

DESTRUCTIVISTAS

Joel Cahen (2012, revised 2016)

With our present day awareness, the arts as we have known them up to now appear to us in general to be fakes fitted out with a tremendous affectation. Let us take leave of these piles of counterfeit objects on the altars, in the palaces, in the salons and the antique shops. They are an illusion with which, by human hand and by way of fraud, materials such as print, pieces of cloth, metals, clay or marble are loaded with false significance, so that, instead of just presenting their own material self, they take on the appearance of something else. Under the cloak of intellectual aim, the materials have been completely murdered and can no longer speak to us.

Jiro Yoshihara – Expropriated from The Gutai Manifesto (1956)

'Love the fact that we humans begin our attack with such ferocity only to be worn down 2mins later. Very un-ape like. Then with our limp limbs and unable to singlehandedly destroy we form teams to increase the damage caused. It was great to at long last depreciate our attachment to stuff and learn just how difficult it is to destroy them. Initially it felt gladiatorial but consumed by so much lack of brawn, the bashing does become emotional, sometimes I was sad for some objects, but in truth it was probably the most passion I ever gave to them – wonderful.'

– Stephen (text message following Scrap Club 11Sep11)

For myself, the burning of the harpsichord didn't so much symbolize a jettisoning of the past, as it did a release of the incessant clinging to tradition (any tradition) to the degree that it stems creativity and responsiveness in the present. To be honest, the burning of the harpsichord was perhaps the most creative (and honest) act that I could contribute with the instrument at that point in my practice.

- Bill Thompson (on his Harpiscord Burning piece 2006)

'It was orgasmic! I felt totally empowered!' – Miklos (text message following Scrap Club 11Sep11)

'It is the denaturing and abstraction of the actual experience of destruction that is the triumph of the technology of that destruction. In this situation, great care must be exercised to prevent theoretical abstractions from becoming part of the suppression of actual experience that culminates in the denial of identity altogether. Such denials conspire in the destruction of bodies and are the unforgivable consequence of mistaking the map for the territory'

- Kristine Stiles Ph.D. 'Selected Comments on Destruction Art' – Book for Unstable Media (1992)

The following text presents questions, possible answers, and tangential thoughts that have surfaced to mind throughout the last five years (since April 2007) of staging the public Destructivist activity that is Scrap Club. It began as an idea shared with Wajid Yaseen as a response to a re-enactment of an Einstürzende Neubauten performance at the ICA in which we both participated in Feb 2007.

Concerto for Voice and Machinery: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Fonem_J_zU

On stage we were using heavy tools such as a banyorammer, drills, angle grinders and hammers to play a scored sonic action. The destructive element of the action was appealing in itself, in fact it was exhilarating. We resolved that everyone should experience that, and a sober view of the extensive surplus of defunct objects on the streets proved that there was no lack of stuff to smash.

Over the next five years we have set up fifteen public Scrap Club events, in warehouses, open spaces, clubs, galleries, festivals and on the street, in London, Amsterdam and Newcastle.



The response was impressive in the way it touched the participants across ages, genders and characters. There was more to it than mindless aggressive expression. Participants revealed a core value in their expression of focussed and intentional destruction. Intentional destruction, hereafter referred to as Destructivist, is such a powerful dynamic in society, yet often debatable in its true motive. It is associated with offensive violence, vandalism and chaos, yet also with constructive and creative processes, it is how the destructive forces in nature express themselves through human action. By framing the direct experience of destruction in such an explicit manner and without any pretence other than its physical expression, can the human destructive dynamic be interrogated before it accumulates prescribed

meaning? Will this process give more insight to the motives for destructive actions in culture, society and between people?

SCRAP CLUB

Scrap Club is an ephemeral public Destructivist act, its initial inspiration is not to act as a response to society's constant reflexion towards order and creativity, nor to act as a metaphor for the destructive powers which counteract it. The core and drive behind Scrap Club touches the unrefined individual before the sensitive and intricate machinery, cabling and coding, demanded dexterous and cautious handling; before the polite gestural codes of table mannerism. Here lives the human nature that finds expression through aggressive confrontation and ego driven hostility. This human nature, is largely masked by social and cultural etiquette, but appears only too often in the guise of tribal valour directed towards violent and harmful confrontation.

