I Know Something You Don't Know: Contemporary Performance and the Politics of Expertise

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the figure of the expert in a range of contemporary performance practices. Much has been written in recent years about the rise of education, pedagogy and research as both curatorial strategies and modes for making art (see below for cited texts). The significance of theatre and performance within these practices has also been asserted (see, for instance, Shannon Jackson's *Social Works*). I argue, however, that the specific use of the figure of the expert within the conjunction of pedagogy, research and performance has not been fully addressed. I further argue that looking at the expert in performance practices provides valuable insight into the broader contemporary dynamic of knowledge and power, as well as telling us much about the current state of performance itself.

This is clearly a broad topic, with many possibilities for analysis. In this introduction, therefore, I will outline the rationale behind my choices of practices and critical resources, and I will discuss the rationale behind the geographical and temporal limits that I have chosen. I will also define my key terms, while noting that all of them are both contested and subject to change. I will discuss my methodology, including the various ways I have accessed the performance events and documentation that are included in this thesis, and my approach to the interdisciplinarity that necessarily underpins a project with such potentially

broad scope as this one. Finally, I will briefly outline the six chapters which form the body of this study, again indicating reasons for the choices I have made, as well as drawing a few initial connections between practices and ideas.

FIELDS

Research and Pedagogy as Contemporary Curatorial and Artistic Strategies

This project began as a conjunction between personal interests that I have developed regarding performance practice and theory, and observation of growing trends in the style and forms that other performance practitioners around me are producing. When I began to think about this thesis in 2008, I found myself increasingly invested in thinking how knowledges and information could be produced, troubled, exploited, distributed, confused and managed with and through performance. During the same period, I also attended Hannah Hurtzig's Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge, several of Walid Raad's Atlas Group lecture-performances, the Brussels chapter of the international Public School network, among many other events, exhibitions, festivals, symposia and one-off performance projects which have drawn on performance in order to think through and stage broader political, social and cultural issues around the production of knowledge and expertise in various contemporary contexts.

The field of work that this thesis addresses, then, is the burgeoning field of knowledge-production-as-art. This unwieldy phrase needs some unpacking.

What is 'knowledge production' and how is it 'art'? In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-François Lyotard identifies 'research' and 'pedagogy' as two modes through which knowledge is produced and circulated.[1] This distinction can be felt, perhaps, in the difference in this country between 'taught' degrees and 'research' degrees, where one of the qualifying factors of a research degree is the contribution of original knowledge. Teaching and research: these are the activities 'experts' undertake, at least in the classical sense of the rational scientific expert. In recent years, cultural producers have turned to both of these modes as a way of structuring art production and distribution as well. In the hands of artists, curators and cultural theorists (among other participants in the ongoing production of 'culture'), these modes have taken on complications specific to the institutions and political investments of the art world. In order to wrestle this field of practice into something at least provisionally manageable, I will briefly outline a few underlying ideas and key examples of 'research' and 'pedagogy' in contemporary art.

Pedagogy

As stated above, much has been written about a turn toward educational objectives and forms in contemporary art. Among the recent texts which tackle education as both a mode and subject of art production, there are: *Education*,

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[1] Jean-Luc Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 4.

edited by Felicity Allen (part of the Whitechapel Gallery's ongoing 'Documents in Contemporary Art'); *Curating and the Educational Turn*, edited by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson; *Notes for an Art School*, compiled for the (cancelled) Manifesta 6; multiple articles from the *e-flux* online journal, particularly the themed issued from March, 2010 on 'Education, Actualised'; and 'Pedagogic Projects' a chapter from Clair Bishop's *Artificial Hells*. These texts respond to, accompany, or in some cases initiate a host of projects, which press the boundaries of education, curating and art production, including: *unitednationsplaza* in Berlin, which was continued as *night school* (2008-2009)at the New Museum in New York; the *Wide Open School* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London (2012); Fritz Haeg's ongoing Sundown Schoolhouse project; Tania Brugera's Cátedra Arte de Conducta (Behaviour Art School) (2002-2009); *On the Future of Art School*, a symposium at the University of Southern California (2007); and *SUMMIT: non-aligned initiatives in education culture* in Berlin (2007) – to name just a few of these projects and events.

Irit Rogoff is an oft-cited figure in this field of cultural production, and her article on the 'educational turn' is a particularly useful discussion of this trend and the issues surrounding recent intersections between art and pedagogy. In this article, she gives an overview of specific projects that exemplify this turn and lays out what might be at stake in any such 'turning'. She asks whether a 'turn' in contemporary art might constitute the development of an 'interpretive model' or whether it involves the layering of a 'pedagogical system' over a system of

'display exhibition and manifestation' so that each opens the other to something new. Finally she questions whether 'turning' might be more than a reading or interpretation system, and might be rather 'a generative moment in which a new horizon emerges into being'.[2] Can the 'educational turn' give us a new way to think, not just about education and art, but about broader political and cultural possibilities?

Significantly, Rogoff is wary of the emergence of a 'pedagogical aesthetic',[3] or any easily recognisable set of conventions that reproduce the materials of education (desks, files, archives, lecture series) without questioning the often conservative and dominating power dynamics that can be generated along with such materials. However, Rogoff insists that there is value in the 'educational turn' in the art world. This is rooted in the inclusion of 'conversation' as both a legitimate practice and an area for focusing critical investigation. While the value of conversation for Rogoff is largely in its open-endedness and the potential for dissolving hierarchical categories, she argues that even this has risked over-emphasising the development of formulas which themselves might sediment into rote conventions. Rogoff argues, then, that 'the "turn" we are talking about must result not only in new formats, but also in another way of recognizing when and why something important is being said'.

In order to suggest how this recognition might occur, Rogoff draws on Michel Foucault's remarks about the Greek term *parrhesia*, which is 'generally

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[2] Irit Rogoff, 'Turning', *e-flux* 0, 2008 <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/turning/> [accessed 14 December 2011].
[3] Rogoff, 'Turning'.

perceived as free speech, and ... those who practice it are perceived to be those who speak the truth'. Importantly, this speaking of truth is also an active making of truth; for Rogoff, truth 'is not a position but a drive'. Even more significantly, *parrhesia* must occur in public and for an audience, and 'it must take the form of an address'.[4] It is the articulation of particular realities in a specific context, but far from being a radically subjective, individualised pursuit, this making of truths happens always in relation to others. For Rogoff, this particular mode of making and speaking of truth defines the political potential for the 'educational turn' in art production.

For me, this analysis also indicates the necessity of performance for pedagogical art practices that aim to balance both the liberating possibility of open-endedness and the imperative to be politically strategic within concrete situations. In other words, I am interested in work that challenges hierarchies in its form, but that also specifically addresses local political content. I think that Rogoff's understanding of *parrhesia as* address helps show how performance is useful for creating such work. Techniques for thinking through a relationship between speaker and audiences are fundamental to performance practices. Performance is made in the interaction between performers and audiences, and performance studies has produced many tools for thinking through how this interaction occurs.

Moreover, the connection of public address with the 'educational turn' suggests to me the importance of thinking about the figure of the expert. To

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[4] Rogoff, 'Turning'.

extend Rogoff's assertion that the educational turn must result in 'another way of recognizing when and why something important is being said', I argue that it must also result in new ways of thinking *who* says important things. If the answer to the question 'who says important things?' is 'experts', we must expand how we think about expertise. If we want to change that answer, we must challenge some of the ways in which expertise is thought.

Research

If pedagogy, or the transmission of knowledge, has been generative for artists in recent years, research, or the production of knowledge, has been at least as widespread a strategy. Indeed, the adoption of information or archival aesthetics is so ubiquitous and diffuse a strategy that it is certainly beyond the scope of this thesis to adequately represent it. Tom Holert usefully summarises the impulse, traced at least to the beginning of Conceptual Art in the 1960s, to draw from academic procedures, often to critical or interventionist ends, writing:

> Administrative, information, or service aesthetics, introduced at various moments of modernist and post-modernist art, emulated, mimicked, caricaturized and endorsed the aesthetics and rhetoric of scientific communities. They created representations and methodologies for intellectual labour on and off-display, and founded migrating and flexible archives that aimed to transform the knowledge spaces of galleries and museums according to what were often feminist agendas.[5]

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[5] Tom Holert 'Art in the Knowledge-based Polis', *e-flux* 3, 2009 < http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/> [accessed 10 January, 2013]

The archival projects of, for instance, Renée Green, such as *Import/Export Funk Office* (1992), which is both subjective and treats a subject – hip-hop – with a complicated relationship to official histories, might be one example of this emulation or caricaturization of research aesthetics. Further examples of the archive as artistic and curatorial strategy can be found in, for example, *Arkive City*[6], *Interarchive. Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field*[7], *Archive fever: uses of the document in contemporary art*[8], among many other texts which anthologise and reflect upon the archive in contemporary art practice.

Some of the work I address in this thesis does not necessarily come from this genealogy of conceptual art, even as I argue that it significantly develops what might be thought of as a 'research' function for art and performance. Some emerges, for instance, at the intersections of activism and cultural production (sometimes labeled 'tactical media') and some emerges from artists' engagements with science. *Tactical Biopolitics* and *New Art/Science Affinities* are two recent publications that trace this field of work. In my first chapter, I look more closely at these intersections, in relationship to my discussion of the Critical Art Ensemble. I believe that the framework of 'expertise' helps me connect these multiple genealogical threads.

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[6] Julie Bacon, Ed., *Arkive City*, (Newcastle, England, and Belfast, Northern Ireland: Interface and Locus+ Archive, 2008).
[7] Hans-Peter Feldman, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Diethelm Stoller, Ulf Wuggenig (ed.) *Interarchive. Archival Practices and Sites in the Contemporary Art Field* (Lueneburg/Koeln: Publishing House Bookshop Walther Koenig, 2002)
[8] Okwui Enwezor and Willis E. Hartshorn, *Archive fever: uses of the document in contemporary art* (London: Steidl, 2008)

Indeed, for me, the most interesting way to think about research is part of a relationship between knowledge and power. The expert is fundamentally implicated in the sites in which power as a function of knowledge accrues. In my interaction with performance practice and theory, I am, perhaps foremost, committed to engaging these sites of power from both a critical and interventionist perspective. The expert has become a valuable figure for such engagement, and for an investigation of particularly contemporary configurations of power and knowledge.

Holert's proposals for what might constitute artistic research more broadly are useful in this sense. Couched in a description of a proposed research project titled 'Art in the Knowledge-based Polis', Holert describes a system that would combine science-based processes with art-based ones, without privileging either. Key to this is a productive tension which I hope to develop further in this thesis: the relationship of art production to forms of non-knowledge. Holert writes about 'the traditional claim that artists almost constitutively work on the hind side of rationalist, explicated knowledge—in the realms of non-knowledge (or emergent knowledge)'. Artists are mystics or visionaries according to this claim, either seeing beyond rational frameworks or seeing past them to future frameworks. As one-dimensional as this take on artistic activity might be, the value of it is that it sidestephs the instrumentalised goals of the knowledge-based economy ('efficiency, innovation, and transferability' as Holert phrases them). It is this 'apparent incompatibility' between knowledge and nonknowledge that Holert

champions as the political potential for 'research' if it is to contribute to the overcoming of dominant regimes.[9]

Live Art and Expertise

Having briefly addressed pedagogy and research as broad curatorial and artistic strategies in contemporary art, I want to shift focus slightly, to consider the term Live Art and its relationship to expertise. Many of the artists I consider in this thesis have shown their work in a context associated with Live Art. Moreover, it is a term that has a specific sense in the United Kingdom, in the context in which I have produced this thesis. In attempting to delineate the field I have studied, it is important to pause for a moment with Live Art.

It is a contested term, and there is some recent work that historicises both the development of the term and the practitioners and institutions associated with it.[10] In a themed issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* Dominic Johnson argues for the importance of 'accounting for Live Art as a geographically and historically situated set of practices'. This is particularly important because unlike Performance Art, which Johnson calls a 'formal tradition' with a set of recognizable styles and recurrent themes, 'Live Art is a sector'.[11] It is a term that

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[9] Holert, 'Knowledge-based Polis'

[10] Since the writing of this thesis, an edited collection on this topic has come out, which would be useful to consider in further developments of this project. See Deirdre Heddon and Jennie Klein, *Histories and Practices of Live Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

[11] Dominic Johnson, 'Introduction: The What, When and Where of Live Art', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22.1 (2012), p. 1. Note: an article I co-authored titled 'Gobsmacked: Getting Speechless

was developed strategically by artists and institutions, particularly in the UK, who were looking for a place to situate practices that were marginalized or had no other vocabulary to describe themselves – and thus little access to funding or institutional support.

Historicizing 'Live Art' then, is especially difficult because its practitioners have often displayed a reluctance to positively define the term. Joshua Sofaer, for instance, in the text of his lecture performance *What Is Live Art?*, states that 'The term "Live Art" came into usage in the UK in the mid-1980's, and was born out of a frustration by arts professionals to account for art practices that expanded or escaped the classifications in use'.[12] In other words, Sofaer suggests that any tracing of the history of Live Art as a category must account for the desire on the part of its practitioners to 'escape' or in other ways go beyond categorisation. Sofaer goes on to describe various ways that artists have found value in the term Live Art, and to show how there are thematic and methodological links between these artists. Many artists who focus on presence, for instance, or the body, or the marginalisation of certain bodies have all found Live Art a hospitable term.

However, Sofaer insists that, 'at least part of the definition of Live Art has to be its resistance to definition. Maybe it's called "live" precisely because it hasn't

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in Performance' appears in this issue.

[12] Joshua Sofaer, *What Is Live Art?* prod. by Outsmart Productions, 2002, <http://www.joshuasofaer.com/2011/06/what-is-live-art/> [accessed 14 March 2012].

yet solidified into a category; it is a live process of change and challenge'.[13]

Similarly, The Live Art Development Agency (one of the most vocal advocates for

live work in the UK and for practitioners of challenging performance) states that:

> Live Art is not a description of an artform or discipline, but a cultural strategy
> to include experimental processes and experiential practices that might
> otherwise be excluded from established curatorial, cultural and critical
> frameworks.[14]

This resistance to formal definitions and insistence on the value of broadly

accepting practices that might otherwise not find space will be familiar to anyone

who has encountered Live Art and its institutions.

So is Live Art the genre that defies genre? Possibly, but there are a few

caveats that need to be considered first. To return to Johnson's essay, he

expresses concern that Live Art might ultimately be limiting in its strategic aims,

becoming 'a parochial system for presenting work that sometimes feels

unhelpfully cut off from the wider histories and conventions of artistic

production'.[15] Championing marginalized practices can sometimes feel like

championing marginalization itself. Yet by rigorously situating Live Art in a

context, without succumbing to the stifling impulses of orthodox categories, it

might be possible to realize a much broader potential for Live Art as a way of

understanding uncompromising and political performance practices. For

Johnson, this potential can be realized if we 'search for the bite, the flinch, the

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[13] Sofaer.
[14] Live Art Development Agency, What Is Live Art?,
<http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html> [accessed 14 March 2012].
[15] Johnson, p. 8.

grimace of one's confusion in the face of Live Art, and never settle for anything less, despite the consolations that convivial forms might sometimes offer'.[16] The provocation is to understand Live Art as an engine for challenging what we know about performance, not a cozy refuge from the messy outside world. Understood this way, Live Art has been a productive framework for my investigation.

So how to consider expertise as it functions in Live Art? Does this 'sector' or 'strategy' have its own experts, or its own anxieties around knowledge production and power? Returning to Sofaer's lecture performance on the definition of Live Art might help to answer these questions. An important thing to note about this performance is that he performs the text to a camera, on a busy urban pavement. He is wearing a suit, and his delivery is authoritative and confident. He is a white man who is convincing as an expert. As he speaks, passersby continually turn to look back at him, many of them laughing and pointing. The reason for this surprising behaviour becomes clear only at the end of the performance, as the camera pans out and rotates behind Sofaer, to reveal that the seat of his trousers has been cut out, and his bare buttocks are prominently on display. I take this performance as a metonym for a broader approach to knowledge and expertise that occurs under the umbrella Live Art when it is at is most interesting. It is a combination of serious, searching questions and articulations, alongside the unexpected, the disruptive or the inappropriate.

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[16] Johnson, p. 16.

I am interested, in this thesis, to draw on this combination of careful thinking and articulation around categories and expertise, and of strategies for undermining and collapsing categories and expert positions. I believe that it is possible to connect common political intentions and identify collective aesthetic stakes, without reducing the work to brands or labels, and still to maintain a careful, critical position around issues of hierarchy that arise from canon-building. I also argue that instances of excess, failure, contradiction – and the straight up piss-take – have been deployed masterfully by the artists I am interested in to complicate this thinking and to question this carefulness. It is this dynamic and never easily resolved combination that I explore in what follows.

While I do not want to use Live Art as a way to avoid outlining contexts or to make uninformed comparisons, I do value the strategic dimension of the term as a way to think critically about the limits of categories and ways of rigourously re-thinking boundaries. Within the development of institutions that support Live Art, there is a self-identified attempt to be actively inclusive of marginalised bodies, not just abstractly, but at an institutional, programming level. Again, the Live Art Development Agency is a useful example of these kinds of programming objectives. In recent years, their large-scale projects *Documenting Live* and *Access All Areas*, for example, have addressed issues facing artists of colour and disabled artists, respectively, in ways that are complex, challenging and not easily resolvable. Projects such as these are not tokenistic but argue, rather, that

the experiences of marginalised groups are constitutive materials for the field of Live Art as such. This is not, I argue, the same thing as championing marginalization – it is a material effort to engage with types of knowledges that are actively excluded from mainstream discourse. When Live Art challenges us to commit to activist cultural politics, it is valuable to my own investments.

Performance Studies, Disciplinarity and Expertise

If Live Art is a vital mode because of its complex relationship to expertise, the value of performance studies as an academic framework for considering this relationship comes also from the anxieties and tensions within the discipline around expertise. Indeed, the particular purchase that performance studies has on these questions is fundamentally related to its sometimes self-identification as an anti-discipline. My investigation reflects the anxieties felt towards disciplinarity among many who study performance, while maintaining an awareness of how these anxieties only increase as the institutional footing of performance studies also increases and narratives of its development take hold. I argue that this ambivalent attitude towards expertise in the academic study of performance actually makes it a fertile space to think about the problems of expertise for performance.

One of the useful critical tools that has been developed through the anxiety around disciplinarity in performance studies is the use of jarring comparisons which de-stabilise disciplinary boundaries without necessarily rejecting them

outright. Rebecca Schneider, for instance, urges us to be 'serious about imprecision', citing Fred Moten's *In the Break* for its 'cross-medial comparisons' in which considerations of 'the sound of a photograph',[17] for instance, might simultaneously enrich the study of his particular cultural objects of choice, and refigure conventions that delineate what constitutes 'study'.[18] These sorts of practices are significant because they do not rely on the complete negation of disciplinary borders, but rather require a canny understanding of how disciplinary boundaries work in order to ever so carefully reorganise how they operate. As Schneider writes, 'it is the almost wrong that helps us get something almost right'.[19] However, the practice of recognising when and where these 'almosts' begin and end is tricky. I hope to approach expertise in a way that strikes a balance between indeterminacy and comprehensibility – and which draws on the valuable tools developed within performance studies to do so.

Schneider deploys this 'betweenness' as a way to approach historicity as a central methodological problem for performance studies, which gets to the heart of what performance studies may be able to contribute to knowledge production. While it is crucial for many performance scholars to understand the historical processes that produce the material conditions that surround both the production and reception of theatre and performance, at the same time scholars balance the desire to emphasise liveness and subjective and embodied experience, which

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[17] Rebecca Schneider, 'Intermediality, Infelicity, and Scholarship on the Slip' *Theatre Survey*, 47.2 (2006), p. 254.

[18] For more on Moten's significant work on the concept of study, see Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, 'The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses', *Social Text* 22.2 (2004), pp. 101-115.

[19] Schneider, 'Intermediality', 258.

may seem in conflict with the arguably more abstracted perspective of long term social movements. However, as Schneider argues, within performance 'the tug between the extremes of "presentness" on one side and extremes of "historicism" on another will not (and arguably should not) find precise resolution'.[20] For Schneider, it is precisely the tension between these two poles, and the unwillingness to give way on either point, which make performance studies a politically valuable framework. For me, this type of tension between seemingly opposed modes of understanding what constitutes valuable knowledge also make performance studies a politically useful framework for thinking about expertise.

The history of performance studies itself, along with its relationship to expertise, is hotly contested. How much does performance studies owe to theatre, or to anthropology, or to visual arts, or to linguistics? How indebted is the field to its point of origin (e.g. the Department of Performance Studies at Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, often understood to be the first department of its kind)? How do national contexts affect what is considered to be performance studies, and how does the dominance of a North American, or a Western European perspective affect what is considered to be legitimate expert research activities in the field? A number of studies have come out in recent years which attempt to account for the historical trajectory of performance studies and its institutional affiliations, often while attempting to maintain some spirit of indeterminacy which could allow for alternative histories and affiliations to

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[20] Schneider, 'Intermediality' p. 257.

emerge.

Shannon Jackson's work, for instance, both lays out particular narratives of the development of performance studies and reflects on the consequences of doing so. For Jackson, the claim on the part of performance studies scholars that the performance studies field is charting unknown waters needs to be tempered by looking at the already entrenched histories of the development of fields like drama and theatre in the (particularly for Jackson, North American) academy. Looking at such histories allows us to 'further demonstrate how saturated oppositional discourse is with what it claims not to be'.[21] Jackson argues that it is crucial for scholars in performance studies to participate in disciplinary genealogies of this sort because it is 'a means of approaching the past to unsettle the heretofore stable'.[22] Significantly, Jackson also argues that performance studies is not unique in having a genealogy (or genealogies) that are contested and riddled with anxiety. She argues, instead, that it is in the nature of disciplinarity to be the site of conflicting investments, even if it is often thought to be the place for the definition of stable categories.

I argue, however, that the self-conscious attention currently being paid to these anxieties and conflicting investments by scholars such as Jackson in the field of performance studies makes this discipline ripe for a larger project of problematising expertise. The anxiety around the cohesion and institutionalisation

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[21] Shannon Jackson, 'Professing Performance: Disciplinary Genealogies, *TDR*, 45.1 (2001), p. 85.

[22] Jackson, 'Professing', 92.

of performance studies – and the consequent anxiety around the modes of expertise that it (performance studies) creates – are, I argue, factors which makes performance studies a particularly valuable place from which to launch an investigation into the politics and aesthetics of expertise. As those who developed the foundations of performance studies as a discipline – foundations that were, at least for some, intended to be permanently unstable – become increasingly looked to by newer generations of academic performance scholars as experts, the implications of this needs to be considered. On the one hand, it may be important to examine self-consciously the status positions embedded and developing in the discipline of performance studies. On the other hand, if one wants to investigate how a discipline might confront the assumptions and processes behind its own development, it might be a good idea to consult the experts – and performance studies might be a good place to find expert understanding of disciplinary anxiety.

Performance Studies and Practice-As-Research

One of the places expertise is being negotiated in the discipline of performance studies is in the space of intersection between 'practice' and 'research'. Having discussed broadly the significance of 'research' as a mode for contemporary art, I want to look a bit more carefully at the specific situation of practice as research within performance studies as an academic discipline. There has been a perceived need in a growing number of university performance

studies departments not to separate conventional academic activities from artistic activities. Increasingly these departments are characterised not only by the working side by side of people who make performance and people who write about performance, but also by people whose professional lives consist of some balance of both.

Some of the motivation and energy behind such developments has come from the forceful arguments of performance studies figures such as Dwight Conquergood. For Conquergood, there is an underlying political urgency behind the question of practice as research. Conquergood writes of 'the dominant way of knowing in the academy' which is 'that of empirical observation and critical analysis from a distanced perspective'. This dominance results in an academy that centres on text to the exclusion of all other forms of knowing and transmitting knowledge. For Conquergood, the re-evaluation of performance practice is an attempt to create some parity with the production of text. This re-evaluation does more than attempt a balance between artists and scholars, however. It also addresses 'ways of knowing that are rooted in embodied experience, orality, and local contigencies'. These ways of knowing need to be emphasised because they are often the domain of 'subordinate people' who 'do not have the privilege of explicitness, the luxury of transparency, the presumptive norm of clear and direct communication, free and open debate on a level playing field that the privileged classes take for granted'.[23] Performance studies has had the opportunity to

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[23] Dwight Conquergood, 'Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research', *TDR* 46.2 (2002), p. 146.

propose, however modestly, concrete mechanisms for supporting embodied, local knowledge alongside and among the abstract and critical thinking that is more easily associated with expert academic work as it is conventionally understood. The degree to which these proposals will be seriously taken up remains to be seen.

The history and future of practice as research is complex and contested, and much work has been done to investigate its problems and potentials. The five-year-long research project Practice as Research in Performance (PARIP) at the University in Bristol, for example, was initiated in 2002 as an attempt to articulate some of the challenges facing this type of work, and to refine some of its terms. Questions around definition (e.g. does 'practice as research' differ materially from 'practice-based research'?) were addressed alongside questions of legitimacy, access and evaluation. In his introduction to the resulting publication, Baz Kershaw attempts a partial narrative of the development of practice as research in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, highlighting institutional obstacles and loopholes, and proclaiming, optimistically, that this type of work 'could well have a future that is profoundly sustainable'.[24]

The layers of complexity that attend the questions around practice as research are vast. There also needs to be a consideration of how practice as

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[24] Baz Kershaw, 'Practice-as-Research: An Introduction', *Practice-as-Research in Performance and Screen*, eds. Ludivine Allegue, Simon Jones, Baz Kershaw, Angela Piccini (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.16.

research has been treated in different (though often intersecting fields) such as visual culture, music or dance research. The field might be enriched by thinking how 'practice' is defined in academic fields that are further afield – mathematics, say, where the distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' might be interesting to compare to performance study's 'theory' and 'practice'. I do not have the space to address these points in detail. I do, however, want to point out that despite Kershaw's optimism the future of practice as research in performance studies is far from clear, as the increasing demands on higher education to do more with less will no doubt continue to affect the ability of institutions to experiment outside of predictable instrumental outcomes. Additionally, at a more general level, there is a question about whether the dominance of text is still to be taken for granted. Might, for example, the ability to manipulate and circulate images be a more important form of expertise to understand and critique? At least since Guy Debord's pronouncements on the 'whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail' being 'an immense accumulation of spectacles',[25] such image critique has developed (and has become an object of critique) throughout the humanities fields. Is the performance studies field (such as it is) sufficiently nimble to accommodate and respond to shifts and tremors in the wider context? Is it a choice between institutional sedimentation and permanent precarity, or are there ways to think about knowledge and skill that offers other alternatives? I suspect that these questions underlie much of the

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[25] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 3rd edn., trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p. 3.

work that has emerged in recent years in the intersections between expertise and performance, and I propose that these anxieties link a lot of otherwise disparate practice.

Performance Art: Institutionalisation and Legitimacy

As the place of performance 'practice' is being negotiated within the academy, one of the primary objects of performance studies has undergone a massive shift in institutional positioning. Performance art, often understood as being part of a fine art or visual art genealogy, has gained new traction within wider arts discourse. Marina Abramović has ascended to canonical status in major museums, and along with other such superstar figures, performance art more generally is beginning to have a new understanding of itself and its place in art history. There are anxieties that attend these shifts as well. Can there be a radical programme for performance art when it is embraced by the Museum of Modern Art in New York or the Tate Modern in the UK? Exactly whose work is being embraced? How is the work of earlier generations being remembered, and what does that do to the field of performance art more generally?

The three-year-long research project Performance Matters, begun in 2009 and based jointly at Roehampton University and Goldsmiths, University of London is one initiative that has undertaken to address such questions. Its two major streams Performing Idea and Trashing Performance take on the dual notion that performance is simultaneously achieving new forms of knowing and

circulating knowledge, and also producing a mess. As the project website states, the current position of performance in a broader cultural context means the time is ripe to ask 'whether such forms of cultural practice are now being taken seriously in culture more broadly, and how they may possess the potential to refashion understandings of what, and how, things matter in the contemporary world'.[26] Is it possible for performance to leverage its new foothold in cultural positioning to contribute to a more profound shift in the legitimizing functions of culture more broadly? How can the producers of performance insist on the ongoing need for questioning the 'what' and the 'how' (and perhaps also the 'who') of things that matter.

Part of this is down to the forms of knowledge that performance can contribute, even at the level of self-knowledge of performance histories. It seems important to briefly mention the rise of the performance re-enactment as a popular form in museums, galleries and symposia internationally. This thesis does not explicitly address performance re-enactment, but I suspect that the 'educational turn' may have a relationship with this mode which has become nearly as ubiquitous as the performance lecture. On the one hand, Abramović's historical re-enactments the Guggenheim Museum in New York (CITE) or her orchestration of re-enactments of her own performance histories at the Museum of Modern Art (also in New York) might be seen as part of either playing into a particular moment of fashionability or perhaps a more weighted introduction of

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[26] Performance Matters, 'Introduction: Performance Matters'
<http://www.thisisperformancematters.co.uk/what-and-why.html>, [accessed 14 December 2011]

performance into an institutionalised canon. On the other hand, re-enactment has been a strategy at smaller scale, but perhaps, I argue, with more interesting results, by artists like Robin Deacon (with his ongoing project on the experimental downtown New York performance artist Stuart Sherman), Janez Janša (one of three Slovenia-based artist to officially change their names to that of the right-wing Slovenian prime minister, and who produced a number of re-enactments of 1960s Yugoslavian performance) or Mel Brimfield (who has recently published a collection of works titled *This Is Performance Art*). Affection, disruption, fiction and humour thread through these and other practices, offering different possibilities for how we might *know* performance. In these examples, performance practitioners use their own tools to produce knowledge both about their own disciplinary histories, and about how history might be known. They are not only developing their own narratives and producing their own evidence, but also proposing alternative modes of narrative, and alternatives ways of thinking about evidence.

LIMITS

I have touched on a few broad issues found at the intersections of performance and expertise. There are, of course, countless others. It would be possible to investigate the ongoing professionalisation of the artist, and how this operates alongside other cultural ideals such as, for instance, the Romantic notion of the artist as divinely inspired, outside or above economics or industries,

or the avant-garde ideal of the fusion of art and life. There are also sets of questions to be asked about the performative and theatrical dimension of cultural ideas about expertise, from the rhetorical styles of persuasive speech, to the semiotics of costume among say, scientists, political analysts and professional athletes. Indeed, a performance studies PhD thesis could be devoted to studying people with Drama degrees who contribute to the public speaking curricula in business schools. For this study, I have limited my inquiry to artists working with performance (not necessarily exclusively but at least in significant ways) who are self-consciously and explicitly drawing on expertise either as an object of critique, material to be mined for its formal properties, or as a site (both physically and conceptually) to locate a practice.

My decision to focus on this set of parameters is largely in response to trends in performance work that I have witnessed. The baseline observation that motivated the development of this thesis is this: in recent years, many artists have been explicitly drawing on intersections between knowledge production and performance to create work. I then discovered that thinking expertise as a frame helps bring some seemingly disparate practices into useful conversation, and focuses what could be an impossibly broad field of study. The impulses behind the works I have witnessed are varied. Some of these include: creating alternative academies and institutions; critiquing the professional art industry; activism against other institutions ranging from the pharmaceutical industry to national border security; expanding the definition of the word 'expert', and who

can be included in it; and working towards interdisciplinary models for collaboration between artists and other institutions. I wanted to explore this trend as an overarching theme, while at the same time maintaining the variety and non-cohesiveness that exists between the artists I have encountered.

What, specifically am I looking at? Having outlined broadly the fields of practice and fields of study I have drawn from, what is specific to the set of artists I have looked at? I have already discussed how Live Art is a useful frame for considering the set of practices I consider as a whole, without erasing the different backgrounds and motivations of the diverse set of practices I look at. These backgrounds include, as I have already discussed, an explicitly activist framework (ACT UP, Critical Arts Ensemble and the noborders movement). I also look at work that is in the visual art performance tradition (Kira O'Reilly, Bobby Baker, Aaron Williamson, William Pope L., Walid Raad). There is the related segment of 'postdramatic theatre' represented herein (Rimini Protokoll), as well as the somewhat different area of so-called 'bio-art' (O'Reilly and Critical Art Ensemble again). Each of these areas has its own relationship to expertise, and produces its own motivation for addressing it or incorporating it into the practice and the politics. At the same time, none of these areas has a permanent boundary, and indeed the practitioners I have looked at often operate in multiple settings and for multiple types of audiences. Once again, I have aimed to build a structure for my analysis that maintains these elements of both multiplicity and intersection, rather than forcing an inappropriate field that would elide difference

for the sake of neat categories.

Nevertheless, there are important limits to this study, and before I move on to defining my key terms, and outlining my thesis chapters, I want to briefly discuss two significant areas where I have had to draw lines around the work I have considered. The first is temporal limits and the second is geographical limits.

Time Period

I want to briefly discuss the time frame I have chosen to work with. In the title for this thesis, I have used the word 'contemporary' to describe the time frame. To be more specific, the earliest work I look at is from the late 1980s, and the most current work I look at is ongoing at the time of this writing, with most of the work being concentrated between 2000-2010. (I consider the work of Bobby Baker, whose career began before the period I have just indicated, but the pieces I consider are her later 'How to Live' pieces.)

Periodisation is always a fraught and imprecise activity, but the work I look at is influenced by external political factors like the rise of neoliberal, globalised economic models and the subsequent global economic crisis, composed as a sequence of burst 'bubbles' – technology, credit, housing – which have been felt most spectacularly since 2008, but which reach much earlier. The economic austerity programmes which have been enacted in response have, certainly in this country, materially affected the type of work that is being made in this

'contemporary' period, as budgets are slashed and remaining resources are concentrated in already elite institutions. Ideologically as well, however, the transition from a neoliberal New Labour government to a conservative coalition administration means that understandings of the social function of the arts, and the types work that is valued and knowledges that are legitimated have shifted. The global 'War on Terror' declared in response to the events of September 11, 2001 also certainly conditions the work I consider here, as do the attendant restrictions on immigration in North America and Western Europe, the curtailing of civil liberties enacted through such policies as the Patriot Act in the USA, and the more abstract deployment of unspecified and ongoing 'threat' that has been opportunistically adopted by the governments of powerful nations to justify a spectrum of violence, ranging from detainment to torture.[27] Finally, ongoing advances in information and communication technology, characterized particularly in this period by the near ubiquity (in wealthy communities) of mobile communication devices and the rise of social media, are both directly influencing the work I look at, in terms of expanding and shaping what is technically possible, and by changing how we think about (at least) subjectivity, competence, ownership and accessibility.

This is a list of conditions that is simultaneously too broad to adequately address in this thesis, and fatally limited in terms of actually acknowledging the complexities of the contemporary period in which we are living. Moreover, in this

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[27] For a theorisation of 'threat' see Brian Massumi, 'The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat' in *The Affect Theory Reader*, eds. Seigworth, Gregory J. and Melissa Gregg (Durham, Duke University Press, 2010).

thesis I want to focus on performance work, and to find my way to broader issues through the analysis of this work. However, I have made this list because I think there is a particular urgency around thinking about expertise *now*, that is crucially different from, say, the period of the 1960s and 70s that Lyotard marks as the period of the 'postmodern' (which I will address in more detail below). If the last few decades are no less subject to computerisation, the continued dominance of data and information as legitimated forms of knowledge, or the ongoing fracturing of grand metanarratives than was the year 1979, nevertheless the particular conditions of permanent yet diffuse crisis, the possible waning dominance of North America and Western Europe (and particularly of the United States as a global superpower), and the precaritisation of large swathes of the so-called knowledge economy has, perhaps paradoxically, lent renewed significance to the questions of what is an expert, what types of knowledge count, and who decides.

On a more modest level, the period between the late 1980s-2010 is useful as well for thinking how the discipline of performance studies itself has an ongoing relationship to expertise, as a new, but no longer quite so new as it was, discipline. Further, as performance as an art form undergoes ongoing permutations and takes on new positions within discourse and institutional valuation, the relationship between performance and broader understandings of expertise becomes more complex. The 'contemporary', however inadequate it might be as a descriptive term, nonetheless demands attention as forming a specific collision between performance, knowledge, power and expertise.

Geographical Limits

I also want to acknowledge that there are limits to the field of study I am considering in terms of geography. The work I look at, while it often alludes to political issues and dynamics in a global context, is largely emanating from Western Europe and the United States, and the majority of performance examples I consider when not from the United Kingdom are based in Germany and the United States. Similarly, the critical literature I engage with, while keenly aware of a range of political contexts and histories, is also largely European and North American in origin. This geographical bias certainly betrays my own educational and professional history. However, I am also interested in the ways anxieties around expertise and challenges to dominant forms of expertise within these geographical limits betray broader anxieties around and challenges to the ongoing dominance of these geographical centres.

DEFINITIONS

Having cleared some space for investigation, in terms of the fields of practice and disciplinary contexts I will draw from, and limits to these fields that I have provisionally constructed, I will now undertake to define the key terms of my argument. 'Knowledge', 'affect' and then 'expertise' itself are the primary terms that I need to address, though I proceed with the understanding that each of

these terms is both too large to adequately summarise, and too hotly contested to define uncontroversially. These definitions should be understood as provisional and functional, highlighting key issues and usages that help frame the proceeding investigation.

Knowledge

I will focus on four aspects of knowledge that particularly influence my understanding of expertise as a project for contemporary performance. First, I assert that knowledge cannot be defined as a single category, but must be understood as referring to a diverse set of categories, each involving different criteria for legitimation or truth-value. Second, these categories are subject to change, and shift over time. As a consequence, a period in history may be characterized, at least in part, by the operations of the categories of knowledge in play. Third, knowledge has a fundamental relationship to power, and any political work that aims to disrupt existing configurations of power must deal with configurations of knowledge (and vice versa). Finally, fourth, the knowledge/power relation plays out in our understanding of the competencies, or capacities for knowledge, or different individuals. This means, I argue, that the question of *who* is considered to be knowledgeable may be as important to a politically committed investigation of expertise as the question of *what* is considered to be knowledge.

So, to begin: for the purposes of this thesis, knowledge must be understood

as existing in multiple categories, and these categories are characterised by differing criteria when it comes to determining legitimacy or truth. These differing criteria may, indeed, exclude other forms of knowledge at various times. I draw on Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* to help me support this assertion (and a consequent assertion that I make below). As Lyotard argues:

> [W]hat is meant by the term *knowledge* is not only a set of denotative statements, far from it. It also includes notions of 'know-how', 'knowing how to live', 'how to listen', etc. Knowledge, then, is a question of competence that goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criterion of truth, extending to the determination and application of criteria of efficacy (technical qualification), of justice and/or happiness (ethical wisdom), of the beauty of a sound or colour (auditory and visual sensibility), etc.[28]

So knowledge may allow one to know *how* something works, *whether* something is right, or *if* an object is beautiful, among other forms of knowledge or knowing. The criteria for all of these are different. One who is understood to be knowledgeable may broadly be understood to be competent, but these competencies vary:

> Knowledge is what makes someone capable of forming 'good' denotative utterances, but also 'good' prescriptive and 'good' evaluative utterances… It is not a competence relative to a particular class of statements (for example, cognitive ones) to the exclusion of all others. On the contrary, it makes 'good' performances in relation to a variety of objects of discourse possible: objects to be known, decided on, evaluated, transformed… [29]

Knowledge and competence are mutually self-supporting, but different types of knowledge may lead to different types of competencies, and vice versa. Indeed, one form of knowledge may result in competence that looks like incompetence

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[28] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 19.
[29] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition,* p. 19.

under another criteria for knowledge.

Lyotard addresses this last point when he focuses particularly on the distinction between narrative knowledge and scientific knowledge. For Lyotard, the pragmatics of science, on the other hand, are fundamentally defined by their concern for questions of legitimacy in the determination of facts about the world. Science is the set of knowledge that is concerned with 'denotative' statements – statements of truth, or statements which correspond with reality. The practice of making such statements is necessarily concerned with the practice of evaluating such statements. Thus the meta-discourse of science, which determines the rules of how things can be said to be true, is as important as the discourse of science, or statements of truth.

On the other hand, the pragmatics of narrative knowledge are not concerned with *questions* of legitimacy, though it operates with relation to legitimacy. Narrative is a process by which criteria for legitimacy are determined and circulated. Narratives nominate those subjects that have a right to speak and be heard, and narratives distribute those words. Insofar as narratives have force, 'they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do'.[30] The stories we tell about who we are and how we behave constitute a type of knowledge that *works*, whether or not it is *true.*

In summary, then, narrative knowledge does not prioritise legitimation, rather, 'it certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having

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[30] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 23.

recourse to argumentation and proof'.[31] Narrative knowledge is knowledge, insofar as it is passed down as knowledge. Whereas scientific knowledge must be accessible to legitimation – it is knowledge insofar as it can be proved and stand up to argument. One consequence of this is that scientific knowledge looks to narrative knowledge with its own criteria and finds narrative knowledge falls short. While narrative develops criteria of legitimation that science draws from, science cannot legitimate narrative.

All this is to show, then, how knowledge exists in multiple categories, and one category of knowledge might challenge the fundaments of another category of knowledge. On to the second point in my definition of knowledge, which complicates the first point about the diversity of categories of knowledge. Categories of knowledge shift and change over time – as does the predominance of some categories over other categories. Additionally, the configuration of categories of knowledge characterises a historical moment. So, drawing from Lyotard again, the shift from 'modernity' to 'postmodernity' is a shift from one configuration of knowledge sets to another configuration. Even the word 'configuration' is difficult, because it suggests a stable, if provisional, structure. My point is that stability is not a necessary characteristic of knowledge, even if the integrity of a certain category of knowledge or the dynamics between knowledges may have duration, whether extended or brief.

Lyotard demonstrates this point in his detailed analysis of the shift from modernity to postmodernity, characterised as a shift in the function of knowledge

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[31] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 26.

in correspondence with other shifts in political paradigms. So, for instance, the question of legitimacy in modern scientific knowledge was determined by a specific type of narrative knowledge – the grand meta-narrative, such as the concept of Spirit in German Idealist philosophy. This is the result of the development of a certain self-consciousness within the realm of modern scientific discourse:

> It is recognised that the conditions of truth, in other words, the rules of the game of science, are immanent in that game, that they can only be established within the bonds of a debate that is already scientific in nature, and that there is no other proof that the rules are good than the consensus extended to them by the experts.[32]

In order to lend authority to the consensus of experts, the experts looked outside of scientific discourse, seeking for some unity that would stabilize the rules of the game. With this understanding of legitimacy also comes the concept of progress, and the idea of a cumulative teleology became a fundamental characteristic of modernity. And thus unity became the major philosophical project of modernity, in a context of knowledge production which aimed to produce 'fully legitimated subject[s] of knowledge and society'.[33] In the German Idealist tradition:

> Philosophy must restore unity to learning, which has been scattered into separate sciences in laboratories and in pre-university education; it can only achieve this in a language game that links the sciences together as moments in the becoming of spirit, in other words, which links them in a rational narration, or rather meta-narration.[34]

Postmodernism is 'post-' because legitimation is no longer characterised in these

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[32] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 30.
[33] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 33/
[34] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 33.

terms. With the rise of information technology, 'the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses'.[35] The game of science is shattered, or might seem to be, 'by revealing that it is a language game with its own rules…and that it has no special calling to supervise the game of praxis (nor the game of aesthetics for that matter).[36] The pessimistic response to this shattering is to bemoan the failure of philosophy, the loss of the subject, the reduction of grand unities to diminished specialisms. However, for Lyotard, the important move for postmodern science is a self-awareness that understands that the production of truth statements is governed by rules, and that rules are not themselves statements of truth. The 'game' of postmodernism is to search for the paradox, or the broken rule, and the 'moves' players of this game make are to rally for new rules, or new ways of thinking and speaking.

The third point about knowledge that I want to make here is implicit in the first two points (that knowledge has multiple categories and is intertwined with history). That is that knowledge has a fundamental relationship with power. Here and elsewhere in this thesis, I draw on Michel Foucault's formulation of power as multiple and dynamic. For Foucault, power needs to be understood as 'force relations' produced through processes of 'ceaseless struggles and confrontations'. These relations are mutually self-supporting, and take effect under strategies 'whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social

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[35] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 37.
[36] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p. 40.

hegemonies'.[37] Power, then, is neither centralised nor static, though it is often expressed through recognizable channels. There is a danger that this understanding of power as dispersed and ever-present might lead to political apathy or exhaustion if the ground of power constantly crumbles only to re-emerge elsewhere, and stronger. However, I take this understanding of power to mean that it can be produced and wielded in surprising places and to non-determined ends, and thus that working for change can produce results.

For Foucault, knowledge and power are not only related but productive of one another. He criticizes, for instance, the idea that power functions exclusively to repress knowledge, arguing that 'power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression'. If this were the case, knowledge would be the enemy of power, and revelation a sufficient weapon against control. This isn't how power works, Foucault insists: 'if…power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realize, it produces effects at the level of desire – and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it'.[38] What and how we know is a result of the mechanisms of power.

One of Foucault's major examples of the way power produces is at the level of knowledge about bodies, understandings of which are based on regimes

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[37] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1998) p. 93.

[38] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writing* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 59.

of discipline that have developed in the modern and contemporary period. In his study of the prison system, for instance, Foucault demonstrates how the technologies of the body – the everyday rigours and routines that operate not only on the incarcerated but on entire populations via institutions of religion, education, the military or others – constitute a 'micro-physics of power'.[39] It is through these everyday systems that knowledge of what a body is and can do is produced. Foucault calls the interdependence of power and knowledge 'power-knowledge relations' and argues that it is impossible to understand a system of power without a corresponding system of knowledge, and vice versa.

Knowledge cannot be thought, then, as the province of free and disinterested individuals, as the modern understanding of knowledge might have it. Rather, 'the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformation'.[40] Having asserted that power and knowledge are inseparable companions, still the question of the subject who knows must be dealt with a bit further here. My fourth and final point to make about knowledge concerns how we think about competence, and who is capable of knowing. In recent years, the work of Jacques Rancière has been influential in formulating this point as a question of intelligence. This work is based on a radical assumption of equality of

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[39] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012) p. 26.
[40] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 28.

intelligence, understood in a particularly technical way that does not frame intelligence as a quantity possessed equally by all, but rather asserts that the assumption of equality is a political action that disrupts stultifying regimes of power.

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière argues that the dominant pedagogical regime is based on a model of explication, with a teacher who knows and student who is ignorant. The actors in this model may presume that the goal of pedagogy is equality of intelligence, that with enough explication the student will become as knowledgeable as the schoolteacher. However, Rancière writes:

> Explication is not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. It is the explicator who needs the incapable, and not the other way around; it is he who constitutes the incapable as such. To explain something to someone is first of all to show him he cannot understand it himself.[41]

He argues that the model of explication necessarily perpetuates inequality, that explication structurally produces a distance between the knowledgeable and the ignorant that it cannot then ever reduce. He proposes an alternative to explication, the ignorant schoolmaster, who does not know more than his students and who therefore cannot presume to explain. In her introduction to *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Kristin Ross describes this alternative by asking:

> What would it mean to make equality a *presupposition* rather than a goal, a *practice* rather than a reward situated in some distant future so as to all the

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[41] Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 6.

better explain its present infeasibility?[42]

As a question for a project on the politics of expertise, this proposal for equality as a practice resonates strongly.

