although sex is something that is fixed at birth and for the most part unchangeable, gender is determined by a different set of variables. Butler’s idea was that gender is more

than just a corporeal connection, and is influenced by social constructs that put constraints on people's "true gender". Butler states in a 2011 interview that "to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really *is* a gender from the start" (Butler, J., 2011), and that the gender people *do* rather than *are* as categorized by a social milieu, is far more relevant to the make-up of the person's personality than the material sex they are born with. The concept of performative gender gives engendering language and perlocutionary actions the power to change one of the most fundamental aspects of a person's existence. The fixed becomes fluid. This kind of fluidity endows people with the agency to participate in the determination of their own gender rather than enter into what Butler calls "the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions" (1990, p. 179) enforced by society and its norms. This is despite Butler's notion that these cultural fictions are just that, and they have no credibility outside of "the punishments that attend to not agreeing to believe in them" (1990, p. 179). Butler sees these kinds of punishments as further restrictions to the agency of each individual to express their performative gender, further restrictions to people taking actions which result in the perlocutionary effect of engendering, reinforcing gender through performance.

Another application of the concept of performativity shows itself in Lamontagne's work on wearable technologies (Lamontagne, 2012), exploring the relationship between human and non-human agencies, the modalities of technoscientific engagement with materials, and the convergence of materiality and performativity within the "techno-scientific-social-artistic practice of wearables" (2012, p. 1). Lamontagne states that performance and performativity are crucial methods of the expression of knowledge "within the arts and

humanities, as well as in technoscientific communities and discourse” (2012, p. 1). She puts this down to a turn away from traditional representational methods of expression, also known as the Performative Turn, which is muddled by “the ill-defined and interchangeably misused” (2012, p. 1) terms of performance and performativity. Lamontagne defines performance as just *doing* and performativity as a doing with a *focus on the qualities that that doing reinforces* – the “transformation from an action to an adjective” (2012, p. 1) – and believes that “we are witnessing an evolution” (2012, p. 1) from the term performance towards the term performativity. Lamontagne wishes to explore the role of performance and performativity in our understanding of culture and society, and the difference between those two concepts.

Lamontagne states that the rise of the Performative Turn came about from the 1950s-70s, when researchers throughout the humanities “took performance inspired methods and situations as both the subject of research and methodology – focusing on grounded, intimate, embodied practices as a source for understanding society” (2012, p. 2). She goes on to reference Schechner, Austin and Goffman, citing the use of performance in rituals, speech acts such as wedding vows and the fluid nature of public identity as examples of why social analysis under a performative lens became so prevalent, as it looked to explain the meaning of these rituals and events, whilst understanding the complex nature of the interactions between people and their social and physical environments. She also looks at Schechner’s qualities of performance to determine a framework for the concept – those being: “(a) a special ordering of time, (b) a special value attached to objects, (c) non-productivity in terms of goods, and (d) rules” (2012, p. 2) – and uses this definition to separate performance from performativity, drawing out the

distinction between the action performed and the particular quality that is produced. However, this is then further complicated by the differences between the performative turn of the 1970s and performativity as it is seen in the 21st century, and how these “shifts in meaning” (2012, p. 2) need to be identified in order to understand the progression of use from performance to performativity. She then outlines her three key conditions to understanding performance, with these three key conditions being “1. Textuality; 2. Space, time and context; 3. Humans versus non-humans” (2012, p. 2).

The first condition, textuality, refers to the use of textual documents as a principal focus within the performative turn, as textual documents contain the knowledge needed to create and understand the paradigm of a performance. The second, space, time and context, involves Schechner’s three types of time that exist within a performance:

“1. *Event time*, when the activity itself has a set sequence and all the steps of that sequence must be completed no matter how long (or short) the elapsed clock time; 2. *Set time*, where an arbitrary time pattern is imposed on events – they begin and end at certain moments whether or not they have been ‘completed’. Here there is an antagonistic context between activity and the clock; 3. *Symbolic time* when the span of the activity represents another (longer, shorter) span of clock time. Or, where time is considered differently (2012, p. 3).

The third condition, which refers to humans and non-humans, is the difference in agency between humans and non-humans in performance. According to Lamontagne, “non-humans do not acquire agency in the unfolding of performance in the performative turn except as secondary props, tools, or symbolic objects at the service of propelling *human* performance, action and transformation” (2012, p. 3). The first condition echoes Barad’s useful concept of material discursivity, that material comes from discourse and this material then produces further discourse. The second condition is also helpful, as it provides a flexible temporal framework for performances to exist within. This allows for performance to exist as a constant iterative process but also within objective time patterns. However, Lamontagne’s point on human and non-human interactions in terms of performance is especially interesting, and somewhat problematic. Though the performative relationship between humans and non-sentient or non-living entities may be one where agency is one sided, it seems debatable as to whether this is the case for all non-human entities. When examining the performative relationships between humans and animals – for instance, in the case of guide dogs, or farm animals, or pets – it becomes clear that agency is rarely acquired unless there is some sort of transaction taking place, where the animal acts as a prop, tool or symbolic object. However, though this definition can be applied to all non-human entities, there is a lack of agency here, which is challenged by other concepts, such as Barad’s intra-action. Lamontagne’s interpretations of these relations are lopsided, and do not account for performative relationships between non-human entities. Other frameworks, such as Barad’s intra-action, allow for a more dynamic theory of relations in which a truly performative stance can be observed.

Lamontagne states that performativity is “emerging as a key concept in the area of science, technology and society (STS)” (2012, p. 4) with a performative shift within the field and a new emphasis where “the mechanics of the production of knowledge – laboratory contexts, specific uses of apparatuses, human/non-human interactions – are shifting and shaping scientific paradigms” (2012, p. 4). Lamontagne references Barad, who believes that “performative approaches call into question representationalist claims that there are representations...and ontologically separate entities” (Barad cited in Lamontagne, 2012, p. 5) and that performative alternatives to representationalist methods “shift the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality to matters of practices/doings/actions” (Barad cited in Lamontagne, 2012, p. 5). Lamontagne believes that this performative framework reflects STS practices and literature, where the emphasis is on “non-textual knowledge through experiments, social dynamics, and technical practices” (Lamontagne, 2012, p.5) all of which are enacted and performative rather than representation-based. This idea of texts producing non-textual knowledge is important, as it shows the nature of performances within Lamontagne’s framework, as processes that inform and shape new processes whilst being informed by the processes they shape.

Lamontagne uses the example of wearable technologies and materialities to illustrate the performative, agential shift in STS. She poses questions about the collusion of the body with technology, about how technologies expand upon the expressiveness of materials, how wearables perform in the public realm and the potential of wearables as a performative gesture or enunciation. Of course, the very nature of clothing is transformative, but when coupled with technology and given the agency to *do*, or the ability to interact with a body and enact change,

clothing and wearable technology becomes performative. As a case study, Lamontagne looks at the “Intimacy Black” project (2012, p. 6) developed by Dutch creative hub and media institute V2_, which was a dress infused with polymer dispersed liquid crystal film that reacts to proximity and flash exposure and which eventually evolved into “Psuedomorphs”, a dress that can change colour and be customized to the wearer’s liking (2012, p. 6). Lamontagne states that the performativity of the “Pseudomorphs” dress is enacted innately with its colour-changing potential, and again when the wearer changes its colour “performing” the garment. Thus, “the performativity of the ‘Psuedomorphs’ garment relies on this moment of human/non-human performance, creating a unique intimacy and quality” (2012, p. 7) – and this type of performativity can be extended to the relationship between the materiality of wearable technologies, and the agency of their wearer, as a whole (2012, p. 7).

These ideas are useful as it provides a practical demonstration of how the relationship between the human and the non-human can be performative in nature. This relationship and the general notion of performativity as it relates to non-humans is an important part of developing and applying the performative model. Lamontagne’s work provides an interesting development of the performative notion. In her separation of performance and performativity, the divide between action and affect, Lamontagne is able to further break down and study the concepts of performance and the performative. With the conditions she set for these in terms of textuality, time and non-human relations, she provides an interesting framework, and this is exemplified in its application to wearable technology. Despite some oversights in her definition of non-human relations within performance, Lamontagne’s work is useful to discuss in its development of

performativity and in its practical application. These elements can contribute towards constructing a separate framework which further builds upon these ideas.

Barad's work cited in Lamontagne's piece is one of the most compelling expansions of the concept of performativity. Her account of posthumanist performativity suggests many new approaches (Barad, 2003). For Barad, material discursiveness, the production of material bodies through discursive practices (2003 p. 808), is central to the concept of posthumanist performativity. Material discursiveness integrates several other important ideas, including intra-action, phenomena and apparatus, and the limitations of language - aspects of which come together to form the concept of material discursiveness, a concept which suggests the intra-action of the non-human. These notions stem from Barad's theory of agential realism; an ontological and epistemological theory inspired by the work of Bohr. Barad believes that the universe consists of phenomena emerging from "the ontological inseparability of intra-acting components" (2003, p. 815). She states that these phenomena are produced by apparatus, which are "dynamic reconfigurings of the world, specific agential practices/intra-actions/performances through which specific exclusionary boundaries are enacted" (2003, p. 816). However, this does not mean that apparatuses are merely there to change phenomena, rather apparatuses *are* themselves phenomena in that their state or practices can be rearticulated or rearranged, and in their constant intra-actions with other apparatus that are changing them just as they are changing phenomena. Idea of apparatus and phenomena are simply further dynamic reconfigurings.

It is important then, judging by how frequently it is mentioned in Barad's work, to understand the concept of *intra-action*. Whereas an interaction is often

implied as the act of one thing affecting another thing, relying on a pre-existing subject/object relationship with pre-existing independent conditions; intra-action involves an agential cut (as opposed to the Cartesian cut of an interaction) which separates the subject and object, resulting in an egalitarian relation where no phenomenon has preceded it. Furthermore, these cuts are an enactment of “agential separability” (2003, p. 815), as they create a “local condition of *exteriority-within-phenomena*” (2003, p. 815) which allows for the possibility of objectivity. New phenomena emerge through the intra-action, a form of diffraction where the phenomena and apparatus collide, but this new phenomenon is created just as much by the presence of the apparatus as by the presence of the phenomenon – resulting in a mutuality of emergence. This mutuality of emergence is an important theme throughout Barad’s work, with that mutuality being a common thread through her theories of material discursiveness and agential realism. In the case of Barad, mutuality of emergence is the need for both the apparatus and phenomena to be actively involved in a process in order for any affect to occur. This notion of mutuality of emergence is an important idea not just in Barad’s work, but in performativity in general. In both Lamontagne’s and Barad’s performative frameworks, entities both inform the processes they shape and are informed by these processes.

In the example of material discursiveness, the production of material bodies through discursive practices, material bodies cannot be produced if there are no discursive practices to produce them, and discursive practices cannot produce material bodies if there are no material bodies to discourse about. A simplistic interpretation, perhaps, but one that seems ever-present within the concept of posthumanist performativity. Barad talks about several other strong

dualities that have the same intra-active relationship, for instance cause and effect, matter and meaning, and the human role in understanding nature whilst still being a part of it. This is a key concept within agential realism; with humans involved as the apparatus changing the phenomena of the world around us whilst *simultaneously* being phenomena that are changed by the apparatus of the world. The entire point of performativity is *to do* rather than *to be*, and an intra-active universe is constantly *doing* whether it is reinforcing itself or affecting other phenomena.

A more straightforward concern for Barad is the extent of the power given to language in contemporary society, as she states that materiality has been transformed into a form of cultural representation. Barad suggests that “Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter.” (2003, p. 801). She argues that the agency and historicity that has been granted to language and culture has eclipsed the importance of materiality.

At first, this kind of thinking seems at odds with Butler’s view of performativity. When it comes to gender at least, Butler states that matter, in fact, doesn’t matter – and that the expression of a person’s gender is entirely reliant on their actions, and the language they use that reinforces those actions. However, upon closer inspection, language is just another limitation that the performative must transcend. In terms of gender, for example, questions like ‘why is certain language feminine?’ must be asked. It is here that Barad’s statement about language being granted excessive power to determine what is real (2003, p. 802) rings true, as ‘femininity’ or ‘gender’ is essentially an idea constructed by society and defined by language. The performative, as Barad states, is a contestation of

the power of language, and a contestation of “the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve” (2003, 802).

Barad explores further limitations of language when analyzing discourse, proposing a posthumanist account of discursive practices and reworking the notion of materiality whilst attempting to understand the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena from the standpoint of agential realism (2003, p. 818). She states that meaning is not a property of words, and is neither intra-linguistically nor extra-linguistically referenced, rather it exists within discursive practices that change over time. Barad states that rather than discourse being what is said, as in the representationalist school of thought, discourse defines what can be said, and what counts as a meaningful statement (203, p. 819). Barad references Bohr’s insight that “concepts are not ideational, but rather are actual physical arrangements” (2003, p. 820) and augments this with her own suggestion that apparatuses are not static arrangements in the world, but instead are “specific material practices through which local semantic and ontological determinacy are intra-actively enacted” (2003, p. 820). Barad goes on to say that discursive practices are ongoing intra-actions “through which local determinacy is enacted within the phenomena produced” (2003, p. 821), thus discursive practices are causal intra-actions – with Barad showing us yet another symbiotic duality, between materiality and discursivity.

Intra-action is a useful concept within the development of performativity. It provides an extended definition of the way in which apparatus and phenomena interact performatively, with neither reduced to simply being a passive part or byproduct of the reaction between the two. The agential cut between phenomena

and apparatus gives meaning to the two components and the effect of their connection. The meaning of the components is not inherent, but rather emerges mutually when the two intra-act. Intra-activity reinforces the simple notion that is the very basis of performativity: doing not being.

Barad's posthumanist account of performativity is useful as it shows how the notion of the performativity can be further developed to encompass more ideas. Concepts such as intra-action, diffraction, phenomena, apparatus and mutuality of emergence clarify many aspects of performativity as a whole whilst also expanding upon and delivering a deeper understanding of its components. Barad's theory provides a sound framework for further development of performativity and its use within multiple applications.

1.2 Representationalism and Assemblage: DeLanda's ontology

In order to gain a better comprehension of the performative and its development, it is also necessary to come to an understanding of conflicting ideas, and compare them to, or incorporate them into, performativity as we now know it. In addition to acquiring new knowledge of the context of performativity, it can also help to develop performativity as a concept in itself. The most significant alternative approach for this discussion is representationalism, which preceded the performative as a dominant academic paradigm. The performative turn was a paradigm shift in academia which moved academics towards a model based on the idea of *doing* (Lamontagne, 2012, pp. 1-2) as an alternative to the representational model based on the idea of *being* (Barad, 2003, p. 807).

Representationalism is the idea that the world we perceive is a "virtual reality replica" (Lehar, 2014) of the world that materially exists. It suggests that

there is a split between those two worlds, and the difference between them is our own material and immaterial limitations (Lehar, 2014). This would appear to be supported by numerous physical and non-physical factors, for instance that we as humans can only see a certain range of colours and can only hear a certain range of sounds, but also that we perceive the world through society's constructed sets of knowledge and contexts. Representationalism dictates that the world is made up of things and objects that exist materially, and that this material existence precedes their representation but is actualised in the realm of words and language. The correlation between the two – when matter and things collide with words and representation – is what causes our knowledge and understanding of the object, creating a context for it within society. The interplay between these material and immaterial factors is what forms the basis of the philosophy of representationalism (Mastin, 2008).

The ideas of representationalism have been debated and re-interpreted many times since they were first mooted. One of these interpretations, developed by DeLanda, takes the concept of representationalism and expands on it with a five-way framework that forms an alternative representationalist ontology that he calls *assemblage theory* (Harman, 2008). This framework consists of DeLanda's realist stance on philosophy, his rejection of the idea of "essence", his hardline separation of species and genus, his theory of *catalysis* and his two axes on which the world is organized; the material and the expressive, and territorialization and deterritorialization. DeLanda states that the purpose of his assemblage theory is "to introduce a novel approach to social ontology" (2006, p. 1). DeLanda's assemblage theory is characterized by his rejection of "relations of interiority" (2006, p. 9) in which the component parts of a whole are constituted by the

relations they have with the other parts in that whole. When a part is detached, both the part and the whole change intrinsically, creating a new whole with new parts in doing so. The components have no meaning outside of their relational significance.

DeLanda instead looks at relations of *exteriority*, which is the idea that an assemblage has a unique set of properties and capacities (2006, p. 10). These properties (to be affected) and capacities (to affect) determine the nature of the relations of interiority between objects. Take for instance the reaction between alkali metals and water. Potassium, for example, has the property to explode when in contact with water. Water has the capacity to make potassium explode when coming into contact with it. According to assemblage theory, both water and potassium are whole assemblages in their own rights, and the chemical reaction between the two chemicals through their properties and capacities creates a new assemblage. However, this does not mean that all assemblages are defined by the relations their properties and capacities can have with other assemblages. DeLanda uses the example of genes to clarify the application of assemblage theory to an object, and the implications this has on an object's properties, stating that "the interactions of genes with the rest of a body's machinery should not be viewed as if they constituted the defining essence of that machinery" (2006, p. 17). Meaning that, simply because the genes are interacting with the other parts of the body (just as each part of the body is interacting with the other in order for it to function) does not mean that the genes define any other part of the body simply by interacting with them. Where relations of interiority are defined by necessity, relations of exteriority emerge through interactions.

DeLanda believes that reality is made up of infinite assemblages, which cannot dissolve into greater organic wholes nor can they be reduced to smaller parts. The greater wholes and the smaller parts are assemblages within themselves. Despite being a realist, DeLanda avoids being lured into the kind of conventional realist thinking that limits realist ontology to only thinking about the physical. He uses the idea of assemblages to represent any and all real entities, from people and rocks to corporations and nations, with the strength and relevance of the relational ties between assemblages then forming new, larger assemblages. These relations are all external, as all of these relations are between different assemblages, with assemblages shifting freely between other assemblages and being defined by their own internal reality, with each assemblage free to form new combinations and thus new assemblages. This kind of thinking challenges traditional notions of the real, and shows how dynamic DeLanda's theory is. Though still representational, it allows for an iterative process of becoming, much like the performative does.

DeLanda's rejection of essence also forms a major part of his assemblage theory, and ties in directly with his focus on the distinction between species and genus. DeLanda especially refutes the Aristotelian model of essence, which focuses on the commonalities between members of a species, and the existence of entities within a "natural kind" (Harman, 2008, p. 372). DeLanda rejects that notion, opting for a more individual stance on the matter where the differences between two individuals are no more or less significant than the difference between two species. DeLanda's view here is based upon the ideas that the natural is no more real than the artificial or constructed, and that "individuals must be viewed as historic processes" (2008, p. 372). This is an important basis for

DeLanda's theory, and one which is arguably performative in nature, with the focus being on what the individual *does*. It opposes the actualist way of seeing the world as "made only of things as they are here and now" (2006, p. 373), by stating that individuals are "transient crystallizations of a longer process" (2006, p. 373) made up of their actions, "a flow of genesis" (2006, p. 373) rather than a ready-made "fully formed individual" (2006, p. 373). This way of thinking directly applies to DeLanda's separation of genus and species, as he opts for a more individualized virtuality where the idea of a species is made irrelevant by them being "populations of individuals, each with their own unique private history" (2006, p. 374). The genus however transcends this, as it adheres to a different set of material, biological rules that transcends the individual, whereas the actions of and relations between individual entities define a species.

Much like essence, DeLanda also rejects causality in favour of catalysis. DeLanda's theory of catalysis is explained by Harman using the example of smoking and lung cancer. The example accentuates the difference between causality and catalysis, with the interaction between the two assemblages of cigarettes and the lungs being a catalyst for a new assemblage rather than simply *causing it*. The previous example of potassium and water is also relevant here. The respective properties and capacities of the two assemblages are simply catalysts for the assemblage of the chemical reaction. Though DeLanda does not reject linear causation entirely, his model of catalysis is based upon the interaction of each assemblage and their own capacities reacting with one another, which makes each relation a more complex affair than simple cause and effect. In doing this, DeLanda creates a virtual layer, a genus, in which individuals are in some sense dictated by the assemblages within them and their unique capacities.