As we have seen in Scrap club, destruction brings a sense of great satisfaction to the participant, it is directly drawn from the Destructivist act itself and basks in its afterglow. The passion invested in the transformative act is invested with devotion. There is a sense of true victory. The fact that a glow of satisfaction follows a creative act suggests that this satisfaction in itself is a goal and a justifiable purpose, unconcerned with its creative or destructive catalysts. A desired neuro-biological state that is attained as a result of physical effort to process change in an object regardless of its destruction or creation.

In times where all experience is mediated and filtered by digital, and increasingly uniformed, codices, Scrap Club offers the feel of a real experience that relieves pent up aggression and frustration expressed in choreographic actions intended on inflicting maximum damage on those very objects that impose those codices.

BBC news item: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mYeG0eJY19U>

The objects are released from their sacrosanct, social, aesthetic, semiotic, emotional and mnemonic charge with each blow of the hammer and shatter of chassis while producing supportive shouts from the viewing public.

The participants are gladiators in the arena reclaiming the human creative essence planted in the machines; reclaiming the passion invested in the centuries of technology that led up to these current manifestations; retaliating against the movement restrictions imposed on them by these machines and furniture items and against the technological bind imposed by urban society. Retaliation against the constraints these, often necessary, objects impose on us: Physical constraints, movement constraints, and financial constraints.

Finally, Scrap Club adds another link in the chain of human/object relationship – Right before the inanimate machinations enter the recycling chain, after being designed, created and thoroughly used, humanity has a go at smashing it up, asserting their role as their creators and destroyers. Participants have commented how there is a clear feeling of a sending off, of a funeral rite, despite there not being anything particularly ritualistic about the framework of Scrap Club. As the quotes from Stephen and Bill Thompson suggest before the introduction to this text, the destruction of it, is the peak of their relationship with the object.

There are a variety of other practices that share the destructive elements in Scrap Club and while entire publications could be dedicated to each of these small chapters ahead, they are only briefly mentioned here with the aim of inspiring the reader to further investigation.

THE DESTRUCTION IN ART

'Behind matter, within matter, the creative spirit is hidden' – Wassily Kandinski.

The Destructivist becomes an excavator and executioner of the creative essence, hitherto held in the confines of the utilitarian and consumerist package being smashed, crushed in its last moment of service before joining the recycling basin. The debris resulting, when examined, testifies to the origins of the object, reverting to the schemas and creative spirit that brought it to life in the first place, underneath its branded casing.



Last bow / Scrap Club 2009

True story: A Coca Cola vending machine was found and brought to Scrap Club. It was placed in the arena and was subjected to the hammers of the anonymous participants over several rounds. The item was displayed on a spot lit plinth for several Scrap Club events. The item, now a sculpture/debris in its own

right, was left outside the venue for lack of space to store it. It was found by a scout for a famous artist who sold it to the artist who then signed it and sold it on to an art collector.

In Scrap Club, the participants become artists in that they passionately inflict change on a particular material using a tool. The object, which was 'whole' yet defunct, undergoes a sculpting process changing its shape, utility, structure and aesthetic. It is then displayed on plinths in its new aesthetic, before it either emerges into the art market, or submerges in the metal recycling bin. This reckless disposability of the item is inherent in the association with its lack of utility and its reason for being re-forged in the arena in the first place. The intention behind its emergence as an aesthetic object is not a conscious artistic practice, in the traditional sense, on behalf of the anonymous hammers that struck it, but a by product of a purely Destructivist action, the essential motivation for which is not an aesthetic one.



Scrap Club Amsterdam / Robodok 2010

This disposability touches on an ambiguous core value of an item as an artwork. Is it the artistic intention of the artist that makes the item an artwork? Is it the artists' brand name? Or is it the framework, the gallery or market, in which it is displayed?

