Marc Garrett

RECLAIMING THE CORPORATE OWNED SELF

Jennifer Lyn Morone, Inc
INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE
Authorized To Issue 10,000,000 Shares Common Stock At $ 0.000010 Par Value

This Certifies That

Aksiona Institute
Ten shares

fully paid and non-assessable Shares of the Stock of the above named Corporation transferable only on the books of the Corporation by the holder hereof in person or by duly authorized Attorney upon surrender of this Certificate properly endorsed.

In Witness Whereof, the said Corporation has caused this Certificate to be signed by its duly authorized officers and its Corporate Seal to be hereunto affixed this 17th day of May A.D., 2017

Jennifer Morone
President

Jennifer Morone
Secretary
In a world where every atom can be addressable with an IP address (IP6), discussion of the possibility of capturing analogue things is increasingly less relevant. What becomes critical is the question of who captures and controls what data owned by whom.”

Introduction

The old cliché that knowledge is power holds true today as it has ever done. Elite groups channel our social interactions, cultural identities, and interests all of the time. The narratives and stories of who we really are have become distorted, filtered, and engineered in accordance with the needs of marketing companies, accepted historical canons, everyday mainstream media, the military, numerous corporations, and nation states. Truth, like everything else, is a commodity; it is not a right. Truth and fact are owned by the highest bidder, and if you can afford it, you can misinform a mass of people. One example of this is illustrated in the documentary Merchants of Doubt, directed by Robert Kenner (2014). In it he reveals how the tobacco industry spread false information among firefighters to spread the false belief that domestic fires caused by cigarettes were the fault of furniture rather than cigarettes. The production of misinformation in order to maintain profits and control over social contexts can also be seen in the way that climate change deniers

have been encouraged to attack scientists. “Fossil fuel interests are more than happy to provide funds for them in various ways, to promote them, to sell their books, to fly them around to give presentations.”

At the same time social networking platforms such as Facebook, Google, and others are conducting mass marketing surveillance on an unprecedented scale, collecting users’ personal data and then selling it on to advertisers for billions. “As an infrastructure, Facebook is progressively embedding itself in our daily existence, taking over more and more functions formerly provided by other, less restrictive means.” Edward Snowden’s leaks revealed that NSA agents were spying on Americans and millions outside of the US, and rather than rooting out terrorists they spent their time “infiltrating video game communities and developing techniques to blackmail individuals with

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their online pornography usage.”⁵ Also, Facebook and Google have been handing over user data to the NSA.⁶ This direct communication between these powerful bodies has demonstrated that a tiny number of powerful clusters exist as a network of obsessive surveillance networks, a panopticon observing us all. It is not only an intrusive, exploitative, and oppressively perverse gaze into our lives, but it also introduces a military presence into our digital interactions. Jason Louv in his in-depth critique, “NSA Surveillance, Edward Snowden and the End of Privacy,” says, “Such surveillance policies will only be the tip of the iceberg.”⁷

Autonomy across the Internet and its networks is now disappearing as online activity becomes more dominated by corporate controlled “social” zones. The virtually indigenous user of the Internet is now experiencing being penned into reservations such as Facebook. The digitized versions of ourselves graze away in these social networking platform pens similar to cows in a field, chomping at the bits allocated to us via biased algorithms as they dictate what we see and hear. Thus, our Internet experience is restricted as we abide by and exist within imposed filter bubbles. When we use these social media platforms and web browsers, our data is harvested and scraped. This mass extraction of data extends much further and even into blatant arrogance involving questionable aspects in respect of social engineering:

“Facebook knows your friends, what information you provide about them, what they say about you, what other sites you visit (if they include a Facebook ‘like’ button, which most do), what you bought, what device you used to access Facebook, and much more.”⁸

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According to the British newspaper *The Independent*, in 2014 Facebook “was found to have secretly manipulated hundreds of thousands of users’ news feeds as part of an experiment to work out whether it could affect people's emotions.” And it has been “considering secretly watching and recording users through their webcams and smartphone cameras.” Apple collects phone data which they say is collected anonymously while users have no opt out clause. This includes text messages, contact lists, and photos extracted from iPhones. Ippolita, a group of activists and writers, warned how social media promotes emotional pornography, where our feelings are exploited by click baits in exchange for our personal data. We are a rich source of data-mining material. The historical roots for this lies in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and 20th century statistical analysis. These two methods of formulating data have grown ever closer together backed by corporations and government initiated military funding.

