

Epistemological relevance of the Arts in foresight and futures studies

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In this paper, we argue that the arts in its various forms have a genuine epistemological relevance to the theory and practice of foresight. To this end, we draw on the work of Ernst Bloch to advance the ‘disclosive’ role of graffiti art in contributing to futures becoming and the understanding of peoples’ subjective experiences and shared social theories about inarticulate social currents that may bring to life possibilities and potentialities in the realization of some modest utopian visions.

Keywords: Bloch, arts, graffiti, futures, utopia,

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate on the claim that the arts in its various forms can make some meaningful contribution to extend our understanding of some environmental currents when setting a foresight agenda. In order to show that this is the case, we build on the *magnum opus* of Ernst Bloch which challenges us about our visions of a better society to offer an epistemological analysis of the arts and their contribution to understanding the future when setting a foresight agenda. Departing from a narrow focus on utopian visions, Bloch’s (1959) thesis offers an alternative interpretive lens to the construction and critical evaluation of open-ended futures manipulable by human action within the contingency of the moment.

Two main advantages of using Bloch’s thesis could be seen for the purpose of this paper. First, it provides a space for imagination and the creative evaluation of the fleeting possibilities and limits inherent in the differential visions developed during foresight projects. Modern foresight projects even though tend to venture beyond the unknown future; they rely extensively on contemplative knowledge (what has become) and seldom attend to inarticulate and unconscious societal aspirations. Chia’s (2, p. 23) statement is valid here that there is a profound “reluctance to examine the *forming* aspects of in-form-ation”. Second, it provides a broad outline of how to bring to life possibilities and potentialities in the realization of some modest utopian visions. From this perspective, we argue that some utopian visions found in the arts are worthy of

consideration and underplays the fundamental role of the arts in our everyday engagement with the future.

We organise our analysis into four sections. First, we briefly make the case for the role of the arts in the cultivation of foresight and imagination. Second, we outline how Bloch's leviathan view on hope, offers the necessary analytical *framework* to 'unpack' the epistemological relevance of the arts to the development of plausible and probable futures. Third, we draw on graffiti art to illustrate the usefulness of the arts in future studies by exploring some salient and critical non-instrumental role of the arts in contributing to our understanding of our emergent and fluid world. Lastly, we present some implications of our analysis to the theory and practice of setting a foresight agenda.

The Arts, foresight and imagination

The arts in various forms are expressions of human creativity and reflect peoples' subjective experiences and shared social theories [3]. Art therefore has the potential to unlock emotional and intellectual aspirations that cannot be expressed in the realm of the purely rational and intellectual. From this perspective Chia ([4], p.28) observed that:

art and literature with their long-established tradition of attending to the vague, the ephemeral, the uncertain and the illusive elements of social phenomena have much to say about [foresight and imagination] that has been over looked in [futures] research.

This is not to deny that much Art has a rational dimension often consciously embedded in work in the form of visual metaphors such as allegory [5]. Most art in whatever form, primarily seeks, however, to engender an emotional resonance in the observer [6] and by use of the aesthetic quality of the work to convey the artists intent, an intent that can range from entertainment and decoration to deeper philosophical goals [7]. Bloch clearly knew that Art hold a primacy in the expression of the human experience and aspiration in his essay *Discussing Expressionism*, he states,

The importance of Expressionism is to be found exactly where Ziegler condemns it: it undermined the schematic routines and academicism to which the “values of art” had been reduced. Instead of eternal ‘formal analyses’ of the work of art, it directed attention to human beings and their substance, in their quest for the most authentic expression possible. ([8], p.23)

It is the phrase, “most authentic expression possible”, that is revealing here, as Bloch clearly believes that Art in whatever form is capable of embodying and revealing the ever present drive to an utopian state. As Vincent Geoghegan writes in his review of Bloch’s work,

Simply put, his claim was that significant works of art embody powerful human aspirations and are therefore in the very vanguard of utopian forms; and although his subsequent Marxism led to many changes in his analyses of cultural forms, this basic belief remained undimmed. ([9], p.46)

Bloch had an eclectic view of what constituted “significant work” as is witnessed in his extensive reflections on various tropes in *The Principle of Hope*. His writing in this volume comments on architecture, painting, literature and opera, identifying in each form intimations of utopian visions. Here Bloch, after a lengthy reflection on the painterly skill of Rembrandt and his use of light gives an intimation of how, in his view, Rembrandt’s artistic imagination stretches into a incompletely realised future, or a foresight of a possible future.

