# SPECTACLES OF RESISTANCE AND RESISTANCE OF SPECTACLES

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores organizational controls in an era dominated by spectacles, images and pictures and seeks to identify some forms of resistance that subvert and undermine these controls. It develops the metaphor of today's organizations a 'glass cages' in juxtaposition to the Weberian 'iron cages' that summed up some of the qualities of organizations of yesteryear. The paper analyses new forms of resistance, such as whistleblowing and subvertizing, that are particularly aimed at besmirching an organization's image and reputation. It is argued that, with the decline of trade unionism and organized labour opposition, many employees have lost their collective voice – instead, they occasionally raise their individual voices in opposition, cynical rejection or questioning of managerial practices and discourses. More often, however, they resort to exit – seeking employment elsewhere. In this way, they handle their choices at the workplace in a way directly echoing the choices of consumers – accept what is on offer or look elsewhere, without having to offer explanations and justifications. It is argued that many of today's forms of workplace resistance (including whistleblowing, distance, cynicism and exit) mirror similar forms of resistance employed by individuals as consumers in questioning, disrupting and, at times, challenging the claims of consumerism.

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Max Weber's (1958; 1978) metaphor of 'the iron cage' provided an abiding image of organizations during the high-noon of modernity. It captured the entrapping qualities of bureaucracies which sought to control everything through rational procedures, rules and processes. Most commentators, however, appear to agree that these organizations, rigid, rational and predictable, are no longer sustainable, in our times of information capitalism, globalization, and consumer power (See, for example, Calas & Smircich, 1999; Castells, 1996; Clegg, 1990; Gabriel, 2004; Hassard, 1994; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Parker, 1992; Sennett, 1998). Instead of a pre-occupation with efficient production and rational administration, management today is increasingly turning to the consumer as the measure of all things, a consumer who seeks not merely the useful and the functional, but the magical, the fantastic and the alluring. The management of organizations thus finds itself increasingly preoccupied with the orchestration of collective fantasies and the venting of collective emotions through the merchandizing of symbols and images (See, for example, du Gay & Salaman, 1992; Gabriel & Lang, 2006; Ritzer, 1999).

Trying to capture the transition from rigid, Weberian bureaucracies to today's more flexible, more consumer-oriented organizations, I proposed the metaphor of a glass cage and its double, a glass palace (Gabriel, 2005). I argued that while the Weberian iron cage stifled creativity, fantasy and freedom, today's glass cages allow for more ambivalent and nuanced experiences; these stem from an emphasis on narcissistic display and exhibitionism but also from controls residing in ever-present and ever-more-subtle surveillance. As a material generating, distorting and disseminating images, glass evokes both the glitter and the fragility of organizations in late modernity. The metaphor of the glass cage suggests certain constraints,

discontents and consolations quite distinct from those we encounter at the high noon of modernity. Shared features of the glass cage of work and the glass cage of consumption are an emphasis on image, an invisibility of constraints, a powerful illusion of choice and an ironic question-mark as to whether freedom lies inside or outside the glass. Above all, there is an ambiguity as to whether the glass is a medium of entrapment or a beautifying frame.

This paper explores further organizational controls in an era dominated by spectacles, images and pictures and seeks to identify some forms of resistance that subvert and undermine these controls. It links glass with today's overwhelming concern over 'transparency', and identifies new forms of resistance, such as whistleblowing and subvertizing, that are particularly aimed at besmirching an organization's image and reputation. We note that, with the decline of trade unionism and organized labour opposition, many employees have lost their collective voice – instead, they occasionally raise their individual voices in opposition, cynical rejection or questioning of managerial practices and discourses. More often, however, they resort to exit – seeking employment elsewhere. In this way, they handle their choices at the workplace in a way directly echoing the choices of consumers – accept what is on offer or look elsewhere, without having to offer explanations and justifications. It will be argued that many of today's forms of workplace resistance (including whistleblowing, distance, cynicism and exit) mirror similar forms of resistance employed by individuals as consumers in questioning, disrupting and, at times, challenging the claims of consumerism.

