



The elite ethic of fiduciarity: The heraldry of the Jack Wills brand*

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abstract

The Jack Wills brand claims to be *Outfitters to the Gentry*. This article argues that Jack Wills' marketing ethos institutes a means to achieve this promise. This promise is investigated as instituting a form of heraldry through its corporate program of Seasonnaires and monopolising the spaces and symbols of elite social standing for their branded products. Heraldry is concerned with making the symbols of the peers of the realm distinctive and within an exclusive set. I call this enterprise 'fiduciary' as the heralds are persons trusted to preserve the symbols' sanctity. Overall I claim that the Jack Wills brand seeks this through its corporate program. Imitation-heraldry is a means to create the value of the brand as 'fiduciary value', community trust in the products and its worth. The ethic and politics that accompany the brand-ethos is concerned with making the name 'Jack Wills' come to stand as an eponymous character that embodies the social actions and unity of the social group the brand outfits. Jack Wills institutes an ethical economy that allocates the branded goods to those within the Seasonnaire economy of distribution, an economy that centres upon upholding fiduciary value.

Introduction

In the award winning British comedy-drama about university students, *Fresh Meat*, the character of JP is the victim of 'the worst kind of racism: money racism!' when his house-mates refuse to let his old-school friend Giles move into

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their shared house. They claim he's too posh and they 'don't want another JP' to which he exclaims: 'Are you seriously saying that something I want isn't going to happen *because of you*'. These ironically conceived comments are ones often attributed to the archetypical public-school, upper-middle class type that JP portrays – a self-assertive, privileged and entitled 'posh kid'. To British student audiences, JP's remarks, manner and views can all be distilled in the name that adorns his clothing, 'Jack Wills'. Jack Wills is the name of a brand name corporation yet is often rendered an imaginary person that encapsulates a character-type the named clothing materialises. To see JP or his old school-friend, Ralph, in his pink Jack Wills jumper may be a trivial occurrence [Fig. 1]. For 'Jack Wills', these colours and logos have deeper significance. Their outward display lets other students know where Ralph comes from, what he's like, even how to act toward him. That the pink Jack Wills jumper Ralph wears allows other people to recognise him as 'a toff' or 'posh' is not merely a result of how people conflate the brand name with a social personality but derives from the cultural significance of Jack Wills.



Figure 1 Ralph on British comedy-drama, *Fresh Meat* (2012) www.channel4.com/4od (accessed: 30th Oct 2012)

This article argues that Jack Wills seek to use branding as a form of heraldry. With *Outfitters to the Gentry* as Jack Wills Ltd.'s brand-slogan, they conjure up a herald-like image for themselves. Heraldry is a central marker of social distinction in upper-class modes of group identification, its role being 'to distinguish a person by means of symbols clearly recognisable' (Woods-

Woollaston, 1960: 1) as these symbols refer to descent from an ancestor who founded a lineage that restricted the use or display of these symbols. By viewing the use of branding devices – logos, slogans, colours, names and icons – as homologies to the stylistic devices of heraldry – termed field, motto, tinctures, title and charge – I argue that Jack Wills Ltd.’s brand symbols strive to act as heraldic markers of social station.

Following Adam Arvidsson’s (2013) suggestion that brand name personages rest upon an *ethos* in the Aristotelian sense of character disposition, ‘Jack Wills’ will be treated here as an (imaginary) ancestor of the British gentry. Arvidsson argues that brand name personages develop an ‘excellence of character’ whose affective qualities support ‘the ability of a brand to provide a particular consumer experience’ (2013: 377). The ‘consumer experience’ that the Jack Wills corporation seeks to achieve is that of its named-commodities having a role much akin to heraldry in British society. Jack Wills Ltd. act *as-if* they were a herald in their marketing devices and brand image. Jack Wills Ltd. do so in order to foster the reputation of ‘Jack Wills’, the imaginary character, as an (imaginary) ancestor of the British gentry that the corporation seeks to outfit. Branding, as surrogate heraldry, deals with the same concern of keeping elites in elite clothing and non-elites out of elite cloth. Such a perspective is utilised to demonstrate that heraldic-branding has the unintended consequences of strengthening and consolidating the social group that Jack Wills Ltd. outfit. The term gentry is used *very* loosely. Historically, gentry is accompanied by the prefix landed. The landed gentry were an intermediate group of landowners between the middle class and the aristocracy. The term gentry lingers on as a term for this intermediate class as historians and gentry persons in British society have argued in greater depth (Nicholson, 2011; Coss, 2003; Heal and Holmes, 1995). Jack Wills’ gentry designation is used to intimate the character excellences that Jack Wills Ltd. finds in its core-customer. Heraldry is the ethos that is most apt to this marketing strategy and its sociological consequences.

The question I pose is: *how is this gentry designation achieved? How does a network of young elite arise through branding practices?* As the ethics of character espoused by gentry persons (e.g. Ralph above) are manifest in their outward appearances, I argue that the corporation actively seek to maintain the sanctity of these clothing symbols as indicative of elite social standing. The equity value of the brand is only retained if the symbols of social station retain their elite, networked association. This social goal was once the concern of heralds appointed by kings (Fox-Davies, 1969; Wagner, 1957) and, mirroring this in brand ethos, the perspective of heraldry will help us shed light on the Jack Wills brand. As I view them, heralds are *fiduciary* persons, a technical term for those in whom the monarch placed trust; as third party preservers of his peers. Heraldry has an

obligation to achieve fiduciarity, the trust of their patrimonial masters (monarchs) in their role of surveying the monarch's peers and gaining peer loyalty. I shall argue that this fiduciary trust is what Jack Wills Ltd. seek to achieve for their imaginary ancestor 'Jack Wills'; to preserve 'his' products with a public confidence that the promises made by the brand – to be *Outfitters to the Gentry* – is being kept to. I use the term fiduciarity to evoke the heraldic concern with the sanctity of material emblems; the goal of the herald is 'fiduciarity'. By analysing Jack Wills Ltd.'s branding devices and strategies, I argue that the *ethos* of heraldry establishes the value of the Jack Wills brand in equity terms.