Destructive processes have been infused with artistic processes and have resulted in new artistic frameworks so quickly and often that it is difficult to distinguish the purely destructive element within it. Rauschenberg's minimalist abstract paintings and Pollock's painting destroy the previous idea of form, and are just a couple of examples of how what began as a destruction of previous structures developed into a robust genre and a body of work that is then assimilated into the system. It is unclear whether the artists' motivations for initiating the change of style started as a pure Destructivist act and only later formed into a thoughtful constructive method, though punk music in the mid 70s certainly seems to suggest such a

process; here the initial motivation was destructive - to destroy the musicality and 'harmonic' ideals of previous musical styles often due to the musicians display of an inability to match the technical skills required to produce them.

In this sense what has been termed as Destructive Art in the 60s is in a way, the least destructive of these processes as it creates a framework by its very definition of Destructive Art in a similar way that the apocalyptic paintings of John Martin describe a destructive image in a refined and very crafty framed painting.

The aesthetic of destroyed and decayed things is the subject of Wabi-Sabi, the Japanese art of decay and also the aesthetic background of the Japanese Tea Ceremony. There is an appreciation for the ingenuous integrity of natural objects and processes of decay that imbue each object with a different aesthetic.

Similarly, in great opposition to the conveyer belt clones of mass production, after Scrap Club, no two items are alike. They have become sculpting material at the hands of an anonymous force, anonymous because of the shared effort at the arena and due to the lack of personal intention in creating an objet d'art in the process. At the core of the action, there is no intentional cerebral 'deconstruction' and no destruction as a social or as an artistic statement.

In turn, the item becomes sanctified as it bears the purgative force of its assailants. The value of the item (whether kept or discarded), in the eyes of its assailants, increases as it is loaded with their wrath. If that reverence is transferred between people then the item can be glorified and valuable to others.

"A thing is sacred if it cannot be bought or sold; a thing is sacred if it cannot be subject to (further) deconstruction. Flaws, cracks, obsolescence of all and any kind: these are the marks of the sacred, the "symbols of the divine". We must learn from the objects themselves, in their wisdom of age and their dereliction. Intrinsic in human waste is the memory, the aura, of meaning." Jesse Darling – of Waste (2010)

Alongside the fetishist attraction to the item post-scrapclub there can be an almost spiritual attraction to the halo of these emotional actions and the value of the action in itself.



Scrap Club Bocking Street Studios 2012 / Photo Andy Clydesdale

Some items get completely smashed to bits; a surviving shard of circuit board is all that's left. Still, the same meaning can be attached to it, as it bears the memory of the action that extracted it from its dull utilitarian context, of the passion that asserted the action and of the emotional and mental context from which this passion originated. This meaning and the process involved in imbuing it are sufficient for the object to now be regarded as an objet d'art.

RITUAL IN DESTRUCTION

A ritual directed at creating remote harm or good to a person or a thing would involve incantations, movements, particular materials and objects and often a sacrifice or offering from the subject's belongings or body. Rituals in indigenous cultures often involved sacrifice and a fetishisation of the body. These rituals objectify the body and invoke the separation of the spirit from the body. Enduring pain symbolizes the triumph of the spirit over the body and unites the participants by excluding uninitiated individuals from it. There are countless examples of self-harm in tribal rituals, from lashing, scarring to group piss ups at the pub and in some parts of India coconut smashing on devotees' heads is practiced. The destructive energy is directed outwards towards objects, in Greece, breaking plates is a traditional folk custom at weddings and other occasions. It may have symbolized the wealth of the family hosting the event, or fireworks causing noise and some danger in the spirit of celebration. At Jewish weddings, a glass is stomped on and smashed as a symbol of the irreversible act of marriage or the remembrance of the destruction of the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem, balancing the happiness of the festivities with mourning. Warriors who go out to battle with a destructive aim and the knowledge they may not return,

have a protocol they follow that often involves superstitious charms or actions that are intended to fuse their personal intention with the military one.

Destruction can be a very emotional and even spiritual experience, and even as part of a group aggressive expression creates a deep impact. It is this expression of group aggression that, on one hand, Scrap Club fragments by providing a personalised experience, and on the other hand, frames within a gladiatorial contained arena.

