Performing ‘risk’:
neoliberalization and contemporary performance

Louise Owen
PhD
Queen Mary, University of London
September 2009
ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the relation between ‘risk’ and ‘performance’ through analysis of examples of contemporary theatre and performance practice commissioned, developed and produced under the New Labour government. The project is multidisciplinary and materialist. It problematises constructions of risk in theatre and performance studies as either inhering in the identity of the artist, as a dynamic specific to genre or indeed a discipline-specific value. In view of the explosion of social scientific interest in ‘risk’ which gathered momentum in the early 1990s, it follows work by theorists of neoliberal governmentality, geography and cultural studies to suggest that a more productive and historically specific treatment of the concept is one informed by political economy. Neoliberal policy rejects the welfare state’s collectivisation of risk and characteristically redistributes risk to individual, entrepreneurialised subjects. New Labour, seeking to produce ‘inclusion’, has deployed a managerial cultural policy in the service of this aim, the chief concerns of which are the ‘ethical training’ of social subjects and the economic regeneration of post-industrial sites. I analyse closely the mediation of four figures of contemporary political economic concern in theatre and performance: the asylum seeker, the young person ‘at risk’, the sex worker and the entrepreneur. On the basis of these analyses, I make two key claims. Firstly, that culture’s supplementary role to the state manifests in these works in a preoccupation with ‘value’. Secondly, that their strategies of, or concerns with aesthetic realism and immersion correlate to the delegation of risk to individuals imagined to operate in a ‘community’ space. The necessary implication of social subjects not in unproblematically communal relations but in systems of production and exchange will burst through in performance in the form of theatricality – a cognizance not of an immersive ‘community’ space, but of agonistic, dialectical relations.
DECLARATION

I confirm that the work presented in the thesis is my own and that all references are cited accordingly.

......................................................................................................................
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 8
(i) Risk and uncertainty 15
(ii) ‘Governing the margins’: inclusion and exclusion 24
(iii) Regimes of value 33

CHAPTER 1: Performing ‘exclusion’: The Margate Exodus

Introduction 40
I: ‘Off Limits’: Artangel’s commissioning practice 50
 (i) Impresarios of the avant garde 52
 (ii) Entrepreneurial subjects 67
II: The Margate Exodus 76
 (i) Cultural recognition 82
 (ii) Exodus Day 89
Conclusion 101

CHAPTER 2: Performing ‘inclusion’: From the favela to the world

Introduction 105
I: ‘Culture is our weapon’: Grupo Cultural AfroReggae 116
 (i) From the favela to the world I: cultural exchange across borders 117
 (ii) ‘The Shiva effect’: creative destruction, risk and productivity 133
 (iii) ‘The exchange mechanism’ 143
II: ‘Can culture be our weapon?’: The AfroReggae UK Partnership 151
 (i) From the favela to the world II: cultural exchange across borders 153
 (ii) ‘The spirit or integrity of the art itself’: ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’ value 156
 (iii) ‘Culture is our weapon here in Shoreditch’: Immediate Theatre 172
Conclusion 178

CHAPTER 3: ‘Homo sacer’s ghost’: Unprotected

Introduction 181
I: Verbatim theatre: from cultural action to ‘authenticity’ 191
 (i) The emergence of ‘verbatim theatre’ 194
 (ii) A growing canon 205
 (iii) Rhetorics of the ‘real’ 212
II: ‘Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse present Unprotected’ 222
 (i) The ‘excluded exclusion’ 225
 (ii) Public nuisance, zero tolerance and the production of space 231
 (iii) ‘Turning headlines into human stories’ 239
Conclusion 255
CHAPTER 4: Enterprising subjects: La Ribot’s 40 espontaneos

Introduction 258
I: ‘Not dance’: La Ribot 271
   (i) ‘Still distinguished’: La Ribot’s piezas distinguidas 276
   (ii) ‘There is no more representation, only presentation’: theatre, disavowed 283
   (iii) Distinguished proprietors: ‘La Ribot’ on the market 293
II: ‘Mission impossible’: 40 espontaneos 296
   (i) “A human exchange, about people”: ‘live art’ and ‘community dance’ collide 299
   (ii) 40 espontaneos in Britain 307
Conclusion 316

CONCLUSION 323

BIBLIOGRAPHY 330
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which funded this doctoral project (award number 2005/117789).