As a contribution to this special issue on 'The Ethics of the Brand', I suggest that the arcane notion that virtue of character is synonymous with the economic value of material emblems may apply to the Jack Wills brand. I see this as a contribution to Arvidsson's 'ethical economy' (2008; 2013; Arvidsson et. al., 2008). Firstly I position heraldry within in the brand literature. Subsequently, I outline the *politics* of such an ethical economy by drawing upon my field research and some of its findings. The link between the ethics and politics of the brand is sought through Aristotle, as in Arvidsson's ethical economy (2013; Arvidsson et. al., 2008). Aristotle's *Ethics* (2002) ends by stating the next stage of inquiring is *Politics* (1999) and these two works were the intellectual basis for Karl Polanyi's (1957) notion of an embedded economy. I argue that Jack Wills Ltd. acting as a herald is a political concern with upholding the character ethos of 'Jack Wills'. Heraldry is a device utilised in an embedded economy, i.e. an economy where distribution of articles of wealth go hand in hand with the upholding of status bound character virtues (Polanyi, 1957; Finley, 1973; Castoriadis, 1978). The decisions about 'who gets what' (distributive justice) for the corporation Jack Wills Ltd., (which we are accustomed to calling 'marketing devices'), forms the political side of the brand and goes hand in hand with the ethical character of 'Jack Wills persons'. My empirical illustrations come from ethnographic fieldwork (see methodology below) following the brand's promotional and lifestyle events. My primary informants were members of Jack Wills' promotional team, 'Seasonnaires', and the patronised university societies of the brand. I demonstrate that these promotional activities are as much a means of distributing branded goods as they are about the celebrating the lifestyles of the persons gaining the goods.

Ethical branding: Jack Wills and heraldry in brand literature

Peter Williams, founder and CEO of Jack Wills, created the brand in 1999 at the young age of 23. After visiting Salcombe, an up-market holiday town on the Devon coast, Peter conjured up the idea for a premium brand that encapsulated

the hedonism of university and romanticised the care-free holidaying that one associates with a leisured life of inherited wealth. Peter named his brand ‘Jack Wills’ after his grandfather John Williams. Changing John to its old-English nickname ‘Jack’ and shortening ‘Williams’ to ‘Wills’ (more gentrified because of its association with the Wills family in the British peerage), Peter Williams created his own (imaginary) ancestor. With no money for advertising, Peter convinced the local public-school holidaymakers in Salcombe to wear his (imaginary ancestor’s) eponymous clothing as gifts of favour. Through these gifts, he outfitted them in his (imaginary) ancestor’s household coat. This was the beginning of the central mandate that Peter Williams established for ‘Jack Wills’:

If you’re not our target customer, *we actively want you to never have heard of us...* What we want to do is build authentic, grassroots locations and lifestyle specific relations with our target customers. (Williams, 2011, emphasis added)

And:

My aspiration is that we hide from everybody. It doesn’t feel comfortable being in the public domain. ...We’re a niche premium brand. We have no interest in the mass. We’re all about viral. I want the brand to be discovered. (Williams, in Greene, 2011)

These statements demonstrate a heraldry logic because the mandate is to outfit only those who adequately recognize ‘Jack Wills’ as a personage worthy of integrating themselves with.

Those grassroots locations and lifestyle specific relations are where ‘Jack Wills’ wishes to be acknowledged as *the* outfitter and the brand demonstrates its fidelity to this end by establishing a networked series of persons in these communal spaces. These location specific relations take place in small upmarket sites that are surveyed by Seasonnaires. Seasonnaires are ‘the mouthpieces of the brand... their job for the summer is to make friends, throw parties and be in the right places seeding the brand. They never sell directly – that would piss people off’ (Williams, in Walsh, 2012). The heraldic logic of Jack Wills Ltd. is hinted at, as the Seasonnaires are heralds-of-arms announcing the arrival and messages of the corporate body. Described as mouthpieces, the Seasonnaires become messengers of ‘Jack Wills’ and divvy out ‘his’ goods as gifts. They are not sold, for heraldic insignia is something *inherited*. As one Seasonnaire remarked during the giving out of free apparel on a skiing trip:

That’s what we’re into – we’re into real friendships with people, like the people we’ve met here. We’ve got our i-pads for people’s numbers and twitter so we can just send them a text, tell them what we’re up to and say come along. We’re not trying to just sell people clothes. (Fieldnotes)

The distribution of clothing is the gift that consolidates a group of networked persons through friendships in the vicinity of a life-style practice¹.

Consolidating the group is crucial to the brand's image in terms of value of products and equity of the brand. Heraldry achieves value/equity through eponymous insignia – notably 'household coats' where the names of families are written onto ancestral valuables (Stallybrass, 2002). While farfetched, I want to suggest the use of eponymous naming in brand corporations follows a similar logic to heraldic inheritances and its logic of social distinction predicated upon such inheritances. One may trace this in the brand literature. Certain contributions to the literature draw upon how heraldry is both patrimonial domination and economic standing.

In this guise, Mazzarella (2003a; 2003b) argues that brands draw upon connotations of an idealised world and that this obliges persons to inhabit these imagined universes in product use. Idealised worlds express and contextualise aspirations and enact identity in the heraldic guise of eponymous obligation: 'visual signs (logos, trademarks) operate like nothing so much as royal insignia: consumers who wear these signs on their bodies are thus literally incorporated as loyal vassals' (Mazzarella, 2003a: 55). Mazzarella points out, in his case-study of EMW Mobile, 'respondents...had explained that he expected to be looked after by EMW "as a father looks after a child"' (Mazzarella, 2003a: 55). Mazzarella emphasises patrimonial domination as the father-to-child outlook is steeped in the insignia of the quasi-Royal body of the brand name².