However, what are the practicalities of such a practice? Claire Bishop draws on Rancière in a recent chapter on pedagogical art practices, arguing that the most successful of these combine his theoretical proposals for equality as a practice with more concrete analyses of actual hierarchical regimes. As an example of this second type of analysis, she draws on Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which frames the teacher as a facilitator who uses the position of authority not necessarily to explain but strategically to gain access or to foster communication. Freire's pedagogy is fundamentally concrete, a practice of 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'.[43] For Bishop, then, pedagogical projects are interesting when:

> …the artist operates from a position of amateur enthusiast rather than informed expert, and delegates the work of lecturing to others. It is as if the artist wants to be a student once more, but does this by setting up their own school from which to learn, combining the student/teacher position.[44]

I argue, however, that it is important to look at how expertise *is* handled in pedagogy projects, even in projects where the artist specifically places herself in the position of an amateur. I also argue that it is important to look at how artists employ strategies for dealing with expert authority - not just delegating, though

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[42] Kristin Ross, 'Translator's Introduction' in Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) p. xix.
[43] Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2nd edition (London: Penguin, 1996) p. 39
[44] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verson, 2012), p. 256.

that is one interesting strategy - but also by collaborating, appropriating, subverting and performing expertise.

To summarise, then, this thesis assumes that knowledge is made of multiple categories. These categories change with history and they also change history. Knowledge is necessarily in a relationship with power. One way to tip the balance of power is through the practice of what Lyotard calls 'paralogy', or the seeking out of paradox within the rules that define knowledge, and the petitioning players in the games of knowledge to accept new rules. However, in thinking about knowledge as a game, the question of who is competent to play arises. In thinking about competency, I want to balance my support for Rancière's radical assumption of an equality of intelligence with Freire's practical interventions in the conditions which limit the field for some players.

Non-knowledge

Having settled on the figure of the expert as a way to organise thinking around knowledge, power and performance over the course of my research, I have also developed a keen interest in the flip side of this investigation – the ways that non-knowledge and non-expertise also interact with power, and particularly how performance has staged these interactions. I became keen to identify instances of destablisation, when the conventions of expertise and knowledge were not simply being reproduced, but reproduced paradoxically, or badly, or in ways that forced a fundamental re-thinking of those conventions. I was drawn to artists who saw contradiction as comprising important structural

elements of expertise, and who developed these contradictions into critique or into interventionist actions, or both. Thus, while I have maintained my focus on the figure of the expert in performance throughout, the practices I have looked at tend to emphasise contradictions, failures, gaps or excesses which destabilise category boundaries. I argue that performance is particularly equipped to exploit these areas, and draw on the significant work that has been done, both by scholars and by artists, around the constitutive contradictions and failures in performance itself.

Some of my understanding of what non-knowledge might be has come from engaging Georges Bataille's work on the concept, figured as a confrontation with limits, which was also deeply influential for the postmodern/poststructuralist exploration of transgression. Importantly, Bataille's concept of nonknowledge is arrived at not through the abandonment of systematic thinking but through its exhaustion. Analysing Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, he admits an attraction to the protagonist's 'sovereignty' that Bataille associates with nonknowledge. However, he admits to reservations about what seems to be avoidance, on Hemingway's part, to take the route to nonknowledge through knowledge itself. He writes:

> I would like to emphasize the rather painful feeling that fills me with the same hate that someone like Hemingway has for the intellectual effort of men; not that I don't perceive and even that I don't share the possibility of feeling a great repugnance in regard to everything that is intellectual, but I think that this repugnance must also be overcome. It is necessary to overcome it. In fact, I don't believe in the possibility of avoiding going to the end of things… I think that, in this world of work, we are like people who submit to its law, we cannot escape it, we cannot play fisherman,

hunters, and amateur bullfighters who have nothing else to do, and, reciprocally, we cannot ignore what is represented by the desperate effort of men to go to the end of their intellectual possibilities'.[45]

Much as we might like to 'play fisherman, hunters, and amateur bullfighters who have nothing else to do', the 'world of work' cannot be ignored. The relations of bodies to rationality and productivity can only be shifted by taking the systems which structure them to the extreme limits. Jean-Luc Nancy affirms this dimension of Bataille's thought – the necessity of 'going to the end of things', the end of the thought, the end of meaning and the end of language. Further, Nancy emphasizes that Bataille's practice of nonknowledge itself involved its own sort of 'acting.' He writes, 'Bataille always *played* at being unable to finish… It was a game and an act, for he wrote ceaselessly, writing everywhere, always, the exhaustion of his writing'.[46] This writer who could never stop writing about the impossibility of writing would provide a key irony for a later generation of writers writing on writing.

Foucault uses Bataille's work on transgression – discussed above as Bataille's interest in 'going to the end of things' – to elaborate concepts that would become crucial both to his own later work, and to the work of his contemporaries, namely the function of 'limits' and the role sexuality in the practice of limits in a newly secular culture. Foucault writes:

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[45] Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge,* ed. Stuart Kendall, trans. Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 149

[46] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Excription', trans. by Katherine Lydon, *Yale French Studies* 78 (1990), p 60.

> …sexuality [as a product of modernity] is a fissure – not one that surrounds us as the basis of our isolation or individulity, but one which marks the limit within us and designates us as a limit.[47] (30)

Formerly, when Christianity was the hegemonic cultural structure in Europe, God represented both the limit of understanding, and structured the understanding of limitlessness. For Foucault, the sacred no longer has a form, so can only become manifest negatively, through profanation: 'the speech given to sexuality is contemporaneous, both in time and in structure, with that through which we announce to ourselves that God is dead'.[48] God is a limit (that which is 'beyond' what we understand or experience). The existence of God is the existence of limits. To kill God is to destroy limits, and to kill a God who never existed is to experience the non-existence of limits, thus:

> …the death of God does not restore us to a limited and positivistic world, but to a world exposed by the experience of limits, made and unmade by that excess which transgresses it.[49]

For Foucault, sexuality then comes to operate as that which limits understanding, and simultaneously structures the understanding of limitlessness – a historically bound and constructed development of modernity and modern subjectivity.

This preoccupation with transgression would come to inform a host of cultural theory concerned with the deconstruction of modern subjectivity.[50] As well, as Suzanne Guerlac writes, for Foucault, Bataille's concept of

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[47] Michel Foucault, 'Preface to Transgression' in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 30.
[48] Foucault, 'Preface', p. 30
[49] Foucault, 'Preface', p. 31.
[50] See, for example Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1986)

transgression is crucial to expanding philosophy beyond 'the realm of cognitive or rational activity'.[51] Thus, 'in this way Foucault etablished transgression as an alternative to the machine of dialectical contradiction'.[52] However, as Guerlac goes on to argue, many later postructuralist interpretations of Bataille's transgression were limited to text and how it might function as a poetics of non-representation. She writes, 'When transgression is analyzed in exclusively linguistic terms, that is, in relation to the "fundamental scandal of the arbitrariness of the sign", it becomes writing (in the emerging poststructuralist sense)'.[53] Thus the postructuralist, and indeed, postmodernist, aesthetic came to be dominated by 'various practices of avant-garde poetics' characterized by 'a refusal of figuration in all its forms'.[54] This refusal would function as Bataille's 'going to the end of things' – the end of representation as the ends of language.

However, I am also interested in ways that different experiences of *not-knowing* have specific emotional or affective characteristics that might not be entirely addressed by questions about writing, or indeed by questions about transgression. How does confusion *feel*? Can the transmission of, for instance, stupidity be described? What are the political ramifications? In the middle two chapters of this thesis, I look at the ways artists have combined performance, expertise and non-knowledge to answer these and other questions.

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[51] Susan Guerlac, 'Bataille in Afterimages (Lascaux)', *Diacritics* 26.2 (1996), p. 6.
[52] Guerlac, p. 7.
[53] Guerlac, p. 8.
[54] Guerlac, p. 10.

Affect

While knowledge must clearly be a significant part of any exploration of expertise, and non-knowledge helps me as a framing device to understand how contradiction, paradox and failure thread through the performative engagements I consider in this thesis, I also draw on the affective dimensions of expertise, which are distinct, thought certainly not separate, from knowledge and non-knowledge. So what is affect? One of the trickiest parts of pinning this concept down (putting aside for a moment the fact that affect may used to problematise the pinning down of things) is differentiating affect from emotions, or feelings. This is only made more difficult because scholars who think about affect have wildly different and sometimes contradictory stances on the relation between emotion, affect and feeling. As Kristyn Gorton writes, in her survey of feminist engagements with affect theory:

> The nature and degree of difference between emotion and affect is often contested. Some argue that emotion refers to a sociological expression of feelings whereas affect is more firmly rooted in biology and in our physical response to feelings; others attempt to differentiate on the basis that emotion requires a subject while affect does not; and some ignore these distinctions altogether'.[55]

Is emotion cultural and affect biological? Are feelings contingent and affects autonomous? Or are these all words for the same swirling, messy atmosphere that both separates and connects bodies of all types?

Gorton emphasises one significant thread running through all the works she

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[55] Kristyn Gorton, 'Theorizing Emotion and Affect: Feminist Engagements', *Feminist Theory* 8.3 (2007), p. 334.

surveys, which is 'the way in which feeling is negotiated in the public sphere and experienced through the body'. For Gorton, the body and the public sphere are two poles on a spectrum that partly constitutes the field of affect. I find this synthesis useful, though it arguably ignores the strands of affect theory that emphasise the non-human and the non-organic. However, for this study, I accept that affect helps me think about the politics of expertise operating at the nexus of feeling, bodies and publics. I also assert that in this thesis, emotion plays a significant role, and even if affect cannot be reduced to emotion, nevertheless, many strands categorised under the umbrella of 'affect theory' help me think through the relationship between emotion and expertise.

Thus, despite its complexities (and also because of them) I draw on the concept of affect, and on affect theory, for a number of reasons. First, it helps me to think about expertise as something that is not necessarily synonymous with or reducible to knowledge (or even non-knowledge). Expertise sometimes exceeds and sometimes falls short of categories of knowledge, and affect helps to consider *what else* might be happening in the development and transmission of expertise beyond the production and transmission of knowledge (though as I've shown above, these latter processes are anything but straightforward themselves). How does the figure of the expert appear and what are the somatic and emotional reactions that it produces? While these questions are certainly related to knowledge production, they can't be answered solely in reference to it.

I am not suggesting that affect – or feelings, or emotions – are wholly separate from knowledge, however. Indeed, as Sara Ahmed argues in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* it is crucial that emotions and feelings be perceived as constitutive elements of knowledge. She insists that feminist politics requires its agents to articulate the inseparability of emotion from thought, writing:

> The response to the dismissal of feminists as emotional should not then be to claim that feminism is rational rather than emotional. Such a claim would be misguided as it would accept the very opposition between emotions and rational thought that is crucial to the subordination of femininity as well as feminism. Instead, we need to contest this understanding of emotion as 'the unthought', just as we need to contest the assumption that 'rational thought' is unemotional, or that it does not involve being moved by others.[56]

The feeling of thought, and the way it 'moves' others (and is the result of being moved by others) are certainly subjects for studies of affect. However, I also think there are movements and reactions and *feelings* involved in expertise that are not necessarily directly connected to knowing or learning or thinking. I emphasise this in my third and fourth chapter, where I look at performance examples that use the outer trappings of expertise to produce and consider various forms of nonknowledge. Even more generally, I think that delivering the impression of knowing has consequences beyond knowing and not-knowing. Affect, and its relation to impressions and exchanges, helps to think this through.

Another reason affect theory is useful for this project is that it has often been deployed as a way to circumvent stubborn binaries (mind/body,

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[56] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 170.

knowledge/emotion among a host of others). As Rebecca Schneider states:

> Thinking through affective engagement offers a radical shift in thinking about our mobilities in dealings with the binaries landscape of social plots (such as gender, such as race), undoing the solidity of binaries in favour of mining the slip and slide of affect as negotiation. As such, affects […] are often described via words that indicate viscosity, tactility, or a certain mobility in the way one is *moved*.[57]

This movement Schneider emphasises has also come up above. Affect feels exciting because it calls to mind dynamism, and seems to offers ways around sedimented ideas and entrenched positions. At the same time, I am grateful for the way Schneider also attends to the 'stickiness' of affect, drawing on work by Heather Love and Elizabeth Freeman on temporal 'drag'. Affect is not all unobstructed movement – sometimes it drags our feet. As Schneider writes:

> …histories of events and historical effects of identity fixing, *stick* to any mobility, *dragging* (in Elizabeth Freeman's sense) the temporal past into the sticky substance of any present. To be stick with the past and the future is not to be autonomous, but to be engaged in a freighted, cross-temporal mobility.[58]

This is a welcome reminder that while it is important to slip and slide through rigid old frameworks, those frameworks have a way of persisting, sometimes in the very acts of attempting to avoid them. We may find that in the face of some fixities, a stubborn stickiness of our own is the best recourse.

Expertise

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[57] Rebecca Schneider *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), p. 36.
[58] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 36-37

Having discussed knowledge and affect, I will now turn to the specifics of expertise. What constitutes expert knowledge or expert ability? How is it achieved and how does it function? What are the particular features of expertise that need to be problematised and called into question here? Perhaps most importantly, why is it urgent to consider questions of expertise now?

The field of Expert Studies is a growing academic area, with major research centered particularly at the Florida State University Department of Psychology and Learning Systems Institute. Their Human Performance Research Centre includes the research objective of 'expert performance' (alongside 'knowledge communities, performance improvement and team cognition'[59]). One of the major contributors to this research objective is K. Anders Ericsson,[60] who is also an editor of *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*. In the introduction to this volume, he discusses the possibility of a general field theory for Expert Studies. He states that 'expertise refers to the characteristics, skills, and knowledge that distinguish experts from novices and less experienced people'.[61] I am skeptical of any such field theory, for fear that such tautologies (expertise is what experts do) might be inevitable. As with the above definitions of knowledge and affect, I will limit this definition to a few key points.

[59] Human Performance Research Centre at Learning Systems Institute, http://www.lsi.fsu.edu/centers/hprc/ [accessed 14 March 2012]
[60] Ericsson has also authored, with Jacqui Smith, *Towards a general theory of expertise: prospects and limits*, making him one of the foremost contemporary expert on experts.
[61] K. Anders Ericsson, 'Inroduction' The Cambridge Handbook of Experts and Expert Performance, ed. by K. Ericsson Anders, Neil Charness, Robert R. Hoffman and Paul J. Feltovich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 5.

First, just as knowledge has multiple categories with varying criteria, so must expertise. In the second chapter of *The Cambridge Handbook*, Michelen T.H. Chi makes a distinction between the expert as an individual or group that has access to and can communicate about a large domain of knowledge, and the expert who is a skilled performer. A domain is defined as a finite set of facts and processes, thematically linked. Domain experts are responsible for knowing what exists within this finite set, but also for setting and patrolling the boundaries. A skilled performer performs against a metric: he or she is measurably faster, more accurate, or has a higher endurance for discrete physical activities than other measurable performers.

Increasingly, I think the boundary between domain expert and expert as skilled performer will break down. Accessing knowledge and communicating it – and deciding what is to be included in a delimited domain – are performative activities or have performative elements. The performance of meta-domain knowledge is becoming increasingly important, and includes mastery of the sets of facts and processes aimed at navigating numerous domains. This might be called the expertise of management or administration (and has been a subject of much interest in contemporary art for some time, as I will show in following chapters). It is also highly relevant to the age of the search engine, in which the manufacturers of tools like Google, which can guide users through the landscapes of information on the Internet, are increasingly more influential than producers of information, such a professional news media.

In addition to these distinctions, a range of other distinctions between types of expertise that could be made. Expertise might also be identified as a set of activity that aids politicians and decision makers.[62] There is also the field, particularly relevant to this study, of aesthetic expertise: the connoisseur, the curator, the collector or the critic. This area is related to both the domain definition, and to meta-domain knowledge. It is not enough to have a large knowledge base to be an aesthetic expert, one needs to convince a certain audience that it is the correct knowledge base.

This type of expertise has been the subject of criticism for generations. Gavin Butt, indeed, argues that the deconstructive efforts of postmodernist critics of aesthetics have themselves sedimented into a type of expert authority. For Butt, 'criticism today may find itself turning away from some of the established procedures of critical practice precisely in order that it remain critical' (original emphasis). Butt's insistence on the necessity of the paradoxical (not necessarily 'in the strict sense of being logically contradictory'), as a way of being 'para – against and/or beside – the doxa of received wisdom'[63], calls to mind Lyotard's 'paralogy' discussed above. However, Butt's nuance of the paradox as *either* 'against and/or beside' is particularly useful. Many of the examples I look at do not situate themselves utterly or only 'against' knowledge or expertise, though oppositional politics may be important in many cases. The possibility of working

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[62] See Philip Tetlock, Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know? (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[63] Gavin Butt, 'Introduction: The Paradoxes of Criticism', After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance, ed. Gavin Butt (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 5.

'beside' received wisdom might itself be an interesting new proposition for the rules of political intervention through performance.

In addition to the multiplicity of types of expertise, my second observation about expertise is that it has a complicated relationship to collectivity. On the one hand, it is associated with elite and exclusive knowledge, and with the competition that structures the attainment of it. In this sense, expertise is a problematically individualistic pursuit. It promotes self-fulfillment at the expense of others. On the other hand, professional accreditation and the establishment of expert knowledge (via, for example, publication in professional journals) are processes of peer approval, and require a collective system of verification and acceptance. Edward Said argues that this professional collectivity is a tool for authoritarian conformity,[64] and indeed it may easily be argued that top-down structures for legitimisation create conservatism and repression. Nevertheless, it may also be too simple to place the creative individual in opposition to the deadening collective. We must remember that neoliberal discourse celebrates the enterprising individual but fails to provide materially for those individuals whose collective identity (developed by virtue of categories of class, race, gender or sexuality, for example) results in limited access to the resources necessary for successful enterprising behaviours. In what follows, I aim to present performance examples where expertise (and active non-expertise) can inform models of collectivity that neither exploit, repress nor marginalise individuals, especially

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[64] Edward Said, 'Professional and Amateurs', Representations of the Intellectual (London: Vintage Books, 1996)

those whose bodies do not conform to a normative paradigm.

The collectivity of expertise can also be wrapped up in social conventions, often unspoken, which allow an expert to navigate interpersonal relationships and establish networks of influence. Indeed, an expert may need to master a set of institutional vocabularies which allow for communication based on shorthand, which can often, from the outside, look like communication based on obscure code. This is one of the most potent contemporary functions of the expert, and artists have been self-consciously using this theme as a way to understand both the social and economic value of the arts, and the way these values reflect wider socio-economic structures.

The third area of importance in my grappling with the term 'expert' is, once again, the issue of historicity. Since Plato imagined his Republic ruled by philosophers (and emptied of poets and actors) some types of experts have been valued over others – and this hierarchy of value has been inextricably linked with political power. However, the figure of the expert is linked to complex historical movements related to modernity, with its development connected to the rise of specialisation through the process of industrialisation and the related and ongoing division of the academic disciplines. All of these inform a contemporary understanding of what it means to be an expert. Context is crucially important for making (some) sense of the complex and often contradictory relationship of power and knowledge.

The work of Tino Sehgal, for example, might be figured as an argument that

administration and networking are the primary valued skill sets in a globalised, post-industrial economy, and should thus be the primary material for advanced art making in museums. At a talk at Tate Modern in 2009,[65] the artist insisted that the ability to skillfully manipulate materials in order to produce individual objects was the skill most valued by a craft-based economy, and thus painting and sculpture were the art forms that were venerated in pre-industrial Europe. For Sehgal, modern and postmodern art are functions of the shift in valuing the ability to design mass-produced objects over the ability to craft individual objects. In a knowledge and service-based economy, then, artists should be coordinating and administrating immaterial events and experiences, Sehgal asserted.

The project of mapping the relationship between expertise and value in historical terms is significant, and close attention must be paid to the types of skills that are called expert at different times and in different contexts. Further, I argue that performance may be well placed to carry out such mappings with a critical perspective. Nicholas Ridout usefully demonstrates how theatre and performance are paradigmatic examples of such broader economic trends such as the outsourcing of labour, drawing on work by the companies Rimini Protokoll and Mammalian Diving Reflex to show that 'performance reveals itself as exemplary commodity (it commodifies action, not just things) and as the site for a

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[65] Tino Sehgal, artist talk, Characters, Figures, Signs, Tate Modern (20 February 2009) <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/musicperform/charactersfiguresandsigns.htm> [accessed 14 December 2011]

critique of its own commodifying practice'[66] Importantly, Ridout shows how performance can be both an example to critique and a site for critique. This thesis builds on Ridout's locating of performance as a fertile ground for critique because of its contradictory relationship to the objects of its critique.

The definition of expertise that drives this thesis is a contested one. Experts are alternately (or even simultaneously) bland, conservative keepers of the status quo, and also vanguard players for the future of the development of culture. They can be collective participants in the establishment of rigourous public knowledge, and they can be gatekeepers who bar public access to knowledge. Their skills might represent the values of a particular cultural dynamic, even as those values are ever in flux. It is this complexity that I want to account for, both as it exists within performance practice and study, and as it is expressed through performance practice and study. Throughout this thesis, contradictions surrounding expertise and disciplinary boundaries, identity, collectivity, value and historicity will be highlighted. The performance examples I gather here do not resolve these contradictions, but mine them for their critical potential.

By and large, then, I am thinking through how specialism and the power associated with it have been treated by contemporary performance practitioners who are sensitive to the problems and exclusivities that specialism can produce – though who might not necessarily deny the political value of the development of specialist skills. In problematising expertise, it is important to strike a balance

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[66] Nicholas Ridout, 'Performance in the Service Economy: Outsourcing and Delegation', Double Agent, ed. Claire Bishop and Mark Sladen (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 2008), p. 131.

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between an appreciation for the focus and nuance that a specialist disciplinary frame might allow for, and an emphasis on the need to understand the cultural conventions and assumptions that produce such frames (and which can often go unremarked upon with profoundly problematic results).

Before moving on from this broad overview of possible significant definitions and modes of expertise, I want to address one final important relationship, which is that between expertise, the body and identity.

Expertise, the Body and Identity

While a focus on knowledge and expertise might suggest an emphasis on abstraction and cognition, this thesis is very concerned with the myriad ways expertise is a question posed about bodies. In this thesis, this question tends not to focus on, say, virtuosic bodily performances, but is more often directed at the level of everyday affective and somatic forces and dynamics that imprint the relationship between knowledge and power. One consequence of this concern with bodies is that this thesis often invokes a re-visitation of the politics of identity.

Why should identity be a key term for a thesis on expertise? Knowledge, of course, is an issue for identity-based politics. From feminist critiques of reason to critiques of racialised rhetoric about 'aptitude' in, for instance, North American debates around affirmative action, there are myriad examples of the politically charged relationship between identity and knowledge. Moreover, I argue that

problematising knowledge production has can help make for more interesting and potent identity-based politics. It allows, I argue, for a politics that is based on an understanding of identity as complex, dynamic and contingent, rather than fixed.

Ann Cvetkovich's work on the public circulation of 'categories of experience typically assigned to the private sphere'[67] helps explain what I mean. Cvetkovich acknowledges the work of such critics of identity politics as Wendy Brown, who has shown how activism which relies on the bringing of grievances to judicial institutions under the banner of group identity can limit itself through the acceptance of the terms of engagement set by these dominant institutions.[68] Nevertheless, Cvetkovich shows how engaging with categories of identity as they circulate publicly can also be to unravel these categories, or to de-stablise the oppressive power they may wield. She calls for 'a reconsideration of conventional distinctions between political and emotional life',[69] drawing on the category of trauma to demonstrate how this distinction is already disrupted in the everyday experiences of those who suffer trauma, and those who inflict it.

Cvetkovich's engagement with ideas of the public has directly influenced my understanding of the development of the figure of the expert as a public entity who also produces and engages in affective dynamics that might typically be seen as operating at the level of private experience. As well, her method of

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[67] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 10.

[68] See, for example Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[69] Cvetkovich, p. 10.

disrupting categories by concentrating on how the contradictory and the paradoxical reside in their definitions has also had an impact on the development of my interest in the contradictory and paradoxical elements that operate in definitions and engagements with expertise.

METHODOLOGY
I have gathered the set of examples and constructed the critical framework of this thesis through a methodology that involves multiple types of encounters with performance work, and an interdisciplinary engagement with critical texts.

Above, I have detailed the fields I have addressed in the thesis, made provisional definitions of my (highly contested) key terms, and discussed the rationale behind the decisions I have made in order to clear a space for investigation. Below I will briefly discuss some of the practical modes and methods that have structured this investigation, and tease out a few issues with their application.

The Live

First of all, my methodology has involved seeing things live. Living and working in London, I have participated in the performance 'scene' that inhabits this city's venues and institutions, both permanent and established as well as temporary and makeshift. I have also had access to performance circuits and networks throughout the United Kingdom, and in Europe, where practices often overlap as relatively small groups of people seek to access increasingly smaller sets of resources and funding. I am interested to think through what it means to

be part of a scene. There is the privilege this assumes. To be part of a performance or Live Art scene in London there are multiple privileges that are in operation, both financial and cultural: being able to receive funding from institutions to pay for tickets, for instance, and having the time to devote to going to festivals, and conferences.

At the same time, I am not ready to dismiss the significance of presence, not understood as a transcendent good ('you just had to be there'), but for the valuable insight into the ad hoc and the anecdotal currency of any cultural movement. The context around this thesis includes performances I have witnessed and the material and institutional politics of these performances. It also includes bars and foyers I have lingered in, club nights I have stayed too late at, gossip that has circulated around me. All of these structure knowledge of performance. This type of knowledge has been written about by, for example, Gavin Butt, who argues in his book *Between You and Me* that forms of communication like gossip both inform and shape the lives and practices of artists, but also contribute to how we know art history.[70] In an interview with Matthias Danholt, Butt discusses, as well, his notion of 'flirtation' in scholarly writing as a way to problematise 'seriousness' as the received mode of thinking importance or significance. Flirtatious writing, Butt states, 'is a way of entertaining seriousness, but without being committed to it: Entering into a relationship with it,

[70] Gavin Butt, *Between You and Me: Queer Disclosures in the New York Art World, 1948-1963* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

but without being made subject to it'.[71] Butt's work on 'seriousness' has been

particularly influential on my thinking about the expert, and his development of

the possibility of modes of writing that operate not strictly or solely in opposition

to seriousness has had an important – even serious – impact on my thinking

through my methodological approach to this thesis.

The Documents

While a live 'scene' is very much present in this thesis, at the same time, I

have relied for significant parts of this thesis on documentation. This has involved

interacting with archives of performance, both on site and online. In my final

chapter, I consider specifically how my analysis of Rimini Protokoll's work is

affected through accessing it solely via documentation. Here, I want to give a

general overview of the types of documentation I have looked at, and a few of the

critical resources that I have drawn on to think about documentation as such.

The Live Art Development Agency has been one of the most valuable

resources for this documentation. Importantly, the Agency avoids the term

'archive' altogether, preferring 'collection'. This evokes both idiosyncrasy – calling

to mind the personal collection – and intentional inclusivity, without the remit of

the archive to select based on standards of relevance and the use-value of each

object as the bearer of information. I have also worked in the Bristol Live Art

Archive, which is part of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. The Theatre

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[71] Gavin Butt with Matthias Danholt, 'Dismantling the Serious Machine: An Interview with Gavin Butt' (2009) <http://trikster.net/3/butt/1.html> [accessed 14 March, 2012]

Collection is certified as an archive, a museum and a library, and thus, unlike the Live Art Development Agency collection, has explicit institutional imperatives: the materials should yield publications and research grants for the university, for instance, and they should be accessible in certain ways and preserved rigourously. I have also drawn heavily on online resources (such as the Franklin Furnace archive, ubuweb, Arnolfini's a database, among many other listed in my bibliography) both in order to write about work directly in this thesis or to situate the work I write about in a broader context. All of these examples of physical and virtual (and both) resources deal concretely with issues around the archiving and historicising of performance that are being staged theoretical throughout the academy.

Performance and its documents particularly are a source of much current scholarly work. Some major research areas include the potential of documentation replace or commodify the live event. There is also work being done to develop curatorial strategies for the display and circulation of performance documentation. Questions around these areas are being staged in, for instance, the University of Bristol's Performing Documents project (for which I am currently employed as a Research Assistant). Rather than attempting a general field position around performance and documentation, throughout the thesis, I have been attentive to issues of documentation that arise with each example I draw on.

The Context

Having discussed seeing things live and seeing things recorded, I will briefly discuss how I have been seeing things in context. What are the critical frameworks I use? What are the genres and genealogies of work I am responding to and what fields of knowledge am I contributing to?

To begin with the performance work, as I have already discussed, I am responding to practices that have developed within a number of different genres and which have a number of genealogies. The 'educational turn' tends to refer to work in the visual arts that has roots in Conceptual Art and various traditions of Institutional Critique (in Chapter Three, which deals specifically with institutions, I detail more closely how I understand genealogies of Institutional Critique to be operating in this project). I have discussed above how 'research' has long been a mode associated with these practices, and I have also clarified that I am interested in looking as well at 'research' as a concern for those working as Tactical Media practitioners, and those working on the borders of this and, for instance, 'bio-art' or other engagements between art practice and the life sciences.

I have also looked at work that is more explicitly within a theatre and performance context. While Live Art may not wholly describe the context any of the artists I am looking at, many of these artists are connected by their participation in festivals of Live Art or publications that consider Live Art as a strategy. Again, I have considered above how Live Art offers particular questions about the relationship between performance and expertise that are useful for this

project.

In terms of academic frameworks and traditions that this thesis draws on and hopefully contributes to, this project is most firmly situated within a performance studies context. I have drawn heavily on work by performance studies scholars Rebecca Schneider, Shannon Jackson and Nicholas Ridout, among numerous others. Further, I believe that this thesis contributes original knowledge about expertise and its relation to a range of concerns within a performance studies context, including time and duration, the body, audience and theatricality.

In addition to performance studies, as I have indicated through my definitions of key terms, this project is indebted to traditions of postmodern theory and poststructuralist analyses of knowledge. I have cited Foucault and Lyotard heavily, and Foucault in particular threads through this thesis consistently. More recent developments in affect theory are also incredibly important to this project, particularly strands developed in a feminist and queer mode. I am very aware that there are other strands that receive less attention in this thesis, that could have been relevant to this undertaking. I do not, for example, look at Deleuze, or the connecting threads with later theorists like Massumi, which of course could have offered a range of possibilities for theorizing affect, knowledge and performance. I am indebted to David Harvey's definitions of postmodern labour conditions and his analyses of neoliberalism, but I do not delve into the possibly complementary work from the Italian left on the 'knowledge economy' and

immaterialism associated with, for instance, Paulo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato or Franco 'Bifo' Berardi. Given the impossibly large and shifting field of possible resources to choose from, there are no doubt a large number of similar omissions. I hope, however, that the range of resources I have selected form a useful scaffold for the observations I want to make about performance and the politics of expertise.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

All of the performance examples I identify and analyse draw on components that de-stabilise expert knowledge and the figure of the expert, in complex though certainly not always combative ways. These components include the figure of the amateur, whose modes of knowledge production challenge the professional codes and standards that structure the development of expertise. They also include judicious applications of non-knowledge within a performative or theatrical frame of expertise, unsettling expectations and producing new affective dynamics in various audiences. Finally, the performance examples I have gathered in this thesis have sometimes over-identified expertise, turning over its seemingly fundamental hierarchies by finding it in unexpected places, or simply applying the term 'expert' with radical inclusivity.

As a way of focusing my investigation, I have chosen to structure the chapters of this thesis around these three destabilising components. Chapters one and two are investigations of non-expertise, further delimited by a consideration of non- expertise used as a tool by performance practitioners

working with, around and sometimes against the sciences and scientific institutions. Chapter one looks at the figure of the amateur as a performative tool for activist intervention. Chapter two looks at the use of 'play' and the figure of the 'hobbyist' in recent work of performance artist Kira O'Reilly which deals with and draws from cellular biology.

Chapters three and four are considerations of artists who use performative forms of expertise, here the use of theatrical forms to create alternative institutions and the use of the lecture performance, to produce experiences of non-knowledge. I use chapter three to consider how non-knowledge is used in the theatricalisation of institutional spaces, and the consequences for the politics of expertise. I use chapter four to consider how multiple specific affective dynamics are produced through experiences of non-knowledge, and how these dynamics position non- knowledge not directly against knowledge, but in complex and often de-stabilising relationships with knowledge.

Finally, my fifth and sixth chapters shift from these considerations of the negative outlines of expertise to looking at artists who engage in excessively positive declarations that 'everyone is an expert'. These last chapters consider how the performance of radical inclusivity is a subtle but powerful way of critically engaging with the problems of knowledge and hierarchy. I look at artists who investigate a variety of contexts including, immigration, domestic labour and globalised economies. Using forms of radical inclusivity, these artists are critical while maintaining an appreciation for the possibilities of specialised skills and

personal knowledge.

I KNOW SOMETHING YOU DON'T KNOW

Before I begin the following enquiry, a brief word about the title of this thesis. I have chosen the taunting phrase 'I know something you don't know' for several reasons. First, it illustrates the power embedded in the expert/non-expert relationship. Second, it evokes the attraction of those who know what others do not. Finally, I am keen to have a title to this thesis that is somehow 'in character', as a way to gesture to the particular purchase that performance has on the politics of expertise. Through the course of researching this thesis, I have come to understand expertise as key to optimisms and anxieties of our time. From navigating 'information overload' to perpetuating narratives of threat and terror, from pharmaceutical industries who influence what we put into our bodies to immigration policies which determine where certain bodies are allowed to be, there are profound political ramification to knowing what others do not – and delivering the impression of that knowledge. While performance is not sufficient to overturn the politics of expertise, I have found that it is a particularly interesting way to think through how they operate.

Chapter One: Activist/Amateurs

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I question how non-expertise is both a problem to be addressed by activist artists, and a mode of addressing a host of other political issues. I show how performative forms have been adopted as a means to challenge and deploy non-expertise. I use two examples from the United States: the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) and the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), both of which are explicitly political groups which combine arts practice with interventionist tactics. ACT UP is fundamentally a political movement around which a host of arts and cultural production has taken place. CAE is perhaps best known an arts and cultural production body, but its members insist that they use 'culture' as a mechanism for pedagogical and interventionist politics. I have paired these examples because both have explicitly questioned the politics of expertise, and have utilised forms of non-expertise as activist tools. Further, both have addressed non-expertise in the context of scientific discourse and the institutions of science as politically charged spaces. Science is a particularly powerful realm of expertise to explore, as the claims on knowledge by scientific institutions are deeply ingrained. Both ACT UP and CAE have complex engagements with science, neither denying the value of scientific inquiry nor shying away from confrontations with some of the more intractable borders surrounding some institutions of science.

Both of these examples, then, address the dynamic between expert and

non-expert for activist purposes, and both intervene in scientific institutions as crucial political sites. It is important to note that both also originated in the late 1980s – indeed, members of CAE were co-founders of the Florida chapter of ACT UP, and initial CAE projects were created in collaboration with ACT UP affiliated art collective Gran Fury. The type of activism they have produced is very much tied to this moment in US culture, when public services became increasingly privatized or abolished, and traditional industries moved out of the US to be replaced, and only in part, by service industries, financial industries and other so-called 'knowledge industries' (e.g. technology). These transitions are associated with the rise of 'postmodern flexibility', as theorized by David Harvey. The conditions of postmodern flexibility are, Harvey argues, 'dominated by fiction, fantasy, the immaterial (particularly of money), fictitious capital, images, ephemerality, chance and flexibility in production techniques, labour markets an consumptions niches'. [72] While Harvey would argue that there is no strict dividing line between modernism and postmodernism, but that both sets of conditions are indicative of the broader dynamics of capital accumulation, nevertheless 'postmodern flexibility' is very much connected to forms of activism that developed in the 1980s.

It is telling that at this time ACT UP and CAE structured their activism through a dizzying array of formats and channels, nor that a primary focus for concern was the unstable sphere of the expert. As notions of broad, overarching

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[72] See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), p. 339.

publics and identities were giving way to multiplicity and incompleteness, activism was forced to become increasingly targeted and, to use the word CAE uses, 'tactical'. The idea of a single culture, or even a single counterculture, was for many untenable, and instead, intersectionality, or communication across a range of affiliated interests and backgrounds, became urgently important in the face of a crisis like AIDS, which cut across identity groups. For CAE, a mode of thought and action was developed to seek out microcosms of power to critically respond to and ultimately intervene in, and the format of each of their projects was developed in response, as opposed to a more traditional practice which would seek channels for a particular specialist technique. Finally, as traditional boundaries between disciplines and specialisms started to break down, yet with economic and political power increasingly concentrated in the spheres of an existing elite, the opening to demand more access to privileged knowledge production – and the urgent need to do so – arose.

In looking at ACT UP, and particularly the New York chapter and the associated artist collective Gran Fury, I begin by considering how, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, expert image production was combined with direct action to significantly influence both cultural perception of AIDS and policy responses to the medical crisis, even as this work received a complicated reception by the professional art world. I go on to think about the challenges of vocabulary and communication that were faced in the same time period by the non-expert members of the group in dealing with institutions like the Federal Drug

Administration (FDA). Finally I look at the question of history and legacy, asking how a movement that excelled at immediate and spontaneous production and organization can also be thought of in a longer, slower timescale. Each of these areas is framed as a question of performance, as I argue that ACT UP drew, and continues to draw, on time-based media to both challenge and negotiate expert and non-expert status in spheres where the stakes continue to be high.

The range of issues the CAE focuses on is broader than ACT UP (though I think the most useful way to look at ACT UP's significance is to insist that AIDS is an issue that implicates a broad swathe of political structures); they take on the pharmaceutical industries, big agriculture, defense industries and a host of other institutions that increasingly influence contemporary political life. They are especially focused on scientific institutions, and they challenge the barriers to access built into many of these institutions, even while drawing on the potential of scientific inquiry. The biggest controversy surrounding the group can be framed as a problem of non-expertise, namely founding member Steve Kurtz's 2004 arrest and subsequent trial for the procurement of a non-threatening bacterial agent for use in an art installation. His status as a non-scientist was used as a basis for aggressively indicting both Kurtz and his university colleague, Dr. Robert Ferrell, the scientist who helped Kurtz procure the bacteria. The story is a harrowing example of how the intersection between art, activism and amateur science could have alarming consequences in the paranoid early years of the US 'war on terror'.

However, I assert that the arguably unforeseeable highlighting of non-expertise by the US federal government is in many ways only the most superficial aspect of the CAE's complex engagement with amateur science. It is a consistent and explicitly intentional element of the CAE's wider practice, which insists on the value of amateur scientific pursuit, both in collaboration with expert technical practitioners and as a method for responding tactically, and with nuance and complexity, to a multiplicity of political and social situations. Performance is an integral part of this practice, as elements of character, set design, and dramatization in the form of lecture-performance often structure the sprawling and multi-platform projects the CAE create.

ACT UP

In his discussion of the confessional mode in *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Foucault formulates the relationship between the patient and the doctor (specifically the psychiatrist) as, respectively, the one who speaks and the one who listens silently and is supposed to know (and has the right to ask)[73]. The power relationship is structured so that speaking from experience becomes an act of submission, and silence is domination. The famous slogan used by ACT UP in protest against the willful government neglect of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s that 'Silence = Death' was a stunning rejection of this expert/non-expert power relationship. In this section I consider how ACT UP members struggled

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[73] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 51-74.

with this dynamic, not by refusing to speak from personal experience, but by demanding a response. Far from denying the importance of medical research and expertise, I argue that ACT UP were radical in insisting that this expertise must be made dramatically accessible to the public.

Formed in 1987, ACT UP pioneered direct action and organisational techniques to fight the AIDS crisis in the United States. It particularly targeted the blatantly homophobic, racist and sexist AIDS policies (and lack thereof) of US political administrations, beginning with the violent neglect of marginalised peoples by the Ronald Reagan administration. ACT UP has been influential both for the impact of their actions and for initiating a model of grass-roots political organisation. In doing so, they have directly addressed the concentrations of power in the pharmaceutical industry and in public health policy.

One of the ways ACT UP members combated the silence of experts was through the skillful and performative development and deployment of images. In Douglas Crimp's book *AIDS Demo Graphics* the art historian and activist documents the many iconic images that arose during the height of ACT UP's activism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, particularly those of the New York chapter. He argues that the speed and effectiveness of the movement's image production and dissemination was a major factor in the successful organisation of direct action, and the subsequent influence of ACT UP on AIDS policy in the United States.

I suggest that there is an important performance strategy at work in this

process. The time-based nature of this image production and dissemination is crucial to discuss, alongside the technical and aesthetic skill that allowed for the production of images that could circulate widely and effectively. I argue that a significant component of the impact of ACT UP lies in various attentions paid to the importance of time for the production of both urgency and commitment. This extends from the quick and responsive organisation of direct actions to the ongoing process of documentation that some ACT UP members have committed to in recent years. This nuanced understanding of the importance of time-based strategies helped gain ACT UP access to previously barred discourses around public health policy. I argue, then, that performance as a frame for understanding time-based practices is a particularly important mode for understanding the varied forms of activism produced by ACT UP, and the complex relation this activism has to expertise.

From their earliest actions, members of ACT UP showed a canny understanding of the symbolic spread of images and information as crucial to successful intervention into policy. Considering ACT UP, one finds the medical realities of HIV/AIDS interacting with the specific politics surrounding the infection, but also the metaphorically infective properties of images: the way they circulate and attack, and the way counter-images might be used to 'vaccinate' against insidious hatreds and violence. Crimp provides a useful account of some of the major actions of the New York chapter of ACT UP from the first few years of its founding, through the lens of an analysis of the graphics and designs

produced and disseminated by the organisation. A member of ACT UP himself, Crimp narrates over a dozen large-scale demonstrations, occupations and other direct actions staged by the organization. The larger actions he describes include: marches on Wall Street and City Hall; targeted campaigns against misinformation that had been spread by Cosmopolitan magazine and the shocking neglect of the issue by the New York Times; an attempt to seize control of the Food and Drug Administration (whose favouring of corporate pharmaceutical interests and foot- dragging around clinical trials of experimental drugs caused countless needless deaths); and protests against conservative Cardinal of the Catholic church John O'Connor.

Crimp is also careful to refer to the numerous smaller, ad-hoc actions, or 'zaps' organized as quick reactions to opportunities. He describes 'zaps' as 'those small protests organised on the spur of the moment to respond to an emergency situation of a tip-off'. ACT UP did not invent such immediate action tactics, but they were particularly adept at producing high-quality graphics on-demand for such actions. 'ACT UP's innovation is to get the wheels of mechanical reproduction turning on equally short notice', Crimp writes.[74] It is this combination of skilful image production with sensitivity to the value of time-based strategies that I am particularly interested in. The ability to arrive on a scene prepared with striking and effective visuals already prepared lends an aura of anticipation, and subtly shifts the power dynamic from protestors simply reacting to more powerful institutions, to an organisation that appears to be a step ahead.

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[74] Douglas Crimp*, AIDS Demo-graphics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990), p. 22.

This combination of sensitivity to time with skillful manipulation of visual form also relates to another component that performance discourse has a stake in developing: audience. Crimp begins his analysis of the graphic dimension of ACT UP by narrating the development of the famous Silence=Death logo referred to above. He describes the layered semiotic codes that make this logo legible to different groups – a historically informed reading would understand that the pink triangle was used by Nazis to identify gay men and women, but the equation of AIDS policy with concentration camps would also be refracted through the knowledge of previous appropriation of the symbol by earlier gay and lesbian rights activism. At the same time, without this reference base, Silence=Death operates as a simple and striking design that is easily read as a logo, and that prompts curiosity for a less knowledgeable audience. ACT UP's ability to use graphics to swiftly and deftly represent its position across audience groups may be seen, then, as one of the organisation's key tactical advantages.

While attention to audience and time contributed to ACT UP's effectiveness as a protest movement, these performative strategies also made for a complex relationship to professionalism and expertise. This can be seen, for example, in the relationship ACT UP has had with professional, mainstream arts institutions. While many members of the New York chapter were versed in contemporary visual art and aesthetic theory, ACT UP encountered resistance from established art institutions when it came to displaying their graphic work in an art context. For instance, when the Museum of Modern Art staged an exhibition on protest

aesthetics in 1988, the exhibition curator chose not to include any visual work connected to AIDS activism, prompting a number of groups affiliated with ACT UP to protest outside the museum.[75] The questions of time and audience here are key. For MoMA, AIDS activism was too immediate to count as aesthetically important, or for ACT UP members to be seen as professional artists when producing activist materials. Only distance allowed the established art audience to see imagery associated with protest as appropriate for the reflective or contemplative modes museums such as MoMA foster. For ACT UP, on the other hand, it was precisely an aesthetic image's ability to operate in the present, with urgent performativity, that made it valuable. In this framework, defining reflection and contemplation as divorced from presence and action weakens the image's effects.

Many of ACT UP's image-makers were very aware of the complicated position they occupied as activists attempting to use the art world instrumentally. Members of Gran Fury, a collective of artists and designers that arose from ACT UP activism, describe themselves as 'a collective of AIDS activists opposing governments and social institutions that make those living with AIDS invisible'.[76] Importantly, this description focuses on visibility not from the position of *making visible* those who are currently invisible, but from the imperative to challenge those systems which *make invisible* those living with AIDS. There is necessarily an antagonism to the work of Gran Fury, and yet, in the same presentation, they

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[75] Crimp, pp. 16-17

[76] Tom Kalin, Michael Nesline and John Lindell, 'A Presentation' in *Art and Social Change* ed. by Will Bradley and Charles Esche (London: Tate Publishing and Afterall, 2007), p. 277.

also acknowledge that 'in fact we are part of an institution, we do function institutionally, and we use art to speak about these issues, whatever art is'.[77]

Indeed, Gran Fury's inaugurating project came at the invitation of an institution, when Bill Olander, then director of the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York gave ACT UP a public storefront window to produce a project titled *Let the Record Show…* The result was a series of cardboard cutouts of public figures, accompanied by captions with problematic quotations attributed to each of these figures. This project demonstrates the complicated nexus of institutionality, expertise and power that Gran Fury both drew from and fought against. Richard Meyer reads this as a question of visibility, but specifically as an act of making visible not the sensationalised victim of AIDS, but figures of power who, in this rendering, are figured as the real threat in the AIDS crisis. So, for instance, a cutout of William F. Buckley is accompanied by a *New York Times* editorial in which he called for everyone diagnosed with AIDS to be tattooed. In putting that quotation in a conspicuous public place, 'ACT UP challenged Buckley's regulatory scheme by forcing the regulator - rather than his targets - into visibility'.[78] In other words, Buckley, then a prominent public intellectual, proposed a making visible of people with AIDS that simultaneously erased their visibility as anything other than victim and threat. ACT UP's response was to use the institutional inroads at their disposal to challenge, performatively, this public figure – this expert in rhetoric and persuasion – by casting his regulatory schema

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[77] Kalin, Nesline and Lindell, p. 280.
[78] Richard Meyer, *Outlaw Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 226.

as an object for antagonism.