## GLASS CAGES AND GLASS PALACES

Glass is the signature material of our times, just as steel was the signature material of industrial capitalism in its heyday. Glass starts its existence as a viscous and flexible fluid in order to solidify into transparent mass; thus, its

defining property is optical rather than static -- its ability to allow light to pass through it, even as it reflects, distorts or refracts it. It is a substance which generates changing images, a substance whose mere presence leaves us in no doubt that what it encases is worthy of attention. Glass then evokes image and movement, just as readily as steel evokes structure and stability.

Why glass cage? Camera lenses everywhere, ready to intrude into people's privacy, open plan offices and glass buildings, a quasi-religious obsession with 'transparency', audits, reviews, appraisals, feedbacks, lists and league tables, these suggest that, the glass cage shares the chief quality of Foucault's (1977) Panopticon, that curious combination of Catholic obsession with the omnipotent eye of God and Protestant pre-occupation with clean efficiency. Like the Panopticon, the glass cage acts as a metaphor for the formidable machinery of contemporary surveillance, one which deploys all kinds of technologies, electronic, spatial, psychological and cultural. While surveillance was not unknown in small communities and authoritarian regimes of earlier times, never before have free citizens been spied upon so systematically by snooping governments, insurance companies, employers and other prying organizations (Brin, 1998; Marx, 1995, 1999). Equally, however, never before have the snoopers been themselves targets of snooping. Transparency, the public's 'right to know' whether it applies to governments, state organizations, corporations, charities or the private lives of politicians or 'celebrities' has been elevated to a supreme value and the media have become its staunchest defenders (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003; Vattimo, 1992). As Oliver (2004) aptly puts it, the cardinal sins of today are hype, spin, dishonesty, manipulation, deception, fraud, ruses, trickery, scams, duplicity, cheating, lying, deceit, cons, corruption, and, above all, cover-ups.

There is another side to glass, however. It is not merely a medium asserting transparency – it is also a framing medium, attesting that what is behind it is worthy of attention and admiration. Like the Perspex boxes of magician David Blaine and those of artist Damien Hirst, the glass cage also suggests that the

modern employee is part of a cast exposed to the critical gaze of the customer with all the kicks, excitements and frustrations that this implies. It evokes vital elements of choice, exhibitionism and display which are entirely consistent with the narcissism of our times (Brown, 1997; Lasch, 1980). The employee becomes part of the organizational brand on show, a brand whose glamorous image offers an instant face-lift to all who are part of it. Thus, exposure, with its thrills, horrors, and corresponding desires to protect privacy and create sheltered spaces, is the key to the experience in the glass cage, an experience not limited to employees, but to football managers, politicians and all other public figures when they euphemistically talk of the 'goldfish bowl' which magnifies the tiniest blemishes and exaggerates the smallest imperfections.

The fragility of the glass cage also suggests a brand that is easily tarnished or contaminated by the activities of a few whistle-blowers, disenchanted or simply poorly performing employees. It is also liable to crack, break and collapse. Exposed as they are to the customer's critical gaze, employees find themselves in the position of children capable of embarrassing their parents in the presence of strangers (Fleming, 2005). Thus, the very visibility of individuals inside the glass cage to the unforgiving gaze places certain limits to the overt controls that managers are able to exercise. They can hardly appear to scream abuse or exhortation to the employees. Corporations themselves feel exposed to constant snooping and spying, to threats from prying journalists, whistle-blowers, saboteurs and conspiracy theorists of all types. In Tapscott's (2003) terms, they stand naked.

This glass cage then evokes several fundamental ambivalences of contemporary culture – an ambivalence between the anxiety of continuous exposure and the narcissistic self-satisfaction of being part of a winning team or brand, an ambivalence between defending privacy and craving for celebrity, and an ambivalence of viewing transparency both as a threat to human rights but also as the cardinal defense of those self-same rights.

