is an extreme example of the flexible personality now demanded by, what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello call 'the new spirit of capitalism'. Such a personality must be capable of participating, with total energy and enthusiasm, in whatever project engages her at that moment. On the other hand, she must also have the ability ‘to disengage from a project in order to be available’ for a new one. ‘Even at the peak of engagement, enthusiasm, involvement in a project’, the flexible personality must be ‘prepared for change and capable of new investments’. It would seem that in such a world, where the business ontology dominates, and appears determined to evacuate the culture of all vitality (the entropic dissipation of all energy) old ideas about authenticity are out dated. However writing about Richard Kelly’s film Southland Tales, Steven Shaviro draws a distinction between authenticity and sincerity:

‘but sincerity is precisely not a question of depth, or of authenticity, or of some fundamental inner quality of being. Sincerity merely implies a certain consistency in the way that a being acts and presents itself, without presupposing anything about the basis of this consistency. Graham Harman defines sincerity as the way that a thing always just is what it is.

John Beagles is an artist.

Footnotes:


2. Elmyr de Hory features in Orson Welles’ (aka the ‘charlatan’) film, ‘F For Fake’. De Hory claimed to have produced half of the Modigliani’s in American museums and to have received a punch on the nose for trying to sell a fake Salvador Dali to Salvador Dali. The film also features Clifford Irving, who, in one of the more brazen hoaxes of the twentieth century faked reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes autobiography (Hughes, who always used the alias John T. Conover, was still alive at the time, but holed up on the top floor of a Las Vegas penthouse). Irving’s book ‘Hoax’ (later made into a film with Richard Gere) is an entertaining narrative of the ‘facts of the story’. However, perhaps the best ‘true story’ featuring Howard Hughes is Jonathan Demme’s 1983 film ‘Melvin and Howard’, which recounts Melvin Dummar’s alleged meeting with Hughes late one night in the desert, and his posthumous citing in Hughes ‘fake Mormon will’.
3. The accolade of Britain’s finest art forger must surely go to Lewisham born, Tom Keating, who, if you believe wikipedia, faked over 2000 works by 100 different artists. A popular, folk hero for many, Keating claimed he had made the forgeries as a protest 'against those art traders who get rich at the artist's expense'. Irritatingly for the auction houses, which he regular infiltrated with his fakes, he refused to provide a detailed catalogue of his masterpieces.

4. Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa’s (author of The Book of Disquiet) use of heteronyms (estimated by the author to amount to up to 75 distinct ‘personalities’) is perhaps the best example of this.

5. Mark Chapmans reading of J D Salinger’s novel ‘Catcher in the Rye‘ led him to ‘explaining’ his execution of John Lennon, by claiming that like Holden Caulfield in the book, he was fed up with all the phony’s in the adult world. Chapman told police investigators "I’m sure the large part of me is Holden Caulfield, who is the main person in the book. The small part of me must be the Devil."


7. The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne and Michael Winterbottom’s film ‘Cock and Bull’ (2005) both explore this idea.

8. Catfish (2010), Borat (2006), Bruno (2009) and I'm Still Here (2010). The ‘real person’ who set this train in motion was however, Gary Shandling, whose long running TV series the Larry Sanders Show (1992-1998) while firstly being probably one of the best comedy shows ever to air, also set a template for others to follow in its collapsing of the distinction between real and fake.

9. Chuck Barris’ Confessions of a Dangerous Mind and Bill Zehme’s biography of Andy Kaufman, Lost in the Funhouse are exceptional examples of this.


11. The presence of the giant squid was first revealed to me in Arthur C Clarkes thirteen part series ‘Arthur C Clarkes Mysterious World’ broadcast on the 9th of September in 1980, in the episode titled ‘Monsters of the deep’.


13. Sherlock Holmes creator Conan Doyle was of course famously ‘fooled’ himself by the apparent photographs of fairies produced by two little girls in Cottingley in 1917. One of the ‘girls’ involved, Frances Griffiths remarked "I never even thought of it as being a fraud – it was just Elsie and I having a bit of fun and I can't understand to this day why they were taken in – they wanted to be taken in." The most interesting retelling of the Cottingley Fairies story is Nick Willing's film ‘Photographing Fairies’ which adds a tab of hallucinogens to the tale.