Gran Fury narrate the making of *Let the Record Show…* as a bringing together of grassroots expertise. Member Tom Kalin describes how this worked, and how the project then led to the gradual formation of Gran Fury, writing:

> Upward of fifty people worked on that window. There were big workshop sessions, like the one where the slabs of concrete were made by cutting rubber stencils. All the labor-intensive work was being done in someone's studio with fifteen or twenty people there at a time. Various people came in for specific tasks. I came in myself because I knew how to do mural photography. Other people came with their own abilities - the person who made the neon and so on. After the window happened people didn't meet as a group for a month. Then we had a potluck dinner. Various people, many of whom are here now, called each other up and started to meet and talk about making posters.[79] (*Discourses,*196)

Through the next several years, Gran Fury would work together to produce a series of highly charged and widely circulated images that both galvanized demonstrators during public actions and brought the message of ACT UP into spaces that demonstrators could never reach. Member Michael Nesline describes this second function as a co-opting of professional art world channels by non-expert activists, but he also maintains a wariness about the motivations of the professional art world. He writes:

> As a nonartist [*sic*] who is a member of an art collective, the thing that is most interesting to me about being part of the art world is the power that is granted to artists. Mark put it eloquently in the past when he remarked that an artist is one of the few people in our society who can say, "I want to do my piece in the middle of the airport" and actually be permitted to do it. ACT UP cannot have a demonstration in an airport, and that is why it's valuable to me to participate in this artistic endeavour. I'm perfectly willing to exploit

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[79] Gran Fury and David Deitcher, 'Gran Fury: Interview by David Deitcher' in *Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Art and Culture* ed. by Russell Ferguson, William Olander, Marcia Tucker and Karen Fiss (Cambdridge: MIT Press, 1990), p. 196.

the power of the art world if it will allow us to do what we want to do where we want to do it. But I absolutely cringe at the idea that because AIDS is this year's hot art world topics, that next year AIDS is passé.[80]

The advantage of time-based media, in this case, is access and impact, but there is also the danger that as presence yields to a new present, urgency fades and histories are lost.

I want to consider this danger in more detail, but first I want to look at a final example of a particular graphic image that helps illustrate the complex institutional configurations Gran Fury navigated, demonstrating a commitment to visibility through a mode of performativity. Crimp describes a graphic text with the word 'Riot' at the centre, surrounded by the words 'Stonewall '69' and 'AIDS '89'. The image recalls Robert Indiana's 1960s pop art graphic of the word LOVE – an internationally well- known piece. However, the Gran Fury image also recalls another group, the Canadian collective General Idea. This group had created a well-known appropriation of the LOVE graphic, replacing LOVE with AIDS. This was very much an art world piece – it required previous knowledge of the pop art context, and its message was oblique, and potentially problematic ('Did sixties' love lead inexorably to eighties' AIDS?' Crimp questions[81]). Gran Fury's appropriation was also initially developed for an art-world context – it was submitted to an exhibition in Berlin in which the General Idea graphic was also included. However, with its clear and targeted message – homophobic oppression demands immediate action – the graphic could then be re-recycled

[80] Gran Fury, *Discourses*, p. 206/
[81] Crimp, p. 104

for activist purposes. The insider art world reference, while both available and sophisticated, was ultimately less important than the visually compelling layout which allowed the graphic to operate with urgency. As Crimps says 'it if works, we use it'.[82] It is this commitment to 'working' that emphasizes the performative at the foundation of Gran Fury's work.

While this sensitivity to the performativity of images incorporated significant skills with complex relationships to professionalism and expertise, another axis of duration is equally important. How does ACT UP and AIDS activism fit into a longer time frame? How do they participate in history and memory? At the beginning of this section, I recalled Foucault's formulation of the doctor and patient relationship as one of dominance and submission structured by voices and silence. I suggested that ACT UP could be seen as re- working this relationship, but not by adopting silence about personal experience with HIV/AIDS. Rather, these experiences were amplified and turned into a demand for a response. Having touched on the topic of visibility with regard to protest action, it may also be important to consider the question of history and memory in relation to the category of voice.

Voice, and the question of whose voice is being heard, is a recurrent problem for grassroots political action. It is important to note that from its beginning, AIDS activism has often been framed as a special interest, not affecting the mainstream. This violent rhetorical marginalization allowed (and allows) vulnerable people to disappear both from public discourse and public

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[82] Crimp, p. 14

service. Decades later, however, AIDS activism in the United States risks being viewed as a special interest service for another group – namely an educated white male population. To what degree is this a legitimate criticism of the movement, and to what degree is this a result of problematic historicising after the fact? One resource which works to address the complicated question of voice in AIDS activism into the writing of history is the ACT UP Oral History Project, a collection of more than one hundred interviews by members of ACT UP. [83] Extracts from the videos can be seen online, where they are arranged alphabetically by name, chronologically by date of interview, and labelled with a short title or description. The project has been featured as part of a recent exhibition on ACT UP, initially shown at the Carpenter Center at Harvard University,[84] and later touring to White Columns gallery in New York. [85]

Initiated by Sarah Schulman and Jim Hubbard, the Oral History Project shows how the labour of documentation plays a role in sustaining tactical direct action. While I hope that I have shown the importance of urgency and immediacy, at the same time, longer-term time-based strategies are required to intervene in broader historical narratives. In her statement about the project, Schulman notes her anger as the narrative of AIDS policy in the US began to be told as a story of

[83] ACT UP Oral History Project, <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/> [accessed 15 September, 2011]

[84] Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, ACT UP NEW YORK: ACTIVISM, ART, AND THE AIDS CRISIS, 1987–1993, <http://www.ves.fas.harvard.edu/ACTUP.html> [accessed 15 September, 2011]

[85] White Columns, ACT UP NEW YORK: ACTIVISM, ART, AND THE AIDS CRISIS, 1987–1993, <http://www.whitecolumns.org/view.html?type=exhibitions&id=524> [accessed 15 September, 2011]

the mainstream choosing to pay attention after a regrettable delay. She argues

that:

> Actually, what really took place was this: thousands of people, over many years, dedicated their lives to achieving a cultural and scientific transformation. In other words, a nation that had always hated and humiliated and violated gay people, was forced—against their will—to behave differently than they wished to, because activists intervened and took control of a terrible situation, thereby changing it.[86]

Schulman insists that the cultural work of changing the behaviour of a nation or

society is necessarily a long-term, active and collective labour. The oral history

project is not a transparent document, then, but is an activist tool. It promotes the

claim that direct action can and does have an effect, while also insisting on

identifying the participants in successful direct action. Because the participants in

ACT UP have come from a wide variety of groups, many of them marginalised,

this very act of insisting on identity has its own politics. The complexity of voice

and identity is put into high relief here – it is important to point out how identifying

labels have been used as components of oppression or structural violence, but it

is just as important to insist that the activism of people from marginalised groups

is written into history.

Another archival project also uses oral history as a way to address voices

that are missing from dominant histories of AIDS activism. Ann Cvetkovich has

documented stories from lesbians who were involved in the New York chapter of

ACT UP, using the oral history form to both seek alternatives to mainstream

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[86] Sarah Schulman, 'Statement' <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/about/statements.html> [accessed 15 September, 2011]

narratives, and to think reflexively about the complexities of historiography. The questions Cvetokovich asks about the shifting meanings of images and acts as different time-scales take hold are relevant here, and I want to take some of my own time, now, to consider her approach.

The choice to specifically document the voices of lesbians involved with ACT UP enacts both a very particular political purpose and a type of mourning that has everything to do with differential time-scales. First, focusing on the experiences of lesbians combats the problem that 'with the passage of time, ACT UP is in danger of being remembered as a group of privileged gay white men without strong political sensibility, and sometimes critiqued on those grounds'. [87] While the women Cvetkovich speaks to were very aware of issues of race and class present in the movement – which did not always comfortably resolve – still, listening to their voices complicates any notion of a homogenous profile for ACT UP. Second, these women are now in a position where 'they have a legacy; they have the privilege of moving on because they have remained alive'.[88] Cvetkovich is careful not to imply that women are immune from HIV/AIDS, or not directly affected by its medical realities, but she also attends to the role of the caretaker that has fallen to many queer women (including Cvetkovich herself), and to the different sense of urgency and responsibility to history this position might evoke.

This second point is related to the politics of mourning, and is developed especially in reference to Crimp's 'Mourning and Melancholia', a much-cited

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[87] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 159.
[88] Cvetkovich, p. 160.

polemic that insists both that militancy has an emotional dimension, which shouldn't be thought separately from the personal, and that mourning has public ramifications and does not exclude (indeed can be the impetus for) action and activism. Cvetkovich frames the Crimp's argument in relation to her own interest in the axis points where public and private connect, writing:

> Adding new resonance to the term *intimate public sphere*, these practices [of militant mourning] counter the invisibility of and indifference to feelings of loss by making them extravagantly public as well as building collective cultural practices that can acknowledge and showcase them.[89]

The refusal to go along with the time-scales that are understood by the mainstream as appropriate for grief or public expressions of loss is part of a larger mode of political action that also includes taking mourning into unsanctioned spaces, and insisting that mourning can occur for losses that dominant society doesn't recognize. Crimp, for instance, insists that after AIDS, a loss of ease around unprotected or promiscuous sex is something to be mourned, and something that has a political edge.

For Cvetkovich, in addition to mourning individual lives lost, she also mourns the loss of political urgency that AIDS activism helped catalyze in the late 1980s and '90s. Reflecting on the slogan 'The AIDS crisis is not over', which ACT UP used in its early days, Cvetkovich wonders how the same slogan resonates ten (and now twenty) years later. She writes:

> What kind of memorial would be appropriate for a movement that while not exactly dead, since ACT UP/NY and other chapters, for example, continue to meet, is dramatically changed? When is it important to move on and

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[89] Cvetkovich, p. 163.

when is it useful, if painful, to return to the past? I ask these questions about ACT UP in particular because in the process where AIDS activism was the catalyst for what has now become mainstream gay politics and consumer visibility, something got lost along the way, and I'm mourning that loss along with the loss of so many lives.[90]

An oral history project is one answer that Cvetkovich lands on, to activate this mourning for a political movement not based on adhering to a consumer capitalist norm. Documentation, then, is not just about preservation, or rather, preservation can have an activist function. Documentation is a political issue because in preserving a voice, 'its preservation makes the claim that it mattered, that it made a difference'.[91]

There is absolutely a question of expertise here – who has the authority to make claims about what matters? Cvetkovich assumes this authority as a political act, noting that the archive of ACT UP is not the mainstream archive of the AIDS crisis. The sentimentality of the film *Philadelphia* or even the interesting yet certainly not antagonistic AIDS Memorial Quilt are the kinds of works that occupy the popular imagination of cultural responses to AIDS. Insisting on the greater complexity and more vigorously oppositional makeup of AIDS activism is itself an important intervention. However, Cvetkovich also brings a reflexivity to the project of making an oral history, and an awareness that no document will ever be a transparent record of the past. She uses this tension between a responsibility to the past and the needs and desires of the present, noting that:

…one of the great, and often misunderstood, lessons of deconstruction is

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[90] Cvetkovich, p. 156.
[91] Cvetkovich, p. 159.

that far from undermining the grounds for inquiry, it is at its most interesting when applied to concrete decisions such as those demanded by the practice of oral history'.[92]

The concrete decisions Cvetkovich makes are to focus on relationships, on the social, on the complicated intertwining of activism and 'real life', rather than developing an overarching chronology of the movement through the voices of some who participated. The excerpts of interviews she shares are contextualised by Cvetkovich's analysis of, for instance, the way individual friendships often became the point of entry to ACT UP, or the way political expertise is transferrable between movements. She notes how many of the lesbian members of ACT UP were able to make significant impact because of previous organizing experience with feminist causes.

Cvetkovich also discusses the difficulty of writing about conflicts in the movement, choosing not to takes sides, but trying, rather, to parse the emotional undercurrents that accompany narratives of breakdown or schism. The vocal record that arises is fundamentally incomplete – much goes unsaid or is assumed to go without saying. She attends to these silences, as well. Ultimately, the archive she creates is both an intervention that insists on the political value of memorialising ACT UP, but also a reflection on the emotional, even traumatic, experiences that surround political action. She writes:

> While an archive of ACT UP constitutes as record of its accomplishments, it is a tool for exploring political difficulties and challenges as well. As such, oral history is itself a complex tool, sometimes revealing these issues only through gaps and silences within the interviews and conflicts between

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[92] Cvetkovich, p. 166.

them.[93]

Cvetkovich's archive of feeling, then, is a complex set of documents that not only deals with the authority of voices, but also with the information of silence.

I have tried to show above how sensitivity to time, audience and voice are all performative strategies used by ACT UP in complicated relationship to expertise. The activism of ACT UP precisely targeted the structures which bar access to decision-making around public health and pharmaceutical research. The graphical savvy associated with ACT UP was an important component in shifting public opinion around prioritising AIDS research, thus directly affecting those decision-making processes. The ongoing effort to document the history of ACT UP targets a drift in the mainstream narrative that would deny the interventionist action that took place, and would re-assign the responsibility for addressing the AIDS crisis back to mainstream institutions. However, these strategies operate alongside even more direct interventions by non-experts into professional realms of the expert, particularly at the level of public health policy.

In an article titled 'AIDS Activists and People with AIDS: A Movement to Revolutionise Research for Universal Access to Treatment', Mark Harrington, the co-founder and Executive Director of the Treatment Action Group (TAG) (an organisation with roots in ACT UP, which later splintered off to become an independent entity) narrates his experiences lobbying with the Federal Drug Administration, the government organisation that approves drugs to be released

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[93] Cvetkovich, p. 167.

for sale in the United States.[94] In developing what Harrington and others refer to as treatment activism, members had to develop sophisticated technical understanding both of the science underlying pharmaceutical development and of the bureaucratic processes and dynamics of influence that set pharmaceutical research agendas.

The development of this knowledge was coupled with and a result of outspoken direct action. In 1988 'Seize Control of the FDA' was organised and implemented. Activists from around the United States surrounded the FDA building in Washington D.C. and attempted direct entry, alongside performative actions outside (banners, costumes, a 'die-in' at the doors of the building – many of the performative image-making tactics discussed above were in full force). The demonstration took place several days after a meeting between representatives of the FDA and ACT UP met for the first time to discuss the activists' demands. The meeting was disappointing. As Harrington writes, 'Activists and bureaucrats were speaking different languages. We did not yet have a common vocabulary in which to negotiate'.[95] Learning this language and forging this relationship had direct consequences. Harrington details gains reached in 1989, the year after the 1988 'Seize Control of the FDA' march:

> When the year opened, just one drug had been approved by the FDA to be sold for treating AIDS – AZT – and no drugs had been approved specifically to treat the AIDS-related opportunistic infections. After six months of

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[94] A recent film which documents work by the Treatment Action Group and ACT UP, *How to Survive a Plague*, has been released since the writing of this thesis and might usefully be addressed in later developments of this project.

[95] Mark Harrington, 'AIDS Activists and People with AIDS: A Movement to Revolutionize Research and Universal Access to Treatment', in Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), p. 333

relentless activist pressure, in June the FDA would approve the first two drugs for AIDS-related opportunistic infections, aerosolized pentamidine to prevent Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP), which afflicted 60-80 percent of PWAs, and DPHG (ganciclovir) for cytomegalovirus (CMV) retinitis, a viral disease which causes blindness.[96]

These concrete advances bolstered the commitment of Harrington and others to a specific form of treatment activism that went on to have a profound influence worldwide. In a 1998 speech, Harrington outlined four principles of a strategy that a Hong Kong-based activist developed in response to Treatment Action Group activism, the first of which is 'Knowledge. Learn the language of the experts and appropriate it -- subvert it if necessary -- for your own ends'.[97] At the core of treatment activism, then, is this insistence that activists can both absorb and influence expert knowledge.

The success of ACT UP in terms of focusing pressure, learning how to influence powerful institutions, and achieving concrete results is one of the most clear examples of the power of non-experts intervening in the life sciences. As austerity politics in this country and globally threaten provision of health care to vulnerable people, it is increasingly important that those affected by health policy are able to participate in its development, and that their interests are taken as the first priority, as a matter of course. Equally, as new challenges for organising oppositional politics arise, it may be crucial to look to the expertise developed by earlier movements – and the emotional, personal and otherwise *felt* experiences

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[96] Harrington, p. 338

[97] 'Talk About a Revolution', < http://www.treatmentactiongroup.org/tagline/1998/december/talk-about-revolution> [accessed 23 March, 2013]

that attend public intervention. Looking to the mix of performative media manipulation, activist archiving practices and direct non-expert intervention engaged in by ACT UP provides a significant framework for thinking through the political possibilities of active encounters with expertise.

CRITICAL ART ENSEMBLE

The example of the Critical Art Ensemble is perhaps an even more overtly articulated instance of the necessity for thinking through how activism and expertise intertwine. In this next section, I will show how the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) have adopted a radical version of the amateur position in order to challenge and problematise a broad set of specific, material issues, as well as critiquing the more general lack of access to knowledge about and decision-making input for non-specialists in arenas where power that influences and affects the general public accrues.

CAE's practice is based on tactical interventions, in which specific concentrations of power (around industrial agriculture or biological weaponry, for example) are targeted for analysis and different media employed to suit each particular instance. This tactical format is significant as a model for crossing disciplinary and institutional boundaries, as research and action are carried out in response to a wide variety of situations requiring a wide number of methods and practices. The model of the amateur is a useful way for thinking about this variety of subjects and responses, considering the amateur's position outside

professional imperatives, and ability to focus attention based on interest.

A brief moment to attend to the term Tactical Media, an umbrella term that refers to the type of politically motivated cultural work with which CAE was associated around the time of its emergence as a collective. Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip give an overview of the development of Tactical Media, as well as some of the activities associated with it in their introduction to *Tactical Biopolitics*, a book which builds on many of the convictions associated with Tactical Media as they have been worked through in more recent practices. They write:

> Tactical Media practices and their associated conceptual framings emerged within the political climate of post-Cold War Europe. The sudden availability of cheap 'do-it-yourself' media, public access to the Internet, and reports about tactics of underground information exchanges formerly employed in communist Eastern Europe provoked intellectual and experiential exchanges between programmers, artists, activists, and theorists in search for new approaches to media activism.[98]

Tactical Media was from the beginning a movement that drew on a heavily politicised amateurism, which was important because of the independence that 'doing-it-yourself' created, but also because of the way it allowed for communication and exchange across borders and other obstacles. Importantly, while Tactical Media was understood as 'a cultural, decentralised, non-institutionalised formation', it never had a directly anti-institutional stance. Rather, 'it has also found creative ways to explore temporary alliances and funding sources within institutionalised academic and public contexts'. Indeed, an

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[98] Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip, 'Introduction', *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), p. xvii.

emphasis on the provisional is what marks it as 'tactical'. The activist potential for an amateurism exploited for its interventionist potential, and not just its exemption from professional oversight, is what I want to explore in CAE's work.

I want to discuss an example of CAE's recent work, in order to trace how their 'tactical' approach works, and to look at the way amateurism operates as part of this. In 2008, I traveled to Liverpool to visit the *sk-interface* exhibit at the FACT Gallery, a cultural centre devoted to intersections between the arts and technology.[99] *sk-interface*, as the title announces, was an exhibition focused on skin as both a material and a metaphor. Projects addressed this thin membrane that is both barrier and point of contact, and which is never as impermeable an armour as we might like it to be.

I wandered past exhibits of projects like *Harlequin Coat* by the ORLAN, which displayed Petri dishes embedded in brightly-coloured squares in which skin cells were growing, and *hymNEXT* by Julia Reodica, sculptures composed of 'replacement hymens' cultured from human and marsupial cells. At the top of a set of stairs, I encountered a two-channel video installation. Images of a chemical fire alternated with images of the disintegration of human cells. A caption underneath the television set told me that both sets of images represented the effects of incendiary weapons. This blunt, minimally composed installation was a project of the CAE titled *Immolation*, and it is the part of *sk-interfaces* that has most remained with me. The dizzying shifts in scale from

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[99] 'FACT is a Liverpool-based cinema, art gallery and the UK's leading organisation for the support and exhibition of film, art and new media.'
<http://www.fact.co.uk/about/exhibitions/2008/sk-interfaces> [accessed 15 September, 2011]

micro to macro gripped my attention, and the sober, matter-of-fact text ('Healthy human tissue cells', 'Disintegrating human tissue cells') drove me to search for more information. A video interview with CAE member Steve Kurtz told me that the project was a protest against the failure of the United States to sign treaties banning the use of incendiary weapons against civilians. This was directly in response to such weapons 'being used on a regular basis in the Middle East'.[100]

The CAE reiterate both their political position and their methodological commitments in an essay that accompanied the *Immolation* installation. Addressing the motivation behind the project, they assert that 'if one was selective in examining the many microcosms of war and warfare one could create compelling points of cultural resistance rather than duplicating generic stop-the-war campaigns'.[101] The ability to identify and move between microcosms is the privilege of the amateur – a privilege the CAE exploits heartily.

It is useful to examine how CAE defines its specific targets of critique. *Immolation* focuses on two of these 'microcosms of war and warfare'. First, it addresses the barbarity of the use of incendiary weapons against civilians. They argue for the importance of this topic for critical examination in part because these weapons receive less public attention than nuclear weapons, for example, but wreak terrible havoc both in lives lost and in the spectacular fear that firepower produces in a targeted population. Second, it addresses the problem of

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[100] Critical Art Ensemble, 'Immolation' in Sk-interfaces: Exploding Boundaries, Creating Membranes in Art, Technology and Society, ed. by Jens Hauser (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 114
[101] Critical Art Ensemble, p. 114

cultural ideology around the representation of war. CAE describe the manipulative rhetoric this way: [mainstream cultural productions] represent the war as horrible and unjust, and the troops as flawed people just trying to survive a terrifying ordeal by any means they can. But once this confession is made, [such productions] reverse the rhetoric and say that, in fact, for doing this, they are heroes, and that in order to support them, war must be tolerated and/or perpetuated and any culpability for horror must be indefinitely deferred.[102]

The CAE resists the temptation to cast horror as humanity and to ask an audience to identify with a flawed hero rather than seeing, and rejecting, massive-scale violence. In choosing not to show recognizable human bodies that an audience might identify with, they stood against this problematic trope in war films.

However, CAE still needed to convey – and denounce – human devastation caused by incendiary weapons. The images of chemical fires used in the installation came from archival footage, according to the interview with

Kurtz. They drew from three historical sites of destruction: fire-bombing of Tokyo during World War II, of Vietnam in the 1970s and of Fallujah during the second Iraq war. This far-reaching historical perspective leant a dimension of abstraction to the project, as did the actual viewpoint of the cameras – far above the burning ground. Nevertheless, the use of archival footage maintained the concrete connection to actual suffering. The images of human tissue cells disintegrating

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[102] Critical Art Ensemble, p. 114

were created during a residency at SymbioticA, a laboratory connected to the University of Western Australia which provides instruments and support for artists wishing to create work using scientific processes (I will discuss SymbioticA in more detail in my next chapter). The use of these images created an experience of identification in *Immolation* – the human cells are, in some sense, 'us'. However, this identification was not with a fictionalised and ideologically manipulative personality, but with the human body – the body of the viewer.

The combined use of the microscopic lens and the historical overview in *Immolation* created an experience for this viewer that stretched the conventional experience of war representation. Typically the viewer's heart goes out for the suffering or loss of a single individual, conveniently excluding both the large-scale political mechanisms of destruction and the physical consequences for the human body. Here, the viewer's outrage and understanding were evoked instead. In order to create these images, the CAE had to collaborate with professional scientists and archivists. The CAE do not reject expertise or specialisation outright, they simply refuse to accept that issues affecting the general public should be solely left to the experts.

The work of CAE is not wilfully eclectic, then, even while it coordinates multiple skill sets and addresses problems arising from a wide variety of fields and disciplines. They focus these interdisciplinary crossings through targeted examinations of surprising or overlooked 'microcosms' in which formations are produced. Cultural production and the skills and methodologies associated with it

are overtly instrumentalised with the direct and stated aims of identifying these microcosms and, where possible, resisting or subverting them. Projects like *Immolation*, which may seem simple at first glance, require the coordination of a wide set of collaborators, including scientific experts who helped produce the images of skin cells deteriorating, archivists who made available the existing footage, as well as the conceptual and critical research and development done by the members of CAE themselves. It is this combination of targeted critique and deft coordination that makes the case for the politically committed, interventionist version of the amateur that CAE model.

Probably the most notorious series of events in the CAE history points to how disruptive this model can be. The story is fairly familiar, having received national and international press. In May of 2004, Steve Kurtz woke one morning to find his wife and fellow CAE member Hope Kurtz unconscious. When the paramedics came to the house, they noted the presence of lab equipment in the Kurtz's home and notified the FBI. The Joint Terrorism Task Force descended, and materials, computers and Kurtz's passport were confiscated. Kurtz was apparently being investigated under a statute related to biological warfare, which had been expanded with the introduction of the USA Patriot Act. This would likely have been due to the presence of harmless bacteria in the Kurtz home, which was going to be used for a later project dealing with US biological warfare, for the group exhibition *The Interventionists*, at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. However, NYC Commissioner of Public Health reported no

hazardous materials were found, and the initial bio-terrorism charges were soon dropped.[103]

Of course, in the period around 2004, anxieties were high around the threat of terrorist attacks – and especially anthrax and other biological weapons attacks – and the Patriot Act had recently been enacted. The initial overreaction by authorities might then perhaps have been chalked up to an atmosphere of over-caution, however problematic and politically charged such over-caution certainly was. However, after the bioterrorism charges were dropped, Kurtz and a colleague from the University of Pittsburgh were brought up on charges of mail fraud. The colleague, Dr. Robert Ferrell, former head of the Department of Genetics, had procured the harmless bacteria for Kurtz in a transaction that both insisted was common in the university culture – claims which a number of colleagues supported.[104] For four years, Kurtz and Ferrell underwent exhausting investigation, incurring over a hundred thousand dollars in legal expenses. Many in the art and academic worlds came to their support, holding an art auction to raise legal fees, and speaking out publicly against what looked undeniably liked politically motivated witch-hunting.[105]

The indictment against Kurtz was eventually dropped in 2008. Ferrell, who was in ill health at the start of the ordeal and suffered several strokes during the investigation, submitted to a plea deal. The importance on the part of United

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[103] Hirsch, p. 24.

[104] CAE Defense Fund', < http://www.caedefensefund.org/faq.html#scientists> [accessed 15 September, 2011].

[105] 'Benefit Auction for Critical Art Ensemble Legal Defense, New York City, April 17, 2005 l Interactivist Info Exchange' < http://interactivist.autonomedia.org/node/4275> [accessed 15 September, 2011].

States law enforcement of policing the disciplinary barriers between expert and amateur, science and culture, private and public interest, was clearly communicated at the expense of the personal life and well-being of several people who attempted to bring those territories closer together. Yet while this is a particularly clear instance of the perceived disrupting force of amateur activists, an ethos of non-expertise has been a defining factor in for CAE for much longer.

According to a timeline published in *TDR,* CAE began as a collaboration between Steve Kurtz and Steve Barnes in 1986 but by 1987 had expanded to include six core members.[106] The name Critical Art Ensemble also served to acknowledge the multiple other people who contributed to the projects, initially in lo-tech video, and later in a wide range of other media. As befits their 'tactical' approach, the outputs CAE produces are wildly varied in form. There are some distinct categories of output, however. There are book projects, which range from books of plagiarized poetry to extensively researched polemics on subjects such as technology and civil disobedience or biological warfare. (Many of these projects are published by Autonomedia, and available to download for free).[107] They also produce biotech-related projects (often with a performance/installation output). An example is *Molecular Invasion* (2000), an intervention related to a genetically engineered product of Monsanto, the multi-national agricultural company, or *Flesh Machine* (1997-98) which suggested a relationship between

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[106] 'Critical Ensemble Timeline', *TDR: The Drama Review* 44.4 (2000).
[107] 'Zen Cart! The Art of E-commerce' <http://www.autonomedia.org/> [accessed 15 September 2011]

fertility treatment and eugenics (I will refer to *Flesh Machine* in more detail below). These works in particular often spark outcry or censorship – Monsanto issued cease-and-desist orders against *Molecular Invasion*, in spite of the fact that the project was produced by amateurs for a cultural institution, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC. For these projects, the group often dons lab coats, and presents lectures on the topics. Particularly early on in their work, CAE also produces media interventions, where the group's media outputs, such as videos, pamphlets and radio and print ads, are inserted into public spaces. One such coordinated effort was *Exit Culture* (1992), where the public spaces included areas off of Florida highways, such as rest stops and shopping malls.

As Rebecca Schneider points out, the group also differentiates between direct action and pedagogical work. Paradoxically, maybe, their understanding of direct action is as something that 'necessitates, today, invisibility and non-locatability'.[108] This understanding comes from the groups early work with electronic civil disobedience, which developed as a way to fight the diffusion and naturalization of capital in the digital age by deftly blocking seemingly smooth channels of communication, thereby both revealing the constructed and manipulative nature of these channels, and directly frustrating the flows of information that support late capitalist structures. Schneider writes of the way, 'CAE argues that the state has *given people the streets* (as a kind of "false public" space) because power has itself gone nomadic through electronic

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[108] Rebecca Schneider, 'Nomadmedia: On Critical Art Ensemble', *TDR* 44.4 (2000), p. 131.

networks'[original emphasis].[109] Schneider notes how, for CAE, traditional civil disobedience – taking to the streets to demand change – is no longer effective direct action when power is no longer centralized in physical institutions.[110]

The pedagogical strand of the group's work, Schneider argues, is the strand that deals with presence and visibility. While all of CAE's work deals to some degree with politics of the body, it is only in this pedagogical strand that the presence of bodies plays a role in the actual production of the work. As well, in the direct action category of practice, representation is avoided in favour of performative action (actions which make something happen). In their pedagogical work, however, representation plays a role, as the figure of the scientist in the white lab coat becomes a character in the group's performance lecture practice, and where fiction (in the form of, for instance, a fake corporation called GenTech) can be developed. A sort of Brechtian theatricality, where representation is used to expose the mechanisms of representation, is at play here.

All of the group's projects target specific instances of manipulative, oppressive or violent practices by business and state institutions. Their use of media and scientific processes responds directly to the disproportionate influence

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[109] Schneider, 'Nomadmedia', p. 125.
[110] I would argue, as an aside, that in the wake of the 'Arab Spring', the global Occupy movement, and the street actions taking place in countries like Greece in response to recent economic crises, that a new politics of the streets has emerged in recent years, that understands or has an awareness of the de-centralisation of power, but has nonetheless (re-)discovered that the physical body is a powerful instrument of political opposition. Indeed, the street as sanctioned public space (even understood as a false promise) may be a less secure proposition than imagined fifteen or twenty years ago.

and destructive effects of the institutional manifestations of these same processes, particularly by the pharmaceutical industry, the proponents of genetically engineered agriculture, and the forces that administrate and perpetuate warfare. The CAE's position is then structurally marginal, as they produce loud and insistent critiques that are profoundly uncomfortable for the institutions at which they are directed. At the same time, they are also reliant on the expertise of professional members of these institutions, as direct appropriation of scientific methods is a fundamental part of their practice.

Founding member Steve Kurtz describes their position thus:

> …without the asset of a territory to work from, strategy is off the table, and we are left only with the choice of flying under the radar, responding to specific situations'.[111]

This position explains the many different forms the CAE's practice takes – each project is a reaction to a specific situation, and the outputs are crafted so as most effectively to deliver a message or intervention. They work with a shifting set of sympathetic allies within institutions to carry out targeted missions, rather than focusing on overarching conceptual or aesthetic approaches. (This is not to say that stylistic patterns do not emerge from the work. However, a detailed discussion of the relationship between politics and form in the work of CAE is outside the scope of this particular chapter).

I want to focus for a moment, now, on the figure of the amateur in broader

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[111] Robert Hirsch interview with Steve Kurtz 'The Strange Case of Steve Kurtz: Critical Art Ensemble and the Price of Freedom' Afterimage 32 (2005), p. 28.

terms, in order to think more closely how CAE have developed their own use of amateurism. I want to think, particularly, about the ways collectivity and individualism are both expressed in the amateur. The relationship between the amateur and the expert in the sciences in particular has a textured political history. Morris Berman gives a sociological analysis of the historical conditions that surround the work of British scientists in the 19th century, using Antonio Gramsci's work on 'hegemony'[112] – or the disproportionate influence of one group over others – to tease out the political dimension of this. Berman discusses how class influenced the development of scientific inquiry, so that in Britain it remained associated with the aristocracy long after the professionalisation of scientific institutions (and the attendant rise of the bourgeoisie) was underway in France and Germany. Even as technical skills were acquired by a burgeoning middle class, the standardisation of the profession of the scientist, and the subsequent conditions that produce the figure of the expert, was not adopted in Britain until much later than its continental neighbours.

One knock-on effect of this was to enforce the idea of science in Britain as the arena for spectacular individuals, rather than a collective pursuit. Berman writes that, in Britain, 'the lack of scientific organization in the nineteenth century was paralleled by a series of discoveries that were almost pathologically individualistic'. He lists 'Hutton, Wollaston, Young, Davy, Dalton, Herschel,

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[112] As articulated in, for example Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks: Selections*, 2nd edn., trans. and ed. by Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

Faraday, Maxwell, Kelvin, Joule, Tyndall, Crookes, Lyell, Darwin, Huxley, Rutherford and others' as men (gender-specific) who occupied space outside of professional pressures, yet with the resources to accomplish sustained and self-directed work, and accomplish startlingly innovative results. The institutions of expertise that developed in the 19th century, on the other hand, were characterized by collective discipline and transferable standards which were devoted to the demands of industrial capitalism, and commercial goals. As Berman writes, 'if aristocratic hegemony retarded the development of scientific organization, it simultaneously inhibited the growth of the (conservative) cult of expertise upon which professionalism is based, a judgment network that serves to determine the success, if not the livelihood, of its practitioners'.[113] If the choice is between liberated individual and deadening collective, it is hard to argue for the collective.

This notion of the amateur as a liberating counterpoint to oppressive, homogenising expert institutions remains resonant in more recent cultural imaginings. Edward Said, for example, champions the amateur position as the proper place for radical intellectualism. Said distinguishes specialisation as such from the professional expert, writing that 'to be an expert you have to be certified by the proper authorities; they instruct you in speaking the right language, citing the right authorities, holding the right territory'.[114] In other words, expertise is as

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[113] Morris Berman, '"Hegemony" and the Amateur Tradition in British Science', *Journal of Social History*, 8.2 (1975), p. 41.
[114] Edward Said, Representations of the Intellectual (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 77

much about social behaviour as it is knowledge or ability. For Said, the individual, dissenting voice of the intellectual is a precious thing which must be protected from the socialising force of expertise. He writes:

> The fact is that the intellectual ought neither to be so uncontroversial and safe a figure as to be just a friendly technician nor should the intellectual try to be a full-time Cassandra, who was not only righteously unpleasant but also unheard.[115]

For Said, then, the figure of the amateur represents an ideal balance – a voice not so disconnected from the world as to shut out an audience, but still outside the spheres of power that demand conformity and compromise. Also, fundamentally, this is the voice of an individual, set apart yet participating from afar.

Where the aristocratic amateur scientist maintains freedom from professional constrictions through his privileged class position, and Said's amateur intellectual holds himself above the fray of suppressive authority, the CAE insists on the practice of amateurism as a way of getting inside spaces that might otherwise be closed to the non-professional. While not dismissing the value of specialisation, the group asserts that interdisciplinarity and exchange make for better public knowledge. They propose amateurism as an opportunity to be responsibly informed about things that affect public life, but are often kept strictly private, either by repressive governments or corporations driven by competition. Importantly, in the CAE version of the amateur, this figure does not operate

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[115] Said, p. 69

outside of professional spaces, but attempts to enter those spaces.

Schneider interviewed the members of CAE about their laboratory work, interested to find out to what degree they do 'real' science, and to what degree they are mimicking scientific procedures in a representational field. Her questions were in relationship to a project called *Flesh Machine*, which combined a performance lecture on contemporary eugenics (complete with performative skits), with a participatory, hands-on section, where audience members could provide tissue samples, which are tested for 'suitability' in genetic engineering. When asked about the work that went into setting up this lab section, CAE responded:

> We didn't study "seriously." We are amateurs. However, to get to the political economy of this situation, and the sociological impact of these goings-on, you don't have to get a degree. We simply read lots of books and journals; spent a semester in cell biology lab (more like a participatory researcher in anthropology); spent two weeks living with a couple going through IVF; did numerous interviews with molecular biologists; had biologists (experts) check our work, and generally act as consultants. When we did *Flesh Machine* in Vienna, a team of biologists from the local university came to the event to check our work, and show we were a fraud. They did not find one thing they could dispute, and were quite congratulatory about it too—although they were never too keen on our politics.[116]

CAE's engagement with science insists that the physical processes that constitute much of the labour of the lab are not outside the capability of most people to grasp. They are adamant that understanding and participating in science could be vastly more accessible, and that taking an informed, oppositional stance to some of the more troubling ideological structures in the

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[116] Schneider, 'Nomadmedia', p. 121.

biological industries is not something that should be left to the experts.

The Critical Art Ensemble's celebration of the amateur, like Said's discussed above, asserts the importance of refiguring constricting definitions of expertise, but does not celebrate the individual as the defining weapon against such constricting definitions. Rather, CAE's works are unsigned by individuals, producing a collective, semi-anonymous yet still accountable pseudo-authorship for the work. Schneider argues that CAE's use of anonymity is precisely a refusal of privatization, writing:

> Their anonymity serves as a mark of their resistance to privatization—as does their collectivity. They are not secretive about their names. They simply do not use their names as signatures relative to their work.[117]

This refusal to play into the power of the signature is also a refusal of the artist as a heightened individual, and a critique of the art world system of obscuring privilege in the celebration of the individual. She writes:

> Rather than struggle to name the unnamed, CAE names the operation of naming, struggling to expose the fact that the named artist (the "star" individual) has long been circulated *as a name* to support a broader anonymous (unmarked) collective of (white patriarchal) privilege that reproduces its foundations by structurally facilitating institutional support for the cult of the individual artist'.[118]

Collective, anonymous and amateur, CAE challenge the basis of the relationship privatisation, capital and knowledge – a relationship that necessarily includes scientific institutions. They do so not by denying the importance of scientific

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[117] Schneider, 'Nomadmedia', p. 123-124.
[118] Schneider, 'Nomadmedia', p. 125.

inquiry – on the contrary, they insist that it is so important, it cannot be left solely to the experts.

CONCLUSION

ACT UP and CAE are examples of committed activists who use performance strategies to insist on the participation of non-experts in the development of scientific knowledge and the development of political policies that draw on this knowledge. The results of this activism are practical (e.g. at the level of concrete changes to policy), cultural (e.g. at the level shifting how images are used, who they represent, and how histories are told), and structural (e.g. at the level of struggling against the individualism and privatisation that often determine how the aims of science are structured institutionally – even if this does not always characterise how science is practiced). By insisting on the participation of non-experts in the lab, both groups have made lasting contributions to re-thinking the politics of expertise.

In my next chapter, I look more closely at one artist's development of a non-expert practice in the lab. I consider how the labour of the artist (or at least the labour of this artist) poses real challenges to the labour of the lab, even as it offers possibilities for rich and varied forms of communication between specialties. I also show how Kira O'Reilly's work with and around scientists is not separate from her other body-based practice, but is part of a continuum of practice that connects materiality and the imagination, and desire, play and the development of new ways of knowing.

Chapter Two: Serious Play

INTRODUCTION

The last chapter was about artists using non-expertise in an explicitly activist mode, which necessarily involved a degree of antagonism – not necessarily against individual 'experts' or against specialist knowledge per se, but against structures of exclusion which attend some institutions of expertise. This chapter also focuses on an artist using non-expertise to engage with institutions of expertise, and while I want to preserve the possibilities of opposition and antagonism, the mode of engagement I will explore here is playful. I argue, however, that this play has serious stakes and complications, and it might not always be 'fun'.

ART AND TECHNOSCIENCE

In 2007, I attended a seminar with the artist Kira O'Reilly at Queen Mary, University of London. Previously, I had only been familiar with her solo performance work, but at this seminar she spoke as well about her recent residency in the School of Biosciences at the University of Birmingham. I was struck by her engagement with the technical processes of cell cultures and how she managed not to elevate or even absolutely separate these processes from her more associative performance-making process. She expressed respect for the labour of those she had worked with, and she was self-deprecating, without diminishing the value of her engagement. In answer to a question about the residency and her work in the lab, she laughed and talked about the limits of her

technical skills. She said that her own lab skills were like cooking, just following a recipe, where the professionals she worked with were on a different level.[119] Nevertheless, O'Reilly's projects to come out of that residency are far from rote or routine. Rather, they offer a compelling lens to consider how the labour of the lab maps on to other labours of love.

In her blog from 2007 onwards, O'Reilly writes about her residency, and her enthusiasm for technical processes and their connection to her processes outside of the laboratory as well.[120] She narrates her practical work with cell cultures: in a post on 7 July, 2007 she details her 'attempts to convince theHaCat [*sic*] cells to grow in some areas and not in others', describing the materials and sequences she employed to carry out these attempts. She is also attentive to social exchanges within the lab, particularly highlighting instances of the imaginative among the professionals she worked with. One of the post-doctoral students suggested that O'Reilly should 'talk to [her] cells and get to know them'. She goes on to write that 'most people I've spoken to who work with culturing cells admit quite happily to conversations down the microscope'.[121] This microscopic/anthropomorphic playfulness works against notions of humourlessness or the overly literal that might be associated with ideas of a professional laboratory.

This mix of narration with observation, and of the technical with the social,

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[119] Kira O'Reilly, 'Exit Wounds and Bioimaginings: Practices and Explorations into Body Collapse, from the Integral to the Cellular and Back Again', unpublished seminar presentation, Queen Mary, University of London, 21 November, 2007.
[120] Note: when quoting O'Reilly's blog, I have maintained the spelling errors that are natural in this casual and spontaneous form.
[121] kiraoreilly>>April, 2012]

creates an engaging document of O'Reilly's experience. Her position as a non-scientist encourages this mix – the artist-in-residence is expected to pick up on relatable details and express them to a broad range of audiences. However, O'Reilly is also attuned to the ways her position as an outsider can lead to anxieties and miscommunications. She describes working in various labs, where 'the principles are the same but the interpretations of them and behaviours around practices of containment, sterility and exclusion are very different'.[122] This variety of interpretations is particularly difficult for the beginner, for someone who has neither the experience nor the authority to sense the nuances of communication in the lab nor to assert her own interpretations. O'Reilly describes an instance of getting the timing on a process wrong, because 'for some reasons [she] didn't get the bit of information that expalined th [*sic*] time scale of the cells [*sic*] tubule information and came back too late'.[123] In her desire not to appear slow and not to impinge too much on the time of the professionals she works with, information is lost and assumptions about existing knowledge go uncorrected.

However, O'Reilly repeatedly professes her love for the work of biosciences. 'I love tissue cultures', she writes. 'I have a complete fascination with the manipulation and cultivation of these microscopic modules, isolated, grown and disseminated into multiple scenarios and possibilities'. [124] This

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[122] kiraoreilly>> Cross Lab Cultures', http://www.kiraoreilly.com/blog/archives/20 [accessed 17 April, 2012].
[123] O'Reilly, 'Cross Lab Cultures'
[124] 'kiraoreilly>> Getting my hands wet' http://www.kiraoreilly.com/blog/archives/10 [accessed 17

foregrounding of emotion is one reason I initially identified O'Reilly's engagement with science not only as non-scientist but as that of the classic passionate amateur, doing it for love, as the etymology of the term suggests. Moreover, the reasons she gives for this love, the way it allows for thinking about multiplicity and potential, call to mind the spirit of adventure associated particularly with the 19th-century scientist, working as the possibilities of industrial technology were beginning to be developed and exploited, but before the professional disciplines had sedimented into later configurations (see my discussion of the historical politics of the amateur scientist in the Chapter 1). This positive amateur position also expresses itself in O'Reilly's openness to the unexpected, both the unexpected outcome and the unexpected connection, and an insistence on deferral of 'anything fixed, resolved or finite'.[125]

When I spoke with O'Reilly in 2011, though, she was hesitant to assume the label 'amateur', preferring 'hobbyist' or 'tinkerer'.[126] The grandness of the amateur was replaced by something less substantial, finer or more miniature. This was emphasised by the fact that much of O'Reilly's work in Birmingham was with spider silk, a substance both metaphorically and materially fragile and gossamer. There is also a different quality to the enthusiasm of the hobbyist from that of the amateur. Where the etymology of the term amateur comes from

April, 2012]
[125] 'kiraoreilly>> Tinkering is so slight and literally gossamar like'
http://www.kiraoreilly.com/blog/archives/30 [accessed 17 April, 2012]
[126] Kira O'Reilly and Johanna Linsley, unpublished interview, 1 June 2011.

love,[127] which calls to mind overwhelming passions, the hobbyist comes from the child's toy hobby horse,[128] evoking both play and something that can be set aside. There is modesty in O'Reilly's use of 'hobbyist', but I also think that it expresses a commitment to the combination of materiality and the unfixed and unresolved, perhaps more than the rather broader strokes of the amateur. Even more usefully for this current study, O'Reilly's distinction makes it clear that the non- expert can be thought of in various shades, and that the failures and contradictions of the non-expert may be as important to consider as those of the expert.

In what follows, I will consider a set of projects that resulted from O'Reilly's residency at the University of Birmingham, and a previous residency at the Australian laboratory SymbioticA, which pairs artists with scientists and gives these artists access to laboratory space and equipment to create new work. I think in greater depth about how O'Reilly frames her relationship to the sciences as a 'hobbyist'. I will also consider these projects alongside her better known body-based and one-to-one performance work, as existing on a continuum of practice with similar aims. I argue that generally her work picks up on various valences of 'play', both as an open-ended, self-determined response to existing materials (or toys, perhaps) and also as a highly charged, and not always 'fun', play of desire and intimacy. I argue that in the context of the laboratory, this

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[127] 'amateur, n. : Oxford English Dictionary'
http://oed.com/view/Entry/6041?redirectedFrom=amateur#eid [accessed 17 April, 2012]
[128] 'hobby, n. 1 : Oxford English Dictionary'
http://oed.com/view/Entry/87460?rskey=SZaPnB&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid [accessed 17 April, 2012]

serious play results in work that responds to the complexity of scientific labour. Here, exchanges between materiality and imagination connect both scientific and performance practice. Further, I argue that O'Reilly's work pays special attention to mistakes and failures, not in order to recuperate them easily into a vague notion of 'process', but to highlight how the specific processes in the biology labs she has been working in rely on highly attuned communication and immaterial or affective knowledge alongside highly technical skills. Finally, I look at the ways O'Reilly's labour in the lab combines with her focus on intimacy to produce a very particular understanding of the play of transformation and change.

PLAYING AT WORK IN THE LAB

In 2003, O'Reilly began her residency at SymbioticA. I have already mentioned SymbioticA in my discussion of the Critical Art Ensemble – now I will take a moment to consider this institution in a bit more depth. Introduced in the publication *New Art/Science Affinities* as 'the gold standard for the integration of artists inside science laboratories', SymbioticA is a research laboratory based at the University of Western Australia. Artists and thinkers working in the humanities and other fields outside the life sciences are given the opportunity to engage directly with the technical processes and professional discourses of the life sciences. There is the sense that this benefits the scientists as well – that the relationship is indeed symbiotic and not parasitic. The benefit of the non-scientist in the lab is described as the possibility for a more general openness, or the creation of an environment of inquiry that is not necessarily geared to the

instrumental pressures that researchers might feel in more traditional research contexts. For the non-scientists, the projects they undertake must adhere to professional standards and regulations. The editors of *New Art/Science Affinities* argue that in fact, this produces more opportunities than it curtails. They write:

> This rule-abiding approach makes their work all the more powerful and gives the artists more freedom to create and exhibit their work without the fear of being censored or excluded from the larger departmental discourse.[129]

Playing by the rules is what allows artists to properly play the game.