While formal rationality, and the rational deployment of resources, is the chief force behind Weber's iron cage, the glass cage emphasizes the importance of emotional displays and appearances. In particular, it highlights the emotional labour (the 'smile', the 'look') which has become part of the work of ever increasing segments of the workforce (Fineman, 1996, 2000; Hochschild, 1983), an emotional labour that is not merely external (i.e. discovering emotional displays suitable for the requirements of different social situations) but also internal, that is in coping with conflicts, contradictions and ambivalences and keeping some sense of order in potentially chaotic emotional states. More recently, the concept of aesthetic labour has been proposed (Hancock & Tyler, 2000; Tyler & Taylor, 1998; Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, & Cullen, 2000; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003) which does full justice to the idea that the bodies and movements of employees become part of a corporate aesthetic, itself a major creator of value in many industries.

In all these ways, the glass cage, suggests both the rhetorical 'transparency' and 'openness' of the contemporary workplace, with its open plan offices, its glass facades and its huge atria, but also the fragility of contemporary control systems (For an account of the uses of architecture to create the impression of transparency, see, for example, Barnstone, 2005). Unlike an iron cage which frustrates all attempts at escape with its brutish and inflexible force, a glass cage is discreet, unobtrusive, at times even invisible – it seeks to hide the reality of entrapment rather than display it, always inviting the idea or the fantasy that it may be breached, even if at the cost of serious potential injury. The image of such a cage suggests that it may not be a cage at all, but a wrapping box, a <u>glass palace</u>, a container aimed at highlighting the uniqueness of what it contains rather than constraining or oppressing it. Glass then is a medium perfectly suited for a society of <u>spectacle</u>, just as steel was perfectly suited for a society of mechanism.

## SOCIETY OF SPECTACLE

It was in the 1960s that the idea emerged of capitalism transforming itself from a society of material goods to a society of spectacle, from a mode of production of objects as commodities to a mode of production of images, desires, fantasies and dreams as commodities. While several members of the Frankfurt School (Marcuse, 1955, 1964), Barthes (Barthes & Heath, 1977) and Baudrillard (Baudrillard, 1968/1988, 1970/1988) noted the increasing importance of the visual aspects of culture, it was Guy Debord and his situationist movement that made spectacle the centre-point of their analysis and critique of late capitalism. Writing at a time when most homes did not have a colour television and before digital cameras, computer screens and electronic games had been invented, Guy Debord opened his situationist manifesto with:

> "In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation." (Debord, 1977, paragraph 1)

Allowing for the obvious hyperbole and the parody of Marx, Debord's premise seems to be even more appropriate today than in the 60s when it became the basis of his then fashionable situationist critique (Boorstin, 1962; Edelman, 1988; Elkins, 1998).

Numerous theorists of consumption, including Bauman, Ritzer and Baudrillard, have since argued that spectacle has become the dominant type of experience in late modernity, dominating almost every aspect of our public and private lives. Inspired by Bauman, Ritzer (1999), for instance, argued that spectacle has led to a re-enchantment of the world in late modernity's cathedrals of consumption, such as shopping malls, glass buildings, tourist resorts, sports venues and theme parks, are all minutely planned and

orchestrated shows, with spectators themselves becoming part of the display. Many, if not most, of our experiences in and out of our workplaces are visual experiences, on our television screen and computer monitors, on posters, newspapers and magazines, in our city streets and our homes. Spectacle saturates public and private spaces, offering "the promise of new, overwhelming, mind-boggling or spine-chilling, but always exhilarating experience" (Bauman, 1997p. 181).

Spectacle has assumed ever increasing significance in every domain of social activity. PowerPoint is revolutionizing the nature of education as well as business knowledge and communication, building on its massive visual impact as compared to earlier technologies (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2005; Karreman & Strannegard, 2004; Susskind, 2005). Newspapers, magazines and web-site publishing have all built on powerful visual techniques; the scoop or the expose are increasingly assuming visual rather than narrative forms, as evidenced by the aftermath of shocking images from the Abu Ghraib prison or from Saddam Hussein's execution. "A picture tells more that ten thousand words" increasingly captures the visual rhetoric of our times.

