

Archaic Economy

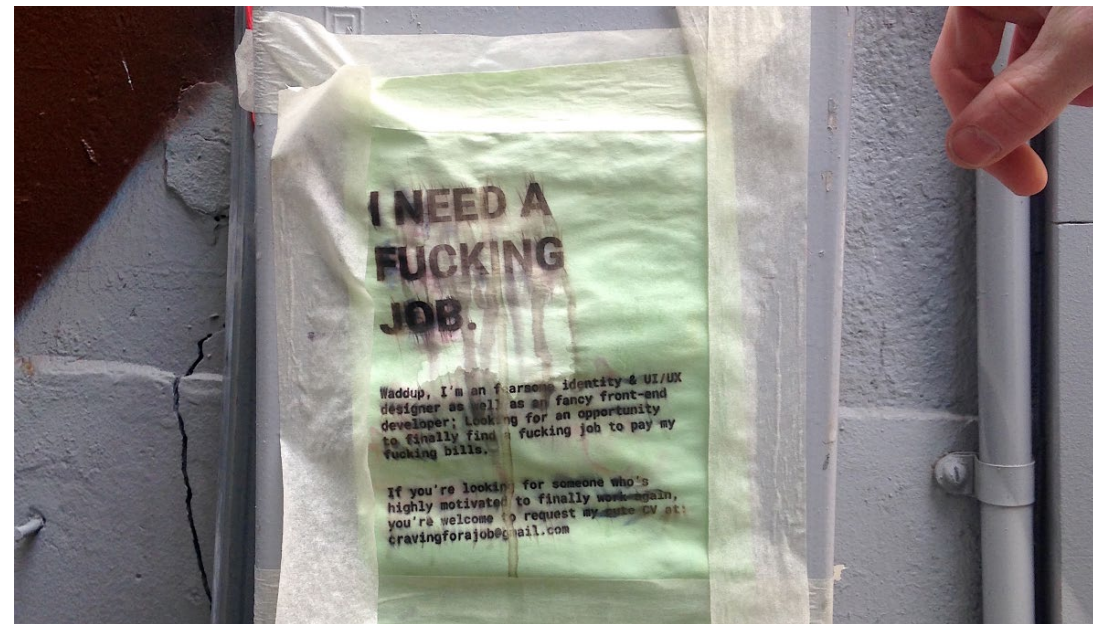
Lloyd Corporation's Collection
of Street Notices

Martin Westwood

Washing machine services; a book on the imminent collision of Earth with a red planet; a Local Council blocks public access to residential roads; telephone numbers adjoined to the word 'massage'; accusations that an elderly Windrush-era citizen has been abducted from his home; a value-for-money community decorator offers to repaint your bedroom; buy a slice of cake to assist with the cost of neutering cats; address your conscience concerning injustices against immigrants. This is an incomplete list of various propositions, notices and invitations found in Lloyd Corporation's (LC) collection of found street notices and advertisements.

Any grouping of multiple items suggests at least two related questions before this grouping might graduate to become, singularly (and identified by the capitalization of the first letter) a Collection. A Collection is dependent upon sense being shared between the objects collected: to constitute a type the most outlying example must modulate, contaminate and share some capacity with the most central or middling. So, firstly, exactly what type of thing has been collected here? Secondly, what sort of fractionalisation, ordering or classification of this material extends from this identification of type: if there is a type here, then, are there sub-types?

A ready-to-hand model of ordering public notices and advertisements exists within newspaper and magazine publishing:



Classified Ads are advertisements grouped, or classed, according to the vending or purchasing of various, often local, goods or services. Unlike classified ads LC's street notices are not categorized and published according to an editorial of use values: Wanted – Kitchen Appliances, Services – Beauty and Salon, Personals – Men seeking Men, Jobs Offered and Wanted, Vehicles – Trucks, Property and Lettings, Announcements etc. These categories organize the object of the transaction's utility alongside elemental changes in the directionality of this transaction: requests, offers and announcements are separated. In contrast, the deployment and placement of the street advertisement follows no editorial organization of utility nor arrangement for the rental of column inches. Categorizing on the basis of utility is no more intrinsic to LC's selection of material, in or out of their street context, than any of the classes suggested by Borges in his *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* are intrinsic to animals.¹ Rather, the authors of these street announcements, by eliminating the editorial intermediary of publishing/distribution and circumventing the cost of renting column inches, communicate more directly to their local populations – 'person to person' as Lloyd Corporation state.