The English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the late Eighteenth Century designed the Panopticon. It was designed to allow round-the-clock surveillance of inmates by a superintendent. Bentham’s intention was humanitarian, but penitentiaries are not the best advertisement for a utilitarian ethic. In 1975 the French Philosopher Michel Foucault said we are not only monitored in prisons, but in all hierarchical structures like the army, schools, hospitals, and factories. This process has evolved

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10 Ibid.  
through history to resemble Bentham’s Panopticon, and “because there is a penetration of power into the behaviour of individuals. Power becomes more efficient through the mechanisms of observation, with knowledge following suit, always in search of ‘new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised.’”¹⁶ Now, we have digital networks: our phones are following us via mapping apps and GPS, TVs have been “tracking what their owners were watching, and shuttling that data back to the company’s servers, where it would be sold to eager advertisers.”¹⁷ The contemporary version of the Panopticon exists through digital networks as the Netopticon. Individuals are complicit in feeding their own forms of collective co-surveillance every day, as well as being traced by corporations, governments, and spammers.¹⁸

“[...] individuals have become information hungry. What started as a slightly awkward hobby in the 80s, the quantified self has now become mainstream with people self monitoring anything from sleep to eating habits, from sport activities to mood using smartphones and smartwatches with build-in sensors, uploading intimate details such as heart-rate, sleep patterns and whereabouts to corporate servers in order to improve their performance.”¹⁹

**We Are the Netopticon**

Critiquing the role of contemporary technological platforms, systems, and structures in the networked age is a necessary exercise. A new generation of contemporary artists, scientists, researchers, activists, hackers, and journalists are exploring beyond graphical user interfaces (GUI) and finding inventive strategies to unlock these clandestine machinic manoeuvres that

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vacuum up our data experiences in our everyday lives. One such artist is Jennifer Lyn Morone. By literally turning herself into a corporation she has embraced this extreme form of capitalism. Morone is an individual and a business enterprise. Her intention is to better understand the effects of these free-market systems dominating our lives.

“Everything she is biologically and intellectually, everything she does, learns or creates has the potential to be turned into profits. Jennifer Lyn Morone™ Inc. is a graduation project in Design Interactions but as Jennifer underlines, this is not a speculative project.”

Morone turns the tables by shining the torch back onto the hunters to study their behaviours and clarifies the conditions of the data hunt. She takes on the trappings and movements of the body of the predator – to become them, to see what they see, to feel their intentions, to reflect on her own vulnerability in the mirror of their all seeing eye. Morone says as a corporation in extreme capitalism “You are no longer merely a human with an identity, thoughts, emotions and abilities all jumbled up into a body. You become deconstructed and compartmentalised into a collection of many units of marketable goods and services.” By claiming corporate ownership over her own personal data she breaks down the abstraction and ambiguity of what was there before. Morone, as the founder of her own corporation, turns over her skills, capital, possessions, and intellectual property to it, the corporation, and these become its assets and increase its value. This includes Morone’s identity. Her name, appearance, and IP addresses become the brand and are trademarked; thus, her mental abilities (knowledge) are processes and strategies; her physical abilities are equipment; her biological functions are products; her data is the corporation’s property; and the shares are her potential. These all become assets that she can now capitalize on. Her debt is turned into the corporation’s liability, which actually increases

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her, the company’s, value if it were to be sold. It is a symbiotic relationship and also an appropriation on both sides. Morone says, “A corporation is not just a series of legal protocols, it is a state of mind. Life as a corporation is not for the weak, the lazy, nor the fearful.”

