“Failed and Fell: Fell to Fail”
The Narration of History in the Works of Tacita Dean and Jeremy Deller

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Abstract

This Thesis is concerned with how history is narrated in two selected works by the British artists, Tacita Dean and Jeremy Deller. Chapter one considers Deller’s The Battle of Orgreave (2001), a reenactment of a violent miners’ strike against Margaret Thatcher’s government in 1984-1985. The reenactment brought together reenactment hobbyist and ex-miners to perform the events at Orgreave and created a discourse around the imagined historical role of the working classes. Chapter two examines Dean’s book Teignmouth Electron (1999), which recounts the failed voyage of Donald Crowhurst, one of the contestants of the 1967 Golden Globe Race who committed suicide after developing ‘time-madness’ at sea. She offers the history of this individual as a point of entry into middle-class aspirations in England in the 1960s.

Produced at the turn of the 21st century when Britain’s New Labour government was instigating an image of a New Britain to match its bygone glory, both works look back to moments in the past that epitomize the decline of the country’s old order. Unearthing instances of failure and defeat, each artist offers an alternative glance at Britain’s past and present condition than the one promoted by New Labour.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

When novelist J.G. Ballard received a photograph of a rusting boat abandoned on the Caribbean Island of Cayman Brac in the mail, he thought it resembled an old World War II aircraft crashed and forgotten in a remote overgrown jungle.¹ The photograph had been taken and sent by the artist Tacita Dean who saw the boat as belonging to one of Ballard’s fictional landscapes where the familiar is made peculiar. For Dean this corroded boat, that from an angle also looked like “the exoskeleton of an extinct creature,” seemed to have stepped out of a Ballardian story in which “the sea had retreated and left our boats stranded, or had risen and carried off our harbours to strange and unfit places.”²

Even before traveling to Cayman Brac to visit the discarded vessel, Dean had already anticipated its discord with its surroundings.³ She knew that this boat named Teignmouth Electron would not seem at home on the island because, as a wreckage of history, there was no place in the present where it would not look alien. Dean’s photographs, film and book present the boat as a strange artifact that sits uncomfortably in its environment. Her work offers Teignmouth Electron as a dislodged object that cannot belong to the present and portrays history as the very condition of this experience. In Dean’s work history is what appears when an object expires. It is not like a thread that connects the past to the present moving on to the future. Rather, it is what emerges when an ordinary object is experienced as obsolete.

Teignmouth Electron belonged to a man named Donald Crowhurst who himself became physically and mentally displaced wandering in the Atlantic ocean while attempting to circumnavigate the globe. It was on this boat that he developed “time-
“time-madness” by losing track of his position in relation to the land. The boat and the man had thus already fallen out of time when Crowhurst committed suicide by jumping overboard into the ocean with his chronometer leaving the trimaran to be found off the coast of England in July of 1969. Dean’s investigation of the boat on the island of Cayman Brac in 1999 where it had eventually been jettisoned, submits Crowhurst’s time-madness as an affliction comparable to that of history. History in Dean’s work, like time-madness, is a temporal disorientation which impedes all possibilities for a return. It is becoming aware of time as soon as it disappears. History is thus the story of an irredeemable past. In Chapter 2 of this essay, I discuss Dean’s narration of history by analyzing a dream she transcribes in her book Teignmouth Electron (titled after Crowhurst’s trimaran). For my analysis, I draw on Freud’s Interpretations of Dreams because it is his theory of the dream-work, a process whereby ordinary objects, words and events are transformed into opaque and complex images through “condensation” and “displacement”, that most resembles her process of historical inquiry. I do not use this methodology however, as a guide through the layered sediments of her text in order to reach the “core” of history because any attempt at such a task is hindered by the form and content of her transcription. As my discussion will show, Dean’s dream is resistant to the very notion of subjective (and historical) depth proposed by Freudian psychoanalysis. Instead, the historical characters in her dream enact their roles on a flatly leveled stage which spotlights their drift out of time.

This idea of history as an eruption of time recalls a view proposed by Jacques Derrida in his 1994 lecture at the Freud museum in London. Published in English as Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression, Derrida presented his audience with three
conceptions of history. First was the disposition of a historian who allows for the possibility of a rupture between past and future forms of knowledge. This historian does not assume that the future resembles the past or the present and forestalls all interpretive projections.¹ In this view the past is lost despite its ghostly outline in the present. Archives themselves, Derrida maintained, are “spectral a priori, neither present nor absent ‘in the flesh’, neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met.”⁵

One can imagine the potency of the idea of a dead and defeated history in Britain of the mid-1990s. After almost two decades of conservative leadership, a country that had been tightly fastened to its imagined heritage was ready to welcome a new vision of itself. This ensured the popularity of a New Labour party about to receive a landslide victory at the polls in 1997 by promoting Britain as a “young country”. Tony Blair’s speeches, whose compilation was published under the heading of *New Britain: My Vision for a Young Country*, promised “modernization” and “re-energization” of social and economic policies.⁶ But this new “vision” was hardly a redefinition and was viewed by most as a mere cosmetic restoration. As Estella Tincknell has argued, New Labour’s modernizing program was closer to a schizophrenic desire to simultaneously occupy the present and the past “with a heightened intensity.”⁷ Describing a set of “ready-made card placards mounted on short poles” used in New Labour’s campaign for their second term in office in 2001, which “uncannily resembled those traditionally carried on marches or at demonstrations,” Tincknell summed up the situation as pastiche.⁸ In Fredric Jameson’s use of the word, the element of pastiche is present in the very prefix added to “New” Labour. The sway of the “neo” which signals the “random cannibalization of all styles
of the past (and) the play of random stylistic allusion,” was a concoction of Labour and conservatism to promote a Third Way.

New Labour’s simultaneous takeover of the past and the present recalls the other two conceptions of history invoked in Derrida’s lecture. In Derrida’s analysis these two notions of history are connected like two adjacent door frames that alternately open and close as a central door swings on its hinges between them. Standing in one doorway is a historian who anticipates a particular vision and hope for the future\(^9\) (perhaps not unlike that of a New Britain). Leaning against the other is one who yearns to step aside to let the past speak for itself.\(^10\) What joins these two views together is the idea that the past may be called upon as an alibi to guide one’s vision and interpretation for the future. The hinge is thus the claim to objectivity while crafting and adjusting the past to fit the desires of the present.

Dean’s work loosens the hinge and throws time in flux. The fluidity of time is contrasted in the first Chapter of this essay with a discussion of history’s ossification as highlighted by a performance conceived by the artist Jeremy Deller. Produced in England in 2001, Jeremy Deller’s *Battle of Orgreave* was a reenactment of an event in the miners’ strike against Margaret Thatcher’s government that lasted from 1984 to 1985. The reenactment, which took place in the small town of Orgreave in South Yorkshire, cast reenactment hobbyists alongside ex-miners and policemen to perform the picketers’ confrontation with the police at the Orgreave coking plant. This controversial event was part of a larger project that sought to compile and relate the history of the depleted mining community by gathering their banners, songs and memories, publishing them as a book

Deller’s approach to narrating history is sharply opposed to Dean’s process in many ways. Where Deller gathers a community to relate their own stories, Dean places her emphasis on personal interpretation. Under Dean’s method time erupts into disarray, while Deller opts for repetition. But what brings these two works together is their disruption of the layered depths of history. As with Dean, Deller’s repetition flattens time into a ceaseless relay of the same. By employing reenactment societies to carry out the performance, Deller managed to systematize the events of a single day in the miners’ strike into a graphed timetable of positions, moves and strategies that could stand in for the conflicts involved in the whole event. *The Battle of Orgreave* was thus converted into a rigidly iterable score that can be replayed repeatedly and without much variation. This charted history further undermines the individual memories and experiences that his accompanying book purports to record. Deller’s site-specific reenactment recalls a situation akin to a story told by one of the characters in Julian Barnes’ novel *England, England*. With a pointed allegorical nod, this character tells about a few Soviet composers, who on orders from the Kremlin “were packed off to various regions and told to come back with cheerful suites of folk music” that would “inspire the people and make them throw out the aggressor.”12 But given that Stalin had tried to wipe out these regions a few years earlier with “collectivization, purges, ethnic cleansing and famine,” the composers in search of peasant songs soon found that “there wasn’t any authentic folk music left!”13 Facing this conundrum they thought it wise to settle for the imitation and invented their own folk songs to be sent them back to the Kremlin. Deller’s *The Battle of*
*Orgreave* thus presents history as a predictable set of formulaic rules that play a role in the construction of a national image. In the following two chapters I explore the above works of art and the ways in which they confront the sedimentation of history.
Chapter 2: The Mock Picket on the Orgreave Hills

On 17 June 2001, a group of ex-miners joined an enthusiastic team of actors from several reenactment societies in the village of Orgreave in South Yorkshire. This gathering was organized by the artist Jeremy Deller and was sponsored by Artangel, a charity organization, which distributed funds for this project from the Arts Council of England and Channel 4. The event was held to reenact a single day in the violent confrontation between picketing members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Thatcher government’s highly trained riot police, that had occurred outside a coking plant at Orgreave in 1984. Many of the miners who participated in the reenactment in 2001, had either taken part in the 1984 strike themselves, or had retrieved the old-fashioned jean jackets of their parents and adorning them with re-prints of “Coal not Dole” stickers joined the performance to experience and commemorate the notorious confrontation on the Orgreave hills. A few adventurous miners decided to put on the riot gear of the police instead, and joining the single participating ex-policeman, relived the event from the opposite side of the battlefield. On the outskirts of this historical stage, the audience sporting their own “Coal not Dole” stickers and humming the old slogan “The Miners/United/Will never be defeated”, strolled among the tents set up by the reenactment societies, browsed through publicity literature distributed by current unions on strike, picked up popular reenactment journals and had their clothes carefully vetted for post-1984 logos. Hovering over the whole event were cameras and microphones of a film crew, who documented the scene for Channel 4 to be aired in the following year.