DeLanda also defines his concept of assemblage across two different dimensions, one of which “defines the variable roles which an assemblage’s components may play, from a purely material role at one extreme of the axis, to a purely expressive role at the other extreme” (2006, p. 377) and another which “defines variable processes in which these components become involved and that either stabilize the identity of an assemblage, by increasing its degree of internal homogeneity or the degree of sharpness of its boundaries, or destabilize it” (2006, p. 378). DeLanda uses the example of a city’s skyline to elucidate this. The city’s skyline is representative of both its infrastructure that defines its material reality, and of “an expressive surface exceeding the city’s current material reality” (2006, p. 378). The skyline then is at once expressive whilst still being functional in its materiality. Both material and expressive roles are capacities of an assemblage, with assemblages displaying varying degrees of one or the other, but never fully being either. These axes showcase how assemblages are not defined solely by form or function, but by use and action, similar to the performative notion of mutuality of emergence or Barad’s intra-action. The idea of territorialisation and deterritorialisation are also useful. This is the dimension which “defines variable processes in which these components become involved” (2006, p. 378), with territorialisation “increasing [an assemblage’s] degree of internal homogeneity or the degree of sharpness of its boundaries” (2006, p. 378) and deterritorialisation “destabilizing” (2006, p. 378) these boundaries. Both of these forces can exist within the same assemblage, with components expressing different sets of capacities which work to both stabilize and destabilize. Territorialisation and deterritorialisation provides a similar function within DeLanda’s theory as the cuts and dynamic reconfigurings of Barad. These are important ideas as they concern

the necessary boundaries involved with a pragmatic application of these theories, assuring that objectivity is not entirely abandoned.

DeLanda's work is useful as it provides an alternative framework to the purely performative ideas of Butler, Lamontagne and Barad. His concept of assemblage provides a representational basis to compare and contrast with the ideas presented by the other performative theorists. However, though DeLanda's ideas are representational in nature, there are also many performative features in his work and some which mirror those of the performative theorists discussed earlier, such as intra-action. This makes DeLanda's work even more useful as it is more open to comparison and synthesis with the ideas of Butler, Lamontagne and Barad than an entirely representationalist perspective.

1.3 Active Externalism

A further idea that is close to Baradian and DeLandian thinking is Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers' concept of active externalism (1998). Active externalism is the idea that the human organism links to an external entity, when interacting with it in any way, creating a two way interactive system between the organism and the entity. Clark and Chalmers state that the link initiated by the interaction between organism and entity creates its own cognitive system; an active, causal system in which the organism and the entity jointly govern its behaviour – extending the cognitive capabilities of the organism by augmenting it with an external entity. They use the example of the video game *Tetris* to illustrate the kind of action caused by this link, a game where the goal is to quickly rotate falling shapes so that they fall into “an appropriate slot on an emerging structure” (1998, p. 2). They state that it is not only easier to rotate the shape on the screen

rather than rotate it mentally, but that the physical rotation that takes place actually helps the player determine how compatible the shape and the slot are, thus making the game easier.

This kind of interaction between player, game-input (controls), game and game-output (screen) results in an extension of the cognitive process that assists the player in making better decisions, with the human mind delegating some tasks to external media to make the process more efficient. These processes combined form a new system, an assemblage of sorts that relies on the symbiotic interactions created by all the various inputs and outputs between the affecting and affected modules within the assemblage. Clark and Chalmers state that these systems are created everywhere from using paper to aid with long multiplication, to prompting word recall by rearranging Scrabble tiles, to interacting daily with “the general paraphernalia of language, books, diagrams and culture” (1998, p. 2).

Clark and Chalmers call this theory “active externalism” (1998, p. 2) and compare it to the “passive externalism” (1998, p. 3) described by the likes of Putnam (1975) and Burge (1979), which Clark and Chalmers call ‘standard variety’ externalism (1998, p. 2). They state that in a passive externalist context, the difference in beliefs between two people (in this case specifically, two hypothetical exact twins) is “distal and historical, at the other end of a lengthy causal chain” (1998, p. 2). Clark and Chalmers state that the relevant external features are passive, playing no part in “driving the cognitive process in the here-and-now” (1998, p. 2) because of their distal nature. In active externalism, these external elements are active; we allow them to *do* and they help us *do* by *doing*. Because of this focus on the mutual doing between entities, active externalism is a performative, intra-active process. This kind of reciprocal relationship between

internal and external, organism and entity, creates a loop rather than Putnam and Burge's long casual chain. Clark and Chalmers continue, stating that active externalist relationships are "needlessly complex[ified]" (1998, p. 3) by explaining them through an endless series of inputs and actions. They argue that such an explanation is a cumbersome way to describe something that should just be accepted as a part of thought itself, once again using the example of the rearrangement of Scrabble tiles to prompt memory recall to show the interactive merging of internal and external phenomena.

Clark and Chalmers then address the criticism that active externalism cannot be valid as the idea of cognition is directly tied to the idea of consciousness. They respond by stating that many cognitive processes are not conscious processes in the first place. Clark and Chalmers argue that "the retrieval of memories, linguistic processes and skill acquisition" (1998, p. 3) are all examples of cognitive processes that are "beyond the borders of consciousness" (1998, p. 3), and the simple fact that some of these processes are external where consciousness is internal is no reason to deny that these processes are cognitive. Clark and Chalmers argue that the main difference between "real" and "extended" cognitive processes (1998, p. 4) is that real cognitive processes are portable. When the externalities are stripped away, we are left with a "naked mind" (1998, p. 4) that can be relied upon to perform cognitive tasks "regardless of the local environment" (1998, p. 4) – these tasks being the "true cognitive processes" (1998, p. 4) that are central to the system. This kind of platform is akin to a computer, or more specifically an operating system such as Windows, Mac OS or a Linux distribution. The operating system itself contains a set of inherent features that can aid in basic tasks regardless of whatever else is on the hard drive. These

include the delegation of actions for both hardware and software, much like our mind controls our basic physical and mental actions. However, when it comes to more complex or specialized tasks, more complex or specialized software is necessary to give the system the capacity to complete those tasks. When added to the system, this software works seamlessly in tandem with the operating system and the hardware in order to complete these tasks as efficiently as possible, much like we do when we interact with external media as shown in Clark and Chalmers' explanation of active externalism. This creates a new system; an assemblage reliant on capacity to affect and properties to be affected in order to meet its objective. Clark and Chalmers even use the example of a possible distant future where the human mind can be augmented with various modules that help us complete processes so well and so effortlessly that it is as if they had always been there.

They further elaborate on the cognitive and conscious implications of active externalism by using the example of the way a normal person thinks in certain situations as opposed to the way an Alzheimer's patient would think. They use this example to illustrate the externality of thought, and the extension of the mind into the physical world. According to Clark and Chalmers, the normal person (Inga) wants to go to the museum, and so she simply recalls her belief of the museum's location and goes there. This belief was always present, but it simply needed to be accessed. The Alzheimer's patient (Otto) also decides to go to the museum, however due to his condition he cannot consult his memory, and instead looks to the notebook that he carries around everywhere he goes and writes down important information in to tell him where the museum is. Once again, this information has always been there. Otto's belief in the museum's

location was always in the notebook, it was just waiting to be recalled before it can be put to use. Despite their obvious differences then, Otto's notebook plays the exact same role as Inga's memory. Clark and Chalmers' state that the main argument to this point is "that Otto has no belief about the matter until he consults his notebook" (1998, p. 6), but naturally an Alzheimer's patient would constantly refer to his notebook in the same way we constantly refer to our memory on a day to day basis. In both cases, Otto's notebook and Inga's memory are systems that help them execute tasks more efficiently. The only difference between them is that Inga's memory is internal, part of Inga as an organism, whereas Otto's notebook is an external entity. However, Clark and Chalmers argue that this difference, striking though it is, does not result in a difference in belief and thus it is not entirely relevant to the issue at hand. Otto's notebook is simply an implant, software that supplements Otto's faulty hardware with the ability of memory recall. As stated before, in the distant future a more advanced module would replace the notebook, with Clark and Chalmers even using the example of a module for extra short-term memory when necessary. The presence of the module, much like the presence of the notebook in Otto's case, would not make the level of cognition involved in using it any higher or lower than if it were not present, due to the seamlessness of its implementation.

The most intriguing argument against Clark and Chalmers' suggestion that Inga's and Otto's cases are no different from one another is that Otto has access to the information in his notebook by *perception* whereas Inga has access to the information in her memory by *introspection*. Inga's access to her beliefs is direct; she has access to pure thought, uninhibited by sentence structures or grammatical considerations, or the medium of the notebook. Otto on the other hand merely

perceives the information through his notebook. Any thought that Otto had and was able to verify and write down has been translated into fact, decoded from stream of consciousness into a shared language that we can use to communicate with each other. However, Clark and Chalmers argue that this difference is superficial and shallow as, once again, it has no tangible effect on the status of the belief. To reference Barad once again, Otto's notebook is a primitive example of one of Barad's "exteriorities within" (Barad, 2003, p. 825), a device that populates a space between interior and exterior, the mind and the environment, that will only become more and more populated as technology continues to advance and more and more modules begin to emerge.

In reality, this is already happening. Clark and Chalmers ask "does the information in my Filofax count as part of my memory?" (1998, p. 8) and the fact is that in 2014, most of the population has swapped their Filofax for Firefox. We have constantly referred to the Internet for information since it first rose to mainstream relevance in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and since then our reliance on it as a life-informing medium has only increased. We use the Internet to retrieve directions to places we need to go, to find out information on people we are interested in, and to keep updated with the latest news around the world. Since the social media boom of the late 2000s we have given more and more of ourselves, our interiority, to the external medium of the Internet than to any medium before it. Facebook helps us store memories and remember friends' birthdays, Twitter lets us take snapshots of our thoughts to send out to the world and sites like Tumblr and Pinterest allow us to create personal shrines that we can share with whoever we like. These social media networks are not only modules that attach themselves to us and form a part of our efficient assemblage, but also

turn us into modules for them by making us part of a far larger interconnected communications network. Our mobile phone now serves as our address book, alarm clock, calculator, camera, torch, calendar, radio, television, computer, games console, photo album, notebook, and endless other capabilities that can be accessed simply by downloading an app. Will this happen to glasses (as it already has with Google's 'Google Glass' device) and contact lenses, which could integrate cameras and other applications? Vaccines that could house devices that monitor your health? Perhaps even our brain could open itself up to direct attachments, much like a computer's motherboard. A new module for problem solving, or for driving or cooking. These are not new suggestions at all, but with recent developments these kinds of technologies are moving from a fictional future into the present. Naturally this kind of augmentation has the potential to blur the line between interior and exterior, to the point that we will not be able to differentiate the external module from the internal mind.

Clark and Chalmers' pose the question: "is my cognitive state somehow spread across the Internet?" (1998, p. 8). They believe there are "no categorical answers" (1998, p.8) to that question. For many people the answer is a definitive yes. From their public footprints of photos and status updates on sites like Facebook and Twitter, to extended blog posts reflecting their various beliefs in-depth, to posts on private forums or messages sent to others; to say that people spread aspects of their consciousness out across the internet is likely not too difficult to accept. This is also reflected by the use of artificial intelligence to simulate a person's online actions after they die. LivesOn and DeadSocial are just two examples of organisations who are making it possible to continue to have an online presence after death (Jeffries, 2013).

Most importantly however, these kinds of technologies further blur the line between Clark and Chalmers' internal and external landscapes. An external technology portraying an internal mind in the form of an artificial intelligence portraying a dead person, inhabits the same space as a living person using an iPhone to get to a museum - it is just that the roles are reversed. As these devices become further integrated, the extended mind becomes the extended self, and the "hegemony of skin and skull" (1998, p. 10) is undermined more and more with each development. Accepting Clark & Chalmers' theory, eventually neither matter nor language will matter, replaced instead with forms of social activity "as less akin to communication and action, and more akin to thought" (1998, p. 10). However, in contrast to what Clark & Chalmers are saying, the extension of the self and the effect of the external on the internal does not start and end with the development and progression of external technologies to aid with internal processes. On the contrary, all human beings are impacted by active and affective externalities from their birth onwards. These externalities exist all around us in our environment and the relationships we have with others, and they do not simply aid with our internal processes but rather shape them entirely intra-actively. Though we may not have a choice in the matter and are thus passive in the equation, these external factors actively affect us – whether that be our relationship with our parents, our socio-economic standing, or the media that we take in on a day to day basis – these factors become important parts of our own performative identities, and the images that we passively or actively choose to identify with and appropriate to ourselves.

These are useful concepts to include in my own work, as this kind of development of the performative notion can help shape my own approach. Active

externalism and the performative school of thought are complementary, as shown by the similarities in the work of Clark and Chalmers and Lamontagne's work on wearable technology. Upon broadening the context however, in a Butlerian or post-Baradian fashion, the link between the two is even stronger, forming a part of a larger ontology.

1.4 Onto-Cartography and the post-human media ecology

A very recent example of assemblage thinking is Bryant's work on onto-cartography (Bryant, 2014). Bryant states that onto-cartography is "the investigation of structural couplings between machines and how they modify the becomings, activities, movements, and ways in which the coupled machines relate to the world around them...a mapping of these couplings between machines and their vectors of becoming, movement and activity." (2014, p. 35). The concept of machines is central to Bryant's approach. He quotes the Oxford English Dictionary for its definition, "material or immaterial structure[s] [composing] the fabric of the world or of the universe." (2014, p. 15). He expands on this stating that "machines" is "our name for any entity, material or immaterial, corporeal or incorporeal, that exists. Entity, object, existent, substance, body, and thing, are all synonyms of machine" (2014, p. 15). Similar to DeLanda's assemblage, the machine is Bryant's concept that includes both living and non-living entities. Bryant goes on to say that "being is an ensemble or assemblage of machines" (2014, p. 15), meaning that the universe and everything in it is made up of machines, which presumably form the universe as a machine in itself. However, instead of just using a word such as 'thing' or 'entity' Bryant uses the notion of 'machine' to capture the idea that machines are productive. The essence of

machines is functioning and acting, which avoids the subject/object dichotomy as referred to by Barad. Bryant's machine based universe is a universe founded upon the performative.

Bryant then goes on to construct an ontology based around this idea. He states that there are many different types of machines, as opposed to the prejudicial view of the word that refers only to "rigid machines" (2014, p. 16) such as automobiles and computers. These machines are characterized by "routinized functioning, and are incapable of learning, growth, and development" (2014, p. 16) – a definition that also extends to lamps, rocks, dead planets, comets and atomic particles. Bryant states that this is not the be all and end all of machines, and that "a tree is no less a machine than an airplane, and a constitution is no less a machine than a VCR" (2014, p. 16) To establish a deeper understanding of the notion, Bryant says "we require a much broader concept of the machinic than that of an entity composed of fixed, material parts operating on flows of matter in a routine fashion." (2014, p. 16) and states that not all machines are material in nature. Bryant argues that "the second great prejudice" (2014, p. 17) behind the general lack of understanding of the machinic is the idea that all machines are designed. He believes that the human focus on anthropocentrism when it comes to creation at large automatically causes us to miss the point when talking about "machines" or "objects". Instead, Bryant agrees with the DeLandian notion that many machines emerge out of other machines, without any intentionality guiding it (2014, p. 18). He refers to the hylomorphic (Greek for 'matter forming') model of crafting; where the artist or creator imposes the model of what he wants to produce onto matter, giving it its shape. In reality however, this imposition is more of a negotiation between the creator and the materials used

to create. The matter and its properties “impose imperatives on the designers” (2014, p. 19), as does the environment, the materials available, and the purpose of the machine. Using the example of a train, Bryant shows that eventually “the designer of the train is no less designed by the train than she designs the train” (2014, p. 20). This resonates strongly with Barad’s notion of intra-action. The mutuality of emergence when machines connect, where the components of the intra-action affect each other actively, is present in Bryant’s model.

Bryant further demonstrates that the emergence of machines through other machines also works from material machines to immaterial machines, by way of social imperatives. Bryant uses the example of the personal clock, and the unprecedented impact it has had on society. A simple ‘machine’ totally reshaped the way we live our lives, changing how we perceive time and allowing us to structure our day around this new perception. Though there is an option to reject it in favour of an alternative method of time structuring, there is a high social cost in denying the social obligations and expectations that have arisen because of the clock. The idea of time, and how we perceive and live by it, is another example of a Butlerian tacit collective agreement; one that as a member of society we are born into, have no realistic hope of changing, and face ostracism in rejecting it. Bryant goes on to say that technologies such as electric lighting, newspapers, televisions, automobiles and cell phones have all had such an impact, and that all illustrate his point, being that “while the craftman’s intentions and map play a role in the production of the artifact, the things themselves, the matter used, the circumstances under which they’re produced, all contribute to the final product in ways not anticipated by the craftsman.” (2014, p. 21). Bryant states that matter is far from being “passive stuff awaiting our formation or inscriptions” (2014, p. 22)

but rather “the exigencies of matter drew the final design...to this particular shape and configuration” (2014, p. 22). In the case of something like the clock, and the social imperatives that come with it, Bryant believes “these matters design *us* to the same degree that we form them. The nature of my life, goals and intentions change with the invention of something like a clock.” (2014, p. 22). This once again showcases how Bryant’s work is performative and resonates with Barad’s idea of agential realism and its ideas of intra-action and mutuality of emergence, important concepts in developing the performative notion.

Bryant believes that “the third great prejudice about machines is that they *have* a purpose or use.” (2014, p. 23). He states that the common belief that the purpose of a knife is to cut, or the purpose of a razor is to shave, is imposed onto the machines as if those uses and purposes were intrinsic features of the machine. He goes on to say that if all entities are machines, this cannot be the case. There are plenty of entities, such as “neutrinos, black holes, seeds, shrubberies, and rabbits” (2014, p. 23), which are all machines, and yet they do not conform to any kind of default use. Just like people, they are not “*for the sake of* anything,” (2014, p. 23) their goals and aims are not inherent, rather they can be *put to use* by other machines. Bryant uses the example of an Amazonian capybara, saying that their intrinsic purpose does not lie beyond themselves, though they can be “*put to use*” as “food for crocodiles and leopards, or breaking down plant life.” (2014, p. 23) He states that the reason for this is because machines are “pluripotent” (2014, p. 23): and have the capacity to possess a range of possible becomings, although these capacities are in no way unlimited (meaning that one entity cannot become every other type of entity). He further illustrates this point by using the example of rocks (which can be put to use as paperweights, door stops, to build a wall),

and the ballpoint pen (which despite the obvious intention in its design, does not stop them from being used as a weapon or a straw) to show that even rigid machines are pluripotent. This idea of use and pluripotence is also similar to Butler's ideas on gender identity. To Butler gender is not inherent to people, but rather it is shaped by its surroundings as an intra-action. To Bryant, each default use of an object, such as the aforementioned knife and razor, is simply another tacit collective agreement, and to him these agreements cannot be used to define a machine's use.

Much like DeLanda's assemblages have properties and capacities which are *catalysts* for purpose, Bryant's machines do not *have* a purpose, but rather *take on* a purpose when "structurally coupled to other machines" (2014, p. 24). This concept of structural coupling, the idea of "interactive relations between entities that perturb one another and thereby develop in relation to one another" (2014, pp. 24-25), is not dissimilar to DeLanda's properties and capacities of affect, or Barad's phenomena and apparatus; in that they are a way to describe the symbiotic intra-action between two entities and the results of that coupling. Bryant also refers to McLuhan's famous statement "the medium is the message" (2014, p. 22) and develops the relationship between his machines and McLuhan's media. He states that, essentially, they are very similar. Both Bryant's machines and McLuhan's media "are formative of human action, social relations, and designs in a variety of ways that don't simply issue from humans themselves" (2014, p. 22) - and he once again refers to the impact, what he calls the "gravity," of the clock, that changes our own wishes and aims to suit its structure (2014, p. 23). This is linked to his idea of purpose and structural coupling, and states that when a machine structurally couples with another machine, they become a

medium for one another, and give each other a purpose. The idea of coupling is also a useful precedent in terms of diffraction and intra-action, and in applying those ideas methodologically. An analysis based upon the examination of the structural coupling of machines can be a useful way to interact with the case study of news media.

Bryant also makes an argument for the importance and effect of materiality. The materiality of each machine, or medium, and the properties and powers that imbues it, “substantially modify human activities and relations in ways that outpace the *content* of the medium” (2014, p. 32). Bryant uses the example of a law being far more powerful in writing than in speech, and of the electric light’s impact on creating a whole new context for “night” as a concept (2014, p. 33). However, he also argues that McLuhan’s definition of media as an amplification or extension of the human senses needs expansion, stating that a medium is not just a sense amplifier, but also something that “modifies the activity or becoming for any other machine” (2014, p. 33). He also extends McLuhan’s definition beyond just humans, with many machines being a medium for other, non-human machines, such as animals or rigid machines; creating an unrestricted, post-human media ecology. This wider definition allows for greater application of these ideas as a method in terms of a case study related to news media. News media is not a human being, but it does conform to the notion of being more than its content and acting as a modifier for activity or becoming.