Thus Rembrandt’s paradoxical light is not to be found anywhere in the world, but nor has it emanated, despite its continuous reflection, from any ancient metaphysics of heavenly light: it is *perspective light of hope*,¹ deeply led down into nearness and desolation answered. ([1], p.801)

It is clear from this observation that Bloch is claiming that Rembrandt’s oeuvre reveals a small but fundamental part of the idealised utopian state: the presence of hope. Art, then has the potential to reveal, albeit incompletely, albeit piecemeal the critical building blocks of the utopian ideal and thus artistic imagination and foresight are crucial to the development and evolution of human consciousness and ultimately the material reality of Utopia.

¹ Bloch’s italics

Bloch's principles of utopian visions

In his work: *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch, shows that he conceives of Utopia not as is meant in the classical sense “nowhere” or an impossible ideal, but as a real and concrete final state which can be achieved politically. Bloch's Principle of Hope is an exploration of the nature of being and existence that extends his philosophy, grounded though it is in Marxist materialism, into the discursive and subjective realms of speculative cultural, social and personal evolution. Bloch's view of the conditions required to attain this rational and material utopia are a direct consequence of his the nature of human consciousness and ontological state. In his introduction to his translation of *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature* [10], Jack Zipes succinctly summarises this.

...Bloch argued that humans have a type of consciousness, formed by the impulse of hope, in which inklings of what they might become manifest themselves. For the individual the not-yet-conscious is the physical representation of what has not become in our time and its world. Signs of the not-yet conscious are found in primarily in daydreams, where individuals have presentiments of what they lack, what they need, what they want and what they hope to find...Important here is Bloch's notion of presentiment (Ahnung) that arises in the not-yet-conscious. ([10], p.16)

Drawing in part on the concept of process from Hegel, Bloch develops a concept of utopian process at work with materialism centred on the principles of *Not-Yet-Conscious* and *Anticipatory Consciousness* and *Not Yet*. Bloch uses these manifestations of consciousness to explore an ontological terrain, he deconstructs the consciousness of the personal and the social by identifying discrete modes, some of which may be prescient of an authentic utopian ideal and some of which may not. The key quality of all these “categories” of consciousness is that they are multi-layered and encompass both overt and latent characteristics [11, 12]. The latter may not be sensible to contemporary analysis or even awareness as some of their potential for action may be dependent on as yet unrevealed contingencies of personal social and cultural environments. Whilst a

detailed account of the Blochian position on utopia is beyond the scope of this paper, we modestly attempt to delineate some of the quintessential elements of his principles to explore the relevance of the arts in the building of plausible futures.

Not-Yet-Conscious

In a world full of meaning, new meanings and interpretations could be deciphered from past thinking simply because past thinking is never completed. Such thinking he argues lay bare for succeeding generations to inherit and discover because unrealised meanings can be trapped in the works of the past. These unrealised or hidden meanings could lie dormant for centuries before new social conditions recall it and extract its new meaning. Treating time as a stream, he argues that the Not-Yet-Conscious is embedded in the past, present and the future. However as Roberto Poli [11] posits this is not a simple layer of hidden meaning there are also latent potentialities in the not-yet-conscious that, given the appropriate conditions, become important in the unfolding evolution of individual and societal relations.

The difference between being hidden and being latent can be clarified as follows: hidden components are there, waiting for triggers to activate them. On the other hand, latent components do not exist at all in the entity's actual state. Latent components relate to incompletely present conditions and aspects. Their incompleteness may be ascribed either to still maturing conditions or to new conditions that may subsequently arise. ([11], p.14)

This is a critical insight into the nature of the not-yet-conscious. It emphasises that in certain conditions, evidence may manifest itself without being necessarily comprehensible within its temporal context. To read and understand this evidence may require the application of a mature and comprehensive system that is fully immersed in Bloch's poetics.