Commentaries on the reenactment printed in the popular press varied from laudable appraisals of its importance for the mining community of Orgreave to its
dismissal as another ineffectual attempt by an artist at ironic appropriation of working class history. Those who appreciated the reenactment remarked on the deep emotions that the event stirred for South Yorkshire residents. *The Independent* reported that the performance had been a highly cathartic experience for most participants. The *Times* quoted one weeping woman as saying that the strike at Orgreave had now been “burnt into [their] folklore, [their] community memory and consciousness” and that they would “never forget them.” Besides purely emotional responses, one of the most significant aspects of the reenactment and the resulting media attention was said to be the opportunity it provided for the workers to accurately reconstruct an event which had been repeatedly misrepresented by the media in and since 1984.

In accordance with Margaret Thatcher’s characterization of picketing NUM as the “enemy within”, the media in the 1980s had consistently portrayed them as overtly violent in relation to the moderate neutrality of the police. While the media’s emphasis on the hostility of picketers at the expense of an accurate examination of the terms of the debate was not limited to the Thatcher era, its particular poignancy at that time was due to the introduction of new strike-breaking tactics employed by the recently appointed head of the National Coal Board, Ian McGregor. McGregor’s reputation for having eliminated 80,000 jobs in the British steel industry through the employment of imported American strategies of using the media to demonize and discredit union leaders had created a particular resentment for the media among union members in the early 1980s. The 2001 reenactment was thus applauded as a retrospective attempt at representing their side of the debate.

Critical responses to the event came from the art critics and historians present
in the audience. Jane Rendell describing the hotdog stands and microphones entering her picture frame as she pushed her way through the crowd to get a photograph of the reenactment, expressed her frustration at “Deller’s dogged desire for so-called historical accuracy in replaying the battle scenes.”

“Somehow” she wrote, “I would rather he had been a bit more Benjminian and had brushed history against the grain, seeking to question the ways in which history usually supports the view of the victors.” A similar sentiment came from Dave Beech, dismayed at seeing the “prevailing fetishism of the reenactment societies” leading to an ultimate celebration of “the plans, strategies, weapons and victory of the police” on the day of the reenactment. “Deller’s The Battle of Orgreave,” Beech wrote, “was a political work of art that took sides, ultimately, not with the striking miners so close to Deller’s heart but, despite himself, with the state and Thatcher’s government.” Other critics dismissed the performance as mere spectacle devoid of critical inquiry, with the banal effect of “burying class war in the shroud of a colorful pageant.”

Let us begin with a simple question that the reenactment and its reception prompts: How did the representation of the strike at Orgreave in the form of a reenactment function in 2001? Why did the reenactment connote a participatory commemoration of a local event for one group of people, while it repulsed others as the depoliticization of an instance of industrial revolt? What was the shared social context to which these different positions addressed themselves and within which they resonated?

One shared assumption of the opposing sides in the debate was a belief in the relevance and continued resonance of the 1984 miners’ strike for 2001. The commentators trusted that the historical confrontation between 4000 armed riot police
and 5000 unarmed miners was a pivotal point in changing industrial relations in Britain whose effects were still keenly felt at Orgreave. What caused the controversy was not so much the subject matter, but the form of its presentation, and what follows is an examination of what the shape of this living history signified for the spectators.

The embodiment of the historical narration of the confrontation at Orgreave was what delivered its heightened emotional impact. Those who supported the reenactment due to its potential cathartic release, found in the bodies of the performers the perfect vehicle for the commemoration of an event whose vitality and rigour, whose very energy, could be mimicked and replayed in every pulsating muscle of the actors. Since the depleted time of the past can only be experienced metaphorically in the present, the reenactment successfully spatialized the temporal across the bodies of the performers, making history visible and palpable. Furthermore, the reenactment worked to seize the memory of the original event by staging itself on the very site of the Orgreave hills where the picketers had met the hooves of the police horses in 1984. Thus for the advocates, the reenactment was an actual reliving of the past in the present.

At the core of the debate was precisely this question of the possibility of such a reliving. Could a performance shift from being a mere representation of the past to ushering the real of the past into the present? While Deller had been planning the reenactment for several years, in June of 2001 when The Battle of Orgreave was performed, imagining a simulation rising to the level of the real was not difficult for the public to swallow. In fact, British elections on June 7th had brought critics to suggest that Britain itself was a simulation elevated to the realm of the real: a reenactment, if you will, of the Great Britain of the past in the present. Let me explain.
Perhaps the first clue that the June elections were to be a highly theatrical event came in February of 2001 when a routine veterinary inspection at an abattoir near Essex, detected suspicious signs of the foot-and-mouth disease in a farmer’s livestock. By April, the melodrama of this isolated case had spread over the English countryside and new cases of the disease were being detected daily across the Channel and on the continent, adding to the fear of the already rampant (if temporarily under control) Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy epidemic. A sudden panic had set in. For Prime Minister Tony Blair there could not have been a more inopportune time for an epidemic of this scale. Not only had the spread of the foot-and-mouth disease created an antagonism between the agriculturalists and the supermarkets, it had also created a lull in the tourist industry. The raging discontent that this situation had provoked, led Blair to request that the elections be postponed from its original date in April to June of 2001. But even by June, ceremonial pyres were still routinely constructed for burning culled livestock, and as the elections drew close, polling stations were equipped with disinfectants to spray potentially contagious voters.

The general dissatisfaction with how the government was dealing with the epidemic was yet another item on a long list that had already contributed to the decline of the British self-image. As a lead story in The Independent had confirmed back in March of 2000, Britain was perceived to have pushed way past its steady decline and was now gasping for its last breath. Attempting to calm its frenzied readers the article optimistically declared that the death of Britain had been greatly exaggerated. Pointing to the numerous books and articles on the subject that had recently proliferated, the essay identified the root causes of the anticipated death of Britain as anxiety over its
absorption into the European Union and the devolution of state power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Dismissing these events as being incapable of having any effect on the essence of Britishness, which it claimed could be found in the common belief in “decency, tolerance, fair play and liberty”, and digging deep for examples from the past, the unsigned leader cheerfully reminded readers that if Britain could have survived the loss of its colonies, it could certainly endure the replacement of the Pound with the Euro.

But this was back in 2000. By the end of June 2001, which brought a second “land-slide” victory for Tony Blair’s New Labour Party, these hopeful remarks were only echoes in the distant past. The death of Britain had been confirmed.

Some commentators went even a step further. Tom Nairn writing just after the June elections, remarked that the only thing New Labour’s triumph had confirmed was that rigor mortis had already set in on Britain’s corpse, alleviating any hope for a cure. In fact, Nairn suggested, Britain had died back in 1979 when Thatcher won the elections, but instead of being properly buried, it had joined the realm of the undead “clutching on to the vestments of its ancestral grandeur and world renown.” This was parody-Britain.

“Decline” Nairn wrote, “was the older, more genteel form of putrefaction which prevailed until the close of the 1970s. But from then on, a qualitatively distinct phase has taken over: the brazen simulacrum endured by all subjects of the Crown today.” What Blair’s pantomime elections had managed to do, Nairn maintained, was to hypnotize the crowd into believing that Great Britain was still alive and well.

So the question is, if the state is a poised simulation, how are the citizens affected? Could one assume that protest would itself need to enter the parody-state’s theme park and onto a staged battlefield? If Great Britain was dragging its past glory
kicking and screaming into the present to adorn the corpse, then the reenacting e-miners of *The Battle of Orgreave* were also in dress rehearsal. Parody-Britain got a parody-strike.

It was also the case that the type of address which the citizens received was itself creating a ghostly effect. One commentator assessing New Labour’s social policies, described the excessive use of the term “community” in vividly spectral terms. “Community” he wrote, “functions not as a set of practices or shared knowledge, not even really as an idea; it functions rather as a quasi-theatrical ‘appearing’, something that looms behind the dialogue, a rather mysterious ‘power’ that is already amongst us.”

“Community” he continued, “seems to summon up some greater social body that retains in the hollow of its belly a special space just for me.”

It is not difficult to imagine the critics of *The Battle of Orgreave* regarding the representation of an old mining “community” through a pageant as an echo of this empty shell, and perceiving it as compliance with the hollow rhetoric of communal bonding so characteristic of New Labour. While appreciating the importance of remembering the aggression of Thatcher’s government towards its citizens, the performance connoted something entirely different for them. In the presence of the reenactment hobbyists, who “had abandoned their 17th century Cavalier regiments for the day, and had swapped their confederate forage hats for 1980s visors,” not only was the past politics of the miners’ strike nowhere to be found on that day, but the reenactment itself had finally managed to wipe out every last vestige of its lingering memories. The performance had become a copy without an original tied to the name of an artist. As with other battles performed by reenactment societies, representing the conflicts at Orgreave in the form of a reenactment had pushed the event safely into the past as yet another sepia-colored moment of resolved
tension. For the critics, the reenactment was a mere “cultural” event without the necessary “political” edge.

