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A Million Shades of Grey:

Can we ever hope to understand a truth of our Heritage? Can Jan Verwoert's Art of Invocation Suggest an Alternative?

Introduction:

One of the commonest ways we encounter the historical today is through heritage sites and heritage tourism. Places and sites are positioned as Heritage Destinations, where culture is the desirable element of the destination, the 'unique selling point' of it as a destination and product. Heritage is understood in the tourist industry as a wide ranging term that relates equally to landscapes, customs and narratives of history and identity.

In this essay I will not question whether Tourist destinations are marketed to us by the creation and dissemination of images and narratives of that place. I will take it as read that they are and that these can be understood as 'Signs', signifiers of that place *as a tourist destination*. I will not question whether heritage sites are constructs, but take it as a given.

But what is effect of this on of a place and it's history? Can we ever hope to discover a reality or truth of history and should we even attempt to do so?

I will look at Baudrillard's conception of the Simulacrum and of Hyper-reality. Is this theory useful when we consider Heritage sites, or does it miss the point and why? Would it not be more useful to consider Heritage in the light of Walter Benjamin's "On the concept of History" and look at how meaning may be authenticated within heritage that presents a history that works for the interests on the present dominant power systems? If this is the case, what is the problem of this? I will propose Jan Verwoert's essay "Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art," as presenting a possible alternative to a heritage that attempts to show a historical truth and may work to benefit the present dominant power systems.

"Constable Country" and Baudrillard:

On a recent visit "Constable Country" I was informed that if I went round the corner I could see where they, (They being the National Trust in this case) had cut down some trees so you could see the view "more like in that painting"; Constable's famous "The Haywain" (Fig.1), Icon of English landscape Painting. Apparently, the site was being conserved in such a way that it was altered so that it resembled and lived up to what the National Trust and visitors themselves expect and desire to see from the areas own reproduction. People visit the area, and are encouraged to do so, largely because of it's association with the Painting as an iconic and metaphoric sign of a certain type of English countryside, and of the traditions and and continuity of rural life that the painting and Constable's wider art is seen to represent. So in the area the gap was being closed between three-dimensional materiality of the area in the present and it's idealised, two-dimensional sign, as a kind of circular, looping materiality and time. By altering the three-dimensional materiality of the area with reference to a two-dimensional image of it the area can only be conceived of from one

position, the viewpoint that most directly corresponds to the image. The area is made flat, it becomes virtually two-dimensional, almost an image of itself. It becomes frozen at an idealised time that only ever existed in the Painting.

Jean Baudrillard, in "Simulations", talks of how a 'simulacral' complex such as Disneyland exists in order to conceal the fact that there is no longer any reality, no longer any 'real' surrounding it. He discusses how, with reference to political power;

"linear continuity and dialectical polarity no longer exist, in a field *unhinged by simulation*" (Baudrillard, 1983: p31)

and how;

"It is by putting an *arbitrary* stop to this revolving causality that a principle of political reality can be saved." (Baudrillard, 1983: p31)

According to Baudrillard's reading the gap between the signs and images and the reality of a thing is closed to hide the fact that there is no reality any longer. To hide that there is no longer any dialectical opposition of political Left and Right, of true and false as all achieve the same ends. He suggests that in a world where our experience of our ideas of nature, culture and history commonly comes in the debased form where we no longer physically experience the 'real' of our ideas but interact with them in a synthetic manner through signs and images, there is no longer any reality. If illusion and reality are equivalent, then this is the only way we can experience them, as this is all there is. He further states that it is now a case of simulating the real in order to save the "reality principle", and hence a simulation of real power. Baudrillard's reading can be extreme, but it is conceivable to see how the conservation of Constable Country with reference to a two-dimensional idealised sign of our past and nature could suggest that we experience this past and nature more through images and signs than any actual experience of them. By altering the three-dimensional materiality of the area with reference to a two-dimensional image of it the area can only be conceived of from one position, the viewpoint that most directly corresponds to the image. The area is made flat, it becomes virtually two-dimensional, almost an image of itself. Baudrillard's reading would suggest that this is done in order to make us believe that we do *actually* experience this past and this nature because it actually existed, or still exists. Furthermore, I found another sign (Fig.2) in the area that explained that certain trees that were ending of their natural lives, and had been used in a now disappeared matchstick industry were being cut down. One given reason for this was that some trees had fallen and they were endangering property and people. However, the sign also stated in its heading "Restoring Historic Views". This maybe reveals another reason for cutting down the trees. Surely the matchstick industry and the views associated with it are historic, it is part of the history of the area? In this case, perversely, one version of historic reality was apparently being altered in order to fit the apparent 'reality' being simulated, that of the painting. The commercial and symbolic 'reality' of the area as a popular Tourist site to be viewed.