Celia Lury (2003) makes a similar argument by stating that branded colours and graphics act as surrogates for kinship and group membership. These surrogate kin-devices function as metaphors for the longevity of 'brand' which is key to its economic prowess. Heraldic insignia branded onto bodies is indicative of the 'time' of global capitalism. As heraldry refers to traditional authority based upon custom, it seeks to make the personage under such insignia immortal. This temporal modality of immortality in brand name guise rests upon the fact that 'the durability of the brand is ... independent of the durability of the products which are its effects'. Brands, like heraldry, seek 'to displace the temporality of

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- 1 It should be pointed out for non-British readers that, unlike other European nations, the British class associated with skiing is restricted to the upper-middle and upper classes.
 - 2 Anthropologically speaking, eponymous naming identifies descent from an ancestor and obligation 'to bring the eponymous ancestor 'back to life', i.e. succeed him in responsibilities and powers" (Bourdieu, 1977: 36) and inherit economic prowess: 'the rights to land belonging to the case of sale'. (Bourdieu, 1977: 36). cf. Harold Perkin's theory of neo-feudal hierarchies in multinational capital (1996).

fashion altogether' (Lury, 2003: 393). Heraldic insignia passing down generations are the perfect analogue to the immortality that branded corporations seek for themselves, e.g. 'Est. 1776' and similar product insignia. The immortality of the brand may be linked to the patrimonial aspect of heraldry: it obliges persons to take on an eponymous character (the brand name). The name is a lingering reminder of the person who founded the corporation.

Additionally, David Hopper and Charles Vallance (2013) bring the name to the forefront in contemporary branding. Eponymy, for them, is the defining feature of the economic landscape of the twentieth and twenty-first century and they call eponymous brand-owners *The Branded Gentry* (Hopper and Vallance, 2013)³. They do so in a way which has bearing upon heraldry as concerned with both patrimonial loyalty and economic standing. Eponymous products (Dyson, Boden, Sainsbury etc.) act as marks of fidelity. Eponymy makes persons dearly responsible as the product embodies their personal values (Hopper and Vallance, 2013: 300). Yet Hopper and Vallance suggest the opposite for invented persona: 'faux personalities designed to evoke the life style of an illusory founder without any *real* person taking the gamble; names like Jack Wills...' (2013: 300, original emphasis). Hopper and Vallance underestimate 'Jack Wills' in this respect. Not only does Peter Williams state fidelity to his product as much as eponymous brand names but Williams' pseudonym brand name 'Jack Wills' follows a naming and obligation complex that *mirrors that of his stated social group, the gentry*. Gentry personages are known by the name, listed in elite surveys (e.g. specialist periodicals such as Debrett's or Burke's peerage). Gentry names carry an entire history. For example, (Lord) Julian Fellowes has the insight in his novel *Snobs* (2005) that gentry persons practice what he calls 'name-exchange': surnames come to be used as currency for those using them to mark out the 'right people'. Heraldry mirrors this as it makes the name a fetishized device that designates a character-type and series of past deeds that founded lineages via names marked upon their material valuables.

The name 'Jack Wills' having the status of an imaginary ancestor is predicated upon the sociological role that ancestors have amongst the British upper-echelons: they designate character excellences. As such, Peter Williams' stated aims of sticking so firmly to target customers in locations and authentic relationships, of friendships and word-of-mouth, demonstrates fidelity of purpose that is akin to the filial obligation that gentry persons owe to their

3 See Elizabeth Hirschman's (1990) concept of 'secular immortality': the upper-middle classes in American society seek to make a 'name' for themselves over and above expensive purchases or ventures; e.g. name capitalists such as Trump, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt or Rothschild.

ancestors. It is in this respect that a heraldic perspective on the Jack Wills brand reveals Williams' brand strategy to be an ethical stance. In Aristotle's *Ethics* (2002), we learn that all acts have an end or 'good' – the chief good is an end that is sought in-and-of-itself, not dependent upon anything else or subsumed to other ends. In the case of (pseudo)eponymous products, creating brand name commodities of superior quality/use is not the sole end of branding. Product quality, while important, is subordinate to the sole end of demonstrating the name as synonymous with the values of the corporation. The name is a fetishized device that becomes 'a direct expression of the values and beliefs of the founder' (Hopper and Vallance, 2013: 300). When one hears Apple, for example, one associates its virtues with excellences that are *not* rationalised in product use *per se*, but rather become moral ones (Arvidsson, 2013: 379). The name Jack Wills aims at name recognition similar to that described by Fellowes in *Snobs*: to be exchanged with the 'right' persons and stand for the values of that community. Heraldry is concerned is with the names of persons to be unified under recognisable symbols. This heraldic concern is found in the brand striving for the ultimate end of desired customers to personify brand values and ethos through adoption of products bearing the brand name. This corporate outlook can be elaborated with Arvidsson's 'ethical economy' (2008; 2009; 2013).

An 'ethical economy', Arvidsson (2008) argues, is one in which corporations seek fidelity to non-market principles which, ironically, create the economic prowess of the brand name. The value/equity ('profit potential') of brand name corporations, Arvidsson (2008; 2005) points out, is largely dependent upon financial markets (cf. Lash and Lury, 2007; Beil, 1993). Equity comes from the perceived trust investors have in the brand to remain solvent. Asking how this equity may be generated, Arvidsson demonstrates that it rests upon fostering a powerful attachment to the brand, a respect and sense of friendship (*philia*) for the corporate efforts. By doing so, the brand creates a network of persons associated with it and this social capital becomes embedded with the brand's promotional activity and product range. Arvidsson's empirical insights come from the service economy, and he states that bonds of *philia* and respect come from charismatic personalities – DJs, rock stars and promoters. In Jack Wills' case the Seasonnaires described above, their role as quasi-heralds – distributing the goods and message of Jack Wills Ltd. – concerns what Arvidsson sees as the central paradox of the ethical economy: it is an economy built around a series of disinterested, affective community-based ties upholding the values of a lifestyle *and* interested corporate gain (cf. Arvidsson, 2008: 333). *Philia* turns into monetary value, in short (Arvidsson, 2009: 22). In an ethical economy, brand-value is 'contingent on the ability to produce ethnically significant ties, and its currencies – networks and respects – are for all intents and purposes a measure of that ability' (Arvidsson, 2008: 344).

