

**FINAL DRAFT**

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**Title: Broadening the Horizons of Economy**

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**Abstract**

From corporations to occupied factories, a growing number of widely accessible books and documentary films have emerged to represent an array of economic concerns and the groups gathered around them. Viewed as a new form of political association, these representations offer a lens to contemporary social change. This article draws on theories of performativity to explore the ways in which such diversely constituted assemblies might transform the economy. Representation has a number of different meanings; it relates to how economic concerns are discursively represented and thereby made real while also referring to the political representation of different groups gathered around that concern. Putting these two senses of representation together, this article examines the temporal and spatial composition of two alternative economic representations, the documentary films *The Take* and *Les Glaneurs et al Glaneuse (The Gleaners and I)*. Through *The Take* I explore the way in which alternative economies are performatively brought into being. I argue the *The Gleaners and I* illustrates how one might go about representing and reassembling the geography of economy through the idea of the periperformative. Together these films offer a way of broadening economy that has implications for the performative potential of research more generally.

## **Introduction: Representing Economic Concerns**

We have recently been flooded with an array of representations of economic concerns. Books like Paul Kingsnorth's (2003) *One No, Many Yeses* and films like *The Corporation* (Achbar, Abbott and Bakan 2003) have emerged in steady succession to capture and make real a broad political terrain of concern, representing a vast range of people and things gathered around contemporary economic issues, such as the power of corporations and alternative economic futures. These representations have begun to map out and spatialise what Bruno Latour (2004; 2005a; 2005b) sees as a new agent of social transformation, groups gathered around issues of concern. This idea of concern group departs from conceptualisations of social movements as people joined through a clear political identity. Instead concern groups are centred on an issue that relates to a diverse array of humans and non-humans, including animals, the natural environment, machines and objects. These groups seek new ways to bring about change without the continuity, closure and exclusions on which social movements based on a clear political identity rely (Latour 2005a, p.15). This article explores some of the new ways a politics of concern might bring about social change.

Just as maps are often observed as complete and inactive truths (Massey 2005), representations of contemporary concerns and the groups gathered around them often give the impression of doing nothing more than reflecting, and thus opposing by exposing, an external terrain of concern about which we can do little; neoliberalism, globalisation, capitalism or all three together are the usual candidates. The political limitations of such an

approach have been discussed at length elsewhere. J.K. Gibson-Graham's (2006a; 2006b) work in particular has shown how critical representations of Economy and capitalism have inhibited the imagination and enactment of alternative economic projects. How then might the representations of concerns and concern groups Latour writes of bring about social change and by what means? In their work, Gibson-Graham argue that understanding economic representations as performatively constitutive of current realities is a vital part of political struggle. In light of such work, this article takes the performative force of contemporary representations of economic concern seriously by exploring the spatiality of the representation when understood as a terrain in which concern groups and concerns are gathered.

Representing concern, however, is no simple thing, as Latour and Peter Weibel's (2005) experimental collection, *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, highlights. This is an experiment with relating and thereby assembling and disassembling concerns, people and things in space. The collection offers a terrain that brings together two aspects of representation often held apart; firstly, the way the public is gathered, and thus politically represented, around things of concern, and, secondly, the way issues of concern are themselves discursively represented (Latour 2005a, pp.15-16). There are two senses of representation to consider here and Latour (2005a, pp.15-16) argues that political theory has given more attention to the political and democratic representation of the different parties gathered around political issues than to the discursive representation of the matter of concern. In contrast, in subsets of political theory like feminist, cultural and geographical studies, the opposite seems to be case. Here more attention has been given to how objects

of concern, from women to the Economy, have been discursively represented and thereby brought into being than the way people and things are gathered around this performance.

Taking inspiration from Latour (2005a, p.16), this article tackles the way concerns and concern groups are discursively and politically represented and gathered together through experimental assemblies composing a “Body Politik” like *Making Things Public*. I ask how this body politik – Latour’s third sense of representation – might operate to bring about social transformation. I explore this question from the theoretical field of the performative, aiming to extend the understanding of the performative as a means to bring about alternative economies. I draw on recent developments in the theory of performativity, including Judith Butler’s (1988;1990;1997) influential work and Eve Sedgwick’s (2003) more recent idea of the periperformative, to open up the geography of peoples and things gathered around concerns.

With reference to these three understandings of representation and theories of performativity, I look at selected films representing economic concerns and concern groups as experimental assemblies or body politik. The first film is Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein’s (2004), *The Take*, which focuses on an alternative to neoliberal political economy by tracing the action of one concern group currently occupying Argentinean factories. I go on to discuss the periperformative nature of Agnes Varda’s (2000) film, *Les Glaneurs et al Glaneuse* (*The Gleaners and I*), probing the extent to which its exploration of the topic of gleaning reassembles the economic landscape. These two films suggest an economic broadening in two important senses; first, in the nature of economy brought into being; and, second, in the way these representations open, reassemble and compose economy. This process of

broadening widens the economy to encompass not only central yet diverse issues of concern but also all those things gathered around this nucleus.