SymbioticA was founded in 2002 by cell biologist Professor Miranda Grounds, neuroscientist Professor Stuart Bunt and artist Oron Catts (who is also the director of the centre).[130] The spirit of collaboration between disciplines has been in place since the centre's beginning and a sense of open-endedness infuses the centre's self-descriptions. The website states that, 'our research is speculative in nature. We strive to support non-utilitarian, curiosity based and philosophically motivated research'.[131] In short, SymbioticA appears to be a unique and hugely valuable organisation for rethinking not only how artists might engage with science but how scientific inquiry might be constructed in the most dynamic ways possible.

The residency at SymbioticA was O'Reilly's first foray into the practical use

[129] Régine Debatty, Claire L. Evans, Pablo Garcia, Andrea Grover and Thumb Projects, *New Art/Science Affinities* (Pittsburgh: STUDIO for Creative Inquiry and Miller Gallery at Carnegie Mellon University, 2011), p. 74.

[130] 'About us: SymbioticA', < http://www.symbiotica.uwa.edu.au/home/about> [accessed 13 March, 2013].

[131] 'Research: SymbioticA', < http://www.symbiotica.uwa.edu.au/research> [accessed 13 March 2013]

of scientific instruments, though her practice had always concerned technologies of the body. The project she first worked on was to attempt to create a synthetic lace made from tissue cultures from her own skin. In preparing for this work, O'Reilly worked to learn procedures of tissue culturing using skin cells from pigs which were killed for medical research purposes. The outcomes of this residency were varied, both in medium and structure, including performance, video and text. From SymbioticA, a space specifically geared to artists, O'Reilly went on to the University of Birmingham, where she was very much an outsider, and had a different set of challenges to navigate.

In 2011, I had a conversation with O'Reilly about her residencies at Birmingham and SymbioticA. Here, I want to highlight a few of the key points that O'Reilly brought up in this discussion, to set the stage for a further investigation of the 'hobby' in the context of O'Reilly's work. O'Reilly usefully describes the difference between working at SymbioticA and working at Birmingham. At SymbioticA, there are a range of people from the humanities with overlapping vocabularies, bringing these vocabularies into technical spaces and navigating this movement en masse. I will quote O'Reilly at length, on this point:

> …what's very interesting about it is you're in your SymbioticA pod, so the primary conversations are with the people around you, who are practicing artists, or people who work in the art world or philosophers, etc. And then there's kind of moving into space where I would do stuff, like tissue culture, which would be shared spaces between scientists and artists but primarily scientist spaces. So it creates very different ambiences and flavours just because of the different patterns and really mundane things like using of spaces and booking of spaces. The regular protocols you do when you're trying to work with living materials, whatever your background discipline is. But I did find that my primary references and people I would talk to were

artists who had some idea of my background, where I was coming from. We shared some kind of language. Although there were huge differences because people come from very different places and worlds, and you get this amazing mixture in SymbioticA.[132]

At Birmingham, on the other hand, O'Reilly was one of a few artists-in-residence, but for the most part she interacted in a day-to-day capacity with the scientists and technicians in the lab. In this environment, the conversations she had were necessarily very different from the conversations at SymbioticA, though no less compelling.

These conversations dealt more often with materialities and the practical possibilities of working with living materials. 'I found it really challenging and also really exciting', she told me 'to be forced to find ways of putting ideas and approaches into language that people from another discipline could get'. Two things helped facilitate communication in this context. First, the PhD and post-doctoral students she often worked with were also very involved with teaching undergraduates. This meant that they were skilled at pitching their explanations at a non- (or not yet-)specialist audience. Second, the senior scientist in the lab, Dr. Janet Smith, while not a professional artist, was deeply invested in the arts and interested in the practice of making art and the discourse surrounding the reception of art. Both of these mediating points involved generous negotiations of specialism and status, both on the part of the laboratory professionals and the arts professional.

O'Reilly discussed how she has had to embrace the fact that what looks like

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[132] This and other quotes from O'Reilly are from an interview I conducted in 2011.

methodology in an art studio can look haphazard in the laboratory, and not to try

and make her methodology fit the very different procedures and time scales of

the lab. When I asked her about her way of working in the lab, she emphasised a

specific mode of playfulness, which is nevertheless a serious part of her practice.

She gave me an extended example, which is worth quoting at length:

> …it took me years to realise this – that when I go into a lab my big mistake
> is to try and be a trainee scientist because, you know, it's not my strength,
> it's not what I'm good at. I'm good at being, at making other kinds of
> connections. So there was a situation where I was working with some cells
> that were from a very early stage chicken embryo. And I found this very
> powerful and disturbing to work with this kind of material. And at one stage
> – I'd cut up a precursor tube – it's not yet a heart but still the cells twitch so
> it has this appearance of beating. And when you chop that up into smaller –
> when you create cell culture, the cells still twitch, they still syncopate. And at
> the time my research was growing cells on spider silk. So I chopped up a bit
> of heart and put it on a bit of spider silk. Which was very random, very
> crude, very rough, very – the kind of thing I would do in a studio, where I
> would just put two objects beside each other to see what happens – you
> know what I mean? Let's do something fast and see if it... And those are the
> kind of things that I would dismiss – it didn't have the kind of care and
> considered-ness that would come from a genuine experiment but it had a bit
> of the kind of audacity of getting something and doing it anyway even if it
> was a bit rough and ready… But it's not been informed by really how to do it
> properly. And that was something I would get really hung up on, was how to
> do it properly, and then I didn't really, I don't think, appreciate that that
> wasn't my job. That my job was just to do it. And if I wanted to refine it
> maybe ask for help. But actually I could go a long way in just being quite
> playful, for want of a better word. And by playful I don't mean trivial, I mean
> just quite open about taking little risks with things.

O'Reilly has got to a point where she treats microscopic materials the way she

would treat any other materials in her studio. However, there is a tension that I

think may also be productive when the studio is replaced by the necessarily more

regulated space of the lab. The playfulness and risk-taking that are encouraged

in various ways in the development of artists – from early training on through later stages in a career – are completely different to the skills that are developed by trainee scientists.

I am deeply interested in the way O'Reilly frames it as her 'job' to be playful, to be non-expert in the sense of achieving a technical mastery. This is not to say, however, that she doesn't admire the very different time scales and practices of focus that go into achieving this mastery. We spent some time discussing scientists who spend a career studying one tiny area of specialism that yields rich and significant results, and talking through the satisfaction of this idea. O'Reilly was also careful to describe how the scientist she worked with – Dr. Janet Smith – took an interest in the slightly random actions O'Reilly performed. While Smith was a particularly sympathetic colleague, O'Reilly also pointed out that there is a more general notion of seizing opportunities, so that:

> …if your artist in residence or your PhD student does something a bit random you seize on that and you look at it, and you look at the outcomes, and then maybe you do the refining experiments that establish the knowledge, you know that scientific knowledge, and the paper and so on.

For O'Reilly, then, this speaks to a broader intellectual 'opportunism' – in the best sense of the word, denoting an ethos of curiosity.

Nevertheless, the labour of the artist – or the labour of this artist – is not to develop refining experiments or to establish verifiable knowledge. O'Reilly's practice is characterised by openness, association and a roughness which is also what makes it compelling. I want to think more about how this labour that is also

play operates.

Play, Work and Free Time

It's important, then, to take a moment to think specifically about 'hobbies' and the 'hobbyist' in relation to labour. As Theodor Adorno points out, the hobby is a product of the rise of 'free' or 'spare' time – concepts that are historically specific and in contrast with an older idea of 'leisure', which 'denoted the privilege of an unconstrained, comfortable lifestyle'.[133] While leisure can be a lifestyle of its own ('a life of leisure'), 'free time' is necessarily 'shackled to its opposite' – work.[134] Free time exists in order to reproduce labour power – the point of free time is that workers return from it better able to work – and thus the kinds of activities that can take place during 'free time' are as proscribed as those which happen at work. For Adorno, then hobbies are compulsory activities that exist to fill this paradoxically constrained 'free time'. In order to signify that this time is non-work time, hobbies must look as little like work as possible. 'Hence', Adorno writes, 'the inanity of so many leisure activities'.[135] On the other hand, because free time is so forcefully a product of the compulsion to work, freedom is rarely to be found in free time.

Adorno, then, is actively repelled by the notion of hobbies. He insists that he himself had no hobbies. 'As far as my activities beyond the bounds of my

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[133] Theodor Adorno, 'Free Time', *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 165.
[134] Adorno, 'Free Time', p. 162.
[135] Adorno, 'Free Time', p. 164.

recognised profession are concerned', he writes, 'I take them all, without exception, very seriously'. This is in contradistinction to hobbies, which are 'preoccupations with which [people] become infatuated in order to kill time'. This state of affairs is possible because he 'has had the rare opportunity to follow the path of his own intentions and fashion his work accordingly'. [136] He is in a highly privileged position of approximating a liberated autonomy that consumer capitalism aims to erode.

Whether we agree with Adorno that individual autonomy is the liberated solution to capitalistic coercion, one thing to note about his declarations is that they assert the possibility of a way out of the 'completely mediated, total system' that late capitalism aims towards. Indeed, near the end of his essay on free time, Adorno admits that this compromised notion nevertheless offers some useful outlets. He proposes that free time, while fundamentally co-opted to labour and capitalism, still contains a liberating contradiction. He draws on the example of a royal wedding broadcast in Germany, public reactions to which were studied by the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Those interviewed spoke about the event in the terms by which it was broadcast to them, unique and special. Yet these same people at different moments were also able to be critical about its ultimately flimsy social and political importance, demonstrating what Adorno refers to as 'split consciousness'. Reflecting on the evidence that not everyone always thinks what they are told to think, he writes:

It is obvious that the integration of consciousness and free time has not yet

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[136] Adorno, 'Free Time', p. 163.

completely succeeded. The real interests of individuals are still strong enough to resist, within certain limits, total inclusions. That would coincide with the social prediction that a society, whose inherent contradictions persist undiminished, cannot be totally integrated even in consciousness. Society cannot have it all its own way, especially not in free time, which does indeed lay claim to people, but by its very nature still cannot totally claim them without putting them over the edge.[137]

So free time is valuable to capitalist structures, and yet what makes it valuable for capitalism – that it is space for workers to re-charge so they can come back as better workers – also provides a glimpse of space outside of the totalizing impulse of capitalism. If it is possible to make free time truly free, and not subordinated to work, that would be a radical proposition indeed.

Rebecca Schneider has a rather different take on hobbies, one which gives more credit to the hobbyist for complex engagement. She is also particularly attuned to the compromises of her own position as a scholar. In *Performing Remains*, Schneider studies the phenomenon of United States Civil War reenactors. She argues that the Civil War reenactors she speaks with have a nuanced understanding that attends their passionate involvement in the re-creation of the past. She writes:

> In the course of attending Civil War reenactments, I repeatedly betrayed my own biases in that I was continually surprised by the complexities involved in the (re)actions I witnessed. Problems of ambivalence, simultaneous temporal registers, anachronism, and the *everywhere* of error were not lost on any of the reenactors with whom I spoke, despite their common depiction as, by and large, simple or naive 'enthusiasts'. In affective engagement, many of them find reenactment to be, if not the thing itself (the past), somehow also *not not* the thing (the past), as it passes across their bodies

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[137] Adorno, 'Free Time', p. 170.

in space-time'.[138]

Schneider was surprised by the capacity the re-enactors had for processing complex and sometimes contradictory ideas about temporality and for thinking about history as something that is produced in the body as much as it is produced in the mind or on the page. This is in contrast with (some) professional historians Schneider discusses, who view historical reenactment as a threat to proper historiography, fearing that 'history can be overrun by the error-ridden embarrassment of the live body'.[139] The hobbyists, through their very bodily enthusiasm, pose a threat to the stability of the past.

I wonder if this anxiety about the stability of history is also an anxiety about the stability of work. The 'enthusiasts' appear excessive in their commitment to an activity that has no professional reward and yet demands an intense degree of identification akin to that demanded by a job. And while Adorno can safely categorise the non-professional interests he invests with utter seriousness – music and literature – as proper to the life of the mind, Schneider's hobbyists are all messy bodies and unpredictable emotions. If hobbies can be figured as excessive, bodily disruptions to dominating models of work, they start to look like attractive components for a liberatory artistic methodology.

However, the hobby becomes even more complicated in the context of arts production. As Kathy Weeks argues, in post-industrial economies, the 'work ethic'

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[138] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 8.
[139] Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 35.

that fuels capitalistic development has shifted so that the rewards of work include work itself – or life filled with meaningful and fulfilling productive labour, so that 'postindustrial labour employs workers' hearts and minds as well as their hands'.[140] In this model, the hobby would become obsolete, because all activity could potentially be subsumed by productivity, and the need to reproduce labour power could happen *through* labour, rather than *outside* labour. Time could stop selling for free once and for all.

Artistic labour is perhaps the closest thing to this ideal of perpetual productivity. This is labour that is supposed to be all reward. Creative work should renew the self even as self-expression is material for productive creative labour. The economic and social precarity of the artist can be rationalized by the privileges the work itself provides, even if in reality this means that increasingly only the already privileged will be able to pursue artistic careers. Performance, the most immaterial and socially located of artistic practices, may be the best example of creative work that produces all of its own reward. And yet, perhaps because of its proximity to a neoliberal ideal, it is all the more important to consider how performance can be used to critically examine, and hopefully challenge, this ideal.

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[140] Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 31.

Playing vs. 'Doing' Science

Clearly hobbies, and the figure of the hobbyist, have a complicated position in the world of work, professionalism and the labour of the artist. In the previous section, I was speaking generally, but this is especially true in the specific arena of the sciences. In order to think more clearly about the kinds of work – and non-work – O'Reilly is doing in the lab, I want to look more closely at the position of the non-expert, and here particularly the artist, in relationship to scientific inquiry.

How can artists interested in thinking about and working with science access the materials and information necessary to bring the work past the point of simply reflecting dominant discourses as they are articulated through popularised accounts of science's achievements? Artist and theorist Beatriz da Costa has written about the difficulties of participating in science as a layperson. She shows how these difficulties directly affect artists who are interested in participating or intervening in the sciences.

Da Costa illustrates these difficulties by exploring the different challenges facing artists who engage with information technology versus those who engage with the life sciences (even while many artists may engage with both). Many artists who use programming in their work, even if they are not professionally trained in computer science or engineering, find that the skills they develop are relevant to other fields. These artists are able to exert influence or reap rewards in industries and markets other than the art world. This is because, as da Costa

argues, the practice of coding is both flexible and transferable across a multiplicity of contexts. Once the machinery and instruments that are necessary for coding (e.g. personal computers, the Internet, mobile phones, etc.) became available to a wide set of people, both intervention into existing code-based arenas and development of new tools became widespread outside of a strictly circumscribed professional setting. Da Costa uses the example of Wikipedia to illustrate how access to participation in the development of information technology and its applications, while not universal, has certainly become prevalent.

For artists who wish to participate in the life sciences, access is far more limited. If artists wish to do science, rather than represent its outcomes or mimic its procedures, access to the instruments of science is not enough. The contemporary production of scientific fact is a collective process performed by trained participants whose grasp of a particular reference base of previously established facts is key to their successful intervention in the process of assertion and verification of new facts. Da Costa uses her own experience as an artist working with scientific procedures of data collection to demonstrate how participation in scientific discourse is a complex and often fraught process for an outsider.

The project *PigeonBlog* is described by da Costa as 'a collaborative endeavor between homing pigeons, artist, engineers, and pigeon fanciers engaged in a grass-roots scientific data-gathering initiative designed to collect

and distribute information about air quality conditions to the general public.'[141]
The project was designed so that pigeons were put to use as a sort of local traffic
report team, observing and sending information about air pollution rather than
traffic congestion. They were equipped with sensors which transmitted data
directly online, and this data was automatically represented on Google maps. A
real-time stream of information on local air pollution levels was thus made
publicly available for the duration of the project.

While *PigeonBlog* was specifically framed as an activist-art project, it
ended up functioning in ways beyond the attention-raising function such a frame
might imply. As new technology was developed to create the air pollution sensors
which were strapped to the pigeons, da Costa received interested inquiries from
biologists, veterinarians and technophiles interested in the engineering dimension
of the work. As well, the project was positioned to test and challenge existing
procedures for measuring air pollution. Pigeons are uniquely suited to measure
air quality at heights that have proved difficult to reach through other means, and,
unlike the fixed monitoring stations currently used by air quality agencies, the
pigeons are mobile. However, because *PigeonBlog* was not designed with
scientific research protocols in mind (in terms of statistically relevant sample
sizes, for example) the animal rights organisation PETA (People for the Ethical

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[141] Beatriz da Costa 'Reaching the Limit: When Art Becomes Science' in Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience, ed. by Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008) p. 377

Treatment of Animals) raised objections about the use of the pigeons for the project.

All of these responses caused da Costa to question her relationship to the project and to consider the project's future. In order for the results of *PigeonBlog* to appear in a specialised scientific journal where this information would enter the verification process toward the production of scientific fact, rather than in an art context where it would not, large amounts of money would be required to gather data in amounts large enough to adhere to scientific standards. Even if the resources were made available, da Costa also feared that the consequence of publishing in a scientific journal would be that the information might thus become less accessible or accessible only to other specialised researchers. Without fully resolving this dilemma, nevertheless da Costa points to the direction she would prefer the project, and her own involvement with technoscientific art projects, to take.[142] She was invited by Cornell University to take part in a 'citizen science' project called Urban Bird Gardens. Under this initiative, non-experts participate in research projects, and the data they collect is actually integrated into the Ornithology Lab's studies. For da Costa, this is a position, 'between the academy and non-expert participants',[143] that she hopes to develop. The appeal here is that the 'citizens' are not simply the targets of 'outreach' activities, but are actually 'doing' the science. For da Costa, then, the potential for the artist working

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[142] Sadly, da Costa passed away in 2013, and a full development of her ideas for the technoscientific artist are still to be achieved.
[143] Da Costa, p. 382.

with life sciences is to refigure the disciplinary boundaries that structure the processes that currently exist for creating scientific knowledge.

Da Costa argues, then, that one method for non-expertise to become performative in the context of science (in other words, for non-experts to do science) is to aggregate the activities of non-experts and integrate them with the activities of experts. This model of citizen science has much to offer an understanding of the benefits of permeable boundaries for both experts and non-experts alike. This model differs, however, from O'Reilly's approach, which is not necessarily geared at contributing to aggregate data. Rather, I aruge, O'Reilly uses the lab as an extension of the artist studio, and tissue culture is not separate from the other types of body-based work that she does. There is a certain kind of playfulness that she brings to all of these practices, and which provides a connecting thread to some seemingly disparate ideas.

PLAYING (WELL) WITH OTHERS
Having looked at O'Reilly's work in the lab in relation to 'the hobby', I want to look at connections between this work and some other modes of her performance work. There is a different kind of play operating in her one-to-one work, and much of her other body-based performance work, which centers on intimacy, proximity and boundaries. These categories are certainly not separate from economies or labour, but the focus is somewhat different. In the following, I argue that this work constitutes a form of play that produces a complex

understanding of intimacy, of a type which may be joyful and nourishing, but also sometimes uncomfortable and disorientating.

Kira O'Reilly's performance work was some of the first 'Live Art' I was exposed to, my encounter with her work being more or less simultaneous with my introduction to the term. Attending the Performance Studies international (PSi) conference at Brown University in 2005, I was gripped by Rachel Zerihan's account of her participation in O'Reilly's *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter*, a piece which O'Reilly has performed in various forms in numerous spaces. In this piece, O'Reilly invites audience members into a room with her and offers them the opportunity to make a small cut on her body with a razor. Zerihan chose not to make the cut – other audience members choose otherwise. O'Reilly then asks the audience member to hold her naked body in a pietà-style pose. The entire action is carried out under video cameras. This work emphasises interaction and the not always comfortable dimensions of intimacy.

The Live Art Development Agency holds documentation of this action being performed in several locations. It is the moment of holding that is captured. Watching the different reactions of the different audience members – some solemn and still, some grinning, many on the verge of embarrassment – I am aware of O'Reilly's attention to the person holding her. I am aware of the deliberate construction of a situation in which power can be exposed, toyed with, refigured and documented under O'Reilly's watchful eyes, the product of her sensitive reactions to each individual. It is interesting, however, to consider the

way that the production or investigation of intimacy in a piece like *Untitled Action for Bomb Shelter* is structured like a game, with rules and instructions and an element of the dare. O'Reilly plays with the participants in her action, and like any game, some players have more fun than others.

Through much of her career, O'Reilly has been working on the feelings and intimacies that operate as an exchange between bodies. Much of the writing on O'Reilly's work has usefully focused on its relation to intimacy, and the complicated and sometimes messy dimensions that this relation contains. Zerihan, for instance, connects O'Reilly's one-to-one work with ideas of 'catharsis' understood not as an Aristotelian eruption that returns the action to an earlier stable state, but rather as a more profound disruption of patriarchal ways of seeing.[144] Branislava Kuborovic looks at O'Reilly's piece *Stair Falling* as fundamentally an encounter between artist and 'audience/wit(h)nesses'[145] but uses 'trauma' as a theoretical tool to trace a variety of temporal dynamics and idiosyncratic logics that are dislodged by O'Reilly's performance strategies. Both demonstrate how O'Reilly's approach to intimacy is always complex and never simply convivial. This is what I also hope to be showing in my investigation of 'play' in O'Reilly's work.

Importantly, neither Zerihan nor Kuborovic suggest that O'Reilly builds a lasting intimacy with the people who participate in her actions, or that the experience is automatically a positive encounter or therapeutically cathartic

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[144] Rachel Zerihan, 'Revisiting Catharsis in Contemporary Live Art Practice: Kira O'Reilly's Evocative Skin Works', *Theatre Research International* 35.1 (2010), pp. 32-42.
[145] Branislava Kuborovic, 'Sta(i)r Falling', *Performance Research* 16.1 (2011), p. 101.

exchange. Dominic Johnson usefully suggests that this complex and not always positive experience may in fact be a better way of thinking about intimacy itself. Johnson suggests that where intimacy is often viewed as an outcome of an encounter, in fact all the uncomfortable closeness that attends an encounter needs to be considered as structuring intimacy as well. Discussing a one to one piece of his own, he writes:

> The tendency, I think, would be to read this encounter in terms of intimacy. The encounter is partly boring, partly threatening, possibly embarrassing or uncomfortable, and then the difficulties resolve themselves into an experience of beauty or wonder, however slight. This sounds, to me, like a neat description of intimacy itself, as a situation that aims (to varying extents) at pleasure, but necessarily involves less pleasurable eventualities.[146]

Intimacy is not a single emotional state, but encompasses all of the affective dynamics that attend proximity, many of which will be less pleasurable, and may result in less psychological or material support and comfort, than we might often imagine.

Similarly, 'play' does not have to be understood as some romantic or nostalgic evocation of childhood, nor as part of the bland vocabulary of neoliberal corporate management. In O'Reilly's work there are no illusions of innocence, and no shrinking away from the complexities of desire. As Franko B suggests, the one to one form, with which O'Reilly is often associated, has at least partial origins in a semi-public play of desire, stemming from 'a culture of encounter in

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[146] Dominic Johnson and Rachel Zerihan, 'Interview', One to One Study Guide, ed. by Rachel Zerihan (London: Live Art Development Agency, 2009), p. 39.

fetish clubs'.[147]   The pleasure of the encounters O'Reilly stages has to do with public display and more private exchange, as well as the forging of improbable connections. The coordination of these pleasures must also, as Johnson suggests, inevitably include less pleasurable outcomes. In the context of O'Reilly's work, by expanding the definition of intimacy to include these complexities, I also want to suggest that her relationship to play and the hobby might be just as complex.

PLAY AND TRANSFORMATION

Above, I have looked at the ways O'Reilly's work plays with labour and with intimacy. Both of these modes deal fundamentally with boundaries, a concept that I want to expand on here. In this final section, I will now consider one of her driving metaphors and materials, the skin, and look at the ways this preoccupation of O'Reilly's constitutes an in depth investigation of the possibilities, and technologies, of transformation. This investigation has as much to do with play as the above examples, and results in just as complex and ambivalent knowledges. Once again, the idea of boundaries underlies this work – here the boundary between self and other can also be figured as the boundary that must be crossed in order to *become* another. This is a classic mode of play,

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[147] Franko B and Rachel Zerihan, 'Explicating Intercourse: Excerpts from a Dialogue on One to One Performance with Franko B', One to One Study Guide (London: Live Art Development Agency, 2009), p. 10.

but the make believe of a child, or an actor, in O'Reilly's work takes on a very material dimension. Here, her non-expert work in the laboratory allows her to attempt stubbornly literal acts of transformation, even as mistakes, gaps in knowledge and associative leaps in logic lead to less than straightforward results.

It is appropriate that O'Reilly's forays into the biosciences should be focused on the micro-materialities of skin. Much of O'Reilly's practice has focused in detail on the skin. Many of her most well-known performance works involve the small, methodical incisions of the skin I described in the discussion of her *Untitled Action* above. These actions are wrought with metaphors of barriers, permeable or not, as her audiences are asked to cross lines of normative behaviour and intimacy while also being given the opportunity to remain on their own side of the border. The material function of the skin as a barrier lends focus to these less tangible, if no less effective, boundaries. I am interested in how O'Reilly plays with both metaphor and materiality, and the different types of boundary crossings this play allows her. These crossings, I argue, often result in strange combinations – combinations of skills and conventions, images and materials. I argue, as well, that this practice of combining is a form of play, though the play might have serious results.

Petra Kuppers writes about the associative properties of skin, comparing them with those of the scar. Both 'mediate[] between the outside and inside', she writes. For Kuppers, however, the scar has a more dynamic theoretical potential. It is the site of difference and change – 'the copy isn't quite right, crooked lines

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sneak over smooth surfaces'. In contrast, 'skin renews itself constantly, producing the same in repetition'.[148] Repetition is fundamental to both the scar and skin, but for Kuppers, the scar disrupts repetition, prevents us from playing the same old game.

Certainly O'Reilly's work draws on the complex and sometimes fraught associative network of the scar – the interaction of trauma with healing, and the political strength of locating art practice in spaces of difference. However, I argue that O'Reilly also plays with the repetitive dimension of the skin – its self-reproduction – in her own disruptive ways. To intervene in that repetition and to create a new skin, as O'Reilly has literally attempted, is to tap into the mechanisms of transformation. Like a complicated form of dress-up game, transformation threads through O'Reilly's work, in ways that are more complicated than, for instance, the self-help rhetoric of transformation with its unrelenting message of positivity. In O'Reilly's work, transformation can be uncomfortable and disorientating, but it can also do the work of rejecting conservative assignations of identity and humanity.

One of the outcomes of the residency at SymbioticA is 'Marsyas – Beside Myself', a 'performative text',[149] which was included in the publication *sk-interfaces: Exploding Borders – Creating Membranes in Art, Technology and Society.* (This publication accompanied the sk-interface exhibition at FACT Gallery referred to in my above discussion of the Critical Art Ensemble). In the

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[148] Kuppers, p. 1.
[149] Kira O'Reilly 'Pigginess Fantasies', hYbrid
http://www.ibmc.up.pt/hybrid/content.php?menu=6&submenu=43 [accessed 17 April, 2012].

text, O'Reilly outlines nine actions. These are descriptions of performance works created by O'Reilly, most of which include a generic description of the space in which they were performed ('Art gallery', 'A very large room during a very hot night', 'A disused bomb shelter').[150]

At first glance, the final action does not include a description of the performance space, but begins with the line, 'The pig is called Kill no. 000053'. In fact, the pig's carcass is the performance space in this particular example. The performance is titled *inthewrongplaceness* and in it, Kira slow-dances with a pig carcass, inviting audience members to enter the room for ten minutes at a time, and, if they like, to touch either human or non- human animal. In the sk-interface publication, O'Reilly describes how the space inside the animal's dead body became a performance space:

> Her skin draping around me.
> Her unrelenting flesh and weight.
> Wearable space.
> Corporal pocket.[151]

inthewrongplaceness contrasts, perhaps on purpose, with 'inbetweenness', a term invoked by Jens Hauser, curator of the *sk-interface* exhibition and editor of the publication. For Hauser an interest in skin is fundamentally an identification with liminality. Skin may separate, but to engage the skin is to assert the possibility of dynamic and ongoing transformation. Hauser celebrates the virtues

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[150] Kira O'Reilly, 'Marsyas – Beside Myself', *Sk-interfaces: Exploding Boundaries – Creating Membranes in Art, Technology and Society* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 96.
[151] O'Reilly, 'Marsyas', p. 101.

of 'ambiguity, openness and disorientating indeterminacy', [152] virtues of play, I would argue, that I have indicated O'Reilly is also interested in. For Hauser, 'inbetweenness' is the word that sums up these virtues, that creates the vocabulary for a politics of permeable membranes, indeed, for a politics of playfulness.

O'Reilly's use of 'inthewrongplaceness' suggests an affinity with the 'ambiguity, openness and disorienting indeterminacy' of 'inbetweenness'. And yet it also connotes a somewhat more measured, even less optimistic, approach to this playfulness. There is such a thing as a 'wrong' place, or there is at least such a thing as feeling like you're in the wrong place. And what if the wrong place is inside one's own skin? O'Reilly may be invoking a desire to return from the liminal itself, a need to get out of the in-between and go back into the either/or. This is not to say that O'Reilly's work inadvertently advocates for categorical stability. Rather, O'Reilly's work is about movement, about *going between* more than it is about resting in a potentially static inbetweenness. Drawing on Zerihan's re-working of catharsis, I argue that here, metamorphosis is not structured here as stability interrupted by chaos and returned to stability. Rather, it is the result of a meeting with difference. It is the difference between Kira's skin and the pig's, the wrongness, that makes something new.

Interestingly, the difference between these bodies is heightened by how

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[152] Jens Hauser, 'Who's afraid of the in-between', Sk-interfaces: Exploding Boundaries – Creating Membranes in Art, Technology and Society (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 5.

incremental it is. The Live Art Development Agency holds documentation of the performance of *inthewrongplaceness* at the HOME Gallery in London. This documentation consists of still photographs taken during the performance alternating with microscopic videos from the tissue cultures O'Reilly produced at SymbioticA. In one particular photograph, O'Reilly's curved spine takes up most of the space in the right-hand side of the image. In the left hand space, the spine of the pig curves in a perfect reproduction of O'Reilly's shape. The colour of both sets of skin is nearly identical – pale with only the slightest suggestion of pink. This almost-sameness is jarring as the identification slips apart, and O'Reilly's alive, human body becomes impossibly separate from the inert flesh of the pig carcass. It is this flicker between difference and sameness, never resting in between, but constantly moving from one to the other, that makes this serious play.

Returning to the text of 'Marsyas – Beside Myself', O'Reilly describes another wrong place. There are five short sections of text devoted to the part of the SymbioticA residency, after O'Reilly has practiced culturing cells from pig carcasses, when she is ready to get a biopsy to begin the process of making lace from her own skin. There is a section that reproduces her consent form, where she agrees that the procedure has been explained and that she understands what risks might be involved. There is a section of only a few lines where she describes preparing for the 11.20am appointment. 'Everything is ready', she writes. There is an eleven-point list describing the 'protocol for obtaining

epidermal keratinocytes from skin biopsy'.[153] Then there are a few lines describing the trip to the clinic:

> Leave lab at 11.05 to drive short distance to clinic for 11.20am
> appointment.
>
> We turn left.
> And left, and the wrong left and the wrong right.
> We get lost.
>
> I phone.
>
> Too late.
> Can't reschedule.[154]

Describing what must have been a crushing disappointment – her literal wrongplaceness or failure to be in the right place – in the same tone as the description of preparations and procedures, O'Reilly uses the analytic voice to incorporate the reality of mistakes into her practice. Movement can mean making the wrong turn and transformation can fall apart. Particularly when one is a non-expert, mistakes will certainly be made. These hazards of play need to be noticed and cared for as much as the fortuitous discoveries and the successful executions of plans. One result of this care is that what-might-have- been has a presence alongside what happened. In the next section of the

Marsyas text, an email to a friend about her 'non biopsy of myself', O'Reilly writes:

This stuff moves all the time, between actual, imagined, lived, living,

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[153] O'Reilly, 'Marsyas', p. 98.
[154] O'Reilly, 'Marsays', p. 99.

daydreams and other dreams, all other living things that I have planted in tissue culturing flasks in dark warm spaces.[155]

O'Reilly uses processes from the biology lab, but imagined realities are 'planted in tissue culturing flasks' alongside other types of reality. The metaphors of the skin are not separate from its materialities. This does not mean collapsing difference into sameness – it is the care and attention to mistakes and wrongnesses, and ultimately difference, that can connect the imaginary to the physical in the play of O'Reilly's work.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have looked at Kira O'Reilly as a serious non-expert, whose work uses modes of play that stage questions about labour, intimacy and transformation. O'Reilly brings methods of openness and indeterminacy from her studio to the lab, offering a type of hybrid practice that is not limited by discipline, even as she respects the rigours and potentialities of disciplinary commitments. In connecting the various strands of her practice, O'Reilly makes an implicit argument for the connection of materiality and imagination in her practice as a whole. Finally, all of this makes the case for 'play' as a complex form of engagement with materiality and imagination, that need not be co-opted by dominant logics of labour. Taken together, then, I argue that O'Reilly's non-expertise contributes to my understanding of performance and the politics of

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[155] O'Reilly, 'Marsyas', p.99.

expertise.

Chapter Three: Institutes of Non-Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

I have thus far focused on projects that are about oppositional politics challenging experts in order to contest limitations of access to ostensibly public knowledges, or about (sometimes (dangerously) playful) communication between areas of expertise and non-experts. In the next two chapters, I will shift the focus away from the expert/non-expert interplay that has structured the past two chapters. In these next chapters, I will be thinking about institutions and practices of expertise that may not produce knowledge at all. I have already suggested that experiences of knowledge are constituted by all sorts of emotional dynamics and felt experiences that expand how we might think about what knowledge is. But what about dynamics and experiences that are related to confusion, or curiousity, or other ways of explicitly *not knowing*? I argue that expertise is absolutely wrapped up with these modes, as well, and that a politics of expertise needs to account for them. Further, I assert that artists have already started to account for dynamics of non-knowledge in expertise, and that performance has been a particularly fertile mode for these practices.

In chapter four, I will consider how the form of the lecture performance has been used to tease out specific categories of non-knowledge. In this chapter, I will look at two projects that have developed institutions of expertise that are seriously concerned with non-knowledge: the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles, and the Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Nonknowledge, a

traveling project produced by the Berlin-based Mobile Academy. Where in previous chapters the performance strategies I have analysed have operated in a variety of interdisciplinary forms, I argue that the strategies of these two institutions (or 'institutions', perhaps) use explicitly *theatrical* strategies, even if the spaces they occupy are not traditional theatres. Indeed, theatricality is, I argue, a significant mode of disrupting or teasing the edges of modes of knowledge production.

THE INSTITUTION

Before turning to my examples, and their theatrical mechanisms, I first want to take a moment to think about institutions. In recent years a number of cultural projects have been created that combine performance and performative modes with institutional structures and processes. While certainly indebted to earlier generations of artists associated with waves of institutional critique in the 1960s and 70s (e.g. Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren or Michael Asher) and in the 1990s (e.g. Andrea Fraser), more recent instances of art-as-institution differ in the emphasis on the creation of new models, rather than critiquing existing institutions (though I argue that the most successful of these projects maintain a critical edge). Jonas Ekberg argues that this is at least in part down to traditional institutions taking a more open approach to the forms and functions that non-traditional, artist-created institutions might take. He refers to a set of cultural institutions, 'all of whom seem to be adopting, or at least experimenting with, the working methods of contemporary artists and their micro or temporary institutions, especially their flexible, temporal and processual ways of working',

citing the Rooseum in Malmö, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center in Istanbul, and the Bergen Kunsthalle.[156] It is, I argue, important to maintain some degree of critical reflection about whose needs are served by this openness. To what degree does institutional encouragement of the 'flexible, temporal and processual' map on to the ongoing precaritisation of cultural work? On the other hand, it is crucial, I believe, to look for ways that institutions can and do lend structure and support to practices that offer untraditional ways of organising both knowledge and expertise.

For Julia Bryan-Wilson, the institution remains an important place for critique and action because of its relationship to a broader dynamic in society. She writes that institutional critique remains relevant and potent:

> …because it continues to offer up suggestions for way to rethink connections between corporate state power and individual subject-formation, and the ways these are mediated by institutions'.[157]

Institutions in this formulation are the spaces where the subjects of power are disciplined but where they might also work against these disciplinary mechanisms. Bryan-Wilson is working to create a 'curriculum' for institutional critique that promotes an active, indeed activist, understanding of what might be possible for institutions. She writes:

> Any curriculum for institutional critique will need to keep alive this activist, even utopian, component. It will need to understand that the "institution" in

[156] Jonas Ekberg, 'Introduction', *New Institutionalism, Verksted #1*. Ed. Jonas Ekberg (Oslo: Office of Contemporary Art Norway 2003), p. 9.

[157] Julia Bryan-Wilson, 'A Curriculum for Institutional Critique, or the Professionalization of Conceptual Art', *New Institutionalism Verksted #1*. Ed. Jonas Ekberg (Oslo: Office of Contemporary Art Norway 2003), p. 104.

question is still just as broadly defined as its earliest practitioners imagined: not merely a physical set of walls and rooms, but the labyrinthine procedures of capitalism itself. As such, these institutions are contradictory – bound with corporate interests, fraught with ideological agendas, but also vibrant with real moments of pleasure, knowledge, and resistance.[158]

This is a balance that I, too, hope to strike – a critical awareness of the interests and ideologies that align institutions with corporate capitalism and repressive state powers, but also an energetic embrace of the potential for making something new that the structure of institutions, under the broadest and most generous definitions, can offer.

The 'educational turn' is certainly associated with many new works that use institutional structures and processes as materials. Since the mid-2000s there has been a proliferation of schools and other educational institutions that are located in an art context – both physically (as in housed at a museum or gallery, as in the New Museum's Night School in New York or the Wide Open School show at the Hayward Gallery in London) and conceptually (as in a self-conscious positioning of education not *about* art but *as* art). I have already discussed in my introduction how this 'turning' toward education as an artistic and curatorial strategy has both useful and problematic political dimensions.

These projects might also be seen as the practical component of a broader debate around criticism, creativity and institutions in the production of knowledge. A number of recent works, such as Gavin Butt's edited collection *After Criticism*, build on the worry that there is something wrong with the state of the critic as 'a

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[158] Bryan-Wilson, p. 106.

discriminating authority on matters of art and culture' – something wrong, indeed, with the state of the critic as an expert. Many of these suggest the alternative of 'repositioning academic inquiry as a kind of cultural participation in its own right'.[159] One dimension of the concern prompting this debate is the fear that theory as a process of demystification, as touched on above, might have ossified into a paralysing cycle which makes progress impossible. If the critic is forever engaged in the banishment of non-knowledge, how can anything creative ever be done? If, in the process of analysing cultural constructs, these constructs begin to appear immutable, how can anything change?

Irit Rogoff, whose work I also discussed in my introduction, suggests a solution that incorporates a particular type of non-knowledge. She states that there is an 'ever-growing perception of knowledge as an extended wander through fields of intertextual subjectivities'.[160] She argues from the perspective of an art historian and visual culture theorist that the critique of institutions by artists in the past was a necessary step that, now taken, has opened the field for a new set of both liberatory and collective actions and reflections. She proposes non-knowledge as a tool for activating this new field, a process she terms 'looking away'. She writes:

> It is precisely because... we have been through such a long and protracted phase of institutional critique of spaces and strategies of display, that we can affect such a bold step of "looking away" from inside those discourses

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[159] Gavin Butt, 'Introduction', After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance, ed. Gavin Butt (Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), p. 3.
[160] Irit Rogoff, 'Looking Away: Participations in Visual Culture', After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance, ed. Gavin Butt (Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005) p. 119.

and those spaces.

In other words, Rogoff exhorts us to expand the field of our consideration, even our critical consideration, beyond what we have already considered as part of legitimate knowledge. Rogoff suggests that we are now standing in a field of debris created by decades of deconstruction, and rather than continuing to rip down the same old institutions, we can 'look away' and consider the new shapes formed by fragments. In doing this, she writes:

> We produce for ourselves an alternative mode of taking part in culture in which we affect a creative bricolage of art works and spaces, and modalities of attention and subjectivities, that break down the dichotomies of objects and viewers and allow for a dynamic manifestation of the lived cultural moment.[161]

Rogoff suggests, then, that reading and viewing are creative acts, that when we go to a museum or read a text, we are making something. What we are making is not an object, however, but an experience or a dynamic. In the ideal circumstance, the non-knowledge produced by looking away would refer to a not-before-experienced way of being together in which oppressive barriers have shifted or dissolved. Rogoff seems to suggest that one way of beginning to bring about this type of non-knowledge is in the very act of looking away, of seeing that there is an abundance of possibility that exceeds the narrow strictures afforded by the grid-like divisions which separate spaces and produce hierarchical power relations.

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[161] Rogoff, 'Looking Away' p. 113.

It is no coincidence that Rogoff is involved in many of the new pedagogy-as-art projects from recent years (e.g. *A.c.a.d.e.m.y. – Learning and Teaching* (Vanabbemuseum NL 2006) and *Summit – Non Aligned Initiatives in Education Culture* (Berlin 2007)). She admirably puts into practice her theoretical position on the creative possibilities of viewership, and the need to dissolve the separation between objects and viewers. The idea of the cultural critic as active participant in the cultural field is appealing, and even more, the idea of creative interventions into restrictions and cultural hierarchies which aim not only to reveal but also to change. Nevertheless, as with my hesitation about abandoning identity politics for a politics that prioritises movement and change, I think it is still important to maintain a keen sensitivity to the restrictions and hierarchies which do limit access and which do unevenly distribute power. This sensitivity is not mutually exclusive with a commitment to creative change, but the balance is crucial to articulate.

Both of the examples in this chapter create institutions in order to encourage a sort of 'looking away' from official forms of knowledge. Both also reward critical attention, even if the politics they generate may be less direct or activist orientated than previous examples. Theatricality weaves through both the Museum of Jurassic Technology and the Blackmarket, heightening or displacing other institutional modes, sometimes creating distance, sometimes disorientation and often playing on the affects of attraction and control.

MUSEUM OF JURASSIC TECHNOLOGY

I found a parking place only a few blocks away from 9341 Venice Boulevard in Culver City, Los Angeles. The air conditioning turned off along with the car, and I opened the door to a blast of heat familiar from my years of living in Southern California. The rows of one-story buildings lining the wide sidewalk, and the too-bright light were equally familiar. It was all the more disorientating, then, to enter the Museum of Jurassic Technology's tiny, dark foyer and to begin wandering through the exhibits. Modeled after the exhibit techniques of any natural history museum in any city, with information panels and audio guides, nevertheless the content of each individual exhibit, and overall atmosphere of this rather cramped space, are crucially different.

The Museum of Jurassic Technology (MJT) occupies a storefront space on Venice Boulevard. According to Susan A. Crane, in 'Curious Cabinets and Imaginary Museums', the MJT was founded in 1989 by David Wilson, 'a special effects expert in the film industry and a life-long habitué of natural history museums'.[162] Originally housed in a single room on the first floor of this nondescript building, the museum has slowly expanded to include several rooms on the ground floor, an upstairs screening space and tea room, and a gift shop and reception area. The roof has been converted into a terrace garden, with Roman and Greek statue reproductions, and at least a dozen white doves perching, kept in the space by an overhead net. Two doors down the road is the

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[162] Susan A. Crane, 'Curious Cabinets and Imaginary Museums', *Museums and Memory*, ed.Susan A. Crane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 60.

Center for Land Use Interpretation, whose presence creates a mini-district of de-stabilising exhibition projects on this small block.

According to the MJT statement ('The Museum of Jurassic Technology – and You!'), the Museum 'is an educational institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and public appreciation of the Lower Jurassic'.[163] In his book Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonders, Lawrence Weschler amusingly narrates his research process as he attempts to track down a definition of the Lower Jurassic. He details many of the exhibits, which feature a range of oddities including a human horn, the development cycle of the Cameroonian stink ant, the deprong mori (a bat that can fly through solid walls), and the story of the amnesiac opera singer Madelena Deloni. Weschler guides the reader as he tracks the veracity of these exhibits (the deprong mori and the Madelena Deloni story are fictional constructions, the horn and the stink ant are at least based in fact). He emphasizes Wilson's un-winking delivery of incredible stories, and highlights the pleasure he experiences in the game Wilson sets up.[164]

For me, the need to debunk some of the seemingly fantastical facts and displays feels less urgent. It is true that some of the displays do seem to purposefully strain credibility. The story of Madelena Deloni, opera singer whose purity of tone and depth of emotion is attributed to her profound short-term memory loss, can seem both too elaborate to be true, but also too detailed not to be. The display also describes the experiences a neurophysiologist named

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[163] Museum of Jurassic Technology website <http://www.mjt.org/main2.html> [accessed 20 April 2009]

[164] Lawrence Weschler, Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995).

Geoffrey Sonnabend who hears Deloni sing near Igassu Falls, Argentina, where he is convalescing after a nervous breakdown brought on by, among other things 'an exhaustive and largely inconclusive research project into the memory pathways of carp'.[165] After the concert, he has a sleepless night, and as he wanders near the falls, he is struck by the outline of a theory that becomes his life's work. Based on the image of a 'cone of obliscence', Sonnabend's models the decay of experience which underlies the human construction of memory. The story posits non-knowledge, figured as 'forgetting', as the norm of human experience, with knowledge, or memory, as temporary blips on the radar.

While the heightened language and elaborate characterisation that are used in the Deloni/Sonnabend Halls of the MJT evoke a kind of novelistic fiction which prompts curiousity about its basis in fact, other exhibits rely less on the playfulness of the hoax to consider non-knowledge. 'We May Never Have This Same Knowledge Again' is a collection of letters sent to the Mount Wilson Observatory in Pasadena between 1915-1935; 'Tell the Bees: Belief, Knowledge and Hypersymbolic Cognition' is a collection of 'vulgar remedies' or folk cures displayed alongside reflections on the connection between these instances of collective wisdom and the scientific procedures of establishing fact; and 'Lives of Perfect Creatures: Dogs of the Soviet Space Program' is a series of portrait paintings showing each dog that was launched in Soviet rockets in the early years of space exploration. The relative 'truth' of these exhibits is less important

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[165] 'The Life of Geoffrey Sonnabend' <http://www.mjt.org/exhibits/delson/sonabend.html> [accessed 15 January, 2013]

than the way each evokes a specific proposition for a nuanced intertwining of knowledge and non-knowledge.