To sum up this review of the literature and its relation to Jack Wills, I have pointed out that in the branding practice the patrimonial domination of a named personage is written into the economic relation of selling named goods. Eponymous naming has as its core an ethical stance. The chief good is the brand name, which is synonymous with the target customer's networked sociality. Such networked sociality is the basis of sustained equity of the brand. With a brand intimately associated with the cultural values and outlook of the British upper classes, the perspective of heraldry in branding encapsulates these value criteria where a brand name may become a surrogate ancestor-name. I will now develop this argument of networked sociality through explication and elaboration of my research findings with Jack Wills.

Methodology and the embedded economy

The methodological strategy for research on the Jack Wills brand has been to 'follow the brand', a strategy developed by others (Lash and Lury, 2007: 19-21) and found in the value theory of Appadurai (1986) and Kopytoff (1986). Following the major marketing activities of the brand was a means to study their use of 'The Season', a corporate strategy which mirrored the once famous, now faltering, 'Season' of British 'upper to upper-middle class' society (e.g. Royal Ascot Races, Henley Regatta, Royal Academy Exhibition, Chelsea Flower Show, etc.) (Stanley, 1955; cf. York and Barr, 1983; York and Stewart-Liberty, 2007: 174-185). This Season was key to networking and consolidation of elite persons (Nicholson, 2011: xiii). For today's generation the method remains the same: as Peter York puts it, 'New Sloane [*sic* upper-middle class person] Networks demonstrate entirely vital Sloane family values (keeping others out)' (2007: xx). Jack Wills' Season demonstrated such a value.

It was through this ethnographic endeavour that the importance of a quasi-heraldic logic to the Jack Wills brand marketing/value-creation strategies suggested itself. The season has sociological significance in reforming this once top-of-the-pile, now reforming social group in British society. The Jack Wills brand utilises the 'life-style' activities of the upper-middle classes as its key viral marketing and the mode of distribution of its merchandise. I positioned the ethnographic fieldwork within the activities of the brand so as to operationalize and problematize this concept. The Jack Wills brand runs a 'brand strategy' which is premised upon seasonal activity so as to forego what Peter Williams calls 'the promiscuousness of advertising relationships' and instead opt 'for very deep relationships with very small numbers of customers' (Williams, 2011). With this concern for only a core, small number of persons in mind, I attended as many Jack Wills events as possible so as to investigate both the 'deep relationship

with customers' as well as to find out the internal dynamics of this policy. This was conducted through contact with societies and individuals involved with the brand's strategies but not those directly associated with the brand itself because of a privacy policy by which Jack Wills Ltd. abide (Pryia, Jack Wills, personal communication Jan. 2012). The Seasonnaires I spent time with and interviewed have now left the corporation and the Oxbridge club members I spent time with are now graduating. Also other university students I interviewed were not directly associated with the Season but experienced 'Jack Wills' as a name circulated amongst the student body, itself a talking point for the concerns of class and social standing.

Each winter/spring Jack Wills sponsor the British Universities Snowsports Council's 'Main Event' week where they play host to parties and après ski. The Main Event week was established in 2011 and, in 2012, saw an attendance of circa 1,500 university students from the UK. Each summer they put on the 'Jack Wills Varsity Polo' match, which includes matches of Cambridge against Oxford, Eton against Harrow and Harvard against Yale at the historic and prestigious Guards Polo Club in Windsor Great Park (Berkshire). This event is a restoration of the Varsity polo match between Oxford and Cambridge dating back to c.1879 and is the biggest Jack Wills event. It began in 2007 with an attendance of c.700-1,000 and in 2010 attracted 7,000-8,000 in 2010 attendees (Jack Wills Varsity Programme, 2012; Symle Creative, 2010). Additionally the Jack Wills brand provides a 'Summer Seasonnaire' program where a series of university students are hired by the brand to live in affluent seaside towns (Rock in Cornwall, Salcombe in Devon, Abersoch in North Wales, Burnham Market in Suffolk and Alderburgh in Norfolk) and to put on beach parties, store parties and partake in life-style activities (notably, boating, fishing, sunbathing). They would also promotionally film and photograph the events with other seasonal employees, i.e. those working in local stores and hang outs (bars) or as boating instructors. Again, the attendance here is confined to a core group of around 20-30 persons and 2 Seasonnaires with intermittent members who spend 2/3 weeks on holiday but are connected to Seasonnaires through school or university. Jack Wills uses this institutional and locale nexus explicitly to outfit its target customer, these institutions/locale being exclusive and age-based. As Peter Williams states: 'We want to pick you up as a late teen and then you just naturally grow out of the brand' (Williams, 2011).

This ethnographic data reveals the central finding: the brand creates an *ad hoc* promotional team through granting *free clothing* to those being *be-friended*, itself generating deep, *lasting social ties in these exclusive locales*. As an ex-Seasonnaire explained:

We would kit them out in as much free clothing as they wanted, really; and they could give some to their friends. The idea was to make it a genuine relationship. ... Both were really well looked after and the hope was, in return, they'd love the brand or at least our relationship and at least do it for the brand. ... And, you know, some of them are still really good friends – in fact one of the Seasonnaires I stayed with is visiting right now, we've kept in touch. I think while they may have moved away from Jack Wills, they loved the time.

In line with that, during the seasonal activities I attended, the clothes were spoken of not in terms of 'for how much?' or 'commodities for sale': instead they were called 'stash', a term used by university students for society products, and 'for free'. A *genuine* relationship is, therefore, a *non-commodity exchange* relationship. This became clear when one Rock informant stated:

There are two sides to Jack Wills. There's the clothes and then there's the lifestyle. ... I have thought a bit about it, after spending the summer there and the status of Jack Wills on campus as, you know, very public school and that sort of thing.