Paul Heritage and Nicholas Ridout were the joint supervisors of this project. It would have been impossible without their guidance, encouragement, generosity and inspiration and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both.

Many artists and organisations gave me their time, access to archival resources and to projects in process during my research. I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of: Cressida Hubbard and Michael Morris of Artangel; Anna Cutler; Lucy Pardee; Pauline Aitken, Bill Calder, Dixon Graterol, Jonathan Hillier, Emma Impett and Anthony Johnson; Carla Martins and Damian Platt of AfroReggae; Malin Forbes of the Barbican; Richard Ings; Derek Richards; Jo Carter of Immediate Theatre; EJ Trivett; Chris Westwood and Damian Atkinson of the Shoreditch Trust; Karen Taylor of Arts Council England; Rachel Sanger of People’s Palace Projects; Helen Wood of Stoke Newington School; Nicola Baboneau of the Learning Trust; Peter Leigh of Sound Connections; Canan Salih of the Brady Centre; Gabin Sinclair of Rising Tide; Suzanne Bell of the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse; Esther Wilson; the Everyman Archive at Liverpool John Moores University; Maria Ribot; Nicky Childs of Artsadmin; Nicky Molloy and the staff of Dance4; Colin Richardson-Webb of New Moves International; Brendan Keaney and the staff of gDA; Mark Waugh; Myra Fulton; Mary Bendall; and the Live Art Development Agency.

Drama at Queen Mary, University of London has been a wonderful place to pursue postgraduate research. I would like to thank Jen Harvie and Michael McKinnie in particular for their support and advice, and my fellow postgraduate students in Drama and other departments in the college for their friendship and solidarity. My colleagues at CSSD, University of London were very supportive during the writing up process. My thanks also to Sophie Nield and Joel Anderson, who read work in progress and gave invaluable feedback; likewise, James Jackson and Helen Moore, who camped out with me for a full day near the end.

My thanks and love to my friends and family, in particular my parents Beryl and Roger Owen and my sister Clare Owen, for their love and support. Most of all, my love, gratitude and appreciation to Alex Bowen, who shares his life with me and as a consequence knows this project inside out.
NOTE ON THE TEXT

The text of this thesis follows the conventions recommended by the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA).

Where a page number is absent in the source document cited, I indicate this with the abbreviation ‘npg.’.

The bibliography lists works cited in alphabetical order. In addition, I list ‘Primary documents’ (items which are not readily available in public or university libraries or online) and ‘Personal interviews’ (interviews I conducted with artists and other workers connected with the projects in question).
In 1996, the second ever edition of the British theatre and performance studies journal *Performance Research* was published, entitled ‘On Risk’. Following the cultural survey of ‘The Temper of the Times’, it staged a clear statement regarding the conceptual importance of ‘risk’ for the discipline of theatre and performance studies in Britain and a definitively global field of reference. Claire MacDonald’s introduction meditated on her experience of touring as a performer with Impact Theatre to Warsaw in 1986, a tour which the explosion of the nuclear power station at Chernobyl had brought to an abrupt end. In a melancholic, confessional mode, MacDonald describes how she and her co-workers fled; Geiger-countered at the German border, officials advised that on her return to the UK she should destroy her clothing and rub down her luggage with sticky tape. She chooses this scenario to frame the work of the issue, which she goes on to consider in a sociological register:

We now live in a risk society. Risk assessment, risk management, the time bomb of environmental risk and the volatility of political systems combine to create an environment of extreme uncertainty, and a sense that the metaphors we have used to describe the world are no longer adequate to account for a situation of such inconstancy. *All artists take risks: it comes with the territory.* While art comments on society by its very nature, the form which that comment takes and its relationship to the real life of the artist continue to change. There is a poem by W. H. Auden in which he talks about art and suffering. In ‘Musée des Beaux Arts’ Auden notes the way in which suffering is depicted in the work of the old masters, how it often happens off-centre, almost out of sight in a corner, in what he calls ‘some untidy spot/Where the dogs go on with their doggy life’. Auden saw the artist as someone who observed ‘the doggy life’ – since the 1960s we have come to expect the artist to *live* it. Performance art, above all, has carved out a space of transgression and
risk in which a dynamic meeting of the social and personal can take place. (first emphasis mine, second in original)¹