Bryant also describes and defines a variety of different machines, though he also notes that “as of now, we are not even certain of what different genera and species of machines exist” (2014, p. 17). He states that “the first great division between types of machine is between corporeal and incorporeal machines” (2014,

p. 26). He defines the corporeal machine as “any machine that is made of matter, [which] occupies a discrete time and place, and that exists for a duration” (2014, p. 26) giving examples such as rocks, human bodies, institutions and refrigerators. In contrast, incorporeal machines are “defined by iterability, potential eternity, and the capacity to manifest themselves in a variety of different spatial and temporal locations at once while retaining their identity” (2014, p. 26) giving examples including recipes, musical score, numbers, scientific and philosophical theories, cultural identities and novels given. However, Bryant goes on to say that these concepts are not part of “a sort of Platonic dualism” (2014, p. 26) where these entities are “subsisting ideally in some other realm” (2014, p. 26). Rather, they exist on the same plane, and incorporeal machines require a corporeal body to exist in the world, whether that be a brain, or a computer, or a book, or a musical instrument. He further expands on this by stating that incorporeal machines are incorporeal “not by virtue of being immaterial” (2014, p. 26) but rather by the fact they can be copied over and over again for the rest of time without losing their identity, giving the examples of the number 5, or Virginia Woolf’s novel *The Waves* (1931). Though both must be inscribed somewhere, or on something, for them to objectively exist and to be taken in; they remain themselves and their iterability “imbues them with a potential eternity. So long as the inscription remains or the incorporeal machine is copied or iterated, it continues to exist” (2014, p. 26). He also discusses dormant incorporeal machines, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, stating that machines such as this seem to wait “in a state of hibernation or suspended animation, awaiting their rediscovery so that they might transform the present” (2014, pp. 27-28).

Bryant breaks down corporeal machines into “three great species” (2014, p. 29), those being: inanimate, animate, and cognitive machines. He states that inanimate machines can “only undergo change through external causes or internal processes that unfold within them” and uses the example of a rock, which only undergoes change “if it encounters another machine such as a change in temperature” (2014, p. 29). They do not grow, nor do they maintain themselves. Animate machines on the other hand, do. These machines are able to preserve themselves, for instance, if a cat is cut “its wound will heal in more or less the same configuration that its body previously had” (2014, p. 30). Finally, cognitive machines are machines that are “capable of directing their own action” (2014, p. 30). This accounts for most humans and animals, with Bryant giving the example of a cat regulating its temperature by moving closer or further away from a fire. He goes on to say that “these distinctions can overlap and there are all sorts of differences in degree between these different types of machine” (2014, p. 30), meaning that there are many machines that are a combination of animate and cognitive (animals), inanimate and animate (viruses) and incorporeal, animate and cognitive (governments). He further states that both corporeal and incorporeal machines “vary from the absolutely rigid [not susceptible to change] to the plastic [open to different interpretations and readings]” (2014, p. 29) at a variety of different levels. The diversity in the model allows for multiple combinations of varying degrees. Bryant even refers to Butler’s view on sexuality as an example of the intersection between corporeal and incorporeal machines, stating that Butler “rightly argues [that] even our sexuality results, in part, from the agency of incorporeal machines acting on our bodies” (Butler cited in Bryant, 2014, p. 29) and our sexuality “is something that forms in an interaction of incorporeal social

machines and biological corporeal machines” (2014, p. 29). A media text then, is a combination of corporeal and incorporeal machines, which all vary in their plasticity, similarly to how Butler’s idea of sexuality functions as a machine.

When describing the nature of machines, Bryant states that machines are productive rather than representational or expressive. The machine’s properties and capacities are overlooked in favour of its operations, as “a machine is something that operates...a basic process that takes one or more inputs and performs a transformation on it” (2014, p. 38). This kind of stance implies the performative, as was the case with Bryant’s theory on the purpose of machines, with the focus being on what the machine *does* rather than what the machine *is*. This goes for both corporeal and incorporeal machines, as Bryant demonstrates with a tree, which operates on and transforms “water, soil nutrients, light and carbon dioxide” (2014, p. 38) into outputs. He also uses the example of a novel, which operates internally on its characters and events within it, and externally on the readers and language itself. Machines themselves are also made up of other productive machines, with each of our own body parts performing different operations. Our eyes, ears, stomach, and many more, each turn different inputs into outputs to serve both themselves and a greater machine. The idea is that each machine is a factory rather than a theatre, defined by its production and its product. Bryant refers to these as a “virtual proper being” (operations) and “local manifestations” (products), which together “constitute the ‘proper being’ of the machine” (2014, p. 40). He goes on to say that machines can possess these operations without enacting them, referring to them as “powers” (2014, p. 41) which work in much the same way as DeLanda’s properties and capacities. Bryant also splits manifestations into three groups: qualitative (when there is a qualitative

change in a machine), agitive (change in a machine as a result of internal inputs) and material (the product of an operation that departs the machine). This means of thinking provides us with questions to use within a case study; asking about what and how media texts produce, and what operations and powers they possess.

Finally, Bryant touches on trans-corporeality. He states that when given different inputs, a machine produces different local manifestations. Dependent on how rigid or plastic a machine is, “the outputs of a machine will vary depending on the milieu in which it is embedded” (2014, p. 46). The more different the input, the less affected the outputs, and the more rigid the machine is. If different inputs result in more affected outputs, the more plastic the machine is. Bryant states that because of this, all machines are binary machines, and machines are not always coupled to each other. One machine provides a flow for another, and becomes a medium – a very simple binary state. If a machine is always coupled to another machine it undermines the significance of coupling in itself, with the machine not undergoing variations in flows (and thus variation in outputs) due to being constantly coupled. The mutual effect of these interactions relates to trans-corporeality, where the constant interactions between us and “things that seem to be over there” (2014, p. 49) cause profound changes in our own environment, entering us indirectly, as Bryant illustrates with the example of garbage disposal linking to very real environmental issues. At the heart of this lies a “reciprocal determination” (2014, p. 50) where “the machines that flow through a machine modify the machine that operates” (2014, p. 50). Bryant closes by pointing out how this is reflected in great works of art, and how they can be read in many different ways due to this trans-corporeality, and how this can lead to a symbiotic relationship between art and society, with one impacting the other and

simultaneously allowing itself to be impacted. Much like the craftsman producing an artifact that will always be affected by its environment, the artifact itself manages to have an impact on the environment “leading us to attend to certain cultural phenomena as significant, while ignoring others” (2014, p. 53).

Bryant’s machine oriented ontology aims towards a posthuman media ecology, and is an amalgamation of corporeal and incorporeal, bringing them together to form a thought provoking assemblage. Bryant takes cues from Butler, referencing her views on gender identity and falling in line with her suggestions of society’s many tacit collective agreements. His machines also evoke performative notions, with their status as productive factories and the nature of structural coupling reminding of Barad’s light as a particle/wave model of phenomena and apparatus. Though the idea of powers and the categorisation of manifestations are perhaps unnecessary, Bryant’s onto-cartography gives a comprehensive account of ‘the machine’. His ideas on the machine and corporeality strengthen the platform for further expansions on assemblage theory.

1.5 Literature summary

Though the notions of performativity and representationalism are often pitted against each other, when comparing sets of ideas such as DeLanda’s and Barad’s, one notices that the differences between them are not as explicit as is perhaps implied. This suggests that the change from representationalism to performativity, the performative turn, is more of a steady progression than a total polar shift. In the case of DeLanda and Barad, both posit that the world is made up of entities that are irreducible, in DeLanda’s case assemblages, in Barad’s case phenomena and apparatus. Both suggest that individual examples of these entities are defined

by their capacity to affect and be affected, rather than the innate properties that they may possess. In fact, both believe that these innate properties (such as light, in Barad's example) are expressed *within* that capacity to affect and be affected (light's shift into waves or particles).

Though both are examples of a new onto-epistemological school of thought with many similarities, DeLanda's assemblage theory and Barad's agential realism are not without their differences. Barad focuses on the symbiosis between phenomena and apparatus, and how the effects of the intra-actions between the two are not pre-defined and do not precede the intra-action itself. DeLanda on the other hand sees only the assemblage. There is no split between phenomena and apparatus, simply assemblages which each have properties and capacities which include both expressive and material aspects. The causality example used by DeLanda and Harman, of cigarettes and lung cancer, is also symptomatic of an explicit difference between the two ideologies. A representationalist analysis and a performative analysis of smoking, the difference being that one considers what smoking *does* and the other considers what *doing* smoking *does*, result in different focuses, a classic example of the difference between representationalist and performative ways of thinking. Harman calls DeLanda's ontology "flat" and that within it, "atoms have no more reality than grain markets or sports franchises" (Harman, 2008, p. 370). This type of thinking seems at odds with Barad's disapproval of the power of language over matter, where a grain market or a sports franchise exists only because of its context, but one must remember that grain markets and sports franchises also have a level of performance tied to them. Though in essence, both concepts are ideational, it is a material *doing* that makes them relevant – perhaps even more so to many people

than atoms or molecules. For many people, the intra-action between themselves and the atoms of which they comprise is far less overt than the intra-action between themselves and their favourite sports team.

However, these differences mostly stem from DeLanda's focus on the whole as opposed to Barad's focus on the agential cut. Yet, when put together, Barad's phenomena, apparatus and intra-action form an endless loop of sorts. Apparatus joins with phenomena, phenomena intra-acts with apparatus, apparatus intra-acts with phenomena, from which a pattern emerges which intra-acts with a phenomena or apparatus, and so on. This relationship looks very similar to a DeLandian assemblage, where one assemblage couples with another, and their respective properties and capacities create a new assemblage which goes onto couple with further assemblages. Though DeLanda's assemblages are irreducible (Harman, 2008, p. 367), the mere presence of concepts such as properties and capacities seems to refute this. Properties and capacities are not necessarily exclusive to one assemblage, thus an assemblage is reducible to its own properties. Though these may not be separated from the assemblage, this provides a new layer of detail, one which functions much like Barad's phenomena and apparatus.

Upon greater inspection then, the differences between Barad and DeLanda are not necessarily incompatible. However, their respective focus on physics and the materiality of discourse, and philosophical ideologies and nitpicking at theoretical fallacies, causes their work to perhaps unnecessarily differentiate itself from the likes of Butler, Lamontagne, Clark & Chalmers and Bryant. Lamontagne's use of an actual case study in applying performance and performativity to technology shows that there are possibilities for the practical

application of posthuman performativity across many different disciplines, including art, design, science and technology among others. The particular item of clothing that Lamontagne uses as a case study is both unique, but still regular and relatable. The application of ideas such as performance and performativity to something practical is a gateway to the introduction of these ideas in the mainstream. Butler's presentation of performativity also uses such an application. Similarly with Clark & Chalmers, the idea of active externalism is closely related to the posthumanist performative, with the reference to the way people perform intra-actively with technology being just another representation of the phenomena/apparatus/pattern model. Butler's theory of gender is also concerned with intra-action, with the idea of gender as a non-corporeal attribute which both shapes and is shaped by individuals. Bryant's machines further illustrate how DeLanda's wholistic assemblages can just as easily fit within the performative. Notions such as pluripotency and productivity can all be appropriated comfortably within a performative framework such as Barad's posthumanist account. Bryant's concept of machines is an important step in the amalgamation of the two schools of thought, and is an example of how a performative ontology can be developed and explored without abandoning some of the more pragmatic elements of representationalism.

CHAPTER TWO:

METHODOLOGY

The development of a methodology is a crucial step in undertaking any research. To do so, it is necessary to construct a sound ontological basis, a framework within which a method can be effective. The preceding literature covering performativity, its development, and the arguments against it, is a starting point for such a discussion. In order to form this framework, it is important to compare and contrast these theoretical perspectives, analysing points of similarity and difference, and assessing the usefulness of key elements in constructing a foundation for research. From this, a research method can be built, the lens through which the research subject will be explored. A precedent for the method has already been established through the theory of diffraction, which is natural outcome from Barad's account of posthumanist performativity, and offers a framework that has been successfully appropriated as methodology. Investigating this method and identifying its key components will provide direction and focus for my research, and will inform the nature of my research when applied to a case study.

2.1 Constructing a Framework

Considering both the similarities and individual merits of each of the theories discussed, it will be useful to tie them together as one approach which forms the framework for this research. Considering all of these theories feature some form of Baradian intra-action, DeLandian assemblage and Bryant's machines, I propose a theoretical turn towards these concepts. This theory posits that every entity in

the universe – from an oven to an atom, a person to a planet – is an assemblage. These assemblages then entangle with other assemblages, acting as phenomena and apparatus, creating further assemblages. The transversal space where these entanglements occur is where new assemblages are created. According to this theory, the universe is a constantly intra-acting web of assemblages.

Assemblages are made up of various phenomena and apparatus which entangle intra-actively with each other, with these entanglements forming the assemblage. A phenomena is an entity with properties which can be affected by apparatus, and capacities to affect the apparatus. An apparatus is an entity with capacities to affect phenomena and properties to be affected by the phenomena. Both entities, phenomena and apparatus, are assemblages within themselves, with the ability to be broken down exponentially to the smallest possible level into other separate phenomena and apparatus that make up each respective entity, each of which are also assemblages. All assemblages have the potential to be either phenomena or apparatus, and the distinction is not tied intrinsically to the assemblage.

It can be argued then that the distinction between phenomena and apparatus are irrelevant, as a phenomena is to an apparatus what an apparatus is to a phenomena. Furthermore, they are both assemblages in themselves, which are constantly intra-acting and creating new assemblages. However, the distinction is useful in a practical sense, when it comes to analysing intra-acting assemblages and breaking them down into parts. This kind of analysis is the study of how an assemblage is ‘put to use’, much like one of Bryant’s machines. When questioning or applying an assemblage’s contextual purpose, a distinction between phenomena and apparatus is simply a practical measure. It allows the

assemblage to slip in and out of the greater intra-active web that it is a part of and be analysed in isolation. This is relevant to Barad's notion of the agential cut, which includes and excludes, cuts together-apart these different assemblages in order to produce new diffractions and patterns. In such an analysis, the phenomena imbues the apparatus with a purpose, and the apparatus helps the phenomena fulfill that purpose; both of these emerge mutually through entanglement, the formation of an assemblage.

An example would be a blind man and a guide dog. The blind man has the capacity of blindness meaning he cannot walk safely by himself. The guide dog has the capacity to negate that, but is not given the purpose to do so until the entities entangle. Likewise, the blind man has the capacity to be led by the dog, and the dog has the property to lead the man. When these entities entangle, the dog becomes a medium for the man and the man becomes a medium for the dog, forming a greater assemblage, one which suggests active externalism and pluripotency. The interchanging of apparatus and phenomena allows for greater flexibility, inviting the questioning of cultural or social norms by rearranging the assemblage. This kind of framework allows for the challenging of the tacit collective agreements mentioned in Butler, whilst not abandoning the logical approaches that may have been formed by those agreements. In terms of media, especially news media and this case study, this approach allows us to question how organisations are presenting events whilst still keeping in mind the objective events that actually happened.

However, some semantic questions are raised by this theory. Why 'assemblage' and not 'machine'? Why 'entanglement' and not 'coupling'? These two questions have simple answers, being that the words 'machine' and

‘coupling’ are not flexible enough to be accommodated by this theory. The word ‘machine’ already has many practical implications. It implies something mechanical, which has particular purpose or function, and created by man. Though Bryant’s definition of machine is well expressed, the word ‘assemblage’ has more potential for expression, and considering its DeLandian connotations is a more appropriate term to use in this theory. ‘Coupling’ is not suitable as it inherently refers to two-ness. This theory is attempting to reject the binary, hence the replacing of ‘apparatus’ and ‘phenomena’ with a form of ‘apparatus/phenomena’. Though there can be infinite couplings coupled to further couplings, the word ‘entanglement’ is simply a more dynamic and useful ideation.

This development of performativity and the assemblage by bringing together existing theories has allowed a comprehensive and versatile framework to emerge. This theory allows for examination of the whole and of the cut. It allows for endless deconstruction into smaller parts, reassembling into larger assemblages, and isolated examinations of the one. It allows for relation to the human and to the non-human. It is fundamentally performative, with intra-action and entanglements being the crucial relational concepts that tie each assemblage together. Using this combination of Baradian ideas of apparatus and phenomena, and meshing it with the holistic approach of DeLandian assemblages, forms a strong basis for the theory. Bryant’s development of the assemblage, as a productive, pluripotent machine is also useful, as is Butler’s notion of gender performativity. Assemblages are pluripotent entities whose purpose is defined and performed contextually, intra-actively informing its productions and producers. Furthermore, an actively external approach in the vein of Clark, Chalmers and Lamontagne can be taken to separate and explain the separate parts of the

assemblage – the affecting and the affected, the apparatus and the phenomena, and how these all fit together. This helps further elucidate the relationships between assemblage, phenomena and apparatus, whilst still allowing for new interpretations.

In relation to media, a mediating framework of performativity can help us decode the messages that we receive from media every day. In the 21st century, however, we are starting to see a performative shift in the nature of media across many different platforms. Over the past ten years, the roles of consumer and producer have changed drastically, with the evolution of technology making the role of producer more accessible and giving the role of consumer more agency. The now ubiquitous and omnipresent internet has changed the nature of media, and society at large, and yet we are still struggling to come to terms with its use and the impact it has had on not just our media consumption, but on the nature of our social and moral values themselves. These complications show no sign of letting up, and as technology becomes more advanced and more available, difficulties such as copyright infringement or crowdsourcing the news will become insignificant compared to the questions raised by technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. It is with these types of problems that we need to understand and assess performatively in order to come to a comprehensive understanding of these issues and their impact on us as a society, rather than just their representations. The performative when applied to media gives us an alternative layer of analysis that is vital to understanding exactly what media does, what it does with us, as an intra-active process.

2.2 The diffractive method

When further exploring the idea of performativity, a concept that becomes prominent is that of diffraction. It is this concept that forms the basis of my own methodology. The idea of diffraction comes from the scientific concept of diffraction in physics, where a wave encounters an obstacle or slit and different patterns of interference emerge from this encounter (fig. 1). However, Barad uses the idea of diffraction as a metaphor. According to Barad (and her contemporary, Donna Haraway) diffraction is not just a physical fact concerning waves and slits, but a metaphor that can be used to explore and critique notions such as difference and representation. Barad believes that diffraction is a way of coping with epistemological problems of representation. Barad expands on this by stating that diffraction “troubles dichotomies, including some of the most sedimented and stabilized/stabilizing binaries, such as organic/inorganic and animate/inanimate” (Barad, 2014, p. 168) opening up the concept to a posthumanist context. The idea of diffraction is also central to one of Barad’s other concepts: intra-action. In fact, the very metaphor of diffraction resonates with intra-action. The concept of phenomena and apparatus fits the metaphor, with the phenomena being represented by the light and the apparatus being represented by the slit. The new pattern emerges mutually from the light and the slit.

Barad uses the idea of identity to demonstrate these concepts, stating that “particular notions of identity and difference [are] defined through a colonizing logic whereby the ‘self’ maintains and stabilizes itself by eliminating or dominating what it takes to be the other, the non-I” (2014, p. 169). Where this kind of logic “entails the setting of an absolute boundary, a clear dividing line, a geometry of exclusion that positions the self on one side and the other – the not-self – on the other side” (2014, p. 169), an intra-active, diffractive approach does

not. Barad links the concept of gender identity to the “queer behaviour of electrons” (2014, p. 173) by talking about how electrons behave like particles and waves simultaneously, which is not dissimilar to the idea of gender performance. Barad states that physicists were “unable to account for” the “inappropriate behaviour” (2014, p. 173) of this phenomenon, labelling it “a disturbing paradox” (2014, p. 173) until Bohr found that this phenomenon can be accommodated through “a radical reworking of the classical worldview” (2014, p. 173) one which “does not take the Cartesian subject-object dualism for granted” (2014, p. 173). Barad says that Bohr stated wave-particle duality can be explained by “understanding that identity is not essence, fixity or givenness, but a contingent iterative performativity” (2014, pp. 173-174) a point of view which reworks the understanding of difference as an “absolute boundary between object and subject” (2014, p. 174) to “the effects of enacted cuts in a radical reworking of cause/effect” (2014, p. 174). This “coming together of opposite qualities within” (2014, p. 175) can be understood by seeing these phenomena as iterative performative processes that shift in and out rather than simply being one or the other. This kind of outlook allows for multiple entanglements that “entail differentiatings” (2014, p. 176) just as “differentiatings entail entanglings” (2014, p. 176). These entanglements inform and are informed by one another, helping to create new patterns of interference. Models such as this call into question the concept of ‘difference’, with Barad stating that “difference is not some universal concept for all places and times, but is itself a multiplicity within/of itself” (2014, p. 176), an idea which diffracts but is also diffracted itself. It is in the entanglements between intra-action, diffraction and the challenging of Butlerian

tacit collective agreements that form the basis for Barad's theory of agential realism.