But perhaps my blasé attitude to MJT's slippery fictions are because my investments in the museum as a space for the production of reliable historical knowledge are not as strong as some others. Crane, for instance, describes a feeling of intense disappointment when she goes to the UCLA library to track down Sonnabend's three-volume work on obliscence, using a pamphlet which MJT founder David Wilson has personally given her which cites this publication and claims that it came out in 1946 from Northwestern University Press. On determining that no such volume had ever been published, by Northwestern or anyone else, Crane has an intense emotional reaction. She writes:

> I wanted Sonnabend to be real. I was intensely disappointed to find that Sonnabend did not exist: I would have preferred to feel that Wilson had let me in on a discovery, that I had become privy to knowledge about an obscure theorist. Instead, I was embarrassed. I had been duped.[166]

This reaction is wrapped up with the complicated effect MJT has had on her understanding of her professional expertise about the museum as such (Crane is a professor at the University of Arizona, focusing on the history of the museum). She describes her interaction with Wilson, his unrelentingly straight-faced performance and the 'earnest sincerity' with which he presents Sonnabend's work as if it is historical fact. In response, Crane writes:

> I am wary: desirous of being savvy, wanting to have my hard-won expertise intact, and yet professionally sceptical of that expertise and willing to be

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[166] Crane, p. 64.

surprised.[167]

All of the anxieties of the professional expert are in play: the desire to have one's intellectual labour be respected and to have that labour pay off when it counts are in tension with the desire for surprise and wonder which are generally understood to motivate intellectual labour in the first place. Wilson's refusal to play fair puts this tension out of balance, and, moreover, results in 'an uncomfortable bending or blending of categories'.[168] History, even if it is understood as produced or constructed, cannot be a wholesale fiction, Crane argues. I do have some sympathy with this concern. It is perhaps *because* the writing of history can never be neutral that the stakes are high when it comes to historical truth.

For Crane, in order to stabilize the categories that Wilson unbalances, 'the Museum of Jurassic Technology has to be relegated to the realm of art, specifically "performance art"'.[169] She notes that though Wilson's background comes from outside the genealogies of conceptual art, nevertheless, 'the current fascination in the art world with deconstructing the museal space and its exhibition techniques opened the mode of artistic production of museums to aficionados of the curious such as David Wilson'.[170] Though working in response to his own obsessions and preoccupations, these map onto a larger zeitgeist concerning the institution that I have traced above.

Yet Crane seems unsatisfied with the relegation of MJT to the unstable

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[167] Crane, p. 65
[168] Crane, p. 66.
[169] Crane, p. 66.
[170] Crane, pp. 64-65.

realm of 'performance art', at least without a fight. She works, instead, to place MJT in conversations with the history of 'curiosity', both as an intellectual mode and as a strategy for display. She shows how the collection and exhibition of objects in the Renaissance and Early Modern period contributed to a sense of the term 'curiosity' as foundational in the production of knowledge. The 'cabinet of curiousities' developed along with a particular idea of the relationship between objects and intellectual activity. For the Early Moderns, objects that inspired curiousity prompted a mode of consciousness 'that awakens reflection, reflection in turn produces discerned truths, and these show a previously unknown and diverse usefulness of the things'.[171] Encounters with objects can trigger a process of learning, even as these encounters might also constitute an experience of the unknown.

However, drawing on Foucault, Crane shows how the 18th century saw a fundamental shift in the structures of knowledge production, visible in the shift towards exhibition ordered by classification based on principles like 'authenticity', and 'History' figured as a unified whole. Items that were once 'curiosities' became, in the 18th century, 'historical objects'. Along with this came a differentiation between those who are 'merely curious', and prone to acquisitiveness and vanity, and the true connoisseur, who is skillful and studies deeply and systematically. Non-knowledge begins to emerge as that which is not properly classified, or those processes which do not proceed according to a particular form of systematic rationality.

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[171] Crane, p. 68.

According to Crane, the MJT participates in a further re-working of the historical object, using 'curiosity' as a method. She suggests that the MJT, by demonstrating the porosity of systems of classification, shows that the historical object 'does not necessarily face a secure future' itself.[172] I suggest, however, that it is precisely by employing performance strategies that MJT casts doubt on the security of historical objects. With elaborate set design and deadpan delivery, MJT might be frustrating in its refusal to break character, but it stimulates a type of wonder that has everything to do with 'wonder' as itself a historical category.

Here, Stephen Greenblatt's discussion of 'resonance' and 'wonder', while problematic becomes useful. Greenblatt develops 'resonance' and 'wonder' as two modes of experience particularly affected by institutional decisions by museums. His New Historicist approach conditions him to privilege resonance, which would, he writes:

> …attempt to reduce the isolation of individual "masterpieces", to illuminate the condition of their making, to disclose the history of their appropriation and the circumstances in which they come to be displayed, to restore the tangibility, the openness, the permeability of boundaries that that enabled the objects to come into being in the first place.[173]

The art museum is a particularly challenging and rich place for this approach, as much is invested, both practically and conceptually, in maintaining this 'isolation of individual "masterpieces"'. [174] Greenblatt works to show how this very

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[172] Crane, p. 65

[173] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display, ed. by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), p. 43.

[174] Greenblatt, p. 43

investment has a historical basis and a process of development. This work he describes as the evocation of 'resonance'. He writes:

> …by resonance I mean the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand'.[175]

In other words, an object resonates insofar as it is seen to be part of a network of other objects, influences and activities in which each node partly determines and is partly determined by all the other nodes connected to it. The New Historicist approach exists precisely to illuminate these connections, to make objects resonate.

In contrast, Greenblatt states, 'by wonder I mean the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke exalted attention'. [176] Wonder precludes resonance, by shining a light on an object so brightly that other connecting objects and forces are obscured. Greenblatt shows how the modern museum literally produces this effect, describing how the Museum of Modern Art in New York, for instance, relies on 'boutique lighting' to isolate its works in the attention of the viewer.

Greenblatt goes on to conduct a New Historicist analysis of the production of wonder, to show how it is, in itself, an experience with a historical basis and process of development which exists in a network of other concerns, investments

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[175] Greenblatt, p. 42.
[176] Greenblatt, p. 42.

and forces. For instance, the collections of curiosities (the German wunderkammer literally translates as wonder-cabinet) that began to develop among the upper classes from the Early Modern period initially connected the experience of wonder with an impulse for possession. This impulse remains in the curiosity display's contemporary cousin – the museum – today: that 'boutique lighting' obviously refers to commerce and commodity. Now, however, when possession of the objects on display in museums is strictly out of reach for the vast majority of visitors, these institutions 'at once evoke the dream of possession and evacuate it'.[177] Only the almost unimaginably wealthy consider museum objects as realistically consumer objects. For the rest, the museum functions something like the perfect consumerist machine, always producing desire, but simultaneously holding the objects of desire out of reach.

Greenblatt indicates that the history of the development of wonder includes a drastic re-framing of the position and power of the object of wonder. For Greenblatt, in spite of the undeniable commercial value of art works, and the status accrued by the collector of these pieces, nowadays the point of collection is to display the object, not simply to own it. During the Renaissance, any one item in a respected collection generated marvel in part because of the vast number of hidden, un-displayed objects that it signified. The modern museum, Greenblatt asserts, exist for objects to be marveled at in their singularity. This change in status of the 'treasured object' entails a new positioning of the source

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[177] Greenblatt, p. 49.

of wonder, and a new figure associated with its origin:

> The treasured object exists not principally to be owned but to be viewed. Even the fantasy of possession is no longer central to the museum's gaze, or rather has been inverted, so that the object in its essence seems not to be a possession but rather to be itself the possessor of what is most valuable and enduring. What the work possesses is the power to arouse wonder, and that power, in the dominant aesthetic ideology of the West, has been infused into it by the creative genius of the artist.[178]

The experience of wonder promoted by a museum such as the MoMA thus relies on the relatively new development of the concept of the creative genius. This creator, who has the capacity to imbue an object with 'the power to arouse wonder' is similarly imbued, by association. For Greenblatt, this is not necessarily a bad thing. The ability to appreciate the creative genius of another, Greenblatt argues, is a component of Western aesthetic ideology he wishes to preserve. He asserts that the type of gaze he has associated with wonder 'does not have a necessary or inherent politics, either radical or imperialist', but goes on to state that 'it derives at least in part from respect and admiration of the ingenia of others. This respect is a response worth cherishing and enhancing'.[179]

In a sense, then, Greenblatt wants it two ways. His theoretical commitments require him to associate the development of 'wonder' with the concept of 'creative genius' and to describe how both are historically contingent configurations, related to the rise of consumer capitalism. However, he wishes to maintain these configurations. He insists that for all the individualism associated

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[178] Greenblatt, p. 52.
[179] Greenblatt, p. 53.

with the concept of the genius, the dimension of the appreciation of the genius of others is a charitable, even generous act. I am not so sure that I accept this interpretation of the generosity of genius. I am afraid that the cult of individuality broadly – and the specifically gender, race and class histories that attend the 'genius' – are more problematic than Greenblatt allows. In the next chapter, I will look to some work that proposes a different, more critical, approach to wonder. Here, however, I want to look at the way MJT complicates the relationship of resonance and wonder, and the specifically theatrical techniques it uses to do so.

The MJT relies on the practice of 'resonance' to produce 'wonder', I argue. In other words, it uses the strategies some modern museums use to open an object up to a broader historical context – informative text panels, audio guides, collections of large groups of related items grouped so their connections are foregrounded rather than their inherent, singular value. However, the MJT finds this practice itself to be a source of wonder, particularly as it relates to the broader history of the display of curiosities. The MJT wonders at the development of the museum itself, and it performs this wonder in such a way that it disorientates the visitor with its almost – but crucially not quite – familiar techniques of display. The MJT uses wonder to question the ways that we look at museum objects, and to wonder how these ways came to be.

Not only does MJT perform the de-stabilisation of museum display, I argue that the project also creates an explicitly theatrical space. An exhibit from 2004 helps underline how deeply MJT draws on strategies of theatricality. At the back

of the ground floor of MJT, in the hallway leading to the staircase, there is an exhibit titled *Miracles and Disasters in Renaissance and Baroque Theatre Mechanisms*. Guest curated by Los Angeles-based artist Rachel Mayeri, this exhibit shows how special effects developed in European theatres to create, as Mayeri calls it, 'a vocabulary for the marvelous'. [180] There is a display devoted to *ingegni* and *intermezzi*, dazzling inventions and interruption that acted as 'palatable diversions from protracted comedies or interminable feasts'. There are wall texts that describe how 16th and 17th century aristocrats funded the development of 'mechanical devices to capture, reflect and radiate their magnificenses'. The exhibit describes technical innovations (e.g. *periakloi*, or three-sided scenery which allowed for smooth, almost magical scene changes) and luminous personalities (e.g. the Baroque set designer Giacomo Torelli, known as 'the great sorcerer'.) Expertise is everywhere, with a quote from the Italian Baroque architect and theatre designer Nicola Sabbattini giving a sort of manifesto of expertise as he describes the designer examining a performance space:

> He will show confidence in all, give good words to all, yet put complete trust in no on, for often one is cheated by the malignity of enemies or the ignorance of the incompetent. [181]

The heightened experience and its mechanical production get equal stage time in this modest, tucked-away display.

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[180] 'Miracles and Disasters in Renaissance and Baroque Theatres' < http://www.rachelmayeri.com/projects/miracles-and-disasters-in-renaissance-and-baroque-theater-mechanics/> [accessed 27 October, 2012]

[181] *Miracles and Disasters in Renaissance and Baroque Theatres*, guest curator Rachel Mayeri, exhibit at Museum of Jurassic Technology, completed 2004.

When I encountered *Miracles and Disasters,* it struck me that with its focus on the mechanics of illusion and on the period of European history where the modern and contemporary borders of official knowledge were not yet set, but where they find their origins, this exhibition is an oblique declaration of the museum's reigning interests. I wanted to write a few notes, but found myself without a pen or pencil. Instead, I took out my mobile phone and started to type. The invigilator of the space came up to me, and pointed out the sign forbidding the use of mobile phones in the space. I tried to politely assure him that I would not talk on it – I was just using it to take notes. He told me that the rule was not about noise, it was about light. The lighting has been designed so specifically that use of illuminating gadgets throws off the experience. I put my phone away and asked to borrow a pencil, which he kindly provided.

I looked around the dim space to contemplate the lighting design, which was idiosyncratic, at least. The museum used the directional 'boutique' lighting that Greenblatt describes above, but if I had not been assured that each lighting decision was minutely considered – and if I had not been conditioned to suspect that every seeming mistake or accident in the MJT could be planned – I might have thought the design was incompetent. Lights in the MJT tend to obscure as much as illuminate. Lights fall on only part of a text or image, or they miss a text altogether, so the viewer must come nearly nose to the wall in order to read it. This lighting strategy corresponds with other instances of planned failures. There

is a glass display case with a sign that promising that the smashed glass slide within would be repaired – neither the sign nor the smashed glass have changed in the (at least) half-dozen times I have visited MJT over the course of ten years. 1980s-style telephone receivers are attached to display walls, and most of these when lifted from their cradles produce authoritative and affectless (thus highly affected) narrative voices explaining the adjacent display, but a noticeable percentage of these phones simply produce silence, no matter what one does to them.

The way MJT evokes the perpetually underfunded, well meaning but overstretched community museum can only be described, I think, as 'stagey'. The 'museum' is almost as much a character here as the historical and pseudo-historical personages constructed through the displays, or the narrator voices described above. The layers of artifice which structure MJT are subtly signaled by these constructed failures, which tease visitors with the sensation that some kind of game is being played, but certainly do not give the game away. What makes MJT disorientating, and what makes it effective as an institute of non-knowledge, is not that it commits historical hoaxes, but that it stages the possibility of overcoming the artifice, occasionally letting the mask appear to slip, but never properly coming clean.

THE BLACKMARKET OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE AND NON-KNOWLEDGE

My next example of a performative institution of non-knowledge explores

the relationship between knowledge and non- knowledge in communication and relationships. It explores this idea through the charged detachments that thread through communication, in which intensity is inflected with scepticism or doubt. To do so, it uses subtle conversational techniques and broad theatrical conventions to stage highly structured and yet, at many levels, unpredictable interactions.

I visited the Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Nonknowledge in 2008, in its tenth iteration, where it was staged as part of the Weiner Festwochen in Vienna, a city-wide festival of performance. The subtitle of the event was 'Who Will Have Been to Blame', and on offer were individualized lectures on the law, banking, dystopia, 'exchange and guilt', corruption, shame and forgiveness, but also on 'future scenarios' and 'future past'. The Blackmarket was housed at the baroque Odeon Theatre, a grand space in a slightly less grand part of town. There were two main event spaces. The foyer of the theatre was used to sell the above-mentioned lectures. Hostesses with elaborate, vaguely 1940s or 50s-style hair styles and plain uniforms in a shade of hospital-blue stood behind a counter on a raised platform. Behind them, a black wall was covered with precisely spaced notecards indicating the different 'rounds' which structure the event, and showing which lectures were still available to buy. Long queues formed, snaking through the foyer space, and occasionally, impromptu 'auctions' would break out, as punters competed for more desirable lectures.

Past the foyer, there was a large theatre space, with raked seating platforms on the north and south edges of the space, facing each other. On the east and west edges there were large projector screens, and taking up the majority of the space between these edges, rows of tables were lined up with a chair on either side and an exposed filament light bulb hanging directly above. This was the lecture space, where the official business of the Blackmarket took place. Every half hour, the chairs would fill with clients and experts, a gong would sound, and the sounds of dozens of one-to-one conversations filled the space. After the half hour was up, the gong would sound again, and all would disperse, to start the process over again. Anyone who was not able to successfully purchase a lecture – or who was overwhelmed by the process and need some time out – could sit in the seats, and watch the faces of expert/client pairs blown up and projected onto the screens, or listen in on conversations, selections of which were broadcast via shortwave radio to mobile receivers with headphones (available in the foyer). As well, underneath the seating platforms, there was messy tent set up, where purveyors of 'secondhand knowledge' were available to strike a deal and pass on rumours and other unverified tidbits. The event as a whole teetered between the highly structured and the gleefully shambolic, as a party atmosphere became the backdrop for an intense engagement with the social dynamics surrounding knowledge exchange, and the pleasures and anxieties of not-knowing.

The Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge is an event, a

formula and a performance. It was created by German dramaturge Hannah Hurtzig, under the auspices of the Mobile Academy. The Mobile Academy began as a summer school gathering of cultural workers to discuss 'The Future of Work' in 1999, and has become the umbrella for a range of activities produced by Hurtzig on the borders of theatre, exhibition, pedagogy and a range of specialisms in contemporary cultural studies. The tag line for the Mobile Academy is 'The Mobile Academy always changes location, time and theme, maintaining a consistent intensity and a growing sense of doubt'.[182] This pairing of intensity with doubt indicates a form of non-knowledge Hurtzig's projects commit to – a mix of highly focused process and ever elusive conclusion prompting ongoing activity rarely shaped by decisive end result.

The Blackmarket has been presented in Hamburg, Berlin, Warsaw, Istanbul, Graz, Vienna, Liverpool, Jaffa, Dresden, Turku, Plovdiv and Bern. In Mannheim, in 2009, the Blackmarket was licensed to the Nationaltheatre Mannheim for the 15th International Schillertage (an annual festival dedicated to Friedrich Schiller). There have also been 'Copyleft' versions of the model produced in Graz and Freiburg. While these various franchising models do have an ironic or critical edge, they also in fact serve the conventional franchise formula developed by a central but absent figure, Hurtzig in this case.

The content of each Blackmarket differs radically with each production.

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[182] 'Mobile Akademie – Mobile Academy' <http://www.mobileacademy-berlin.com/> [accessed 12 March, 2013]

However, the Blackmarket is able to tour widely and franchise itself because its structure is essentially unchanging. Hurtzig and her collaborators bring together up to 100 different 'experts' to speak on a particular, generally site-specific theme. 'Experts' is contained in quotation marks not because the recruited speakers do not have some kind of knowledge to share, but because the range of knowledge is so diverse that a standard definition of expertise would be difficult to arrive at. Audience members are able to purchase a 30-minute lecture with one of these experts, for the symbolic fee of one euro (or pound, or dollar etc., depending on national currency). The lectures take place together in one room, and if an audience member is not directly involved, she can observe the action from rows of seats surrounding the arena (or agora as Hurtzig calls it). She can also listen in, as five lectures in every round are broadcast on shortwave radio.

The size of this operation and the complexity of the bureaucracy – transparently highlighted within the event – suggest and also produce a familiar type of detachment: alienation. While Hurtzig is clearly in charge of the meta-working of The Blackmarket, nevertheless no one person has a clear sense of the totality of its operation. Indeed, when I entered The Blackmarket at its staging in Vienna, I looked around, rather bewildered, and caught the eye of a young man handing out programmes. 'I don't know what's going on!' I told him. 'Nobody does!' he responded, gleefully.

Audience members ('clients'), experts, and managers/administrators

willingly contribute to the event without ever fully seeing the product of their labour, as the product is the event itself. It might be argued that the Blackmarket simply reproduces, albeit on a micro scale, relations of capitalism. Is critique possible when nobody knows what is going on? The same might be said for the 'franchise' model, which could also be critiqued under Rick Knowles' problematizing of the globalization of the performance festival 'circuit' which the Blackmarket certainly participates in. For Knowles, this cosmopolitan market often results in work that ignores the material conditions of the audiences for which it is produced, in favour of the simultaneously more flexible yet more politically limited conditions of the global cultural market itself.[183] (I will consider Knowles' argument around materiality in more depth in my final chapter). However, I think the Blackmarket is more interesting to think about in terms of the staged intensities it produces, the opportunities it provides to view these intensities from a variety of perspectives, and the ways it insists both that the distribution of knowledge is wrapped up with the exchange of intensities in social interaction, and that knowledge is never the only thing that is being exchanged.

The above might be explicated in more depth by looking at the way 'knowledge' does play a part in the Blackmarket, and by thinking about the 'usefulness' that is supposed to attend this knowledge. Alix Rule, writing on the Blackmarket for Frieze magazine, suggests that 'useful knowledge' might simply be a convenient framework for Hurtzig's deeper interests – that perhaps Hurtzig

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[183] Rick Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre* ((Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 89-90.

only uses 'education' as a frame because of its currency in the art world. She

writes, 'Cynically, one is tempted to speculate that what interests Hurtzig most is

really the mysterious dynamics of rules and attraction; but these days in the art

world, useful knowledge sells'.[184] Rule has a point about the difficulty of pinning

down the usefulness of the knowledge on offer at the Blackmarket, and about

Hurtzig's preoccupation with 'rules and attraction'. Because the range and style

of the lectures is so diverse, and the possibility of assessing the validity of any

one set of facts an audience member might receive is so limited, it is difficult to

say that the Blackmarket is actually invested in teaching, per se. Non-knowledge,

here figured as the non-verifiability of facts, seems to reign. Given the popularity

of performative pedagogical project in recent years, it is understandable that Rule

might see The Blackmarket as potentially cashing in on a trend for useful

knowledge in order to pass off an entirely different set of concerns.

Bojana Cvejik's assessment differs, however. She claims that the Mobile

Academy's development over many years has not been in response to current

trends, and nor should it be figured as a forerunner. Rather, she characterizes it

as an 'autonomous practice' whose 'appearance seems to be amplified at times

by a current curatorial interest'.[185] The work's relative 'autonomy' might be

contested: the Academy is always institutionally affiliated, though the partners

shift, and by Hurtzig's account the Blackmarket developed as a performative

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[184] Alix Rule, 'Frieze Magazine | Comment | The Blackmarket', published 26.07.2009
http://www.frieze.com/comment/article/the_blackmarket/ <accessed 13.02.2011>, unpaginated.
[185] Bojana Cvejik, 'Trickstering, hallucinating and exhausting production: The Blackmarket of
Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge', http://www.mobileacademy-
berlin.com/englisch/bm_texte/bonja.html <accessed 13.02.2011>

final report to funders.[186]   However, Cvejik usefully historicizes the Mobile Academy events that preceded the Blackmarket. 'Even if they are now lumped together with other summer schools and academies burgeoning all over', Cvejik writes, 'they were the first to hybridize (in-)disciplined workshops and lectures, cultural fieldwork and political activism in an event that creates its own imaginary community'.[187] For Cvejik, then, it is precisely the hybrid nature of the event that is of value. Hybridity may always bear the problem of verification: when a variety of systems for evaluation blend, it is difficult to maintain a set standard.

Rule goes on to suggest a less cynical possibility, as well. She writes, 'Rather more generously, knowledge exchange seems to serve as an excellent pretext, equally for facilitating the individual encounters – flirtations, problematics, momentary bonds – and for the event as a whole'.[188] But even in this more generous analysis, the Blackmarket's outward structure of experts exchanging knowledge is an – admittedly elaborate – excuse for something quite apart from knowledge. Rule's insistence that a 'pretext' is at work actually says a lot about the Blackmarket's relationship to pretense.   Rule notes that while the Blackmarket can be understood in relationship to participatory or relational artworks, an analysis must also take into account Hurtzig's background in theatre and performance. She writes:

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[186] Hannah Hurtzig interviewed by Johanna Linsley, *A Report on the Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge*, unpublished MA dissertation, 2009.
[187] Bojana Cvejic, 'Trickstering, hallucinating and exhausting production: The Blackmarket of Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge', http://www.mobileacademy-berlin.com/englisch/bm_texte/bonja.html <accessed 13 February 2011>.
[188] Rule, unpaginated.

What makes the event distinctive in the art context is that it's organized according to an uncommonly subtle appreciation of how performance figures in communication, in social interaction generally. Hurtzig doesn't so much attack the theatrical conventions that mystify actors on stage, as manipulate them to redistribute the mystique more equitably.[189]

Theatre and performance are historically shot through with pretense and illusion. As Rule seems to allude to, the German avant-garde theatrical tradition of the previous century – which forms part of Hurtzig's background – was, particularly as developed by Bertolt Brecht, committed to the exposure of the mechanisms of this illusion as part of a broader political program of demystification.

Mystification is a form of non-knowledge that repels knowledge. It insists that there's nothing to see here folks, by shrouding concrete processes or structures in mystery. It also importantly implies a political benefit to be achieved through hiding privilege or power in the shadows. Brecht's Marxist-influenced politics aimed to work against the mystification of power structures, with the belief that the revelation of exploitation is the first step to liberation.[190] 'Mystique', which Rule suggests is the currency Hurtzig is using to redistribute in her Blackmarket, is subtly different from mystification. It might be thought of as non-knowledge that attracts knowledge – or at least produces a desire for the unknown. It may hide its object, but it also prompts its viewers to peek behind the curtains. Hurtzig's redistribution of mystique serves a significant function for the impact of the event. It makes all of the participants – again, clients, experts

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[189] Rule, unpaginated.
[190] Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic (London: Metheun, 1964), p. 122.

and managers/administrators – hyper-aware of the acting that goes on during the normal course of communication. This holding back, wondering what the other person is thinking, wondering what they are thinking about you, trying to arrange your face so that it looks like you're paying attention – all of these activities are par for the course in any number of conversational scenarios. They serve the function of managing the attractions – and repulsions – that emerge and maintain interaction. This set of attractions might be called a low-level mystique that fuels curiosity in another person in any social situation.

However, I would argue – perhaps against Rule's assessment – that the knowledge transfer scenario is particularly charged with mystique. This is because power differentials are blatantly pronounced, and the stakes of curiosity in another person are higher. It matters more to me, or at least matters in a particular way, what an expert thinks about me, even if rationally I believe that there will be no great consequences. I agree that Hurtzig's interest does seem primarily to lie in 'rules and attraction', and in the intensities I discuss above, but I suggest that this is not at odds with the stated purpose of The Blackmarket to be a space for the exchange of knowledge and non-knowledge. Knowledge and non-knowledge – and their mutual interaction – have everything to do with rules and, perhaps especially, attraction.

In 2008, I met with Hannah Hurtzig in Berlin, to discuss the Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge. In this conversation, the critical dimensions of the project opened up, as Hurtzig addressed theatricality, potent

social forms of non- (or semi- or pseudo-)knowledge like rumours or social anxiety or management chaos, and the neoliberal 'knowledge' economy that is everywhere referred to in the Blackmarket, even as non-knowledge constantly threatens to unhinge or dissolve the proceedings. Describing the political framework for the project, Hurtzig referred to:

> …the model of advanced liberalism... [the] entrepreneurial individual who manages himself, grasps himself as capital, voluntarily invests in knowledge and skills, and organizes social relationships and networks on his own initiative. Someone who trains self-administration, self-control, and self-realization... Blackmarket plays with this neoliberal model of the future as a set piece.[191]

The project toys, then, with the growing imperative for individuals to fashion themselves as uniquely qualified and connected operators in an increasingly complex system which promises to reward self-motivation and self-management (without necessarily being able to deliver on that promise). Hurtzig stages interactions against a backdrop that insists that everyone must be an expert in order to thrive, even where access to the collective resources and structural support to develop lucrative expertise are not universally available.

Hurtzig claimed that the initial 'check-in' when audience members enter the Blackmarker is designed to heighten this critique, and to direct this critique specifically at the state of educational systems under neoliberal economies. The booking-in of lectures is, Hurtzig said, an "unpleasant image of neo-liberalistic

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[191] This and other quotations in this chapter come from an interview with Hannah Hurtzig by Johanna Linsley, *A Report on the Blackmarket for Useful Knowledge and Non-knowledge*, unpublished MA dissertation, Queen Mary, University of London (2008)

education forms" which result in "individualistic poverty" – everyone for himself, so no one gets what he wants. Not all non-knowledge is cheerfully subversive. Barriers of access to privileged centres of knowledge are only getting more prevalent as social investment is withdrawn and rhetoric of individual responsibility take stronger hold.

At the same time, the Blackmarket is also riddled with little cracks, where individuals can stage mini-rebellions, or join together to alter the terms of the event. There are limits to this, of course. Hurtzig told me the story of one expert – a lawyer – who sat down in front of a client who knew he would be part of the event, and who tried to get legal advice from him during her half hour lecture. The lawyer refused, as his commitment to professional regulations of course trumped his commitment to the Blackmarket's open-ended inquiry. Hurtzig also pointed out that the degree to which participants in the Blackmarket feel able to play with the terms of the event is conditioned by their backgrounds. In Vienna, the proprietors of the Secondhand Knowledge market came from an educated, middle-class background, and Hurtzig claimed that they felt too much anxiety to charge money for their wares. In Graz, on the other hand, a 'girl gang' ran this secondary market, and Hurtzig told me that they made a lot of money.

The Blackmarket flickers between an over-the-top, lightly dystopian version of the commodification of knowledge, and a semi-anarchic refusal of prescribed and individualistic consequences of this commodification. Even the use of 'Blackmarket' as a framing device for the event plays into this duality. One the

one hand, black markets are extreme examples of the logic of the free market –

unregulated and governed wholly by the dispassionate laws of supply and

demand. On the other hand, Hurtzig told me that she chose to call her event a

black market because it conjures up the image of an entity that reacts quickly to

change, and that crops up in moments of transition. Under these conditions,

unexpected reconfigurations can sometimes occur.

Hurtzig also discussed a different dimension of the command to expertise

implied by the project's critique of neoliberalism. She told me that one premise of

The Blackmarket is that 'everyone can be an "expert", if one only listens to him

closely enough'.[192] Here, rather than referring to the need for the individuals to

define themselves through their ability to successfully navigate on an economic

playing field, expertise is a matter of perception. It is up to individuals to discover

or create expertise not within themselves, but within those they encounter and

interact with.

Hurtzig noted the slightly cringe-worthy aspect of this second type of

universal expertise when she discussed some of the background of the

Blackmarket. One influence, she stated, was 'the little bit romantic, little bit

pathetic' declarations by Joseph Beuys that 'everyone is an artist'.[193] In her

monograph on Beuys, Caroline Tisdall describes the background of this

declaration thus:

> It means a widened concept of art in which the whole **process of living**
> [original emphasis] itself is the creative act. On one level it means farewell

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[192] Hurtzig, Interview, unpaginated.
[193] Hurtzig, Interview, unpaginated.

to narrow definitions and to the restriction of art to the products of a specialized group of professionals. More importantly, it implies an intensified feeling for life, for the processes of living, and for the structures of society.[194]

I am interested in this heightening of intensity, and the send of the almost magical power of attention to transform personal experience into creation. This echoes Hurtzig's suggestion that attention is what it takes to discover the unique expertise in everyone. I am even curious about the possibility of a relationship between Beuys's interest in the shamanistic and my interest in expertise – the power of spiritual knowledge as it might relate to other forms of knowledge. I am also interested, however, in the way this rhetoric is (in Hurtzig's words) 'pathetic' – in the way that, reaching too far, it falls short.

In one of the few performance studies articles that directly addresses the performance lecture as a specific form, Patricia Milder places Joseph Beuys at the origin of the form. She cites his 1965 *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* as the forerunner of the myriad conceptually playful and politically focused iterations of the lecture as performance by later generations. Milder is critical of Beuys, noting 'the paradox of working against the capitalist system from the vantage point of success within it'.[195] She discusses, for example, Beuys accepting funding from the West German government for his Free International University, which, if successful in its aims, would have challenged and overturned

[194] Caroline Tisdall, Joseph Beuys (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and Thames and Hudson, 1979), p.7.
[195] Patricia Milder, 'Teaching as Art: The Contemporary Lecture-Performance', PAJ 97 (2011), p. 17.

the liberal capitalism of Western European nations. For Milder, this working against a system from within it is inherently suspect. She finds it 'difficult to believe the hyperbolic statements about the revolutionary potential of this type of education, especially when it is government funded', even as she is willing to 'respect the FIU as a work of art'.[196]

I am perhaps less concerned about the problems of hyperbole in mounting political opposition to capitalism. I am also not completely convinced of the need for, or indeed possibility of, the clear separation between inside and outside of a system that Milder calls for. Especially in the context of massive cuts in government spending on education in this country, a wholesale dismissal of state spending on Beuys's Free International University rubs the wrong way. More troubling for me are possible parallels between Beuys's expanded definition of art and creativity with the more insidious rhetoric of entrepreneurial individualism discussed earlier.

Angela McRobbie picks up on the use of buzzwords like 'creativity' in the neoliberal lexicon in her article 'Everyone Is Creative: artists as new economy pioneers?'. She takes her title from a New Labour green paper on the 'cultural economy', which opened with McRobbie's title phrase, a quotation from New Labour intellectual Charles Leadbetter. More than a decade later, under a drastically different government and economic context, the call for 'further expansion of education and training in the arts and cultural fields, for children and

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[196] Milder, p. 18.

young people from all social backgrounds'[197] outlined in the green paper seems a long way off. Nevertheless, the precarity that McRobbie argues underlies the decentralized 'cultural economy' of New Labour, and other late twentieth-century liberal capitalist governments, has only increased. If the 'New Labour classless dream' consisted of 'a high-energy band of young people driving the cultural economy ahead, but in a totally privatised and non-subsidy-oriented direction', in this era of economic crisis and austerity measures, the privatisation of services and the slashing of public investment is having a devastating effect far beyond the cultural sector.

McRobbie's vision is not wholly bleak, however. Underlying the precaritization of culture work, McRobbie detects a hopeful dynamic, which is 'the potential for turning the desire to make a living in an enjoyable and rewarding way into a desire for creating a better society'.[198] In other words, all the mobility and flexibility of the freelance lifestyle, and the energy this lifestyle demands, could, McRobbie argues, be channeled away from neoliberal goals and into working for alternative, and crucially collective, models of social equity. The fact that this freelance lifestyle is 'in the long term, utterly unsustainable'[199] should be, in McRobbie's analysis, a significant motivator for such a channeling.

In my final two chapters, I will look in more depth at the range of propositions that might be made with the statement that 'everyone is an expert'.

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[197] Angela McRobbie, 'Everyone Is Creative: artists as new economy pioneers?' openDemocracy, 2001 http://www.opendemocracy.net [accessed 20 April 2012], p. 2
[198] McRobbie, p. 5.
[199] McRobbie, p. 6.

Here, I just want to return to Hurtzig qualification of her assertion that 'everyone is an "expert", if one only listens to him closely enough' with the admission that this idea may be 'a little bit romantic, a little bit pathetic'. This is characteristic, I think, of Hurtzig's approach – the matching of intensity with doubt that is also found in the description of the Mobile Academy discussed above, and which structures, I believe, the Blackmarket specifically.

I detected this pairing elsewhere in my interview with Hurtzig, particularly in the way she addressed how theatrical artifice paired with moments of the 'real', or perhaps better, momentary interruptions of the unplanned or the uncontrollable. Hurtzig told me that she wanted a performance of hectic, put-upon service from the hostesses, for example, so she gave them too much work to do. Using a task-based directing technique, then, Hurtzig got her performers to look like they were working by getting them to work. As an added bonus, the excessiveness of the rules actually encouraged disobedience, and the rigorous theatrical infrastructure became the occasion for rebellious improvisations or even exasperated refusals, outcomes that Hurtzig seemed to find exciting. Theatrical conventions also resulted in that most theatrical of mental conditions – stage fright – and Hurtzig claimed that it was typically the most eminent of experts, used to speaking in front of crowds, who found the intimacy of the one-to-one conversation, which was nevertheless projected or broadcast or simply observed as a theatrical event, the most troubling.

Event Hurtzig's proposition that 'if you listen long enough to a person, you make an expert' she qualified by insisting that its value was as a theatrical premise. It was an idea, she claimed, but since it was a theatrical idea, it did not matter, really, whether it was true. Rather, the premise sparked a process of theatrical engineering, resulting in a 'complicated exchange of roles between the expert and the client'. If this supports the claim discussed above that expertise is a sort of ruse, nevertheless, I argue that it is not evoked in the place of some more genuine interest. Instead, I think that the Blackmarket is an institute of non-knowledge so committed to doubt that it cannot even believe its own premise, yet run by a creator so fascinated by the results that perhaps it does not matter.

CONCLUSION

MJT and the Blackmarket have very different genealogies and aims, but I have placed them side-by-side because I think they both use surprising theatrical strategies to produce non-knowledge as a companion to expertise. Looking at the relationship of non-knowledge to expertise uncovers a diverse range of investments and detachments. MJT focuses on the fantastic and its connection to the trivial, whether it's the mechanical truth behind the theatrical illusion, the wonder of fiction and the banality of the lie, the scientific method and unverified collective wisdom, or the scoffed-at crank with visions of the divine. All of these dynamics, MJT implicitly suggests, are already to be found in the history of the museum, a place we no longer understand as a straightforward repository of knowledge, even as it continues to be a powerful influence on how culture is

valued. The Blackmarket focuses on the social behaviours that surround the transmission of expertise, which are extra to the production of knowledge, and may indeed supplant or trouble it. The intensity of proximity and the detachment of doubt each play a role in the staging of communication that the Blackmarket constructs.

There is another surprising connection between the Blackmarket and MJT, in the form of a Victorian English public initiative called the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The Blackmarket clearly draws on this phrasing. Coincidentally, MJT's publishing wing is called the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Information. The re-working both projects give to this phrase helps underline the way each also positions itself outside of the production of knowledge, even while expertise plays a key role in their structures. The Blackmarket emphasises the illicit, the unplanned and the unverified, and unlike an official Society, trades in both knowledge and non-knowledge. MJT makes a distinction between knowledge and information, and the materials it diffuses may, for a variety of reasons, run counter to knowledge categories, not least because they may come from unreliable sources or are, indeed, fabricated. Both nevertheless insist that their non-knowledges are *useful*, and I have found them to be so, in thinking how expertise produces an array of experiences, sensations and dynamics that cannot be categorised as knowledge production. To get even deeper into this array, in my next chapter, I will be focusing more particularly on how the different feelings of non-knowledge that expertise produces might be

understood, and how they contribute to thinking about a broader politics of performance and expertise.

Chapter Four: Lectures in Nonknowledges

I have looked at institutions that use theatricality to thread non-knowledge into familiar modes of expertise. Now I want to think through how explicit performances of expertise, using the form of the lecture, both use non-knowledge to disrupt expertise and suggest how non-knowledge commonly attends performances of expertise. I argue that careful examination of some recent performance projects that operate this way can help towards a further articulation of non-knowledge as both a contributing factor in the marginalisation of certain bodies, and part of a useful method for questioning seemingly fixed structures, among other possibilities for non-knowledge. In order to drive home the point that non-knowledge is a multiple, shifting set of experiences with a range of associations and forces, I will begin now not to refer to non-knowledge, but to non-knowledges. Specifically, I want to outline a few culturally recognisable categories of experience that highlight the emotional complexity of various dimensions of non-knowledges.

So where to begin? There is a rich strain of performance studies that frames failure not as crucial step on the path to success, but as a stumbling block that forces us to question and re-evaluate directions. To name just two examples, in Sara Jane Bailes's recent *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure*, failure is employed by performance artists as a challenge to received ideas about virtuosity and other hierarchical understandings of skill, while in Nicholas Ridout's *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems*, failure is both a

constitutive element of modern theatre, and the key to its critical potential – when theatre fails it reveals central problems with capitalistic labour mechanisms. An initial starting point for approaching non-knowledge as an experience might be thinking it through as a form of failure – a failure to learn or perhaps a failure to teach.

So how can the failure to learn be described? There is the failure of recall: the test-taking moment where carefully – or not-so-carefully – memorised facts are suddenly, vertiginously absent. There is the failure of attention: sitting in a lecture hall, mimicking the gestures of focus whilst the words fail utterly to register. There are the unspoken categories of exclusion from knowledge: having the wrong body, the wrong manner, the wrong history. There is the shrug and the sheepish smile: I'll never learn. The same phrase, spoken with a slight difference, injects the failure to learn with defiance. I'll never learn to behave well, to ignore those categories of exclusion, to accept that this is it.

One premise of pedagogy is that the successful outcome of learning is knowledge. At the same time, there is a notion that the risk of failure offers a crucial freedom to the student. Without a safe space to fail, experimentation and innovation cannot occur. As funding for arts education becomes ever scarcer, such instrumentalised outcomes will no doubt become even more emphasised. However, if failure must automatically lead to success, what happens to critique and accountability? Must experimentation dissolve into toothless consensus? If there is critical value for performance pedagogy in the freedom to fail, there must

be clarity about what failure is and does, and what it produces. We must think through the myriad *non*-knowledges that might be revealed through pedagogy and consider how these non-knowledges are performed. We must learn to identify those instances when the failure to learn is also a political move or a creative act.

In order to address these questions, I want to twist the perspective somewhat, from performance pedagogy to the performance *of* pedagogy. In recent years, a number of performance practitioners have staged pedagogical encounters in order to think through precisely these problems. The format of the performance lecture in particular has become nearly ubiquitous in festivals and symposia, but little has been written to account for the popularity of the form, much less the critical, philosophical and political problems these performers are working through. Throughout this chapter, I argue that an important impulse for many performance practitioners who adopt the lecture form is to critically examine and strategically produce non-knowledge. Further, I argue that non-knowledge must be thought in multiple categories, with various affective forces. When does a failure of knowledge produce exclusion or disenfranchisement, and when might it be an advantage not to know? Can non-knowledge feel exhilarating, scary, sexy, boring or tender? Can it be critical? Political? Is it ever fun?

To start answering these questions, I want to create a taxonomy – a positively negative taxonomy – showing how non-knowledges, while certainly

sometimes indicative of lack or detachment, nevertheless still produce emotion and investment. I want to emphasise, however, that this taxonomy is necessarily unstable and, at best, provisional. The 'non-knowledges' I look at have a tricky way of shifting and even sometimes looking more like alternative forms of knowledge. Also, and crucially, it is important to emphasise that I do not suggest that the performance examples which compel my discussions can be *described* by the terms of non-knowledge I use. I discuss stupidity with reference to one of the most brilliant performers I can think of, I evoke paranoia not as a pathology but as a way of thinking through the writing of (often traumatic) histories, and I return to earlier discussions of wonder to consider how it might be framed as a critical tool for fighting against obstacles to access to knowledge. To underline how the terms I use are in unstable relationships with my examples (and to suggest that the terms may be unstable themselves), I want to take a moment to address them directly.

Perhaps the most viscerally recognizable category of non-knowledge is stupidity. Its link to knowledge is both intuitively obvious and maddeningly difficult to articulate. It is a powerful insult and an effective tool for marginalising cultural minorities, but also on occasion a delightful and even liberatory refusal of suffocating convention. The emotions associated with the encounter with (and performance of) stupidity are perhaps more easy delineate. Exquisite frustration may be the most prominent of a list that includes anger, aggression, laughter, self-righteousness but also, sometimes, pleasure.

Paranoia has generated enormous critical attention for generations. This form of non-knowledge is, of course, characterized by the conviction on the part of the subject that s/he does know. Paranoia is not quite positioned against knowledge, but in parallel with it – the paths have the same shape, but never touch. This form of knowing outside of real knowledge has, at least since Freud, been associated with the project of philosophy – of knowing knowledge.

If stupidity and paranoia conjure the emotions of frustration and fear that can correspond with non-knowledge, a third category is associated with the thrill of it. Wonder is an experience that is celebrated as existing at the beginning of knowledge. The physicality of wonder is well codified: gasps, wide eyes, speechlessness. It can also be criticised as the fetishisation of non-knowledge – an emotion that prompts the endless deferral of understanding – or for giving primacy to the shock of the present at the expense of a consideration of context.

All of these categories have in common a complicated relationship to knowledge – they are not simply opposed to knowledge but might ignore knowledge or fear knowledge or put knowledge on a pedestal. Each of these categories has been written about critically, but has also infused performance practices. Finally, stupidity, paranoia and wonder all have the capacity both to contribute to marginalisation and oppression, but also to intervene in and penetrate the sometimes seemingly fixed foundations of knowledge production. In what follows, I want to trace both of these dimensions within each category,

and discuss how performance practitioners have significantly made use of both to question, criticise and reconfigure the power of knowledge.

WILLIAM POPE.L SPEAKS KLINGON

The video shows footage from the Tate Modern in London, in the Starr Auditorium. It documents a panel discussion. Four people sit on chairs placed just to the side of the stage, and there is a lectern with a light focused on it. The panel topic is 'Global Subjects', and the discussion is taking place as part of the 'Live Culture' programme in 2003, curated by Lois Keidan and Daniel Brine of the Live Art Development Agency in London and performance academic and writer Adrian Heathfield. The four people in the seats are Carol Becker, Ricardo Dominguez, Jean Fisher and William Pope.L. All have been invited to reflect on the problems and possibilities of performance and globalization at this respected museum during this high profile event. The panel employs various strategies of performance and presentation. Becker and Fisher give thoughtful presentations straight to the audience. Dominguez delivers his inspired polemic regarding the Zapatista uprising in the Chiapas in Mexico wearing a balaclava. When Pope.L takes his place at the lectern he stands for a moment, then steps away to have a sip of water. He returns, and seems to clear his throat. He keeps clearing his throat. It slowly becomes obvious that he is not clearing his throat, but intentionally producing guttural sounds punctuated with heavy consonants. 'FFFFFFFF   FFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFFF', he intones, and

'SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS SSSS'.[200]

I am struck when the video overlays long shots of a British Sign Language interpreter on top of Pope.L's image – during the other talks a few shots of the interpreters had broken up the longer sections of the speaker talking, but had been brief. I wonder if the choice to overlay the images has to do with access (transforming this performance into accessible text for the hearing impaired would be a challenge) or if it is a choice to emphasize the live predicament this unusual presentation poses for the audience. The camera cuts occasionally to artist Aaron Williamson sitting in the audience. Williamson (whose work I will discuss later in this chapter) is profoundly deaf. In the shot, he is laughing, seemingly in response both to Pope.L and to the interpreter's dilemma. The interpreter herself laughs as she attempts to convey what Pope.L is doing – valiantly, as it is far from clear what Pope.L is doing. All the while, Pope.L's physical language conveys a very convincing performance of a somewhat harried intellectual explaining a complicated concept and attempting to find an appropriate vocabulary for an audience that might not be as well-versed in the nuances as he is. Aside from the actual content of his speech, he is the perfect world-weary pedagogue, tired but still with a spark of passion for his subject.

How is this a response to the topic of 'Global Subjects'? Is Pope.L commenting on translation processes that make certain subjects appear inarticulate? Is he coupling the physicality and gestural vocabulary of the lecturer

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[200] Tate Modern, 'Tate Channel: Live Culture: Performance and the Contemporary – Part 4', http://channel.tate.org.uk/media/292141267001/292148769001 [accessed 13 July, 2011].

with incomprehensible sounds in order to critique the baroque theoretical language of the humanities scholar, who is able to travel globally and comment on anything but is divorced from the realities about which he professes expertise? Or is this a more targeted intervention, tailored specifically to this context – not a direct critique necessarily but rather a joyful co-optation of a conventional format to surprising and poetic ends? I think of other examples of structured gibberish in performance, of Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonate* or the sound poetry of Bob Cobbing. I think of the ways this mode has been used to press against the limits of both language and rationality.

Pope.L was on stage for approximately ten minutes, after which he simply walked out from behind the lectern and returned to his seat. I was prepared to file this performance under non-knowledge that meditates on the failure of speech – a large subheading with a textured relationship to power and subjectivity. The choice on the part of the documentation team at the Tate to emphasize Williamson's reaction seems to line up with this interpretation. Pope.L is using the lecture format to expose the embodied dimension of knowledge transfer, and to highlight how bodies are implicated when that transfer breaks down.

Then a colleague pointed me to a press release that claims that Pope.L's 'Live Culture' presentation was performed entirely in Klingon, a fictional language developed for the science fiction series Star Trek.[201] This changed everything. I thought: a ten-minute lecture delivered in Klingon is not an example of non-

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[201] Rove Gallery, 'William Pope.L Press Release', http://www.rovetv.net/wp-press.html, [accessed 13 July, 2011].

knowledge at all. It evokes, rather, the obsessive knowledge of fandom. Though on reflection, fan knowledge might not be so separate from a certain type of non-knowledge. What does it mean to develop an expertise in a fictional subject? Fan knowledge feels excessive not only because of the intensity of interest in the chosen subject but because that interest contributes to the invention of the subject itself.