The procedure at Scrap Club is uniform for participants, they are picked out at random, enter the space, don their personal protection equipment (PPE), get briefed, disperse in the arena, and proceed to lash out at the objects in front of them. While these actions are not ritualistic at all, they provide a certain rhythm and standardisation which frames the Destructivist action in Scrap Club. The arena (discussed next) gets repeatedly cleaned and reloaded with scrap. These are all mundane actions that simply assist in carrying out the main activity safely and conveniently.

Scrap club events have sometimes included background music, the style of the music was noise (destroyed melody and musical narrative) and percussion played live on found scrap. It intentionally lacked any literal cultural association, such as a particular genre of music, so as not to infuse the personal act of destruction with a particular and contrived ideology expressed in music. Playing Black Metal during the activity, for example, would inform of a particular cultural context different from that of Classical Music. In later Scrap Clubs, music was excluded altogether at the arena. The lack of ritual and the somewhat dry presentation intensifies the personal motivations for destruction without relying on any context created by sound to inform of a specific cultural pretext for the event. A common audio reference such as genre or rhythm would mask something that comes from the participants themselves, an expression of their inner space; it would turn to a stylised social engagement and could inhibit emotions that do not rely on social conformities to form. The ritual of destruction, the swarm activity of it, is indifferent to the psychological and ethical stance of the participants' Destructivist intention, but rather it might exploit this innate energy for other purposes outside the participants' personal agenda.

'One does not escape meaning by dissociation, disconnection or deterritorialization. One escapes meaning by replacing it with a more radical simulacrum, a still more conventional order – like the alphabetical order for Barthes, or the rules of a game, or the innumerable rituals of everyday life which frustrate both the (political, historical or social) order of meaning and the disorder (chance) which one would impose on them. Indeterminacy, dissociation or proliferation in the form of a star or rhizome only generalize meaning's sphere of influence to the entire sphere of non-sense. That is, they merely generalize meaning's pure form, an abstract finality with neither a determinate end nor contents . Only rituals abolish meaning' - Jean Baudrillard – Excerpt from 'Seduction'(1979)

DEMARCATION

All of the places in the individual's psyche are expressed, in some shape or form, in public spaces. Introspection finds its public place in the temple. Dream life and social and aesthetic critique finds its public space in the art gallery. The personal space of storing knowledge and memory finds a public space in the libraries and Internet. The personal space of dealing with fear, anger, aggression and traumatic body sensations finds its public space often in the unfortunate self-destructive arenas of war and inter-personal violence or vandalism.

Scrap Club provides a space for aggression to breathe and vent and for dealing with these personal issues that involve aggression, yet are not violent (violence referring to aggression between people or acts of vandalism). It is contained and controlled and directed towards inanimate items. The arena is a stage where, donned with the performer's goggles and helmet, the participant is expected to release fury onto the machine, the aggression is controlled, focussed and turned into a craft of body movement and precision of impact for maximum efficiency. It is harnessed and directed in a purely Destructivist action that hurts no one.



Scrap Club at V22 Bermondsey 2013

The church contains the concentrated spiritual attention of the community, they are more likely to exercise spiritual introspection within that space and not outside it. Similarly, a place set for Destructivist activities could help focus personal expressions of destruction and contain them. The demarcation of the destruction area provides spectator controlled behaviour where the audience becomes a monitoring unit that moves the participant into self-monitoring. As opposed to the gladiator arena, the entertainment factor is led by the participant, not by the audience. The self-monitoring is not infected by audience

expectation for action but rather allows for surfacing of personal intentions for destruction, which are not necessarily group led. The intentions and their inhibitors are invariably related to a personal morality and ethical value.

THE STRENGTH OF ETHICAL AND MORAL CONVICTIONS IN DESTRUCTION

We were presented with an unused, un-tuned 150-year-old piano. It was a relatively cheaply made piano and sounded bad; an old status symbol planted in many households in the 19th century. It was decorative and aesthetically pleasing in the living room of the family where we picked it up. The piano had a sentimental value to the family but they gave it away. It could have been used as a sound source, but lack of space to store it, led it into the Scrap Club arena and smashed to bits by the participating public.