However, Baudrillard's reading and the style of his writing appear paranoid, and is something of and aestheticisation. This is where the problem with his conception of simulacra lies. Despite his assertion that there is no reality, Baudrillard appears to cling to a notion of a truth or reality that at least once existed, and believe that the Hyper-real and Simulacrum are morally suspect. In "The Vital Illusion" Baudrillard claims that the problem we face is not a lack of reality so much as a disappearance of the gap between reality and illusion;

"For even as I spoke of the extermination of the Real, I meant, in fact, the more fundamental extermination of the Illusion...I mean the radical and objective illusion of the world, the radical impossibility of things being, their definitive absence from themselves." (Baudrillard, 2000: p70)

further;

“Language itself never signifies what it means, it always signifies something else, through its very irreducible, ontological absence from itself.” (Baudrillard, 2000: p70-71)

Baudrillard appears to assert is that if a language becomes exactly equivalent to what it means it becomes directly referential and there will be no difference between illusion and reality, no gap. If there is no gap and all is directly reversible and equivalent, all becomes hyper-real. He believes we must preserve this gap because;

“If the same were identical to the same, we would be faced with an absolute reality, with the unconditional truth of things. But absolute truth is the other name for death.”
(Baudrillard, 2000: p72)

For Baudrillard, if something is a simulacrum and becomes exactly equivalent to its sign, it becomes unconditionally true and dead. Following, if Constable Country becomes the absolute equivalent of Constable's painting, it becomes frozen there is no more room to interpret it, it becomes essentially dead. For Baudrillard, we must preserve this gap between reality and illusion.

Here in lies the problem of Baudrillard's thinking. On a metaphorical level it is useful to understand a heritage area such as Constable Country and what happens in our wider culture of the virtual and images in this way. However, Baudrillard appears to believe that the Material is somehow more real than imagery and language, at least until it becomes a simulacrum. The creation of of an illusion in much Western Art has historically been seen in a positive manner, be it the technical illusion of perspective, or the ideal created on canvas by the Romantics. These artworks may purport to show an ideal or deeper reality, but they do so through illusory means or by means such as allegory, and never claim to be anything other than illusionary representations. Indeed, some trompe l'oeil paintings play on this status. Some Modernist abstract paintings such as those of Malevich, conversely, attempted to show a hidden truth through their lack of illusion. However, both conceive of an underlying truth, both work from the hidden ideal reality. Baudrillard's conception of the Hyper-real also seems to rest on this existence of a hidden ideal truth. It is this truth that he call “the other name for death” (Baudrillard, 2000: p72). His conception of images and signs seems to be assume they are dangerous; for him they must be tamed by being held as illusions that do not claim to be real, because we cannot stand this unconditional truth. So for us to need illusion, as Baudrillard states there must be an unconditional truth that we cannot stand.

But is there an unconditional truth to be revealed or hidden? I don't believe there is. Signs and images do not hide a absolute truth. There is no absolute truth, no hidden reality, of a heritage site or of history. But not because all is simulacrum, but because our very concept of a place, of history, of ourselves, is constructed not simply by signs, and images but in many different ways. There is no absolute factual truth, but rather infinite different conceptions of it. Who can say what has really happened? This is what I will discuss next.