The dichotomy drawn here between culture and politics was not accidental. The extent to which social antagonism could be ameliorated through cultural programs was a particularly pointed topic in England in 2001. Since New Labour’s election victory in 1997, much had been made of the wonders that the arts could do for the economic well-being of the United Kingdom. Not only was the government promising increased funding for the arts, it was also subscribing to a version of Joseph Beuys’ notion that every citizen was an artist. The deep well of British creativity was heralded by none other than Tony Blair himself in his 1999 address to New Labour Party. He declared in his manifesto:

People are born with talent and everywhere it is in chains. Look at Britain. Great strengths. Great history. English, the language of the new technology. The national creative genius of the British people. But wasted. The country run for far too long on the talents of the few, when the genius of the many lies uncared for, and ignored. Fail to develop the talents of any one person, we fail Britain. Talent is 21st century wealth. Every person liberated to fulfil their potential adds to our wealth.

Early signs of mining this creative cornucopia was the speech act of re-branding the country as “Cool Britannia”. Despite popular objections, New Labour was certain that this new image would create the economic boost the country needed. While increased spending on the arts was welcomed by many (contemporary artists specially, who had suffered under the neglect of consecutive Conservative governments), others were
disturbed by this forced new image. An article in *Daily Mail* found the events promoted in conjunction with Blair’s “Cool Britannia”, to solicit “nothing but a groan or a yawn.”

One marker of New Labour’s new image was the renaming of the Department of National Heritage to the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), and updating the associated term “cultural industries” to “creative industries”.

While such make-overs may seem unimportant, it signals New Labour’s commitment to distance itself and its policies from both the market-oriented individualism of the preceding Conservative era and the state “paternalism” of Old Labour. Under the heading the Third Way, New Labour attempted a middle ground that was market friendly but guided and overseen by a “managerial state.”

The compulsory modernization that the Third Way demanded from its public sectors, such as the creative industries, was also a counter-claim to the declining image of Britain. Terms like “heritage” were everywhere erased for their association with an undesirable past.

The term “heritage” was particularly problematic for New Labour’s new image. As Raphael Samuel has shown, as early as the late 1980s, ‘heritage’ had become an unpopular word across the political spectrum. He wrote,

Aesthetes of both left and right, though specially perhaps the latter, have found it [heritage] offensive, accusing it of packaging the past, and presenting a ‘Disneyfied’ version of history in place of the real thing. Purists have objected to the schemes promoted in its name, arguing that it blurs the line between entertainment and education and warning that, as with church restoration in the nineteenth century, it will replace real-life survivals with simulacra of an original that never was.
Such arguments against the marketing, and potential erasing, of history in the process, also carried connotations of economic deterioration and decline. “Heritage” Samuel explained, had come to be “the mark of a sick society, one which, despairing of the future, had become ‘besotted’ or ‘obsessed’ with an idealized version of the past.”\(^{34}\) Samuel, who was writing in 1994 before New Labour came to power, attributed the commercialization of “heritage”, which included theme parks, living history and historical walks for the promotion of neighbourhood trails amongst other schemes of “preserving tradition in aspic,”\(^{35}\) to the rise of the New Right.\(^{36}\)

Perhaps this explains Blair’s rigorous attempt to rid its party of the trace of heritage. But despite his modernizing efforts, echoes of old criticisms was still heard everywhere during his term. In 1998 for instance, Julian Barnes’ novel *England England*, shrunk and duplicated the whole country into a theme park placed on the Isle of Wight for the gratification of tourists. The disasters that follow ranks the novel as a pointed satire on the complications of “real” life that the sterilized versions of heritage hope to avoid. Such criticisms along with Deller’s reenactment indicate that the modernization of England under New Labour was seen to be little more than a forced rejuvenation.

As indicated, the creative aspirations for “Cool Britannia” was conceptually tied to the economic well-being of the nation. This is not to suggest that New Labour’s plan for the creative industries was simply an extension of the market-driven policies of the Conservatives (the logic of the Third Way had extended its ideological tentacles across the board), but it aimed to redefine the relationship between the state and private capital.\(^{37}\) What resulted was a sector of the economy that was socially useful, with a heightened attention to media arts. Michael Mckinnie has shown that New Labour’s arts policy
attempted to redefine the social function of the arts in a structural organization that was different from previous governments. Until the early 1990s, the post-war system of state patronage which saw minimal adjustments under John Major, had operated through a diffused set of quango institutions without direct government intervention. New Labour, aimed to refine Major’s initiatives and reconnect the various affiliated structures to create a “bureaucratic homology between the creative industries and all other areas of state involvement.”

This new administrative system also gave an “affirmative” logic to the arts. Mckinnie defines the affirmative view of the arts, following Herbert Marcuse, as one that “sustains dominant ideology by reproducing the mystifications on which the ideology rests”, and that seeks a “structure through which the arts can create relations of social accord in the economic, civic and institutional spheres.” For Mckinnie, New Labour’s arts policy expected the arts to reproduce the ideals of the dominant class, “and in the process, encourage a sense of mutual well-being.” The role of the arts, he writes, became a “virtuous form of economic production” and a “medium through which social inclusion occurs.”

Claire Bishop has also warned that New Labour’s rhetoric of social inclusion bears a distinct resemblance to those claimed by socially engaged artistic practices that since the 1990s have gone under the various headings of “relational” or “dialogic” art. The demand for productivity and quantitative outcome, Bishop writes, reduces “art to statistical information about target audiences and ‘performance indicators’,” prioritizing “social effect over considerations of artistic quality.” As we have seen Deller’s participatory event was itself evaluated based on its practical outcome for the
impoverished mining community of Orgreave. Bishop has criticized this approach noting that evaluating relational art based on the values of democratic inclusion, adheres to a “fictitious” notion of “whole subjects” and “harmonious community” identities, ignoring that antagonism is an inherent condition of democracy. It is important therefore, to examine the ideological underpinnings of New Labour’s policy of social exclusion and its incorporation into the mandate of the Arts Council of England, since it funded Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* through Artangel.

Social inclusion, a corollary of social exclusion and promoted through the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), was one of New Labour’s main proposals for addressing social inequality and poverty. Through programs such as the New Deal, which provided counseling and educational services for the unemployed youth, New Labour promised to fulfill its goal of “life-time equality of opportunity.” As many critics have pointed out, the policy was sharply nuanced on the word “opportunity” rather than “equality” and focused on achieving its goal of social inclusion through the encouragement of special training programs and education.

It has also been argued that the emphasis of SEU on employability rather than ensuring employment, which has the same ideological basis as the advocation of mass creativity, is a form of meritocracy where competition is the highest ideal. In this system however, “genuine recognition of equal worth in any meaningful sense is not really possible when society is so polarised between rich and poor.” In this so-called meritocratic system, the already existing social inequality is ignored and “equality of opportunity and high social mobility” is used to justify the unequal distribution of wealth by presenting the ensuing unequal rewards as fair. Ruth Levitas has pointed out the
problem with using social exclusion as the implicit model to describe communities; it divides society into the two poles of the excluded and the included. The model thus aspires to a homogeneous vision of society where “inequality and poverty become residual and pathological rather than endemic” conditions. The model also masks the differences within the included sector by defining them by their participation in the market economy.

Such objections not withstanding, SEU’s agenda was extended into the Arts Council’s programming in 1999. Although the Arts Council is a royally-charted body and remains structurally at arms length from state policy, New Labour’s innovative partnership strategy, brought the Arts Council’s decision-making process and funding allocation under the central apparatus of the government. This move provided another avenue through which the educational activities of SEU could be promoted. An Arts Council report described its understanding of social exclusion:

Social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.

By accepting social exclusion into its policy, the Arts Council agreed to “maximize the impact of government spending on the arts” by allocating its budget to low-income areas and by focusing particularly on poverty in combination with other factors such as low levels of education, poor health, crime and unemployment. It assigned this task to Policy Action Teams (PAT), which were established to organize art events, cultural and recreational activities, and sports, in order to “engage” people living
in poor neighborhoods and “contribute to neighborhood renewal.”

The Arts Council’s concentration on neighbourhood renewal is a reflection of the SEU’s area based targeting. Much of this attention to small areas and emphasis on resident participation was warmly welcomed. In particular, the SEU was admired for its efforts “to foster social capital,” which describes the refurbishing of civil society by encouraging interpersonal relationships between individuals and families living in the same community. But, as critics have warned, this local focus runs the risk of “diverting attention away from the wider political and economic forces which cause and maintain the concentrations of poverty and unemployment in these areas.” With regards to Arts Council’s promotion of the goal of social inclusion, critics objected that the government was using the funds allocated for the arts to perform its tasks of social responsibility.

Tugging at the various ends of this debate, The Battle of Orgreave provided another battle ground. By focusing on a small, impoverished area which had long began its journey down the “spiral of social exclusion,” by including the community in a participatory event, and by using state allocated Arts Council Funds to organize it, the reenactment was keenly attentive to many New Labour policies and, as we have seen, polarized the participants’ sympathies.