What has changed since the situationist critique of spectacle in the 1960s is that today most theorists of spectacle offer a more equivocal evaluation. Image and spectacle are not seen as invariably inducing passivity and stupefaction. Appropriating images is far from a passive experience.  As consumers in a society of spectacle, we are frequently seduced by image. But we also learn to mistrust image, to question and probe it. We develop skills to read and decode, question and ignore, frame and unframed, combine, dismiss and ignore images (Gabriel & Lang, 2006). Visiting museums and art galleries, we learn to compare contrast, filter out, frame and focus on particular exhibits. Similar skills are used to engaging with the diverse spectacles we observe in our streets, our shopping malls, our theatres and theme parks. Even watching television can become an active experience, especially for young viewers  who constantly interpret images, characters and

plots intertextually with reference to other images, characters and plots. Thompson, for example, notes that

> "Media messages are commonly discussed by individuals in the course of reception and subsequent to it … [They] are transformed through an ongoing process of telling and retelling, interpretation and reinterpretation, commentary, laughter and criticism… By taking hold of messages and routinely incorporating them into our lives .. we are constantly shaping and reshaping our skills and stocks of knowledge, testing our feelings and tastes, and expanding the horizons of our experience." (Thompson, 1995, p. 42)

Not only have we become experts at appropriating images in different ways, but many of our memories assume visual forms. Retention becomes linked to image. As Susan Sontag put it "the memory museum is now mostly a visual one" (2004) – remembering has come to signify having a mental image of an event or of a phenomenon. An event captured on camera becomes instantly more memorable than one of which no visual record is left. If learning requires memory, most people today would more readily remember a well-chosen image than a well-told story, let alone a well-argued case. When most members of the public circulate with cameras embedded in their mobile phones, the rhetorics of enthymemes (quasi-arguments) and oral narratives become subverted and appropriated by the seemingly incontestable authority of the captured image.

## ORGANIZATIONS IN THE GLASS ERA

Organizations have not been immune to the arrival of a society of spectacle. In fact, organizations have been among the prime movers of the onslaught of spectacle. In image, spectacle and show, they have discovered endless

selling opportunities that material objects alone can scarcely touch. Just as many of the products that organizations sell have assumed the character of images, spectacles and shows, many of their core features have also altered to reflect a pre-occupation with the visual experience of the customer as well as the overall preoccupation with image, glamour and display. Gone are the days when a corporation could bank on its solid, traditional, well-tested products; as most firms discover sooner or later, the consumer craves for style, mystique and innovation, not for craftsmanship (unless it can itself be made an object of fantasy). This emphasis on image allied to the vast new possibilities opened by new information technologies, the opening of the world's markets and the lifting of many trade barriers, have led to new forms of organization that have been the object of exhaustive analysis by numerous social theorists, working in the areas of organizations as well as consumer and cultural studies. Along with many others, Sennett in his widely read book, <u>The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism</u> (1998), argued that the key feature of today's Western organizations is flexibility – the demand that employees should be prepared to carry out an infinity of tasks, for short periods, with no guaranteed long-term employment. These new flexible work arrangements are fostered by a variety of factors. They include increased mobility of capital and jobs, the move from manufacturing to services and the ever-present customer ethos. Successful organizations increasingly turn out to be flexible ones, able to spot quickly niches and opportunities in the market and advance to take advantage of them. Flexibility is of the essence as companies must be able to redeploy resources rapidly, constantly stepping into new markets and new products and stepping out of existing ones.

This short-term opportunistic outlook of companies today erodes the value of its employees' loyalty as well as the value of fixed, non-transferrable skills. Instead it values a new range of transferable values that include presentation, social skills, flexibility and adaptability. Companies are willing to pay for these qualities at the expense of qualities like loyalty and competence in fixed

routines. Employees, for their part, develop a short-term, opportunistic outlook which mirrors that of their employers, valuing quick gains, flexible work arrangements and keeping as many of their options open as possible.

The missed opportunity represents the ultimate failure in this state of affairs. Constant job moves, preoccupation with image and the look of cvs, absence of commitments and sacrifices, these stand in opposition with traditional family values of duty, commitment, constancy and caring. Dependence comes to be seen as shameful, evidence of personal failure, in a society where individuals need no-one and are needed by no-one. Salesmanship, showmanship and acting are the essential virtues of the flexible individual, able to sail through today's flexible organizations in a way that optimises benefits. This is what Sennett calls the chameleon-employee, the man or woman who can assume many different personas, playing many different parts and being able to discern which part is suitable for different opportunities.