Anticipatory consciousness

Anticipatory consciousness is another of Bloch's concepts key to the development of a critical tool for the examination of the relevance of Art to foresight studies. Here he suggests that embedded in current consciousness is the potential to grasp future potential. In Bloch's view this is not the product of wishful thinking or an unrealistic hoped for future, but an objective and open apprehension of practical potential. Accordingly, selected, but not all works of art can display this anticipatory consciousness, but they are not predictions of a concrete future, but an intimation of possibility. This very human yearning for a better possibility is eloquently summarised by Daniel and Moylan [13]

Utopia, in the thinking of Ernst Bloch, ceases to exist as "nowhere", as an other to real history. It is a constituent element of all human activity and simultaneously, historical. It becomes manifest in the quest for meaning, the thrill of sports, the desire for love, the wonder of a child and the experience of lightness before a *genuine work of art*². Each is a dim prefiguration (Vorescheinung) of its existence; the question becomes how to articulate and realise the hopes unconsciously shared by humanity. ([13, pp. 166-167).

Some Art can reveal glimpses of an utopian ideal but such intimations are not readily translatable into to literal or conscious poetics. Returning to [12], Poli argues that

Everything that is, being temporal tends towards something else. From the point of view of the space of possibilities the development is towards the entity's stable points, if any. On the other hand, from the point of view of the space from the point of view of the space of potentialities, the existence of something like stable points cannot be accepted. What is needed is the idea of something that is neither reachable nor cross-able. The concept of *horizon* – as opposed to the concept of boundary, used to distinguish the system of the entity from its environment — suits our purpose precisely. ([12] p.78)

So, whilst the ultimate utopian future can only be determined by the unfolding of a negotiated settlement in a material world. Glimpses of this settlement can nevertheless be seen through Art even if it has an overtly religious or spiritual intent but this anticipatory consciousness is at best a sense of the movement to the entity's "horizon".

² Our italics

Not -Yet

It is important that any analysis that seeks to use the Blochian concepts of the *Not-Yet Conscious* and *Anticipatory Consciousness* as an insight into foresight is tempered by recognition of the uneven evolution of human consciousness by awareness of what Bloch calls *Not-Yet*. An almost inevitable companion of the *Not-Yet- Conscious* are the memories and traditions of social structures and culture that pre-date the development of an authentic political and material consciousness. Bloch illustrates this point by discussing in the *Heritage of Our Times* [14] how the Nazi state was able to capitalise on folk memories of millenarian movements prevalent in Mitteleuropa from the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire. These millennial visions of a messianic state heralding a new golden celestial age tallied closely with the aims and intent of the Nazi party and its own messianic structure. In this work Bloch expanded his developing philosophy to “incorporate the past” [15]. Accordingly Bloch is dismissive of the art sponsored by the Nazi state as it embodies this false urge or rather has warped this will to utopia by taking the folk consciousness out of its correct historical context. By doing so it renders the myth as contemporary, creating a dual track of consciousness, one of the false consciousnesses of the *Not Yet* and the other the authentic consciousness of the *Not-Yet- Conscious* which places such myths and their inherent latencies in their correct temporal context. We contend that these three concepts can be used as an analytical tool which can be applied to Art to examine its role in forming and expressing human intimations of the future, or foresight.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to re-construct in full Bloch’s analytical framework, we can only offer a palimpsest of his analytical process. This we intend to be a signpost or route map towards work which will unpack in full the complexity and potential of the process.

Case illustration - Graffiti

The Art form we have chosen to illustrate an application of Bloch's analysis of the role of art in foresight is Graffiti. We are aware of the inherent contradiction in claiming that Graffiti is an art form, or at least an art form that is universally recognised to be so. Nevertheless, this is a trope that has a well-documented cultural history often recorded with the knowing participation of the practitioners of this, mostly, illegal activity. An example of this form of iterative collusion is *Trespass* [16], which covers "four generations of visionary outlaws" successive attempts to remediate their environments through the medium of "illicit art". Even that graffiti that is currently recognised as contemporary art has a direct lineage to practitioners such as Blek Le Rat whose stencil style is, in itself, a direct precursor of Banksy's own oeuvre [17]. This history of often anonymous, visual traditions has been traced even further by [18] and [19]. The indeterminate and mainly anonymous genealogy of Graffiti allows for a multiplicity of interpretation. Furthermore it has been persuasively argued that Graffiti can, in certain contexts, have a transformational effect that can mediate and facilitate alternative readings of urban spaces [20]. It is perhaps the ubiquity of modes of semiological expression within contemporary society that invests Graffiti with a purpose often far beyond the intent of the originator.