The dramatization of the conflict between the miners and the police was further reinforced in Deller’s reenactment by the clash between the theme and the form of its representation. This final discord between form and content in the performance created an ironic effect which divided audience response. Writing in the 1930s, William Empson described irony as a critical device which holds the two sides of an argument in tension. “What is said in irony,” according to Empson, is made absurd because it simultaneously
recalls “what the opponent might say.” The effect of irony is such that viewers agree on the merits and force of what they see but end up doubting its sincerity and “disagree about whether or not it is a joke.” For Empson, irony was an essential aspect of the pastoral mode in art and literature.

The recent interest in the pastoral as a critical form of artistic practice has been noted by Julian Stallabrass. Drawing on Empson’s definition of the pastoral and its reevaluation by Thomas Crow, Stallabrass noted its development in the works of British artists working in the 1990s. Directed at the “snobbishness, cant and high seriousness” of the art world, these works “contained a critique of the way things are.” In the art world, this critique was pressed through bursts of “obscenities, crudities and the detritus of modern, urban life” in the “polite” context of galleries, in the hope that it would offend viewers’ sensibilities. For Stallabrass, the most characteristic feature of the British pastoral art of the 1990s was the displacement of rural subjects with those found in the urban core. While the term pastoral might recall “rustic” themes and “erotic pleasures in sunlit Arcadian landscapes,” Stallabrass argued, British art was highlighting the detritus of the urban landscape. Thus he described works such as Sarah Lucas’ Islington Diamonds (1997), a car with a smashed windshield installed in the gallery, as urban pastoral. Such works fulfilled the pastoral criteria by presenting “low” content in “high” form and attempted to bring “something trivial associated with the less advantaged sections of society” to the “attention of the art-lovers.”

The pastoral paralleling of “high” and “low”, according to Crow, gains its critical edge based on the understanding that “unrelieved high-mindedness” is “impoverishing.” Thus the appearance of a rustic shepherdess or a swain in a 19th century landscape
painting, that had traditionally depicted the nobility, brought a sense of humility to the cultivated viewers who could contemplate their own refinements in relation to bucolic simplicity. In this traditional definition, the pastoral affect is achieved due to a disruption in the strict delineation of the arts into a hierarchical system of genres. Crow argues that the gradual dissolution, since the mid-19th century, of this classificatory model released the genres themselves into vernacular culture. This is not to say that art ceased to be ranked, but that discarded genres trickled down to the lowest order and were left in the hands of marginal enthusiasts for “modest keeping”.

The presence of reenactment societies in Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* is an instant of the reemergence of genre in “advanced” art in the hands of vernacular aficionados. As safeguards of the once exalted task of depicting history, the reenactment hobbyists brought the abandoned genre back into the borders of fine arts with a pastoral effect. Therefore, Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* was not so much a “contemporary history painting,” that “symbolically elevated the relatively recent events at Orgreave to the status of English history,” as Claire Bishop would have it, but a pastoral resurfacing of history painting in high art. At this level, the reenactment was ironic because it held two contradictory notions of historical representation in tension. On the one hand, Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* presented itself as an accurate depiction of history patched together from oral histories and archival research. On the other hand (and concurrently), it sabotaged its own revered commitment to “facts” by presenting them through “the eccentric leisure activity” of reenactment societies.

Deller’s pastoral approach to the history of the miners’ strike considered the status of history in a country consumed by its own past eminence and glory, a state
drained by a slow and steady state of decline. It did so, however, while the country was in thralls of a desperate attempt at rejuvenation, thus triggering anxieties over forms of historical preservation. Furthermore, the reenactment of *The Battle of Orgreave* brought the contradictions of state policy for the area of South Yorkshire to the heart of the discussion. By focusing on a decisive moment, which had led to a complete disintegration of the area’s main economy, the reenactment performed one government’s solution to another’s policies. *The Battle of Orgreave* recited more than just the miners’ strike from 1984, it also mimicked the Blair government’s strategy for concealing and containing social antagonism behind institutional art and cultural programs.
Chapter 3: The Impossible Escape to Tristan da Cunha

A Dream, July 10, 1997

Last night I dreamt I was on Tristan da Cunha. I was on the beach with others. The sea came in ferociously and at double speed, sweeping us all up. It was a long shot. The others were distant. I was pleased, because this sea was the Roaring Forties. I was studying the albatross. Looking at them. The place felt like a shanty town. The people were resistant to me wanting to come to live there for a year. I broke into a van to find a shoe box in which to collect the sand. The sand was red and yellow. I wanted to give some to a friend, who was coming the next day. I wanted to say that it was sand from Tristan da Cunha. Two women unlocked the door of the van and let me out into a scruffy car park. I remember thinking that this was not how I imagined Tristan da Cunha. It was like Cornwall tinged with red. I was then inside a building. Somebody was laying out the post at people’s place settings on a round table. The people weren’t there. I thought it odd, because people in Tristan da Cunha only got post once a year when the boat came. Then I realized that it must be the ‘once a year’ today, and that the boat must be in, and that’s how I arrived. A young woman told me that I could stay if I wanted to, but somehow the offer came too late. I woke up to a ringing phone.

Tacita Dean, From Teignmouth Electron, 1999
On 10 July 1997, the artist Tacita Dean recorded a dream that had taken her off to the island of Tristan da Cunha the night before. Located in the South Atlantic, Tristan da Cunha is known as the most remote island in the world, due to its distance of 2,400 km off the closest coast on the neighbouring island of St.Helena.\textsuperscript{1} Home to a population of less than 300 people, most of whom are the descendants of “the shipwrecked, the runaways and the restless at home,”\textsuperscript{2} the isolated island is only accessed once a year by a boat from the neighboring Falkland islands.

If we assume, following Sigmund Freud, that “all the material making up the content of a dream is in some way derived from experience,”\textsuperscript{3} it might be said that Dean’s dream was prompted by her preoccupation with the life of Donald Crowhurst. Crowhurst’s story begins on a fateful day in the spring of 1968 when he came across a contest known as the \textit{Golden Globe Race}, publicized in the \textit{Sunday Times}.\textsuperscript{4} The advertisement was seeking brave sailors who could circumnavigate the globe for a cash prize of £5,000.\textsuperscript{5} Crowhurst, who was not a professional mariner, entered the race in the Fall on a boat named \textit{Teignmouth Electron} after the small sea side town of Teignmouth in Devon, England, which sponsored his voyage and bid him farewell as he sailed away from a group of proud locals. Mid-way into the Atlantic, Crowhurst came to realize that he was not fit to compete. But rather than withdraw from the race and return home, he began to calculate an imaginary voyage around the world and reported his fictitious bearings back to his astonished press agent on land. He would eventually cut off all radio contacts.\textsuperscript{6} After many lonely months of lingering in the South Atlantic, and as his false position began to coincide with his actual one again, he resumed communication with Teignmouth and learned that he was winning the race. But on his journey back
towards the English Channel, he had a change of heart and leaped into the ocean with his chronometer on July 1st 1969, leaving his boat containing his films, notebooks and other belongings to be discovered off the English coast.  

Dean’s exploration of Crowhurst’s story takes a variety of artistic forms. It appears in 3 films, numerous photographs and chalk-board drawings, and a book titled *Teignmouth Electron* (1999). The book *Teignmouth Electron* was commissioned by London’s National Maritime Museum as part of its contemporary arts initiative known as New Visions, designed to encourage contemporary artists “to explore themes that illustrate the significance of the sea, time and stars.” The dream mentioned above is inserted in the book following an account of a drawing left by Crowhurst in a friend’s notebook to which the dream is related. Crowhurst’s drawing outlined a map of the South Atlantic, and somewhere between Africa and South America, he drew two small triangles, one named Falkland Islands, the other Tristan da Cunha. He had made this sketch in jest to point out to his friend that there is only one annual sail between these islands which makes the ocean in between an ideal place to linger and hide from view.

Following another of Freud’s tenets, Dean’s dream may be read as the fulfillment of a wish. A desire not only to drift to the most remote island in the world, but perhaps also to stage an encounter with Crowhurst in the South Atlantic. This meeting certainly takes place in a later dream dated to 1998 included in *Teignmouth Electron*, where she finds herself at Crowhurst’s homecoming party in Teignmouth as he arrives looking thirty years older with a “ruddy complexion and a beard.” But the structure of the previous dream is such that it does not facilitate such a fulfillment because, upon arrival, Dean is surprised to find that the island of Tristan da Cunha is far from what she had
imagined. As is typical in dreams, Tristan da Cunha has here overlapped with Cornwall
in England. She notices this because just like Cornwall the sand here is also “tinged
with red.” The red sand that transforms the island of Tristan da Cunha into Cornwall,
also connotes Dean’s own intimate familiarity with the British peninsula, as “the place
where [she] first discovered the sea,” and thus impels another reading for the dream.
In this reading, Cornwall, playing the role of Dean’s primordial site, converges with the
most distant island of Tristan da Cunha, and thus prevents her escape in an uncanny state
of perpetual return. This sense of entrapment, similar to Freud’s stroll in a small Italian
town that repeatedly brought him back to the same red-light district, is confirmed when
one realizes that as she stands by the ocean on Tristan da Cunha gasping at the Roaring
Forties hurling the waves against the sea, her view is mediated through a screen. “It was
a long shot” she inserts right in the middle of her description. Is this really a dream or a
film, looped and montaged at “double speed”?