A deep anxiety and insecurity permeates today's organizations. This, by itself is not new. Earlier generations of employees worried; they worried because of the vagaries of the labour markets, social injustice and lack of control over their fate. Today's employees, however, perceive themselves as having choices, which can make the difference between success and failure. "I make my own choices; I take full responsibility for moving around so much" (1998, p. 29) says one of Sennett's interviewees  says one of his protagonists, who seems to abhor dependency above all else.

In a thought-provoking essay called "Collective myths and fantasies: The myth of the good life in California" (Smelser, 1984, 1998), Smelser prefigures some of the arguments put forward by Sennett and others. What Smelser calls "the myth of California" has become a generic fantasy of our times. California, Smelser argues, represented a land where people 'escape', a land that stood for what is new, for gold, for plenty, and the good life. Like all myths, the myth of California is a collective fantasy. A key feature of this fantasy (in contrast to

the rigors of the old country, neediness, ugliness and hard work) is that California is a place where <u>success comes easy</u> (Smelser, 1984, p. 117). In California, success is no longer the product of hard work, achievement and heroism as it was for the Puritans; instead, success is brought by the magic of 'being discovered', which involves luck, self-presentation, image and finding oneself at the right place at the right time. This recalls the 'chameleon-qualities' highlighted by Sennett, only in reverse – where the chameleon blends with its environment, the star, like gold in the eye of the prospector, shines persistently. This dilemma between displaying chameleon-like flexibility (willingness to play any part, to do any job, to work any patch) while also boasting unique star qualities, seems to define the predicament of the individual under the sway of the Hollywood myth.

This argument is consistent with those put forward by organizational theorists studying workplace relations in sectors of the new economy, the media, entertainment industries, information technology and so forth. If the discontent of modernity was the sacrifice of freedom in alienating jobs, the core discontent of our time as described by Smelser, Sennett and others is the feeling of having choices but being unable to exercise them in a way that generates happiness or even contentment. This is a frustration arising not from an absence of opportunities but from constantly having to look for them, and appearing to miss them when others succeed. It is as if the door of the cage is open, yet as soon as we cross it, we find ourselves in a new cage. Thus choice, instead of freedom (Bauman, 1988), appears to generated entrapment in ever narrower cages.


**<u>New forms of control, and resistance</u>**

In place of the controls that were associated with the modern bureaucracy and Taylorist production lines, many of today's organizations resort to far subtler, yet deeper, controls, controls that are pervasive and invasive, that do not

merely constrain a person, but define a person. These include cultural and ideological controls (emphasizing the importance of customer service, quality and image; affirming the business enterprise as an arena for heroic or spiritual accomplishments etc.), structural controls (continuous measurements and benchmarking, flatter organizational hierarchies etc.), technological (electronic surveillance of unimaginable sophistication), spatial controls (open-plan offices, controlled accesses) and so forth. Following Foucault, we have become highly aware of discursive controls that operate through language, labelling, classification, and so forth, which are invisible, but unyielding. Finally, many of these controls rely on the disciplining gaze of the paying customer – the customer who, chooses, demands and criticizes, the customer who has assumed an ambiguous position as the disciplining agent of management, yet whose critical stare is internalized as a force of self-control and self-policing.

The proliferation of such controls has undoubtedly coincided with the decline of modernist forms of work resistance, notably strikes and the whole area of organized and class-conscious recalcitrance that used to form the bread and butter of industrial relations. The proletarian of even thirty years ago has become a disappearing figure from today's Western organizations, beaten not so much by legal and political measures (although these cannot be discounted) but more importantly by the flight of manufacturing capital to places of cheap labour, lax environmental regulation and political repression. Union membership has declined consistently along with organized collective action, as the proletarian is replaced by the chameleon worker, the worker who believes that they are in control of their destiny, making choices and being free to move from one glass cage to another.