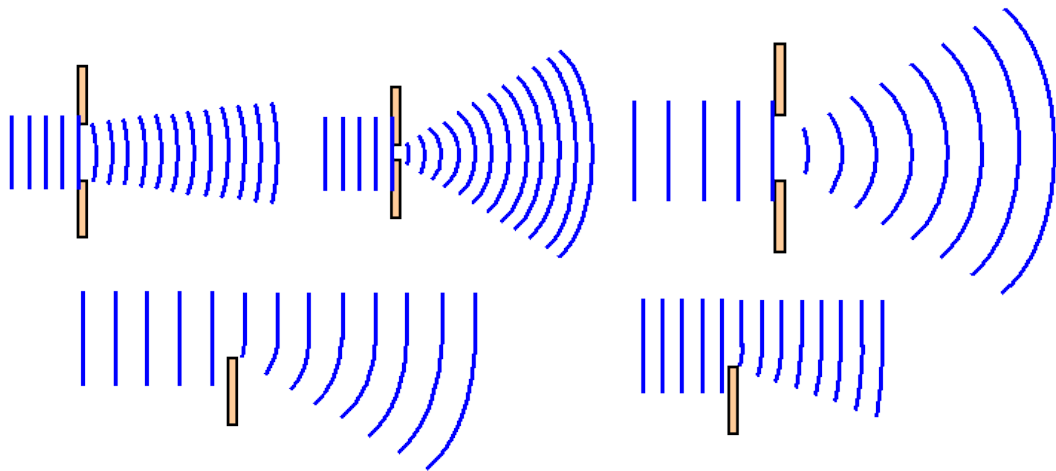


Figure 1: Diffraction in physics – waves encounter an obstacle and new patterns emerge from that encounter (Source: K. Gibbs, 2009)

The concept of diffraction is not only linked to Barad's posthumanist account of performativity. Its three-stage framework of light, slit, pattern also links to Austin's initial concept of performativity. Austin's linguistic model of performativity consisted of locution (the words spoken), illocutionary force (the attempt to *do* within the locution) and the perlocutionary effect (the effect of the words spoken on the people being spoken to). Diffraction is once again an apt metaphor, with the locution suggesting the light, the illocutionary force suggesting the slit, and the pattern produced by the light and the slit suggesting the perlocutionary effect. This once again signals a mutuality of emergence, as the combination of locution and illocutionary force are both actively working to create a new pattern. This shows that the concept of diffraction is performative at its core and the concept of performativity is equally diffractive, meaning that the relationship between performativity and diffraction is another intra-action within itself. The kinds of patterns which emerge from this intra-action include theories

such as Barad's, which themselves impact the ideas of performativity and diffraction. This is the performance, the assemblage of the researcher. The assemblage of the researcher intra-acts with the assemblages that are concepts and methods and engages with these in ways that force new patterns to emerge. This ongoing process is a material discursive practice and process. As a researcher I intra-act with the theory and material, being informed by them as I inform them, and creating new patterns by doing so, just as the research findings themselves create new diffractive patterns as they are engaged with by others..

However, diffraction is not just a loose concept based on a metaphor. It is also a method. According to Barad, "a diffractive methodology is a critical practice for making a difference in the world. It is a commitment to understanding which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom. It is a critical practice of engagement, not a distance-learning practice from afar" (Barad, 2007, p. 90). A diffractive methodology "implies a profound rethinking of Western ontology and epistemology" (Timeto, 2011, p. 158). It looks at representations as performance, as "a diffractive practice that reveals the co-emergence and co-implication of both meaning and matter" (2011, p. 158), one where the differences produced by intra-actions do not signify or reinforce dissonance between the entangled assemblages, but rather where connections are established. A diffractive methodology does not seek the *effect*, the differences themselves, but rather the *affect*, the active impact of differences. In line with Barad's agential realism, diffraction is a material discursive practice. It produces material patterns, from the discourse of entanglements and intra-action. It is a practice, a performance. However, although diffraction and performativity are strongly linked by theory, there is no need to abandon the concept of representation all together. Rather, a diffractive

methodology allows us to simply rework and reconfigure it in order to create new patterns – new interpretations found by reading through and being read through. Thus, it is useful to use diffraction as a tool to analyse and disseminate performances and representations.

This is the kind of approach that Iris van der Tuin takes in her article “A Different Starting Point, a Different Metaphysics: Reading Bergeson and Barad Diffractively”. Van der Tuin attempts an “affirmative feminist reading of the philosophy of Henry Bergson” (van der Tuin, 2011) by using Barad’s work as a lens under which to analyse it. She states that a diffractive reading “breaks through the academic habit of criticism and works along affirmative lines” (2011, p. 22). This alludes to the idea that diffraction does not focus on differences as something to critique, but rather as something that establishes connections between assemblages and allows the reader to consider the intra-active relations within and around them. Van der Tuin further explains that “diffraction is meant to disrupt linear and fixed causalities, and to work towards more promising interference patterns” (2011, p. 26) by reading and rewriting texts through one another. Van der Tuin goes on to say that this approach can disrupt the temporality of a text, cross disciplinary boundaries, and can open up meaning by changing meanings in different contexts. She illustrates this by finding that Bergson’s “assumed phallogentrism” (2011, p. 38) can “specify and strengthen the philosophy so as to make it work for feminism and sexual difference theory” (2011, p. 39).

Furthermore, the idea of a diffractive method also exists outside of the performative as a whole. Harman, in his reading of DeLanda, suggests that the entire concept of philosophical critique should be replaced with the method of

“philosophical hyperbole” (Harman, 2008, p. 381). Philosophical hyperbole replaces the nitpicking of orthodox philosophical critical thinking with a “what if?” situation: “if this work were the greatest of the century, how would our thoughts need to change?” (2008, p. 381) rather than “where are the mistaken arguments here” (2008, p. 381). Harman uses DeLanda’s ontology as an example of the application of such a method, suggesting that, if assemblage theory was the world’s philosophical dogma in 2030, it is more important to look at how we would feel liberated, and how we would feel cramped or stifled in that scenario. This means of review rewards the sweeping, ambitious schools of thought whilst not overlooking the mistakes and fallacies that litter many expanded philosophical musings. In applying this thinking to DeLanda’s theory, Harman states that the most problematic element of a DeLandian universe is the absence of “an adequate theory of causal relations” (2008, p. 382) once again due to DeLanda’s focus on an object’s capacity to affect and be affected by other objects than on their own individual properties.

Reading texts through other texts to create new readings is the diffractive method. This kind of method seems tailor made for the methodological framework my research is operating in, as it has many of the same characteristics. In my theoretical framework, new patterns emerge from the intra-action between assemblages. This kind of process resonates within the diffractive model, and the diffractive method, with new patterns emerging from the intra-action between light and slit, and new readings emerging from the intra-action between researcher and texts. Here, the similarities between the diffractive method and the concepts of performativity, intra-action and assemblage are evident. An assemblage (the light) entangles with another assemblage (the obstacle) and produces a new

assemblage (the interference pattern). Considering the relationship between assemblage, phenomena and apparatus, this theory is also diffractive within itself, further emphasizing that a diffractive methodology is a suitable method for this framework.

However, although this method is clearly effective when applied to theoretical texts, it is unclear how applications such as van der Tuin's will be useful in the more practical context that I plan to apply the diffractive method. When applying it to a case study such as media, a news media event in particular, both the effectiveness of the method and the means of its application become more unclear. Theoretically, the diffractive method is simple. The first step is to intersect two or more assemblages. For the sake of this example, let it be two – one to be read, and one to be read through. The point where these two assemblages entangle is the transversal space, where intra-action occurs and a new assemblage is created, an assemblage which then entangles with the assemblage to be read and the assemblage to be read through. This new reading is intra-active. It equally affects the assemblages that are read and read through as it is affected by them. These readings then intra-act with both the text and the researcher, opening up new meanings and affecting the performance of the researcher and the research they are producing. Analysis of this transversal space where intra-action occurs is key in producing new readings.

However, in regards to media, finding this transversal space and the components that entangle to form it is a greater challenge than it is with waves and slits. Barad however provides some insight on this, by stating that a diffractive methodology is about “reading insights through one another, building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in

their fine details” (Barad, 2009). The emphasis on finding differences fits with the concept of the issue of performance in the media, specifically in this case study of news media. Although a diffractive methodology concerns the relational nature of assemblages with one another, and the meanings that these relate produce, it does not necessarily exclude other methodologies, and semiotic or comparative readings for instance could also be part of the diffractive process; producing new meanings and patterns of interference. An application of the diffractive model to the assemblages of and within media texts can certainly raise useful insights, but with news media being a material modality rather than a theoretical one, it is also important to make sure a more practical approach is taken to produce these insights. This can be done by asking pragmatic questions that the application of a diffractive model can answer. Some of these might be:

- What cuts are being made in this diffractive process?
- How are these cuts enacted or expressed in the materiality of the text?
- How do these cuts change the performance of the assemblages within the process, and the intra-actions between them?
- What kind of pattern do these cuts help produce, and what purpose does this pattern serve?

The focus on the cuts as the core of the research is key. This kind of application will help in separating the diffractive methodology from a purely theoretical approach. It allows the researcher to ask questions that can provide real, material answers, but does not abandon the need for the researcher’s own interpretation and performance within the methodology. It simply introduces another intra-active process which creates more patterns. The questions enable the recognition of points of difference within assemblages and their perlocutionary

force, a performative approach which brings to light the affect of difference as opposed to simply difference itself, one of the foundations of diffraction.

For clarity, my diffractive method can be summarized in four key points:

1. The universe is made up of assemblages. All entities, material and immaterial, living and non-living, are assemblages.
2. Assemblages can be deconstructed into their diffractive components: phenomena (what is read) and apparatus (what is read through). When a phenomena is diffracted through an apparatus, intra-action occurs, and a pattern is created. This new pattern is the assemblage which emerges from the entanglement of phenomena and apparatus.
3. Phenomena and apparatus are assemblages within themselves which can be deconstructed or dissolved.
4. Assemblages are pluripotent in terms of their place in the diffractive model. No assemblage is inherently either apparatus or phenomena, but rather all assemblages have the potential to be both. In actuality, within a diffraction, phenomena is to apparatus as apparatus is to phenomena. There is no objective difference between the two, as they are simply two assemblages intra-acting. The distinction between them is made solely for the purpose of research and analysis, as it provides a pragmatic framework which allows for new readings and knowledge to be discovered.

A diffractive methodology manages to bring together the foundational ideas of the assemblage and the performative, by providing a methodology which necessitates the synthesising nature of the assemblage, along with the active and interpretative approach of the performative. Diffraction relies on both of these as the very point of it is to look at the performative relations and intra-actions

between assemblages, and how they shape each other and create new patterns in the process. This approach provides a versatile framework that is able to accommodate complex questions and yield complex answers.

2.3 Diffractive media practices

However, before applying this method to our case study, it will be useful to test the diffractive method on a form of media which is based upon a diffractive methodology in the first place. This will help demonstrate whether or not a diffractive methodology has any merit in application to media events, by showing whether or not it is effective in extracting new readings from texts which operate in a diffractive environment. One of these forms of media is the practice of culture jamming, a movement employed by anti-consumerist organisations in order to subvert and critique mass media messages and their automatic consumption (Binay, 2005). Those who practice this movement “create an alternative consumer resistance media that replies back to the mass media messages based on existing media artifacts” (Binay, 2005). In itself, culture jamming is a performative practice. The products of culture jamming are undoubtedly more than just images and words representing a message. Rather, they are texts that perform that message actively, with the meaning and purpose of the texts heavily contextualised by their physical form and locality as much as the abstract social or temporal settings in which they are performed. The words, images and signs produced by the creators of these texts are forced upon (hence, “jamming”) existing social ideas, practices or iconography to re-appropriate the original messages behind them in a direct response to those who endorse them. Culture jamming can come in many forms, not just through the medium of

“subvertisements” (corporate advertisements that are defaced in order to subvert the messages within them), including but not limited to public events, performance art, film or music. The entire idea of culture jamming is inherently performative, an active challenge to the tacit collective agreement to mindlessly internalise those messages that form a large part of how we engage within society. Furthermore, one of the defining features of culture jamming is its participatory nature. The practitioners of culture jamming do not merely create a text to be admired or taken in, but create something public, allegorical, and directly subversive that requires the participation of the audience. The effectiveness of culture jamming relies on its audience’s enthusiasm for its performance and is intended to affect new diffractive processes.

Most importantly however, culture jamming is an example of a diffractive methodology at work. The presence of a diffractive way of thinking shows in culture jamming, as the message of each jam is contained within the transversal. In the case of a culture jam, the transversal is the space in which the internal (the message jammed onto the original text by the author) and the external (the original or traditional message) collide. Often, the two (or more) entities within a culture jam when separated are simply assemblages on differing ends of an ideological spectrum. However, when brought together they form a new assemblage. These two separate messages intra-act in a way that creates a new, subversive, culturally aggressive context. The term “guerilla communications” (Fyfe, 1998, p. 274) is an apt description, not only due to the frequent tendency of culture jam practitioners to be smaller groups attempting to subvert far larger social or corporate institutions, but also in its often fearless, aggressive means of expressing these messages – an attitude which is reflected in those transversal

intra-actions that make culture jamming what it is. There is perhaps no purer expression of McLuhan's famous "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964) than culture jamming, to which the medium it is performed in (physical or otherwise) is part of the practice, whilst also shaping the content and context of its message. The form and the function are one and the same. Two prominent practitioners of culture jamming are the anti-capitalist, not-for-profit organisation Adbusters Media Foundation, and the anonymous British street artist Banksy. Both of these authors use culture jamming as a means to explore and subvert consumer culture, capitalism, disenfranchisement and marginalisation in society.

Adbusters Media Foundation is, in its own words, "a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age. [Adbusters'] aim is to topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way we will live in the 21st century" (Adbusters, 2014). This aim, and the ideology and values that it implies, is the perfect basis for culture jamming. Though Adbusters' main outlet is its "not for profit, reader-supported, 60,000 circulation magazine" (Adbusters, 2014), the organisation also has other avenues in which it works towards its goal; including social marketing campaigns including "Buy Nothing Day" and events such as the famous "Occupy Wall Street" (Adbusters, 2014). All of these channels, however, are forms of culture jams – performative texts or events that are designed to actively engage an audience, and explore social issues, by subverting a message using familiar ideas and icons.

Adbusters magazine is Adbusters' most prominent media channel. The magazine is much like any other magazine, collecting articles and images and

arranging them in a set format. However, the words and images within an *Adbusters* magazine are nothing like the contents of most glossy magazines. *Adbusters* magazines are filled with pop culture imagery and corporate messages directly contrasted alongside (and on top of, underneath or in-between for that matter) social, political and philosophical culture jam. The magazine uses culture jamming primarily to attack consumer culture, which seems to be the main adversary in most of *Adbusters*' activity, with co-founder Kalle Lasn being cited to state that consumerism is "the opiate of the masses" (Lasn cited in Sommer, 2012). On a level beyond that *Adbusters* is subverting ideas we take for granted in modern western society. The magazine attacks capitalism at large, social intolerance, governmental policy, economic injustice and, perhaps most importantly, the hegemonic power structures that dictate the significance and impact of all of those notions, though it must be said that this is not necessarily a vindictive, or even conscious, undertaking by those structures. *Adbusters* is cultural vandalism, taking those Butlerian tacit collective agreements that define what is acceptable and palatable in society and subverting them by using their own messages and images within an entirely different context. There is no doubt that *Adbusters* have an anti-corporate, anti-consumerist agenda, but they have no intention of keeping that agenda a secret. In fact, they display it proudly on their website for anybody to see:

Ultimately *Adbusters* is an ecological magazine, dedicated to examining the relationship between human beings and their physical and mental environment. We want a world in which the economy and ecology resonate in balance. We try to coax people from spectator to participant in this

quest. We want folks to get mad about corporate disinformation, injustices in the global economy, and any industry that pollutes our physical or mental commons.

(Adbusters, 2014)

With this in mind, the very idea that the kind of content produced by *Adbusters* is published as a glossy magazine is itself a culture jam. Although *Adbusters* shares a format with *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, and many other large glossy magazines, the magazine is somewhat of an anti-competitor with those publications well-known for being consumerist havens. The September 2013 edition of *Vogue* for instance (which in all fairness is consistently the year's largest issue) had 902 pages, and 70% of these were advertisements (Quay, 2013). By being such an aggressively anti-consumerist publication, and yet being sold on the same shelves as such brand-centric magazines, *Adbusters* subverts the codes and conventions of its own medium; finding its very form in the transversal of the unlikely diffraction between high gloss magazine and anti-consumerist, social activist messages.

Despite this connection, *Adbusters* is not just a vessel for irony. Most of the content within *Adbusters* is made up of pointed word and image collages that work together to form a message greater than either of the parts by themselves. One such example is in *Adbusters*' 95th issue "Post West" (Adbusters, 2011) where on one page (2011, p. 36) an image of pop star Lady Gaga with the text "Moral Collapse of a Nation" is overlaid, with Arabic translation underneath the text (with the Arabic translation being a theme throughout the issue). On the adjacent page however (2011, p. 37), is an extract from a book by Bulgarian

philosopher Tzvetan Todorov. The extract covers the existence of torture in American jails and the release of documents by the American government that reveal that these torture practices were not abnormal “blunders” on behalf of the CIA, but regular, calculated occurrences that were (or perhaps, are) actively practiced and protected by legal loopholes and ambiguities absolving the perpetrators of any accountability and decimating any chance of reprisal.

Adbusters’ use of a diffractive methodology is clear in that the performance of the article is constructed. Assemblages are meshed together to create a new pattern. In the diffractive model of *Adbusters 95*’s ‘Moral Collapse of a Nation’ pages, the moral panic of Lady Gaga is read through the slit of institutional torture, an intra-action which creates the pattern of a pointed statement about what issues are really pertinent in society, and the distractions that are used to direct our attention elsewhere. The foundations of this lie in the cuts that are made by Adbusters. It is the cuts that set the precedent for how each assemblage intra-acts in the transversal space and produces a pattern, as the cuts define how each individual assemblage is performed within the diffractive process. Cuts are made to each of the assemblages that form the intra-action which creates the story, those being the “moral panic of a nation” text, the image of Lady Gaga, and the article on the opposite page. When breaking these relationships down diffractively we can decode the patterns they produce both as individual assemblages and, the patterns the piece itself produces as one assemblage.



Figure 2: 'Moral Collapse of a Nation' from *Adbusters* 95 (Source: *Adbusters*, 2011, pp. 36-37)

The text and the image of Gaga actually intra-act in their own way and create their own assemblage. The text makes a very literal exclusionary cut, almost entirely covering Gaga's face. This has several connotations. Firstly, the obscuring of Gaga's face implies that her identity is entirely irrelevant. That this person could be anybody who fits a certain criteria. It implies that what Lady Gaga does is far less important than the purpose she serves in being "the moral collapse of a nation", which has replaced her face and has become the defining element of her performance in this text. This obscuring of Gaga's face is all the more notable due to the fact that her body is for the most part unobstructed by the text. The way the text gives a clear view of Gaga's body from the chest down implies the status of sexuality in Western society (especially female sexuality). Sexuality is a go-to moral panic for mass media to exploit, as it is something

which draws attention and ire from both the conservative and progressive ends of the social scale. With everything from comic books to pop stars having been blamed for corrupting the minds of youth and causing moral decay in society, pop culture idols have long been scapegoats for the inevitable misunderstanding of a changing world. Making controversial statements or maintaining a provocative image is something that often challenges some of the conservative Judeo-Christian values held in Western society. Something which Gaga does (Church of God News, 2010). This is how the image of Gaga is performing on the page. The intra-action between Gaga and the text suggests the liberal expression of sexuality, especially female sexuality and by extension the empowerment of previously oppressed parts of society, and the status of pop culture idols in society, is the cause of a nation's moral collapse.