Narrative and the Victor:

“Heritage places are not simply old places or places of historical significance, displayed unchanged in their existing state, but are products, or perhaps constructions, of history.” (Herbert, 1995: p1)

Heritage sites are delivered to us by history; we do not receive them in an innocent state. Our very conception of a place is also made up of any number of interpretations and narratives. We receive

our ideas of what a place is and what it stands for through the literature, stories, paintings and historical narratives surrounding it. The representations of it from the past, from any number of previous interpretations and viewpoints. As Herbert's quote suggests, a heritage site is in a very real sense produced *by* its history in these narratives and our understanding of it is constructed through time.

Walter Benjamin, in his "On the concept of history" states that narrative history, which he equates with historicism, is written by the Victor.

"with whom does the historical writer of historicism actually empathise. The answer is irrefutably with the victor. Those who currently rule are however the heirs of all those who have ever been victorious. Empathy with the victors thus comes to befit the current rulers every time." (Benjamin, 1939: Theses VII)

If this is accepted then surely our understanding of a heritage site as a historical place, of our past, will always be from the point of view of the Victor? If a heritage site and our conception of it is already produced to some degree in relation to the historical narratives surrounding it, then how we receive it, how it is delivered to us by history, will always be from the point of view of the Victor, if this victor is taken to be the dominant cultural narrative of a time. Benjamin's Marxist reading links this to an actual rulers actual power. In a certain sense this is perceivable in the Heritage Sites we find today. In Britain these tend to present a certain type of heritage. Organisations such as the National Trust present the country homes and castles of the aristocratic rulers of our past, or else the industrial heritage sites of the recent capitalist past displaying work and industry, in a celebratory, heroic manner. The fact that organisations such as the National Trust or English Heritage hold these sites *in trust* for the nation can be seen as an attempt to get everyone on the side of, in the position of the Victors. I would suggest that if these sites are seen as embodying the domination of a certain culture or economic and political approach, then the holding of them in trust for the *whole nation* can be seen as positioning this version of our heritage as the *the* heritage, *the* past, of *all of us*, at the cost of any alternative pasts. We become part of the dominant cultural narrative; *we are the Victors*. However, a Marxist reading such as Benjamin's would question this positioning, and would see some people as the "oppressed" whose "nameless drudgery" (Benjamin, 1939: Theses VII) helped create these places (sites) in the first place. So where as the fact that some aristocratic houses are now held in trust for us all could be seen as representing the downfall of the aristocratic system of power, it also has the effect, by the very number and visibility of these sites, of suggesting that this is the heritage, the history of all of us. After all, how many slums do we see positioned as heritage sites?

Heritage sites form the recent industrial past have a similar but different effect. In positioning these sites as national property, held in trust for, and positioning them, through the (often heroic) historical narratives surrounding them, these sites too are positioned as all our heritage, and we again are the 'victors', in that we (our society) are part of and product of the capitalist system these sites represent. In a communist country these sites could just as easily be positioned as representing the heroic achievements of the worker and the success and dominance of the communist system, the heroic narrative of communism.

It is possible to see how, through simply positioning and labelling certain types of site *as* Heritage sites, and through holding them in trust as a common heritage, a common inheritance of history, then we, the common in question, are put into the position of Benjamin's Victor, if this Victor is the dominant culture of a time. And hence a distinct narrative of history is created as a type of common history of us all, (that which) (what) Benjamin believed the bad universal history of historicism that presents its self as the true narrative of history, and work to cancels out any alternative possibilities. And this narrative could be anything, be it the rightness and success of Capitalism, or the rightness and success of communism, the inevitability of the victory of the dominant culture and political

approach.