For an artist born in 1965, who was in the possession of an “imaginary
camera” filming herself as the star of her own documentary before she was given a real
camera, this last distortion in Dean’s dream is perhaps more than just a (coincidental)
association of people and places in the dream state. It rather resembles the condition of an
impossibility to think the world outside the image. An image inflated to such a size that
it replaces reality altogether and whose ubiquity enters even the most intimate space of a
dream. As Guy Debord wrote in 1967, within the society of the spectacle “all that once
was directly lived has become mere representation” where “images detached from every
aspect of life merge into a common stream” to generate a “pseudo-world apart, solely as
an object of contemplation.”
Viewing a dream through the lens of a camera, however, bears a distinct resemblance to Freud’s own description of the dream-work. Freud compared the psychic apparatus to that of a “compound microscope or a photographic apparatus” with its constituent parts spatially divided into: the unconscious located at the back end of the instrument, the preconscious propped like a “screen” in the middle, and consciousness in the foreground. Within this apparatus, unconscious wishes have no direct access to the forefront of the instrument but are mediated through, or repressed by, the preconscious screen. What is important here is that while the mind is at rest, the preconscious, which cogitates verbally, refrains from its inhibiting function and allows suppressed impulses of the unconscious to take visual form. The point that Freud insists on is that these image-substitutes do not simply escape the notice of the relaxed preconscious during sleep, but are allowed to “prance upon the stage” because no matter how severely censored the unconscious thoughts may be, “they remain harmless” in dreams “because they are unable to set in motion the motor apparatus by which alone they might modify the external world.” In other words, the preconscious mind raises the curtain to the repressed theatre of the unconscious reflected upon its screen because in the dream state it simultaneously “shuts the door upon the power of movement.” This mechanism of the dream-work recalls Debord’s opposition between the act of “direct” living in the world and the incapacitated, passive “contemplation” of its pseudo-image generated as mere hallucinations of unconscious desires. In this sense the society of the spectacle resembles a bad dream one cannot shake off.

In Debord’s characterization, the spectacle is an eerily cyclical process that “naturalizes” itself by mimicking the rotating time of nature (night and day or seasons)
which once guided agricultural societies. This “pseudo-cyclical” time of the spectacle, which exists within the linear time of progressive modernity, organizes the two essential components of the society of the spectacle (labour and consumption) in the systematic form of the 40-hour work week, leisure time and vacation. This repetitious time, which can only be appropriately “killed” by watching television or reading the paper works to repress spontaneous action by compartmentalizing, managing and selling even the most ephemeral aspects of life, such as “sociability itself”, which is sold in “fully equipped blocks” of time as in “exciting conversations” or “meetings with celebrities.”

In this context, the presence of a camera in Dean’s dream, which not only recalls the ubiquity of the image in waking life but also transforms the dream itself into a “fully equipped block” of experience, is also an apt form in which to engage with Crowhurst. According to his biographers,

with half his mind [Crowhurst] thought the magical tales of heroism and scandal [printed in newspapers], were more real than they could ever be; with the other half he thought them such a facile pretense they could be artificially duplicated with little more than good intentions, a bravura manner, and a skillful press agent.

In other words, Crowhurst was an ideal member of the society of the spectacle, doubly engaged in its representational process: at once a consumer and an aspirant producer of spectacular, salable time. After all, Crowhurst was an entrepreneur, the proprietor of a firm he named Electron Utilisation, and the inventor of the Navigator, a navigational device for sailors that essentially sold them time by promising to keep them
fixed within the confines of measured space.  

As Pamela M. Lee has shown, however, “to fall in and out of time and to loose one’s bearing in the process” was far from a condition unique to mariners in the 1960s. Rather, it was a popular trope for the technological organization of modern time. Paradoxically, this technological disorientation everywhere led to its opposite, a need to seize time more effectively, often with more gadgets like the *Navigator*, which only increased the unease leading to a condition Lee has termed chronophobia. According to Lee, the symptoms of chronophobia are the divergent impulses of wanting to master the passage of time, halt its accelerated movement, or give shape to its changing condition.  

In Dean’s dream the notion of mastering time and space through technology is one of the central “dream-thoughts” that has become “condensed” and repeated across several images. In Freudian terms, condensed images in dreams act as nodal points where multiple determinations coalesce and are expressed in the dream content. I have already alluded to the presence of a camera in the dream which appears in the transcription as: “It was a long shot.” This sentence is a distinctly spatial articulation that is followed and reinforced in the next sentence which reads: “The others were distant.” This representation of the camera through captured space, in the particularly slippery realm of a dream where “time and space are often thrown into confusion,” might be seen as an investigation of the chronophobic condition, attempting to frame and compartmentalize the landscape.  

Kaja Silverman has argued that Freud’s use of the camera as a metaphor for the psychic apparatus accords a level of agency to the visual processes of the unconscious.
She notes that with this analogy Freud proposed a mental apparatus that formed images *internally*, rather than one that merely stored received images. As with the camera which produces an image in the time it takes for the light to pass through its aperture, the psychic apparatus also relies on a temporal mechanism to correlate new perceptions with those already present in one’s memory. Silverman interprets this as a subjective procedure “because subjectivity itself” she writes, “is in its most profound sense nothing other than a constellation of visual memories which is struggling to achieve a perceptual form.” In this sense, not only does the unconscious mind create dreams when the mind is asleep, but it also seeks to give form to its visual memory in waking life through sensory perceptions.

On the other hand, Dean introduces a camera into the realm of a dream with the opposite effect. Rather than emphasizing the viewing subject and the experience of seeing (and being seen), Dean’s dream expels the viewer from the scene by fixing her behind the camera, and even moves “the others” to the “distant” peripheries of its frame. This process is enacted through a disembodied eye attached to a lens, which replaces the perceiving subject. The effect is thus similar to the one described by Caroline Jones as “opticality.” A characteristically modernist experience, opticality dissects and isolates perception creating an “Eye” that displaces the “I” of the subject. Ideologically, the Eye “objectifies and masters” by producing and maintaining distance, therefore creating an alienated subject. Jones explained opticality and alienation to be parallel processes that were essential for the creation of manageable, “bureaucratic subjects.”

As a transcription of a dream, Dean’s text invites a search for the subject’s interiority. It invites interpretation. But by positioning the narrator behind a camera and
providing a “long shot” on a flat screen, the reader is relentlessly pushed back to the surface. Not only does this strategy deny access to the recesses of the dreamer’s mind, it also problematizes the very notion of unmediated subjectivity. This process of distancing the subject is further reinforced through Dean’s identification with Crowhurst. As we have seen, Crowhurst had attempted a fraudulent trip around the world and was known to his friends as a fabulator. Her subjectivity is therefore doubly removed from the transcription of her dream, which was inevitably reformulated in the very act of recording it in textual form.

While Dean’s subjectivity is denied within the dream, her self-representation defines a particular relationship with her historical subject of study. The 30-year distance between Tacita Dean and Donald Crowhurst is shown to have augmented the chronophobic condition preventing all unmediated experiences. In a passage from Teignmouth Electron, Dean explains that Crowhurst developed “time-madness” because he became increasingly suspicious of the accuracy of his chronometer, which was to locate him in relation to Greenwich Mean Time. Crowhurst’s “madness” was thus a result of his failure to master the vast ocean and locate himself through the rationalization of time. But in the 30 years since Crowhurst’s death when Dean began her inquiry, this form of “madness” had become an outdated malady due to the advent of satellite navigation which eliminated its risk altogether. Dean lives in a world that has even made “time-madness” safe. This signals the disparity between her and Crowhurst and gives a particular shape to her desire: a wish to step into the scene on Tristan da Cunha from behind the camera and join Crowhurst in the isolation of “time-madness”. But what interrupts this reverie is a telephone ringing at the end of her transcription. The function
Figure 3.1. Untitled photograph From Tacita Dean’s *Teignmouth Electron*, 1999
of this telephone at the end of the text is similar to that of satellite navigation in waking life. It keeps her connected preventing her escape.

The chronophobic disorientation that results from efforts to eliminate ailments such as time-madness through the use of advanced communication technologies is another motif in Dean’s dream. The passage preceding the telephone call expresses it as follows:

Somebody was laying out the post at people’s place settings on a round table. The people weren’t there. I thought it odd, because people in Tristan da Cunha only got post once a year when the boat came. Then I realized that it must be the ‘once a year’ today, and that the boat must be in, and that’s how I arrived.

The source of Dean’s temporal disorientation is here identified as “the post”. If we take the word post in the semantic context of the narrative, it refers to the mail that is expected to arrive once a year on Tristan da Cunha. In a later text from 2005, Dean looks back to this moment in her dream and describes her panic at seeing the mail laid out on the table. Not only did this mean that the boat had already arrived and was waiting to take her back home, thus shrinking her one-year-long stay on the island into a mere instant, it also meant that she could not send or receive any letters.41

The word “post” is another nodal point in Dean’s dream where dream-thoughts intersect. For Freud, along with condensation, the other fundamental factor in dream formation is the “transference” of unconscious thoughts and wishes to the most trivial objects from daily life residing in preconscious memory whose contents become “displaced” and their values reversed. “Post” in Dean’s dream serves such a function and
stands in for the notion of communication technology. Freud also suggests that a common aspect of dream distortion is “chronological reversal” which consists of “representing the outcome of an event or the conclusion of a train of thought at the beginning of a dream and of placing at its end the premises on which the conclusion was based or the causes which led to the event.”

