Memorandum

To: City Gallery Wellington

CC: Glen Hayward

From: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith

Date: 5/06/2013

Re: A response to *I don't want you to worry about me: I have met some beautiful people*, compiled almost entirely from quotes.

How to Use This Memo Template

1. "A recent film has one character blown to death at their keyboard. Underneath the desk they sit at is a bomb controlled by a keystroke counter. When the number of taps on the keyboard drops below a certain number, off goes the explosive. A real innovation in the switching system the bomb uses is that it is tied into the grammar check in Microsoft Word. The victim is unable to keep tapping away at the same key until help arrives. They have to keep composing grammatically correct sentences, line after line, through the cramp in their fingers.

    "Needless to say, knowing this is both a sure wellspring of verbiage and a scriptwriter's shortcut to bathos, they compose a last letter to their loved ones. Eventually though, the agrammaticality of their emotions or of tiredness sprawls out of even these second guessed finger-tips and as a green line appears under a patiently panicked phrase, up they go."[i]

2. "The Matrix is a 1999 American–Australian science fiction action film written and directed by the Wachowskis and starring Keanu Reeves, Laurence Fishburne, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano, and Hugo Weaving. It depicts a dystopian future in which reality as perceived by most humans is actually a simulated reality called "the Matrix", created by sentient machines to subdue the human population, while their bodies' heat and electrical activity are used as an energy source. Computer programmer "Neo" learns this truth and is drawn into a rebellion against the machines, which involves other people who have been freed from the "dream world"".[ii]

3. Neo is working in his office cubicle when he receives the infamous phonecall that will eventually lead to him breaking out of the Matrix.

4. "It is unlikely that any other office furnishings have had as great a social impact as the introduction of the office cubicle in the 1960s, though the outcome of the cubicle's arrival is still open to debate, in both its pros and cons. Author Thomas Hine has gone so far as to speculate that the cubicle made it possible for women to move into middle management positions in the late 1960s because the introduction of cubicles gave their male counterparts a new office environment in which to place women managers without having to allow their entry into the private "bull pens" that had been the exclusive domain of men.[iii]

   "Despite becoming Herman Miller's most successful project, George Nelson disowned himself from any connection with the "Action Office II" line.[iv] In 1970 he sent a letter to Robert Blaich, who had beome Herman Miller's Vice-President for Corporate Design and Communication, in which he described the system's "dehumanizing effect as a working environment." He summed up his feeling by saying:

   > "One does not have to be an especially perceptive critic to realize that AO II is definitely not a system which produces an environment gratifying for people in general. But it is admirable for planners looking for ways of cramming in a maximum number of bodies, for "employees" (as against individuals), for "personnel," corporate zombies, the walking dead, the silent majority. A large market."[v] "[vi]

5. With this in mind, the office cubicles in The Matrix could be seen as a metaphor for the human farm of life pods housing the subdued human's bodies.

6. What kind of documents do subdued humans produce?

7. Despite printed text being visible on the sheets of paper in Neo's cubicle, the sheets in Hayward's cubicle have been left blank.

8. "In 1997, Microsoft formed the Macintosh Business Unit as an independent group within Microsoft focused on writing software for the Mac. Its first version of Word, Word 98, was released with Office 98 Macintosh Edition. Document compatibility reached parity with Word 97, and it included features from Word 97 for Windows, including spell and grammar checking with squiggles. Users could choose the menus and keyboard shortcuts to be similar to either Word 97 for Windows or Word 5 for Mac."[vii]

9. Considering that The Matrix was released in 1999, there is a reasonable probability that the documents visible in the film were produced using Microsoft Word. Did Neo produce these documents, or were they copies of documents made by someone else?

10. "Just as freedom of speech is a convenient myth under which something else entirely can safely be left to occur, the ideal of a word processor is that it creates an enunciative framework that remains the same whether what is being written is a love letter or a tax return. What kind of language is the language of Word? The nomenclature and organisational norms of Microsoft Projects is already beginning to effect the way people think about business reduced to a stuttering sequence of Action Points, Outcomes and milestones. Does the compulsorily informal mode of addressing co-workers that prevails in the Microsoft corporation feed over into the way it speaks to users and the way it double-guesses the way the world should begin their letters?

"The Templates, sample documents that the user can edit to make their own, with their repertoire of 'elegant fax', 'contemporary fax' to 'formal letter' or 'memo', acknowledge that forgery is the basic form of document produced in the modern office."[i]

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[i] Excerpt from "It looks like you're writing a letter: Microsoft Word", Matthew Fuller, 2000. Accessed at http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0009/msg00040.html

[ii] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Matrix, accessed 26 May 2013. Text licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0

[iii] Hine, Thomas (2007). *The Great Funk*. New York, New York: Sara Crichton Books.

[iv] Abercrombie, Stanley (1995). *George Nelson: The Design of Modern Design*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

[v] Ibid.

[vi] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cubicle, accessed 28 May 2013

[vii] Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_Word, accessed 26 May 2013. Text licensed under CC-BY-SA 3.0