Yet, it would be wrong to view the decline of worker militancy as signalling the end of worker resistance. In spite of the formidable disciplinary mechanisms noted above, today's workplace creates its own possibilities of opposition, with employees displaying a bewildering range of responses which qualify,

subvert, disregard or resist managerial calls for flexibility, commitment and quality. At certain times, employees may comply enthusiastically with some management initiative; at other times, compliance may be grudgingly or ritualistically. At times, fear and insecurity may dominate their responses, yet frequently they show ingenuity in supplanting and contesting management discourses, turning them into objects of amusement, cynicism or confrontation (Gabriel, 1999; Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994; Sturdy, 1998). Thus even within today's glass cages, employees create niches which are unmanaged and unmanageable; in these spaces, individuals can fashion identities which amount neither to conformity nor to rebellion, but are infinitely more complex and rich than those deriving from official organizational practices (Gabriel, 1995). This form of resistance is what Collinson (1994) has termed resistance through distance, a type of resistance that does not engage directly management controls but seeks to side-step them. To be sure, these types of resistance may be compromised or corrupted (Fleming & Spicer, 2004), but they cannot be eliminated.

A different form of resistance, particularly attuned to puncturing the mystique of the glass cage, is whistle-blowing. Whistle-blowing strikes at the heart of the glass cage organization, revealing its fragility and corruption. Not only is there substantial evidence that whistle-blowing is increasing (Near, 1995), but increasingly the political dimension of whistle-blowing is recognized (Miethe, 1999; Perry, 1998; Rothschild & Miethe, 1994). Far from being from representing the desperate acts of a few disenchanted and irrational individuals, whistle-blowing is a widely recognized social phenomenon that keeps corporations on their guard, disciplining them, as much as they seek to discipline their members. Of course, many whistle-blowers may suffer for their actions though this is by no means automatic (Near & Miceli, 1996). Furthermore, following the Enron collapse and other corporate scandals, legislators have sought to encourage and protect whistle-blowing as a legitimate force controlling illegal and unethical organizational practices. Whistle-blowing is a form of resistance attuned to an era of spectacle, when

request for transparency and the cult of the exposé reign supreme. It is also a form of resistance that becomes a spectacle in its own right, as many well-publicised cases suggest.

Whistle-blowing like resistance through distance represent attempts whereby employees seek to find their voices in opposition to an organization's dominant voices. Unlike traditional forms of resistance they tend to be individualistic, ephemeral and disorganized. Voice is the second form of response to an organization observed by Hirschman (1970) in his well-known book <u>Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states</u>. It is a response when loyalty, the first type of response, ceases to be an option. It is a response whose consumer equivalent is often referred to as culture jamming or subvertising. This is epitomised in the work of anti-advertisement magazines, like <u>Adbusters</u> (Littler, 2005; Rumbo, 2002), but it entails all forms of subversion of symbols and meanings disseminated by organizations which may include graffiti, the disfigurement of advertisements or the dissemination of rumours often through the internet. Thus, insiders may resort to whistle-blowing just as outsiders resort to culture jamming to disrupt and challenge today's organizations where it hurts them more – at their image. (To be fair, Hirschman envisaged voice predominantly as the 'reasoned' voice of democratic discourse where dialogue, debate and compromise rather than subversion, undermining and sidestepping. However, his trichotomy has been used increasingly in the manner done here – voice as shrill, oppositional and identity building, challenging the status quo).

Hirschman also identifies a third type of response, exit – leaving the organization. This, I suspect, has become one of the key forms of resistance in many of today's organizations. Chameleon employees build no loyalty towards their employers and may see no point in challenging, questioning and raising their voices. When the going gets tough, they walk out. Many of them leave even before the going gets tough creating a veritable headache for

many managers and keeping management academics busy with proclamations about the "war for talent", "employee retention" and so forth.