These remarks execute a number of familiar critical moves. ‘Risk’ appears, in common sense style, as something that inheres in art-making. ‘Risk’ and ‘transgression’, which are positive actions, are reciprocally engaged. The collapse of the categories ‘art’ and ‘life’ consolidated by performance artists in the 1960s is the exemplary site of such transgression, enunciated here in a developmental mode. Performance art is the high water mark of a socially engaged art practice initiated in the early years of the twentieth century; as Roselee Goldberg documents, the exponents of Futurism, Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism likewise exemplified “artists who use performance in trying to live, and who create work which takes life as its subject”.² Yet, cited as a governmental concept in terms of Ulrich Beck’s ‘risk society’ thesis at the top of the paragraph, risk makes quite a different appearance: an enumerable quantity for assessment and management whose assessment, in the context of ‘volatile political systems’, has the paradoxical effect of producing “a climate of extreme uncertainty”.³

The juxtaposition of these ideas is somewhat uneasy. By drawing them into a proximate relationship MacDonald seems implicitly to suggest that the historical circumstances she describes have produced or at least coincide with the

³ Claire MacDonald, p. vi.
appearance of an artist who, now no longer an observer, makes use of everyday life as both politicised grounds and resource for art-making. Bringing the boundary between ‘life’ and ‘work’ into radical crisis, the contemporary performance artist represents an immersive model of human action which bears something of a resemblance to nuclear pollution’s unbounded character (whose locus of concentration MacDonald, as a globally mobile cultural worker, was herself able to leave). But her editorial essay and the writings in the collection do not pursue this thought further, instead identifying a set of ‘risks’: Gina Pane “ingesting and spitting raw meat, cutting herself with razor blades and being suspended over burning candles”;4 Marina’s Abramovic’s engagement of “the risk of theatricality itself”;5 performance art’s notional other; risk as the act of “facing that which is feared”;6 the “specifically political risk”7 cabaret artists took under the Third Reich; Ken Saro-Wiwa’s “literal engagement with physical risk”8 in his activist support of the Ogoni people in Nigeria. In each of the examples of performance which MacDonald cites, the concept of risk appears as a descriptive category for another phenomenon or entity – the possibility of attack, enforced exile, imprisonment or execution; an affective engagement with the unknown; disciplinary convention and the consequences of its disruption or refusal; and the body’s response to interventions deemed to be unsafe. A set of master categories relating to social reproduction more broadly appear covalent with risk; the

---

4 Claire MacDonald, p. vii.
5 Claire MacDonald, p. vii.
6 Claire MacDonald, p. vii.
7 Claire MacDonald, p. vii.
8 Claire MacDonald, p. viii.
actuarial basis of the practice of ‘risk management’ disappears entirely from view.

For the disciplinary formations of theatre and performance studies in the 2000s the notion that ‘all artists take risks’ remains pervasive. From the long table of the opening plenary at PSi#15 (Zagreb) in 2009, Richard Gough rehearsed an almost identical statement; likewise, contributors to the annual Association of Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) conference ‘Risking Innovation’ (New York) in 2009 framed papers and panel discussions with tropes of novelty, border-crossing and the departure from ‘comfort zones’, packaging a range of concepts - ‘visibility’, ‘collaboration’, ‘producing’, ‘theory’, ‘theatre’ itself – as risks. The implication, that ‘risk’ and ‘risk-taking’ is a desirable and necessarily progressive practice occludes the concept’s status as functional to the emergence of western capitalism; indeed, the driver of capital accumulation. And the way in which MacDonald’s editorial and these disciplinary interventions, thirteen years apart, so readily and eagerly set out a single term to embrace a disparate set of experiences suggests the citation of ‘risk’ to signify an ideological position: a cultural value attaching to a particular ‘territory’. The metaphorical territory in question – that is to say, a domain of practice which identifiable characteristics - is the act of meaning-making undertaken by the professional figure of the artist.