Within the modern world there is a tendency to express one's views, however trivial, through a series of sign systems. These signs perform a variety of roles and are controlled and used by various social groups. Regarded by some as a scourge on present-day society, graffiti remains an important mechanism for expressing and gauging public and private opinion ([21], p.41)

This tension of perception, dependent as it is on the cultural and social perspective of the observer has been encapsulated by Halsey and Young when they observed that:

Graffiti exists as a paradoxical phenomenon—as both aesthetic practice and criminal activity. Its practitioners often vigorously assert its visual merit and its

cultural value. Its detractors recommend its removal from urban streetscapes and the prosecution of graffiti writers ([22], p.275).

This polarisation is the first level of a complex taxonomy of graffiti that ranges from messages written in public places for specific and temporally bound purposes to authorless decoration for its own sake. The form and intent of graffiti is as complex and varied as the authors of the form, the countless individuals who are responsible for “making their mark” in this manner. Important here are the alternative perceptions of marginal space in the urban context. In the tradition of urban design and development these spaces are a challenge and an opportunity to subsume such spaces in the service of the culturally dominant social perception through “improvement” and “serious consideration” [23, 24]. Contrast this with the deliberate subversion of social norms of acceptability perpetrated by Graffiti artists who cause criminal damage to the property of others. On one side the aim is to create an inclusive, lawful space on the other a desire to use the marginality of such spaces to subvert this rule of law. However not all graffiti is art either intentional or unintentional; it has other specific purposes that do indeed include criminality. It is here that we need some kind of taxonomy to help unpack graffiti.

For the purposes of analysis in the context of what could or could not be useful for, or susceptible to an examination based on Bloch’s discernment of the desire for a utopian ideal, we propose to adapt the taxonomy of Graffiti outlined by Jane Gadsby [25] to identify and contextualise those works which are amenable to analysis. The definitions below are a paraphrase of Gadsby’s original taxonomy.

- Latrinalia – Graffiti found in public toilets or toilets with a multi-use purpose
- Public – Graffiti found in public places on any surface that can be viewed by the public. Such as the walls of shops, subways, bus stations or even cliff faces.

- Tags – Symbols or motifs that act as unique identifiers for individuals, as Gadsby points out these are most often found in, or are associated with public Graffiti but not exclusively so.
- Historical – Graffiti which is not contemporary to the observer/ analyser of the work. The example Gadsby gives is that of the wall writings found in Pompeii
- Folk Epigraphy – Graffiti which is carved into rock, trees, or finished wood or stone surfaces. Again, as Gadsby points out, this is a form which has declined with the advent and utility of the spray can.
- Humorous – Graffiti with a specifically humorous intent.

Having set out the taxonomy, Gadsby then correctly observes that “the comprehension of graffiti would not be complete without a look at the motivations behind writing it.”

And then adapts Blume’s [26] two classifications for motivations again we paraphrase,

- Conversational – Which is Graffiti written in order to provoke or elicit a written response on or near the location of the original message. This is most commonly found in Latrinalia.
- Declarative - Graffiti which unlike the above does not seek to elicit a response but which is there to make a statement whether this be humorous, political, territorial or social.

To Blume’s motivational categories we would add a third major purpose, that of transformation. Public art can be used to consciously transform the identity and purpose of a public space [27] as it is recognised that the visual and sometimes aural metaphors of public art can transmit a wide gamut of political, social and religious messages [28, 29]. It is this transformational motivation that we believe is most susceptible to the analysis we propose. In this sense we are less interested in the overt and self conscious and the