### **Theorising the Performative: Performative acts and their surrounds**

Contemporary understandings of ‘the performative’ stem from J.L. Austin’s ([1955]1962) seminal work on a specific type of utterance. In his 1955 William James lectures at Harvard University, Austin famously described a type of utterance that performs actions, employing his now well-known example of ‘I do’ as the act constituting marriage during a marriage ceremony. As he (p.6, original emphasis) wrote : “In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstance) is not to *describe* my doing... or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it”. Austin named this the performative utterance to indicate its active rather than descriptive nature. Since then work on the constitutive force of the performative has taken several directions and has been especially picked up in two strands of thought: one extends the idea of the performative to develop an anti-essentialist understanding of the constitution of social life, the other develops Austin’s work on the speech utterance to understand the performative’s linguistic and spatial configuration, particularly through the idea of the periperformative (Sedgwick 2003).

The performative provides a powerful explanation of how social phenomena like subject identity, understood as an effect of power, come into being. This anti-essentialist thinking draws on Austin and others’ emphasis on the “productive aspect of language” to argue against claims that language merely describes facts or a reality outside of it (Sedgwick 2003, p.5). Today, the idea of discursive power plays an important role in explaining our

social realities; power which seen to be materialised in bodies, practices, networks and other material objects (Gibson-Graham 2006b; Mitchell 1998). Judith Butler's (1988; 1990) early work on the discursive and dramatic embodiment of gender and queer performativity is a notable example. In this work Butler (1990, p.33) challenges foundationalist premises of the subject by showing that gender is a "process, a becoming", a historical act based on an existing script that is repeated in time to give the appearance of a continued stable identity. While appearing stable, the fact that identity must be repeatedly performed introduces room for slippage and excess, that is, a means for alteration, difference and the creation of the new (Butler 1988, p.520). In her later work on subjection, Butler (1997, p.11) explores the relationship between the constitution of the subject and the subject's agency, including agency to resist or oppose that subjection and subordination on which the very existence of the subject relies. Tackling the question "How, then, is subjection to be thought and how can it become a site of alteration?" (p.11), Butler suggests that the power constituting the subject is temporally different when taken up by the subject (p.12):

Consider that in the very act by which the subject reproduces the conditions of its own subordination, the subject exemplifies a temporally based vulnerability that belongs to those conditions, specifically, to the exigencies of their renewal. Power considered as a condition of the subject is necessarily not the same as power considered as what the subject is said to wield.

Understood as a "site of ....reiteration" in the complex process of assuming power, subject agency introduces slippage and contingency into the constitution of social life and importantly the possibility of the new (p.16).

The performative has succeeded a narrow understanding of the linguistic utterance to encompass all language and creation of meaning (Sedgwick 2003, p.6). And, as Butler's work highlights, it also provides a way to think about social transformation. The performative has not been restricted to the analysis of gender and subject identity either, but has been employed to challenge the essentialist foundations of a number of different entities, especially the economy. For instance, marking out an "anthropology of (the) econom(y)ics", Michel Callon and Koray Caliskan (2005) have drawn attention to the way "economics performs the economy", whereby, as others have shown, particular economic subjectivities are brought into being (Gibson 2001). More recently, work in this area has moved beyond challenging essentialist thought to use the idea of the performative to actively construct alternative realities. This is exemplified by Gibson-Graham's (2006b) new book, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, which retheorises the economy to bring into being a new economic politics, new economic subjects and intellectual community that can equip alternative economic projects. As they (2006a, pp.xx-xxi) see it, "the ability of theory to describe and predict is not an outcome of accurate observations/calculations, but a measure of the success of its 'performance'".

This understanding of the performative suggests an important role for research, and representation more generally, in activist experimentation aimed at changing the world. Yet this is not a simple intervention; the success of performing theory can limit rather than open the way for alternatives. As Latour (2005b, p.226, original emphasis) explains in relation to sociology, because sociologists are so successful at "*performing*", "*formatting*" and consequently fixing relationships that form the social sphere they encounter difficulty when faced with the

task of examining and reassembling it. This is because social scientists tend to enact the social in a way that extends and strengthens rather than opens the associations through which the social is constituted. Timothy Mitchell's (1998) work provides a good example of the way that the economy has been fixed through the application of scientific ideas and imagery to economic relations and processes, with the recent inclusion of the informal economy into the Economy exemplifying this process. By employing these and other ideas, economics has formatted relationships between diverse aspects of economic life and thereby constituted a totalised field of Economy. Consequently, both existing and new associations of terrains like the social and economy have to be examined carefully (Latour 2005b, p.227).