On the other hand, fan knowledge is never truly separate from the world, even if it arises from an escapist impulse. The Klingon reference may also draw on problematic racial associations embedded in pop culture. In the Star Trek universe, the Klingon race is dark- skinned as well as being characterized as violent and barbaric. Much of Pope.L's work draws on the way race is constructed – and re- constructed – through the circulation of images and objects. (As part of his project Black Factory, for instance, participants were invited to donate a 'sample of Blackness' – an object that meant Blackness to them).[202] The trope of the violent and inarticulate other is an important target to address and deconstruct and one well within Pope.L's frame of reference.

In addition to these associations, I must admit to detecting an element of the piss-take in Pope.L's Star Trek homage. There is something gleefully silly about delivering a lecture at a prestigious symposium in a fictional alien language, particularly without preamble or postscript. I snorted in approval on learning about the Klingon dimension of Pope.L's performance and said, without thinking

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[202] Mark H.C. Bessire,William Pope.L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), p. 184.

but with sincere appreciation: that's so stupid.

Stupidity, in fact, may be an interesting lens with which to consider Pope.L's lecture. It should be clear that I am not suggesting that the lecture itself was stupid – much less that Pope.L is stupid. I want to state, unequivocally, that I think Pope.L's lecture performance, as well as his wider practice, are brilliant. I also want to suggest that my anxiety in even evoking the word 'stupid' says something about how potent this form of non-knowledge is. Indeed, one of the strange things about the term is how difficult it is to wield. It seems that even an examination of the concept becomes infected with its qualities. Yet stupidity as a form of non-knowledge is compelling in its ability to be absolutely on the surface but also to operate under many guises. Sometimes an invective, sometimes armour, and occasionally the source of a compliment, stupidity is a form of non-knowledge characterized by excess rather than absence. Instinctively, I suspect that this combination of surface and excess is what makes me want to think about stupidity with reference to Pope.L's Klingon lecture. Prepared, though inadequately, to expose myself to stupidity's properties, I march on.

Stupidity, as discussed by theorist Avital Ronell, has a slippery relationship to knowledge, and is never simply its direct other. Stupidity 'does not allow itself to be opposed to knowledge in any simple way, nor is it the other of thought'.[203] It has a destabilizing power over knowledge-production that pointed critique does not have, because it does not rely on the same assumptions or conventions as its object. Because it is only edifice, it frustrates interpretation and deflects

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[203] Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 5

penetration; 'one cannot understand a stone or a mountain, or offer a critique or a twelve-step program to change their descriptions'.[204] This gives it an odd rhetorical power. A calculated use of stupidity (if that is not a contradiction in terms) might overcome the difficulties the critic faces, of negotiating one's position at a distance from the critiqued.

When Pope.L marches down 125th Street in Harlem wearing a 12-foot white cardboard phallus, as he did in 1996 as *Member, also known as Schlong Journey* he is clearly invoking the intersections between race and sexuality that infuse the cultural construction of the black man in the United States.[205] However, he is also adopting the technique of the frustrated or bored young person who scrawls a penis onto the surface of a public monument. This technique of inserting oneself into, or rather onto, a hostile environment is maddening to the (self-)serious protectors of public civility, who might decry such a stupid act of petty vandalism. It is also a powerful outlet for a certain kind of liberating disregard of the conventions of seriousness. When sober, civic-minded intelligence produces hateful and entrenched social prejudice, stupidity can look rather attractive.

Of course, stupidity as a label is a powerful stand-in for bigotry. Ronell notes that:

> In order to do justice to the American uses and behaviours of stupidity, to the rhetorical sedimentation of the term, one would have to review the consistent naming of the slave as the nonhuman, the ineducable, in terms of phantasms of calculable intelligence. What has morphed into seemingly

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[204] Ronell, Stupidity, p.10.
[205] Bessire, *William Pope.L*, p. 166.

less lacerating assertions of stupidity ('shallow', 'airhead', 'bimbo', 'brain-dead' etc.) belongs to a sinister history, which in part it repeats, of destroying an alterity.[206]

A historicisation of stupidity would have to come to terms with the way aptitude and race are dubiously and violently transposed. It would have to note how consigning certain subjectivities to dwell at the surface (all of those 'shallow' idiots unable to discern depth) lends a moral and aesthetic – and deeply problematic – superiority to discrimination. As a consequence, an account of stupidity might have to dispense with depth altogether.

While stupidity as a label is unquestionably problematic, the frustration that is generated through encounters with institutional greed, injustice or shortsightedness sometimes can only be summarized in one word: stupid. Repeat: stupid! Stupid! Stupid! The importance of rage and the necessity of outburst are captured by this recitation. Ronell writes,

> On the one hand, the very existence of stupidity can and must be disputed – are we not dealing in each case with intricacies of repression, bungled action, error, blindness? – and on the other hand stupidity must be exposed.[207]

However much we might deconstruct the causes of stupidity, there is perhaps nothing like it for capturing the feeling that however many mitigating, underlying circumstances there are, an outcome might be wrong, and its wrongness must be announced.

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[206] Ronell, *Stupidity*, p. 39.
[207] Avital Ronell, 'Kathy Acker Goes to Hell: On the Irresolvable Stupidity of Acker's Death", *Lust for Life: On the Writing of Kathy Acker*, ed. by Carla Harryman, Avital Ronell, Amy Scholder (London: Verso Books, 2006), p. 20.

Ronell writes the above with reference to the work of Kathy Acker, and it is worth tracing the permutations stupidity undergoes in Ronell's reading of both Acker's politics and the political conditions that surround Acker's life and, as Ronell emphasises, her death. Ronell points to the recurrence in Acker's writing of the use of the words 'stupid', 'stupidity', 'idiotic', and 'dumb' to capture the litany of objectionable experiences that constitute contemporary life. Each word captures a different shade of meaning, and resonates with a different political tone.

> So many things are dumb – that you have to get a job, get up, go to sleep, watch your weight, check your calls, pay your bills, clean your apartment, get another degree – all this suggests a level of facticity, whereas stupidity implicates its object in a certain way, as if malice were intended, as if there were an element of ethical failure.[208]

'Dumb' is the weight of everything in the world that we have to do even when it's pointless or coercive. (Ronell does not, though one might wish she had, point to the problematic use of 'dumb' with relationship to physical disability). 'Stupid' is meaner, more dangerous, but for that, it has potential as a rhetorical weapon. Ronell writes:

> Attuned to its several registers of usage and intent, Kathy was appalled by stupidity and denounced it wherever it came up, especially in repressive politics or with issues of social justice'.[209]

If the world is repressive, violent, hierarchical, corrupt and structurally unfair, surely the least we can do is call it names?

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[208] Ronnell, 'Kathy', p. 20.
[209] Ronnell, 'Kathy', p. 21.

For Acker, the contemporary university was one such repressive system. Ronell writes:

> There is something about the institution of learning that has angered Acker – something that is associated for her with a studied curriculum of stupidity, the wrong side of the memory tracks, heading only for memorization techniques and vital depletion ... As far as Kathy was concerned – and she was not alone in this – universities have peculiar transmission problems: they transmit stupidity.[210]

This attitude positioned Acker outside the institution that was potentially most suited to support her. This stupidity begat another stupidity, the 'irresolvable stupidity' in the title of Ronell's chapter. 'I will never get over the fact that Acker had to suffer the refusal of medical benefits', Ronell writes, because she remained an adjunct and never a fully employed professor.[211] It is an irresolvably stupid system that links health care to particular forms of employment. Or perhaps Acker was just stupid to get breast cancer in the United States in the 1990s...

Acker's punk and New Narrative aesthetic is, of course, very distinct from Pope.L's conceptual yet politically invested performance work. I have invoked it here to establish the dizzying forms stupidity can take. It is the appalling nature of social injustice, and it is the angry hiss that rejects what it encounters. It is arrogant, and it makes self-awareness impossible. It also produces a profound and unsettling insecurity. Am I being stupid? Is it disastrously stupid to try and propose stupidity as a performance strategy, to try and suggest that it might pull

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[210] Ronnell, 'Kathy', p. 15.
[211] Ronnell, 'Kathy', p. 15.

the rug out from under the expert's seemingly steady feet? If I can't wholly recuperate stupidity, can I at least propose that its very nauseating variability makes it important to consider, without making myself look like a complete idiot?

My own insecurities notwithstanding, Pope.L's work absolutely operates at the razor sharp and unsettling edge of the politics of race, authority, knowledge and expertise. One of the brilliant things about Pope.L's work is his ability to manipulate and repurpose not just the images or texts that comprise a structurally racist society's visual or literary culture, but also the embodied, gestural and performative tropes that make up its affective landscape. He is not a satirist, nor directly a commentator. He is too committed to collapsing the distance between his body and the world for that. The critical questions I asked above regarding the function of Pope.L's lecture in the context of a panel on 'Global Subjects' are not irrelevant to the piece, but neither are they entirely to the point. Part of the power of the pedagogical encounter that he staged at Tate is that it undid itself before it could be subjected to a direct critical analysis. Pope.L emptied the contents out from the form of the pedagogical encounter, and he kept a straight face as he stretched and bent the form until its purpose was not longer clearly discernible. What did I learn from his lecture? It is hard to point to a clearly identifiable unit of information or verifiable knowledge produced. According to the press release referred to above, Pope.L was not even speaking good Klingon. Rather, this performance developed a set of associations, feelings and predicaments that are not easily resolved, and that are anything but stupid.

And yet this illegitimate and unwelcome beast in the shadow of knowledge helps me frame a response to this set of unresolved issues that does not rely on knowledge's palliating powers, and that maintains the uncomfortable feelings that should be a part of a troubling of expertise's certainties.

THE ATLAS GROUP: PARANOID HISTORIES

Walid Raad's voice is calm and clear. As he speaks, I settle in and I am ready to listen, which is good because the lecture is an elegantly verbose affair. I am at the Kitchen, in Manhattan in 2006, at a performance-lecture connected to an exhibition titled *The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs: Documents from the Atlas Group Archive*. Speaking on behalf of the Atlas Group, Raad describes the group's mission 'to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon'.[212] These research projects might document the arcane betting habits of Beirut's Marxist historians during a season at the racetracks, or the experiences of the only Arab man held with Americans during the Lebanon hostage crisis in the 1980s. The evening I attend the lecture, I am particularly taken with a series of videos that claim to be footage taken from security cameras on the Comiche, a boardwalk in Beirut. For years, the unknown camera operator is said to have turned his camera every evening away from its

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[212] Walid Raad, *The Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs: Documents from the Atlas Group Archive*, The Kitchen, 2006.

surveillance duties and towards the sunset. We are shown a long, meditative montage, constructed from this (quote-unquote) footage.

The documents that Raad presents fall under three categories. He displays these categories on the screen during his neat and clear PowerPoint presentation:

> TYPE A: for files that contain documents that we produced and that we attribute to named imaginary individuals or organizations.
> TYPE FD: for files that contain documents that we produced and that we attribute to anonymous individuals or organizations.
> TYPE AGP: for files that contain documents that we produce and that we attribute to the Atlas Group.[213]

On one level, these categories help Raad to emphasize that the documents, while based in a real historical milieu, are constructed and fictional. The Atlas Group is a solo project undertaken by Raad himself, and he takes care to communicate that to the audience. However, Raad employs the language of the archive to present his constructed 'documents', purposefully shifting the emphasis of the construction. Raad is not presenting a fake archive but a real archive of fake documents. His performances themselves contain deceptions, such as audience plants who speak up during the question and answer period that inevitably ends each event.[214] The archivist is a fake. The archive is real, but it is filled with fake documents. It goes on. The multiple layers of fact, fiction, trust and deception trigger a sequence of suspicious questions – can I trust Raad

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[213] The Atlas Group, 'index', http://www.theatlasgroup.org/ [accessed 28 April, 2012].

[214] Lee Smith, 'Missing in Action: the Art of the Atlas Group/ Walid Raad', ArtForum (2003) Available at < http://artforum.com/inprint/issue=200302&id=4184> [accessed on 14 September, 2011].

now? What about now? This sensation – along with Raad's endlessly proliferating documents and the baroque systems of internal logic devised to contain them and relate them to one another – call to mind a particular type of non-knowledge: paranoia.

Perhaps because this paranoid feeling operates on me, an audience member, as a component in the legibility of the performance, I am reminded of the well-known debate about paranoia in literary theory spurred by queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. For Sedgwick, paranoia began as a useful object of criticism, which she later identified as a problematic mode of criticism. In her early work, she drew on paranoia as a structural element of systemic homophobia. [215] Later, in an essay titled 'Paranoid reading and reparative reading, or You're so vain, you probably think this introduction is about you', she proposed that paranoia had begun to structure critical analysis in a negative yet endemic way.[216] She asserted that the process of suspicion and revelation, which she dubbed 'paranoid reading', was making it all but impossible to read critically in any other mode. Once it becomes normative for criticism to operate as a process of confirming suspicion, not being suspicious comes to appear unforgivably, and dangerously, naïve.

Paranoid knowledge has a complicated, and certainly not simply

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[215] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991)

[216] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid reading and reparative reading, or, You're so paranoid, you probably think this introduction is about you', Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)

oppositional, relationship with truth-value. David Bell usefully summarises how Freud positioned paranoia as 'a caricature of a philosophical system'.[217] Bell describes the links thus:

> …both dwell upon fundamental problems of existence, give great attention to detail and argument, and are driven to the creation of systems of thought through urgent internal concerns.[218]

It is both through form and content that paranoia resemble philosophy, therefore, both in the subject of existence and the systematic way both paranoids and philosophers go about addressing them. I can't help but think of Raad's highly systematic filing systems, which, as André Lepecki points out, are based on an equally highly internal logic. 'What is the difference', Lepecki asks, 'between a document that the Atlas Group attributes to an "imaginary individual" and one that it attributes to itself, given that the Atlas Group is in itself, as we are told, "imaginary"?'[219] It is not, of course, that I am arguing that Raad is paranoid, but rather that he is drawing on a sophisticated understanding of the ways knowledge and non-knowledge can operate in parallel. Paranoia is a useful mechanism, then, for helping think one framework for these parallels.

Indeed paranoia may be partially characterized by the conviction that one does know – and the validity of that conviction may sometimes be beside the point. Sedgwick writes, 'I am saying that the main reasons for questioning

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[217] Sigmund Freud *Totem and Taboo*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 73.
[218] David Bell, *Paranoia: Ideas in Psychoanalysis* (Cambdridge: Icon Books, 2003), p. 10.
[219] André Lepecki, '"After All, This Terror Was Not Without Reason": Unfiled Notes on the Atlas Group Archive', *TDR* 50.3 (2006), p. 95

paranoid practices are other than the possibility that their suspicions can be delusional'.[220] In other words, paranoid critics might be correct in their suspicions, but the structure of suspicion-and-exposure is itself a problem. This structure is a problem because there is no guarantee, or indeed much evidence, that exposure will have an impact on the instances of oppression exposed. This position does seem, in some ways, counterintuitive. Surely it is of crucial importance not to remain silent in the face of systemic cruelty and violence. However, Sedgwick argues that there are multiple ways to speak up, and that, in fact, 'the hermeneutics of suspicion' that she criticizes in turn are responsible for silencing these other modes. She asserts that the monopoly of paranoid theory is a problem because it dictates the exclusion of pleasure and reform as modes of reading:

> What makes pleasure and amelioration so 'mere'? Only the exclusiveness of paranoia's faith in demystifying exposure: only its cruel and contemptuous assumption that the one thing lacking for global revolution, explosion of gender roles, or whatever, is people's (that is, other people's) having the painful effects of their oppression, poverty or deludedness sufficiently exacerbated to make the pain conscious (as if otherwise it wouldn't have been) and intolerable (as if intolerable situations were famous for generating excellent solutions).[221]

For Sedgwick, paranoid reading is arrogant in its assumption of a passive, deluded readership, which might otherwise labour under the assumption that all is well with the world. Among those for whom all is decidedly not well, recitation of the conditions of their suffering is neither useful nor is it news.

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[220] Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading', p. 8.
[221] Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading', p. 20.

How does a critique of paranoid reading relate to Raad's paranoid performance? Sedgwick's critique is situated in a very particular context – the popularization of deconstruction in academic literary theory – while Raad is dealing with the drastically different topic of the violence of war in Lebanon in the 1970s through the 1990s. If anything, it is my own initial response to the Atlas Group – gleeful intrigue about where and how Raad might be pulling one over on me – that belongs in the category of tired paranoia, rather than the project itself. Indeed, I will return to the question of audience that is, I think, at the heart of Raad's construction of paranoia as a form of non-knowledge that contributes to an understanding of the construction of history.

However, a closer look at one of the Atlas Group projects suggests a useful link with what I have discussed above. In footage of an Atlas Group lecture-performance at the Walker Center in 2007, Raad introduces the audience to Yussef Bitar, a state investigator and chief explosives expert for the Lebanese army, who, during the civil wars, would brief the press daily about the most recent car bombings. Raad describes the Atlas Group's interest in Bitar. He also says that Bitar would often confuse them (the pronoun Raad uses) with a particular journalist who followed Bitar in the 1980s. He was thus unable to provide answers to any questions beyond those he had already heard from this journalist. For instance, the Atlas Group could not learn why Bitar kept copies of every report he submitted during this period. Eventually, they came to believe that he was simply waiting for his day in court – the day he could present proof that the

original reports had been tampered with by politicians.

Inspired by Bitar's doggedness and conviction, the Atlas Group decided to create their own complete dossier of particular car bombings (the project is titled *My Neck Is Thinner than a Hair*). The investigation began 'arbitrarily – or as arbitrarily as anything can be with a car bomb that exploded in 1986 in east Beirut'. The caveat in that sentence is important, a clue perhaps; arbitrariness is relative and never free of context. Over the course of their investigations, the Atlas Group was able to discover the identities of some of the bombers. However, when they attempted to bring these identities to light, they were brushed off with 'you're not telling us anything new'. It was then, Raad claims, they realized their assumption that the confirmation of suspicions and revelation of the truth would change things was wrong, or at least profoundly limited. Raad says:

> What was shocking was not so much the fact that political players involved in the 1980s – and still shaping contemporary life in Lebanon – had been criminals, had been warlords who had ordered car bombs; this was not shocking at all. What seemed shocking was that fact that these car bombs, 3,600 of them had in fact altered time and space in these neighborhoods, in a way that was very difficult to intuit and detect, and it became our job to become sensitive to how spatio-temporal dimensions in these ghettos where car bombs had detonated, had altered and had remained intact thirty years after these detonations.[222]

The resonance of the Atlas Group project with Sedgwick's paranoid reading might emanate from this. For Sedgwick, paranoia is non-knowledge not because it fails to see the truth, but because it fails to see the point. Importantly, the point

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[222] Walker Centre, 'Artist Talk: Walid Raad | Walker Channel' http://channel.walkerart.org/play/artist-talk-walid-raad/ [accessed 14 September, 2011].

is situated in a context. The bombs investigated by the Atlas Group, in all their specific reality and violence, also speak to the reality of a period and a place. The fictional framework that allowed the investigation to take place is as true and as beside the point as the fact that the bombings are connected to powerful people – this, everyone already knows. Raad does not presume, however, as perhaps Sedwick does, that non-paranoid reading has the power to recuperate traumatic histories. Rather, Raad's practice is to attend to the 'spatio-temporal dimensions' that are produced by war in the urban political landscapes he investigates, and to the impacts of these dimensions on the lived and felt experiences of the people occupying them.

Part of the way Raad captures these dimensions is through the creation of instability within the archive. Like the Museum of Jurassic Technology, part of what's unsettling is not just that there are fictions in the Atlas Group archive, but that these fictions are signalled sometimes, but not all the time. It is the unpredictability, the shifting ground, rather than the hoax per se that disorientates, even as it also signals how the writing of history is a construction.

Indeed, Lepecki focuses his examination of the Atlas Group on the way Raad insists that the document never quite catches the historical moment. Lepecki draws on an entry in the archive the Raad called 'Missing Lebanese Wars' which shows a sequence of photographs taken at the finish line at the horse races in Beirut. These photos are always taken a few moments before or after the horse reaches the finish line. According to Raad, a group of Marxist

historians used to attend the horse races, and bet, not on which horse would win, but on how many centimetres before or beyond the finish line the photographer captured the horse. The professional historians not only accept that the document will always be in some ways inadequate, but use that fact as the basis for pleasure, and to make a new type of game.

Lepecki connects the Atlas Group projects to Walter Benjamin's work on historiogray, to show how re-thinking the position of material fragments of the past – and more, *using* these pieces like so many Marxist historians – can create a different understanding of temporality itself. He writes of 'the temporality of the event not as bound to its instantaneous eruption as signifier of decline or progress, but as a force field whose effect ripples across space and time. (92) Progress or decline are eschewed, then, in this system, for a more open and indeterminate idea of temporality. I argue, though, that Raad also usefully attends to the anxieties and the mental stress that an unstable relationship to truth can produce, or, perhaps better, how these anxieties are related to an unstable understanding of whom to trust.

Lepecki quotes Raad speaking about his use of the lecture form, and on the authority that attends it, suggesting that the lecture form is partially responsible for creating a micro-crisis of trust:

> I [...] always mention in exhibitions and lectures that the Atlas Group documents are ones that I produced and that I attribute to various imaginary individuals. But even this direct statement fails, in many instances, to make evident for readers or an audience the imaginary

nature of the Atlas Group and its documents. This confirms to me the weighty associations with authority and authenticity of certain modes of address (the lecture, the conference) and display (the white walls of a museum or gallery, vinyl text, the picture frame); modes that I choose to lean on and play with at the same time.[223]

Even though Raad explicitly alerts his audiences to the fictions in his projects, still the form that he uses generates doubt – not on whether to trust him, but actually whether *not* to trust him. Importantly, then, ripples of paranoia generated by the Atlas Group are not produced simply by the historian/author/authority. The audience participates in the production of both Raad's authority and in the production of the instability in his histories. Lepecki argues that one of Raad's critical successes with the project is that it:

> …reveals the fundamental role of the audience as a crucial accomplice in the production of the historian's authority—the audience as a partner in the historian's many forgeries, reveries, conscious or unconscious manipulations, political desires, ambitious poetics, and feverish archival drive'. (94)

In consciously playing with this authority (through the techniques of his staging and in the prestigious sites the work is presented) Raad:

> …displayed clearly how historiography is the primary discursive tool behind any desire to ideologically control current political discourses and actions—particularly when these take place in the context of open warfare. (94)

Ultimately, then, the Atlas Group is a project about power, and how the production of historical knowledge can be a tool for control. In creating paranoid, unstable, parallel systems of historical knowledge, Raad may not directly undo any of these controls, but he does show how they profoundly they affect the living

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[223] Alan Gilber, 'Walid Raad', *Bomb* (Fall), p. 40, quoted in André

participants of history.

AARON WILLIAMSON: CRITICAL WONDER

The projector is not working: an inevitable and inevitably cruel fact of public presentations. As Aaron Williamson speaks, the image behind him jerks and flickers. He is standing in the auditorium of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London, on the second day of a symposium on Art Writing, in 2009. Aaron Williamson is meant to be giving a presentation titled 'A language in search of its metalanguage'. Instead, visibly distressed with a red face and forehead gleaming with sweat, he is trying to get the projector to work. A technical assistant is running from the back of the auditorium to the front, then back again, without seeming to be able to understand, let alone fix the problem. The British Sign Language interpreter in the front row is less useful still. Williamson looks at her helplessly, and she simply tells him that technical assistance is outside her remit. The feeling in the room is pure tension, heightened by familiarity. The symphony of technical difficulties that has by now played out is unique only in quantity – the cringe-inducing failures onstage have their counterparts in countless other halls and auditoriums. It is the unrelenting barrage, coupled with a knee-jerk discomfort with watching a person with a disability struggle, which makes these minutes so excruciating. I wonder if I should intervene, and how. There are a few nervous giggles in the audience and I, slow on the uptake, condemn these insensitive monsters. It is several more minutes before the chaos tips into physical slapstick and I realize the joke is on me. This is a stunningly mimetic

performance of failure, a total success of a failure. Indeed, as Williamson deadpans in the Q&A at the end of the symposium, in terms of producing a virtuosic representation of failure, he 'rocked'.

I struggled at first trying to place this performance into my non-knowledge taxonomy. It seems like an exemplary case for my study in some ways. It is clear that the title of the piece, 'A language in search of its meta-language', is not arbitrary, even if it is also a cheeky play on the vagueness of academic language. The performance was a precise illustration of the role conceptual frames play in understanding. Williamson was operating at the edge of his own frame, highlighting it through his perceived failure to act within it: the performer or lecturer in a recognized space (the auditorium), with conventional manner (composure even in the face of glitches) and technical skill (the ability to operate electronic equipment or liaise with those who do). He was also touching on the frames that condition response to disability – how prepared is the audience to see a deaf person as helpless? There was also an embedded comment about performance itself – what are the frames that allow an audience to see something as a performance? The group consensus which gave the audience permission to laugh was a precisely calibrated meta-mechanism worked out by Williamson in collaboration with the technician and interpreter, and ultimately with the audience as well.

Strangely perhaps, then, the category in which I want to place this work is

the category of 'wonder'. I do not here refer to the wonder elaborated by Stephen

Greenblatt 'Resonance and Wonder' – the 'arresting' and 'exalted attention'

inspired by certain museum objects, which I discussed in Chapter 3. For

Greenblatt, wonder is the opposite of resonance, or 'the power of the displayed

object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world'.[224] In contrast,

wonder blots out this larger world by compressing attention entirely within the

object's formal boundaries. Greenblatt celebrates this type of attention, even as

he asserts that it is a historically constructed concept with resonance of its own.

I am more interested here in Sara Ahmed's formulation of wonder. The type

of wonder Ahmed might like to cherish and enhance has less to do with exalted

objects in a museum, and more to do with ordinary and familiar structures. She

begins her discussion of wonder with her own historicization, and then moves to

develop wonder as a recognition of history. Writing about Descartes' *The*

Passions of the Soul, she states:

> Wonder here seems premised on "first-ness": the object that appears
> before the subject is encountered for the first time, or as if for the first time.
> It is hence a departure from ordinary experience; or, by implication, the
> ordinary is not experienced or felt at all. We can relate this non-feeling of
> ordinariness to the feeling of comfort, as a feeling that one does not feel
> oneself.[225]

For Ahmed, ordinariness as non-feeling is a form of non-knowledge. It is the

privilege afforded to some not to be aware of their surroundings. Being jolted out

of that lack of awareness (a type of non-non-awareness), or even being aware of

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[224] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Resonance and Wonder', *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Levine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), p. 53.
[225] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, p. 179.

that lack of awareness, might be described as a particular type of wonder. For instance, in Queer Phenomenology, Ahmed describes the sensation of being part of the only lesbian couple in a restaurant filled with heterosexual couples. She states:

> Rather than just seeing the familiar, which of course means that it passes from view, I felt wonder and surprise at the regularity of its form, as the form of what arrived at the table, as forms that get repeated, again and again, until they are "forgotten" and simply become forms of life. To wonder is to remember the forgetting and to see the repetition of form as the "taking form" of the familiar. It is hard to know why it is that we can be "shocked" by what passes by us as familiar.[226]

Particularly interesting is this idea that wonder is defined as knowledge of the forgotten, as forgotten. The lack of awareness that is the ordinary or the familiar is informed by repetition, by the gradual mastery of an environment that comes from repeated, unchallenged exposure. The result – the reward – of this mastery is the forgetting of the environment.

Wonder, on the other hand, seems anathema to repetition. It is the experience of singularity and novelty. There is a problematic dimension to this, however. As Ahmed puts it:

> Does such an impulse to wonder require an erasure of history, by forgetting that one has seen the world before, or even that the world precedes the impulse to wonder? It could be assumed that the "as if" functions as a radical form of subjectivism, in which the subject forgets all that has taken place before a given moment of contemplation.[227]

This 'radical form of subjectivism' would in turn erase the possibility of action in

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[226] Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 83
[227] Ahmed, Cultural Politics, p. 180.

the world, as attention is absorbed completely in one's own absolutely present experience. The non-knowledge of wonder might subvert the non-knowledge of familiarity, as long as it doesn't subsume it. Wonder is an affective relation with political force only if it prompts an understanding of what has come before, or rather, a heightened affective experience of the coming-before-ness of the world. As Ahmed writes:

> I would suggest that wonder allows us to see the surfaces of the world as made, and as such wonder opens up rather than suspends historicity. Historicity is what is concealed by the transformation of the world into "the ordinary", into something that is already familiar or recognisable.[228]

Importantly, Ahmed's emphasis on the phrase "as if" suggests that political wonder might rely on a form of acting, or dramatization, an inverted suspension of disbelief where it is familiar or ordinary (and thus unthought-of) beliefs that are temporarily suspended. That temporary suspension might open the way for a rush of energy and motivation to change:

> This first-time-ness of wonder is not the radical present – a moment that is liveable only insofar as it is cut off from prior acts of perception. Rather, wonder involves the radicalisation of our relation to the past, which is transformed into that which lives and breathes in the present.[229]

Thus wonder as an affective relation could be marshaled into the cause of a politically inflected relationality itself.

Ahmed discusses wonder as a political practice with reference to the specific development of a feminist wonder. This is a type of wonder that is not

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[228] Ahmed, Cultural Politics, p. 180.
[229] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, p. 180.

just conducted with a feminist lens, but which allows us to think about feminism in a new way. Ahmed writes:

> What is striking about feminist wonder is that the critical gaze is not simply directed outside; rather, feminist wonder becomes wonder about the very forms of feminism that have emerged here or there. This critical wonder is about recognising that nothing in the world can be taken for granted, which includes the very political movements to which we are attached.[230]

Wonder allows a form of self-reflexivity which is not a celebration of the potential for personal self-development, but which helps to uncouple the way things are from the way things have always been and, most crucially, from the way things must always be. I suggest that Ahmed's feminist wonder might be termed, more broadly, critical wonder, and that it is a useful tool for thinking how this particular form of non-knowledge can operate in a variety of contexts, and especially in the context of performance.

For me, that moment of excess in Williamson's performance-lecture, when the barrage of technical difficulties became too much to believe, is what connects this work with Ahmed's critical wonder. Occurring at a different moment for different audience members, yet developing in response to others' reactions, this moment allowed the conceptual frames that Williamson had disrupted to slip back into place, but changed. As long as Williamson withheld any obvious delineation between choreography and accident, he organized a near-perfect representation of a failure of organization. Then he shifted from appearing like a

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[230] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, p. 182.

failure to appearing like the appearance of failure.

'Getting it', for me, constituted the instance of critical wonder – in the eye of this perfect storm of malfunction was a brilliant demonstration of how critical wonder might operate. It created a temporary, but absolutely vital and affective, suspension of belief in the ordinary or familiar, such as assumptions about the power relationship between a deaf person and interpreter or technical assistant, and about disability and 'helplessness'. This instant revealed as made (to use Ahmed's term) the embodied conventions (technological and communicative) that both enable and impede access to knowledge.

Much of Williamson's work operates as a conceptual response to the obstacles faced by the disabled community from the non-disabled community (or as, Williamson puts it, 'the temporarily non-disabled community'.[231] Williamson states that 'social perception' is the 'main disabling aspect' of his life, and he is thus a committed advocate for and explorer of 'the cause and philosophy of access'.[232] Access is both physical and conceptual (if it is possible to separate those two) – both stated and unspoken. It makes the world in that it constructs possibility. One of the most valuable experiences of critical wonder, then, would inspire understanding of the construction of access.

Williamson's work has elsewhere more explicitly addressed the connection between wonder and access. Much of this draws directly on the history and

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[231] Aaron Williamson and Marquard Smith, 'Performance, Disability, Humour and Being in Public', *Aaron Williamson: Performance/Video/Collaboration* (London: Live Art Development Agency and KIOSK, 2008), p. 9.

[232] Williamson and Smith, p. 13.

cultural mechanics of the medical marvel. For instance, in his solo performance *Obscure Display*, shown at the Victoria and Albert museum in 2000, Williamson's naked body is in a glass, Victorian-style display case, covered only by a fig leaf over his genitals. He proceeds to smear the glass with shaving cream, until all transparency is obscured. Then, using a plastic edge, he slowly clears small squares in the shaving cream, creating a set of frames across the case. He strikes a series of poses, the frames exposing specific sections of his naked body.

This work sets up a theme that Williamson often returns to: the disruption of scientific narratives of wholeness. Like familiarity, wholeness only appears as such when its frame is invisible, allowing the space of display to go uninterrupted and unmarked. The frame is present in its absence, remarkable for being unremarked upon. In Williamson's work, the fragment is not an incompleteness that must be repaired (the dominant medical notion of impairment) but refers to the shifting system of frames that can allow or bar access. In manipulating these frames in his work, Williamson produces, I argue, what might be called a critical wonder during which wholeness, familiarity and the ordinary can and must be redefined. In this instance, non-knowing is a verb, meaning to make the known surprising and the familiar new. This kind of non-knowledge is a non-knowledge that is ripe for action and connection, even if it is a close cousin to the type of wonder that is static and isolated. This non-knowledge is a failure to learn that rejects learning as a recapitulation of the world as it is and always has been. It is,

in fact, an unlearning of this world, and the unexamined assumptions it makes about capacity and access.

CONCLUSION

Through looking at a selection of projects that produce distinct experiences of non-knowledge, I have proposed the beginnings of a provisional taxonomy of non-knowledge affects. This taxonomy is purposefully not intended ever to exhaust the possibilities of non-knowledge, but rather to refer to its condition of multiplicity and constant change. Stupidity might be summarised as the refusal to attain depth. Paranoia might be characterised as a non-knowledge compelled constantly to undo and remake itself – to suspect, expose and return once again to suspicion. Wonder might be described as the unlearning of the known world. However, these summaries are inadequate to capture the various histories and politics of each term. I want here to emphasise here, rather, how each of these categories in my partial taxonomy operates differently, and contains its own problematic associations and distinct potentialities. As I stated in my introduction, it is crucial to think when the failure to learn might be productive or interventionist, and when it might be the product or act of exclusion or disenfranchisement. Insisting that non-knowledges operate differently and distinctly is perhaps an important first step to recognising how they might assist criticality and creativity.

I opened this chapter by asking how the failure to learn could be described. I will close with this answer: I don't know. Yet I suggest that a multiplicity of non-knowledges might be, and should be, identified and explored. Some of these

non-knowledges must be challenged and overcome. Some should be given the

freedom to flourish.

Chapter Five: We Need More Experts

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter and the next chapter, the question of borders becomes particularly urgent. This can mean the physical borders of national boundaries, as well as the immaterial and imagined borders that make up contemporary ideas about nationhood as such. These borders will be explicitly in play in this chapter, which focuses on the radical 'no borders' movement which challenges global immigration control. I also refer to borders that define expertise itself – who is in and who is out of it, and which skills constitute its proper behaviours. These borders have been questioned throughout, both by looking at a range of non-expert activities, and by looking at the way non-knowledge complicates what we might think of as expert activities. In the last two chapters, however, I want to think about how the borders of expertise might be addressed through modes of hyperbole and overidentification. How is 'everyone is an expert' a political statement? What sort of performance strategies might be employed in making this assertion?

In this chapter, I focus on a relatively short-lived project called *Everyone Is an Expert*, initiated in 2001 and continuing through 2002. The project involved the development of an interactive database (the 'Expertbase'), as well as two live performance installations. Like Gran Fury and the Critical Art Ensemble discussed in the first chapter, this project has explicitly activist intentions. In this case, the movement the project supports is the no-borders movement, which is a

radical immigrants' rights movement, which challenges the legitimacy of national

borders. Though *Everyone Is an Expert* is not longer functioning, it has very

much structured my thinking about the possibilities of approaching the politics of

expertise from a position of participation, to the point of hyperbole. It is also

particularly interesting as a time-piece reflecting a very specific period of thinking

around both the performative potential of the database and the radical value of

the Internet to promote inclusivity and participation. If thinking around these

issues has shifted in more recent years, still this project provides an important

opportunity to discuss how the politics of expertise frames complicated questions

about participation.

EVERYONE IS AN EXPERT

     I begin with an extended analysis of the language and presentation of the

Everyone Is an Expert project itself, in its manifestation as an online database,

and its appearance in two (very different) exhibition contexts. I will look at the

'Expertbase' website as it currently exists online – the database is now no longer

operational, and exists rather as a virtual artifact. Next, I will discuss the project's

presentation at the Make World festival in Munich in 2001, while also discussing

the ethos of the festival itself, in terms of technology and self-organization, radical

change and artistic intervention. Finally, I will discuss the controversy that

attended the project's second presentation at the 'biennale internazionale arte

giovane' ['international biennial of young art'] in Torino, Italy, in 2002.

     As mentioned above, Everyone Is an Expert includes an online database

component, called the Expertbase. The Expertbase website describes itself thus:

> Expertbase is a site for people with extraordinary skills. It's a site for people, who are not found in any commercial or official databases. A site for people, who are being ignored by vulgar headhunters and usually excluded from the labor market -- either because of their residence permit status or because of their origins, but in the last instance because of their unique abilities and singular qualifications. Expertbase is a site for people, who have gained expert knowledge on any field and who are willing to share these experiences with others.[233]

Importantly, then, 'expertise' is self-defined, though not necessarily self-generated. Everyone is an expert, if everyone decides to identify her/his own expertise.

The project underwent four manifestations. Again from the Expertbase website, these include 'Expertbase 0.7', which was an initial reaction to then Chancellor Schröder's call for more 'expert' immigrants to Germany in 2000. This reaction took the form of a printed newspaper which was distributed in the anti-racist bordercamp in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. The second manifestation, 'Expertbase 1.0', took the form of an installation at the 2001 Make World festival. Drawing on the aesthetic of an office, artist Shu Lea Cheang and photographer Armin Smailovic joined the team to reproduce a typical waiting room, where visitors watched for their number to appear on an LCD screen, and then entered details about their expertise. This was the impetus for the development of the online database, which continued to exist, no longer synched with the installation.

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[233] Expertbase, 'Homepage' <http://noborder.org/archive/www.expertbase.net/index.html> [accessed on 10 February 2010]

The Make World festival took its name from a programming command 'make world', which is 'used to completely update an operating system'. Bringing together 'scientists, theorists, artists and activists ' for a series of 'presentations, constructive conversations, reflection and debates', the festival aimed to produce an environment where 'expertism turns into ubiquitous networking, liberating infinite potentials and virtualities'.[234] The festival's self description situates it in the field of critical theory and art production, where a complex network of complicated ideas and realities is processed and managed. The language is optimistic about the potential for new technologies to fundamentally shift hierarchical relations of knowledge production. The 'network' is an energising principle, which has the potential to collectivise individuals and liberate controlled thinking.

The third manifestation of *Everyone Is an Expert*, 'Expertbase 1.3', ran into difficulties. Invited to install a larger scale project at the 'biennale internazionale arte giovane' ['international biennial of young art'] in Torino, Italy in 2002, the group found they had arrived in the city at the same time that new immigration legislation was being debated in Italy. According to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), this legislation, called the Bossi-Fini Law, was the implementation of campaign promises by the centre-right government newly in power. The law provided stricter restrictions and controls on non-EU migrants (e.g. requiring migrant labourers to provide

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[234] Make World Festival, 'Homepage' <http://www.makeworlds.org/1/index.html> [accessed 10 February 2010]

contracts from employers, with the provision that the migrant must return to the country of origin at the end of the contract.) Again, highly skilled workers were exempt from the new controls.[235]

According to the Expertbase participants, the organisers of the festival asked them to remove a phrase calling for the dismissal of the Bossi-Fini law from a newspaper and stickers they were distributing. When they refused, they were removed from the festival. The Expertbase team states that 'this episode also taught us to avoid being completely dependend [sic] on the infrastructure of future exibitions [sic]'.[236] They were able to contribute to a forum of the exhibition, however, and to attend a political demonstration against Bossi-Fini.

The final manifestation took the form of a van that toured Europe in 2003. The purpose was to recruit experts and to set up 'ad-hoc networking for multiple purposes ranging from a roaming webcasting unit to a mobile online- library; from a wireless discotheque to an open-source job-market; from internet workshops on wheels to event-coverage in real-time'.[237] Here, the 'network' is encouraged through the grassroots organising mixed with mobile communication technologies and social contact. Again, optimism and the sense that the act of bringing people together might result in unexpected and liberating possibilities is prominent.

There is a lot of talk about self-organisation and the user in the Expertbase.

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[235] Domenico Paparella and Vilma Rinolfi, 'New legislation regulates immigration' (2002) <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/09/feature/it0209103f.htm> [accessed 10 February 2010]

[236] 'Expertbase Homepage' <http://noborder.org/archive/www.expertbase.net/index.html>

[237] 'Make World Festival – Newspapers' <http://www.makeworlds.org/node/6> [accessed 10 February, 2010]

Usefully, however, much of this has to do with the user taking on the forms of technology, rather than simply producing 'user-generated content'. Shu Lea Cheang, the artist associated with Expertbase 1.0, states that she does not come from a computer programming background, but she views the use of technology in her work as the ability 'to walk around, to look for land-mines almost'. Because computer programming and database technology are such powerful tools for processing and managing complication, and because these tools are never neutral, the ability to understand and communicate in the language of technology is politically powerful. As Cheang says, 'I'm more of an inbetween agent... if I can talk to those programming people, to make an interface that is accessible for social use and public use - I become the agent to apply that technology.'[238] The in-betweeness that Cheang identifies relates to my previous discussions of the non-expert in earlier chapters. As the tools for producing information and communication technology became increasingly available to artists, questions about these tools' social function also became pressing.

So what models are necessary to think through *Everyone Is an Expert*? The project seems fairly straightforward: it consists primarily of a database platform that allows anyone to upload information detailing the skills and valuable experiences that make him or her an 'expert'. This information is searchable, and allows anyone else to draw on the expert's skills and experiences, should they be required, or desired. However, the genealogy of this category of work

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[238] 'Interview with Shu Lea Cheang', Neus Kraft, Neus Work archives <http://www.platoniq.net/nknw/slc.htm> [accessed 17 December, 2010]

and the history of the manifestations of the specific project are more complex, and they lead to broader issues connecting immigration, technology, and participation. I now want to look at some of these issues in more detail.

In the following, then, I will look at some of the background politics of *Everyone Is an Expert*. As I mentioned above, the project is directly related to the 'no borders' movement, a loose association of radical anti-racist activists who protest repressive immigration controls, largely in Europe and the USA, though also significantly in Canada and Australia. In the following, I will first briefly discuss some activities associated with this movement. Then, I will analyse a theoretical framework that directly articulates the stakes of the movement, as developed by immigration lawyer Steven Cohen. I will also look at the more general role of state sovereignty to discuss the broader philosophical framework of inclusion and exclusion that manifests in the practice of deportation, and then look at how activist intervention has challenged this framework.

BORDER POLITICS

Kein Mensch Ist Illegal

It would be problematic to assert a founder, or even singular founding moment, to the 'no borders' movement, but it is fair to say that since the late 1990s, activists worldwide have been participating in actions connected to this movement. Many of them organize around the slogan 'No one is illegal'. As Steven Cohen writes:

> Sometimes resistance is in the name. More and more the struggle against immigration control is taking place under the name of No One Is Illegal. This is the title of the newsletter of the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit in the UK. Even a cursory look at the internet shows groups of this name in Australia, Germany (Kein Mensch Ist Illegal), Spain (Niinguna Persona Es Illegal), Poland (Zaden Czlowick Nie Jest Nielegalny).[239]

He goes on to list: an August, 1999 anarchist demonstration in Lvov, Poland; the French sans papiers campaign; no-border camps at German, Czech and Polish borders; a June 2002 demonstration in Ottawa, Canada; and an Australian radical media group (SKA TV) video. All of these, and more, have been associated with the slogan 'No one is illegal'.[240]

The *Everyone Is an Expert* project was developed in part by people associated with the 'Kein Mensch Ist Illegal' event in 1997 at the 'Hybrid Workspace' program of Documenta X.[241] This event is held to be the first use of 'Kein Mensch Ist Illegal' as an organizing cry, and a point of connection for a network 'from the autonomous left as well as the church asylum movement, from refugee councils and the self-organisations of migrants'.[242] Documenta, a prestigious and highly institutionalised space, became a central gathering point for a much broader network of interests. As an instance of tactical organising, and the use of institutions as mechanisms for amplifying existing campaigns,

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[239] Steven Cohen, *No One Is Illegal: Asylum and Immigration Control, Past and Present* (Staffordshire: Trentham Books, Ltd. 2003), p. 17.

[240] Steven Cohen, No One Is Illegal: Asylum and Immigration Control, Past and Present (Staffordshire: Trentham Books, Ltd. 2003), p. 17.

[241] 'Mute Magazine – Hybrid Workspace', <http://www.metamute.org/node/6912> [accessed 3 February, 2010]

[242] 'Sans papier', < http://www.bok.net/pajol/international/kassel/grenze.en.html> [accessed 18 March 2013]

'Kein Mensch Ist Illegal' seems a successful example. The ongoing effects of the event are still felt, as chapters internationally continue to organise and fight.

This intersection between the art world and radical activist politics took place against the backdrop of what the 'Hybrid Workspace' website describes as 'the summer of content'.[243] In addition to 'Kein Mensch Ist Illegal', the Hybrid workspace also supported: a 'salon' series on the topic of memory; the 'Society for Old and New Media' rallying for the expanded allocation of bandwidth to the public sphere; a temporary webradio broadcast with twenty-four hours of programming; a meeting of the Tactical Media Network; and a focused programme on cyberfeminism by 'The Old Boys Network'. Over the 100 days of the Documenta festival, the Hybrid WorkSpace operated open to the public in one of the festival's exhibition spaces.

The Hybrid Workspace programme, then, seems like an attempt to politicise the explosion of information, and more, the inevitable capitalistic attempts to absorb this explosion, that occurred with the introduction of the Internet to a mainstream population. 'Content' takes on new significance when the mechanism for its distribution have become radically more accessible. As I have already suggested, there is an optimism and an urgency around data as a radical proposition that situates the Hybrid Workspace as well as *Everyone Is an Expert* in a particular time. This does not, I argue, make it any less interesting for an inquiry into the politics of expertise.

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[243] 'The Hybrid Workspace Archive', <http://www.medialounge.net/lounge/workspace/> [accessed 18 March, 2013]

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No One Is Illegal

I will now look more closely at the 'content' informing *Everyone Is an Expert*, specifically the politics of immigration control and their connection to expertise. In thinking through the background politics of the *Everyone Is an Expert* project, I have found the work of Steven Cohen – politically invested and polemical as it is – deeply useful. In his manifesto on the 'no borders' movement, Cohen, a lawyer and activist, argues that all immigration controls are fundamentally unjust, and yet so deeply at the core of political discourse, that changing them would require a fundamental shift in the ideology of contemporary nationhood. Cohen asserts that:

> Immigration law is unique. In every other area of law it is the deed that is unlawful. In immigration control it is the person who becomes illegal – an illegal, a pariah, a non-person. In this way the modern migrant, immigrant and refugee assumes and resumes the status of the medieval outlaw – outside of legal norms and beyond legal protection.[244]

Hence the organising cry of immigration activism: 'no one is illegal', the fact of a person's existence must not be criminalized.