Morone’s video “JLM™ Inc - Meeting Minutes,” was made one year after she had made the decision to exist as a corporation. The video shows three versions of herself attending an annual board meeting. This is a playful critique demonstrating a non-patriarchal convening. It shows us a startling contrast to the usually male dominated business board meetings we are typically used to. The video illustrates how Morone has taken on multiple identities in order to reflect the different roles and tasks undertaken to become a corporation.

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23 Ibid.
“You might have multiple identities and take on many forms. You must see everything that you are - mentally, physically and biologically - everything you do, learn or create - as having the potential to be commodified and capitalised on.”

Morone has created a pharmaceutical business that produces Rejuvanix, a hormone therapy made from her Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA). It is one of the most abundant circulating steroids in humans, and is produced in the adrenal glands, the gonads, and the brain, where it functions as a metabolic intermediate in the biosynthesis of the androgen and estrogen sex steroids. It also acts as a neurosteroid and neurotrophin, and is used orally as a medication and dietary supplement. As Morone’s satirical promotional video for her product Rejuvanix explains half way through, high doses may cause aggressiveness, irritability, trouble sleeping, and the growth of body or facial hair on women. It also may stop menstruation and lower levels of HDL (“good” cholesterol), which could increase the risk of heart disease.

24 Ibid.
Side effects include acne, heart rhythm problems, liver problems, hair loss (from the scalp), and oily skin. It may also alter the body’s regulation of blood sugar.  

Various artists and activists have engaged themselves in recreating, extending, or adopting personas in order to unearth or unsettle a foe larger than themselves. One worth mentioning is the mysterious multiple identity of female artist(s) Karen Blissett. During the process of becoming multiple, Karen claimed to be the offspring of the legendary 90s Neoist radical arts collective identity, Luther Blissett and Karen Eliot. Blissett is arguably the first net-spawned Neoist, and certainly the first Neoist artist to grow up with web 2.0. Karen used the uncertainty surrounding her “real girl” status as a part of her artistic materials and inhabits similar terrain to the productively disruptive and exploratory net identities of 90s audio visual software artists NN aka Netochka Nezvanova aka Nameless Nobodies, as well as more recent human-bot combos such as Angel F, a baby Artificial Intelligence by Salvatore Iaconesi and Oriana Persico (of the Italian art duo Art is Open Source) created to grow up “among viruses, technological systems, digital emotions, and stories of the fight for freedom of expression. “Karen’s ontology also rhymes with Piratbyran’s chatbot OmniHal, programmed to welcome users to their Internet Relay Chat channel (used for years by a group of friends to devise, plan, and develop the philosophies, software, and parties that underpinned a particular flowering of free culture on the Internet). Over time the chatbot mimics the words and concerns of the IRC users, filling the channel with echoes of previous exchanges creating a sense of belonging and conviviality”.  

Morone’s intention to reclaim agency whilst being immersed within data driven networks, protocols, and algorithms, constitutes a style of Post-Fordist cyborg-activism. Antonia Caronia in his book, The Cyborg: A Treatise on The Artificial Man, says, today’s cyborg is forced into a process of capitalistic

growth that sees no difference between work and leisure, “between the office and the playground, and between times of public and private life.”

Simon Penny points out in his essay “Consumer Culture and the Technological Imperative,” “One of the classic techno-utopian myths of computers is that access to information will be a liberation, and the results will be, by definition, democratizing.”

His critique of networked technology and the dreams it once promised us point now to the dire trouble and unexpected consequences of these utopian dreams.

Morone’s cyborgian presence is not techno-utopian, or Transhumanist, expounding about how perfect technology is and how it will save us all in the Ray Kurzweil sense. Hers is a dystopian act of genuine survival, in contrast to Kurzweil’s seemingly overly optimistic, privileged chant, which more tells us about his lack of grounded knowledge in the world. By interrogating the relationship with proprietary systems and re-examining the conditions and affordances of black boxes and the systems of techno-cultural production, we can disrupt the mechanisms that dominate the conversations around art, technology, life, and economy.