A performative approach to research thus should be attentive to the ways in which research assembles, fixes, gives form to and makes real spheres like the social and the economy. Moreover, the project of reassembling or creating alternatives needs to consider the performativity of concern in terms of how this performance is achieved, not only through reiteration but also in terms of all the entities it involves and associations made. In order to make visible and create room for all the other things that make performative acts possible, that is to move from the performatives temporal force to also consider its spatial force (Sedgwick 2003), we need to reconsider the linguistic utterance.

Responding to contemporary uses of performativity theory and the questions these raise, like the difference between linguistic and non-linguistic acts and temporal and spatial registers, Sedgwick attempts to clarify Austin's performative utterance. Sedgwick aims to spatialise the performative utterance, to map out the relationship between different forms of



utterances and utterers, and, in particular, the relationships on which its constitutive force relies:

If, as Austin himself says, there is finally no yes/no distinction between performative and nonperformative utterances, then it could be more helpful to imagine a maplike set of relations: a map that might feature *explicit performative utterances*...and a multitude of other utterances scattered or clustered near and far, depending on the various ways they might resemble or differ from those examples (Sedgwick 2003, p.5, original emphasis).

Sedgwick begins by exploring the ideal form of the performative utterance (for instance, performatives that take the first person singular and are active in tense), the exemplary “I do”. She notes that not all performatives take the ideal grammatical shape but are “scattered or clustered near and far” (p.5). For example, “You’re out” is not in the first person singular but nevertheless a performative in the Austinian sense (p.4). Extending from the exemplar of marriage, Sedgwick (p.69) goes on to show that performatives rely on “the tacit demarcation of the space of a third-person plural, a ‘they’ of witness – whether or not literally present”. The ‘I do’ of marriage for instance requires the presence of state authority as well as witnesses (p.71). Similarly, in the case of ‘I dare you’ the darer evokes consenting witnesses through which the dared person will be judged (p.69). These witnesses on which the performative utterance depends are not inactive stand-ins, rather they suggest that the force and authority of the performative is relational and open to challenge through further performative utterances by those witnesses, such as “count me out” in the case of a performative utterance that responds to “I dare you” (p.70).

Recognising that anti-essentialist thought tends to privilege the temporal force of the performative, Sedgwick develops her understanding of the spatial nature of the performative further by introducing another type of utterance, the periperformative. Periperformative utterances speak about and “*allude to* explicit performative utterances” (p.68, emphasis in original). Sedgwick (p.70) demonstrates this distinction through the case of the performative “I dare you” that is responded to by the periperformative “Don’t accept the dare on our account”. As this example shows, the periperformative is not only about the performative “I dare you” but includes challenges that potentially reorganise the relationships on which the performative force of the dare depends, especially the authority and agency of the darer:

For in daring you, in undertaking through any given iteration to reinscribe a framework of presumptive relations more deeply, and thereby to establish more firmly my own authority to manipulate them, I place under stress the consensual nature both of those valuations and of my own authority. To have my dare greeted with a periperformative witnesses’ chorus of ‘Don’t accept the dare on our account’ would radically alter the social, the political, the interlocutory (I-you-they) space of our encounter. So, in a different way, would your calmly accomplishing the dare and coming back to me, in the space demarcated by the presence of the same witnesses, with the expectation of my accomplishing it in turn (Sedgwick 2003, p.70).

While the performative utterance brings with it a crisis of agency in that it can be responded to and challenged by others implicated in its utterance, periperformatives “dramatize...the pathos of uncertain agency, rather than occluding it as the explicit performative almost must” (Sedgwick, p.76). The periperformative achieves this because it avoids the active and first person ‘I’ and instead makes a dramatic statement about the performative act by, for

instance, naming the utterer in third person (p.76). Unlike the performative utterance where action is performed through the speech act, the periperformative can refer to several speech acts and place them in the context of other acts. The periperformative can therefore “invoke...the force of more than one illocutionary act” (p.78): it can register several meanings at once as well as historical change. Sedgwick’s (pp.75-77) analysis of George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* is an excellent example, especially her reading of the utterance “These diamonds, which were once given with ardent love to Lydia Glasher, she passes on to you” (Eliot quoted p.76). Discussing the peri-performative force of this utterance Sedgwick (p.77) draws attention to the way the third person and “inversion in the word order of subject and object” displaces the agency of the utterer, Lydia Glasher, while giving the diamonds “an oscillating and uncanny agency”. This utterance also refers to several acts, namely a gift and the passing of the diamonds, in a way that Sedgwick (p.77) suggests evokes “the material and legal problematics of how a woman may be said either to own or transmit property”. The periperformative utterance thus not only enables the discussion of performatives but offers a way to represent and thus move between the dramatic and linguistic senses of the performative. This makes the periperformative particularly potent, mapping the force of the performative.