Smashed upright piano. Scrap Club Cody Docks 2013

During the last five years of Scrap Club activity and discourse, ethical questions regarding the boundaries of vandalism inevitably arose. Even if not regarded as vandalism, people experience a hesitant feeling pre-empting the smashing up of an object. Below are some attributes of objects, which are likely to raise these moral dilemmas.

Emotional sentiment – Anthropomorphically associating an object with the memory of a person, or a relationship, or with a meaningful event brings about a personal moralism. It is then a profound personal

statement to destroy something that has strong personal sentiment despite it lacking utility, aesthetic, or meaning to anyone else. Destroying it can release the emotional attachment to the source of the meaning given to it. A participant at Scrap Club once ceremoniously destroyed a guitar given to him by his abusive father to start the event. This, to his own admission, helped him deal with the strong hateful emotions he had for him.

Symbolic value – Smashing a logo or sign that is specifically linked with a certain ideology, product or identity could be construed as a political act can have ambivalence as to the purpose of smashing it. In the eyes of the participant the object might be no more than a discarded object or by destroying it the participant might be exercising revenge or making an aggressive filled comment on the actions or the ideal behind the logo. For example, we found a plastic BP logo in a skip, though it was collected it was not presented to be smashed at Scrap Club in case it was viewed as a comment on BP's policies. This attitude relates to our aversion from playing contextual music in the background; it prevents imposition of a political, social or ideological meaning onto the Destructivist process.

Beauty – A personal aesthetic judgement can be a powerful deterrent when considering smashing an object. There is a shared sentiment among all people of all cultures that beauty must be preserved, although they might differ over what counts as beautiful. Yet even with beauty there can be an overpowering sense of its destruction as if exactly in spite of it, a malevolent impulse that makes the point that beauty can be transitory and the self prevails.

Heritage – For the sake of historical preservation it is considered vandalism to destroy relics of ancient cultures. Is it because they are old / rare / valuable? This is a trait that changes with society. Archaeology is a science that is engrained in Western thought yet the very same cultures have that now practice it have participated in the destruction of other cultural heritage centuries earlier when Christianity took over pagan religions. Poverty can influence priorities where the present and future are more important than the past. Or societies could divert attention from particular histories for the sake of incitement and indoctrination. Preservation and destruction of historical artefacts are social ethics acquired through particular education and cultural awareness.



found online, Daesh supporters destroying ancient statues in Syria

Utility – Scrap Club happens at a time where the machines are miniaturizing in favour of tiny electronic devices. The medium is disappearing; telecommunication and entertainment have shrunk to fit in a small palm. The most common machines led to the Scrap Club arena are large screen televisions; computer monitors, desktops and household equipment. There might come a time when there is less and less to smash. Would that be a time when we are totally bound to the items that surround us - All miniaturized to fit on clothing. The exoskeleton would fit too snugly to remove.

If the object works, then it's 'alive' and destroying it urges us to apply the same logic that makes killing immoral and would make destroying a perfectly working object immoral. However, in these affluent days of mass production where costs are cheap and objects easily replaceable, there is less lament for their destruction. At Scrap Club we present items that have been discarded, excluded from the utility and value economy, and either dumped on the roadside, in skips or donated by their owners. Destroying a fully functional item in a public space is an act driven by a socially conscious agenda. It's an act of violence as is attacking somebody else's property. Such an attack is publicly regarded as vandalism, although this latter notion is largely a socio-economic concept and as such changes with context.

It could be argued that plenty of surplus functional products and food products are destroyed regularly. Yet if the owner destroys such products, which could be useful to other members of society, are they vandals in a broader social sense? As providers of necessary products, do they have a social obligation that they are failing?

Monetary value – If it can sell then it has value. How important is the Destructivist act? Is it worth the financial loss of not selling it? For example, an arcade machine, could have had sold for a couple hundred pounds on eBay, yet it was given away to Scrap Club with a blessing, or a brand new industrial printer probably worth thousands of pounds, yet was discarded at a scrap yard.