14. Chris Morris rules this area. Brass Eye stands alone in the history of British TV. For publicly humiliating Noel Edmonds, statues should be erected of Morris. Earlier instances of this form include Ghostwatch (1992) and the slightly more mysterious ‘Southern Television Hoax of 1977’ when the broadcast signal was hacked by a extra terrestrial called Asteron, who informed the viewers that "all your weapons of evil must be destroyed" and that "you have but a short time to learn to live together in peace." Orson Welles radio spoof of War of the Worlds is an obvious early source of inspiration as well.
The Disappointed Fake

15. For example Clemens von Wedemeyer’s films detailing the story of the Tasaday Tribe, shown at the Barbican Gallery in 2009.

16. The implanting of false memories is explored in Philip K Dick’s ‘We Can Remember It for You Wholesale’, which after, a Dan O Bannon script became Total Recall with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

17. The void created by the disillusionment with the authority of the state has been filled with conspiracy theories and theories of conspiracy (see “Conspiracy theories” by Robin Ramsay published by Pocket Essentials). Differentiating between the two articulations of distrust is important. Conspiracy theories are often more extreme, fanciful and exotic in their search for explanations. For example in the states Lyndon LaRouch has offered the entertaining mega conspiracy that America’s slide into social apocalypse is the result of continued British control (apparently the war of independence was a ruse). According to LaRouch, old misery guts (aka the queen) runs the worlds drug trafficking and was directly responsible for the Kennedy assassination. This variant of paranoia is of course patently rubbish (almost as good as David Icke’s lizard conspiracy). However the ridiculous notion of the queen as the uber drugs baron of an international crack corporation shouldn’t be allowed to rubbish the more credible theories of conspiracy. For while mega conspiracy theories reduce the complexity of political and social life to a single line, theories of conspiracy actually offer infinitely more complex versions of why we are in the state we’re in. In Britain talk of theories of conspiracy is routinely waved away by the dominant political class as crackpot nonsense. However as numerous authors have shown Britain’s secrets are no less disturbing than those of America. Special Branch’s operations in Northern Ireland, specifically the revelations of their involvement in aiding Loyalist gunmen in the political assassination of prominent republicans, and MI5’s role in the states destruction of the trade union movement (see “The Enemy Within – the Secret War against the Miners” by Seumus Milne published by Pan 1994), specifically during the miners strike, are just two of the more well known examples.

18. Occam’s razor.


20. Please see the group of Islington anarchists sitting in front of me now as I write this on the plane. Please also see Pulp’s Common People and the Television Personalities ‘Part time Punks’ for more erudite explorations of ‘slumming it’.


23. Inauthentic radicals’ such as the Yippies, motherfuckers and King Mob, who famously authored this piece of graffiti - ‘Same thing day after day- tube - work - dinner - work - tube - armchair - TV - sleep - tube - work - how much more can you take? - one in ten go mad, one in five cracks up’.
The Disappointed Fake

24. David Manning the fictitious film critic created by the Sony Corporation to give their films positive reviews.

25. The subjective nature of the real is visually and sonically explored in Michelangelo Antonioni’s ‘Blow Up’ (1966) and Francis Ford Coppola’s ‘The Conversation’ (1974).

26. Danny La Rue, Dick Emery and Les Dawson. Now Matt Lucas and David Walliams have prosthetically reinvented female impersonation in Little Britain characters such as Babs. Personally I miss the cultivated wit of Les Dawson's scripts.

27. Leo Marks, English cryptographer, playwright and scriptwriter (author of Michael Powell’s ‘Peeping Tom’). Marks used poems to hide secret messages for agents in WWII, most famously in the poem / code ‘The life that I have’, written for the agent Violette Szabo.