Cohen takes a historical view on immigration law, arguing that while its ideals or so entrenched as to seem inevitable, it is actually a relatively recent are of the law. He indentifies the first immigration control in the UK as the 1905 Aliens Act, which operated, Cohen asserts, to exclude Jewish asylums seekers fleeing Austria. Thus not only has anti-immigration been quite recently legislated, its roots are tied up with bigotry, though the targets of bigotry shift with the times.

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[244] Cohen, p. 3.

Since 1905, Cohen argues, 'from the perspective of the Home Office the potential is always that everyone is illegal'.[245]

Of course, the UK is not the only nation to embrace the control of immigration. Since the late nineteenth century, immigration control has become an international norm. Importantly, of course, modern immigration legislation never aims to wholly seal national borders. Rather, it is based complex equations, with variables like demand for labour and the costs of domestic labour at their hearts. Cohen writes immigration controls, 'all other countries have them. In particular, all other capitalised, industrialised countries have them – not to exclude labour but to literally control labour in accordance with economic needs'.[246] Immigration as a question of expertise begins to emerge at this point, though I will elaborate on this later.

Having demonstrated that immigration control is both historical (i.e. not 'natural'), but also ubiquitous, Cohen goes on to argue for the impossibility of non-racist immigration controls. He quotes Sarah Spencer's *Strangers and Citizens*, published by Labour Party think-tank the Institute for Public Policy Research, which calls for 'non discriminatory, fair and clear' controls.[247] Cohen insists that non-discrimination and fairness are in contradiction with immigration control. He writes, 'as long as there are controls some will be excluded and

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[245] Cohen, p. 4.
[246] Cohen, p. 14.
[247] Sarah Spencer, Strangers and Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1994), p. 333 [quoted in Cohen, p. 48]

these some will be poor and impoverished, the colonised and neo- colonised workers from outside the imperialist heartlands'. He goes on to write that immigration controls, as the 'historic consequences of nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, fascism, welfarism, labourism', are connected to the determining factors which create a global class of the poor and impoverished. As such, 'controls cannot be stripped from their historic roots and somehow be sanitised and made racism-free'.[248] Immigration is necessarily an issue that evokes histories of inequality and exploitation. 'Neutral immigration law' is a contradiction in terms.

Importantly, Cohen distinguishes his position – freedom of movement for all human beings – from a libertarian position. 'The libertarian stance,' Cohen writes, 'is predicated not on the freedom of movement for workers, but on the freedom of both global and local capital to exploit migrating labour'. He emphasizes that the resistance to immigration controls is not just about right to entry, but also contests the link between immigration status and welfare entitlements. Thus:

> Freedom of movement would require the utmost protection of the workplace, welfare and social rights of migrating labour, for instance right to the minimum wage, right to health and safety, right to trade union organizations, right not to suffer discrimination and the right to full welfare – with the latter requiring the end of internal controls and breaking the link between migration and welfare.[249]

 While I am sympathetic to the position Cohen outlines, I am also aware of the difficulties faced by those attempting to assert this position. In the final chapter of his book, Cohen admits that the idea of 'No one is illegal' being voluntarily

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[248] Cohen, p. 48.
[249] Cohen, p. 254.

adopted in contemporary political discourse is almost literally unthinkable, so central to capitalist expansion is the control of labour, and controlled entitlement to welfare, gained through the control of the movement of labourers. Thus it is important to analyse the strategies for resistance that have developed within political and cultural discourse, to identify possibilities for re-thinking the imperative for secure national borders. Hopefully, in re-thinking how this 'security' is defined and achieved, there may be room for undoing some of the ugly human consequences that are currently unchecked.

I want to take a moment, then, to think about how contemporary understandings of statehood relies on immigration control, even as the power of the state is in a complicated relationship with corporations as multi- or transnational entities. This understanding helps frame expertise as a political question for the state. Are experts subject to control, or do they transcend questions of state sovereignty? What does it say about the state of *nationhood* when the parameters and definitions expertise move and shift?

Peter Nyer looks at the question of contemporary state sovereignty by considering the figure of the asylum seeker. Asylum seekers occupy a different position from, for instance, economic refugees seeking labour opportunities, a contentious category which can spark right-wing accusations of job theft by foreigners. This category has obvious consequences for thinking about expertise and immigration. Which immigrants are seen as a drain on economic resources and which are seen as beneficial has much to do with questions of perceived

'skill' and competence. These questions themselves may also cover up a variety of other questions of culture, assimilation, tradition and other dynamics that contribute to the 'imagined communities' that create ideas of nationhood (i.e. as developed by Benedict Anderson[250]).

The asylum seeker is a particularly emotionally potent category of immigrant. On the one hand, there is a sense that those seeking asylum may be more deserving, somehow, than immigrants who leave their countries for economic reasons. And yet, asylum seekers may also be seen as a threat to the integrity of national borders. The way nations deal with asylum seekers is often controversial, but Nyer argues that what is at stake is the very foundation of state sovereignty. For Nyer, the contemporary state uses the possibility of extending protection – and denying it – to asylum seekers in order to '(re)found its claim to monopolise the political'.[251] This '(re)founding' is not any less urgent, Nyer shows, in an age where global movement is the basis for economies. Indeed, under these conditions, security, control and exclusion have become the underlying logic of the so-called developed world, a logic which has only become more ingrained after 9/11 and other attacks, and in the face of increasing global economic insecurity.

Nyer understands the framework of wealthy nations' immigrant policy to be thus: the migrant is an object, albeit an object with particular, uncanny agencies –

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[250] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
[251] Peter Nyer, 'Abject Cosmopolitanism: The Politics of Protection in the Anti-Deportation Movement', *Third World Quarterly*, 24 (2003), p. 1069.

'unsavoury agency (ie they are identity-frauds, queuejumpers, people who under-mine consent in the polity)' and 'dangerous agency (ie they are criminals, terrorists,agentsof insecurity)'. In the face of these strange agencies (strange because objects do not usually 'act'), nations have adopted border control policies the severity of which have, Nyer claims, created an 'abject diaspora'.[252]

Abjection poses a particular difficulty for any understanding of clear-cut 'inside' and outside', however, because it describes that which is rejected but always (at least partly) still present. Nyer works to clarify how it might be possible to act politically from this position by asking:

> What are the possibilities and constraints that (dis)allow political activism by non- or quasi-citizens? For their agency to be recognised as legitimate and heard as political, does it require mediation from other citizen groups? Most importantly, what implications does the activism of abject migrants have for regimes of the political which operate on the assumption that such acts of agency are, in fact, impossible?[253]

Nyer addresses these questions by developing a concept of 'abject cosmopolitanism': cosmopolitan in reference to the concept of 'thinking and acting beyond the state',[254] and abject in recognition of the politically non-existent status of those to whom this concept is here applied, i.e. asylum seekers. Nyer uses the example of a group of Algerian refugees in Montreal, Quebec to assert an important dual point about this concept. This group, which calls itself Comité d'Action des Sans Status Algériens (CASS), successfully lobbied the Canadian

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[252] Nyer, p. 1070.
[253] Nyer, p. 1071.
[254] Nyer, p. 1073.

government to reconsider their deportation status in 2002. Nyer shows how such

an act of self- organization is a radical political move, stating that:

> When speechless victims begin to speak about the politics of protection, this has the effect of putting the political into question. This is what makes 'no one is illegal' such a radical proclamation. Our received traditions of the political require that some human beings be illegal. To say that no human is illegal is to call into question the entire architecture of sovereignty, all its borders, locks and doors, internal hierarchies, etc.[255]

The radicalism of the politics of abject cosmopolitanism extends beyond the

internal borders of a state, as well. 'To engage with deportation is not only to

engage with practices that are constitutive of citizenship, but also with practices

that are constitutive of a state-centric world order', Nyer writes.[256] Again, when

states perform their right to deport, they also reinforce their primacy, their

'monopoly' on the realm of the political as such. Thus, to engage deportation is to

petition for the right to participate in this realm.

However, Nyer shows how resilient the state-centric monopoly on the

political can be. He describes how his case study shows both a successful

petition on the part of asylum seekers, as well as a re-asserting of state power,

writing that: 'the CASS found that, while they received recognition by the

Canadian and Quebec governments, they were unsuccessful in defining the

conditions of this recognition'. The Canadian government created an amnesty

program which allowed refugees to apply for permanent residency status, as

immigrants. Importantly, this conflicted with the claim by CASS that they should

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[255] Nyer, p. 1089.
[256] Nyer, p. 1088.

be offered asylum on the basis of protection, not immigration. As one CASS member stated, 'We don't agree with this, because immigration is granted to people based on their job skills, their language skills. Should not speaking French or English mean you have less of a right not to be returned to a situation where you could be tortured and killed?'[257] So while the Canadian government allowed many people to remain in Montreal – the practical purpose of the lobby – it did so in a way that allowed the framework for evaluating political agency to remain the same. There was still a class of people who were politically speechless – refugees – and the Canadian government maintained this class by shunting one group out of that class into the politically recognized class of legal immigrant. In doing so, the Canadian government simultaneously re-asserted its own power as the body that structures political agency internally, and the power of the 'state' as sovereign in the international arena. Thus, Nyer writes, 'the radical takings of foreigners are always at risk of being deflected and absorbed by the non-democratic re-takings of sovereign power for the purposes of national and international (re)foundings'.[258]

Relevant to this thesis, the Canadian government defines the legal immigrant class on the basis of skill, and it is precisely this definition that CASS objected to in principle. In a framework where 'no one is illegal', particular skills should be irrelevant to a person's ability to seek protection from persecution. Under the current regime, however, the evocation of 'expertise' is a time-tested

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[257] Nyer, p. 1087.

[258] Nyer, p. 1090.

way to create borders that have a controlled porosity, creating flexibility on the part of nations to accommodate protest whilst maintaining sovereignty.

We Need More Experts

If the overarching ideology of statehood require that national borders are asserted through the act of denying some people the right to cross them, the specifics of this act are subject to often rapid change. In this section, I will discuss the shorter term historical and political context that prompted the developers of *Everyone Is an Expert*, looking also at why they chose their slogan as an evolution of the phrase 'No One Is Illegal'. I will show how this decision is a response to a very particular shift in immigration policy in Germany at the beginning of the 21st century, and more generally Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia at the same time. I will also show how the shifting nature of immigration policy is itself an object of critique and protest, as it produces conditions of precariousness even among the privileged within any one policy mood. I will also briefly examine the 2002 White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, which led to the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill in the UK as a way to situate *Everyone Is an Expert* in a particular time with particular policy imperatives.

Florian Schneider, one of the developers of *Everyone Is an Expert*, wrote in Mute Magazine, in 2002, that:

> At the February 2000 computer convention CEBIT in Hanover, after a quarter-century-long, loudly-trumpeted policy of zero migration, and with an increasingly brutal regime arrayed along EU borders, German Chancellor

Gerhard Schröder declared that an acute shortage in qualified personnel in the IT sector demanded a liberalisation of Germany's complicated laws on foreigners.[259]

He goes on to assert that this liberalisation had the knock-on effect of deepening the precariousness of the situation of migrant workers of all skill-levels and types in Germany, as 'other industries made claims for equal treatment, demanding the privilege of hiring temporary, low-wage employees from abroad'.[260] The complicated application of this shift in immigration policy, then, increased the possibility for some foreign workers to cross borders, but without an attendant shift in labour protections to accommodate the rights of these workers. (At least) three categories of migrants must be considered, then: those privileged few 'experts' whose skills are internationally respected and desired; those whose skills are economically necessary but not respected, and who therefore do not benefit from labour protections when their labour is recruited; and those whose skills are not economically necessary, and who are therefore excluded.

Germany was not the only country to enact such a policy shift around this period. Indeed, the close relationship between labour, immigration and global capital means that policy around immigration often has international echoes. The 2002 White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*, presented to Parliament in the UK, contains a similar tone to that of the German government recounted by Schneider. The foreword to the paper, by David Blunkett (then Home Secretary)

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[259] Florian Schneider, 'Knocking Holes in Fortress Europe', Mute Magazine (2002), <http://metamute.org> [accessed 18 December 2010].
[260] Schneider, 'Knocking Holes'

strikes a note of considered warmth and tolerance. He writes:

> In setting out a policy on citizenship, immigration and asylum it is this recognition of global movement, mass communication and the changing international situation that has to inform our thinking if we are determined to develop the type of society we all want to be part of... This means welcoming those who have a contribution to make to our country, offering refuge to those who have a well-founded fear of persecution and engaging those who seek citizenship so they can enjoy the full benefits of this status and understand the obligations that go with it.[261]

This opening, firm but kind, draws on a sort of fuzzy universalism ('the type of society we all want to be part of') to create the sense of uncontroversial reasonableness.

However, as Rosemary Sales argues, the attitude of inclusion generated in the White Paper is extended only partially, to those who 'by virtue of their skills or their ability to meet the strict criteria for refugee status' are considered deserving.[262] There is a proportionate rise in exclusion applied to those not considered deserving. In the guise of tolerance, then, immigration controls have become more severe. 'The boundaries of exclusion are... shifted,' writes Sales,' and made more impenetrable'.[263] The call for more experts can also shut down the rights of anyone who does not fit the precise niche to be filled.

Steven Cohen is even more condemning of *Secure Borders, Safe Havens*, while also noting its warmer tone. He compares the document with the 1998 White Paper *Fairer, Faster and Firmer*. The rhetoric of the earlier paper warns of

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[261] David Blunkett, 'Foreword', Secure Borders, Safe Havens: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain (presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, 2002), p. 4.

[262] Rosemary Sales, 'Secure Borders, Safe Havens: A Contradiction in Terms', Ethnic and Racial Studies, 28 (2005), p. 448.

[263] Sales, p. 448.

widespread abuse of the UK's immigration system. The 2002 paper, by contrast, claims that this abuse is a myth. To return to Blunkett's foreword, the secretary asserts that the document is intended in part, he writes:

> ...to expose the nonsense of the claim that people coming through the Channel Tunnel, or crossing in container lorries, constitutes an invasion when it patently demonstrates how difficult people are finding it to reach this country.[264]

Again, the driving attitude is New Labour reasonableness, against the (presumably opposition) hysteria about a system that Blunkett argues is working (insofar as it is making it difficult for people to reach the UK). Cohen, like Sales, shows how this note of evenhandedness conceals the increased intolerance in the document towards those not qualified under the new policy. He also vehemently objects to the way policy which affects the lives of immigrants can shift according to the demands of capital. He writes:

> So foreign labour is unwelcome when unneeded and recruited when required. This labour is no longer humanity but another form of disposable commodity. There is always a tension between the economic racists and the social racists. The former are prepared to tolerate foreign labour when economically necessary without wanting its presence. The latter don't want either the labour or the presence.[265]

The problem is not only that some are included and some are excluded, though this is the base of the issue. It is also that inclusion and exclusion are defined in ever-shifting terms, which requires critique and activism to be equally nimble. As terrorism and economic downturn increasingly dominate political discourse,

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[264] Blunkett, p. 3.
[265] Cohen, p. 252.

immigration policy will continue to shift, and those who were protected under earlier policies may find themselves less so. Indeed, since I started this thesis, international students, while sometimes prized for the income they bring to universities in the form of fees, are now facing increased obstacles to coming to the UK and increased monitoring once they are here. It will only become more important to think through models for objecting to repressive immigration policies.

It is this framework of the late 90s and early 2000s to which *Everyone Is an Expert* is responding. The complications of international border politics are reflected in the sprawling applications of the seemingly simple art project. Schneider writes of the project that:

> It is characterised by voluntary, self-determined associations, blurred relations, rich diversity, and a multiplicity of tactical and strategic contexts, all of which draw attention to the incalculable differences and holisms of all productive practice.

Everyone Is an Expert attempts multiplicity and flexibility in the face of uncertain times. The project's approach to terminology is one example of this. The phrase 'Everyone Is an Expert' is explicitly a response to the phrase 'No One Is Illegal'. Schneider writes that it 'updates the double negation' of the earlier phrase. Further, 'it's turning the latter's simplicity, redundancy, and necessary understatement into a political tactic of over-affirmation'.[266] Keenly attuned to the mechanics of policy language, *Everyone Is an Expert* actively pre-empts the capitalist and state-ist applications of this language.

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[266] Schneider, 'Knocking Holes'.

SOCIAL COMMITMENTS

Having discussed some of the political commitments that drove the development of *Everyone Is an Expert*, I want to turn my attention to the way in worked in the context of cultural production. Very little has been written about the project itself, so to help me find a framework for considering *Everyone Is an Expert* in these terms, I turn to an article about another artist group associated with 'Kein Mensch Ist Illegal', which has some useful results for the project here. The group, called Schleuser, plays on the aesthetics of a corporation (as, to a degree, does *Everyone Is an Expert)* with pointed satire. They claim to be an agency representing modern day coyotes – those who assist migrants to illegally cross borders. Ole Gram, the author of the article, writes:

> In their broad repertoire of activities, from the Web site to educational seminars and installation art, the collective behind Schleuser parodies the use of international marketing language and commodity aesthetics and thereby questions the shifting conditions and valences with which terms such as "mobility" and "security" are applied to the international flow of capital, goods, and people.[267]

Gram, asserts that Schleuser should be read through a Situationist framework. He draws on Guy Debord's critique of 'spectacle'[268], in which Debord posits a pathological relationship between alienated subjects and the increasingly mediatized cultural landscape, which precludes a direct engagement with reality and produces a disaffected, apolitical population. He also references actions by

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[267] Ole Gram, 'Escape Artists: Germany, Fortress Europe, and the Situationist Rescripting of Travel', Cultural Critique, 65 (2007), p. 190.
[268] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 3rd edn., trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994)

the French Situationist group in the 1960s aimed at disrupting the mechanisms of spectacle through 'hijacking, plagiarism, and a re-functioning of "spectacular" images with the intention of revealing and reversing the ideological function of its texts and images in the process'.[269] In other words, image-making was put to the task of un-making the distancing and alienating effects of images.

Schleuser is Situationism with a difference, however, Gram argues. Highly aware of the visual language of media and capitalist spectacle, still, as Gram writes, Schleuser 'recycle the Situationist device but largely discard the attendant anxieties surrounding the obfuscating powers of the "spectacle" in favor of a kind of preemptive embrace of capitalist sign production'.[270] In a sense, then, the sign production of capitalism is seen to exist as part of a common pool of language, and is no more the 'property' of capital.

Gram suggests that Schleuser are subject to, and to a degree help to resolve, a common tension experience by 'socially committed' art, as articulated by Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-garde*. This tension is between 'regressive iteration of the avant-garde impulse in the "happening" or submission to a seemingly irrelevant realm of art'.[271] The latter is obviously problematic insofar as it drains art practice of any critical efficacy whatsoever and frames the aesthetic realm in 'purely' formal terms. The former is problematic because it risks becoming 'citation and repetition of earlier critical artistic practices that have

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[269] Gram, p. 199.
[270] Gram, p. 199.

[271] Gram, p. 196.

already been fully defused, absorbed, and obfuscated by mass culture'. For

Gram, Schleuser resolve this tension with the production of another tension:

> The meaningful denotative "message" that risks disintegrating the "aesthetic" form is held in charged tension by a parodic type of expression that continuously threatens to destroy its political message.[272]

In other words, in their use of parody that never quite settles on a target,

Schleuser resist integration into either the purely formal or the crudely 'political'

by use of a message that is itself never comfortable in either realm.

For me, however, the risk of the degradation of the aesthetic realm is less

urgent. More than questioning *if* the project 'works' artistically or *whether* the

project is political, questions of *how* the project works within and through various

political frameworks and conditions make it interesting for this thesis. *Everyone Is*

an Expert is far less parodic than the Schleuser projects. In fact, it might almost

be characterized as quixotically sincere, (though perhaps the position of tongue

vis à vis cheek is not always necessarily clear). Nevertheless, it is similar in that it

uses image-making and the aesthetics of management. Moreover, it invests in

ideas of 'users', 'content' and the 'network' that were already part of a corporate

lexicon in 2001, and which would go on to dominate the development of web 2.0

and the ongoing capitalization of information and communication technologies.

The politics of immigration and the politics of technology and participation are in

tension in *Everyone Is an Expert*, and an opportunity to consider these tensions

makes the project at least worth thinking about.

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[272] Gram, p. 212.

CONCLUSION: PARTICIPATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

I have alluded to a framework of 'radical inclusivity' to understand *Everyone Is an Expert*, radical insofar as it produces conflict in the act of inclusion. Unlike a liberal position, which would aim for resolution within existing structures, or a position which would aim to abolish existing structures wholly – and thus perhaps remove itself from debate altogether – the 'radical' position I think *Everyone Is and Expert* occupied seeks to reveal, critique and ultimately affect systems by participating in them. Expertise is a valuable tool for this radical participation, as it is simultaneously an easily recognizable target, and a subtly pervasive assumption of exclusion. In making the proposition that 'everyone is an expert', however, the organisers seem to shatter its terms. If everyone is an expert, what meaning does expertise as unique and specialized knowledge have? Yet *Everyone Is and Expert* does not dismiss outright the possibility and value of specialized or unique knowledge. 'Everyone is an expert' becomes a radical proposition when it creates space for individuals without imposing a hierarchical order.

However, of course, *Everyone Is an Expert* is a failure on its own terms. 'Its use is its only value', states the project's self- description, a rather melancholy assertion when viewed on a dated, non-functioning webpage. This melancholy might also extend to the failed optimism of user-generated media and technology, and of the database as neutral facilitator for self-organisation. As well, since the development of *Everyone Is an Expert,* a critique has been

mounted on 'participation' within the cultural field. Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells* is a polemic against the way that art practice framed as 'social practice' is often also pitched as 'social work' without being measured by the criteria civil programmes are measured.[273] At the Tate Modern's *No Soul for Sale* show, Brooklyn-based arts and activist group Not an Alternative offered an installation made up of 'the padlocked façade of a foreclosed home', and act which both evokes the subprime mortgage crisis and, the group argues, 'demands we take an outsider's view, that we remain in a space of contemplation not engagement, and consider those excluded from the uncritical celebration of participation'.[274] All of these are, perhaps, welcome correctives to an unchecked enthusiasm for participation that does not consider how obstacles to participation operate.

Nevertheless, there is an audacity to *Everyone Is an Expert* that I think outpaces its short life. While it is certainly of its own specific time, nevertheless, I think it coordinates a set of problems around national borders, valued knowledges and the forms of intervention that cultural practices can take which are absolutely still in play.

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[273] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verson, 2012).
[274] 'The Limits of Participation', <http://notanalternative.com/blog/the-limits-of-participation> [accessed 22 February, 2013]

Chapter Six: The Expert in All of Us

INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues my investigation of inclusion as a strategy for working on the politics of expertise. I look at Bobby Baker's work on the gendered domestic sphere, as well as her engagement with the mental health professions. I also consider Rimini Protokoll's 'theatre of experts',[275] as they refer to their practice, specifically their *Call Cutta* and *Cargo Sofia*. In distinction to the *Everyone Is an Expert* project, this chapter looks at how these artists have targeted specific forms of labour that are undervalued and have presented these forms as 'expert'. Far from resulting in work that patronisingly speaks for marginalised professions, however, both Baker and Rimini Protokoll produce works that both call into question the materialities of labour and the structures of expertise itself.

Before beginning my analysis of Baker and Rimini Protokoll, I want to frame my analysis by explicitly considering some problems with a rhetoric of radical inclusion that have been implicit in my previous analyses. Earlier, I discussed the problematic neoliberal ideal that 'everyone is creative', citing Angela McRobbie's work in this area. To refresh, McRobbie is responding to rhetoric around the so-

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[275] 'Rimini Protokoll', <http://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/about.html>, [accessed 22 February, 2013]

called 'creative class' that began to circulate in the 1990s and 2000s. In the face of economies shifting from manufacturing to knowledge-based and service-orientated industries, and the concurrent deterioration of job stability and social benefits, this rhetoric champions the entrepreneurial individual who achieves through self-realisation, becoming his or her own agent and marketing department. If everyone could unlock their innate creative potential, they would be able to participate in a fulfilling, consumer- orientated, consumer lifestyle. McRobbie argues that seemingly radical empowerment of individuals is actually problematic individualisation, which – when not supported by structures of social security – is a recipe for economic precarity and social incohesion.[276] This is the ugly flip side to the dream of an open field that blurs the border between art and life, because social practice, just like art objects, becomes available to circulate in markets, and is subject to the structural alienation and exploitation that occur when profit is the defining logic of a society. Further, when collective life is abandoned for entrepreneurial individualism, the rhetoric of self-determination leaves little room for structural support for those whose 'creativity' is not compensated by a living wage.

I suggest, however, that the statement that everyone is an expert might offer opportunities for a subtly more critical position than 'everyone is creative', because of the inherent contradiction of its terms. It is a statement of horizontal

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[276] Angela McRobbie, "'Everyone Is Creative'" artists as new economy pioneers?', openDemocracy (29 August 2001), <http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/652> [accessed 14 March 2012]

inclusion in a field that is definitionally hierarchical. In other words, it is the specifically paradoxical relationship between inclusion on the one hand and the seemingly fundamental exclusiveness of expertise on the other that opens up possibilities for critique both about the hierarchical structure of expertise and the individualism of liberal ideology.

In using the term 'radical inclusivity' as I have above, I mean both a categorization of knowledge that includes a broad range of practices and subjectivities, and also a context wherein such a categorization is against the grain, counterintuitive, or in some other way beyond what may be perceived as conventional. The terms 'inside' and 'outside' will recur throughout this chapter. For both of the practices in this analysis, I will define the concrete parameters that designate 'inside' and 'outside' (for instance, in the case of Bobby Baker, both the mental health profession, and the status of the housewife provide fields for inclusion and exclusion). However, there are structural similarities between Baker's and Rimini Protokoll's practices that can be identified as related conceptual approaches to 'inside' and 'outside'.

In various ways, both negotiate the need for a critical, outsider perspective with an equally urgent call for participation. Inversely, each example demonstrates a tension between self-implication in exclusive structures, and rejection of the potentially paralyzing attitude towards progressive change such self-awareness might incur. These ambiguities make up the 'radical inclusivity' I am arguing for. I contrast this with a 'liberal inclusivity', which would work entirely

within existing structures to cast a wider net of inclusion, as well as perhaps 'revolutionary inclusivity', which would need to reject existing structures wholly.

So what do I mean by 'outside' and 'inside'? Inside of what? Kept out of where? There is a broad range of instances where this conflict emerges, and there are both philosophical and political consequences to staging this conflict. Even confining an investigation to how this conflict operates for theatre and performance gives an almost impossibly wide field to consider. In the *Everyone Is an Expert* project, the force of the work relied on a pragmatic universalism that nevertheless faced equally pragmatic difficulties – is the database really the best tool for communicating the message that economic competence should not dictate human value? For this chapter, I focus on how Baker's and Rimini Protokoll's practices focus on concrete, materially located examples and create situations where inside and outside are but into constant conflict and often contradiction – where one seems to undermine or negate the other, and vice versa. I argue that this flicker of contradiction is politically important because it allows material conditions and power dynamics to be addressed without resulting in stasis or isolation.

BOBBY BAKER

Inclusion ad absurdum

In this section, I will argue that Bobby Baker's use of sites, activities and roles traditionally marked female, and (therefore) not traditionally marked expert or professional, works to structure her version of 'radical inclusivity'. I will

consider the housewife in the kitchen, as portrayed in her performance *Kitchen Show*. I will also consider the housewife in the supermarket, as portrayed in her performance *How to Shop*. I will suggest that the very use of these sites in Baker's work both points to and unsettles the hierarchy of content for 'expert knowledge'. She shows that expertise is not a matter of abstract excellence, but is rather figured by specific social expectations. In other words, some activities are more 'expert' than others in the popular imagination.

I will also argue, however, that Baker does more than insist on the inclusion of the domestic labourer in the pantheon of exalted skilled workers and knowledge producers. Rather, she constructs a model of inclusion based on principles that operate differently the logic of excellence or 'expert knowledge', extending perhaps into the realm of the absurd. At the end of this section, I will consider the 'absurd expert' that emerges as a critique of possible absurdities of expertise.

Baker's *Kitchen Show* (1991) is one of her best-known and most written-about works. The piece was initially developed and performed in Baker's own kitchen. It went on to tour kitchens throughout the UK and worldwide. *Kitchen Show* involves Baker making 'one dozen kitchen actions public'.[277] Each action involves a 'mark' applied to Baker's body, and the final action (the thirteenth, creating a baker's/Baker's dozen) has Baker standing monumentally on a cake stand, displaying all twelve previous 'marks', in triumph.

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[277] For a schematic of this performance, see Bobby Baker, '13 Actions: Text', *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life*, ed. Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 164.

This work has provided the opportunity for many critics and feminist theorists to reflect on the seeming contradiction of public actions in the private kitchen. The kitchen has been constructed as the most private of spaces, not least, as Leslie Ferris points out, in theatre history. Ferris discusses how classical Greek drama constructed the 'public' is located outside the palace. The domestic interior is 'a hidden, secret space, an unknown and in many cases obscene world in which the woman is kept and contained'.[278] Violence happens in the house. 'Men discover in Greek tragedy that to enter the inside space is to put oneself in peril, as the fate of Agamemnon demonstrates'.[279] The public space is the space of representation, of reason, of knowledge. The private space is unknown and unknowable. To be kept inside is to be placed outside of discourse. From this perspective, opening the kitchen and 'kitchen action' to the public is a political act of inclusion. It makes the kitchen a space for knowledge and it makes the woman in the kitchen a subject of discourse.

For Janet Floyd, however, the modern kitchen is a 'private but altogether predictable space'.[280] In the consumer age, Floyd suggests, the private space became known, and the housewife targeted for persuasion in the form of advertisement, and management in the form of mental health care. The kitchen space, while still outside the public – now read as professional –sphere, nonetheless becomes a space in which to receive professional instruction, and

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[278] Leslie Ferris, ''Cooking Up the Self: Bobby Baker and Blondell Cummings "Do" the Kitchen', Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image Performance , Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 187.

[279] Ferris, p. 187.

[280] Janet Floyd, 'Coming Out of the Kitchen: Texts, Contexts and Debates', Cultural Geographies 10 (2004), p. 65.

the housewife is on the receiving end. Baker's actions can be seen as instructive. She speaks of the time when she began to do housework *seriously*, giving the audience assurance that they are receiving seasoned, insider knowledge.[281] Baker's position, then, might be seen as a form of reversal, where the housewife no longer receives professional instruction, but transmits it. Interestingly, however, Floyd goes on to analyse what might be termed the 'Nigella Lawson' phenomenon,[282] Increasingly, Floyd suggests, with the rise of cooking shows like Lawson's, the kitchen is becoming popularly seen as a site from which professional instruction is transmitted. Thus the simple reversal of housewife as receiver to housewife as producer of professional knowledge is not quite enough to produce a radical reworking of the concept of expertise.

In *How to Shop*, Baker takes on a more explicitly authoritative persona. In her introduction, she refers to sociological interest in the domestic arena, and she insists that she is an expert to whom attention must be paid.[283] The following performance becomes a severe lesson in, indeed, how to shop – somewhere between a cultural studies seminar and a Victorian lecture in self-improvement. Interestingly, it feels more extreme to provide instructions on how to shop than how to be in the kitchen. As explored above, the kitchen has become increasingly a place to and from where professional instruction may be transmitted. However, perhaps because of a more or less conscious

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[281] Daily Life Series: Kitchen Show, Bobby Baker, devised and performed, Polona Baloh Brown, co-dir., Carole Lamond, camera, (1991).

[282] Floyd, p. 66.

[283] Daily Life Series: How to Shop, Bobby Baker, devised and performed, Polona Baloh Brown, co-dir., Toby Oakes, camera, filmed at Regents College, London (1993)

naturalization of shopping, providing instruction on how to shop feels wrong. Shopping suddenly does not erupt spontaneously from merely untapped wells of desire, as establishments such as Marks & Spencer might prefer the shopper to believe.

This shop – the ubiquitous-in-London, multi-purpose grocery, clothing and household supply store – confines its explicit instructions to the financial transaction: queue in this direction, go to this till, hand over this amount, take your receipt. The rest of the textual communication is cheerful and indirect. From sweetly cajoling ('why not try one of our many other products?') to cutely self-sacrificing ('we've counted the calories so you don't have to') the aim is always to be helpful, but by appealing ultimately to an already existing, if unrealized, desire. You know you want to. You know you already want to. Even when the tone seems instruction ('eat three items of low fat dairy a day to strengthen your bones') Marks & Spencer never instructs the customer how to shop. Instructions on how to be healthy are provided.[284] The necessary items are made available. You know what to do.

So, in both *Kitchen Show* and *How to Shop* sites that have not traditionally been spaces for professional instruction become such spaces. However, I have suggested that this move also highlights complex determining and shifting factors that lead to the different spaces resonating in different ways. The kitchen has evolved from private and unknowable, to private but known, to increasingly represented in public. The supermarket is public but the semiotics of persuasion

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[284] Marks & Spencer, St. Pancras Station, London <visited 26 January, 2010>

in this site cause the shopper to feel her decisions are interior and self-determined.

Connecting the two sites in Baker's work is the absurd content of the instructions she provides. In *Kitchen Show*, Baker binds her right hand into the perfect shape for stirring tea, she attaches a wooden spoon to her hair in a slanted homage to a friend, and she applies margarine to her face. In *How to Shop*, she responds to a compulsion related to the voice of God by stuffing her mouth with a large tin can of sardines, and races up and down the aisles. These strange acts require a more complex reading of Baker's position on professional instruction.

In a recent publication surveying Baker's work, both Michèle Barrett and Adrian Heathfield discuss theories of the abject as a possible frame to think through Baker's work. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's development of the concept, Barrett writes, 'The abject is banished, but constantly beseeches; it is separate and loathsome: "Not me. Not that. But not nothing either."'[285] Abjection is a powerful tool for thinking a complicated situation of inside and outside: that which is rejected and yet never wholly got rid of. However, as Barrett notes, in Baker's work 'the abjection is always trumped'.[286] By this, it should not be assumed that Baker's performances resolve the tension of inside and outside. I suggest that the term 'absurd' might be a better way of thinking Baker's position on inside and

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[285] Michèle Barrett, 'The Armature of Reason', Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life, Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 13.

[286] Barrett, p. 15.

outside, particularly as regards the expert. As Baker states in an interview with

Heathfield:

> The absurd expert. Questioning the whole notion of there being a "true" authority and expertise. I am chipping away at those authority figures: the posturing that goes on in life. I can't say that I'm not a part of that, but I really object to it on quite a regular basis. Those people who invest themselves in these bodies of knowledge, and then strut around the world telling people how to live and what to do. I'm constantly fascinated by it: it isn't that I don't think they have valid things to say, or useful advice or skill or strategies or processes. I suppose it is a recurring infuriation with a lack of awareness that we're all just part of some giant hamster wheel. You know? I suppose I want to step outside and say "Look, this is all a bit of a joke really".[287]

It is the desire to step outside and laugh, while always understanding that she

'can't say that I'm not a part of that', that I'm interested in here, in Baker's work.

Indeed, the struggle to step outside coupled with an inability to step outside is

what makes Baker's 'inclusivity' radical. In the next part, I will continue this

analysis of the ambiguity of inside and outside in Baker's work, by examining her

use of pastiche combined with autobiographical material.

Don't Be Ridiculous
   While I have argued above that Baker creates an absurd persona in order to

critique the absurdity of expertise, it would be a mistake to view Baker's work as

a satire of expertise. There is an ambiguity in the artist's position with regard to

the object of critique that makes such a reading inadequate. Baker's strategy

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[287] Adrian Heathfield, 'Saying the Unsayable', Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life, Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 139.

with regard to persona prevents her from ever standing completely outside of the system she is representing. In the following section, I will discuss how Baker structures this ambiguity, and I will suggest wider questions of the 'outsider' with regard to Baker's 'radical inclusivity'. I assert that Baker's strategy is to collapse the separation between representation and identification that allows an audience to separate itself from even the most pointed critique.

In *How to Live*, the follow-up project to the Daily Life series, of which *Kitchen Show* and *How to Shop* were a part, Bobby Baker plays a 'clinical psychologist'. The quotation marks are firmly in place. In fact, these quotation marks form a sort of scaffold, propping up the structure of the piece, and connecting it to Baker's previous work, which nearly always draws on explicit pastiche of familiar sources. Interestingly, however, another recurring element of Baker's work is autobiographical information. 'Bobby Baker' is just as firmly quoted as anything else. In this section, I will analyze the example of *How to Live* in order to discuss the dual effect of pastiche and autobiography throughout Baker's practice. I assert that this duality signals and enacts a rich ambiguity between representation and identification.

Baker's psychologist in *How to Live* offers the viewer eleven steps toward self-improvement. The absurdities of self-help are in full force here. The music she uses ranges from perky violins, to cheerful electronic Muzak and folk-singing/chanting – all very educational and improving. The language she uses is equally glib. Baker introduces her 'program' by asserting that everyone has

capacity to reflect on oneself and change – but an expert is needed to help.[288] It is nearly impossible to pin down Baker's tone. It is almost, but never quite, sarcastic. She is too goofy. The situation is silly, but the jokes go on for too long, and end without a clear punch line. When Baker uses the patronizing language of self-empowerment, telling the audience that patients with personality disorders are the real experts, the language is undermined first by the fact that her 'patients' are small green peas, and second by the time and care she expends on these legumes.

However, as much as the self-help professions may be skewered, the performance always insists that 'Bobby Baker' is the character occupying the role being skewered. The simple act of naming herself creates a truly ambiguous situation. The sense described above, that the satire refuses to settle down, is underlined by Baker's insistence that she is making a joke at her own expense. Even further than this is the fact that she is drawing on her own experiences with Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) to inform the 'personality disorders' affecting the peas.[289] So is Bobby Baker a doctor or a green pea? Is she the satirist or the satirized? Interestingly, it is possible to read the pea as a small, vulnerable and rather silly piece of food, but also as the silent 'p' of psychologist, psychiatrist, etc. The pea itself is both present and absent, both patient and the part of the expert that is silent.

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[288] How to Live, Bobby Baker, devised and performed (2004)
[289] Jon Snow and John Daniel, 'How to Live', Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life, Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 248.

The autobiographical functions as 'almost real' in *How to Live*, uncanny more than confessional. 'Person A' is a recurring character who plagues the green peas. He has a habit of leaving jumpers in the kitchen in the morning, and he is skilled at controlling the narrative of a relationship. 'Communicate and don't give way', insists Doctor Baker. Baker's then long-term partner is called Andrew, of course. The closeness, the almost-but-not-quite of the representation makes it impossible for an audience member to wholly reject any of the characters in *How to Live*: Person A who was also a husband, the doctor who is also a pea. The ability to stand outside and represent is constantly undermined by the compulsion to identify.

Baker insists that she is a sceptic, who must 'explore things from the outside'.[290] Marina Warner draws attention to the political importance of this aspect of Baker's work in her essay 'The Rebel at the Heart of the Joker'. Paraphrasing the philosopher Gillian Rose, she writes, 'fascism... retains its hold when it is not faced and challenged through representation'.[291] We must model and hold up objectionable forms, no matter how uncomfortable that might make us, or how implicated in them we are. However, she continues later:

> The various comic modes on which Bobby Baker draws – stand-up patter, self-mockery, burlesque, clowning and pantomime – consist of different ways of acknowledging the state of abjection and making a virtue of it, which is a form of refusal, but not complete denial.[292]

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[290] Daniel, p. 248.
[291] Marina Warner, 'The Rebel at the Heart of the Joker', Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life, Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 97.
[292] Warner, p. 107.

This subtle differentiation between refusal and denial is key to an analysis of Baker's use of identification and representation. Refusal without denial is not only valuable but necessary if Baker is going to stage a form of resistance without denying her/self.

Thus, I assert that the ambiguity I have demonstrated leads to a politically useful position, situated alternately 'outside' and 'inside'. From this outside position of representation, satire and critique are possible. But as Baker's persona constantly slips in, the practice of identification enters the representational field. Self-implication joins critique, and equally, empathy joins satire. This duality is key to the notion of 'radical inclusivity' I am developing, and will recur in further analyses.

Expert Knowledge from 1 – Z

In the previous part, I discussed how Baker's performances are structured as interplay between representation and identification, between pastiche and autobiography. These forms are themselves structured with surprising consistency in the form of lists. Indeed, in *How to Shop* we are confronted with lists within lists. Arriving at the item 'How to know what you're shopping for' a shopping list appears, containing seven items, related to seven virtues. In the following section, I will consider how Baker's use of lists connects to her investigation of expertise, and that her particular methodology with regard to lists furthers the concept of 'radical inclusivity', drawing again on the duality of inside and outside that I have developed in the previous parts.

For Baker, lists are connected to work. Janet Floyd compares the actions in *Kitchen Show* to the labours of Hercules.[293] There is also, of course, the more contemporary, prosaic to-do list. The list is the mark of the professional. The completion of the list is the necessary act to achieve professional status. Baker's use of the list in this way automatically highlights the identity of domestic activity as labour, for instance with her use of the grocery list mentioned above.

Art historian Mignon Nixon proposes that list making in art can also signify emotional labour. Discussing Louise Bourgeois's work in psychoanalytic terms, Nixon draws on Freud's description of mourning. She writes:

> The work of mourning as Freud portrays it is an obsessive kind of listing. On the one hand are the memories and hopes bound up with the loved object. On the other hand are the satisfactions of reality. The mourner's task is to compile these two inventories and to work through them, sifting and sorting, removing and restoring – until even the energy necessary to mourning is dissipated. In the end, Freud suggests, the ego turns to the reality of the external world as much in exhaustion as in renewed desire.[294]

There are three important things to highlight in this concept. First, list-making frames mourning as an active process, as work. Second, the process of list-making doesn't come to an end with a balanced inventory. Rather, the work is complete when the list-maker can no longer list. An additional useful point occurs when Nixon goes on to note that in the work of Melanie Klein and others post-Freud, this mental labour can be applied to any 'emotional adversity'.[295]

Further, she details the problems and tensions around the specific 'adversity' of

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[293] Floyd, p. 65.
[294] Mignon Nixon, Fantastic Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2005), p. 141.
[295] Nixon, p. 156.

the 'maternal depressive position', emphasizing the taboo around theorizing any maternal ambiguity beyond support and nurture.

I will now apply these three points to Baker's work, and the concepts of expertise and radical inclusivity. As I mentioned above, Baker's lists are both professional work and expert instruction. However, they also recall emotional labour. The work of literally including these particular items on this particular list requires an emotional effort. Item number six on Baker's *How to Live* programme is 'make changes in your life so positive events will happen'.[296] She discusses doing small things to make one's life more pleasant, for instance, buying kitchen gadgets. However, the most pleasant small thing one can do, Baker insists, is to read the pleasant events list itself. As if surveying the fruits of her labour, Baker acknowledges the work of list-making as the work of returning to the external world.   However, despite the self-help trappings, the knowledge produced by Baker's list-making effort is not the positive, can-do knowledge of what it is possible to do. It is the knowledge of loss – of what it is possible to do without. Related to the second point made by Nixon, then, the ending of a typical Baker performance is usually literally a mess, and one can easily imagine that it is the performer's exhaustion of the space that puts a stop to the activity, rather than resolution.   Finally, regarding Klein's application of the mental labour of mourning to any 'emotional adversity', Baker's lists take on the taboo subject of the dissatisfied or emotionally traumatized maternal figure.

However, as useful as this framework might be for analyzing Baker's

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[296] Baker, How to Live

recurrent use of lists, it does miss an important piece of her strategy. While the lists are quite literal and structure the movement of the performance in a linear progression, the content of the lists are never straightforward. Baker's performances proceed in lists from 1 to 13 (*Kitchen Show),* or 1 to 11 (*How to Live*), but the content of those lists gives rise to non-linear associations. For example, in Kitchen Show the seventh action is 'picking up small pieces of food and putting them in my mouth'.[297] The mark is 'to put bright red lipstick on my puckered lips'. The relationship between the action and the mark is related thus:

I chose the mark for this action because of something that happened when I was little. We went to visit a friend of my mother's who had just had a baby. My mother went upstairs to see her friend and the baby in the bedroom. I went up too but they were embarrassed and annoyed at my interruption because she was breastfeeding. I saw the woman's nipple. It looked bright red like a cherry. I thought she'd put lipstick on it.[298]

It is neither necessary nor even predictable that a reflection on the act of grazing in the kitchen as an adult would give rise to a memory of a scene witnessed as a child. In this way, Baker's lists, rather than representing loss in fact recall excess. This is not to say that the details Baker uses to populate her associations are random. The figure of the breast-feeding mother is thematically consistent with Baker's concern with the duties of care the wife and mother figure has traditionally been called upon to perform. However, the process of arriving at

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[297] Bobby Baker, '13 Actions: Text', Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life, Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 168.
[298] Baker, '13 Actions: Text', p. 168.

these details operates beyond the logic of cause-and-effect.

Griselda Pollock suggests that this excess might operate on a 'network' model. She comments on another one of Baker's associations in *Kitchen Show*. Action number 2 is 'resting a wooden spoon on top of a saucepan'.   This is in response to a memory that occurs to Baker as she discusses how her mind wanders when she cooks. She remembers that a friend always places the wooden spoon she uses on the top of the saucepan lid, in order to avoid cooking the spoon. While Baker secretly does not object to cooking the spoon, she always imitates her friend. In homage, her mark for this action is to attach a wooden spoon to her hair. Pollock writes:

> The placing of the spoon on a saucepan lid is a reminder of a friendship, a network of mutual obsessions and shared tips and hints in the perpetual improvement and elaboration of cooking rituals that begin to have charm as tokens that pass between women, invested with memory and association.[299]

 Baker's use of lists and association recalls the same duality referred to in the earlier parts of this analysis. The quantitative structures of expertise are not wholly rejected. Rather they are used and repurposed, to include the qualitative associations of memory and relationships.

RIMINI PROTOKOLL

Feeling Inclusion
This section will consider *Cargo Sofia*, by Rimini Protokoll, in order to

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[299] Griselda Pollock, 'Kitchen Show', Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life, Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 181.

consider the group's use of the term 'expert' to apply to professions that may not traditionally be included in this category, and, more importantly, to the set of personal experiences and associations that attend the performance of these professions, rather than exclusively the knowledge and skill set required to execute them. I will examine how critical responses to this move have often attributed to Rimini Protokoll a badge of 'authenticity', emphasizing the 'reality' effect they produce. In particular, I will look in detail at a response to *Cargo Sofia* by Sara Brady in *TDR* in order to trace the usefulness of and limits to such a response. Next I will consider Rimini Protokoll as part of a tradition of 'documentary theatre' in Germany, to consider how their use of 'reality' differs from earlier, and even contemporaneous, practices. For this I will draw on work by Thomas Irner, also from *TDR*. Finally, I will assert that Rimini Protokoll are using a strategy, not of unmediated reality, but of 'making connection'. This assertion of the feeling of connectedness Rimini Protokoll produces will then set up the arguments in the following parts of this section.

Cargo Sofia takes place on a container truck. Audience members are given instructions on where to arrive, and then loaded into the truck bed where, instead of cargo, seats and a large screen are set up. The truck pulls out and the audience receives a tour, both of the city through which they are driving, and the route to the city as narrated by the drivers. These drivers are hired because of their previous experience as professional truck drivers, operating the route from Sofia, Bulgaria to various cities across Europe (hence the title of the

performance). The narrative is a mix of documentary information about the container shipping industry, and the personal experiences of the labourers who literally drive this industry.