official and socially conscious manifestations of public art. Of more interest to us is the Graffiti of the “yet to be conscious” individuals who use the trope to transform the marginal spaces of their personal landscapes. It is this marginality that is revealing. Public spaces which have a social and political significance to the dominant organs of state, society and other power structures such as corporations or other quasi-governmental bodies can and will prevent the spaces they treat as symbolically central to their interests with care and where necessary the full puissance of state and organisational power. Graffiti in these spaces, unless it is officially sanctioned, has a highly transitory existence, it is expunged with all due haste and efforts are made to identify and punish the perpetrators of such social felonies. In some contexts it is perceived as such a threat that the process of graffiti removal is the subject of criminological analysis at an academic level [30]. There is a almost a tacit settlement between the guardians of these valued public spaces and those that habitually create Graffiti, that these areas are protected from aesthetic defilement, not least due to the fact that it is removed with alacrity [31]. Accordingly Graffiti which endures, or which is known to endure, and thus conveys an enduring transformational message is that which is found in the marginal spaces of the landscape in which the dominant societal structures have no stake or little interest. In the context of our society we can enumerate many such spaces; abandoned housing, investment poor areas, public playgrounds in socially deprived areas, motorway underpasses, poorly maintained transport hubs such as railway stations and bus stations, the common factor here is not just one of social and economic deprivation but also whether or not these spaces matter to those who determine the dominant social consensus. It is in these spaces that we contend that the conscious and unconscious desire and will to utopia is most keenly felt and most revealingly manifest. This is because the bleakness and the patent neglect of such marginal spaces offers a transformational canvas on which the proto-ideological *Not-Yet-Conscious* and *Anticipatory Consciousness* find

space for expression. Tim Endor in his work *Social Practices, Sensual Excess and Aesthetic Transgression* [32], explores in some detail how these marginal spaces are invested with alternative social and cultural meanings by those who are either on the margins of society or committing transgressional acts in these spaces. It should also be noted, as we have said above that interleaved with these authentic expressions of foresight are the images and manifestations of the false consciousness of the *Not-Yet* and the awareness of the latter is essential when reading the images of Graffiti. These are not aesthetic judgements, in the sense that we should evaluate Graffiti from a set of values based on the emergence of an individual aesthetic sensibility, but an analysis predicated on the identification of an ideological consciousness. Using Gadsby's taxonomy this we would anticipate that this Graffiti will be Public, Declarative and sometimes Conversational. It is public in the sense that it occupies a public canvas, albeit in a marginal space, it is declarative as it seeks to transform that space with a folk aesthetic or a statement that is simultaneously personal and anonymous and, sometimes, conversational, as declaratory and personal statements can often be obscured, marred and altered by competing individuals or groups. In order to briefly demonstrate the application of our proposal to apply a Blochian analysis to graffiti we will examine cases where our three analytical tools can be demonstrated.

Graffiti on the Berlin Wall – Not-Yet-Conscious and Anticipatory Consciousness

In his introduction to a catalogue on the Graffiti accumulated on the western side of the Berlin Wall, Ruggero Guarini writes,

...there is something to respect in that strip of colossal, varicoloured graffiti: a certain positiveness an optimism. Compare them to the official ideologues of those same years, stuttering phrases such as overcoming, prospects, transition, way out, trying to develop politics out of poetics. The graffiti, in contrast, presented that ingenious mirage of partying our way to the Great Escape, but they did so with a lot less gloom and petulance than what we had to hear in our theoreticians' significant discourses. (Guarini, *in* [33])

The Berlin Wall was that section of the Iron Curtain that partitioned East Berlin from West Berlin. It was erected as part of a tightening of border controls by the communist East German state, who found it necessary to stem a steady tide of emigration from an economically stagnant East to an increasingly prosperous West. The Berlin Wall became a symbol of this rigorously enforced separation and became not just a physical barrier, often murderously enforced, but also redolent of the ideological divide that dominated Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the twenty eight years of its existence the wall accumulated, on the western side, an eclectic mix of graffiti. It was the ultimate marginal space, thought necessary by one ideology for its own protection and viewed with repugnance by the other, a no-man's land where antithetical world views met. As a canvas for both a conscious and unconscious unfolding of desires, dreams and hope it was the ultimate transformational space, a space on which Art, as manifest in the form of graffiti, revealed the wish fulfilment of those who drew on the wall. As a source for examining traces of the *Not-Yet-Conscious* and *Anticipatory Consciousness*, it could hardly be richer. Here is where our taxonomy becomes useful as we examine the records for that which is *Public, Declaratory and Transformational*, as graffiti which accords with this taxonomic classification is most likely to susceptible to our Blochian analysis. This is not to say that any other taxonomic combination is not amenable to our analysis but that for the purposes of a brief demonstration this combination has the greatest potential to be the most illustrative.