Revealing a vast relational geography around the performative, Sedgwick’s work opens up the space through which entities like the economy are performed and assembled as well as ways in which they can be contested, reassembled and connected differently. In this respect the periperformative speaks directly to Latour’s (2005a; 2005b) inquiry into the way groups gathered around discursive concerns might be represented, making explicit the relationships and the people and things clustered around and enabling the performative

acts of concern. In other words, different people and things have different relationships to the matter of concern; some explicitly perform it, others speak about or convey it, and others witness and enable it. Mapping this relational geography through the periperformative offers a way to represent gatherings around concerns which relates to Latour's third sense of representation as a composition of political space. The periperformative also offers a way for those related to the performative to contest and undermine its constitutive power.

Mapping this relational geography involves several moves. Naming the utterer displaces the performative agent and singular location of agency, opening up the assembly of the economic to the other, always already implicated, human and non-human witnesses. In addition, the periperformative shows how several meanings are generated through one act and how this act relates to different contexts and times. It provides a vehicle for others to respond to and thereby contest the force of the performative. This technique not only reveals a broader geography of relations, circuits and abilities, but the territory of the performative is opened to a variety of entities, ways to displace the performative and, thus presents a means to assemble the world differently, enabling particular kinds of links and associations between things that might otherwise have been held apart or not even seen. In sum, this approach offers a new technique with which to shift the terrain of economy and to open it to alternative economic performances. It offers theorists of performativity in the tradition of Butler's work another way for thinking about how the new arises. Butler's work suggests that the new is created through a temporal register and linked to subject agency and the "assumption" of power, while Sedgwick's work shows how the new can be created through the spatial register and is linked to relationships and associations.

## Broadening Economy through Documentary Films

The documentary films *The Take* and *The Gleaners and I* are unlike many of their political economic contemporaries that critique larger underlying forces while giving little attention to the various concerned groups and or alternatives already within their topics ambit. Joseph G. Ramsey (2005) criticises Mike Moore's 2004 film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, for instance, for its limited focus on the lies wielded as fact by the Bush administration after the September 11 terrorist attack on the United States of America and exclusion of a huge range of concern groups and alternative politics across the globe. In contrast, the film *The Corporation*, also released in 2004, shows a fuller spectrum of concerned groups gathered around this powerful institution, from activists, academics, managers, to brokers and beyond (although, as Ramsey notes, excluding some groups like workers within the corporation). The representation of concern about the corporation is also more diverse than the concern canvassed in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, including, for example, the corporation's history, psychology and effects beyond the market. The effect of this gathering is to perform a truly terrifying monster. While *The Corporation* does include social and economic movements struggling against this beast, they are represented as mostly external to the corporation rather than transformative of it. Consequently, *The Corporation* is vulnerable to Mitch Rose's (2002) criticism of resistance studies, which he argues performatively reaffirm and indeed rely on the pre-existence of the systems they seek to resist.

In contrast to their contemporaries, *The Take* and *The Gleaners and I*, released in 2004 and 2000 respectively, represent alternative forms and ways of organising economic life. They achieve this by both performing alternatives to capitalism and by reflecting on the

performance of the capitalist economy through the periperformative. Both are performed in settings of marked inequality, a time of extreme wealth, consumption and waste, and one of equally extreme poverty and need. In highlighting the interconnected nature of these extremes, both films point to the constitution and maintenance of the capitalist economy. What especially interests me and guides this article are questions concerning the nature and the force of political action undertaken by media in response to the capitalist economy (de Goede 2005, Hynes, Sharpe and Fagan, 2007; Gibson-Graham, 2006). Research has shown how media has broadened the capitalist economy through carnivalesque play and created a space for the performance of alternatives (see de Goede 2005). In the analysis that follows I argue that *The Take's* performative force lies in the assertion of one alternative to the capitalist economy – the cooperative owner-worker led recuperation of abandoned factories in Argentina. Moreover, *The Take* strongly illustrates the way in which performative statements made in response to assertions supporting the capitalist economy can contribute to social change. In contrast, *The Gleaners and I* best illustrates the force of the periperformative and in particular the way that witnesses can undermine the force of performative statements constituting the capitalist economy while reconfiguring who and what is associated with economy. It assembles economic alternatives by building associations through and around the central theme of gleaning, here loosely defined as the collection of discarded materials.