Heritage sites are “products, or perhaps constructions, of history.” (Herbert, 1995: p1)

As Herbert's quote further suggests, heritage sites are not only produced and constructed by historical narratives, by history. They are also produced and constructed using history as the material, the building blocks. We continue to produce meaning for them today. Through the process of interpretation and interpretive display, guidebooks or audiovisual techniques we continue to construct meaning for a site in the present. Indeed, the very concept of displaying, exhibiting and interpretation suggests that definite and deliberate choices, processes and editing are involved, like in any art or museological exhibition. So, to follow from the above reading, not only through the process of historical narrative have we received heritage sites not as innocent but as constructions from the point of view of the victor (the dominant historical and cultural narrative), we continue to construct meaning today. Benjamin's essay would suggest that, as the historicist narrative always writes from the point of view of the victor, this meaning too would be from the point of view of the victor. And today it is possible to imagine how interpretation could be used to put forward a biased viewpoint, or the viewpoint (the historical narrative) of a dominant culture. However, I would argue that this is not inevitable.

Benjamin's conception of the historical narrative of historicism as the narrative of the victor rests on its being a *narrative*, that attempts to establish a “causal network of various moments of history” (Benjamin, 1939: Addendum A) in order to “fill up homogenous and empty time” (Benjamin, 1939: Theses XVII), and is related to the idea of a linear historical continuum. Against this he positions the 'Historical Materialist’ who identifies a monad, a single historical object or event and removes it from the historical continuum

“...in order to explode a specific epoch out of the homogenous course of history” (Benjamin, 1939: Theses XVII.)

who;

“cannot do without the concept of a present which is not in transition, in which time originates and has come to a standstill” (Benjamin, 1939: Theses XVI)

Benjamin seems to suggest that the Materialist principle of history is constructive. Certain objects, and viewpoints are removed from the causal nexus of the historical continuum and meaning is constructed around them; they show the

“constellation in which his own epoch comes into contact with that of an earlier one” (Benjamin, 1939: Addendum A)

and show an “experience with it” (Benjamin, 1939: Theses XVI)

So, could the method of displaying a heritage site could be used to put forward a type of experience, a relationship with specific pasts, instead of simply interpreting it within a linear narrative of cause and effect? How could the construction of meaning be used to show our relationship to a place and its many histories, it's *various* narratives and possibilities?

A model I would put forward for this can be found in Jan Verwoerts essay “Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art” (Art&research, Vol. 1, No.2, Summer 2007.) Verwoert's essay discusses how in some art of the late Nineteen-Seventies and early Eighties

“frozen lumps of dead historical time then became the objects of appropriation” (Verwoert, 2007:p6). He gives as one example work by artists such as Cindy Sherman; (fig. 3)

“appropriating the visual language of epic Hollywood cinema to halt and arrest the motion of the moving pictures in isolated still images of female figures locked in spatial mise-en-scene with the timeline gone missing. These works convey an intense sense of an interruption of temporal continuity.” (Verwoert, 2007: p2) .

He then discusses how these types of appropriation art turn;

“culture and it's tropes,...into pre-objectified, commodified visual language, ready to pick up and use.” (Verwoert, 2007, p2)

The approach of these artists is similar to that of Benjamin's “Historical Materialist.” However, there is a tendency to read the work of an artist like Sherman as being critical of the stereotypical tropes of the cinema and everyday life, and how we create images (the Signs I discussed in the first part of the essay) that can be used as a commodified visual language ready to use to construct any meaning such as in Baudrillard's simulacrum. But Benjamin's theses may suggest another possibility. These “frozen lumps” could be used like Benjamin's “monads” in order to construct a relationship, an experience with the past in the today. Verwoert's essay goes on to suggest a possible method of doing this. He discusses how;

“historical time is again of the essence, only that this historical time is not the linear and unified timeline of steady progress, as imagined by modernity, but a multitude of competing and overlapping temporalities born from the local conflicts... that the modern regimes of power still produce. The political space of the globe is mapped on a surreal texture of criss crossing timelines.” (Verwoert, 2007, p2)