After spending the summer engaged in lifestyle activities, which she had done for most her adolescence, this informant along with others all agreed that the friendships made during the season became much more paramount. In consequence, buying the clothes was a residual concern and demonstrated less connection with life-style networks. In these excerpts we see the emphasis upon friendships and the development therein of an elite network of persons who, through *ad hoc* unpaid work of promotional activity for a brand name, itself develops a series of locale-based group associated with the brand name. They not only promote the brand name but themselves come to embody the characteristics that are valued in that name. The brand's promotional imagery is a refracted mirror image of those living the lifestyle of the gentry. This lifestyle is not merely evoked in imagery, it is actively lived and conducted via relations in a restricted (but, indeed, transatlantic) group of elite personages.

Equity value for the Jack Wills brand (which I call 'fiduciary value') utilises the season as an embedded economy (Polanyi, 1957) which has as its sole aim the forging of an image – mediated through film, photography and social media (Facebook, Twitter) documentation of the lifestyle practices. As brand theorists demonstrate, brand-equity rests upon creating an image based around a common, shared lifestyle (Arvidsson, 2005; Beil, 1993; McCracken, 1993) but what I am demonstrating here is that this brand-image is manifest *in the process of forging an elite group that is marked off against the average (non-elite) 'consumer'* in an embedded economy. Embedded economies, according to Polanyi's (1957) classic account drawn from a re-reading of Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*, are ones where distribution of valuables are 'embedded in non-economic institutions' and economic allocation of resources are distributed through such institutions, so

much so that ‘the term ‘economic life’ would here have no obvious meaning’ (Polanyi, 1957: 70). In our case, the embedded allocation of branded goods does not seem economic because the allocation of branded goods occurs by means of (a) membership to a private ‘society’ – polo society, skiing club, university club / fraternity / society, holiday enclaves whose population consists of high-income second home ownership – and (b) the branded goods come either heavily discounted or ‘free of charge’, or are mandatory for entry and participation. Hence, I conceive of this as heraldry in this respect.

The end of the Seasonnaires, as acting heralds in the distribution of branded apparel to persons with a specific lifestyle has the end of fiduciarity. Fiduciary value and fiduciarity (aiming for it) are ends that act to secure the fidelity of a (seemingly) ‘naturalised’ hierarchy of persons in the stations of British society. As one British herald pointed out, heraldry works on a 17th century aphorism: ‘things more excellent than any symbol are expressed through symbols’ (Woods-Woollaston, 1960: 16). The central point is that social worth is conflated with material symbols and the duty of the herald is to act as a fiduciary entity, i.e. to guarantee their legitimacy and authenticity and to provide trust to the recipients of armoires. The category of fiduciarity is a subordinate end to the higher good of maintaining the excellences of persons loyal to a patrimonial authority (the imaginary figure ‘Jack Wills’). From the perspective of Aristotelian ethics, the distribution of branded goods to those who embody gentry’ characteristics is a *political* issue. The brand is identified with a character-virtue – ‘gentry’ – that is founded in the life-style enclaves within which the brand is embedded. Maintaining this character virtue, which is attributed through material symbols, requires a notion of ‘who gets what’ (distributive justice), the correct handling of which gives fiduciary value to branded products.

For Aristotle (1995; 2002), what is just is how the person described as just contributes to the flourishing of the community through their virtues⁴. As such, heraldry seeks fiduciarity precisely because this end is one that serves the *higher end* of the communal solidarity of those who personify the Jack Wills brand name. The development of an embedded economy is the political end of fiduciary value for the products. Fiduciary value may be conceived as the professionalization of ostensibly marketised principles of distribution of goods. As Harold Perkins noted of professions,

they existed to provide services which were esoteric, evanescent and *fiduciary* – beyond the knowledge of the laity, not ... productive of concrete objects, and thus having to be taken on trust – they could not accept a market valuation of their skill

4 The term used by Aristotle is ‘eudaemonia’, one that may be translated as ‘happiness’, ‘human flourishing’ or ‘welfare’.

but demanded that society should accept their own valuation... (Perkins, 1989: 16, emphasis added)

In contrast to market economics of supply and demand, Jack Wills Ltd. uses the embedded economy to maintain the sanctity of their elite symbols. Fiduciary value sits upon the assumption that the brand knows best. Heraldry concerns brand symbols that rest upon an aristocratic notion of virtue: only 'the few' or 'best' (*aristo*) are worthy of sustaining their meaningful associations with gentry characteristics.

Heraldry and the end of fiduciarity

In this section I analyse the heraldry aspects of the embedded economy by drawing upon my fieldwork as an ethnographic illustration of the use of heraldry-like practices in branding so as to consolidate the social group around clearly recognisable symbols of elite standing. By first suggesting a homology between the design principles of branding and the artistic devices of heraldry, I then demonstrate with ethnographic data the principles of distribution according to the virtues of gentry, virtues connoted through branding symbolism.

On the surface, brands have a similar purpose to heraldry. Both brands and heraldry are concerned with forging difference from other brands/coats of arms by means of design devices. As Scott Lash (2007: 7) observes, brands operate via 'difference' as no brand is equivalent to another. While products – e.g. polo shirts – may be similar in tangible, physical qualities, the brand qualities – logo, colour, slogan etc. – are particular to the brand. The principle purpose of branding, therefore, is to create a product that is self-sufficient and not subordinate to its individual commodities. Similarly, British heraldry authority, Fox-Davies (1969), has argued that heraldry is the 'science' of 'differencing' armours. The sole purpose being that the symbols become ends to venerate the bearer. While others suggest that heraldry arose for the practical purpose of distinguishing persons in battle, the true purpose is nothing more than what Fox-Davies (1969: 16) called 'vanity'. Vanity was the prime driver in this science of differencing arms as 'the son would naturally take pride in upholding the fame which had clustered round the pictured signs and emblems under which his father had warred' (Fox-Davies, 1969: 17). In this vein of symbols for their own sake, brand devices (slogans, logos, colours, names) come to figure as analogues (in aesthetic form and sociological function) to heraldic devices (of mottos, charges, tinctures, titles and 'houses', respectively). In Table 1, I merely wish to illustrate how the devices used by heraldry to difference arms are mirrored in the devices used by brand corporations.