### **Performing Alternative Economies: *The Take***

*The Take* is the product of the partnership between Canadian media personalities Lewis and Klein (see <http://www.thetake.org>). It was directed by Lewis and written by

Klein, who is perhaps best known for her 2001 and 2007 books, *No Logo* and *The Shock Doctrine*. Both are outspoken political commentators, as demonstrated by Lewis's short film on police repression in Argentina titled, *Gustavo Benedetto: Presente!* (2002), and Klein's commentaries on globalisation for leading news media. Early on in the film we learn that Lewis and Klein's motivation for making *The Take* is to address critics negative assessment of their past work and activism. As one television interviewer comments in the film about Klein: "apart from protests, what has she got to offer?" In her voiceover Klein responds, stating: "He had a good point. There is only so much protesting can accomplish. At a certain point you have to talk about what you are fighting for". Reading this exchange through the lens of the performative utterance, the interviewer's question sets up the dare of TINA, There Is No Alternative, which goes something like, 'After all your criticism of the capitalist economy, I dare you to come up with an alternative'. Lewis and Klein take up this dare and, in doing so, challenge the performative force of the utterance 'there is no alternative to capitalism'. Furthermore, this reflection on their past work in relation to what the film is doing establishes from the outset a periperformative position, setting up Lewis and Klein's role in the film through the third person and thereby making room for the presence of all the other agents that perform the alternative Lewis and Klein find in Argentina, the worker occupied factory movement. *The Take* follows a group of former workers in their recuperation of an Argentinean auto parts factory, *Forja*.

*The Take* is backgrounded by 'The Model' of neoliberalism and its fallout. While protest and resistance in Argentina is set against The Model in general, the film singles out Carlos Menem as its chief protagonist and highlights his implementation of the entire "IMF rulebook" in one go, including "downsizing, corporate handouts and selling off every public

asset he could find”. These policies are shown to have had devastating effects on a once prosperous and quickly industrialising country, creating a “wild west” characterised by vast poverty with little hope left for government solutions. Lewis and Klein go on to suggest that capitalism itself has been plunged into disarray, showing us “abandoned factories, cracked cement, rusting machines” – all the signs of industrial production in tatters. But unlike much left critique the narrative of capitalism is not what this film is about, rather it is the context of the dare to which Lewis and Klein respond by stating “jobs are being taken back” through a strategy of “occupy, resist, produce”.

The film employs this discourse, ‘occupy, resist, produce’, strategically to bring into being an alternative to The Model. With the “power to create the effects it names” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p.2), *The Take* forcefully gives presence to an alternative economy through an economic discourse that is already well known and, ironically, has been made powerful through capitalist representations: the discourse of factory production. The title of the film is presented in steel, placed on top of images of industrial production, including steel being crafted into cogs, mass production assembly lines, workers in overalls and protective eyewear and a vast array of machines operated with skill and speed; all accompanied by the sounds of factory production. This is, however, factory production with a twist, with the typical images of industrial processes juxtaposed with cooperative worker meetings, the absence of bosses, male workers overcome with emotion, and worker driven battles with authorities to get into and stay in their workplace. While the film celebrates the forces of production harnessed in industrialisation, it is the relationships of production that are of concern. One might expect images of factory production to be used to represent capitalist class divisions, the alienation of labour, and the justification for working-class struggle, but



they are, in fact, the victorious end result of struggle to gain the right to occupy the abandoned factory and begin production by the group of Forja workers followed in the film. This dramatisation of factory production, so strongly associated with the capitalist economy, is full of slippage and excess, not adding up to or contained by capitalist discourse. In sum, *The Take* acquires its performative force from the powerful discourse of large scale capitalist economic production, while at the same time transforming this discourse through the performance of resist, occupy, produce, that is, resistance to The Model, collective occupation and cooperative production.

Insert Fig 1

**Figure 1:** The title of *The Take* emerges after a series of images of factory production.

In contrast to these bustling images of industrial production, the film's heroes begin their struggle in a mostly empty factory which even the pigeons have deserted. As the workers stroll around the abandoned factory they reflect on this space of absence and silence. Viewing these scenes, it is tempting to suggest that the struggle by the Forja workers, at least in part, nostalgically performs a common working-class identity or politics, and is therefore comparable to Gibson-Graham's (2006b) analysis of the film *Brassed Off*. In the film *Brassed Off* the about-to-be unemployed mine workers remain "fixated on a bygone capitalist order" that is focused "on keeping the mines open; on being employed (and thus exploited by capital); on solidarity based on shared male experience, including that of capitalist exploitation; on keeping alive communities built on exploitation as well as life-destroying work" (Gibson-Graham 2006b, p.13). Indeed, there are representations of

remnants from the Forja workers former working-class selves throughout the factory, in lockers, a recovered cup and other items. But *The Take* moves quickly over these objects to the men themselves, who perform their undignified existence as men and human beings as they weep openly about their state of unemployment and inability to provide for their families. This can be read as a moment of vulnerability in the process of subjectification that Butler (1997) writes of. These men are no longer able to maintain their working class identity and, in particular, the strongly associated identity of the masculine breadwinner.