We will give two examples. The first can be found in *The Lost Graffiti of Berlin* ([33, p. 61]). The composition depicts a yellow coloured cat like demon poised to seize a blue and a red fish confronting each other in a turbulent sea of red, blue and green. In terms of a demonstration of the multi-temporality of the *Not-Yet-Conscious* we could not identify a clearer example. The demon like figure poised to strike and terminate the existence of

both the red (communist) fish and the blue (capitalist) fish is patently a depiction of the devil whose millennial reign according to the book of revelations would be presaged with a time of great conflict and war. This is a symbol from the antique past ingrained in the consciousness of the artist. The symbolism depicting the (then) current conflict of the two fish facing each other in a pose of immanent attack is obviously symbolic of the two armed camps that faced each other across a continent. The composition does however hold a faint hope for the future blending at the ultimate point of conflict the yellow red and blue of the three actors hinting at some form of future synthesis. Here then, is a composition demonstrating the temporal blending of the *Not-Yet-Conscious* where the myths and legends of the past combine with the contingency of the present to point towards a future where all such folk symbolism disappears in a new and possibly rational settlement.

In the same work ([33, p.150]) is a depiction of a seemingly macabre rural scene. From left to right there are eleven naively drawn figures staring out at the observer with skull like faces. None however, look as if they are suffering as all wear amiable expressions. If the composition is read from right to left the predominant colour and tone lightens from red, black and blue to a predominantly green blue and white. A striking feature to the left of the composition is a black patch of “sky” with three figures outlined in white overlooking the scene below with amiable expressions. These can be read as depictions of the “old gods”, figures from Germanic myth whose power abruptly fades as the sky gives way to a patch of white. From this point in the composition and again reading from left to right the humanistic figures in the main panorama now inhabit a less ambiguous space where intimations of conflict have now all but disappeared and where mythical creatures fade into the now predominately blue and white sky. Here, from our Blochian perspective is an example of an *Anticipatory Consciousness* that presages a point in the human story when mankind will not need the ever watchful presence of

mythical deities but will supplant this with a human society based on co-operation and the harmonious harnessing of the material world.

As alluded to above, the Berlin wall fell in 1991 and much of the wish fulfilment, even in the two brief examples we have given above, actually came to fruition and, by its very disappearance, the marginal space that what the wall fulfilled the transformational wishes of the graffiti artists. Furthermore, the wealth of material recorded on this uniquely historical space provides a source of art that could be further analysed by using Bloch's insightful views. However, as this is a short paper we do not have the opportunity to do this. It is however, necessary to illustrate the third element of our analytical approach, the significance of the *Not-Yet*.

Banksy – an example of the Not Yet

No consideration, from the perspective of a Blochian analysis, of the role of graffiti as a form of art which can illustrate a will to utopia, can ignore the impact on popular culture of the graffiti artist "Banksy", whose determined maintenance of anonymity is a key aspect of his (their) constructed public persona. Purportedly of Bristol origin, Banksy is currently feted by the art establishment [34]. However his (their) early work attracted a level of critical opprobrium [35] for its defacing of public places. However, it soon became apparent that Banksy's metier was not one of casting a critical eye on society per se but an often comical, satirical style that engaged viewers in a knowing and self-conscious series of vignettes [36]. This non-threatening and intellectualised form of graffiti became an acceptable expression of the trope. This acceptance led to increasing critical acclaim manifest in such phenomena as a sponsored exhibition in Bristol Museum in 2010, auctions of works at the auction house Sothebys and the patronage of Hollywood celebrities. Banksy has in effect entered a fully knowing dialogue with an informed audience and has been subsumed into the sub-cultural argot of the critically