When diffracting this information, reading it through the slit of the Todorov extract, another cut, the message opens up new readings and interpretations. The extract details the very rarely discussed extent of torture in American prisons, a practice that is supported and protected by the government's legal counsel. However, when reading the extract and including, cutting together-apart, that information upon re-reading the previous page, new insights are produced. A diffractive reading demonstrates that the Gaga page is there to distract from the message of the Todorov extract. On paper the two pages seem disconnected, and yet both pages share a similar background colour, suggesting the two are linked. This is not a random or purely aesthetic decision, it is a performative one. This kind of combination is indicative of the way Adbusters uses culture jamming to convey a message that requires the participation of the audience in the performance, by way of decoding the popular culture references

and semiotic cues in the magazine. The two pages are a statement on moral panic in society. However, whilst these situations are being played out in the media prompting shock and outrage from the public (Greenwood, 2014), far more sinister crimes are being committed by those in far more sensible attire, and are going unnoticed and unpunished. When reading the Todorov extract detailing inhumane practices perpetrated by governments, and when considering that the publisher of the text is Adbusters, the pattern of the intra-action between the assemblages emerges. The Gaga page provides an easy to digest message expressed in images and large text, as opposed to the Todorov extract which seems an arduous read in comparison. The Todorov extract almost acts as the small print related to the Gaga page; an uncomfortable part of a contract that those writing it would rather not have read. The message of the text over Gaga's face is saying: *THIS is the moral collapse of a nation, no need to look at the other page*, and the voice from which this is being said is not Adbusters', but that of the governments responsible for these acts of torture. The presence of the Arabic text is further evidence of this theme, referencing the common depiction of Muslim culture in Western media as barbaric and oppressive towards women and their sexuality. The Arabic text serves as another diffraction that adds to the themes of the text. When reading the idea of Lady Gaga being the moral collapse of a nation diffractively through the Todorov extract about torture in American prisons, the cuts made produce new patterns and significantly alter the diffracted assemblages, uncovering further layers of interpretation.

This example illustrates how culture jamming can use diffraction to link two previously disparate assemblages, in this case idol culture and the torture of prisoners by the United States government, to create a new assemblage that

explores important issues. The insights that arise from these jams can then be decoded through a diffractive method, which allows the researcher to deconstruct, reconstruct and create assemblages and intra-actions using cuts, and use these to read one another through and create new patterns, or further understand or discover those which have already been created. *Adbusters* diffracts Lady Gaga and institutional torture in a way which actually emphasises the gravity of the issue rather than undermining or trivialising it. A link between pop culture and government agenda is explored, and a pattern is created which provides a useful notion when analysing news media too; how a news media event is performed, and the cuts which are made, affecting what is actually performed to be read by the public.

Another proponent of the diffractive culture jam methodology is the United Kingdom born street artist and political activist Banksy. Though like *Adbusters*, Banksy uses culture jam as a way to subvert hegemonic power structures and make responsive statements to social issues and initiatives, there are some marked differences between the two. Firstly, where *Adbusters* promote and sell products in order to cover their costs (as a non-profit organisation), Banksy sees the profits he has made from his work as a moral dilemma, “a mark of failure for a graffiti artist” (Banksy, 2013) who are “not supposed to be embraced in that way” (Banksy, 2013). Although he understands that his commercial success has put him in a position where he can express himself in many different, diverse and innovative ways, he states that it is a complicated situation.

Obviously people need to get paid—otherwise you'd only get vandalism made by part-timers and trust-fund kids. But it's complicated, it feels like as soon as you profit from an image you've put on the street, it magically transforms that piece into advertising. When graffiti isn't criminal, it loses most of its innocence.

(Banksy, 2013)

However, considering the themes and issues brought up by Banksy's work, it is not surprising to see him thrive in the same social context as Adbusters' does. The messages in his art and the connotations they have are one important part of that, but the physical aspect of the medium he uses and the limitations and consequences that come with that are just as vital to the authenticity of his work. Though Banksy, like Adbusters, participates in cultural vandalism through the use of culture jamming, he also participates in literal, legal vandalism by using graffiti as his medium. Once again the notion of "the medium is the message" links strongly to the idea of culture jamming. Graffiti is traditionally seen as a vandalistic, artless and negative addition to the landscape of a city. However, Banksy takes this mode of expression generally associated with being an inane, anti-social nuisance and injects it with a socio-political stance that purposefully subverts power structures and mass media messages in a similar way to *Adbusters*. Banksy creates the art in secret, in a public location, much like one of Bryant's dormant machines, to have an impact on the present once discovered. The art then becomes a performance within itself, acting upon its environment and

being acted upon by the environment due to the context provided by the location and temporality of the artwork.

One of these examples is *Spy Booth* (2014), an artwork in Cheltenham that depicts three spies crowded around a telephone booth. *Spy Booth* is not just important as a useful example of the diffractive method, but also because it is pertinent to the case study developed later. The artwork was created in April 2014 as a response to Edward Snowden's NSA intelligence leaks (Morris, 2014). It was found just three miles away from the Government Communications Headquarters communications surveillance centre. The leaks which contained details of a surveillance programme were described by former GCHQ head Sir David Omand as "the most catastrophic loss to British intelligence ever" (BBC, 2013). The leaks, which were published by *The Guardian* throughout 2013 and 2014, unveiled that GCHQ used a database assembled by the American National Security Agency to search through metadata in order to monitor the communications of British citizens, "including of individuals under no suspicion of illegal activity" (Ball, 2014). The leaks also divulged that GCHQ "intercepted and stored the webcam images of millions of internet users not suspected of wrong doing" (Ball & Ackerman, 2014). Files state that webcam chats were collected in bulk and saved to agency databases, "regardless of whether or not individual users were an intelligence target or not" (Ball & Ackerman, 2014). Yahoo stated it was "a whole new level of violation of our users' privacy" (Ball & Ackerman, 2014).

This context is important, as it aids in demonstrating how *Spy Booth* is a very helpful example of how diffraction can take place between different materialities. The artwork is comprised of two main parts; the location in

Cheltenham of the phone booth and satellite dish, and the assemblage of the paintings that Banksy has made on the wall, of the three spies and their instruments. These two assemblages, which are essentially this location in Cheltenham and Banksy, intra-act to create the statement about government surveillance that the audience sees. The phone booth and satellite dish are intra-acting with Banksy's paintings in a way that changes the assemblage completely.



Figure 3: Banksy's Spy Booth (Source: Jobson, 2014)

By using these real locations and assemblages, such as the phone booth and satellite dish, Banksy's statement becomes more material, and the intra-action between the phone booth and satellite dish, and the paintings becomes even clearer. Much like in Adbusters, the performance of each individual assemblage is important, but the true context and message mutually emerges from the

diffraction, the cutting together-apart, of the regular everyday phone booth and the intimidatingly suspicious spies surrounding it. Due to Banksy, presumably, reading the location through Snowden's revelations and producing *Spy Booth* through his own diffractive process, the phone booth and satellite dish have transformed from simply a phone booth and a satellite dish to a warning about government surveillance. When the audience themselves read *Spy Booth* through the Snowden revelations, *Spy Booth* becomes less of a warning and more of a fact-based depiction of government surveillance of citizens under no suspicion of criminal activity.

However, cuts are also made to support Banksy's warning. The limitation of Banksy's chosen medium is that there is less room for detail than there is for suggestion and affect. Where Adbusters' text had the 'small print' in the form of the Todorov extract, *Spy Booth* has no such counterpart. The depiction of GCHQ as suspicious looking spies listening to every conversation is inaccurate. Though Snowden's files indicate that this kind of information was intercepted, it was not necessarily accessed or used, and the reason these kinds of surveillance programmes exist in the first place is to protect national security (BBC, 2013). Not to mention that GCHQ employees are simply regular people. These motives and details are not expressed in *Spy Booth*, and cuts are made to exclude in order to produce a certain pattern. This cut changes the assemblage of both Banksy's paintings and the phone booth and satellite, as it makes them seem far more sinister than many people may feel they actually are. It makes GCHQ, and by extension, the British government, seem like a nefarious organisation who spy on their own people for no reason at all. When reading *Spy Booth* through the facts, Banksy's reading could be read as an overreaction of sorts. However, it must also

be considered that Banksy's motive with *Spy Booth* was more likely to lie in creating a thought provoking piece of art than presenting all the facts about government surveillance accurately. The cuts made by Banksy serve a purpose in making *Spy Booth* into an assemblage that makes a succinct statement about the concept of mass government surveillance, which, considering the Snowden files, is certainly not a non-issue. However, these cuts in *Spy Booth* make Banksy's political agenda on the issue of mass surveillance just as clear as the pattern he has created through the artwork, which in turn creates a new intra-action between the audience, *Spy Booth* and Banksy, with the artwork having an impact on how the artist is perceived just as the artist has an impact on the artwork. Different cuts being made on these complicated issues can help produce new readings about both the texts and the very issues the texts aim at addressing.

Another example of the diffractive method lies in one of Banksy's most famous works, *Slave Labour*, a mural on the side of a Poundland store (a budget variety store where everything costs £1) in the London borough of Haringey (Trifunov, 2013). The mural was discovered in May 2012, just before Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee celebration (The Telegraph, 2013). It depicts a small boy hunched over a sewing machine, making Union Jack bunting for the celebrations. It is also notable that the London 2012 Olympic Games also commenced in the following months, making 2012 a celebratory year for the United Kingdom. The image is a reference to the fact that both events endorsed and sold products in celebration of the events that were manufactured in sweatshops in Bangladesh (Make Wealth History, 2012).

Once again, Banksy crosses the divide between existing material and his own creations, with *Slave Labour* being infused with another assemblage rather

than the other way around, as *Spy Booth* did. Banksy's artwork provides a new reading of the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee, by diffracting the events through the slit of the news that sweatshop labour was being used to create merchandise for them. The artwork illustrates that these events, events which in themselves perform the ideals of patriotism and national pride, are being manufactured in a Bangladeshi sweatshop by a young child, who is being paid a miniscule amount of money to work long hours in terrible conditions. The performance of the child in comparison to the performance of the flags within the assemblage of *Slave Labour* is also significant. The child is in black and white, attached to the wall, seemingly insignificant as opposed to the bright, colourful flags.



Figure 4: Banksy's *Slave Labour* (Source: Banksy, 2015)

If one were to diffract *Slave Labour* with the previously discussed *Adbusters* text, one could draw significant new patterns from this reading. In

Slave Labour, the flags take the place of Lady Gaga's 'Moral Collapse of a Nation', a distraction to the torture being performed by the American government in their prisons, which is replaced by the sweatshop labour. Furthermore, the performance of the child as a static, black and white object, whilst the flags are colourful and three dimensional, embodies the insignificance of the child labourer in comparison to these extravagant celebratory events. Events which have a positive political and economic impact in terms of international relations and the growth of local and national businesses. These events take place and become a comfortable distraction for the uncomfortable means in which they were organised. Reading *Slave Labour* through *Adbusters* provides an interesting parallel which raises many of the same questions and produces many of the same assemblages and patterns. These are the kinds of patterns that are created by Banksy, simply by attaching bunting to a painting, to provide a new reading of events. This shows once again how a diffractive method can be used to tie assemblages together and create a pattern which highlights other assemblages, in this case, the issue of sweatshop labour.

However, though the cuts made by Banksy on the surface level provide a new reading of these events, there are more cuts to make when it comes to *Slave Labour*, as there are many layers of interpretation within the performance of the artwork. For instance, the locality of *Slave Labour* provides another slit for which to read the artwork through. The presence of the mural in Haringey (and on a Poundland store in particular) can be read as a statement about how much value those who have the resources to invest (such as the Royal Family and the Government, for whom events like the Jubilee and Olympics are respectively organised for and organised by) ascribe to communities like Haringey. Haringey

is a community that was hit particularly hard by the 2011 London riots, and has a high crime rate (Haringey Council, 2014) and a below average employment rate (Haringey Council, 2014). Haringey's mayor even said that the 2011 London riots were "the best thing that's happened" (Blunden, 2013) to her community in a long time, as it meant there was finally some amount of government investment after being totally ignored for years (Blunden, 2013). Reading *Slave Labour* through this context provides new interpretations on the artwork, by raising the issue of how the communities and the taxpayers within them feel about paying sweatshops in Asia to pay for expensive events such as the Jubilee and the Olympics, when communities that need support are being ignored. The fact *Slave Labour* was erected on a Poundland store makes this statement even more pointed. In this sense, there is an intra-action taking place between the assemblage of *Slave Labour* and the assemblage of Haringey (and communities like it) where the mural is as much a part of the community as the community is part of the mural, with new questions and insights emerging from this intra-action.

This then raises even more questions, new diffractions, such as the greater recent trend of "social cleansing" that has been occurring within London. Prior to the Olympics "unscrupulous landlords [were] forcing poorer tenants out of their London homes, freeing them up to rent out to visitors to the Olympics" (Heartfield, 2012), and post Olympics, residents are being forcibly removed from social housing (Londonist, 2014) and being told to relocate to other cities whilst perfectly livable council housing estates are demolished and replaced by new developments (Addley, 2014). Through the use of diffraction, these can then lead to more questions, questions of institutional oppression and the functionality of hegemonic power structures. This demonstrates how diffraction can be applied in

terms of an open process, constantly creating new patterns and assemblages. Through these new diffractions, *Slave Labour* becomes more than just a painting on a wall with flags stuck to it. It even becomes more than just a commentary on the dishonourable use of unethical foreign sweatshops in the United Kingdom's promotion of celebratory national events. Through the use of diffraction, the audience can also read *Slave Labour* as a performance pointing to the constantly growing disparity within London and the United Kingdom, and very little that is being done to stop it, with resources instead being spent on extravagant events. As a material object, as a symbol of these ideas, it becomes a performance for the residents of communities like Haringey to unite around, something to protect and to help strive for positive change – much like they did when the mural vanished and they initiated an international campaign for its return (despite the campaign's failure, and the mural's subsequent £750,000 private sale) (Kozinn, 2013). It is this use, this performance by the mural as an active social agent that makes it an effective culture jam, and an effective demonstration of a diffractive performance. Much like *Adbusters* and *Spy Booth*, *Slave Labour* read familiar iconography through the lens of a number of social issues, and diffracted these with temporality and locality in order to create new insights and raise more questions, which is what caused it to have such a significant social impact.

The context of Banksy's work in terms of mode, form and setting reinforce its status as a cultural jam, as despite graffiti being legally included as an act of vandalism in many countries, laws have been ignored in order to keep a Banksy work intact (Gloucestershire Echo, 2014). Though it may seem a shame, one of the key components of Banksy's art is that it can be destroyed at any point, and that the artist and the art itself are aware of and informed by this. This finite

temporality (in a physical form at least) and constant peril for the artwork adds to its authenticity, and to its effectiveness as a culture jam. Like a performance, Banksy's artwork is defined by its temporality to some extent, and its status as an object with a finite lifespan makes it more of a performatively informed work as it never has a chance to outlive its context. Because of this, the artwork never stops doing. The temporality of the texts actually reflects the space Banksy himself occupies as an artist. As an anonymous, artistic vigilante type figure, Banksy himself acts in the performative, as there is no known representation of him. All we see is the art that he produces. He informs the art, as the art informs the perception of him. A mutuality of emergence, a diffractive and intra-active process.

Between Banksy and Adbusters, the merits of a diffractive methodology are clear. A diffractive methodology combines a framework that can be broken down into separate parts that all relate to each other in some way. The idea of culture jamming as a diffractive, performative and assembling practice is a useful example of this, as it aims to explore and subvert issues at the same time, both being informed by and attempting to inform. Both of these producers create work that thrives in the transversal, which in the cases of these works is the point where the social (light), the author's subversive point of view (slit) and the culture jam these authors create (pattern). The culture jam, the result of the collision of internal and external assemblages by the author, forces us to ask questions about who made it, where it came from and why it exists, and forces a more in depth analysis of the new pattern itself - thus providing new insights into light, slit and pattern. In the case of Banksy and Adbusters, these new insights that are highlighted by their diffractions involve topics such as society, culture, the nature

of artistry and the artist, the way we consume mass media messages, the way the government treats its citizens; all powerful issues that affect many people. This emphasises the strength of diffractive practice as its versatile and active nature allows for a new means of portraying and perceiving these issues. Adbusters and Banksy show through culture jamming that diffractive methodology is not just a way of going about creating, but that it is a performance in its own right, bringing assemblages together and expanding on the intra-actions between them in a way that provides new insights on various levels, all at the same time.

CHAPTER THREE:

CASE STUDY - THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

In analysing Adbusters and Banksy using a diffractive methodology, useful insights have been drawn from their work, such as a deeper understanding of the contextual meanings behind the works and new readings of their materiality. This suggests how a diffractive methodology can be used to analyse media, and that concepts such as assemblage and intra-action have a place outside of purely theoretical engagement. Engaging diffractively with *Adbusters* and Banksy's *Spy Booth* and *Slave Labour*, is a useful illustration of the possibilities of applying a diffractive methodology to media, and in the spirit of intra-action, this application of the method has further developed the method in itself. The results in applying the form of diffractive methodology that I set out to apply have grounded some aspects of my preconceived notions of diffraction, and also opened them up to new possibilities. The analysis of Banksy and Adbusters achieved my goal in proving that new insights could be drawn from media texts by seeing them as diffractive processes, and that cutting together-apart assemblages multiple times to form new patterns can be useful in providing new readings. However, I also found that it is possible to apply the diffractive method's theoretical basis of reading texts through one another to a more practical case study. Much like van der Tuin's reading of Bergson through Barad, I was able to read Banksy's *Spy Booth* through *Adbusters* in order to provide a new reading. Furthermore, this new reading was not irrelevant or unconvincingly related, and ties closely into what *Slave Labour* does as a text. This is important, as it provides a new cut to utilise in the final case study.

My goal with this investigation is to find out whether or not a diffractive methodology based on theories of assemblage and performativity is suitable for effectively analysing news media. As a case study I have decided to use something local, highly publicised and socially prominent: the Internet Party's *The Moment of Truth* event. The event was a talking point of the 2014 New Zealand Elections, and a key moment for the Kim Dotcom backed, Laila Harré led, Internet Party. *The Moment of Truth* garnered a mixed reaction from the media, with some praising its revelations as important, and others dismissing them as irrelevant and unfounded. However, despite these many diffractions of the assemblage, there was no doubt that this was an event which made headlines and split opinions. This makes it a good case study to use for this analysis, as it was reported on by many different news media producers.

For the purpose of this research, let us be under the common public assumption that assemblage of 'the news media' exists for the purpose of providing accurate information about current events. Though it is obvious upon closer inspection that all news media outlets have particular agendas, and thus events are diffracted through the authoring organisation and their interpretation of the event rather than the event itself, news media organisations and the journalists within them have an ethical responsibility to represent news events accurately. In New Zealand, this is defined by the Journalist Code of Ethics, which states in its very first article that journalists "shall report and interpret the news with scrupulous honesty by striving to disclose all essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts or distorting by wrong or improper emphasis" (EPMU, 2015). Using a diffractive methodology in this case involves reading the patterns produced by these interpretations of the event provided by

news media *through* the patterns produced by the event itself. In diffracting these two assemblages, points of difference can be found between the patterns produced by each assemblage. This can help elucidate whether there is significant dissonance between the two patterns. In the interest of fair comparison, and because of *The Moment of Truth's* political context, I will only analyse content from New Zealand based media outlets. Though I had planned to only diffract the news media's interpretations of *The Moment of Truth* with the event itself, diffracting the interpretations through the work of Banksy and Adbusters may also create intriguing patterns and points of difference. Diffracting these reports through the likes of Adbusters and Banksy, may help provide further insights and readings into the cuts made in each diffractive process, and the possible reasoning behind these cuts.

Firstly, it is important to provide some objective account of how the assemblage *The Moment of Truth* was performed, in order to produce the first pattern to be diffracted with the news media's interpretations of the event. This can be done by separating the assemblage of the event from the diffractions that it is also a part of, simply examining it as and of itself, enacting Barad's agential separability which allows for local objectivity (see p. 15). By doing this with the event first, as opposed to the news media's diffractions, we can produce an initial pattern of diffraction; a standard of sorts which can then help indicate points of difference between the assemblage of the event and the assemblages of the news media interpretations of it more effectively.

The Moment of Truth was a panel organised by the Internet Party of New Zealand, aimed at exposing the facts behind mass surveillance perpetrated by the New Zealand government. It took place on the 15th of September 2014 at the

Auckland Town Hall, just five days before the general elections. The panel was hosted by Internet Party leader Laila Harré, and featured guest speakers; Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Glenn Greenwald, internet entrepreneur Kim Dotcom, international lawyer Robert Amsterdam, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, and American whistleblower Edward Snowden. The event was streamed live on YouTube, and the video of this live broadcast is still publically accessible (*The Moment of Truth*, 2014). The information, and all quotes until otherwise indicated, within this summary originate from this source. Whilst this video is obviously its own diffraction of the event, and is not the original event as it took place exactly, it is the closest available documentation of the event. Furthermore, it is the way in which most people have consumed the event, as the views of the broadcast far outweigh the number of people who were in the Town Hall that night (*The Moment of Truth*, 2014). For these reasons, this official broadcast of *The Moment of Truth* is an acceptable alternative to the event itself for the purposes of this research.