The film's dramatization of the workers' breakdown compels witnesses to see and feel shame for the workers. For Sedgwick (2003), shame is performative and potentially transformative. This is because shame is a moment in which the onlooker fails to recognise the one who they once knew, which has the effect of interrupting the process of identification (p.35-36). At this moment the witness feels not only shame for the other (in this case the Forja worker) but is also keenly aware of both their own individuality and their relationship to the shamed other (p.37). Consequently, the shame experienced by witnesses of these workers breaking down – wives, co-workers, viewers, and so on – can also be seen as a moment of interruption in their own identities and relationship to the workers. Shame felt by these witnesses heightens their presence and relationship to the Forja workers in a way that gestures towards a geography or spatiality of identity formation. In sum, in making a dramatic statement about their failure to perform a common working class identity and appearing strange to witnesses of this statement, these workers break with past associations between their identity and work *and* create an opportunity for new relations with others, enabling a different form of worker identification and wider economic organisation to emerge.

Insert Fig 2

**Figure 2:** Two stills of Forja workers; the first filmed as one worker explains that he is unable to support his family as they sit around him at their dining table; the second filmed as a worker strolls around the abandoned factory and weeps over the current state of the factory and his own life.

To develop their case for worker occupation, then production, the Forja workers collectively calculate wages owed to them and assess the factory for things that have been sold off/stolen by its former owners. As they assess these absences and occupy the factory a new form of worker organisation is reiterated. “In the cooperative, we’ll all be administrators”, one man states:

I’ll check on what he does and he’ll check on me. Of course we’re going to have to be more conscientious. And not be too bourgeois like before under the boss, when you would duck into a corner for a break whenever you could. Now, no. If a light is on, turn it off, if it’s not necessary. The salaries will all be equal. There won’t be exaggerated salaries like there were before, which was one of the things that caused all of this.

As the Forja workers develop a business plan they build on this sense of cooperation by linking with other occupied factories with which they can trade. For instance, we see representatives from the Forja cooperative visiting the tractor factory, Zanella, operated through a partnership between workers, former managers and the dealers who sell tractors. This enterprise is organised differently to the Forja worker cooperative and workers do not receive the same pay. This is an important feature of the economic alternative performed by

*The Take*. Recuperated factories are reiterated as an alternative throughout the film; however, as it moves back and forth to the ongoing struggle of longer established factories and that of the Forja workers, this is always with a difference. Indeed, Lewis and Klein state that they are not proposing a single 'one size fits all' model. Thus, this alternative economy remains open to different forms of organisation and the involvement of different concern groups.

Insert Figure 3

**Figure 3:** These stills show gatherings of workers through which they make decisions about the factory, collectively work to bring the factory back into production and celebrate as they make headway in their struggle.

*The Take* represents resistance to The Model in a number of ways, from workers protecting their factories with marbles and slingshots, to enormous protests outside the Brukman suit factory after its workers were evicted during the night, to citizens refusing to participate in national politics. One instance in which the film explores this broad scope of political struggle is by looking within the family of a new worker at Zanon, a ceramics factory occupied for two years. Zanon employs 300 equally paid workers and, due to its success, has been able to employ new workers, including this young woman. Her mother and extended family are supporters of the Peron pro-labour party in national elections and strong believers in national politics. These women from two generations illustrate the contrast between the politics of a bygone area of prosperity and strong government and the newer politics based on direct action and grass roots democracy. The coexistence of these strategies asserts that an alternative economy based around factory recuperation is not one that must

overthrow existing political economic formations, like socialist formations in which large scale state controlled factory production played an important role. Rather, following the second-wave feminist movement (Gibson-Graham 2006b, pp.xxiii-xxiv), the alternative offered by this film is performed through, and transforms, different “subjects” and “places” in various and partial ways, and, in this case, is lived through households politics.

Insert Fig 4

**Figure 4:** Workers at the Zanon factory arm themselves with slingshots and marbles to protect their factories from recuperation by state authorities.

*The Take* traces and brings into being a network of people and things that have gathered around the recovered companies’ movement after the devastation of neoliberal reform. This alternative economy is performed through a discourse that has become conflated with capitalist development, factory production, in a way that de-links the two to join factory production with political struggle and cooperatively organised relations of production. Through this strategic reiteration, *The Take* makes alternatives recognisable, viable and necessary, compelling us to open our eyes and hearts to them. More than this, the film accomplishes the dare, ‘After all your criticism of the capitalist economy, I dare you to come up with an alternative’, and thus works to undermine the performative force of capitalist discourse.

**Reassembling Economy: *The Gleaners and I***

It's like a jazz concert. They take a theme, a famous theme. They play it all together as a chorus. And then the trumpet starts with a theme and does a number. And then, at the end of his solo, the theme comes back, and they go back to the chorus. And then the piano takes the theme again. The other one goes crazy, you know, then comes back to the theme and back to the chorus. I had the feeling my digressions were like this – a little fantasy; a little freedom of playing the music of things I feel, things I love. And come back to the theme: People live off of our leftovers. People feed themselves with what we throw (away). And I say 'we' because it's you, it's me – it's everybody.