We have already identified an instant of this chronological reversal in Dean’s dream, when the island is first introduced as being Tristan da Cunha but then gradually lapses into being Cornwall. A similar chronological reversal seems to apply to the image of “post” in the dream. While the camera appears at the beginning of the dream and is described with the words “long shot” to designate a wide captured space, or perhaps the tripod on which the camera was mounted, the pole that ends the dream is one associated with a telephone. Could communication technology be another primordial element in Dean’s biography?

In a text published in 2003, Dean traces her genealogy to her great, great uncle Godfrey Isaacs, who became the managing director of Marconi Telegraph Company in both Britain and America in 1910. In 1913, the British government approved of the company’s plan to “erect a series of wireless stations around the British Empire.” Dean describes Godfrey as a zealous man whose “energy, business intelligence, and enthusiasm for the new science” coupled with the owner Marconi’s “brilliance” were “fundamental in establishing wireless communication in Britain.” Marconi had earned the first patent for wireless technology in 1896, was invited to London two years later and succeeded in transmitting the first radio signal across the ocean from Cornwall to Newfoundland.

Of even greater interest for the purposes of interpreting Dean’s dream is the Marconi Company’s “particular concern” to “end isolation at sea.” With the
advancement of wireless technology, the company placed “radio operators aboard ships” that were equipped with “long aerials strung up the ship’s masts” through which electric signals could “hopscotch from boat to boat until they reached land.” This image of an antenna mounted on a ship’s mast for electric transmission bears a striking resemblance to a photograph that accompanies the transcription of Dean’s dream in *Teignmouth Electron* (Figure 3.1). Shot on the island of Cayman Brac, where Crowhurst’s trimaran has been discarded among flotsam and jetsam decomposing on the shore, this photograph depicts a close up view of a metal rod that stands upright and traverses the entire length of the image. In relation to other photographs reproduced in the book, this image reads as an interior view of the boat shot in one of its crevices, and belongs to a series of images that document the trimaran’s present decaying condition. The metal rod protrudes through a wooden construction, perhaps in the rear triangular end of a side hull, and although too narrow to be a mast, evokes one in the viewer. Read as a mast, this metal pole also recalls that other meaning for the word, namely a television or radio transmitter. Juxtaposed with the dream’s transcription, the photographed mast solicits the reader’s attention as abruptly as the telephone call at the end of her dream and connects the two together.

Interestingly, with this biographical detail, Dean implicates herself through her lineage in the institution of an instrument that eradicated the possibility of “isolation at sea” a condition which I have identified as Dean’s foremost desire expressed in the dream. Looking back at her dream in 2005, Dean attributed the fantasy of living on Tristan da Cunha for a year with no mail or news to the vanishing “analogue world” which she described as a “world where you could still get lost.” But this fantasy, she continued remorsefully,
belongs to a time before we began endlessly and futilely communicating with each other, when people expected to wait a year for a letter. I read now that a Satellite public phone has been installed in the only village on Tristan da Cunha, and that the governor has email and that from time to time cruise ships stop by when the weather lets them anchor. Maybe getting lost, or rather disappearing out of sight, has become an anachronism in our communication-crazed world.\textsuperscript{51}

The two wishes of “getting lost” and “disappearing out of sight” are precisely the two conditions that the structure of Dean’s dream prevents. Beginning as an image on a screen and ending with a telephone call, her dream prevents the realization of her desire to join Crowhurst in the seclusion of time-madness. Such acute awareness of time was of course not unusual at the close of the Millennium when the commodification of time was plainly visible. When \textit{Teignmouth Electron} was published in 1999, the Maritime Museum (the book’s patron) was itself preparing for an elaborate campaign to promote its “incredible equity” on Greenwich, and to sell 15,000 tickets to those who wished to be right on the Meridian Line at midnight.\textsuperscript{52} While the museum was simply cashing in on its arbitrary link to the Greenwich Observatory and position at the apex of time and space, one cannot help but consider Dean’s book in its context. Writing about a man who developed time-madness by losing his position in relation to the Meridian standard, and wishing to join him in the dream, Dean offers a critique of the hegemonic centralization of time.

It is important to stress here therefore, that Dean’s desire for escape is not escapist. Rather, it is more akin to pastoralism. By definition, pastoral art does not advocate escape but is a “distanced engagement offering critical commentary.”\textsuperscript{53} In this
sense, Dean’s desire to leave the spectacular world which presents one with the only option of buying, selling and mastering time and space, is only to return to it once again with a pointed critique. In the last chapter, I emphasized Deller’s irony as his particular pastoral approach to presenting the history of the miners’ strike. With Dean’s work, I want to underline a different aspect of the pastoral, one that conflates the figure of a hero with an anti-hero.

According to William Empson, pastoral art is critical because it is concerned with characters on the margins of society, failed anti-heroes whose inability to gain from social hierarchies makes them critics of its structure and injustice. But heroes are also marginal characters because they “must be half outside the tribe in order to mediate between it and God or it and Nature.” By bringing the hero and the anti-hero together in a double plot, pastoral art produces a leveling effect (albeit momentarily and in the autonomous realm of art). Pastoralism thus parallels the concerns of the two figures in order to suspend the myth of the hero and the social structures that sustain it. According to Emspon, pastoralism admits that the hero is “not really independent [of society] and should not be admired for it.” It also demonstrates that “nobody”, not even the artist, “can be independent altogether.”

In the context of Dean’s dream, Crowhurst is the ultimate failed anti-hero. Failing to circumnavigate the world, to keep track of his position at sea, to promote his Navigator, or even to carry through with his fraud, he sits in direct contrast to Marconi and Dean’s great, great uncle Godfrey Issacs, who succeeded in achieving all that Crowhurst aspired to. But, there is also another character in the condensed imagery of Dean’s dream who is elliptically connected to Crowhurst. As we have seen Dean arrives
on Tristan da Cunha to find it transformed into Cornwall. Her search for Crowhurst thus becomes a simultaneous search for the conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader.

Ader disappeared at sea in 1975, six years after Crowhurst. He was attempting a passage across the Atlantic from Cape Cod to Cornwall, in a makeshift boat named Ocean Wave, which was 2 feet and 2 inches smaller than the smallest boat that successfully crossed the Atlantic. The journey was conceived as the second piece in a three part series of performances titled In Search of the Miraculous. The first part of the performance consisted of a nocturnal walk in Los Angeles from the Hollywood hills to the Pacific Ocean which was documented with a series of snapshot photographs that showed Ader on his solitary urban sprawl. The third piece was to parallel the first, and have the artist walk through the night in Amsterdam.

Ader turns up frequently alongside Crowhurst in Dean’s works. In Teignmouth Electron, a description of Ader’s work is included after the transcription of Dean’s dream and alongside a 1971 photograph titled Farewell to Faraway Friends that shows the silhouette of the Dutch artist looking out across the ocean. It is therefore not surprising that he should be linked with Crowhurst in Dean’s dream. By arriving on the red-tinged island that connects the two figures, Dean is able to take on the role of the castaway sailors and reach their proposed destinations. Combining her wish with those of the two sailors, Dean stands (perhaps in the same pose as Ader’s silhouette) on the solid shore of the island watching the waves foam over the red sand, and the albatross flying above.

As Empson has noted, the albatross, “tragic and alone like the poet” is a sure sign of the pastoral that brings Ader and Crowhurst together. In the postscript to Teignmouth
Electron, Dean notifies the reader that as she was completing her concluding remarks, she came across an article about Ader in *Artforum* announcing that a copy of Crowhurst’s biography had been found in Ader’s locker in California. Could it be, the postscript seems to bashfully suggest, that Ader had set out into the remote peripheries of art, to the pastoral margins, to reenact the amateur sailor’s failed voyage?

The move towards the margins in conceptual and pop art, Jeff Wall has written, was like “a race to find the most perfect, metaphysically banal image,” object, or experience that most acutely expressed the condition of non-art. This was a demand for a radical transformation of art into an art that was *not*, whose “vanguard” would be “its own disappearance.” Wall has argued, however, that the last thing this art of negation achieved in the 1960s and the 1970s was its own liquidation. Instead, it reinvented itself with yet another avant-garde “endgame” strategy, whereby the very attempt at negation would produce an *art* which left its audience, “with the only task of rediscovering legitimations for works of art as they had existed and might continue to exist.”