This dissertation is in the first instance an effort to question and historicise ‘risk’ in relation to cultural production; specifically, theatre and performance’s direct

---

and indirect relationships with the process of neoliberalization in Britain. Neoliberalism is a mode of political economic organisation which institutionalises enterprise culture and valorizes risk. I pursue this inquiry through a close analysis of four projects commissioned, developed and produced under the New Labour government – Artangel’s commission *The Margate Exodus* (2005-7), People Palace Projects’ *From the Favela to the World* (2006-2012), the Liverpool Everyman’s *Unprotected* (2006) and La Ribot’s *40 espontaneos* (2004-2007). Like MacDonald’s, the critical position that underwrites my analysis of the projects is that art and performance dynamically interact with social reproduction. But I challenge the view that ‘risk’ is unproblematically specific to the artist’s work and that either are necessarily transgressive in the politically radical sense that MacDonald gestured toward in 1996. I suggest that any such claim has the effect of closing down possibilities for analysis of the industrial conditions of artistic production and, reciprocally, the historical complexities of the scene of the social. Before I offer an exposition of the project’s critical approach and the scholarly work from the disciplines of political science, geography and cultural studies that informs it, I will first tell an anecdote which I believe helpfully articulates some of the problems in play.

In 2006 I attended the *Nurturing Risk Forum* at the Arnolfini in Bristol, a symposium inaugurating that year’s Inbetween Time, an annual festival of live art and performance. As I discuss in Chapter 4, live art is a discipline which its advocates frame explicitly as ‘risky’ practice. Four artist-curator partnerships reflected on the meaning of ‘risk’ for their work. As the event’s curator Ruth Holdsworth notes in her documentation, the proceedings demonstrated “the
slippery nature and relativity of ‘risk’\textsuperscript{10} as a concept. The artists and curators spoke of interdisciplinarity, experimentation, hybridity, trust and belief in performance and the welcome sense of safety and protection which peer networks and the support of producing organisations provide. Helen Cole, producer of live art and dance at the Arnolfini, described ‘risk’ as similarly functional to the audience member’s decision to engage with live art. She wished in her work as a curator to create the conditions for as many people as possible to commit to an encounter with it:

audiences do take risks...we have to consider how to encourage them to do so. People like the permeability between artist and audience at the venue...there is no green room, the artist leaves the same way as the audiences do...this encourages artists to speak to their audiences and to build up a context for their work over time. (ellipses as in original)\textsuperscript{11}

Testament to this ambition, the Nurturing Risk Forum was a public event available for booking via the Arnolfini’s website. Seated in the audience it seemed intuitive nonetheless that, given the fact that it had been scheduled to take place during work hours on a Wednesday afternoon and examined a specific set of industrial concerns, all those present would have a professional interest in live art.


\textsuperscript{11} Ruth Holdsworth.
However, during the question and answer session at the conclusion of the event, a woman raised her hand. She asked why it was that in these discussions of risk no-one had yet mentioned Shakespeare’s Globe. Surely, she continued, the way in which the actors talked directly to the audience members in the pit in Shakespeare’s time was a terribly risky practice. A silence gripped the room. As if in an awkward university seminar, most of the panellists gazed at their feet, none willing to venture a response to a statement which so manifestly came from ‘outside’ the event’s discursive frame, the consequences of which would very likely be embarrassment for someone, whether the questioner or the questioned. The discussion’s chair suggested that perhaps the question opened up too much in the closing minutes of the day, and moved quickly on to take another. Taking place in a lecture theatre in the University of Bristol’s chemistry department, a fire evacuation had interrupted the proceedings a few hours earlier, prompting much ironic joking about risky performances and health and safety.