Greenwald, Snowden, Assange and Amsterdam each spoke on issues surrounding mass surveillance and government transparency. Greenwald provided evidence of the New Zealand Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) co-operating with the American National Security Agency (NSA) on a surveillance project, 'Project SPEARGUN', procured from Snowden's leaks of NSA documents. Greenwald provided further evidence from these documents that the controversial GCSB Bill passed by the New Zealand government had favorable implications for Project SPEARGUN, with the bill making legal what was previously illegal despite publicly stating that this was not the bill's purpose. He stated that the government should be asked questions about these activities and

the public's knowledge of them. Greenwald also iterated the credibility of his source, stating that even Snowden's "harshest critics have not been able to say that anything that he has claimed about surveillance is either unreliable or untrue." Snowden himself then joined via video conference, speaking about his experience as an NSA sub-contractor, claiming there are two NSA facilities in New Zealand, and expounding upon the specific program used by the NSA to analyse communications information, known as *XKeyscore*. Snowden claimed that the GCSB uses and has expanded *XKeyscore*, and that the only thing stopping Snowden from accessing the private communications information of New Zealanders was a checkbox. He further stated that the use of *XKeyscore* is "theoretically constrained by policy" but is not overseen and happens "in the dark, without any accountability, without any public say in how these programs are operated or if they should exist at all."

Assange then spoke about the 'Five Eyes' alliance, an alliance between intelligence agencies operating in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Assange stated that the level of mass surveillance in those countries has "increased to a level where it must inevitably affect the structure of our society domestically, and the structure of our international order." He goes on to say that the Five Eyes organisations are attempting to create "a new structure of civilization" that he does not believe "New Zealanders agreed to take part in" and that the rights of New Zealanders are being sacrificed "in exchange for membership of this international intelligence agency club." Assange states that Five Eyes is part of the wider issue of United States laws being applied in other countries, using the example of himself being investigated by a grand jury in the

United States despite not being a United States citizen or having a company registration in the United States.

Amsterdam then spoke, and used the example of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) and other such agreements to further demonstrate this. He stated that laws in the United States are “manufactured by special interests” using the Motion Picture Association of America and the Record Industry Association of America as examples of groups who draft laws and then work with the U.S. trade representative in order to discuss according trade standards. Amsterdam goes on to say that countries who do not comply with these standards have certain sanctions imposed on them, thus putting their capacity to trade with the United States in danger should they not change their laws, citing Sweden and several other European countries as examples of those who have “aggressively changed their IP laws and other cultural related laws to allow them to continue the type of access they believe they need to the U.S. market.” Amsterdam states that New Zealand is also doing this.

Laila Harré then ended the proceedings, calling Dotcom, Snowden and Assange “modern prisoners” and Greenwald and Amsterdam “warriors for our right to know and our responsibility to hold governments around the world accountable for honouring our human rights.” She then stated that the night’s events need to be interpreted within the framework provided by Nicky Hager in *Dirty Politics* (2014) and that “we need to apply our *Dirty Politics* knowledge, Nicky Hager’s framework, to our analysis of what we have heard tonight and to our response when the prime minister begins to find his diary and make his excuses tomorrow.” Harré went on to say that Greenwald, Snowden, Assange and

Amsterdam had “educated [us]...in order to make us an informed citizenry as we decide how to vote on Saturday” before signing off.

However, although separating *The Moment of Truth* from its own diffractive processes is an important step in providing a pattern of how it is performed, it is also important to look at the wider context surrounding the event. *The Moment of Truth* was held on September 15th, just five days before the New Zealand general election. The Internet Party, founded by Dotcom, was competing in this election. Kim Dotcom had been under investigation in a case against him and his website Megaupload from many Hollywood studios and the United States Government since early 2012 (United States Department of Justice, 2012). Dotcom is being charged with conspiracy to commit racketeering, conspiracy to commit copyright infringement, conspiracy to commit money laundering and criminal copyright infringement. Dotcom’s house was also raided during his and his Megaupload associates’ arrest (Fowler, Barrett, & Schneider, 2012). The case is still underway and Dotcom is set for an extradition hearing in February 2015 (Young V., 2014). There is also the matter of how Dotcom came into the country in the first place, with Immigration New Zealand initially blocking his application for residency, but that block was lifted in October 2010 after apparent “political pressure” (New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, 2014, p. 26) and his residency was granted by “special direction” (Fisher, 2014). Immigration New Zealand have consequently said that “government interest” (New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, 2014, p. 3) may have been “misconstrued as political pressure” (2014, p. 3) and that they can now “state unequivocally that there was no political pressure” (2014, p. 3) regarding Kim Dotcom’s residence application.

As the event was unfolding, Prime Minister Key released four declassified documents aimed at dispelling speculation around any kind of mass surveillance programme operating in New Zealand. Though the documents had been declassified by Key two months before *The Moment of Truth*, after Dotcom had first announced the event (O'Brien, 2014). The documents refer to a cybersecurity program called "Project CORTEX" (Office of the Minister Responsible for the Government Communications Security Bureau, 2014, p. 1), which was designed to protect public and private entities from malware and cyber-attacks. The GCSB proposed a business plan which contained five options (Option 0 being "do nothing" and Option 4 being "proactive") (2014, p. 3). The government eventually opted for Option 3 (Cabinet Office, 2014, p. 2) – "Active" – which "delivers advanced malware protection services to [REDACTED] entities: [REDACTED] government agencies plus [REDACTED] organisations of high economic value and/or operating critical national infrastructure" (Office of the Minister Responsible for the Government Communications Security Bureau, 2014, p. 3). The GCSB themselves listed their preferred option as Option 4, which would involve the GCSB sharing "technology and classified information with an Internet Service Provider so that it can disrupt advanced malware for [REDACTED] of its customers under pilot conditions in the first instance." (p. 3). Key's own reaction to *The Moment of Truth* in the lead up to the event is also notable, with him calling Glenn Greenwald "Dotcom's little henchman" and a "loser" (Manhire, 2014). He also doubted the accuracy of Greenwald's claims, stating "there is no ambiguity. No middle ground. I'm right. [Greenwald's] wrong" (Cheng, 2014) on Greenwald's claims of mass surveillance, before later stating that a mass surveillance programme was suggested but "didn't even make it to a business

case” (Cheng, 2014) However, Key’s position further changed after the event, where he admitted that the Southern Cross cable (New Zealand’s internet communications link with the rest of the world) had been tapped, but the project was narrowed (Manning, 2014). On *XKeyscore*, Key stated that he would not “discuss the specific programmes the GCSB may, or may not use, but the GCSB does not collect mass metadata on New Zealanders, therefore it is clearly not contributing such data to anything or anyone” (Key, 2014).

There was also an important issue which related to *The Moment of Truth* and its revelations. In March 2013, a report was published by then-Secretary of the Cabinet (and now-New Zealand Security Intelligence Service Director of Security) Rebecca Kitteridge; a review of compliance into the GCSB amidst allegations that they had unlawfully spied on Kim Dotcom. These allegations were proven to be substantiated by Kitteridge’s report, which stated that the GCSB had assisted domestic law enforcement agencies such as the NZSIS and the New Zealand Police in ways in which “the Solicitor-General confirmed the difficulties in interpreting the GCSB Act and the risk of an adverse outcome if a court were to consider the basis of that assistance” (Kitteridge, 2013, pp. 5-6). This was found to be the case not only for Dotcom, but for 88 other cases from 2003 onwards (2013, p. 6). Though the interception of 86 New Zealand residents’ communications were found to be illegal, nobody within the GCSB was legally prosecuted (Quilliam, 2013). In an official press release, Key stated that the report made for “sobering reading” and that the government was planning to bring proposals to Parliament to “remedy the inadequacies of the GCSB Act” (Key, 2013). Key pledged that he would resign if New Zealanders were subject to mass surveillance by the GCSB (Young A., 2013). The findings of the Kitteridge report

led to the enactment of the GCSB Amendment Bill (ONE News, 2014), also known as the GCSB Bill, the bill that Greenwald was referring to during *The Moment of Truth*.

The run up to the elections was also impacted by a book, named *Dirty Politics* (2014), written by investigative journalist Nicky Hager. The book exposed examples of attack politics from within the National Party, with leaked communications that came into Hager's hands showing that personal information about people was being leaked to journalists by politicians. These journalists were then used, and sometimes even paid, to write articles based on that information in order to discredit those people for political or personal gain.

However, perhaps the most important piece of context surrounding *The Moment of Truth* is an alleged email between Warner Brothers CEO and Chairman Kevin Tsujihara, and Michael Ellis of the film industry lobby group the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). The email was made public in *The New Zealand Herald* hours before *The Moment of Truth* event, and the email had been expected to be an important part of the evening's revelations.

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From: "Kevin Tsujihara" <kevin.tsujihara@warnerbros.com>
To: "Michael Ellis" <michael_ellis@mpaa.org>
Date: Wed, 27 Oct 2010 01:42:39
Subject: MegaRIP

Hi Mike,

We had a really good meeting with the Prime Minister. He's a fan and we're getting what we came for. Your groundwork in New Zealand is paying off. I see strong support for our anti-piracy effort. John Key told me in private that they are granting Dotcom residency despite pushback from officials about his criminal past. His AG will do everything in his power to assist us with our case. VIP treatment and then a one-way ticket to Virginia.

This is a game changer. The DOJ is against the Hong Kong option. No confidence in the Chinese. Great job.

Kevin
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Figure 5: The alleged email (Source: Trevett & Fisher, 2014)

However, the alleged email's integrity was called into question soon after its publication. Key stated "I do not believe that to be correct. I have no recollection

of the conversation that's alluded to in that email" (Trevett & Fisher, 2014) and representatives of Warner Brothers and the MPAA dismissed the email as fake. The email was not mentioned at *The Moment of Truth* event, and in the post-event press conference Dotcom refused to comment on it, with Harré mentioning the next day that he was under legal advice to do so (Fisher, 2014). Mana Party MP Hone Harawira attempted to have the alleged email brought before the Privileges Commission, but could not as Parliament had dissolved until the formation of the new government post-elections, and Harawira was not re-elected.

This focus on context can give us a greater overview of how *The Moment of Truth* functions as a diffractive process, and cutting together-apart how each of these contextual assemblages can provide readings for the event and possibly create new insights. For instance, reading *The Moment of Truth* solely through the Warner Brothers email provides a reading of the event that defines the assemblage of *The Moment of Truth* solely by the exclusionary cut of the email. Between the email being expected to be a key part of proceedings, and its release to the public and the immediate questioning of its authenticity, the absence of the email creates an important intra-action with the event. It immediately begs the question of why the email was not mentioned, Dotcom's silence on the issue only makes its absence more suspicious. The absence of the email at the event similarly reflects onto the assemblage of the email, reinforcing the doubts about its authenticity, as if the email was authentic then why would it not be mentioned at *The Moment of Truth*? When considering the language used in the email, with melodramatic turns such as the "MegaRIP" subject line, this does not seem like a bold claim. The language and format used in the email simply does not fit with the perception of assemblages of the supposed authors; CEOs, chairmen and lobbyists. These are

formal positions of which a certain type of language is perceived to be required. Furthermore, the simple fact that it is an email only detracts from its reliability. Especially when taking the image into account, it is entirely possible for anybody to produce such a 'document' as long as they have access to a computer. It is easy then, when reading the event through the email, to dismiss *The Moment of Truth* entirely.

This kind of reading is only further reinforced when reading the event through Dotcom's legal troubles. Diffractive processes such as 'conspiracy to commit racketeering' and 'conspiracy to commit money laundering' do not produce assemblages of integrity. When further diffracting this with Dotcom's own political agenda, the case against *The Moment of Truth's* integrity and relevance builds further. *The Moment of Truth* contained many critical remarks about John Key, leader of the New Zealand National Party and Prime Minister of New Zealand. The Internet Party, the political party that Dotcom founded and funds, is a direct opponent of the National Party, sitting firmly on the other end of the political spectrum. When diffracting the events of *The Moment of Truth* with this kind of configuring, much of it could be seen as political manoeuvring for the personal gain of Dotcom, considering his criminal quandaries. If Dotcom's Internet Party receives a large enough share of the vote, it may be enough to halt the possibility of extradition to the United States. Diffracting *The Moment of Truth* through these assemblages produces readings and insights that pick away at the credibility of the event's agendas because of the man seemingly behind it all. Dotcom's alleged criminality, political agenda and silence on the issue of the email form a diffractive pattern which overshadows Dotcom, and by extension the Internet Party and *The Moment of Truth*, implicating them as untrustworthy and

dishonest, willing to go to great lengths to discredit his opponents and vindicate himself.

However, other contextual assemblages can be used to diffract *The Moment of Truth* in a way that supports the event's content. For instance, when diffracting *The Moment of Truth* through Nicky Hager's *Dirty Politics*, an entirely different pattern begins to form. When using *Dirty Politics* as an apparatus for *The Moment of Truth*, we see many of the key messages within both texts align, namely the dishonesty and misleading lack of transparency within the New Zealand government. It adds further credence to Greenwald's claims that the government lied about the GCSB Bill and are lying about the undertaking of mass surveillance on New Zealanders. Furthermore, the two assemblages are linked as *Dirty Politics* is referred to in *The Moment of Truth* multiple times. Bob Amsterdam states that *Dirty Politics* is "what Watergate looks like on email" (*The Moment of Truth*, 2014) and Laila Harré even encourages the audience to make a similar diffraction, stating that the event must be read within the context and framework of Hager's book. Likewise, *The Moment of Truth* itself further imbues *Dirty Politics* with more significance, almost as a piece of supporting evidence. The event produces evidence that the government has lied about its activities, a pattern which is similarly produced by *Dirty Politics*. Moreover, it is not just Hager's book that provides a supportive diffractive pattern for *The Moment of Truth*.

When adding Key's comments to this diffraction, his insults towards Greenwald and his changing story on the extent of surveillance programmes, the assemblage of John Key is only further diffracted into untrustworthiness. The Kitteridge report is also an important diffracting apparatus, as it is focused on the

assemblage that *The Moment of Truth* is also most attentive to, namely the illegal surveillance of New Zealanders by the GCSB. When reading what we know from *The Moment of Truth* through what we know from the Kitteridge report, a startling pattern begins to emerge. The Kitteridge report shows that 88 New Zealanders had been illegally spied upon from 2003 onwards. We also know that the GCSB Bill was put in place in order to amend this. However, according to Greenwald's evidence, the GCSB Bill extended the powers of the GCSB rather than diminishing or clarifying them. According to Snowden's leaks, the GCSB Bill made it legal for the mass surveillance programme SPEARGUN to go ahead, despite the bill splitting Parliament and the public being overwhelmingly against its implementation. The GCSB Amendment Act was opposed by 89% of New Zealanders (Campbell Live, 2013) and only passed by two votes in Parliament (ONE News, 2014). When diffracting *The Moment of Truth* and the Kitteridge report, it becomes very clear that there are very significant points of difference between what the government publically announces about the GCSB's activities and the actual goings on behind closed doors. Considering Greenwald echoes this sentiment during the event, the Kitteridge report becomes a useful apparatus for *The Moment of Truth*, and the revelations of the event further augment the Kitteridge report's claims of malpractice within the GCSB.

However, though most of these assemblages have been used to diffract *The Moment of Truth*, the government documents that Key declassified are better read through the event than they are for reading the event through. When using the event as the apparatus, the government documents take on an entirely new meaning. When considering the information and evidence Greenwald and Snowden provide, they are completely irrelevant. The documents refer to a

cybersecurity programme for businesses named Project CORTEX, a project which is never mentioned by Greenwald or Snowden. There is no mention of Project SPEARGUN, the project on which *The Moment of Truth* is most concerned about, in any of the documents that Key declassifies. While Key has said SPEARGUN never saw the light of day (ONE News, 2014) and maintains that his declassifications of the documents proves this, Snowden and Greenwald's evidence prove that this is not the case. The documents have absolutely no relation to the revelations of the event. Adbusters' *Moral Collapse of a Nation* and Banksy's *Slave Labour* come to mind, and when diffracting those assemblages with the Key's documents, the same pattern emerges. Project CORTEX takes the place of Lady Gaga and the bunting, as the boisterous distraction to the far more uncomfortable and sinister Todorov extract and child labourer, which in this situation is Greenwald and Snowden's unanswered claims about Project SPEARGUN and *XKeyscore*. This only adds to the pattern of Key's lack of transparency, as he gives weight to *The Moment of Truth* by providing information that simply does not address the allegations made during the event.

However, although separating these factors from one another and diffracting them individually with the event produces useful patterns and insights, these cuts function differently in reality. *The Moment of Truth* is a complex assemblage, made up of many diffractive entanglements which intra-act with each other to form patterns. Within these patterns is not only Key's lack of transparency and failure to discuss SPEARGUN or *XKeyscore*, but also Dotcom's criminal background and failure to produce the email. Both the diffractive patterns which discredit and the patterns which support *The Moment of Truth* are part of its context, it is merely a matter of which cuts are made to frame a diffractive

interpretation. These are all important events and factors which informed not just *The Moment of Truth* event itself, but the consequent reaction to it from national media outlets and personalities. This reaction was swift and divided. The ongoing Dotcom saga had been a prominent story in itself; but his foray into politics, public quarrel with Key and the anticipation for *The Moment of Truth* event so close to the elections, made for a highly publicised spectacle. The story was commented on by major news organisations, independent journalists and bloggers, some simply reporting and others reacting and disseminating. My three main examples of reactions to *The Moment of Truth* will come from three of New Zealand's largest media institutions: the two largest television news broadcasters, TV One and TV3, and New Zealand's only nationally distributed daily newspaper, *The New Zealand Herald*. All three are reports on *The Moment of Truth* event, two television news segments (TV One and TV3) and one online article (NZ Herald). The TV One segment is from their *Breakfast* programme the day after *The Moment of Truth*. The TV3 segment was from 3 News programme *Firstline*, also the following morning. *The New Zealand Herald's* article was published at 9PM on the 15th of September, immediately following the event.

TV One is a channel operated by Television New Zealand (TVNZ); a publically owned (though mostly commercially funded) company (Interactive Advertising Bureau of New Zealand, 2015). Its morning news show *Breakfast* is the highest rated morning news show on New Zealand screens (TVNZ, 2013). *Breakfast* produced a report on *The Moment of Truth* the morning after the event, and all quotes come from this report until otherwise indicated (TVNZ Breakfast, 2014). Their report performed The Moment of Truth as a failed "political bombshell" by Dotcom that provided "more questions than answers" with the

Warner Brothers email being cited twice as a particular example of this, and host Ali Pugh asking for “cold hard evidence”. A certain performance of the people involved with the event was also perpetuated, with Snowden and Assange being said to have received “rockstar like receptions” and Kim Dotcom’s “celebrity” having single-handedly drawn people to the event. Much was also made of the crowd, with multiple references within the report to the crowd being inevitably receptive to the messages delivered at the event. At the very start, host Rawdon Christie refers to the audience as “lap[ping] up claims” of mass surveillance. An interviewee was shown saying that parts of the event were “a bit evangelical”. When diffracting *The Moment of Truth* through this report, as many people would do considering *Breakfast*’s status, it would be very easy to dismiss the event as part of Kim Dotcom’s cult of personality. The report makes several significant cuts in its performance of the original event that shift the assemblage in a major way.

When reading *The Moment of Truth* through this report, it is immediately obvious that there are extremely significant points of difference between the patterns produced by the event and the patterns produced by the report. The way the event is performed and diffracted in the report creates a drastically different pattern than the event itself. Firstly, an exclusionary cut is made by *Breakfast* concerning the content of *The Moment of Truth*. The only mention of the actual information that was presented at the event, was by Christie and Pugh at the very start, when Christie states that Snowden alleges Key knows about the GCSB conducting mass surveillance on New Zealanders. None of Greenwald’s statements, statements which are substantiated by supporting evidence, are presented in the report. In fact, the only thing said about Greenwald is that he

made people laugh by taking jibes at the Prime Minister. Assange is mentioned once, referring to his reception. Laila Harré and Bob Amsterdam are not mentioned at all. When keeping in mind that during the event, Dotcom was the panel member who spoke the least, it should be surprising that Dotcom is the personality who dominates this report. He's the name in the de facto title of the piece which is about his "political bombshell" – implying that this event is Dotcom's and Dotcom's alone. The report seems to produce its pattern by diffracting the event through nothing else but this further diffracted assemblage of Dotcom. The event is referred to as "Dotcom's political bombshell", the failure of Dotcom to produce the email is a substantial talking point, and Dotcom's celebrity status is referred to as a significant reason for people's attendance.