With this argument in mind, one might read Ader’s reenactment of the amateur sailor as the ultimate modernist reduction at the level of the artist himself. With his proper institutional affiliations, complete with artistic precedents in works such as Chris Burden’s *B.C. Mexico* from 1973, Ader had certainly ensured the reception of his voyage as an artistic performance. *Artforum’s* introduction of Crowhurst into Ader’s story, providing a non-art precedent for his undertaking, only confers the extra ingredient to Ader’s reception as an artist: the element of risk that he almost crossed the line to the outskirts of art and tested its boundaries. In this sense, Ader’s ultimate gamble was not so much his life, but the possible failure of its reception as art.
The two preconditions for the reception of Ader’s voyage as art, his move to the margins to take on the role of an amateur sailor and the risk involved in this undertaking, are of course interrelated and work to elevate Ader to the mythological realm of a hero. Wall has noted that the avant-garde credo of leaping over the gap between the autonomous spheres of art and life to “save the aesthetic dimension by transcending it,” turned aestheticism into a “taboo” that “was carried into the center of every possible artistic thought or critical idea developed by vanguardism.”\textsuperscript{66} Therefore, while aestheticism as taboo prevented artists from any self-declared art practices and repelled them into the domain of deskilled amateurs, their amateurism was ultimately “transcended” to reach a new level of aestheticism. It is precisely this final stage that contains the element of risk because the artist is finally \textit{in touch} with the tabooed object and the forbidden experience, which of course should only be done with the greatest ceremonial caution reserved for a hero.\textsuperscript{67}

With this argument in mind, one cannot read Dean’s conflation of Ader and Crowhurst in her dream as a mere connection of two failed sailors with whom she was preoccupied. On the contrary, Dean achieves the pastoral leveling of an artistic hero and an anti-hero. This is clear in Dean’s comment about Ader’s voyage. She writes:

Icarus, blinded by the elation of his ascent, failed and fell: fell to fail. His was a journey up that came down. Crowhurst’s was a journey along: flat, doomed and sorrowfully human. His fall was wretched, unimagined, unannounced and wholly practical. But for Bas Jan Ader, to fall was to make a work of art. Whatever we believe or whatever we imagine, on a deep deep level, not to have fallen would have meant failure.\textsuperscript{68}
Crowhurst’s snug placement between Icarus and Ader in Dean’s quote places the “sorily human” on a par with the mythical and the artistic and throws all these categories in flux. With Dean’s treatment, Crowhurst becomes an artist, while Ader’s search for the miraculous yields nothing but mortality.

Dean’s own identification with the two sailors in her dream is a move to the margins, to the outsider positions of heroic artists and idealist fools whose integration collapses the hierarchy of their positions in the cultural imagination. Her escape to the margins is also a flight to a time and place in the recent past when one could still disappear or become disconnected in the abyss of “time-madness”. But, by viewing this past through the lens of a camera, the margin itself recedes into the past and its absence becomes exaggerated. What is left of this margin in Dean’s dream is the brute visibility of the present.

A dream offered as art in a book that takes its title from Crowhurst’s dilapidated boat and purports to document it by traveling to its site might be read as an attempt to counter the objective view of a documentary with a subjective account of the artist’s encounter with the object and its history. Dean indicates as much in the introduction to *Teignmouth Electron* when she states that she does not intend to write yet another account of Crowhurst’s life, numerous versions of which already exist in biographical and fictional forms, but hopes that the book will be received as a “culmination of personal research and involvement with the voyage of Donald Crowhurst which has been part of my life now for over four years.”

The dream inserted in the book thus registers as the nadir of her “involvement” with her object of study. The veracity of this subjective expression however, becomes doubtful when one notes her identification with Crowhurst,
a man notable for his fraudulent journey. The dream’s subjective expression is further interrupted, by a flat screen which blocks the reader’s access to Dean’s subjectivity. In this sense the dream only represents the idea, or a model, of such a subjective experience of history rather the experience itself.
Chapter 4 : Conclusion

Tacita Dean’s historical inquiry into the voyage of Donald Crowhurst, a failing entrepreneur who set out on a solitary race around the world in 1967, has a particular resonance in the context of British history of the 1960s. It offers Crowhurst’s story as symptomatic of the period’s sense of resignation and provides retreat, desperation and failure as possible angles through which the landscape of English life in the 1960s may be glanced. The *Sunday Times Golden Globe Race* which set off Crowhurst’s solo voyage, had itself been internationally viewed as a sure sign of the decline of the British kingdom. Bankrupt and in low spirits, the withering empire was said to have reverted “to the purer, nobler, uncomplicated heroic conquering of the elements,” leaving the task of advancing to the moon to the superpowers of the Cold War era.¹ Dean alludes to the lofty ambitions of the decade by beginning her book with the lyrics to David Bowie’s 1969 song “Space Oddity”. But as with Crowhurst, the spaceman in Bowie’s song has stepped outside of his “tin can”, lost all contact with “Ground Control” and is left to drift eternally. With this juxtaposition, the walk on the moon becomes as bathetic as Crowhurst’s lone venture across the Atlantic.

This view of the 1960s as a defeated decade echoes the period’s own textual trail within Britain. While the continent was on the verge of rampant student and labour revolts, British intellectuals were considering the peculiarities of their situation. In an essay titled “Origins of the Present Crisis” written in 1964, Perry Anderson mapped out the historical development of capitalism in Britain and its hegemonic relation to the working classes. His essay lamented the failure of the English proletariat since the mid-19th century to “transform the whole society in its own image, inventing afresh its
economic system, its political institutions [or] its cultural values.” Instead, he argued, the proletariat had sought to “defend and improve its own position within a social order accepted as given.” Anderson’s thesis traced the “origins” of this “crisis” to the English Civil War of the 1640s, arguing that its consequent bourgeois revolution was the “most mediated and least pure of any major European country.” The Civil War, he argued, merely transformed the “roles” but “not the personnel of the ruling class.” Hence, unlike the French revolution, which gave rise to a distinct bourgeois ideology, the English Civil War retained the hegemonic order of the aristocracy because “from the start there was no fundamental antagonistic contradiction between the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie.” This static social formation in turn privileged and enacted reforms, in the form of Labour parties and unions, over revolutions. Anderson’s thesis thus oriented the 1960s along the axis of a long tradition of “catatonic withdrawal” among the working classes and “suffocating traditionalism” characteristic of British capitalism.

Anderson was drafting this historical formulation, presenting the British social system as increasingly decadent and anachronistic, in the same year that the (old) Labour Party was returning to office under Harold Wilson. Faced with a decrepit economy which would soon aggravate into the 1967 Sterling crisis, Wilson’s administration responded by implementing programs towards industrial modernization. The promotion of investment in efficient technologies and research towards higher productivity, not only marked this period with a sense of chronophobia discussed regarding Dean’s Teignmouth Electron, it also instigated the demonization of labour unions. “It was Labour, not a Conservative government” Anderson wrote regretfully, “which pronounced official commination of the British trade-union movement as the principal, if not the sole, cause of the decline
of British industry.” Aggressive measures towards labour unions and anti-strike legislations, as those implemented against the striking miners of South Yorkshire, were to become the dominant rhetoric of Thatcher’s government in the following decades.

The Thatcher government’s identification of labour unions and the Keynesian goal of full employment as the central problems of the British economy resulted in upholding “monetarism, price stability, privatization and labour market de-regulation” as the solution. In 1987, just a few years after the mine-worker’s strikes were violently quelled by the police at Orgreave and under Thatcher’s new industrial legislations, Anderson returned to his 1964 thesis to reexamine the “origins” of the continuing crisis. In his reappraisal, “The Figures of Descent”, Anderson retained the main argument sketched above, but offered a new perspective on the precise nature of the traditionalist ruling classes. One can detect the essence of his 1964 argument preserved in the very title of this new essay. Accented on the word “descent”, it tightly locks dissidence (dissent) with rank and lineage (descent) in an incongruent unity and defines the undesirably sloped direction of its movement (descent).

What Anderson’s second essay sought to explain was the force propelling this knotted society forward despite the disintegration of industrial manufacturing in the 1960s. Wilson’s modernization efforts targeting the bargaining power of trade unions had failed to improve the British economy, leading its manufacturing sectors into severe stagnation. Anderson was therefore attempting to define the economic power that replaced the long tradition of industrial manufacturing in England. To this end, he once again began at the “origins” of the transition between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie in the Civil War era. While the agrarian aristocracy in his 1964 essay had bequeathed its
rule to a homogeneous bourgeoisie in the aftermath of the English Civil War, the 1987 revision split the bourgeois inheritor into a bilateral formation consisting of commercial and manufacturing middle classes. By adding the lurking shadow of commerce to that of manufacturing, Anderson was able to explain the rise of market capitalism in the 1980s which had stepped into the vacuum left by the demise of industry. “The complete failure of Labour’s attempt to reconstruct industrial capital by deliberate state action” Anderson wrote, “coincided with the unpremeditated emergence of a quite new basis for the hegemony of financial and commercial capital.” The reign of the free market under Thatcher was thus traced to this forked development of the English bourgeoisie during the English Civil War.

It is perhaps in this sense that Jeremy Deller compiled his history of the miners’ strike in a book titled *The English Civil War Part II*, harking back to the Civil War of the 17th century. Presenting the miners’ strike against Thatcher’s government as a sequel to that battle, the book’s title points to this second (market oriented, commercial) phase of bourgeois hegemony in England. Deller’s title also designates the Thatcherite “revolution” as the first to have occurred in England for over three centuries, denoting the political impotence of the working classes. Organizing *The Battle of Orgreave* as a pageant in 2001, therefore, portrayed not only a defeated community but a class whose revolutionary potential amounted to little more than a handful of songs and banners gathered and reproduced in a book. The miners’ defeat was thus commemorated as the symbolic harbinger that ushered this second stage of British capitalism: one that was no longer found in the rubbles of mines or the factories shipped offshore, but in the condensed (digital) image of commercial and financial sectors. It was indeed the
increased reliance of finance capitalism on the communication media, connecting every inch of the globe and curbing any chance of losing track or getting lost, that had also frustrated the mining community in 1984. As indicated in the first chapter, the Thatcher government’s strike-breaking tactics perfected under Ian McGregor relied on the media to exert the final pressure commenced by the mounted police that would abolish not only the community’s source of livelihood but the memory of its resistance.