All these issues imply that there is a Choice. What do you choose to vent your aggression on? This implies self-control through assessing your degree of Destructivist satisfaction in relation to the degree of moral ambivalence you are faced with when considering raising a hammer over a particular object. This self-control is indeed good to exercise as well as the strength and validity of your moral convictions. So there is a choice as to what to destroy, but is there a choice whether to destroy or not? Is it a necessary process? Change involves destruction, and at Scrap Club we have seen that participating in it is particularly satisfying. The very process is engrained in human action as a precipitator of change. When does the process become Destructivist, fuelled by a desire to destroy?

DESTRUCTION

As we have seen, Scrap Club focuses on the Destructivist act as an end in itself and not as a means to an end (namely 'a purely Destructivist act'). This is a shift from the paradigm that regards actions as aiming at creation. Since all creations are integrated equally as destructions in the flux of change (the destructive/creative cycle) the shift is simply regarding the destructive act as an end to a creative one. This dichotomy is, obviously, a particular personal perspective. Change can be seen as an un/intentional flux in that the outcomes are neither regarded as beneficial or harmful nor as creative or destructive, but as a casual constant situation. It can be seen in much the same way that a strong earthquake, a volcanic eruption, a storm or any of nature's dynamics just happens without a need or cause for classification. The definition of destruction through creation is therefore a tautology, one that is prominent in Western thought. However, there is a clear idea of what a Destructivist act is, it is a process that causes damage to the intentional function, aesthetic or cohesion of something.

The act of creation is glorified, encouraged, debated, dissected and taught. It is a fundamental drive that refines knowledge and puts it into practice, materialising it and establishing it as new grounds to acquire more knowledge. The reasons behind this drive to create and form are intrinsic with the survival instinct that calls on us to formulate thoughts and respond to how we find ourselves situated in the world. Knowledge and facts are attained by the dissection, deconstruction and analysis of phenomena that progressively isolates it into simpler quanta, such as the reduction of matter to its tiniest components using nuclear and cosmic grade explosions at CERN Hadron Collider. By fragmentation and isolation, these phenomena can be tested for particular attributes and, through observation, can help form a larger vocabulary, a richer language and understanding.

It seems obvious that the above acts of destruction are always done as a means to a creative end. However, this informs on a set of values that give justification to the destructive act, which has been known to involve a great deal of moral ambivalence. For example, for the army generals the destructive act of war and death of troops is a means to a creative end of victory, while for the soldier who gets blown up, the destructive act is the end. This applies to countless other examples, political moves to create new markets by destroying existing economies, destroying rainforests, societies, destruction as a means to isolate a dogma (killing off people who have different ideas) thereby attempting to reduce the vocabulary of cultures.

By shifting the relational observation of destruction and regarding it as an end in itself, it will be possible to examine if there are other motivations for destructive acts, which might be otherwise masked under the guise of creative aims. Such motivations are perhaps as intrinsic and intuitive to human experience, as natural phenomena, as the drive to create. The vocabulary would hopefully expand by dissecting and deconstructing Destruction.

DESTRUCTION AS AN END IN ITSELF

There are known examples of Destructivist actions that have been done with no apparent or standardised creative forecast. Mostly, these have been directed at individuals or groups of people rather than inanimate objects as violent outbursts and confrontations. This destructive drive, or the 'death drive' has been noted by Sigmund Freud as being the opposite to the 'libido', the urge to create.

VIOLENCE IN THE STREETS

Fighting and violent attacks against other people are more frequent occurrences than wished for. Fighting as a drunken brawl or as bashing simply for the sake of causing physical damage is not uncommon. It is possible that these acts are thought of as a sport, the competitive test of ones strength and endurance. The reasoning behind this form of violence can be sprawled upon countless journals and it is not within the scope of this text to go into psychological or socio-demographic analysis of the motivations of interpersonal violence. As a whole though, it can be safely assessed through observation by anyone who has witnessed a drunken fight or been involved in one that the 'fun' is in the actual violent action rather than the achievement of any particular goal. The same goes for casual bashing of innocent passersby that groups of youths partake in only too regularly.