Exit assumes many forms. Some employees may leave one employer to move to another one, hoping to enjoy enhanced rewards and career opportunities; others may drift in and out of the world of organizations, working as free lancers, consultants or simply out of work, supported by spouses, parents or friends and downshifting (Marshall, 1995; Schor, 1998). Exit (like whistle-blowing) is a resistance strategy for employees that directly mirrors the consumerism of our times – the very force that sustains today's glass cages. Consumers may not always operate as sovereign decision-makers but they always operate under the illusion of choice. And the ultimate consumer choice is the choice not to purchase an object or a service, not to patronize a particular organization, not to use a particular service (including many so-called free ones), without having to offer any explanations or account for his/her actions. Consumer disloyalty is the consumer's unique ability to simply change his/her allegiances from one source to another at the merest whim. The same can be said about employee disloyalty – the willingness of the individual to just quit without having to account for their actions.

This is a course routinely taken by employees working in bars, fast food restaurants, media and entertainment industries, the tourism sector, estate agents and many other fields of employment. It is now also adopted as a strategy by numerous academics, whose tenure in specific institutions is often short-lived. What used to be seen as a dual labour market, in which the permanent core of employees was privileged at the expense of the casual and precarious ones is now being reversed. A whole army of contingent employees, many of them possessing highly specialised but transferable skills prefer to work freelance, relying on recruitment agencies to match them for short periods of time with suitable employers, optimising their earning capacity and moving on whenever they have had enough (Kunda, Barley, & Evans, 2002; Matusik & Hill, 1998; Polivka, 1996a, 1996b).

Manpower Inc. for example is an employment agency with over 4000 offices in 70 countries, servicing nearly half a million companies per year, including many small and medium size ones as well as most large multinationals. In its books, it has the cvs of 4 million temporary workers in every conceivable occupation. It is currently ranked 136 in the Fortune 500 with sales in excess of $16 billion. It represents the epitome of flexibility for employers and employees alike.

Exit, then, in contrast to voice, represents a "take it or leave it" attitude, an attitude that does not seek to confront or challenge social reality but places the highest value on individual's freedom to act as they please. Slaves, serfs and proletarians rarely enjoyed the opportunity of exit from their bonds. Today's employee, like today's consumer, lives from exit to exit. In this he/she resembles a tourist, this fast emerging archetypal figure of our age (Adkins, 1995; Bauman, 1996; Urry, 1990), the figure who refuses to commit him/herself to any particular destination after the manner of pilgrims, opting instead for a constant sequence of temporary destination with no final end in sight.

What we arguing then is that as the iron cages of modernity are gradually displaced by the glass cages of our times, the consumer emerges as a crucial cultural archetype, driving production but also offering of model for action, thinking and imagining that has started to permeate other spheres of life. The principle of freedom of choice which implies absence of permanent ties and fixed habits is elevated to an almost universal value, obscuring many other values like fairness, equality or justice.

The rise of the consumer has been achieved at the expense of another cultural archetype that dominated earlier periods, the citizen. The concept of citizen implies mutuality and control as well as a balance of rights and duties which is becoming less evident and maybe less attractive in our time. Citizens

are active members of communities, whose voices are listened to, but also who prepared to defer to the will of the majority. Citizens have to argue their views and engage with the views of others. In as much as they can make choices, citizens have a sense of superior responsibility. Choosing as a citizen leads to a very different evaluation of alternatives than choosing as a consumer.

Citizens look at political action as the key to ensuring a better and fairer quality of life. This is part of the democratic tradition that delivered a welfare system in many countries in the 20$^{th}$ century, where the state acted as the guarantor that core human needs, such as education and health, be met independently of ability to pay. This tradition still lingers in our public life but is currently eroding as citizens are supplanted by consumers who pay for the things they want and see happiness as the product of their own free choices. Exit is an option to consumers but not to citizens. Voice is a privilege of citizens but scarcely of consumers.

As we move on from modernity to whatever lies ahead, three cultural archetypes have been drastically reconfigured. Citizens have been dislodged by consumers, class-conscious proletarians are disappearing in favour of chameleon employees who are constantly looking for new opportunities and are unwilling to be tied down to any one job or organization. Finally managers increasingly turn their sights away from the employees and the processes delivering the services and products towards the consumers whose whims, desires and fantasies they strive to stimulate. The consequence of these reconfigurations are new forms of control and new forms of resistance. It is my view that in this, the age of glass cages, exit represents a more wide-spread form of resistance than voice, and that individual voice is more widely-spread than collective voice.

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