This occasion and its peculiarities are of analytical assistance here for three reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the historically coincident presence of antagonistic discourses of culture; in the moment of their collision, the protagonists of the ‘risky’ discourse of live art chose to close down the disruption to its security that the unexpected question from the audience member represented. Secondly, it demonstrates the ideological content of ‘risk’ applied to artistic practice as a governing concept: a brand, if you like, which articulates a set of general meanings (border-crossing, innovation, challenge) rather than a complex descriptor of works, their aesthetic construction and their ideological effects. And finally, it demonstrates the substantive, productive relationship
between the act of speech and the form of the social. The audience member’s question and the silence which followed revealed and confirmed the coherence of interests shared by a professional association of people – a grouping of the sort that in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has come to attract the term ‘community’ (‘artistic community’, ‘business community’, ‘feminist community’ and so on). The limits articulating the coherence of this community appeared vulnerable to interruption and reconfiguration in the scene of the discussion. The ritual of the fire evacuation, meanwhile, appeared as a technical exercise. Yet, in its staging of relations between bodies and spaces through the exercise of a discourse of health and safety and public liability, thus framing bodies themselves as quantities ‘at risk’, it was no less an act of speech. The interaction between the ‘cultural’ and the ‘technical’, ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’, ‘fiction’ and ‘fact’ is one of the consistent themes of this dissertation. It reflects the positivism of risk management, a critical part of the conceptual architecture of neoliberal political organisation, which is at the same time a social architecture most conducive to its reproduction.

(i) Risk and uncertainty

If, in the 1990s, the discipline of theatre and performance studies treated the relevance of ‘risk’ to the work of art and artists as more or less given, other disciplines were at the same time pursuing exhaustive and intricate analyses of the concept in relation to everyday life. In 1986 Ulrich Beck’s Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity was published in his native Germany. It appeared in English translation in 1992. A cross-disciplinary attention to ‘risk’ was at that
point gaining substantial momentum, in particular in the social sciences and psychology. Beck’s work (extended and elaborated in a number of subsequent texts)\textsuperscript{12} theorises the emergence of ‘reflexive modernisation’ and the ‘risk society’, a moment in which modernity’s promise of emancipation appears corrupted by its production of forms of systemic ‘risk’ which it is unable to control, such as pollution, ecological change and nuclear catastrophe. Allied with Beck’s work and also authored with him, Anthony Giddens (theorist and advocate of the Third Way),\textsuperscript{13} Scott Lash and John Urry examine the self-reflexivity practised by subjects sceptical of grand narratives and operating in the uncertain conditions of the ‘risk society’.\textsuperscript{14} Niklas Luhmann’s complex sociological exposition of risk offers a theory of social system.\textsuperscript{15} A series of subsequent survey works and edited collections address risk from a more empirically oriented sociological perspective, examining behaviours and patterns of social action in terms of material scenarios and, as in the work of John Tulloch (also a theatre scholar interested in questions of audience reception)\textsuperscript{16} explicitly as social

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}
‘performance’.  

Deborah Lupton’s *Risk* (1999), a synthesis of the literatures then available identifies four critical themes: Mary Douglas’ work on risk and culture (important to the theoretical frame of this project); Beck’s ‘risk society’ thesis; risk and identity (incorporating questions of ‘otherness’, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘pleasure’); and risk as functional to neoliberal governmentality (likewise important to the theoretical frame of this project). Peter Taylor-Gooby and Jens Zinn’s edited collection *Risk in Social Science* (2006) framed risk explicitly as an interdisciplinary problematic; likewise, Gabe Mythen and Sandra Walklate’s edited collection *Beyond the Risk Society: Critical Reflections on Risk and Human Security* (2006). More populist texts include the conservative sociologist Frank Furedi’s *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* (1997) and much more recently, informed largely by the work of Daniel Kahneman,

---


Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky\(^\text{23}\) on the ‘affect heuristic’, Dan Gardner’s *Risk: the Science and Politics of Fear* (2008).\(^\text{24}\) These are discrete scholarly projects and procedures and the associated literature is vast. Their exponents do not agree on what logically constitutes a ‘risk’; Nick Fox’s examination of the various positions theorists take regarding the epistemological distinctions (or otherwise) between ‘hazard’ and ‘risk’ and their political consequences,\(^\text{25}\) for example, reinforces Luhmann’s wry observation that “when we seek definitions on the concept of risk, we immediately find ourselves befogged, with an impression of being unable to see beyond our own front bumper”.\(^\text{26}\)

With the volatility and uncertainties of the ‘risk society’ that these theorists describe in view, this project’s specific interest is not in what finally constitutes ‘risk’ in and for theatre and performance. In its analysis of theatre and performance it treats risk as a concept functional to the development of capitalism and its practices:\(^\text{27}\) in Jim McGuigan’s words, “the specifically

---


\(^\text{26}\) Niklas Luhmann, p. 6.