In fact, Tatiana Bazzichelli puts forward the notion of disruptive business and that it “becomes a means for describing immanent practices of hackers, artists, networkers and entrepreneurs.” Morone charging companies for tracing her is a disruption that is proposed by Bazzichelli.

“In my disruptive loop model, artists and hackers use disruptive techniques of networking in the framework of social media and web-based services to generate new modalities for using technology, which, in some cases, are unpredictable and critical; business enterprises apply disruption as a form of innovation to create new markets and network values, which are also often unpredictable. Networked disruption is a place where the oppositions

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coexist, and it is a reconfiguration of practices into a structure of mutual feedback instead of opposition."³¹

In 2016, author Brian Christian and cognitive scientist Tom Griffiths wrote a book called *Algorithms to Live by: The Computer Science of Human Decisions*. Their premise was that algorithms used by computers need not only be mysterious and abstract, but they can also untangle very human questions. This ranges from making better decisions, “from finding a spouse to finding a parking spot, from organizing one’s inbox to understanding the workings of memory […] into strategies for human living.”³² Donna Haraway, in her groundbreaking essay says, “Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. […] Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment.”³³ Morone’s actions relate to Haraway’s call, in the respect that she is taking responsibility for the technology she is using and facing the techno-devil head on, and not hiding away in the hope that things may get better. Morone’s approach is also exactly what Haraway proposes in her latest publication where she asks us to learn to stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged earth as we spiral into ecological devastation.³⁴

Morone proves in her practice that disrupting the data she uses means others can do it also. Wouldn’t it be great if this was the start of something similar to when punks picked up their instruments to forge a new era of social change, where outsiders, amateurs, and the working classes suddenly found a voice and a place for their own artistic freedoms of expression,

³¹ Ibid.
when for a brief period of time DIY culture, music, and politics emerged from its subcultural ghettos influencing mainstream culture and the media. Perhaps the DIY attitude of Morone can reach individuals and groups no longer content to sit at the sidelines as disaffected consumers, just letting the Netopticon suck their data dry. She sets herself in the long tradition of subversive affirmation, translating into a clear, powerful narrative the workings of extreme capitalism, the economic system in which everybody is living today, but that only a few understand and use to their own advantage. This is not just an individual artist expressing a position and social context. It is a cultural shift that demonstrates how a contemporary artist can rebuild and find new narratives and routes from the complicit and old behaviours of just letting data be handled by self-appointed professionals. Morone is developing an app called Database of ME or DOME. It collects and stores
the data she generates: her location, heartbeat, browsing activity, mood, etc. This way, the company can sell, lease, rent, exchange or invest the data for her own profit.\textsuperscript{35} Morone has also made as part of her production line “Lure and Repel, two scents made from her pheromone molecules that, respectively, attract and repel men.”\textsuperscript{36} Haraway proposed that the “proper state for a Western person is to have ownership of the self, to have and hold a core identity as if it were a possession,”\textsuperscript{37} and that “not to have property in the self is not to be a subject, and so not to have agency.”\textsuperscript{38} If we update Haraway’s concept, Morone certainly fits this strategy.

Reclaiming those freedoms curtailed and diverted by the powers that be is a progressive and intelligent action. Morone has bravely entered into an explorative zone, demonstrating a new edge, a new venture space for the \textit{avant-garde}. Like Morone, others need to emerge who are also willing to

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
deconstruct and unpack this hidden world we are all held hostage to. Perhaps if we actively reclaim our digital selves and take more responsibility, and thus control of these clandestine transactions occurring every second of the day as part of the all seeing eye, the Netopticon, we may have a chance of owning our own societal contexts, our networked futures, on our own terms. If this does not happen, then at least we did not fall to our knees, submissive and ignorant of the meta forces working to exploit and redefine us. At least we had fun disrupting the exploiters with our eyes wide open.
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