Anger, frustration, indifference, vengeance are all emotions that play a part. The neuro-biological process on its adrenalin, serotonin, endorphins and hormones plays a large part in fights and in various sports. In aggressive behaviour, when directed at a living being, this is expressed by a sense of competitiveness and sense of danger that contribute to the chemical intoxication and fervour that accompany violent confrontations.

YOUNG DESTRUCTIVISTAS

Two Scrap Clubs in Amsterdam, in 2009 and 2010, were held at an outdoor festival attended by families. While the grown-ups were smashing stuff up in the main arena, the children, aged 3 – 12 were behind the scrap heap taking stuff and smashing it with sticks or stomping on it. The parents urged us to do a children's round and so we did. The questions we considered were whether this is a bad example, would they now smash everything in the house or be more liable to vandalism? Will this 'licence to smash' be indiscriminate?



Scrap Club Amsterdam 2010

Geared up in the protective equipment, the children held hammers and proceeded a ferocious smashing of stuff, like the adults, much to the cheering of the crowd and their parents. The effect was similar, the children exhibited the same elation the grown-ups did, the parents thanked us saying that 'the children really needed that'. A vivid memory is that of a 3 year old girl lifting a toy over her head, teetering as if she is falling under its weight, and flinging it on the ground to the cheer and applause of her parents.

Very young children are known to be destructive almost in the way that cats are to insects. Children seem to test the structure and durability and character of an object by destroying it, finding out its material boundaries, its function is not important and hence the disregard for its value as a whole object. It is possible to relate this destructive nature to malicious intent, in that children of a certain age know that the act will draw attention from their parents, and they are testing the limits of what is allowed and what isn't. The child is empowered by taking control of an eventuality and a process and creating an effect without the use of language that it lacks to express itself at a young age. However it is also possible to deduce that the actual act is enjoyed for satisfaction of curiosity and purely for the sight and feel of the destructive process and the ensuing chaos. Chaos vs order.

PUNISHMENT

The only accepted social reference to destruction as an end in itself is in the idea of punishment, religious doctrines being the most prevalent evidence. Punishment here is examined in its fatalist consequences and not as a correctional reformative act. Examples are in genocides and religious wars.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." {Hosea 4:6}

In the Old Testament, Sodom and Gomorrah, or Noah and the flood, are natural destructive phenomena being superimposed with Destructivist meaning according to a particular ideology with the apparent motive to purge unbelievers from society.

"And when we intended to destroy a city, We command its affluent (to obey Allaah) but they defiantly disobey therein; so the word (i.e. deserved decree) comes into effect upon it, and We destroy it with (complete) destruction." {al-Israa (17): 16}

In this case, the reason for destruction is punishment for not having the same belief system as the destroying group. Non-conformity bears the punishment of annihilation as it is not only seen as an obstacle that weakens the collective intention but can be necessary in order to solidify that intention and test the groups' unity.

However, this is not the reasoning presented to the people who are doing the destruction, rather it is the authoritarian voice of God which they must obey. This punishment is explained as a result of people deterring from the word of God. 'To satisfy God' or 'God's Will' is a dead-end explanation; there is no creative justification to the ensuing destruction. The whole belief system supports the unquestionable destruction in the name of God and therefore gives justification to a Destructivist act as an end in itself; moral and ethical issues absolved. This is true for any kind of authority and the subjects' perception of its place within its jurisdiction. In the subjects' view, Destructivist, punitive, and violent actions under 'Blind' compliance with a social, deistic or hierarchical authority are justified as these are expressions of otherwise immoral and unethical actions in so-called 'emergency' situations.

This poses the question whether fatal non-reformative punishment is a *result* of an inherent 'pure Destructivist' drive, which has pretty much lost its personal expression in these societies, or whether the need to punish and to inflict doom is a *source* of the pure Destructivist dynamic in a kind of precognitive act of social cleansing.

SANITATION OF DESTRUCTION

An item gets disposed of when it loses its functional or aesthetic utility, or as a result of its over-production and excess. When resources are scarce, society recycles; this enters the social and personal

consciousness as a moral duty. Regardless, the process of disposal is a Destructivist one. It is done by an agency tucked away at the industrial areas of the urban landscape. The personal contact the public has with the Destructivist element is reserved to a handful of employees at scrap yards while consumers are faced with an even larger display of brand new products.