Heraldry	Brand	Jack Wills
Field	Logo	Pheasant in top and tails with walking stick
Motto	Slogan	'Outfitters to the Gentry', 'Fabulously British'
Tinctures	Colours	Public school colours
Charge	Icon	Pheasant

Table 1: The homologies between heraldry and branding

What makes Jack Wills Ltd.'s approach different to branding *per se* is that of its embedded position in elite, gentrified institutions. Within the brand literature, we notice how the distribution of goods is embedded in social processes whereby brand values are celebrated, notably lifestyle events (Moor, 2007: 49f; Arvidsson, 2013: 379) or sponsorship which creates notions of possession to alienable commodities through fictional characters or celebrities (Newell, 2013; McCracken, 2005). Jack Wills' use of branding to imitate the characteristics of heraldry comes from their desire to have their products signify an unbroken link from British society's aristocratic past. This aristocratic past is inherited, by the target customer, in the present. This historical link is evoked to create an idea of their target customer's imaginative, largely fictional, descent from this past. I will now outline this using the categories of name, logo and colours.

Names

The heraldic significance of names has been alluded to already. The ancestor name that exists in the pages of history has a laudable reputation and fame to it. The continued use of the name signifies *descent* from the person who bears the name and imitation of the excellence of reputation it carries. 'Jack Wills' seeks such an association; those bearing the name bring the ancestor's qualities 'back to life' in the present. In Jack Wills Ltd.'s case, the brand name *actively sought this purpose*. As one Seasonnaire informed me:

We were all told to tell a story that it was Pete's granddad: John Williams shorted to Jack Wills. ... I always thought it was [true] but I have heard some people say it's not. Perhaps his granddad was named Jack Williams, I don't know. I can't remember the exact time that I heard rumours that it wasn't true but the story seemed pretty simple enough to be real. It's a pretty harmless story. I guess I'll never really know, unless I do some family tree digging.

The story is simple, and despite rumours of its falsity, the central sociological fact is that the corporation is creating a surrogate ancestor for those who bear the name. The Seasonnaires, by re-telling this story, give it credence and it is *their lifestyle and brand image* that make plausible this imaginary ancestor that embodies the characteristics of gentry. The Seasonnaires' goal, when telling this story, is to be associated with the gentry character, for as they tell the story *they themselves are associated with such a social-cultural ideal of names as designating character virtues*. One ironic example of this is a satirical hip-hop song performed by spoof rapper MC Tarquinius, a comic grotesque whose song 'Jack Wills' disparages the name:

So you're heading out to uni, but you can't look whack,
 Let me introduce you to my friend, his name is Jack
 Not Jack Daniels with his whisky, Or Jack Frost with his chills,
 But that suave mother fucker, that's my boy Jack Wills

... Jack Wills got you covered, from your tip to your toe
 If you wanna hit the lake, take your boat for a row,
 Or just kick it with your homies sipping vintage Bordeaux
 Jack Wills is the name that you all will soon know



Figure 2 Mc Tarquinius – Jack Wills
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rO6nWsgZa7U>

In this satirical take on the brand, the intention of which is to undermine the corporation and its ethos, the song itself details the character excellence that *supports* the notion of an imaginary person. It does so by focusing not only upon the clothing (in the video) but also the virtues or cultural activities (in the lyrics) that the name intimates: notably punting, rowing or drinking of fine wines. The brand name has become indicative of the whole notion of persons and

encompasses their whole life, a branded life (cf. Land and Taylor, 2010: 407). ‘Jack Wills’ becomes a personage as the name is further used to indicate characteristics of persons. One informant, whose cousin was involved in the Jack Wills Seasonnaire program, described her as a ‘Jack Wills girl’. When I asked her what she meant, she replied:

ha, um, I guess it’s the whole, you wear the clothes, but then you have the attitude to go with it; like wearing the clothes, kind of outdoorsyish, maybe. ... horrible to say but I guess it’s that you think you’re better than everyone because of the way you dress, little model type ... Jack Wills, model girl.

From this respondent’s observation about ‘outdoorsy’ personality, one infers ‘countryside’ as associated with the British gentry and the use of the term ‘model’ signifies the *ideal and yet distinctly perfected ‘Jack Wills’*, to which people immediately refer. Such use of the name is crucial to the qualities of the character that it carries. As one former University of Durham student stated:

you kind automatically think, they’re wearing Jack Wills, they went to public school’ and sometimes you meet people and you always associate that brand with a bit of snobbery and people always looking down on other people and I can see why people think that...

Such a notion of assumed social elitism was evident not only to this informant at Durham but especially to those at Oxford University. During an interview, a Varsity polo player from Oxford University stated: ‘If I buy a shirt from Ede and Ravenscroft [17th century shirt makers in Oxford] people wouldn’t care or know about it but if I buy a similar one from Jack Wills, I’m a dickhead toff!’ That the name ‘Jack Wills’ indicates pejorative characteristics imitates a key aspect of heraldic naming, the name recalls the fame of the ancestor; most notably, elite status. Despite this name belonging to a fictional person, these interviewee excerpts (taken from the locales that Jack Wills Ltd. seeks to monopolise for its brand-image) themselves demonstrate a surrogate kinship association. This is what Sahlins (2011) calls ‘mutuality of being’; despite each person being different, the brand name is utilised to designate generic characteristics that give credence to the heraldic significance of the ancestor’s name.

The brand name embodying the characteristics of a gentry personage ‘Jack Wills’ is an aspect of fiduciary concern for only persons who also embody these characteristics deserve this name as their pseudonym. The brand name intimates snobbery, elitism or upper-class tastes but, from the perspective of the brand, which seeks out characteristics for an imaginary person, this is *precisely the point*. If persons *not* bearing these character virtues begin to bear the name, literally through wearing the clothing, the *name is defamed and devalued*.