\(^\text{27}\) Jon McKenzie’s influential *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (2001) is concerned with the logic of performance management, ‘efficacy’ and ‘efficiency’ as cultural values and the interface between the experimental and the normative. The book is arguably an inquiry regarding performance (to paraphrase Jameson) as the cultural logic of late capitalism. Though McKenzie doesn’t specifically refer to ‘risk’ and reflects only briefly on the historical development of neoliberalism and the ‘information economy’, the following passage (p. 171) reflects some of the concerns of my own project:
capitalist dynamics of a risky world”. Given the project’s focus on practices of representation, the key question I ask regarding risk is initially an epistemological one. ‘Risk’ is a definitional means of conceiving, measuring or representing how the effects of present action will manifest in the future as either ‘profit’ or ‘loss’. It is a technology of prediction which has a reciprocal relation to a world understood as uncertain. To conceptualise the world in such a way is specific to a secular and capitalist modernity. Before the mid-seventeenth century, the concept of chance or accident in the western world did not exist in the way we understand it today – which is to say, an unpredictable event without motive, the obverse of which is the rational exercise of human agency; unthinkable in a world in which an omnipotent God oversees human action.

The word ‘risk’ entered into common usage at about the same time. The Oxford English Dictionary dates its first usage at 1661; as a noun, it signifies

the age of global performance is not only populated by high performers, peak performers, star performers, performers who challenge forth themselves and others, but also by the performatively challenged, the economically challenged, the digitally challenged, the stylistically challenged, and even the liminally challenged. Perform – or else: there is no performance without challenge, without claims and contestations, demands and accusations, field tests and identity checks, as well as the occasional untimely dare.

McKenzie’s interest however is largely in theorising the historical coincidence of performance management and performance studies, and he locates his study in a broadly North American cultural context; theatre plays a marginal role in the text’s theoretical scheme.

1. a. Hazard, danger; exposure to mischance or peril.
   b. Freq. in phr. to run a or the (also one’s) risk.
   c. A venturous course.
   d. at (or in) risk, at high (etc.) risk: in danger, subject to hazard.
   e. A person who is considered a liability or danger; one who is exposed to
danger.
2. a. The chance or hazard of commercial loss, spec. in the case of insured
   property or goods. Also (freq. without article), the chance that is accepted
   in economic enterprise and considered the source of (an entrepreneur’s)
   profit.\footnote{31}

And as a verb,

1. trans. To hazard, endanger; to expose to the chance of injury or loss.
2. To venture upon, take the chances of.
3. To venture to bring into some situation.
4. intr. To take or run risks.\footnote{32}

Risk represents both an enterprising action unfolding in time, and an identifiable
object, person or event concerned with future profit, loss and liability. In his
Reith Lecture on risk in 1999, Anthony Giddens specified exactly the way in
which

modern capitalism embeds itself into the future by calculating future
profit and loss, and therefore risk, as a continuous process. This wasn't
possible until the invention of double entry bookkeeping in the 15th
century in Europe, which made it possible to track in a precise way how
money can be invested to make more money.\footnote{33}