It would seem to me that Verwoert's “unified timeline of steady progress, as imagined by modernity” (Verwoert, 2007, p2) is the same as Benjamin's conception of the view of historicism. Further, it would seem that Verwoert's idea of “overlapping temporalities” is a more believable conception of *all* historical times and periods. It may be more obvious in today's global world of instant communication, of extreme gaps between the wealth of developed nations and the poverty or medievalist outlooks of the third world and of religious extremism, but the world has never been equal. Indeed, for much of our history we have not even know that the other half of the world exists. There has always been localised conflicts and viewpoints, always extreme differences in technology, always different calendars and various histories, be they (to big to examples) the Christian view of a historical time beginning with the creation, or a Buddhists different conception.

The Allegorical:

Verwoert then discusses post-modern theories such Craig Owen's “The allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmoderism” (Owens, 1980, MIT Press). Owens discuss art dating from the late Nineteen Seventies and early Nineteen Eighties as being allegorical in conception. He discusses how, in his view;

“Allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery; the allegorist does not invent images, but confiscates them. He lays claim to the culturally significant, poses as its interpreter. And in his hands the image becomes something other....He does not restore an original meaning that may have been lost or obscured; allegory is not hermeneutics. Rather, he adds another meaning to the image” (Owens. 1980: p69)

Now it is possible to view a Heritage site as being allegorical, in that it too is interpreted. It is also possible to see how this interpretation adds meaning, rather than restoring a lost meaning. Owens states that the allegorical is made up of fragments. One example he gives that sees a allegorical is Troy Brauntuch's 1979 piece Untitled (Fig. 4), where he displayed enlargements of Hitler's drawings;

“Brauntuch's images simultaneously profer and defer meaning; they solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be directly transparent to it's signification. As a result, they appear strangely incomplete - fragments or runes that must be *deciphered*.” (Owens.1980; p69)

It is a short step to think of these fragments as similar to Benjamin's monads. Although Owens is discussing images I would link these fragments to the fragmentary dates, images, narratives and sites that we have received from history. Again it would be possible for these (to be) interpreted at Heritage sites and meaning added to them allegorically as Owens suggests, to create an allegorical narrative that errs towards the side on the 'Victor', and is not related to any lost truth or meaning. However, Owens is referencing a Nineteen Seventies conception of appropriation. He suggests that by the appropriation and manipulation of these images, through reproduction, framing, display and so forth, artists such a Brauntuch sought to empty images of meaning. Verwoert understands this idea of appropriation as being linked to a postmodernist idea of the death of history, and of “feeling a general loss of historicity.” (Verwoert. 2007; p4) He detects a feeling of melancholy and of “speaking a language that testifies to the death of or dying of its historical meaning.” (Verwoert, 2007:p4); Owens language of allegory. These images when appropriated and removed from their everyday surroundings apparently speak of the the loss of meaning and the death of the historical time continuum of modernism. (The relentless pushing forward of history.) Owens collage of appropriated imagery “producing allegories of the present ruinous state of the historic language of modern art.” (Verwoert, 2007: p5).

Again it is possible to think of the heritage sites, objects and displays as collages of appropriated imagery that are fragmentary; removed from there historical surroundings that, even as they attempt speak of our past and crate meaning, actually only succeed in speaking of their removal from this past, a signifier in ruins, empty of any meaning. However, I believe this is not the whole story. Talk of the end of history was premature. It did not end, at most in simply froze for a while with the stand-off of the Cold War. As Verwoert discusses we can understand historical time as “competing and overlapping temporalities” (Verwoert. 2007: p2). If we accept these “overlapping temporalities, born from local conflicts” (Verwoert. 2007: p2) as not only the present historical situation but as all historical time, then it is possible to see how Verwoerts essay is useful as a method for producing Benjamin's “experience with” the past, the “constellation in which his own epoch comes into contact with that of an earlier one” (Benjamin. 1939: Addendum A), and to begin to have a relationship with our multiple pasts (Not just the one of the victor) in *our* own time, on *their* (the pasts) own terms.