Logos as Charges

In the case of logos, which make tangible the intangible qualities of the brand (Lury, 2004: 74), we see an extension of the same problem as in the case of the name. One means of prohibiting persons, who do not have the characteristics of the name buying the clothing, is to restrict store location and advertising. This is precisely what Jack Wills Ltd. have initiated (Williams, 2011). A further means is to embed the logo in institutions whose primary role is not commercial but rather unified around other ends. Since Jack Wills Ltd. sponsor and patronise university societies, the wearing of Jack Wills clothing becomes mandatory for membership of these societies. The societies Jack Wills patronises are Oxbridge polo and rugby clubs and the elite sports clubs of St. Vincents (Oxford) and Hawks (Cambridge). Entrance into these clubs requires adoption of Jack Wills clothing in order to fulfil one's role within them: to play polo for Oxbridge requires wearing jerseys that bear the Jack Wills logo; to be granted membership to St. Vincents or the Hawks clubs requires the adoption of blazers that signify membership to these clubs, blazers made by Jack Wills Ltd. and embroidered with the Jack Wills' logo (as an equivalent to a heraldic charge).

In heraldic terminology, the right to wear these garments are part of the prerogatives of membership to the house that bears these emblems. By embedding themselves within the Oxbridge system of clubs and societies, Jack Wills Ltd create for themselves the same association of honour that is associated with entrance into these restricted, elite private clubs. To play on the Varsity polo team at the historic Varsity Polo (c.1879) is a triumph of polo prowess *and* an honour of historic significance. To enter St. Vincents or the Hawks Club is a triumph of sporting ability in gaining what is known as 'blues', colours awarded on sporting merit. Achieving these two feats brings with them the honour of donning the Jack Wills' logo on exclusive garments. As a consequence, the logo signifies the same honourable qualities.

In the allocation of the logo to persons in these elite institutions, distribution becomes an honour of membership and distribution is the prerogative of the elite club. The design of the Jack Wills logo (pheasant), which imitates the heraldic designs of animals depicted on the elite, ancient societies has the effect of establishing the brand corporation as akin to these ancient institutions (even though it was established in the recent past) [Table 2]. The Jack Wills logo imitates the designs of animals of on heraldic coats of arms. The design is crucial to signifying association with the cultural milieu of heraldry in British society purely in visual terms. Heraldic animals are depicted in stances dubbed 'attitudes' and a limited number of stances are available: e.g. Volant, Vigilant, Rampant etc. These attitudes have a stylistic rationale: Jack Wills' logo imitating

the animal (pheasant) in attitudes is a device that seeks to achieve a sense of culturally ‘belonging’ to the elite institutions it patrons and embeds the distribution of its garments as honours of membership. In this way, the brand logo is more a heraldic charge, sociologically speaking, than a commercially ‘bought’ logo. The process has fiduciaity as its end, since the stylistic choice is an end undertaken to symbolise the higher, immaterial end of the honours it grants the wearer.

House / Elite club	Prerogative / ‘stylistic attitude’	Charge /Logo
Cambridge university	Coat of Arms	
Cambridge Polo	Lion Rampant	
Hawks Club	Hawk-Volant	
Jack Wills patronage	Pheasant Vigilant	

Table 2: Elite club (‘house’) and heraldic style (‘prerogative’) and logo (‘charge’)



Figure 3: Cambridge Hawks Club, c. 2012: <http://lookatmyfuckingredtrousers.blogspot.co.uk/> (NB: Hawks blue blazers' manufactured by Jack Wills)



Figure 4 Jack Wills | Oxford and Cambridge Varsity Rugby | Formal Club blazers: <http://vimeo.com/37189897>

Colours

Colour follows on from the honours systems of elite club membership. Owing to their origins in Salcombe, the Devon seaside town that boasts a seasonal influx of public school holidaymakers, and also to their marketing policy of gifting public school head boys and girls hoodies (Goodman, 2009), it is no surprise that Jack Wills Ltd. uses the public school house-colours [Table 3].

The public school colour system is a derived honour system from the heraldic tradition: the coats of arms of the schools derive from the founders or royal patrons (e.g. Eton's coat of arms mirrors that of the House of Lancaster as its founder was Henry VI). As sociologists and historians recognise, British public schools are key sites for the consolidation of elite membership and perpetuation of the gentry's traditions (Weiner, 1980: 10ff; Hartmann, 2007: 61ff).

Stylistically, heraldry is concerned with 'proper' colours, ones that must not overlap or mix: the heraldic colours are red (gules), blue (azure), sable (black), vert (green), purpure (purple) and argent (white/silver) (Woollaston, 1960: 6). On an aesthetic level, the colours system of the nine top British public schools ('The Clarendon Nine') demonstrates how the public school system utilises the heraldic colours of red, blue, green, black, white and purple (maroon) to perpetuate this sociological scheme of honour through colour codes. Jack Wills' imitation of these heraldic colours comes from the same concern with being 'Outfitters to the Gentry'. A historic concern for these 'proper' colours is also evident in their choice of colour schemes. But along with logos, the use of colours aims at the same restricted circulation of colours so as to use them as honorific devices.

'Clarendon' Schools	School Colours	Jack Wills items with same colour scheme (c. 2010) (one example of each)
Eton	Blue	Forstal Rugby
Winchester	Blue, Brown, Red	Nye Nevis Shirt (partial match)
Westminster	Pink	Hinckley Oxford Shirt
Charterhouse	Pink, Blue, Maroon	Ibberton Striped Rugby
St. Paul's	Black, White	Castleton Rugby
Merchant Taylors	Black, White	Castleton Rugby
Harrow	Blue, White	Yateley Rugby
Rugby	Blue, White, Green	Crakehill Rugby
Shrewsbury	Blue, White	Forstry Rugby

Table 3: Clarendon school colours and Jack Wills clothes



Figure 5: Jack Wills Varsity Polo, Guards Polo Club, June 2012 (photo by author)



Figure 6 Etonian leads his horse out onto Guards Polo club for the Varsity Match, 2012 (source: www.jackwills.com)



Figure 7 'Look at my red trousers' - Jack Wills Varsity Polo, June 2012 (photo by author)



Figure 8 Cordings/Jack Wills 'dandy coloured cords' – from: www.jackwills.com

With the colours being used as honorific devices, the distribution of Jack Wills clothing is *by implication* the distribution of elite colours – that is, colours which are designated for elite persons. The lifestyle events – as Figures 5-7 show – demand the adoption of these colour schemes as appropriate attire and their distribution at key lifestyle enclaves is bound up with the distribution of free clothing to those befriended by the Seasonnaires. In the granting of free clothing, the Seasonnaire are *also* gifting the honour of colour wearing. These colour schemes, distributed at key localities, are a unifying symbol of membership to a social group. The colours are intimately related to a gentry tradition from heraldry, to public schools and *finally* to Jack Wills; they are not corporate colours (Coca-Cola red or Pepsi blue) but *gentry colours* referring to the social group itself.