informed and liberal middle classes [36]. If we apply Bloch's analysis to this work it soon becomes apparent that it is of little interest if we are attempting to discern elements of "the will to utopia". We cannot identify elements of "not-yet-consciousness" as Banksy's work is patently already conscious and self aware of its role in the cultural psyche. If it were not, then the juxtaposition of images that create the knowingly humorous disjuncture in the work would be incomprehensible. Although some critics claim that the work is "surreal" [37] it is an expression of the surreal that is bound by quite specific social conventions. If it were not then the juxtaposition of incongruent images would be rendered meaningless. Nor can the work be said to have a conscious or unconscious "imaginative perception of the future". Again the work is rooted in a specific temporal and social milieu. This renders the work acceptable and approachable. It is this patent and knowing semiology that renders it in terms of our adopted taxonomy *Declarative*, and consciously *Humorous*. From our Blochian perspective however it is rooted firmly in the now as it engages in a contemporary dialogue with the observer, it offers some foresight which can perhaps be determined in the wish to ameliorate the inherent violence of the organs of state and oppression through humour, but the specificity of the temporal context of most of the work roots the work in the false consciousness of the *Not Yet*.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our discussion must centre on the non-instrumental nature of Art in foresight. It was not the graffiti on the Berlin Wall that caused its demolition. This came about due to a complex mix of economic and political factors prevalent at the end of the twentieth century. These ranged from the unintended consequence of a renewed technological arms race to the unexpected intervention of key political figures. Nevertheless the prescience of imagery and its often seamless connection of iconography from the past, present and an imagined future did presage events. As we have demonstrated some of

this graffiti had epistemological roots in folklore and myth which informed a cognisance of the present which pointed towards a material rather than belief based faith in the future of humanity. Indeed, it was on this material level that the settlement between east and west finally came about, it was the weight of economic circumstance that provided the impetus for change and not an ideological synthesis based on a new belief system. Material pragmatism finally triumphed. In contrast the “humorous” quasi-ideological imagery of Banksy is, in our contention, not an example of the foresight of a more equitable or just society, but a false consciousness that seeks to render current inequities of society more palatable. By applying this analytical insight to contemporary examples of graffiti of a *Public*, *Declaratory* and *Transformational* nature in those marginal spaces where it is allowed to survive we argue that we could discern the role that imagination and foresight plays in the desired futures of the largely anonymous contributors to this trope. Our analysis has an implication for foresight studies beyond this. The analytical framework we propose could be used to read other forms of art and artworks. We would point out, however, that this is the first iteration of this proposed method of analysis. Further development, such as the inclusion of a form of consensual discussion from multiple readers, will aid interpretation, making the process more accurate. The advantage to such an approach is that by knowingly seeking the roots of consciousness and discerning how these roots blend with the present and shape a wanted future we would add a critical and crucial dimension to the field of foresight studies. Bloch did not underestimate the criticality of Art in shaping the future aspirations of individuals and societies.

Art is fundamentally defined as real pre-appearance, as an immanent-perfect one in contrast to religious material. This pre-appearance becomes attainable precisely through the fact that art drives its subject-matter to an end, in plots, situations and characters, and brings it to a stated resolution in suffering happiness and meaning. ([1], p.809)

Bloch, here, clearly underpins his view of art as a vehicle for an evolving and emerging human consciousness rooted in material possibilities, for, even if the subject matter of a work of art is overtly religious, its form must take a nature that is sensible to and bounded by human perception and consciousness. The corollary of this is that it would in fact be remiss to exclude Art, in whatever form, from a vital and crucial place in foresight studies.

We have shown, albeit briefly, that the taxonomy of a particular trope combined with key Blochian concepts can be used to unravel the elements of works which have critical insights into our shared futures. On a final point, we would like to underline the importance of the inclusion of Art in foresight studies by stressing its epistemological scope. The epistemological reach of Art is potentially boundless, as John Dewey states in *Art as Experience*

For philosophy like art moves in the medium of the imaginative mind, and, since art is the most direct and complete manifestation there is of experience *as* experience, it provides a unique control for the imaginative ventures of philosophy ([38], p. 309).

Here Dewey concurs with Bloch over the limitless scope and crucial role of Art as a medium for human consciousness and expression, their ideological standpoints may have been different but their reflections on the nature and purpose of Art led them to similar conclusions. Bloch did not analyse Graffiti as an art form and so we can only provide an intimation of the analytical reach that might be possible. The exposition and development of Bloch's work by Poli (*passim*) is indicative of the potential for a comprehensive analytical template. Unfortunately we cannot in a brief paper reproduce and transliterate Bloch's discursive polemics and so we have limited ourselves to key, clearly identifiable concepts. However, by formulating and further developing a critical structure based on Bloch's concepts we contend that we have an intimation of the means to place Art at the centre of foresight studies.

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