The Consequences of the Performativity of Language and Possible Alternatives:

I have discussed how it was not inevitable that the construction of meaning that occurs in Heritage would produce a linear narrative (from) (of) the point of view of the “Victor”, and now attempted to show how, despite their fragmentary nature, heritage sites don't necessarily speak of the 'ruin of signification'. If we follow Verwoert's thinking his idea of an **Invocation** of a “multiplicity of histories” (Verwoert. 2007:p5) offers a possible way of producing a relationship with our multiple histories. He discusses how, in the Nineteen-Nineties, there was a;

“sudden realisation that words and images, as arbitrarily constructed as they may be, produce

unsuspected effects in the real world.” (Verwoert. 2007: p6)

He further discusses a desire to understand the performativity of language;

“how language, through its power of interpellation and injunction enforces the meaning of what it spells out and like a spell placed on a person, binds that person to execute what it commands” (Verwoert. 2007: p6.)

I believe this can be linked to the concept of the heritage of a place or people through Benjamin's concept of historicism. If historical time is a “multitude of... overlapping temporalities” (Verwoert, 2007: p2), different interpretations and differing viewpoints, then any attempt to impose a narrative on it, and establish a “causal network of various moments of history” (Benjamin. 1939: Addendum A) risks being history seen from the point of view of the Victor, put forward as the inevitable victory of the present dominant culture and political and economic systems; the inevitable march of progress of modernism. If, as Verwoert suggests, language and imagery is not “empty of meaning” but is performative and “binds that person to execute what it commands” (Verwoert. 2007: p6), then any attempt of heritage to present itself within a linear narrative of historicism, as part of a causal network of various moments of history that lead, irrefutably, to the today, as the narrative of the development and progress of mankind; then we begin to see a danger. These narratives, through the performativity of the language in telling them (in heritage sites interpretation) could resurrect themselves in the present day. This narrative of history could be presented as *the* truth: Today had to happen as it did, it could happen no other way, it was inevitable. Hence the victor is always the victor, and today's economic and political system is inevitable: do not fight it, it is part of inevitable progress of mankind.

A frightening prospect, and one that leaves no room for an alternative present or future, no room for Benjamin's possibilities. But if we accept that multiple temporalities and histories have always existed, then there can be no claim to historical truth or to an authenticity or reality of the past, to Benjamin's bad “universal history” of historicism. No one historical narrative can be true, all is conjecture, interpretation and opinion and all occurred *at the same time, overlapping*. Hence we also arrive at the problem for a theory like Baudrillard's that seems to rely on a hidden truth or reality. Further; if linear time and history is a construct, *constructed* by language, images, signs, and the effect of the narrative of historicism, then all could maybe also, due to the performative nature of the language that enforces its effect on us like a spell, be resurrected and invoked in the today. Hence the resurrected polarities of Christian versus Muslim found in Religious Extremism.

Benjamin, for his part, puts forward the concept of the chronicler as an alternative who;

“recounts events without distinguishing between great and small, thereby accounts for the truth, that nothing that has ever happened is lost to history.” (Benjamin. 1939: Theses III)

a chronicler who doesn't attempt to link cause and effect or make judgements. The only truth for Benjamin appears to be a multiplicity of truths, or possibilities and occurrences that are simply recounted, not judged. It is useless to try and construct a narrative of a cause and effect. Hence it is useless for us to understand heritage sites as part of our narrative of history (of mankind, nation and so forth.) Benjamin's conception of historicism appears to rest on historicism's understanding of language as being directly referential and scientific, where language represents facts that can be arranged, according to historians judgements, in a way that makes sense. This can never question the rhetorical nature of narrative, its effect or style, its narration *as a narrative*. Through arranging and judging apparent facts, virtually *any* narrative could be arrived at and enforced, proved. For Benjamin, a universal history requires a pure (directly referential) language, a self-enclosed

language of god. And for Benjamin mankind does not possess it. Hence there is no method of presenting a linear narrative that can claim to present truth, a network of facts, causes and effects as they really are or were. I believe Verwoert presents a possible alternative to this through an art of Invocation. Verwoert asks if it would be;