Sara Brady responded to a performance of *Cargo Sofia* that took place in Dublin, as part of the 'We Are Here 2.0' festival in 2007. Writing about the ticket taker, the author states,' He doesn't appear to be an "actor"; he's not "on". He isn't reacting to audience members as they climb into the truck and his hands are not an actor's hands -– they are rough and worn from hard work. I'm intrigued – I wonder if he is a "real" truck driver.'[300] Emphasizing the 'reality' of the experience, and the novelty of non-actors in a theatre festival it is interesting that Brady highlights lack as a constitutive component of authenticity. The man is intriguing partly because of what he does not do – react to audience members in a way a professional actor would be trained to. Brady's analysis figures manual labour as more 'real' than the labour of professional actors, then. This is emphasized later. Brady notices, during a speech by a worker who discusses the technicalities of loading and unloading cargo, that the cargo ferry that delivers these good is itself visible on the port. The reality of the image creates an alienated experience of the speech. She writes, 'The cargo ferry docked nearby, however, dwarves the scale of the crane and containers: this is the reality of this performance – or

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[300] Sara Brady, 'Cargo Sofia: A Bulgarian Truck Ride through Dublin', TDR: The Drama Review 51
(2007), p. 163.

reality made into performance; this is "work" made strange.'[301]

In addition to figuring manual labour as real, Brady also works to analyse the attraction of this 'reality' effect. Discussing Rimini Protokoll's casting practices, Brady explains that, 'the group finds that the "experts" who express their interest in their projects – by responding to Rimini Protokoll's advertisements or otherwise coming in contact with the artists – offer ways into realities they and their audience might otherwise never know.'[302] I suggest that under these terms of analysis, reality is figured as something elusive, rare. Spectating 'authenticity' conjures a similar feeling that classically expert skill might do, athletic or musical, for instance. The response is, 'how did they do it?', which is another way of saying, 'I could never do that'. Rimini Protokoll's experts are impressive, in these terms, because the audience feels as separate from truck driving as they do from virtuosic piano playing.

Both of these frameworks for thinking Rimini Protokoll's experts have some problems. The first is perhaps ontologically strange. Surely, while truck driving is different in a multiplicity of ways from acting, both professions can be said to 'exist' in more or less the same measure. More importantly, manual labour-as-real risks romanticizing 'work' while simultaneously obscuring it. Work is that which is 'normally' invisible, beautiful in its quaint banality. It is somewhat unsettling to think that Rimini Protokoll's experts are beautiful because we do not normally look at them. This risks normalizing a 'we' and a 'they' and reducing an

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[301] Brady, p. 165.
[302] Brady, p. 164.

analysis of manual labour to uncritical tourism. The second framework simply

makes permanent and aesthetic the gap between audience member and expert –

in the same way that visiting a symphony orchestra will simply confirm most

people as non-virtuosi.

And yet, the first framework does pose something interesting. It might be

seen to suggest that 'reality' itself is that which is normally invisible. Only the

most elaborate of theatrical frames can represent the concept 'authenticity'. The

artifice of authenticity is usefully theorized by Brady. One of the more

spectacular moments of Cargo Sofia occurs after the audience has heard a

particular Bulgarian song for some time. All of a sudden, the truck turns and a

woman is visible on a traffic island. She appears to be singing the same song.

Brady writes of this moment that:

> The theatre of Cargo Sofia is in the imagining of fantasy – of reality
> rendered fantastic. We take in what we see in front of us and hear on our
> earphones – is this the music that Bulgarian drivers listen to on the road for
> 14 hours at a time? First we heard her, then, out of the blue, the voice in our
> imagination appeared – and with this came the sudden recognition that
> what you see is what your hear; a rupture of something true in a fleeting
> moment.[303]

Holding on to the notion that construction and mechanism are key to the 'reality

effect' in Cargo Sofia, it is now necessary to ask what other frameworks there

might be for thinking through the affect produced by Rimini Protokoll's theatre of

experts. Thomas Irner puts Rimini Protokoll in a tradition of practitioners from

Germany who have been concerned with 'documentary theatre' since the 1920s.

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[303] Brady, p. 165

Irner lays out a list of the techniques and aesthetics of documentary theatre:

> Historical documents are treated as the principle material for the stage; characters are seen as authentic protagonists from history; and quite often the forms of investigation – trial or factual reconstruction – are employed to confront the audience with the content.[304]

In the 1960s, this type of theatre was particularly valuable because it contributed 'to the repoliticization of a society that was still recuperating from the Nazi regime and its catastrophic consequences'.[305] Work by practitioners such as Peter Weiss created a forum for debates about topics which had no framework for public dialogue, such as rebuilding and the presence of Nazi elites. This type of theatre insisted on the possibility of an accurate public understanding of the past. Weiss and his contemporaries tasked themselves with a project of historiography. Indeed, Weiss writes, in his 'Notes on Documentary Theatre', that 'the documentary theatre stands for the alternative that reality, however inscrutable it may make itself appear to be, can be explained in every detail.'[306]

In contrast to the sixties incarnation, Germany's current documentary theatre (of which Irner considers Rimini Protokoll a part) 'focuses on unsolved problems of the present (not on the past)'.[307] When an artist tries to represent contemporary discourse, a key characteristic of that discourse is incoherence and contradiction – historiography happens later. So the problem becomes how to create a coherent and objective representation of incoherence and immersion.

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[304] Thomas Irner, 'A Search for New Realities: Documentary Theatre in Germany', TDR: The Drama Review 50 (2006), p. 17.
[305] Irner, p. 17.
[306] Peter Weiss, 'Notizen zum dokumentarischen Theatre', Manifeste europäschen Theaters: Grotowski bis Schleef, Joachim Fiebach, ed. (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, [1968] 2003), p. 73 (quoted by Irner, p. 18).
[307] Irner, p. 19.

Irner describes a new paradigm of the artist as researcher, where the body of materials has expanded beyond official documents to include media culture and the artists' own experiences.

Irner places Rimini Protokoll among relative contemporaries such as Hans-Werner Kroesinger and Roland Brus by emphasizing their 'research process'. He writes of the group, 'Here we find no auteur-director (like Kroesinger) or on-site director and researcher (like Brus), but artists who implement their research among the subjects themselves.'[308] He suggests the very act of connecting is the strategy, rather than necessarily producing an authentic product. I assert that this strategy produces the affect 'feeling inclusion', which is mistaken for unmediated reality or 'authenticity'. In the following part, I will further my argument that 'connection' is the key concept for understanding Rimini Protokoll, over 'reality'. I will suggest that the 'experts' Rimini Protokoll recruits are not so called because their experiences are more authentic, but because they participate in structures of contemporary connection. I will also point to instances where connection is not enough, or where it becomes itself an object of critique.

Critiquing Connection

If Rimini Protokoll's practice creates a 'feeling of inclusion' through the use of its 'theatre of experts', it is necessary to explore further the mechanisms and techniques the group uses to structure this theatre. Having explored a critical response to Cargo Sofia, and one genealogy of Rimini Protokoll in the tradition of

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[308] Irner, p. 25.

documentary theatre, it appears that 'connection' rather than 'authenticity' makes Rimini Protokoll's work distinct.   In the following, I will further examine how 'connection' operates in the staging of the production Call Cutta. Like Cargo Sofia, this production is unusual in the level of audience immersion produced. However, I suggest that the success of the performance does not rely on a direct production of lasting connection between audience member and performer. Rather, I assert that while this performance operates directly within systems structured by specific forms of connectivity, the call centre outsourced to India, it also stages a critique of these connections. There is thus a dual purpose (at least) in Call Cutta: critique of specific connections alongside structures for forming new types of connection.   This duality recalls the analysis in the previous section of this chapter, regarding the duality of 'inside' and 'outside' in the work of Bobby Baker.

Call Cutta is a mobile performance that pairs individual audience members with a call centre employee, located in India. The disembodied voice acts as a tour guide, as the audience member takes a walk based on instructions transmitted from miles away.   The narrator is alternately confessional and unreliable, as she/he reveals personal information, makes mistakes, and admits to previous lies.

As asserted in the previous chapter, the term 'expert' is applied by Rimini Protokoll in Cargo Sofia to refer to skills and knowledges pertaining to connection. In Call Cutta, the expert performers have knowledge and skills

pertaining to the drawing of connections, but they are also skilled at diverting connection. Call centre employees connect customers to a business, but also re-direct that connection. By participating in the performance, the audience member is encouraged to recognize her own participation in these systems. Much has been made of the feeling of personal connection that can occur between the call centre employees Rimini Protokoll hires, and the audience members they attract. However, what happens when that connection fails to occur? Is it a failure of the performance? I assert that, rather, it is an embodied critique of the system in which it participates. In order to make this assertion, I will consider work by Susan Leigh Foster in a recent collection on the changing body of technology, which uses *Call Cutta* as a case study.

In her chapter '"Where Are You Now?": Locating the Body in Contemporary Performance', Foster outlines the structures of bodily knowledge in three historical periods. She compares the worldview of those who came just before the development of the anatomical subject with the current worldview as it relates to 'mapping and orienting'.[309] Previous to the development of the anatomy theatre during the European Renaissance, Foster asserts that physical proximity was the basis for a complex code of relative status. In the Renaissance court, vertical hierarchies were performed on the horizontal plane of physical space. The closer to the highest rank one stood, the higher one stood in that ranking system. Foster states that:

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[309] Susan Leigh Foster, '"Where Are You Now?": Locating the Body in Contemporary Performance', Anatomy Live: Performance and the Operating Theatre, Maaike Bleeker, ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), p. 170.

> The Renaissance anatomy theatre, and the culture of dissection it represents, inaugurated new paradigms of subjectivity and corporeality. It helped to establish the body as a stable and consolidated entity capable of providing a singular perspective on the world. The inert and mute body of the corpse came to vivify the body as machine, the body that transported a perceiving and thinking subject.[310]

Thus, a new system of positionality developed, linked to an age of exploration and new cartography techniques. This system 'required a way of reading that privileged the single and stationary subject'.[311]

Since the development of locative technology (e.g. GPS or SatNav) cartography now 'helps to locate a map reader who is on the move'.[312] This is where Rimini Protokoll comes in. It could be said that mobile communication and satellite positioning technology have delivered us back to a time when relationality determines knowledge. After all, like in the Renaissance court, SatNav requires constant revision of coordinates. However, for Foster, several key skills are lacking in the contemporary model, 'including an ability to note one's own placement in space in relation to others and an ability to respond appropriately to the flux of all bodies' changing positions'. These skills have atrophied because 'cell phone technology... discourages an awareness of other bodies in space'.[313] As cell phone users respond to the inevitable 'where are you now', they perform disregard for the existing physical space around them. For

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[310] Foster, p. 169.
[311] Foster, p. 169.
[312] Foster, p. 169.
[313] Foster, p. 175

them, profit results not from performing well in front of each body with whom they come into contact but from multi-tasking so as to accomplish more contacts in a shorter length of time. These bodies, equally comfortable in stillness or motion, transporting themselves or being transported, have learned that the body's motion alone is no longer responsible for the changes in volume or vision that they experience. These bodies rely on apparatus to modulate physical changes such that they no longer correlate directly with sensory experience.[314]

Foster faults *Call Cutta* as a performance that 'evoked more than it critiqued the culture of digital surveillance in which we live today'.[315] She describes her discomfort with her narrator, who can never be the perfect source of information and guidance she claims to be. More than that, she can never fulfill the promise of perfect connection without emotional investment that is made by the service industry, generally, and seems to be made by Rimini Protokoll.

Indeed, this promise of connection does recur in Rimini Protokoll's promotional materials. An article in *Connect*, an art magazine from India, points out that the performers in *Call Cutta* 'have been encouraged to converse freely with the walkers, so that they may identify with them, and cultivate a friendship for the span of an hour.'[316] This is in contrast with other call centre employees, who must stick to a specific script. However, as Foster rightly points out, it is not only the scripted nature of call centre work that prevents connection. First, 'the system offers no way to acquire a history of familiarity, reliability, or favor, since

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[314] Foster, p. 175.
[315] Foster, p. 173.
[316] Uncredited author, 'Call Cutta', Connect: The Art News Magazine of India 10 (2005), p. 83.

each phone call routes to a different worker. These workers are interchangeable and completely anonymous within the social economy'.[317] Second, and perhaps more importantly, 'the assistant must pass as a member of the economy s/he is serving while remaining solicitous of all the customer's needs'.[318] While *Call Cutta* may be a relatively cushy employment opportunity, the fact that it exists in a theatrical context should not obscure the similarity of that context to the world of business.

Interestingly, however, it may be that the similarity between theatre and business is precisely the critical edge of *Call Cutta*. Rimini Protokoll is not immune to the obstacles that block connection and instrumentalise relationality. However, aware of their position 'inside the system', they create performances directly on top of that system. *Call Cutta* can feel uncomfortable because the outsourcing of labour has uncomfortable results. This critical edge does not mean that Rimini Protokoll are not sincerely attempting to facilitate connection, which may be why Foster categorizes the work as evoking rather than critiquing. However, it is important that the attempt at connection happens excessively within the existing contemporary framework of globalization. This framework is hostile to the connection Rimini Protokoll aims for, but it is also the framework that conditions how connection is figured in much contemporary discourse.

Foster concludes her piece with the call for a different type of 'theatre of experts'. This would be based on skilled improvisation that allows bodies to

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[317] Foster, p. 172.
[318] Foster, p. 171.

interact and define themselves relationally, in 'real' time and space.[319] The problem is that this would have to happen outside the contemporary knowledge paradigm, if it were to resemble the Renaissance courts Foster analyses, rather than an elaborate form of contact improvisation. Rimini Protokoll is operating in a paradigm where connection is figured in terms of electronic telecommunication and globalised business. The ground of their critique is circumscribed by these parameters. In an analysis of 'delegated' and 'outsourced' performance that uses Rimini Protokoll as a primary example, Nicholas Ridout writes:

> Far from being the paradigm of authentic self-expression, performance reveals itself as an exemplary commodity (it commodifies action, not just things) and as a site for a critique of its own commodifying processes.[320]

Thus, in this section, 'inside' and 'outside' are paradoxically situated in the same space: the contemporary globalised economy. The expert, then, is the figure that brings these positions together.

Collapse of the Material

Thus far, my analysis of Rimini Protokoll's contribution to the framework of 'radical inclusivity' that I am developing has focused on the performance event itself. My discussion of *Cargo Sofia* and *Call Cutta* has drawn from the structures of staging and the discourse of audience response to argue for an expert

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[319] Foster, p. 180.

[320] Nicholas Ridout, 'Performance in the Service Economy: Outsourcing and Delegation', Double Agent ed. Claire Bishop and Sylvia Tramontana (London, ICA 2008), p. 131

connectivity the group models, produces and critiques. However, this argument

can be furthered by a look at factors beyond the performance itself. 'Material

semiotics', as summarized and further developed by Ric Knowles in *Reading the*

Material Theatre, is a method of analysis that draws on the 'conditions of

production' and the 'conditions of reception' as well as the performance event as

it is constituted in discourse. This type of performance analysis 'understands

meaning to be produced in the theatre as a negotiation of these shifting and

mutually constitutive poles'. [italics original][321]

In the following, I will apply this method to the two performance events that I

have discussed so far. First, I will discuss the general outline of the methodology

as developed by Knowles. Then, I will analyze specific conditions of production

and reception that affect *Cargo Sofia* and *Call Cutta*. Finally, I will assert that

Rimini Protokoll consciously operates upon these conditions, as a structural

component of the 'performance itself'. This deft operation on the one hand

constitutes the expertise of the group – the collapse of production into reception

into performance requires virtuosic coordination and design. On the other hand,

it also makes possible the dual position I identified in the previous part – critique

along with positive articulation.

In the spirit of material analysis, I will now identify my own conditions of

reception of these performances, which is via the extensive documentation

available in the Live Art Development Agency's collection. This affects my

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[321] Ric Knowles, Reading the Material Theatre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 3.

reading in two ways that are worth articulating here. First, experiencing the work at a distance from the 'event' of the performance, I must use a performance text that has already been constituted in discourse. Second, having access to a range of materials that would not have been available to an audience member (for example, extensive international press coverage, production documents such as the group's tech rider, and video documentation that includes elements of the research process) colours my impression of the group's intentions. Neither factor makes my reading more or less valid, but each does situate the reading in the specific context of academic work with a stated conceptual agenda.

If the performance text of a production is usually self-evident, the process of identifying the conditions of production and reception can be less straightforward. An analysis of the conditions of production for *Cargo Sofia* must recognize that it requires a producing partner or partners, usually a festival.[322] However, the city must also have a specific infrastructure. It is useful to reproduce the Cargo Sofia-X tech rider in detail:

> Possible sites:
> - container terminal or harbor
> - hypermarket/wholesalers for vegetables or meat
> - truck-wash plant
> - freight forwarding business open and working at the time when the performances take place
> - depot or production hall, at-grade, entrance 4m high so one can enter by truck
> - truck parking place/motorway service area/parking for customers/where

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[322] Cargo Sofia has been produced by the Perspectives festival, in Saarbrücken, the Festival de Marseille, and the Festival de quartier d'été in Paris, among others. Rimini Protokoll – Cargo Sofia X <http://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/project_108.html> [accessed 28 January, 2010]

trucks stay overnight and drivers spend their spare time
- roundabout without traffic lights if possible, for the singer
- motorway
- starting point: easy to find and access for the audience, preferably not in the city centre because there could be traffic jams. Max 10 min. driving distance to one of the destinations above.
- endpoint: not necessarily the same as the starting point. Could be next to an area which is alive at night. Public transport should be available.[323]

Importantly, these site requirements can be fulfilled by a broad range of cities, insofar as they participate in international transport of goods. There is a beautiful redundancy here: a production about transport that can only happen in cities with the infrastructure for international transport. It just so happens that cities with the resources for a festival will likely have this infrastructure.

Conditions of reception are also defined by the festival setting. Interestingly, audience members are required to travel from usual festival venues in order to experience *Cargo Sofia*. This might partly emphasize that many audience members will have traveled to the city to begin with. The necessity for travel also provides expertise with a flipped dimension, similar to other moves by Rimini Protokoll with regards to expertise. The festival site is conventionally the site for a production of a certain type of expertise. As such, it is a destination site. Here, however, it becomes the site from which to depart.

Language is another element affected by the festival setting.   In the production of *Call Cutta* in Berlin, the walkers 'received instructions in English that was heavily laced with Indianisms, Hindi and Bengali phrases, and contained

[323] Rimini Protokoll Tech Rider [accessed at the Live Art Development Agency collection, London 2010]

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only a smattering of German'.[324] After all, English is the language of international

business, which means English becomes the necessary language for *Call Cutta*.

In a setting like a performance festival in Berlin, however, it is equally likely that

there will be a large number of English speakers present. Interestingly, Cargo

Sofia in Basel includes an offhand comment that troubles the notion of English as

the international language for all sectors of the global business circuits: the

driver's wife is Turkish, so he speaks Turkish, which means he can speak with

other drivers on the road. Turkish is an international language in this context.

Rimini Protokoll's placement in the 'festival circuit' opens it up to a criticism

of Knowles's, who states that there is a 'generalizing wash that can happen when

work is too often or for too long removed from the specificities of its context and

begins to develop a fuzzy universalism'.[325] He goes on to insist that:

> Theatre, as the most social and place-specific of the arts, brings with it the
> need for practitioners to take responsibilities for the work they present, and
> for its material consequences in its actual social and cultural context – the
> here and now that makes theatre and performance different from most other
> forms of cultural production.[326]

Putting aside the genre claims Knowles makes (is theatre necessarily the most

social and place-specific of the arts?), this statement opens the space for a

potentially useful observation. Here, now, for many people – and not only the

kind of people who attend European performance festivals – is profoundly

conditioned by the material mechanisms of globalization. The festivals that make

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[324] Uncredited author, 'Call Cutta', p. 84.
[325] Knowles, p. 89.
[326] Knowles, p. 89.

possible Rimini Protokoll's work both mirror the 'nomadism' of contemporary capital, and materially rely on its infrastructure, like global transport and outsourced customer service.

Knowles complains that '[festival-oriented] productions will tend to be admired for virtuosity, innovation or skill rather than discussed as cultural interventions with particular, grounded meanings for specific audiences'.[327] Rimini Protokoll feels like a direct response to this criticism. Indeed they are admired for skill and innovation – the truck with a massive screen is amazing, the singer that appears on a traffic island is so cool, etc. – but the content seems to trump these musings about form. The point is that Rimini Protokoll is hyper-aware of the conditions of production and reception of their work, to the degree that these elements are the content of the performance text. Where 'theatre' is the content of the work of some festival-oriented companies Knowles criticizes, the material conditions of the theatre, but not only of the theatre, are the content for Rimini Protokoll's work. Perhaps this collapse of conditions into content is what Helgard Haug means by 'dynamite' in the following statement:

> You can preach or you can perform pieces in which you find very important and sharp thoughts or exemplary definitions, and that is at a certain level helpful and good – on the other side, you can try and link the items to people and act upon reality in a concrete way, and *introduce reality as dynamite into such a space*. [Original italics][328]

Once again, this collapse indicates the same structure of duality I have

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[327] Knowles, p. 90.

[328] Helgard Haug', Rimini Protokoll website http://www.rimini-protokoll.de/artist_frontend.php?artist_id=3 [accessed 11 June 2007] [quoted in Brady, p. 165.]

analysed in all of the previous parts and sections. Rimini Protokoll contribute to a concept of 'radical inclusivity' not by a liberalizing act of including those who have not been included before, but by a structural act of collapsing 'inside' and 'outside'.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have shown how the Bobby Baker uses absurdity, pastiche, lists and associations to develop ambiguities among expert forms and content. Absurdity nuances the presence of the abject in Baker's performances. Rejection that is never complete is paired with laughter that is finally directed inward. For Baker, it is the expert and the structures that make us listen to the expert that needs to be rejected but not denied. The forms of expertise Baker represents in her pastiche are matched with the most personal content, which further reinforces the ambiguity between representation (form/critique) and identification (content/implication). Finally, Baker's lists that give way to associative tangents bring together mourning, professionalism, excess and the thematic content of female subjectivity. The forms of expertise, then, are re-purposed to deliver contradictory contents, and, in turn, these contents re-figure the forms.

I have shown how Rimini Protokoll collapses content and context, using expertise as the 'dynamite' that effects this explosion. I have demonstrated that the emphasis on the 'reality' or 'authenticity' produced by the group is understandable, but that 'connection' might be a more critically productive frame.

Further, I have shown that this principle is not based on abstract connection, but the connection that structures the contemporary globalised economy, an economy that relies on expert knowledge to function. Finally, I have shown that the more specific theatre economy that directly structures Rimini Protokoll's activity is a part of this larger global economy, and operates on similar principles. The value of the group's work, then, is in using the material realities within which they operate as the tools for constructing a critique.

Taken together, I argue that these two examples demonstrate a focus on specific material practices (domestic labour, international transport, call centre worker) that are not often included in the categories of 'skilled' or 'expert' labour. Both use these practices to press against the boundaries of inclusion that expertise can often imply, to help re-frame what might it be possible for the expert to do.

CONCLUSION

January, 2012

Professor Joe Kelleher of Roehampton University introduced artists Lin Hixson and Matthew Goulish with the proffered caveat that little, if any, introduction was needed for the crowd that had gathered at the Chelsea Theatre in London to watch *Word Butterfly: Notes toward essay as a theatrical form*. Hixson and Goulish's work with the performance group Goat Island is internationally recognised, and among a certain set of enthusiasts, they are superstars. These enthusiasts (myself included) were eager to see the new incarnation of Hixson and Goulish's collaboration – the newly formed Every house has a door – but they were also eager to see one another. Earlier in the downstairs lobby, I heard a number of different people exclaim things along the lines of: everyone is here! It was clear that in addition to the work that they do, Hixson and Goulish also function as significant figures in a community. This community may have constituted itself at least in part at the time of gathering in World's End Place (the appropriately dramatic street address of the Chelsea Theatre), and it defined itself in relation to this event, the event of watching two significant figures speak.

Kelleher contextualised this event by telling the audience (now a community) that Hixson and Goulish were completing a project at Roehampton University, which involved leading students in a workshop. He reflected on the types of activities these two artists had engaged in during this period – writing,

speaking and teaching. Hixson and Goulish are, among many other things, excellent teachers. Part of this excellence manifests through the structure they use in both student workshops and in the performance work that they make together (and with others): they make demands. Quite literally, Hixson and Goulish set tasks – mundane, whimsical and/or exacting tasks.

The evidence of this task-based process was on display in the following presentation. For example, a video was shown in which Goulish was tasked with jumping whilst wearing a pair of skis. Hixson had dictated the task precisely, included sequences of jumps and pauses in between. She had also informed Goulish that at a certain point the picture would fade to black, and the final jumps would not be visible but presented only through the sound that they made. At the final moment, however, Hixson had decided not to obscure the picture, compelled by curiosity about how Goulish's performance might change when he thought he would not be seen. This change was visible in the video. Where at the beginning Goulish's arm gestures as he prepares for the jump and the follows through are ornate, with little flourishes of the wrists, toward the end these subtle and perhaps un- or subconscious elaborations melt away and the movements seem to become peremptory.

I began to wonder which of these types of movements is the more theatrical? The first, more visually decorative, set of movements had the element of excess that is often associated with the dramatic or the theatrical. The second had more of a sense of being for the camera, or in a way removed from its own

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authenticity – a jump that is also a representation of a jump. I found myself admiring this elegant, and seemingly spontaneous, demonstration of two theatrical problems. Theatre is too much, and theatre is never enough. Theatre is showy excess, and theatre is at a distance from reality. This simple task of jumping became an argument for one of the defining contradictions that constitutes theatricality.

All of these elements – teaching, tasks, theatricality, complexity and narration – threaded through *Word Butterfly*. Hixson and Goulish sat at a table in front of laptop computers, alternating the speaking role. Hixson's sections dealt often with abstraction. She described the position of the teacher and the position of the beginner. Being able and allowed to speak implies the former, but agency and change necessitate the latter, Hixson told us. This attention to the structure of speech and the structure of action, and the connection between these structures and the dynamic of experts and non-experts helped demonstrate both Hixson's politics and her aesthetic. She discussed the essay form, and tried to imagine the shape of a theatrical essay. These imaginings landed somewhere in the space of contradiction, with Hixson proposing that a performance lecture that should not be a hybrid but should be a space where two items (lecture and performance) resist each other, alternate between one another and fail to get along. The space which holds these contradictory items, and the excess between them, is theatre, Hixson proposed. The theatrical essay, then, resists the traditional thesis-antithesis-synthesis essay form by refusing to synthesise.

Goulish's sections were more anecdotal. He gave us two long stories from his childhood – specifically from his days in primary school. The first was a story about show-and-tell (where students bring in items to show their classmates and stories to tell about these items). The second involved a school play (a dramatised scene from *Tom Sawyer*). In both, teaching and learning were entwined with theatricality, and theatricality had a complex relation to inside and outside, or more precisely, the experience of feeling inside and feeling outside. In the show-and-tell anecdote, a student whose family was not able to afford the kind of items that were being displayed by other students instead stood up and recounted in detail an episode from the television series Batman. Goulish's classmate forged a position for himself in the community of school by claiming ownership over a memory (the memory of the episode of Batman) by standing in front of an audience and speaking it aloud, when that memory was properly communal (everyone else had already seen this episode). The theatre of show-and-tell became a theatre of expertise which was only allowed because it wastheatre. In any other circumstance, episodes of Batman do not belong to people as objects.

In the anecdote of the school play, Goulish was cast as the narrator. When the version of Tom Sawyer came to be performed, Goulish's clearly audible speaking style as narrator contrasted with the chaotic performing style of the other young actors who played the parts without speaking, instead tumbling about onstage. Goulish pointed to the contrast of lucid narration and opaque

enactment in evidence onstage in the school building. This anecdote was another argument for the key contradiction in theatricality of too much, and never enough. Wholly invested in the play of *Tom Sawyer*, the characters were too much inside the action to be able to communicate it. Meanwhile, Goulish, communicating perfectly clearly, was able to do so by virtue of standing at a distance, outside the play. These elements, never reconcilable but always in tension, remain at the core of the performance work Hixson and Goulish produce. Importantly, Goulish told of a moment after the performance's end when one of the actors is compelled to rehash everything that happened onstage with Goulish. The boy intuitively understands that Goulish, in his role as narrator – both part of the play and able to observe it from the outside – is the perfect, and perhaps only possible, listener for this story.

Abstract and personal, observer and participant, making demands and then wondering at the outcomes – these elements structure the performance work Hixson and Goulish make, and it is also, I suspect, their particular way of bringing these elements into their pedagogy that makes them both excellent teachers. I argue that Hixson and Goulish hold a position of a particular type of expertise in the community that forms around them. They are expert theatre makers, but they are also theatrical experts. As part of this conclusion, I want to take some time to think through what this might mean.

RETURN

I began this thesis by sharing the motivation behind this project. It was a

conjunction of personal interests and recognition of external trends in performance. I found myself increasingly interested in knowledge production, and I found myself noticing that artists – and particularly performing artists – were making work in, around and against knowledge production. No doubt my interest and my notice were mutually reinforcing.

One potential problem with writing about contemporary work – work that is happening around me as I write about it – is the possibility of getting caught up in fads and fashions. On the one hand, I do in fact think that the idea of fads and fashions can be vibrant and interesting. On the other hand, it is important to maintain an awareness of the biases and oppressive hierarchies that attend the contemporary art and performance worlds, and which condition what becomes fashionable. In my introduction I stated that the central driving thesis of this project is that the contemporary dynamic between expertise, power and knowledge must be problematised, and that performance is particularly equipped to do such problematising. This is not least because the dynamic between expertise, power and knowledge plays out in particular ways in every context in which performance practitioners find themselves. This dynamic feeds trends, and it is up to the artists to do the work of problematising, to avoid reiterating the problems that have come before. This process as I have seen it is fundamentally complex. I have looked for artists who take difficult positions with relation to expertise – artists who do not necessarily reject the value of specialist knowledge, for instance, but who question how and where specialist knowledge

comes into being, and the access or barriers to access that it produces.

In this thesis, I have outlined three areas where I argue artists have done significant work to do this problematising. I have chosen to focus on these areas in large part because of the scope they give for dealing with complexity. In looking at non-experts within expert spaces (using the laboratory as a crucial contemporary example of an expert space) I have shown artists dealing with the complexity of empiricism, universality and determinism as these concepts affect multiple, subjective and contingent bodies. In looking at the ways artists have used forms of expertise to produce or consider non-knowledge, I have shown them dealing with the complexity of absence and affect as components of knowledge. Finally, in looking at radical inclusivity, I have shown artists making complex negotiations with insides and outsides. It is not enough that these artists have been dealing with complexity, either. I have argued that in these dealings often there emerge challenges and refigurations which have consequences for performance at least, and often for much wider contexts.

CONTEXT

It has been important, then, to insist as well for the significance of context for the problematising of expertise in performance. I want here to list the range of institutional spaces and forms I have covered, not to suggest that I have been exhaustive, but to show the variety of spaces in which the conjunction of performance and expertise is occurring. When I suggest that performance practitioners must problematise expertise because expertise is a problem for

performance that does not mean that such practices must become insular or territorial.

I said above that I looked at 'the laboratory' as an example of an expert space, when I should have said that I looked at 'laboratories'. I have considered a variety of different laboratories, developed for experimentation with genetics, cell tissue, environmental science, pharmacology, chemistry and the engineering of weapons. I have focused on artists who directly engage with the variety and complexity of scientific inquiry, and the specific conventions, dynamics and unspoken rules that give the lie to the idea that the establishment of scientific fact is a straightforward or transparent undertaking. Beginning to understand these performative networks of behaviour is crucial to any re-thinking of access or influence in laboratory spaces and the political and economic spaces they interact with.

Another of the important spaces of expertise I have considered is the space where expertise is developed or transmitted. I considered pedagogy in a variety of ways, from arts education – both in schools and as a component of professional institutions (education programmes at museums, including symposia and lectures by artists) – to alternative and experimental pedagogy, to teaching-as-art and variations of the form of the lecture as performance. The space of pedagogy can be the space were hierarchies are enforced and access becomes segmented, but it can also be a space where expertise has not yet been settled, and where there is space for re-figuring.

Crucial to all of these spaces have been the forms of labour that support, maintain and produce them, from domestic labour to manual labour to affective and service orientated work. Clearly the distinctions that are made between skilled and unskilled labour are significant to an investigation of the politics of expertise, but just as important to this investigation have been the various movements these distinctions enable or restrict, whether it is the outsourcing of labour or the deportation of certain types of labouring bodies. As ideas of expertise shift and change, so, too, do the hospitality and hostility of spaces.

ALTERNATIVE PATHS

There have been, of course, many more possible routes that I have not taken, some of which I hope to pursue as the research begun in this thesis develops. Two major avenues that I have hardly explored include physical expertise (or virtuosity) and the relationship between expertise and management. While virtuosity and its relationship to cultural conditions surrounding metrics and ideas of 'excellence' would be both timely and interesting,[329] nevertheless, a critical cultural analysis of the mechanisms and contexts of virtuosity lies outside of the scope for this thesis. As well, the role of management for certain types performance, particularly in the business sector, has become increasingly a topic for performance studies scholars. Again, however, as this thesis focused on the way artists have worked to challenge the terms of expertise through uses of contradiction and paradox, this was not the space for an in-depth study of the

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[329] See, for instance, Brian McMaster, *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgment* (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2008).

way behaviours are managed by experts.

Another overlooked avenue of inquiry in this thesis might deal explicitly with questions of technology and technique. Richard Sennett's work on craft, for instance, might be a resource for thinking through the cultural consequences of technology, and the role of those who create the tools of technology forproducing understanding of these consequences. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's work, Sennett acknowledges the often-brutal consequences of technological ingenuity. He figures Arendt's take on the Cuban Missile Crisis, for instance, as a warning about the dangers of curiosity. He discusses Robert Oppenheimer as the emblem of an expert who let things get out of control and then asks, 'If the experts cannot make sense of their work, what of the public?'[330] The answer, for Hannah Arendt, was public dialogue about technological progress. Through the process of dialogue, the public will learn to deal responsibly and in humane ways with the tools that are developed by humans. Sennett summarises Arendt's position thus: 'In this public realm, through debate, people ought to decide which technologies should be encouraged and which repressed'.[331]

Sennett has a different take on the relationship of technology to the public, which has to do with his understanding of technique. For Sennett, it is necessary that 'thinking and feeling are contained within the process of making',[332] and thus, that public understanding of technology does not have to develop in an arena

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[330] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), p. 4.
[331] Sennett, p. 5.
[332] Sennett, p. 7.

that is separate from the making of technology. This is possible because there is no reason that technique, or expertise, should be far out of the reach of almost everyone:

> We share in common and in roughly equal measure the raw abilities that allow us to become good craftsmen; it is the motivation and aspiration for quality that takes people along different paths in their lives. Social conditions shape these motivations.[333]

For Sennett, then, it is the job of the cultural critic to work out what social conditions shape motivation, and how they can be changed so that a greater proportion of the public can participate significantly in the development of technology and the development of understanding of the consequences of technology. It is a programme of liberal reform, which has at its heart a commitment to 'an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake'.[334] My investments have been somewhat different in this thesis. I have been arguing for the need to complicate basic and enduring things, and to think through the consequences – and the possible value – of not doing a job well.

Throughout this thesis, I have argue for the value of performance, and particularly, for theatricality in doing this kind of work. I want to take some time in this conclusion to make a final pitch for the importance of thinking expertise with

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[333] Sennett, p. 241.
[334] Sennett, p. 9.

theatricality.

THEATRICALITY AND EXPERTISE

It is clear that knowledge, and particularly expert knowledge, performs. To use Jon McKenzie's outline of the three 'performance paradigms',[335] it can be efficacious, efficient and effective. Moreover, expertise helps set the guidelines for what constitutes efficacious, efficient and effective performance. Expert policy makers establish social goals for efficacious arts programmes, expert managers and consultants develop behaviour guidelines for efficient business performance and expert technologists design tests to measure the effectiveness of machines. Much work has been done to show how performance is a valuable concept for thinking through this variety of functions (and indeed, for thinking through functionality as such). This thesis, however, has often been concerned with instances where expertise does not function, or functions in contradictory and paradoxical ways. I have argued for the importance of non-expertise and non-knowledge, asserting as well that these need not be thought as opposed to expertise and knowledge, but that they interact in complex and various ways with expertise in knowledge. I have also investigated instances where a seeming defining characteristic of expertise – its exclusivity and hierarchical structure – has been turned inside out. One of the key ways I have thought of this non-functioning or paradoxically functioning expertise is to think about it as theatrical.

In recent years, many performance studies scholars have been (re)turning

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[335] Jon McKenzie, *Perform – or Else* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 27.

to theatricality as a rich analytical tool. In the far-reaching Theatricality, Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlethwait attempt to rigourously both historicise and theorise the concept from a range of examples and perspectives. They acknowledge that the task is both difficult and crucial because of theatricality's power as a descriptive term, that is 'yet often open-ended and even contradictory in its associative implications'. While they are nervous that a too-broad or unreflective application of the term can render it meaningless, nonetheless they acknowledge that 'it offers, at least potentially, a protean flexibility that lends richness to both historical study and theoretical analysis'.[336]

For Marvin Carlson, theatricality is a way of thinking the value of some of the reasons theatre has been criticized – e.g. 'that it is artificial, removed from everyday life, exaggerated, extreme, flamboyant, distracting' – even if this does lead Carlson to a slightly uncritical argument for theatre as 'celebrative expression of human potential'.[337] Rebecca Schneider more forcefully argues for the importance of theatricality for a re-thinking of performance studies, because it allows her to argue for the value of the field's 'hollowness, its (in)capacity, its necessary infelicity' [original emphasis].[338] In Schneider's view, new work on theatricality offers an opportunity for a form of scholarship that takes seriously 'what failure does, how infelicity succeeds, and what ambivalence achieves'

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[336] Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlethwait, 'Introduction', *Theatricality*, ed. by Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlethwait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 4.
[337] Marvin Carlson, 'The Resistance to Theatricality', *SubStance* 31.2/3 (2002), p. 249.
[338] Rebecca Schneider, 'Intermediality, Infelicity and Scholarship on the Slip', *Theatre Survey* 47.2 (2006), p. 253.

[original emphasis].[339] This argument has attended my own investigations into contradiction and paradox in expertise, and helped me frame them as something that performance studies has begun to get a particular handle on.

In setting up performativity and theatricality as distinct from one another, however, I have risked making it seem like their relationship, and even their separateness, is uncontroversial. As Shannon Jackson makes clear, this is not the case. The development of disciplinary objects, one of the fundamental processes that underlies expertise, is almost always fraught and rarely straightforward. Jackson outlines a litany of unresolved questions in her examination of performativity and its genealogy (or genealogies) as a disciplinary object.

Is theatre a subset of performance? Is performance a foundation for or a symptom of performativity? Is performativity's act the same as "acting"? What is the difference between performance studies and performativity studies?[340] While she works to address these questions, she also acknowledges the risk that 'The effort to disentangle disciplinary equivalences can transform into the territorial quest to erect impermeable boundaries'.[341] It is a matter of maintaining a critical awareness of both the erasures of histories and investments that can come with collapsing concepts into one another, and of the 'territorial' power dynamic that

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[339] Schneider, 'Intermediality', p. 256.
[340] Shannon Jackson, 'Theatricality's proper objects: genealogies of performance and gender theory' in *Theatricality*, ed. by Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlethwait, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 188.
[341] Jackson, 'Theatricality's proper objects', p. 188.

often attends the formation of disciplinary borders. In discussing contemporary performance and expertise, I have worked to maintain just such a critical awareness.

Politically speaking, I argue that theatricality also allows the opportunity to think the significance of identity without succumbing to essentialism. For Jackson, again, this is precisely what has made theatricality both appealing and contentious for a generation of scholars who would use it as a critical frame. She asserts that it 'functions ubiquitously and contradictorily because of the term's "flexible essentialism"'. Theatricality's ability to play on (at least) two teams – sometimes flying the flag for 'authenticity', for example, while just as often cheering for the artificial, constructed or 'inauthentic' – is not necessarily a good thing, according to Jackson. It can lead to confusion, which can in turn lead to erasure of responsibility or blindness to implication or defensive territorialism. Nevertheless, she tentatively acknowledges that on occasion 'confusion can be experienced as enabling'.[342] Drawing on the emergence of gender studies as a discipline, Jackson shows how key figures like Elin Diamond, Sue-Ellen Case and Judith Butler found theatricality useful for balancing the seemingly contradictory need to de-essentialise identity, while maintaining an activist orientated political programme.

In order to illustrate the importance of interrogating and sometimes deploying the 'flexible essentialism' of theatricality, and to connect this to an

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[342] Jackson, 'Theatricality's proper objects', p. 189.

investigation of expertise, I want to turn to Matthew Goulish's *39 Microlectures*. It is a book I admire and feel is important for, among other things, the way it opens out what can be thought of as knowledge, creates new opportunities for pedagogy, and performs a rigourous modesty that subtly rejects the expert position as dominating and hierarchical. Nevertheless, there is a section that troubles me. It is a section on women and directing, which specifically and intentionally avoids formulating a thesis about women and directing. At the end, Goulish includes a list of things he did not say about the subject:

> I did not say that the details I singled out arose from some innate quality that my subjects share because they are women. I also did not indicate any commonality between these methods because their practitioners are women. Nor did I say that since Goat Island's director is also a woman, that we only look to other women directors as examples, or that Lin as a woman inevitably draws from the work of other women.[343]

Throughout, Goulish professes a confusion about gender definitions, and this also works as an attempt to spread productive confusion about definitions. I appreciate this commitment to performing the non-essentialism of gender, and to multiplicity over reductiveness.

Nevertheless, I think it is important that Goat Island was directed by a woman. I think there is something to say about definitions, even while maintaining that definitions never tell the whole story. It is not enough to say identity does not matter, even if it does not. All of what Goulish says about not saying certain things about women and directing may be true and real, and still

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[343] Matthew Goulish, 39 Microlectures: In Proximity of Performance (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), p. 84.

there are things to say about women and directing. What, for example, makes performance, or a specific kind of performance, an amenable place for women directors? Further, what makes it possible for women directors to work in this kind of performance and not foreground gender? I think not just of Lin Hixson in these terms, but also Elizabeth LeCompte (Wooster Group), Marianne Weems (The Builder's Association) or Anne Bogart (SITI Company), for example. All of these women head leading experimental theatre companies, producing complicated work that refigures identity and categorical boundaries in such a way that it is not necessary to announce that they are doing so. Somehow, the combination of 'experimental' with 'theatre' has proved a fertile match for this type of work, and it is important that women have played a prominent role in developing it, even as the category 'woman' is something that the work imagines might be largely irrelevant.

This is not to say that Goulish is not aware of these questions. Indeed, while I am being somewhat critical of this chapter in *39 Microlectures*, it still begins to do something that I want to emphasise. I want to argue for the simultaneous possibility of identity mattering absolutely and identity mattering not at all – for the need to acknowledge the importance of identity (for the need to devote a chapter to 'Women and Directing' for example), and for the need to reject the imperative for identity. I argue that theatricality is something that allows us to think this contradiction as contradiction: real and not real, material and illusion. It allows us to avoid asserting that identity does not matter, thereby

ignoring – and thus not fighting against – dominating forces. At the same time it allows us to avoid asserting that identity does matter, in the sense that it is fundamental, essential or immutable. I argue that while identity may be performative, theatricality allows us to understand identity as both contradictory and consequential.

Ultimately, it is this match between contradiction and consequence that I have been working to trace throughout this thesis, while arguing for the importance of the work performance practitioners have been doing to foster it.

EXPERTISE, NOW

I have worked to emphasise that performance studies as an academic discipline, and performance as a creative practice both have a significant purchase on questions of knowledge, expertise and power. As a final statement, I will now discuss the importance of addressing expertise now. What are the contemporary anxieties and power dynamics that inform the work that I have looked at, and that motivated my interest in the question of expertise to begin with? What can be drawn from the analyses that I have performed so far, and how can this contribute to a broader context? How can the practices I have considered here help extend the terms by which we value the political and social implications of knowing what others do not, and delivering the impression of that knowledge?

I initially envisioned this project as a question of information as it is figured today. It is a commonplace observation that as the internet and mobile

communication devices have joined earlier broadcast media, new strategies must develop for making sense of the unprecedented mass of statistical data and recorded audio/visual imagery that is now available. From there, it became clear to me that key to the optimisms and anxieties of our times, is the concept of the expert. Increasingly, the ability not only to navigate information but to guide others through information will be will be loaded with power. From search engines to lifestyle guides, 'information overload' has become an opportunity to capitalise on skillfulness with data. Projects that are keen to make something of the promise of democratised access to information and skills, like Free Software or Creative Commons, still exist.[344] Nevertheless, the enthusiasm for the possible reach of such democratisation has waned. This enthusiasm went along with the image of an emancipated public of tech-savvy individuals able to use myriad information channels, and importantly, add to them. This image was already starting to appear dusty when I began this project in 2008, and now feels positively ancient. Billions are being made by tech entrepreneurs from the images, stories and relationships of people who use their social networks – it is time to re-think how collectivity and connection can be marshaled to more equitable ends.

It is also important to remember how and why 'information overload' occurs. The rise in surveillance in recent years is a key contemporary anxiety.

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[344] See Richard Stallman, *Free Software, Free Society: Selected Essay of Richard Stallman*, ed. by Joshua Gay (Boston: GNU Press, 2002) and Lawrence Lessig, *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005)

Who is watching, and what sorts of intelligence exists to process, connect and act upon the CCTV tapes, archived credit card numbers or illegal wiretaps? In the case of surveillance, anxiety is a product not only of not knowing, but of not knowing who knows. These anxieties take on a more profound political dimension within the logic of terror and perpetual crisis and threat that have come to structure contemporary governance.[345] While nominally assigned to the Islamic world or underprivileged urban youth, terror is increasingly abstracted from any identifiable perpetrator. As the threat of disruption and violence seems ever more widespread and dispersed, the call for elite experts who can perpetually rescue a society in crisis increases. In this cult of competence, vigilance takes precedence over reflection, and control must be ceded – always only temporarily, though the end of threat never arrives (and never can) – to those whose with the expertise to handle whatever unknown catastrophe might arise.

However, as the function of the expert is imbued with increasing power while the concept of an enemy of the state is abstracted, it is nonetheless necessary to be concrete in response. People are still being divided into categories, and different categories of people are affected by the politics of expertise in drastically different ways. This is, in part, why I have chosen to use identity as a focus for this investigation. The other part is because I believe

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[345] For a discussion of crisis as a political strategy, see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007). For a discussion of the logic of abstract, proliferating threat, see Brian Massumi, The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat' in *The Affect Theory Reader,* ed. by Seigworth, Gregory J. and Melissa Gregg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

change has to come about through encounters (often antagonistic) within existing structures and forms. Some of the artists I have considered in this thesis are working to propose new forms of knowing and learning (often together). I think is crucial work to do, not least because the hopefulness such work may produce can be profoundly sustaining. Nevertheless, I have concentrated the major part of this thesis on works that operates on contradictions, paradoxes and failures within existing forms of expertise. This is because I want to insist on the importance of working against hierarchical and oppressive structures of knowledge production. This working against cannot take place at some neutral or critically transcendent remove. Rather, we must find ways of confronting from the inside. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that performance is a vital tool for doing just such confronting.

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