Take the Season. The summer time saw sunglasses and t-shirts handed out to those who assisted in the marketing activities; the sunglasses especially were adopted with zeal as the activities of boating and days spent on the beach required them but they also had a heraldic significance as the colour differed with locality, localities which were in competition with each other to put on the best summer program. As such the colours of the locality utilised heraldic colours for the 'stash' (sunglasses) in the competitive drive: Rock was green, Salcombe was blue, Alderburgh was red, Burnham Market was maroon/purple and Abersoch was pink [Fig. 9]. Colour becomes an oblique device that brings together schools/universities in Varsity and localities together in a unified way as the colour is the common entity in elite localities dotted around in the UK.



Figure 9 Jack Wills Summer 2012: the heraldic use of colour for competition between seasonal activities

Moor (2003) has recently argued that brand promotion is an extending/embedding of itself within spatial patterns of everyday life. Promotion provides not an enticement of purchase but ‘a remembering of the event’ (2003: 50). The colours are used to recall the summer season but *also* links into the brand’s concern with fiduciarity. As the colours-schemes refer *back in time* to the British ancestors who founded them in aristocratic houses, elite schools and universities, they also project a notion of redeeming these traditions through involvement in the activities in the present. In so doing, colour acts an oblique symbol of alliance between groups to marshal them to this common activity of upholding these British traditions and the gentrified lifestyle.

Concluding remarks

The ethical aim of Jack Wills Ltd. is to be the *imaginary totem of the social group’s identity*, itself manifest in the name ‘Jack Wills’. In *Politics* (1995), Aristotle deals with the question of how to distribute things according to virtues. Virtues are all or nothing, in this case, as they are acquired dispositions (‘gentry’) in one’s persons. The question of ‘what is just?’ pertains to fully realising these virtuous characteristics. Justice is what is granted so these virtues become fully exercised in the community (Aristotle, 1995: 103, III.9, 1280a7) As such, this notion of justice is one where people are unequal: ‘where people differ from one another there must be a difference in what is just and proportionate to their merits’ (Aristotle, 1995: 113, III, 12, 1282b14). It seems as though Jack Wills Ltd. have picked up upon Aristotle’s philosophy in practice. Jack Wills’ ethos suggests that *not all people can provide the virtues of gentry and those who do are the most worthy*

recipients of the clothing (cf. Polanyi, 1957: 79f). For our purposes, the heraldry role of divvying out goods to those who are members of the life-style and its institutions is a form of distributive justice: a mode of distribution to those whose membership is equal to the virtues membership requires. It would be unjust to distribute Jack Wills goods to those who do not exhibit the excellences of person ('social profile') that the brand-imagery and lifestyle represents. Free goods or mandatory adoption of garments in membership of the lifestyle and its networks of sociality: these are just forms of distribution as they preserve the flourishing community. Furthermore they maintain the equity of the brand because they achieve fiduciarity – trust in persons in the community – as distribution is accorded to those who preserve the virtues of the community.

Heraldry is a pre-modern notion of economic value, one where 'value often seems to wear itself on its face' (Stallybrass, 2002: 277). Despite brand being an immaterial power in *meta*-physical capitalism (Arvidsson, 2005; Lash, 2007; Foster, 2005) we still need to, as Stallybrass points out, 'note the persistence of non-capitalist practices well into the twentieth century' (Stallybrass, 2002: 283) – especially in the context of a social group whose cultural values are orientated toward pre-capitalist notions of group identification.

The idea of brand as akin to heraldic coats of arms seems counter-intuitive to our modern sensibilities. Stallybrass notes that heraldic notions refer to a 'form of power' that is distinctly pre-capitalist in its conflation of 'person and thing' (2002: 276-277). The analysis of modernity treats commodities as alienable objects open to purchase by the impersonal means of money (Carrier, 1994), a view that permeates the sociological classics (Marx, 1976; Simmel, 1990). Additionally we think of people as pervaded by a depth of inward expressiveness that comes through articulation of thoughts, not their material appendages (Taylor, 1989). What we've witnessed here is the opposite – the clothing itself reveals a notion of virtue and the ethnography demonstrates a conviction of just distribution to those who do it justice, in the ancient sense.

Viewing brands in a pre-modern guise illuminates the resilience of old notions of group cohesion in the modern age. One often forgets that Jean Baudrillard's (1981) structural analysis of sign-value is indebted to Lévi-Strauss' (1973) analysis of the Cadeuvo face-tattooing, a practice Lévi-Strauss analysed explicitly in relation to European traditions of heraldry. The analysis of brands is, if anything, not a return to but continued realisation that pre-modern ideas of status and virtue are bound up with the allocation of material and symbolic resources. When Appadurai (1996: 71) suggested that globalisation realises the ever-increasing move from sumptuary law to fashion, he pointed to a problem for status practices of elite distinction in the allocation of resources. By way of the

brand name, which we know to be often built around a personality (Aaker, 1995; McCracken, 1993; Hooper and Vallance, 2013), the ethics of character that it creates also gives rise to the need to develop a political economy based around such a character ethics: Who are the best persons for such a product? To answer is to also conjure up a notion of just distribution, the aim of which is fiduciary value for the products so as to preserve the ideal of the personage the brand epitomises.

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