Varda (interviewed by Meyer, 2001)

Coming at the end of a long and successful, but perhaps under-recognised, film-making career, Varda's 2000 widely acclaimed documentary (Carter 2006), *The Gleaners and I*, can be read as a political commentary about capitalist discourse. It is about claims that the capitalist economy is efficient, provides for all and discards only undesirable waste. In contrast to *The Take*, which focuses on performing an alternative to capitalism, *The Gleaners and I* enlists the periperformative to dwell on and undermine these capitalist claims and, in doing so, illustrates another way to transform the economy. The film takes the viewer on a journey through France, tracing the diverse activities of gleaners across the country, through history and through a range of mediums (including art, music, film and interviews). It pays particular attention to both the excesses of capitalist production and, despite such excess, the needs and desires that are unmet by the capitalist economy.

Varda is very much a part of her films and the way she incorporates herself into *The Gleaners and I* enables Varda to make many periperformative utterances. *The Gleaners and I* [*Les Glaneurs et al Glaneuse*], or literally 'The Gleaners and the feminine Gleaner', immediately

positions Varda as one of the film's subjects, establishing a relationship between herself as a performer in the film and as the creator of the film. This enables Varda to relate to her performance making the film through the lens of the third person. The nature of gleaning is also vital to Varda's periperformative moves and, using voiceover, Varda describes her relationship to the film and indeed herself through its content. Varda builds this relationship to herself in many ways, including by filming her hands, greying hair and other parts of her body and through her voiceover which reflects on the texture of her body and compares it to the objects she has gleaned like the heart-shaped now rotting potatoes. Applying Sedgwick's analysis to this and many other instances in the film, there is a sense that Varda is stating 'These images, which Varda has gleaned, she gives to you'. Such periperformative statements displace Varda as the agent of the film, in this case giving the gleaned images a life and circulation of their own. By problematising the agency of the utterer – Varda herself – to reveal others implicated in the utterance, Varda lays bare the space of agency/authorship constituting the film. She shows the other actors on which the film depends and how they transform the film's performance. Nor are these agents restricted to human actors, rather this film is enlivened by circulating objects. The film in fact relies on things; particularly their ability to enter new relationships, to be transferred, and thus to be gleaned.

Insert Fig 5

**Figure 5:** Varda switches from posing as a gleaner of wheat, micking the classical portraits of gleaners, to her camera as a way of gleaning the images that constitute the film. These include heart shaped potatoes and images of her own aging body.

The perperformative utterances shaping *The Gleaners and I* are about performative statements of the capitalist economy. For example, as the film traverses France, it maps out agricultural production for the capitalist economy, revealing multiple people and things gathered around this sector and providing a site for concerned groups to respond. Varda and the other subjects of the film gather around, indeed glean, waste and leftovers of production for capitalist markets, such as produce left behind from a harvest, discarded on the ground after a fruit and vegetable market or left in bins and on the street to be taken away. People glean these things for diverse reasons; some have no other way to support themselves, others are activists, some are collectors and others are artists gleaning ‘materials’ just as Varda describes her own gleaning of images in creating the film. Exploring agricultural and other forms of production in this way, *The Gleaners and I* challenges the efficiency of the capitalist economy and claims that the discards of this economy are unwanted waste. The film shows that ‘waste’ can be used in multiple ways, challenging the categorisation of waste itself and opening up the possibilities of what can be achieved through gleaning, including art – where waste becomes material for sculpture or painting – and, somewhat more obscurely, free French language classes for refugees – their teacher’s voluntary labour physically sustained by the edible leftovers he collects from fruit and vegetable markets and the streets. Discarded by the capitalist economy, waste becomes part of non-capitalist alternatives including transactions like gifting and voluntary and self-provisioning labour. Varda goes on to explore the legal rights over waste to show that waste can be taken as a ‘gift’ to gleaners from the capitalist economy. Through the perperformative then, waste is framed as a gift while at the same time damning the capitalist economy, revealing both its excess and inability to provide for all.



Gleaning reaches out further to a range of people and things, from lawyers and refugees to oil-slickened birds and paintings. Varda intuitively traces this vast ensemble collected, as in her description of jazz above, around the theme of gleaning. We meet artists gleaning pieces for their work, wine makers happy for people to glean the second harvest of grapes, oyster gleaners at low tide, perfectly sized potatoes sold to markets and those that are dumped, images of Rembrandt paintings gleaned from Varda's trip to Japan and lastly we see blowing in a concrete alleyway a painting dug out from storage of women gleaning in fields. Like this parting shot, Varda brings gleaning out from its historical consignment to assert its presence everywhere and in everyone – in trash picking, in art, in the viewing of this film and elsewhere.

Insert Fig 6

**Figure 6:** *The Gleaners and I* assembles a vast array of images gathered through gleaning. This includes a copy of Millet's famous painting of women gleaning in the fields, urban trash picking, French lessons for immigrants, and trucks filmed by Varda as she journeys through France.