The role of the crowd is also a significant point of difference between the two patterns, being referred to as being part of a Dotcom cult consistently throughout the segment. This kind of diffraction results in the discrediting of the integrity of the information presented at the event. It must be said, that by the standards of political events, *The Moment of Truth* was attended by a fairly raucous crowd. There was lots of applause and loud cheering, and the chanting at the end does nothing to break this perception. With the way that the event was conducted, with the sermon like delivery of some of the speeches and the crowd's reactions to them, the term "evangelical" as used by the interviewee may not be totally out of place. However, that does not mean that the people on the panel, nor the information presented by them, was in any way irrelevant or unimportant. Performing the event in such a way, negating the information that was presented at the event in favour of this interpretation of the crowd's conduct, diffracts the content into a quite misleading pattern. The lone descriptions of Greenwald

“kicking things off and getting the crowd going with some laughter” or of Assange and Snowden as receiving “rockstar like receptions” are examples of these patterns.. Although yes, Greenwald did speak first, and did provoke some laughter with jibes at the Prime Minister, he also provided substantial evidence that the GCSB and the NSA were (at least at one point) collaborating on a mass surveillance programme in New Zealand, without the knowledge or permission of the public. Whilst Snowden and Assange did receive huge ovations according to the video of the event, both provided valuable information about *XKeyscore* and the nature of the Five Eyes alliance and how these issues relate to New Zealand, information which is far more relevant to the local objectivity of *The Moment of Truth* than their reception by the crowd. Yet, despite this, the crowd remains a focus throughout.

At the very start of the report Christie states the crowd “lapped up” the “claims” of mass surveillance, then Pugh asks whether there is any “cold, hard evidence” for those “very strong allegations” – a question which is never answered due to Greenwald and Snowden’s contributions to the assemblage being ignored. When the segment is handed to reporter Chris Chang, we are told that the crowd was “receptive” to what was on display three times in just over a minute, twice by Chang and once by an interviewee. Chang further says that whilst there were “some discerning members of the audience” there were also “some” who were purely there for Dotcom’s celebrity, quantifying the two motivations identically. In depicting the crowd as this cult like group accepting these caveated “claims” and “allegations” without “cold hard evidence”, the actual contents of *The Moment of Truth* are left unpacked. The report discredits the information that was presented by making it seem like the crowd would have listened to any of it

because they were there for “Dotcom’s celebrity” – a totally unsubstantiated claim within the context of the report. Furthermore, a split is enacted between the journalists and the general public. In this televisual performance of *The Moment of Truth*, there is a distinct split made in how journalists – a position of authority on these matters – and the general public are affected by the event. When the report first crosses to Chang, the first thing that is said is that “journalists certainly had more questions than answers” at the end of the event, whereas the crowd was “always going to be receptive” to it. Dotcom’s silence on the topic of the email is referenced multiple times, and is the closing point of the story. There is another pattern created here, that the journalists; the professionals, the objective voice (which just happens to be the voice reading the report) are not satisfied with the event, whereas the cult-like crowd is. This further discredits the event as it shows how those who are informed, authoritative figures on matters such as politics, are not convinced by the event whereas the general public is more accepting of the content as they are easily persuaded by Dotcom’s celebrity status.

These patterns are perpetuated so often throughout the story that it simply cannot be coincidence. These patterns are not appearing by chance. *Breakfast* diffracts *The Moment of Truth* in such a way that key details of the event are not just glossed over, but entirely ignored. What was not said is mentioned more than what was said. Though it is true that the alleged Warner Brothers email and Dotcom’s political intentions are important parts of *The Moment of Truth*’s narrative, they are not the only parts. In fact, in terms of *The Moment of Truth* as an assemblage, Dotcom’s role in the event is minor. Greenwald, Snowden, Assange, Amsterdam and even Harré are far more vocal, and those four guest speakers contribute insight – much of it backed up by evidence, or at least by their

own proven integrity, especially in the cases of Snowden and Assange. However, this report simply refuses to perform *The Moment of Truth* in a manner that reflects its local objectivity. For all intents and purposes, the event was an education on mass surveillance, and an investigation into its use in New Zealand. While there is no doubt at all that the event was politically charged, this report diffracts the event in a way that Dotcom's political manoeuvring and Internet Party cult become the main focus, reading it solely through the assemblage of Dotcom as an untrustworthy and dishonest political character.

There are also diffractive cues within the materiality of how the report is constructed. The opening sequence consists of Christie and Pugh speaking to the camera on the *Breakfast* set which is bright, colourful and adorned with flowers, with a lush image of the countryside in the background. The mid shot perspective and the tone used by the anchors suggests that this is a serious issue they are talking about, but their casual attire gives the feeling that they are on the same level as the audience, who they are informing.



Figure 6: Opening segment (Source: TVNZ Breakfast, 2014)

However, when the focus is switched to Derek Cheng, the report takes on a different feeling. Cheng is shown in a suit, his full body in shot, next to a large screen. His tone and gestures are decisive, as are the words he is saying.



Figure 7: The set for Cheng's segment within the report (TVNZ Breakfast, 2014)

This part of the report feels more professional and authoritative than the opening, with Cheng stating definitively what happened and how the audience responded. He immediately talks about what questions were unanswered and how open the crowd was to the messages of the event, as a montage of images from the event plays on the screen. The story then cuts to the interviews with audience members before going back to Cheng, who highlights the unanswered questions once again.

The way the report was constructed as a televisual medium only further emphasises the kind of diffraction performed by TVNZ. With this diffraction of *The Moment of Truth* being performed by TV One, one of New Zealand's leading media entities, the impact of TV One creating this pattern has consequences outside of the report. The report is intra-actively related to the event itself, as

many people will only read the event through this report. Thus, this report does not just interpret or diffract the assemblage of *The Moment of Truth*, it actually changes it into a different assemblage – one that is performed by the diffraction of the event in the *Breakfast* report. The way this report diffracts *The Moment of Truth* creates dissonance between the report and the local objectivity of the event. It could be argued that *Breakfast* was simply catering to their audience. A heavy, in depth investigation into a sinister topic such as mass surveillance might not be what many people want to see on a Tuesday morning. It was after all only a short, two minute segment. Perhaps there was simply not enough time. However, there is no sanitising or simplifying of the information that the event presented in this report, as much as there is complete omission. So these justifications are inadequate. When considering it diffractively, reading the report through the pattern of the event, there is a vast difference between the two. Though many readings can be taken from the event because of the rich contextual background, only certain cuts are made which fit a certain narrative. The report diffracts *The Moment of Truth* through the untrustworthy side of the Dotcom assemblage and produces a pattern which focuses on the crowd as receptive to anything he might say. This in turn discredits the integrity of the likes of Greenwald, Snowden and Assange, despite the fact that they each have very credible reputations and produce information which is mostly substantiated by evidence.

This second report stems from *Breakfast's* direct competition: TV3's own morning news show, *Firstline*. TV3 is owned privately, by a company called MediaWorks. MediaWorks is a media conglomerate which operates four television channels (MediaWorks, 2015), nine national radio stations and four local radio stations (MediaWorks, 2015). Anchors Sasha McNeil and Michael

Wilson discuss the many issues brought up by *The Moment of Truth* with two guests, columnist David Slack, and editor of current affairs magazine *Metro* Simon Wilson. All quotes are from this report (3 News, 2014), unless otherwise indicated.

In comparison to the *Breakfast* report, *Firstline's* report produces less points of difference between the pattern created by the report and the pattern created by *The Moment of Truth*. The guest panellists, Simon Wilson and David Slack, present an even-handed summary of what was said at the event and the questions that it raises. They highlight the evidence that Greenwald and Snowden brought to the table of mass surveillance allegations in New Zealand – whether that be by the GCSB or the NSA – and explained what this evidence and these allegations mean. Both panellists are alert in their observations, and though there is discussion about the event and the ideas and concerns relating to it, the discussion is entirely about the information presented and the integrity of the voices rather than narratives surrounding the character of Dotcom. Although it must be noted again that Bob Amsterdam and Laila Harré are not mentioned.

However, Michael Wilson and Sacha McNeil, seem to have a different agenda. Each question that is asked (outside of the two opening, introductory questions) seems to be a “yes, but” response to the points brought up by Simon Wilson and Slack, and this seemed to be motivated at diminishing the importance of the information the event presented, and later who it was presented by. Both anchors attempt to make exclusionary cuts in a new diffraction of the event, and steer the discussion in a certain direction.

The first such attempt at a cut is Michael Wilson’s question of “do you think there was evidence there though that the GCSB is participating in mass

surveillance?” after Slack and Simon Wilson comment on the evidence provided by Greenwald and Snowden. Though this is a relevant question related to the event, it seems unnecessary to ask considering the topic had been discussed just moments earlier. Slack and Simon Wilson again mention the claims presented by Snowden, and that regardless of whether mass surveillance is being conducted or are not, this is a discussion that needs to be had by the public. However, this kind of cut calls into question the information presented at *The Moment of Truth*, despite the panellists answering the question before it was asked. Such a cut helps diffract the event further into something that must be questioned, even if there is sound evidence from credible sources.

The second attempt at such a cut, comes in the form of a second, far more tangential question from Michael Wilson, asking whether “privacy really [is] a big issue for the average person now?” In addition to being irrelevant to the information discussed, and also having been answered just moments before with the comment that it is a discussion for the public to have, the question is even tangential to itself. Michael Wilson starts the question by talking about “stuff [assumedly government documents and communications] being leaked left, right and centre” referring to the *Dirty Politics* scandal, and ends the question with people putting “the most incredibly intimate details about their lives” on Facebook. The two points seem entirely unrelated, but are tied together with the question “does the average person even care about privacy?” This is seems to be another diffracting ploy. The assumption cannot be made that because a portion of people choose to share their lives on social media – which is their right – they therefore are unfazed by intelligence agencies collecting information they have not volunteered to any extent, let alone to the extent identified by Snowden and

Greenwald. The argument put forth in the question is wholly irrelevant to *The Moment of Truth*, which was not held to measure how New Zealanders feel about their privacy. Both Slack and Simon Wilson state once again that this is a debate that the public needs to have and an issue the public needs to decide on – not the government, or domestic or foreign intelligence agencies. The question is simply another diffracting of the information presented at the event, by calling into question whether it is even important.

Another cut comes in the form of the Warner Brothers email, which sparks a greater diffraction of the Dotcom assemblage. McNeil asks a relevant question, whether or not the two panellists were disappointed that the email was not mentioned – one of the “unanswered questions” Chris Chang spoke about in his *Breakfast* report. Simon Wilson had referred to the email in his first statement when he talked about “Kim Dotcom [giving] his piece” but said again that in terms of the event it was “a sideshow”, as the information provided by Greenwald, Snowden and Assange is of standalone importance. Michael Wilson seems to take exception to this and turns the conversation back to the credibility and integrity of Dotcom, stating that Dotcom had organised the event and goes on to make comments about Dotcom and his guests. He talks about Dotcom’s “maniacal laugh” and how these “foreigners” (referring to Greenwald, Snowden and Assange), some of whom are “hiding in Moscow and London”, have been brought here five days before the election and asks whether that makes Simon Wilson uncomfortable. Michael Wilson later asks whether he feels it is manipulative in terms of the election.

This line of diffraction of Dotcom is augmented by the presentation of Dotcom by a montage featured in the report. Throughout the montage, Dotcom is

depicted as a Bond villainesque character, with talk of maniacal laughter as an all-black Mercedes Benz SUV with his name on the number plate is shown on the screen, before they cut to shots of the Dotcom Mansion being raided by helicopters and heavily armed police. It is implied that Dotcom is devious, enlisting the help of Snowden and Assange, two criminals in the eyes of many, to help him manipulate the New Zealand election in some way. What is shown on the screen entangles with what Michael Wilson is saying in order to create a certain pattern for Dotcom.

Furthermore, this is not the only time in the report where a montage is used to produce a certain pattern. A montage is also used when Simon Wilson is answering the question of whether the GCSB is conducting mass surveillance. The montage's images are sinister, mysterious and sometimes both, and the Hollywood inspired depiction of computers, with images of random lines of code and fast typing giving the impression that this is something difficult to understand. In reality, it is not, and both Simon Wilson and Slack explain the issues brought up by *The Moment of Truth* in a grounded and easy to understand fashion.



Figures 8-18 (L to R): The Dotcom montage (Source: 3 News, 2014)



Figures 19-25 (L to R): The mass surveillance montage (Source: 3 News, 2014)

However, *Firstline's* misleading performance of events is augmented by the materiality of the report outside of just the montages. The construction of the set, and the framing of both Michael Wilson and McNeil and Simon Wilson and Slack all come into play in performing *Firstline's* diffraction. The set is far more professional and provides a more 'hard news' based trustworthiness as opposed to *Breakfast's* more homely set, and Michael Wilson and McNeil are dressed more formally than Christie and Pugh. They sit in front of a bright, busy newsroom and

behind a glass desk with papers in front of them. Everything about the way they are framed and the way they perform gives off an impression of professionalism and trustworthiness.



Figure 19: Michael Wilson and McNeil (Source: 3 News, 2014)

Furthermore, Slack and Simon Wilson are dressed more casually, and do not speak with the same gravitas and confidence that the anchors do.



Figure 20: Wilson confronts the guests (3 News, 2014)

The manner in which the anchors assert themselves on the conversation is also framed in a way that further builds the report's diffraction, as Slack and Simon Wilson are most often shown individually, where the anchors always provide a united front. When Michael Wilson confronts the two guests on the issue of whether privacy matters, the camera shows the anchors as the dominant force, with Michael Wilson's gesturing a key part of the shot. When reading these material constructions through the diffraction that TV3 constructs, a pattern emerges of TV3 attempting to isolate the guests despite their similar views on the topic and discredit the praise they are giving to the event by making the anchors drive the segment, which is expressed through both the visual construction and performance of the report.

However, the report is diffracted by more than just the materiality of the report. The very first question asked in the report is about Simon Wilson's "penetrating questions" for Greenwald. The word "penetrating" implies that they were uncomfortable questions for Greenwald, and yet Simon Wilson says nothing that alludes to this. On the contrary, he states that he agrees entirely with Greenwald in his answer when asked why he did not come to New Zealand earlier, and says that he finds the information he presented "extremely disturbing." However, it quickly becomes obvious that the information presented is not the part of the story that TV3 wants to focus on when the topic of the event's timing is pressed further. Both Simon Wilson and Slack end up agreeing that the information would have been more useful a month ago. It is here when the segment is ended, even though it is obvious that Slack wants to make another comment, but is cut off or motioned not to by somebody off camera, whom Slack visibly acknowledges. Though television production obviously has time

constraints, it seems convenient that despite all the positive words David Slack and Simon Wilson had to say about the information the event provided, the conclusion of the report is about the timing of the event. The timing of the event is the only thing that both Slack and Simon Wilson agree was poorly handled, and Michael Wilson's earlier line of questioning is that the timing of the event was to do with Dotcom's devious political manoeuvring. However, neither Slack nor Simon Wilson state that the timing detracts from the information, merely that if the event was held a month earlier there would have been more time for the public to disseminate and understand the information, and more time for the press to investigate it, in regards to the election. If anything, where TV3 seems to perform *The Moment of Truth* as a desperate last minute shot at Key to garner votes for the party Dotcom funds, Simon Wilson and David Slack feel Dotcom should have held the event earlier in order to have more of a political impact, and both feel it was "cock up rather than conspiracy".

The way *The Moment of Truth* is performed on *Firstline* produces a different pattern from the actual performance of the event itself. TV3's narrative focuses mostly on the motive of the event; Dotcom's silence over the email, his role in the event and his will for political power. Simon Wilson and David Slack speak about what they found important and striking as much as they can, speaking about the information and the issues it raises. However, TV3 attempts to detract from this at every opportunity, first asking if there is any evidence, secondly asking if it even matters, and finally detracting from the information itself by attacking its authors. This shows that TV3 are only willing to diffract the event in certain ways, those which read the event through the slit of Dotcom's political maneuverings and criminal history. Though Slack and Simon Wilson attempt to

make the weight of the allegations and evidence that came out of the event clear, TV3 attempts to show an entirely different, and at points unrelated, version. Just like the TV One report, with TV3 being a large media entity in New Zealand, this may well be the only reading of *The Moment of Truth* many people receive. The cuts made by TV3 in creating this diffractive pattern change the assemblage of the event once again, by performing it in a way that depicts it as something that is untrustworthy and disingenuous. When reading this performance of the event through TV One's performance, similarities become clear, despite TV3's more comprehensive approach to the report. Both outlets use Dotcom as an apparatus to view *The Moment of Truth* through, framing it in a way that does not accurately perform the contents and motivations of the event, and cuts are made which emphasise these entanglements. Furthermore, both utilise the voice of their anchors and reporters to support this argument, even when faced with different interpretations from the public and guest panelists. In the TV One report, the interviewees were members of the public who were largely intrigued by the event, and felt the claims were substantial and worth investigation. On the TV3 report, Simon Wilson and David Slack are 'experts', the editor of a current affairs magazine and a columnist with political experience respectively, who also agree that *The Moment of Truth* revealed some very important information. This directly subverts One News' message that journalists with authority on these issues see the event very differently from regular members of the public. However, both performances use the likes of Christie, Pugh, Chang, Wilson and McNeil to perpetuate an agenda and create a pattern which fits a certain diffractive narrative, by discrediting the event and questioning those who put stock in its content.

The New Zealand Herald is New Zealand's largest newspaper, and is the only newspaper which is nationally distributed. It is owned by APN News and Media, a publically traded Australian based company (APN News & Media, 2015). The most immediately striking part of the *Herald's* article on *The Moment of Truth* is the title: "Dotcom's moment of truth: NSA has Auckland facility" (Bennett, 2014). The title reads as if that is Dotcom's grand unveiling, that the NSA having an Auckland facility is the "truth" that the event was held for. In reality, this pattern could not be much further from the actual focus of *The Moment of Truth*. Snowden's statement that there is an NSA facility in Auckland was nothing more than a side-note, a small anecdote from Snowden's time in the NSA and the knowledge he has of their infrastructure. Snowden is described as a "renegade" who is "sheltering in Moscow from US attempts to extradite him on espionage charges." This already paints Snowden as someone who perhaps cannot be trusted. It is never said in the article whether his "claims" of an NSA facility or of mass surveillance on New Zealanders are substantiated, only that "visiting US journalist Glen[n] Greenwald" had made the same claims. However, the article goes on to quote Greenwald talking about Snowden saying that he is "overwhelmingly considered a hero" and "even his harshest critics have not been able to say anything he has said about surveillance is unreliable or untrue." Though these quotes are accurate, their context has been changed. Greenwald said Snowden is overwhelmingly considered a hero "around the world in most countries", specifically stating that it is "50-50" in the United States. Furthermore, this quote is open to misinterpretation considering the *Herald* reads Snowden through the law, describing him as a "renegade", a kind of information vigilante.

The article continues to discuss Snowden's claims, mentioning his statement of "if you live in New Zealand, you are being watched" and his experiences of "routinely" finding the communications information of New Zealanders with XKeyscore, and its "check box" functionality. However, aside from this, many exclusionary cuts are made within the *Herald's* own performance of *The Moment of Truth*. Greenwald's own revelations, Assange and Amsterdam's speeches, the leaked NSA slides, Project SPEARGUN, alleged NSA and GCSB collaboration, Five Eyes – these points were not mentioned in the article, despite these being the assemblages that the event was most entangled with. Instead, the event is diluted into a singular "Moment of Truth" which is Snowden's claim that there is an NSA facility in Auckland (there is no mention of the second facility Snowden mentioned which is said to be further north), and some anecdotal evidence based on XKeyscore. The article provides a warped diffraction of *The Moment of Truth's* local objectivity. Greenwald is simply described as a "visiting US journalist", and there is no mention of his success in his profession (Pulitzer Prize winner) or his significantly well informed background on this topic, considering he was Snowden's handpicked journalist to publicise his leaks. Snowden, the "renegade former US intelligence analyst" is not once referred to as a whistleblower, instead the article only talks about his former job at the NSA and that he "claimed in an online article to have evidence of mass surveillance of New Zealanders' electronic communications" by the GCSB. The article referred to by the *Herald* is an article by Snowden on the Greenwald co-founded website *The Intercept* (Snowden, 2014). The article's claims are substantiated by links to classified documentation, the authenticity of which "is not contested by any government" (Snowden, 2014). Not only is this evidence present in the article, but

it was also presented at *The Moment of Truth* event itself, and yet the *Herald* omits this detail. Once again, cuts are made by the *Herald* to exclude entanglements and change the assemblage in a way that makes the event seem untrustworthy. The way the *Herald* depicts the assemblages of Snowden and Greenwald is incomplete, and the pattern produced by these cut performances makes them seem unreliable.