While my discussion has focused on the performance of *The Battle of Orgreave*, which I attempted to piece together through the narratives and impressions of those present on the scene, the filmed version of the event directed by Mike Figgis raised its own set of questions about the political potential of its viewers. Aired on Channel 4 for a national audience in October of 2002, the televised version of the reenactment pointed to the reduction of social antagonism to that of popular entertainment directed at a passive audience. As an image caught on film the reenactment (itself a step removed from an enactment) was in tune with the shape of political life promoted by New Labour. As Estella Tincknell has commented, New Labour’s emphasis rested merely upon the "appearance of action and intervention" dramatized in media coverage of elections, speeches, and special reports. The tie between politics and the media had solidified to such a degree under New Labour that it replaced the historical alliance between the party and the workers. The reenactment aired under the title *Artangel: The Battle of Orgreave* on Channel 4 (a station whose status as a “creative industry” had entitled it to increased broadcasting funds allocated by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports) might have brought some to consider this displacement. At least one viewer had watched the television show thinking of the transformation of working class life into its current
landscape replete with “call centers and just-in-time distribution depots” geared towards gathering consumer and voter opinions rather than political action.\textsuperscript{21}

Tom Nairn writing on the eve of Tony Blair’s election in 2001, regarded the victory of New Labour as the reinforcement of the continued primacy of market capitalism. In Nairn’s view (who had himself been at the center of the debates sparked by Anderson’s thesis in the pages of \textit{New Left Review}),\textsuperscript{22} New Labour’s policies confirmed that the Thatcherite metamorphosis had been more than a temporary glint on the horizon but a full-fledged simulacrum replacing the old stretch of British capitalism. Nairn proclaimed that Anderson’s “gloomy prognosis of so many decades ago” had by 2001 become “far eclipsed by the events themselves.”\textsuperscript{23} New Labour was not reinventing the mantra of the market but ensuring its longevity.

Anderson’s revised 1987 thesis likened British politics to a giant dome supported economically by commerce rather than manufacturing.\textsuperscript{23} Located at the hub of the dome nestled the City, London’s financial core, whose stakes were claimed through the formation of the Bank of England and the Stock Exchange during the pivotal years of the English Civil War.\textsuperscript{24} Thus the commercial prowess of England’s ports in the 17th century that had become hotbeds of international trade with empire’s colonial expansion, were buttressed and centralized by the City’s financial sectors.\textsuperscript{25} One can imagine Anderson deliberately carving out the surrounding industrial and manufacturing provinces to single out the City as the fulcrum of Britain’s economy. By doing so he signalled the aspirations of Thatcherite economy and placed it at the “origins” of Britain’s crisis traced to the inception of the bourgeoisie.

This autonomous core of London was indeed physically and symbolically
shielded in 1986 with Thatcher’s inauguration of the M25. The M25 motorway encircled the outer edge of London helping to seal and protect its center from the “nasty, dirty trade goods, all that was left of the north’s industrial heritage.” This pumping commercial vein which displaced the functioning River Thames, was yet to find its visible center a decade and a half later in the Millennium Dome. With its futuristic prongs transmitting from its Teflon cupola, The Dome came to exemplify New Labour’s reliance on hype, extravaganza and political spin to sidestep the echoes of the economic turmoil of the Thatcher era. The Dome’s failure however, to inspire anything in the minds of Londoners other than perhaps a mild fascination with its silver glow shining across the surrounding luxury complexes and “computer-enhanced heritage and development scams,” seems to have gradually turned into a strong repellent force in the center of the city urging residents to walk away from it. In the two chapters of this essay I have outlined two manifestations of this gravitation towards London’s vast periphery. Moving west to the seaside resort of Teignmouth to investigate the tale of Donald Crowhurst and traveling north to the old mining village of Orgreave to collaborate on the reenactment, both Dean and Deller embarked on projects that took them far away from the city, but that nonetheless referenced its centrality.

Researching at Teignmouth’s docklands, Dean’s project was concerned with the fate of a man who developed time madness at sea by losing his bearings in relation to Greenwich. The title of her book and accompanying film Teignmouth Electron, named after Crowhurst’s trimaran, placed its emphasis on the vessel that took Crowhurst away into the ocean. England thus becomes the spur that drives him out into the Atlantic but one which fails in the end to lead him back onto the land. Dean’s concern with
Crowhurst’s solitary moments at sea, presented through her own private engagement with his story epitomized in her dream, highlights his ultimate resignation from social life.

Similarly, Deller’s drama of defeat pitched the margins against the center in the representation of The Battle of Orgreave. Choosing to reconstruct the events that took place on 18 June 1984, Deller aligned the confrontation at Orgreave’s coking plant with another favourite of reenactment societies, the Battle of Waterloo fought on 18 June 1815. Thus he compared the underestimated events at Orgreave with those which took place at the small Belgian village of Waterloo and ended with Napoleon’s defeat and exile to the British island colony of St. Helena. Along with his book The English Civil War Part II, Deller attempts to extend the historical impact of the miners’ strikes from a merely regional event to a significantly national one.

Placing both works under the heading of the pastoral, I have described the artists’ move to the margins as an attempt at critical engagement with the center. It is then perhaps a paradox (but certainly not a coincidence) that funding for both projects was provided by London-based institutions of Artangel and the Maritime Museum. Julian Stallabrass’ discussion of pastoralism in British art took this contradiction to be an essential trait of the form. Following Clement Greenberg’s definition, Stallabrass noted that pastoralism remains the expression of artists who, while “out of tune with the surface values of the establishment, they are also confident that the establishment will protect them in their dissidence.” It is in this sense that despite all intents and purposes Deller’s reenactment of The Battle of Orgreave remains a mock picket failing to rise to the level of the real. Its form concedes to its inability to be anything other than an ironic exercise in art. It is also the pastoral form that compels Dean to travel and yearn for solitude, but
prevents her from actualizing her desire in an ultimate escape and disappearance in the manner of Ader and Crowhurst.
Chapter 1 : Introduction

2. Ibid., quoted in a section titled “J.G. Ballard”.
3. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 84.
8. Ibid., 157.
10. Derrida, 72.
11. Ibid., 70.
13. Ibid.

Chapter 2 : The Mock Picket on the Orgreave Hills

1. In an E-mail message, Liz Johnson the Administrative Assistant at Artangel explained that Jeremy Deller’s *Battle of Orgreave* was funded by the Arts Council of England and Channel 4 through Artangel Open. Liz Johnson, E-mail message to Author, August 15, 2008. For other projects organized by Artangel see: *Off Limits: 40 Artangel Projects*. Ed. Gerry van Noord (London: Artangel and Merrell, 2002).
8. Derek Fatchett, *Trade Unions and Politics in the 1980s: The 1984 Act and
9. Green, 34.
13. Lubbock, 11.
15. Beech, 396.
20. See “Leading Article: The Death of Britain has been Greatly Exaggerated” *The Independent*, March 29, 2000, 3.
22. Ibid.,16.
24. Ibid.
25. Rendell, 63.
27. Lubbock, 11
34. Ibid., 261.
35. Ibid., 260.
36. Ibid., 264.
38. Ibid., 199.
39. Ibid.,188.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 186.
43. Ibid.
46. Ibid., 78.
51. Mckinnie, 200.
52. Jermyn, 2.
53. Ibid., 5.
54. Ibid., 6.
55. Lister, 432.
56. Oppenheim, 78.
57. Lister, 432.
2001), 92-100, 99.
61. Ibid.
63. Ibid., 240.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., 237.
68. Beech, 396.
69. Stallabrass, 245.
70. Bishop, “The Social Turn,” 179.

Chapter 3: The Impossible Escape to Tristan da Cunha

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Royoux et al., 8
14. Royoux et al., 36.
15. Ibid., 10.
17. Freud, Interpretation, 574.
18. Ibid., 575-582.
19. Ibid., 586.
20. Ibid., 606.
21. Ibid., 607.
22. Ibid.
23. Debord, 93, 110.
24. Ibid., 111.
26. Debord, 111.
28. Ibid., 32.
30. Ibid., xii.
31. Freud, Interpretation 312.
32. Ibid., 344.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 89.
36. Ibid., 88.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 15.
40. Dean, Teignmouth Electron.
41. Royoux et al., 140
42. Freud, Interpretation, 342.
43. Ibid., 363
45. Ibid
46. Ibid.,131.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 132.
49. Ibid
50. Royoux et al., 140.
51. Ibid
53. Jones, 278.
55. Ibid, 199-200.
57. Ibid, 203.
60. Empson, 209.
62. Ibid., 261.
63. Ibid., 135.
64. Ibid., 266.
66. Wall, 250.
68. Dean, “And He Fell into the Sea,” 2.
69. Dean, *Teignmouth Electron*.

**Chapter 4 : Conclusion**

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 17.
5. Ibid., 19.
6. Ibid., 20.
8. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 169.
11. Ibid., 173.
12. Ibid.
13. Chris Howell, *Trade Unions and the State: The Construction of Industrial*

15. Ibid., 136-140.
16. Ibid., 172-173.
17. Ibid., 172.
18. Clair Bishop has noted that Figgis’ position is different from Deller’s, see Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents” Artforum, February (2006): 178-9.
24. Ibid., 136.
25. Ibid., 136.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 11.
29. Ian Sinclair begins his book by describing the urge to walk away from The Dome, 3.
30. “For Some the Battle is Never Over” Independent, October 27, 2002.
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