Going beyond this reiteration of gleaning, *The Gleaners and I* employs the periperformative to make explicit and map out relationships clustering around that which is discarded from the capitalist economy. In the film Varda follows all those who, through gleaning, can be seen to respond directly to acts which constitute that which is discarded as waste, and also others who are only tangentially related to gleaning and the economy. In seeking out vineyard owner Jérôme Noël-Bouton who “cares for his gleaners”, for instance, Varda finds a link to Etienne-Jules Marey, an engineer and erudite physiologist who invented

chronophotography and a person absolutely vital to the development of film. Varda also shoots wine growers who tell us that they have “always protected themselves” from gleaners by leaving the surplus grapes on the ground to rot, thereby “protect[ing] our profession and capital”. In contrast, Varda interviews another grower, Jean Laplanche, who loved to see gleaners in the fields and happens to be a psychotherapist. Laplanche tells us about his contribution to the philosophy of therapy stating that he has “tried to integrate into a man’s psyche the Other above the Ego”. Gleaning is thus an open territory for formatting relations between diverse things. These relationships are not fixed *a priori* but rather they are assembled through Varda’s journey across France, which in turn creates a path through which objects circulate, notably Varda’s gleaned images.

In the opening of the film Varda states: “In times past only women gleaned. Millet’s *Gleanuses* were in all the dictionaries”. In his review of *The Gleaners and I*, Jake Wilson (2002) draws attention to Varda’s feminist political stance, the film’s feminist character and its implicit associations with other contemporary political movements. In doing so he highlights the collective and opened ended nature of Varda’s gleaning of images. Indeed, Varda’s approach to film is comparable to Sadie Plant’s (1998) book, *Zeros + Ones*, which reassembles the domain of cyber technology by collecting and linking the margins, footnotes and feminine elements from which it emerged and continues to evolve. For instance, the story of mathematician Ada Lovelace’s role in the development of computing through footnotes and margins is interwoven with science fiction, the virtual world of cyberspace, computer viruses, the shifting position of women in the paid workforce and the emergence of life itself on earth. Plant traces these connections, reassembling the terrain of cyber technology by associating these various elements in explicitly feminist and feminine ways. *The Gleaners and I*

similarly associates things in a particular way to reassemble the landscape of economy, radically altering the pre-given content of this terrain and undermining capitalist exclusions of waste and people from the economy. It is gleaning that gathers these diverse things and issues together and builds social and economic relationships between them. Through these proliferating associations waste is made beautiful and living off waste becomes a dignified way of being. This is not due to a transformation brought about through the acting subject but rather comes about through a geography of interdependence in which things circulate. In viewing this film one is implicated in this geography if only by simply gleaning its imagery.

### **Conclusion: Broadening the Horizons of Economy**

For some time now economic issues have been represented through a range of media. The growing number of documentary films accompanying left intellectual critique suggests that today is no exception. While there is no doubt about the importance of critical intellectual thought in the constitution of economy, the performative force of these diverse representations also needs to be taken seriously. All forms of representation do more than simply expose current realities to resist them. They also forcefully participate in the constitution of the realities that they represent. In order to bring new realities into being we need to move beyond the practice of critique as exposure (Sedgwick 2003, see also Latour 2004). This article has purposefully resisted such a critical analysis and instead attended to the geography of the performative to offer a new political strategy for economic change. I have operationalised theories of performativity to understand the constitutive force of contemporary representative assemblies of Latour's politics of concern. I have shown that documentary films play an important role in the politics of economies, representing disparate

groups of people and things gathered around contemporary concerns. *The Take* and *The Gleaners and I* are distinctive in the economic alternatives they bring into being and their effect on the networks and associations that constitute economies.

Responding to the dare that there is no alternative to the capitalist economy, *The Take* performs economic life with a difference, placing factory production in a larger cooperative movement to make alternatives real and, in the process, transforming worker identity, communities and politics more generally. In accomplishing this dare, *The Take* shows that the economy is not a fixed external reality but a political field that is, in part, constituted through the realm of film. However, to accept the performative force of representation of concerns does not automatically lead to the reassembly of the relationships that are possible and the things which can circulate through them. As Latour's (2005b) work suggests, the social sciences and especially their radical wing have been particularly powerful in making associations stronger and more fixed, whether social and or economic. Offering a response to this, Sedgwick's discussion of the periperformative shows a vast geography filled with many things and relations that constitute the performative act. The periperformative brings about a broadening of the nature of economy in terms of the associations and relations that are possible. Enlisting periperformative to comment on that which is discarded by the capitalist economy, *The Gleaners and I* navigates the geography of gleaning and in the process builds new associations between people and things. *The Take* and *The Gleaners and I* are two powerful representations of the shifting geography of economy and vehicles for its transformation.

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