28. The practice of blacking up, for me, reached its nadir in David Lean’s ‘A Passage to India’, a film where ‘Sir’ Alec Guiness did much to destroy his reputation by impersonating an Indian.

29. The full face transplant has been a reoccurring feature in popular entertainment most obviously George Franjous ‘Les yeux sans visage’ (1960) John Woo’s ‘Face off’ (1997) and perhaps most disturbingly in Asif Kapadia's ‘Far North’ (2007). Today, as Donna Haraway noted in Simians, Cyborgs and Women ‘the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion’

30. The story of Jasper Maskelyne (1902–1973), a magician who was used by the British military to fool the Germans in WWII is told in David Fisher's book, ‘The War Magician’. The best other example is the amusingly titled practice of Dazzle camouflage aka Razzle Dazzle or Dazzle painting. Edward Wadsworth’s Painting of Dazzle-ships in Drydock at Liverpool, (1919) records the practice.

31. The Mitford Sisters. The best story about the Mitfords is that the reason Unity Mitford was hidden away on her return to Britain in 1940 (she had been in Hitler’s inner circle in Berlin and was a rival for his affections with Eva Braun) was that she was pregnant with Hitler’s child. The story, fanciful as it is, is worthy of a British version of the Boys from Brazil (with Merchant ivory production values). There are after all, no shortage of ‘types’ who could rightfully claim the heir to this throne.

32. Of the various people able to channel the dead, my personal favourite is Derek Acorah. My grandmother was very fond of Doris Stokes, who put her in contact with her dead father.

33. Rock Hudson being the most famous. Cary Grant, Joan Crawford (who allegedly had a one nightstand with Marilyn Monroe) and James Dean. More recently Tom Cruise.

34. Dr James Barry. The excellent BBC series ‘A Skirt through History’,(1994) told the story of how Barry, who was a leading military surgeon in the 19th century was in fact Margaret Ann Bulkley. The details are stranger and more compelling than this space permits –please see the post http://www. Vanhunks.com/cape1/barry1. Htm
35. Euro Disney doesn’t deliver on its dark promise to assault you with the Disney grin, what Ivor Southwood in his book, ‘Non stop inertia’, calls the ‘forced smile of compulsory enthusiasm’. Southwood’s book draws heavily on Arlie Russell Hochschild earlier book, ‘The Managed Heart’, written in the 1980’s, which formulated a notion of emotional labour to account for the new demands and imperatives of workers in a post fordist economy. The worker here is someone who in western cultures at least, is involved not in the production of material goods, but the creation of psychological affect, of emotional states and responses. At its heart, Hochschild’s analysis further expands Zygmunt Bauman’s assertion that in liquid modernity, we have shifted from a culture where what counted for workers was their savoir faire (knowing how to do things) to savoir etre (knowing how to be, constructing and expressing a personality that communicates the required emotions demanded by the company). In this analysis workers become performers, with the arena of work a set within which workers act. The emotional labourer is constituted and regulated through supervision and training, with the workers personal identity and history used as raw material to be transformed into the end product, the creation of a happy worker who’s primary aim is to produce a desired emotional state in the customer. Workers become mood generators. Writing about his own experiences of being subjected to the regulatory systems employee now use to create this performing worker, Southwood writes how working for a company now is not so exclusively about selling the products but internalizing a ‘particular way of performing thinking feeling which makes workers claim this positive attitude as their own and recognize it in others, as something natural and almost spiritual rather than artificially imposed’. The best emotional labourers make this all seem effortless and entirely natural, after all as Ivor Southwood notes, not to do so, would be to break the spell, to show the artifice.

36. Celebration, USA: Living in Disney's Brave New Town (1998) by Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, offers a partial insight into the day to day ‘reality’ of living in the Disney corporations model American town.

37. "Authenticity is the benchmark against which all brands are now judged” John Grant, The New Marketing Manifesto in Authenticity: Brands, Fakes, Spin and the Lust for Real Life by David Boyle (2004).


39. For a fully description of these forces see The New Spirit of Capitalism by Luc Boltanski; Eve Chiapello (2007).