These are not the only cuts made by the *Herald* in their diffraction of the event. Kim Dotcom and the alleged Warner Brothers email is also a major point of diffraction. The article speaks of Dotcom's word on why he did not talk about the email during the event, with his "I think the evidence is pretty clear today in the *Herald*" quote, referring to the article in which it was leaked, the subsequent allegations against its veracity and the news that it would be brought before the Privileges Committee (Trevett & Fisher, 2014). Dotcom says that the email was "going through the official process in the Parliament, we're going to give the Prime Minister the due process that he denied me" and that he believed the email is "100 percent true", with the *Herald* diffracting these comments through the Key/Dotcom feud to add more weight to Dotcom's statements.

However, the slightly sensational performance implied by these comments is intensified when the end of the article talks about how Dotcom "became angry at reporters' questions" about the email. The article states Dotcom was "saying the evening was about the issue of mass surveillance" and that he criticised the media for not holding the government to account, quoting Dotcom: "you have not done that you have failed New Zealanders in the past. You need to wake up and do your jobs." The way this quote is framed and diffracted through the absence of the Warner Brothers email creates a pattern of Dotcom's comment as a kneejerk

reaction to being asked about a topic he did not want to talk about. In reality, he had already been asked questions about the email, and had answered them seemingly to the best of his knowledge, as he was under legal advice. The evidence of the email, and of why he did not use it, was clear in the *Herald's* story. Dotcom gave the impression the email was legitimate. The email was planned to be put before the privileges committee, and it was going through the correct process (Fisher, 2014). The quote used by the *Herald* also differs from what Dotcom actually said. Dotcom most certainly did attack the New Zealand media, and “somewhat heated” was an apt description of the press conference, but the quote used is incorrect and out of context. Actual footage of the press conference shows that the quote instead reads:

You have failed New Zealanders in the past. Look at *Dirty Politics*, you are all parts of that programme. You need to wake up and do your jobs, and make sure that you fulfill your democratic obligation so that we can have a good election this year, based on the truth that is so important: which is that the mass surveillance programme is active in New Zealand. And that affects every New Zealander. My case only affects me. It doesn't matter tonight. That's why we didn't make a big deal out of it.

(3 News, 2014)

Dotcom indeed did say “you have failed New Zealanders in the past”, and Dotcom did indeed say “you need to wake up and do your jobs” – but it is what

was said in between and what was said afterwards that provides context to those two statements. Dotcom is referencing *Dirty Politics*. When diffracting these statements through *Dirty Politics*, we can understand that some members of the media have not just failed the public, they have actively assisted the government in misleading them, and the media has failed to address this problem. Dotcom also talks about the media's "democratic obligation" to report on elections fairly and objectively so that the citizenry is properly equipped to make decisions about government. His statement shows that he believes the mass surveillance allegations made at *The Moment of Truth* are for all New Zealanders, and that his case only affects him, and is thus irrelevant to all New Zealanders' views on government. The *Herald's* removal of the full quote creates a pattern of Dotcom being on the defensive regarding the email, and losing his temper. It is another part of the reading of *The Moment of Truth* through the assemblage of Kim Dotcom as an untrustworthy figure. The *Herald* actively implies that Dotcom's statement was not an attack on the role of the media during the election campaign, but a chink in his armour.

The materiality of the *Herald* also comes into play. The way the article and web page is constructed evokes a feeling of reliability and expertise, as the article is surrounded by links to other articles on similar topics. The gothic font stylings of the *Herald's* logo, along with the variety of topics and sections that the *Herald* reports on and are available to read, only adds to the performance of the text as a dependable piece of news. Furthermore, the medium itself is also a part of this performance. The text holds a greater weight in terms of being a trustworthy news source than either of the two previous examples, simply by being affiliated with a newspaper. Morning television news shows traditionally

have more than one purpose, often showcasing news, features and entertainment at various stages; a newspaper is a traditional medium for news, and with the *Herald's* status as the standard bearer of New Zealand newspapers, this reputation and the audiences attracted to it are enhanced.

Once again, when reading this performance of *The Moment of Truth* through the video of the event, a very different pattern is created. When diffracting the *Herald's* report through the performances of the event by TV One and TV3 however, we see that there are similarities. Though there are quotes from the event in this report where there were not in the other two, which adds credibility and accuracy, these quotes are decontextualized and read through a certain apparatus in order to change the pattern they create. Like the previous performances, key details have been omitted once again and the article creates a new diffraction of *The Moment of Truth's* assemblage. This is on show from the very outset, with the article's loaded title. Furthermore, the coverage of what is mentioned, such as Snowden's claims and *XKeyscore* anecdotes, is not comprehensive enough to provide an accurate pattern of how these assemblages are functioning within the diffractive process of the event. The focus of *Herald's* performance of *The Moment of Truth* lies in Dotcom's political motivations and questionable character, along with the character of his associates, Greenwald and Snowden. This is the apparatus that the *Herald* chooses to diffract *The Moment of Truth* through, and the pattern it produces stems from this intra-action.

In reading the event through Dotcom rather than the entanglements proposed by the event itself, each of these news media texts have produced a pattern which does not make the same meditations on mass surveillance or transparency of government as *The Moment of Truth*, and instead discredits the

likes of Greenwald, Snowden and Assange simply for being associated with Dotcom. In the aftermath of the election, in which InternetMANA failed to win a single seat in parliament, Dotcom acknowledged this, stating that his brand was poisonous to the election campaign (Nippert, 2014). It is hard to argue with this statement, considering that despite many of the significant allegations that came out of *The Moment of Truth*, some of which were backed with hard evidence, the event has failed to have a lasting impact. This is likely not least due to the media's performances of the event, and how these performances shifted the assemblage of the event itself to mean something else than its local objectivity suggests. The assemblage of Dotcom and the diffraction of that assemblage by news media makes Greenwald's, Snowden's, Assange's and Amsterdam's claims less accessible, as they already come with the caveat of criminal association, despite the fact that most of their statements are substantiated even when faced with the Prime Minister's denial. These are the kind of claims that warrant further investigation and accurate interpretation, and media outlets such as TV One, TV3 and *The New Zealand Herald* have simply not provided this. This raises further questions on the integrity of reporting within these outlets, as they have not lived up to their own ethical code of reporting and interpreting "the news with scrupulous honesty by striving to disclose all essential facts and by not suppressing relevant, available facts or distorting by wrong or improper emphasis" (EPMU, 2015).

However, when considering the patterns produced by *The Moment of Truth*, the patterns produced by the news media performances of *The Moment of Truth*, and the patterns produced by diffracting those two assemblages, it becomes clear that the new insights created by these patterns have many points of similarity

with the patterns created by Adbusters' *Moral Collapse of a Nation* and Banksy's *Spy Booth* and *Slave Labour*. When reading the patterns created by the diffraction of *The Moment of Truth* and these news media performances through the lens of Adbusters and Banksy, even more new insights can be produced.

A central theme throughout these news media performances is the exclusionary cuts of Greenwald's information in favour of the inclusionary cuts of Dotcom's questionable background. These cuts are most influential in shaping the assemblages of these performances, and changing the perception of the original performance of *The Moment of Truth*. When reading this insight through the likes of *Moral Collapse of a Nation* and *Slave Labour*, an immediate comparison can be drawn between the themes of a very loud, eye catching and recognisable assemblage distracting from a more uncomfortable truth. In *Moral Collapse of a Nation* it is Lady Gaga and the values she promotes with her identity being seen as society's moral collapse, as opposed to the continuing practice of institutional torture in prisons being carried out and protected by governments. In *Slave Labour*, the bunting and the patriotic, joyous events that it symbolises such as the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics, are a distraction from the fact that these events are built on the back of unethical labour practices in overseas countries. When applying this kind of intra-action to *The Moment of Truth* and its performances in news media, it becomes clear that Dotcom and his personality, character and history are being used as a distraction to the events that have taken place, and the information that the likes of Greenwald and Snowden are providing. These news media texts choose to cut in the context of Dotcom to provide a negative reading of *The Moment of Truth*, with the Dotcom baggage distracting from the greater points being made by the event.

Furthermore, this notion of distraction is reinforced by some of the context surrounding the event, namely Key's declassification of documents. None of the news media texts examined mention that the declassified documents released by Key do not have anything to do with the programme talked about by Greenwald at length. Instead, the *Herald* (O'Sullivan, 2014) and TV One (ONE News, 2014) simply accept that Key's documents clear the government of Greenwald's allegations, when upon reading the documents it is obvious this is not the case, and that Project SPEARGUN and Project CORTEX are two entirely different programmes, tenuously related through the theme of cybersecurity. TV3 did follow up on this detail, but only through an interview with Greenwald where he stated that "the documents that [Key] declassified was a completely different programme" (Campbell Live, 2014). However, these details are excluded in the news media texts covering *The Moment of Truth*, which do not even mention the declassification of these documents.

When adding *Spy Booth* into the diffractive equation, we can create further patterns. The depiction of mass surveillance in *Spy Booth* certainly resonates with the *Dirty Politics* ethos that permeates *The Moment of Truth*. When reading *Spy Booth* through *The Moment of Truth*, an image is created of the dangers of mass surveillance by the government, one which echoes statements made by Assange about the "bizarre Orwellian future" (The Moment of Truth, 2014) that the Five Eyes organisations strive for, and support Amsterdam's fears of a government inevitably turning "against its own citizens" when they are "empowered with the control of information" (The Moment of Truth, 2014). *Spy Booth* itself was diffracted through Snowden's revelations of government security agencies' conduct, and these are the same revelations which inform much of *The Moment of*

Truth, and both produce patterns that encourage the questioning of government activities and their lack of transparency for the general public.

By using a diffractive methodology to examine the intra-actions between *The Moment of Truth* and the performances by media texts of the event, new patterns have been created, suggesting new questions. Diffracting news media in this way, by identifying and questioning the cuts made, allows us to produce insights which can help us analyse and assess how news media operates as a diffractive process, and how effective their diffractions might be. In diffracting these texts with other media texts, such as Banksy and Adbusters, further patterns appear. Furthermore, these events and performances change the way we can look at texts such as Banksy and Adbusters by imbuing them with further meaning and significance, showing that there is a pluripotent, intra-active matter of relations between media texts that can be analysed diffractively.

CHAPTER FOUR:

CONCLUSION

The exploration into the development of performativity within this research has led to new understandings of how ideas can be perceived. The likes of Butler, Barad, Bryant, Lamontagne, Clark & Chalmers and DeLanda each provide concepts which further the notion of performativity, all of which can be read through one another, compared and combined, in an attempt to carve out a new direction for this theory. One of the directions that comes from this is a diffractive methodology based on the framework of assemblage. As detailed previously, this kind of approach allows for an open, performative process focused on creating new readings and insights. When applied to case studies of Banksy and Adbusters, case studies which perform the diffractive method, it was shown how this approach produces new insights.

The application of the diffractive method to media has shown is also a useful means of producing new insights, both by comparing diffraction patterns between different assemblages and by reading assemblages through one another. In regards to the case study of the news media event *The Moment of Truth*, the diffractive method showcased the significant differences in the performance of the event in its own objectivity, and the performance of the event as diffracted by several leading New Zealand news media outlets. These news media outlets made many cuts within their reading of the event in order to produce texts that create a certain kind of pattern. However, the cuts made and the subsequent patterns created by these news media texts raise many pertinent questions from a media studies perspective, as *The Moment of Truth* event created by news media performances is very different to how the event was originally performed. When

indicating these points of difference, questions are raised about why these news media texts are each shifting the assemblage of *The Moment of Truth* in similar directions, including certain elements of context that work towards certain patterns, whilst excluding others that contradict them. In the case study, this is shown by the way the assemblage of Kim Dotcom, as read through his legal troubles and political engagement, is placed front and centre, whilst many of the points raised during the event are treated as side notes, despite being the focus. The assemblage of *The Moment of Truth* as a press conference on the dangers of mass surveillance by governments, is replaced in these news media texts by a new assemblage, one of *The Moment of Truth* as an evangelical political campaign move in which Dotcom avoided awkward questions. The assemblage of Dotcom is used as a distraction from the points made by the likes of Greenwald and Snowden. When diffracting the news media interpretations on *The Moment of Truth* through the case studies of Adbusters and Banksy, further significance is given to these observations, as many of the patterns produced by Adbusters and Banksy can be related to the news media interpretations of *The Moment of Truth*.

In terms of the New Zealand media landscape, and the context in which *The Moment of Truth* was performed, diffracting the news reports in this way evokes much cause for concern. Though, regrettably, bias within news media is not a novel problem, the producers of these media texts are the three major media outlets in New Zealand. When these outlets diffract an event and produce a similar pattern, there would be an assumption that they are reporting accurately. However, when diffracting the news media performances through the original event, it is clear that there are significant details that have been cut in favour of producing a certain pattern. This raises serious questions about the integrity of

journalism, the integrity of these outlets, and their agenda in publishing a biased performance of an event and creating a new assemblage which is disconnected from the initial event. These concerns are intensified when considering that this particular event is one that has significance in terms of the New Zealand elections and the greater political and social context of government surveillance. This suggests that perhaps these media outlets have some kind of stock in the outcome of the election, and are performing events in a way that works towards this agenda.

However, though these suggestions are disturbing, purely within the context of finding whether the diffractive method is an effective tool to analyse media with, I believe this research has been successful. The model of diffraction is driven by the concept of intra-action, the affective relationship between entangling assemblages that both affect and are affected by one another. The concept of intra-action is especially pertinent to media, as media is a social force which both informs processes and is informed by the processes they inform. Furthermore, as a researcher, I am not exempt from these intra-actions. I myself have been intra-acting with the research that I have been doing throughout the course of this thesis. Just as I have affected the research by being the apparatus creating that pattern, by applying the diffractive methodology to the case studies, the diffractive methodology and this research at large has also been a force upon me. It has not just informed how I have conducted my research, simply by being the method I decided to use, but also the way in which I have perceived my results.

As a researcher, I have likely also made cuts that support my argument. For instance, the inclusion of DeLanda as a part of my literature review to exemplify representationalism. DeLanda's account is a particularly performative account of representationalism, and one that fits within the ethos of diffraction.

These kinds of cuts may have influenced my research in a certain way that I am unconscious of, shaping my approach and influencing the outcomes that I have produced. Similarly, my own political and social biases may also have been a part of that diffractive process, as some of the assemblages entangling with this research. There are many internal and external assemblages that I cannot control, which entangle with other assemblages and make diffraction an ever more complex process made up of many variables. My performance as researcher within academia also comes into this. It informs the way I am undertaking this research and the way I am expressing it. There are certain cuts made in that regard, for instance, the terminology I am able to use and the kind of critiques I can express. My performance as a researcher changed my performance in engaging with the diffractive method, and the way in which I expressed these engagements.

It can be argued that all methods of research are diffractive in some way, and this is true as all research is essentially aimed at examining or analysing assemblages and producing insights. However, not all methodologies are underpinned by the diffractive model. When using a diffractive model as an epistemological basis of sorts, not only can new readings be found through the diffraction of unrelated assemblages, but about the assemblage of research and its intra-action with the researcher. The performance of research can be examined intra-actively, as it is a constantly iterative process. The researcher is influenced by the research as much as the research is influenced by the researcher, which further influences more research. This intra-action between research and researcher is an important part of how the diffractive method is enacted. My use of the diffractive methodology has caused me to take a more diffractive worldview, which in turn must have influenced the way in which I have come to

my conclusions in this research.

This research has also caused me to ask greater questions about diffraction as a method. With the way in which I intra-acted with it, in its application to media, and the patterns that were produced by these intra-actions, I see potential for its application beyond just the analysis of media. When considering this prospect, Harman's idea of philosophical hyperbole comes to mind. Harman replaces the idea of philosophical critique by asking, "if this work were the greatest of the century, how would our current thoughts need to change? And what would we still be missing?" (Harman, 2008, p. 381) rather than "where are the mistaken arguments here?" (2008, p. 381). I believe the application of diffraction on a wider scale would have profound implications for this kind of thinking. As my research has shown, using diffraction can provide new insights when it comes to media, and as a dominant media doctrine I it is possible more insights can be created. For instance, reading George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) through *The Moment of Truth* or vice versa may provide us with new insights about both texts. Though a diffractive approach to media may sacrifice some of the room for interpretation within conventional text analysis, it prioritises a more open approach whilst still allowing for the discovery of new readings in the entanglements of multiple texts or events.

However, the issue in the application of diffraction lies in the relationships between intra-actions. Somewhere down the line, each assemblage is diffractively related, and each intra-action can be diffractively read, thus it can become a difficult proposition to produce insightful readings from diffractions where the relationships between apparatus and phenomena are tenuous at best. Though reading news media reports through Banksy's *Slave Labour* may produce

meaningful insights for media researchers, this is not a guarantee for all diffractions and all people. Reading an episode of *Coronation Street* through Mount Everest may not be as productive. Therefore, though we can ask pragmatic questions about cuts, affect and patterns, these questions may not be answered dependent on what the diffraction consists of. Despite the outcome of my application of the diffractive method to media, I still doubt that the application of the diffractive method in more pragmatic fields of research can be unequivocally successful. What I have not demonstrated with my research is whether or not a diffractive analysis can work between entirely disparate assemblages.

However, the concept of assemblage and its basis in representationalist thinking goes some way to addressing this problem. Although the performative turn is something that is now common in academia, an approach based on diffraction and assemblage extends the idea of the performative beyond human performance and human exceptionalism. The notions of assemblage and intra-action, provide an explanation for many of those human issues of performance, but also provides a model to apply to non-human assemblages. The acceptance that non-human entities can also engage with performance or affect is something that comes with the territory of diffraction in order for it to function. A rock performs, intra-acts and is part of the diffractive process as much as a human, depending on circumstances. Furthermore, when considering the implementation of the assemblage, there need not be any constraints or boundaries on what exactly constitutes an assemblage, or types of categories of assemblage based on individual capacities and properties, as they are pluripotent.

However, although the label of assemblage can be applied to all entities, this does not make it an empty signifier. Though all assemblages can be referred

to by their name ('rock', 'dog', 'book'), the concept of assemblage allows for separability from context and further external intra-active relata when implemented into a diffractive, performative model. When looking at the diffractive model, there are three categories that the components fit into: phenomena, apparatus and pattern. For instance, a painting is the result of the phenomena of paint and canvas being diffracted through the apparatus of the artist. However, the painting is not just the pattern created through this diffractive process, through the performance of diffraction - but also a representation of that process. It exists without inherently being a phenomena, or an apparatus, or a pattern, as these are conditions we ascribe to entities when reading them. The concept of assemblage allows for entities to not always be a phenomena or apparatus as part of an analytical framework, and provides an umbrella term which satisfactorily closes an otherwise infinite loop of phenomena/apparatus/pattern when utilising a diffractive methodology. A diffractive methodology does not 'end', but introducing the concept of assemblage makes it possible to isolate particular diffractions more effectively, imposing boundaries which help to maintain a research focus.

In terms of media, these concepts evoke questions of ethics and responsibility. As exemplified in the case studies, the endlessness of diffraction and the necessity of separability for pragmatic reasons can also be used to perpetuate an agenda. Though the idea of diffraction is simple, diffractions themselves can be as simple or as complex as the diffractor chooses. In the case study, the media outlets made cuts which shifted the assemblage of *The Moment of Truth* in a way that seems inaccurate and unethical by journalistic standards. Though enacting separability is a necessary step in presenting a focused account

of an assemblage, it can also be simplified to the point that significant readings are lost. In the case of this report, I believe I have been able to uphold this standard by not diffracting the event myself, but rather diffracting the interpretations made by media outlets through a reproduction of the original event. The comparative approach utilised in this research allowed me to analyse at least some of the cuts made by the various media outlets. However, in the application of a diffractive methodology, researchers must be mindful of their own diffractive agendas and take steps to make sure that the readings they are developing are being developed ethically and responsibly.

An approach based on assemblage and diffraction presents the universe as a constantly producing iterative process, with new assemblages always being created and the greater network of assemblages expanding as a result. It is a natural development of the performative beyond the human.. Though diffraction between more disparate assemblages, whilst still theoretically possible, may be problematic pragmatically, the insights produced by my case studies are significant evidence that diffraction and assemblage are appropriate concepts to apply to media. This provides an alternative to traditional means of research within media studies, and a new way in which to produce meaningful insights from media texts.

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