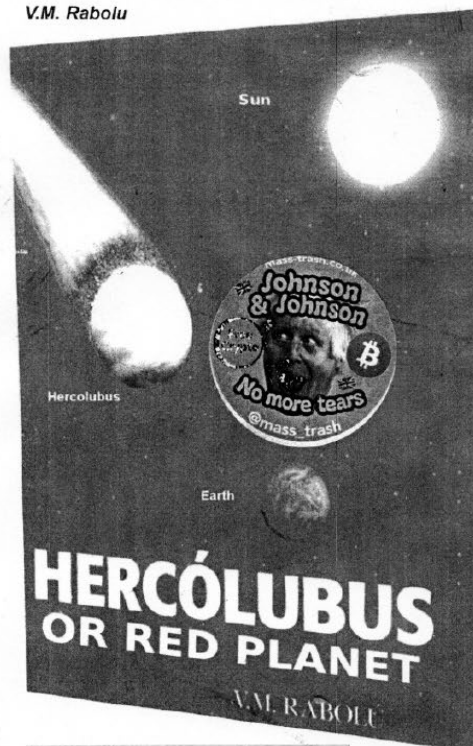
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Rather than classifying according to utility perhaps a more germane classification system could be constructed for these notices based on the overlap between the notices' explicit invitations to forms of engagement and their mode of address: a parallel between their invitation to specific transactional practices and their communicative appeals.

My motivation to address the material in this way stems from Richard Seaford's list in his book *Money and the Early Greek Mind*. Seaford itemizes ten categories of transaction for allocating goods and services to be found in Homer's epic poems. In a spectrum from violent seizure to traded exchange Seaford's list runs as follows: violence, prize, gift, distribution, reward, compensation, ransom, bride-price, slavery, exchange.² Though only some of these categories capture the practices or discourses of LC's selection, and others clearly do not, the gist of Seaford's list of processes of allocation is most relevant.

Following and expanding upon Seaford's example a brief list of the types of transaction motivated in LC's selection would include the following: reward (lost pets or information leading to the prosecution of an offender), restoration (found pets – "we would love to return the rabbit to its owner"), redistribution of resource (free book), gift (free entry to a conference), investment (property: 7.5% returns), self-investment (skills acquisition), donation (Nervemeter), assistance (with your college assignment), rental (property letting), loans, fundraising (the cost of a slice of cake and a cup of tea funds cat sterilization), merit ("Do you know someone exceptional?"), mutual exchange (of apartments).

There are frequent references to perceived and actual levels of politically sanctioned violence, theft, injustice (Alex Chalk MP accused of breaching representation of the People's Act), evictions (20 Lillieshall Road, SW4), description of a hostage situation (Julian Assange), accusations against states for incarceration, the restriction of citizen's freedom of movement, political corruption or turning a blind eye to the suspicious death of a vulnerable member of society. All of which elicit requests to respond by either petition, investigation, punishment or compensation.

Many of these notices offer goods and services for free.

* FORD
* VERY FOCUS ZETEC FOR SALE
CLEAN CONDITION

TAXED \$M.07



£ 899

OR
NEAR
OFFER

PLEASE RING JIMMY IF INTERESTED?
MOR: 029411260682

However, amongst those adverts whose goal is to achieve a financial transaction, the statement of any specific pecuniary cost or benefit is frequently avoided. Rather, these pecuniary transactions are primarily couched in terms of altruistic acts of help and assistance. The exceptions, notable by the infrequency of their occurrence, prove the rule that, at the least, this is an arena of bespoke services. What is evident about these offers to purchase is that they aim to persuade on an ethical basis of cooperative help and assistance; soliciting sympathetic responses precedes motivation towards a mutually beneficial exchange.

Whilst traded exchange, financial purchasing and the satisfactions of use value are far from alien to the street advertisement, it is possible to get a little more under the skin of this collection of notices, which motivate aspects of an altogether different kind of economy. Such an economy, indicated by Seaford's list, is archaic and its primary axis operates between trade, donation and seizure. LC's collection can fruitfully be viewed from this perspective – as the preservation of references to pre-monetary economies. This operates across a number of levels: as declarations of and persuasions towards altruistic practices, as persuasive and sentimental employment of altruistic discourse for ulterior purposes and as reference to economically primitive (though technically sophisticated) forms of political violence. These notices advance, dissimulate and in turn dress themselves within vestiges of archaic economy. An extended identification of the continuing significance of non-monetary economies within human relations, legal economy and black markets, might allow a typology of transaction to arise that can adequately accommodate the material present in a collection of street notices and advertisements.

1. A fictitious taxonomy of animals described by the writer Jorge Luis Borges in his 1942 essay *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins*. Borges' point was that there is no inherent system of organization.
2. Seaford, Richard. *Money and the Early Greek Mind. Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. 23–26.

Investigate Alex Chalk MP for Cheltenham

1/24 MPs who
has
allegedly
breached
the
Representation
of the peoples
act 1983