Although there is a practical aspect to distancing the destructive process from the residential public, in terms of urban planning and toxicity, it is obvious that there is a kind of sanitation process that distances the consumers from the detritus and useless images of the consumed products. This also emerges in the UK meat industry, blood is disposed of as a potential harbinger of disease, it is expunged from view and the consumer is faced with glossy meat cuts wrapped in cellophane. In places like India and developing countries, people might have a different attitude to Destructivist activity. There, scrap is fully integrated and used visibly and openly; the object is stripped of its consumerist spangles and regarded for its material properties. It seems that one of the indications as to the degree of development of a country (pretty much based on its degree of technological development), is its degree of sanitisation of the public and private domain from scrap, (where sanitisation is the concealment of scrap, not hygiene).

THE SPECTACLE OF DESTRUCTION

In some cultures the destructive elements and detritus surface in the entertainment industry. So while it is sanitized in daily life it pollutes cinema and television. Comparing the portrayal of destruction in the media between different cultures (in displays of gore, war, apocalypse, etc) provides an insight into the different social attitudes towards destruction and therefore the personal ones. It is interesting to enquire about the motives behind the obsession Hollywood has with disaster films and compare them to the Japanese obsession with disaster films.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkzRXyWF3SY>

One distinction is that, generally speaking, in Japanese disaster films, the disaster is not an imminent wipeout but a wild uncontrollable force that is confronted and dealt with for the purpose of restoring order showing the resilience of the people and the strength of technology.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vGBUu2iafg>

While in American disaster films are a form of absolution, after the total destruction, apocalypse, there can be a new start. This perpetuating quasi-puritan New World fantasy is the primary drive behind the founding of the United States but also, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pointed out, the motivation of Capitalism is a creative destruction:

The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions. [...] And how

does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

(Marx, Karl; Engels, Friedrich [1848]. The Communist Manifesto)

The phenomenon of the online viral video gives another insight to the attraction of the spectacle of destruction. The ISIS videos, for example, that show destructive performative acts such as the executions or the destruction of archeological sites, are celebrated as well as abhorred. The repeated imagery of the Twin Tower collapsing is devastating as well as fascinating. The spectacle of destruction can have this dual nature, which touches on basic human emotions, fears and wonder. It is arguably one of the main reasons there is such a cathartic sensation about the destructive act.

CONCLUSION

Destruction is a seed of change, of transformation. An alchemical process of seeking new territory and new combinations begins with this transformation and change. A common theme in many stories and myths, which have enchanted humanity for millennia, is this very transformation, and it has proven to be the point of attraction for these works of fiction.

When destroying an object there is a random transfiguration of the object. All it takes is a nudge and a destructive process commences, leading to an apparent chaotic result that goes against all that is constructed and orderly. It introduces chaos and chance processes to all that is structured and man-made, the product of knowledge, order and civilisation. Before a person learns to integrate within the constructs and constricts of society, and as we know despite of it, these processes are naturally expressed as destruction for no apparent reason, destruction as an end in itself.

In fact, destruction is fun. There is a basic enjoyment, or what Lacan terms *jouissance*, in engaging with a destructive process. It is through this intrusion to one's symbolic universe that, as Slavoj Žižek puts it in *The Plague of Fantasies*, '...the subject encounters the density of being'. There is an assertion of one's spirit in relation to the environment that one must constantly respond and adapt to, and the abandon of consideration for social and material constricts. The fact that a society tries to conceal and hijack this apparently fruitless drive with explanations and conducts that serve its, often unethical, cohesive

requirements and agendas, only manipulates the perpetrators and takes the destruction entirely out of its initial context which is an arguably ethical, personal and subjective initiative. An expression of a Destructivist action therefore should remain within this realm of the personal and respectful to its motives. It is important to achieve a state where destruction is exercised individually as a supposedly meaningless action within a safe framework, like the rationale behind a white cube gallery for displaying art works. Hopefully only then the destructive actions of the group can be clearly reconsidered by the participating individual within the group for their ethical grounds.