“acceptable for a critical art practice to give in to the power of the performative alone and invoke the ghosts of historical visual languages to command them to work for the interests of the living?” (Verwoert. 2007: p6)

He states that this is exactly what;

“public address experts do these days anyway. Every orchestrated retro trend or revisionist resurrection of nationalist histories see hordes of ghosts pressed into the service of the market and other ideological programs.” (Verwoert. 2007: p6)

Verwoert suggests that rather than attempting to master the ghosts of the past, to appropriate them for a reason, rather than attempting to show heritage sites as part of the narrative of the progress of mankind or attempting to show an authentic reality or truth, we would be better to invoke them and allow them to speak for themselves. That in order to allow for the influence of multiple unresolved histories we must seek to;

“show what it is for something to mean something today...must expose these unresolved moments of latent presence as they are, and that means first of all not to suggest their resolution in the moment of the exhibition. Appropriation then is about performing the unresolved by staging objects, images or allegories that invoke the ghosts of unclosed histories that allows them to appear as ghosts and reveal the nature of the ambiguous presence.” (Verwoert, 2007: p7)

Although complex and problematic, I would suggest that Jeremy Deller's work “The Battle of Orgreave” (Fig. 5) went some way to achieving this idea of invocation. The piece could be read as simply righting the wrongs of history and presenting the truth of what happened, and its effect on the miners. However, this multi-layered piece is more complicated, I believe. As the re-enactment of the “Battle” involved some original participants, it removes the events from the continuum of historical time. The piece works to achieve something akin to Benjamin's “experience” with the past. By participating in the re-enactment of their own pasts, original participants could begin to conceive of their relationships with their own past, their own history, *in the present*. Further to this, the work is not simply a recording of the re-enactment. It is more complex, and weaves in footage and stills from the original battle with those of the re-enactment, and of the build up, planning and construction of the re-enactment itself. It allows various narratives, various personal remembrances and viewpoints to come through and create a multi-layered effect. The work in its entirety, through revealing its own multilayered and constructed nature in the different approaches of re-enactment, Mike Figgis's documentary of the re-enactment, interviews with the artist and Tony Benn and Mac Mcoughlin, a former miner and policeman who served during the strike, and the book “The English Civil War Part II (Artangel), doesn't simply put across the miners point of view. By revealing its own construction and multi-layered interpretations of the past, and never claiming to reveal a truth, it allows both for the ambiguity both of these interpretations and itself as an artwork, and the status and meaning of these for different people both in the past, at the time, *and in the present*. By its multilayered nature the work allows for both its own ambiguity and the 'fact' that no one true narrative of the events can ever be reached. It allows the event and its interpretations of it (by their very number and 'multilayeredness') to remain ambiguous through its own ambiguous nature. (structure?)

Conclusions:

I would suggest this presents a possible alternative for our way of understanding our(selves) or a places relationship with our past. Rather than searching for a hidden truth and authenticity to the past, or simply seeking to reveal the constructed nature of history and narrative through an ironic or parodic appropriation that speaks of the ruin of signification, and rather than seeking to construct historical narratives that lay claim to a truth, we should rather *invoke* a multitude of possibilities of history and seek to reveal the nature of their ambiguous presence . We cannot hope to reveal a reality or truth, and to risk (trying to do so) to is to risk the extreme idealism of communism and fascism, of religious fanaticism. We need a history, a heritage and art that acts like Verwoert's Art of Invocation, allows it's own possibilities, interpretations, positions, and admits it's own constructed and performative nature, it's changing meaning and movement through temporalities and it own ambiguity.