\footnote{31}“risk, n.”, The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., 1989, OED Online, Oxford
University Press, 30 October 2005 <http://o-
dictionary.oed.com.catalogue.ulrls.lan.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50207290>.
University Press, 30 October 2005 <http://o-
dictionary.oed.com.catalogue.ulrls.lan.ac.uk/cgi/entry/50207291>.
\footnote{33}Anthony Giddens, ‘Lecture 2: Risk’. Reith Lectures 1999,
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_99/week2/week2.htm>
> [accessed November 2005].
The emergence of insurance (“the basis of security where fate has been ousted by an active engagement with the future”) necessarily accompanies such calculative practices. These practices and their long and complex history in turn rely on the existence of objective, non-interpretable ‘fact’, an epistemological category Mary Poovey theorises in *The History of the Modern Fact* (1998). Poovey makes the narrative basis of capital accumulation which Giddens points towards acutely clear; in double-entry bookkeeping, as a practice which demonstrates the rigorous enactment of a rule and thus the bookkeeper’s trustworthiness, “we see fictions being installed as props to systematic meaning and coherence”. In this sense, she insists that “even behaviours that seem to be ‘merely’ economic have always depended on mechanisms that solicited belief”. She associates the turn to a ‘nontheological discourse’ of belief (credit) in the management and distribution of resources with the “demise of sovereign government and the rise of liberal governmentality at the beginning of the eighteenth century”, which itself initiated a distanciation from a concept of the monarch as the representative of God’s authority, and the emergence of a discourse of the self-governing subject: the subject who is ‘free’.

---

34 Anthony Giddens, ‘Lecture 2: Risk’.
37 Mary Poovey, p. 21.
38 Mary Poovey, p. 21.
Under the conditions of liberal capitalism, ‘freedom’, ‘risk’ and ‘uncertainty’ are thus complexly imbricated, both as matters of action and products of knowledge. And, as epistemological problematics as well as technologies and techniques of governance, the rhetorical deployments of ‘risk’ and ‘uncertainty’ are historically specific. In *Risk, Uncertainty and Government* (2004), Pat O’Malley conducts a close analysis of practices including social security, contract law, insurance, gambling, drug use and criminal justice, and insists that, despite the contemporary focus on risk as a ‘late modern’ phenomenon,

the politics of risk and uncertainty – the raising of all of these questions in relation to innovations in government – has a long genealogy. They were present in 18th and 19th century concerns about how individuals should conduct themselves in a free market society. They appeared in contemporaneous debates over how contracts of financial risks and speculation should be governed. Such politics also focused on the moral rights and wrongs of gambling and speculative futures markets. Such politics were also to the fore in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when the establishment of social insurance and social security conflicted with some of the foundational assumptions of classical liberal government. Subsequently, the transformation and even dismantling of these social insurance apparatuses under contemporary neoliberalism has become another major theme of the politics of risk and uncertainty.39

Taking a Foucauldian position, O’Malley asks of such technologies of risk and uncertainty: “what knowledge do these developments privilege; what truths do they assume, and which do they gag or subordinate? What kind of subjects, communities and societies do they seek to turn us into?”40 This helpfully directs attention towards the ideological projects engaged in political economic change:

---

40 Pat O’Malley, p. 27.
one of the critical concerns of this thesis and its analysis of the representational work of theatre and performance.

Addressing projects commissioned either directly before or during New Labour’s third term in office (2005 to date), the thesis’ specific historical scope is the phase in which governments began to effect what Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell call “the roll out of neoliberalized state forms (themselves partly the outcome of previous tensions and contradictions in the early neoliberalist project)” (original emphasis). Neoliberalism, as David Harvey efficiently defines it is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.

As part of its process of ideological adaptation to the institutionalisation of neoliberalism as a global phenomenon, New Labour explicitly embraced Thatcher’s neoliberal mode of governance and its culture of ‘enterprise’ in the communitarian, social democratic iteration known as the ‘Third Way’. Its governmental project has drawn cultural policy into a much closer relationship

---

with the state than the post-1979 Conservative administration. Writing in 2005, Jim McGuigan observes that

> a distinctive yet seldom mentioned feature of neo-liberal development is to translate issues of social policy into questions of cultural policy. And, in its turn, cultural policy ceases to be specifically about culture at all. The predominant rationale for cultural policy today is economic, in terms of competitiveness and regeneration, and, to a lesser extent, social, as an implausible palliative to exclusion and poverty.\(^{44}\)

Though we might critique McGuigan’s schematic definition of ‘culture’ – as surely questions of the ‘social’ and ‘economic’ are as much matters of culture as artistic production – this is precisely the paradigm shift with which the thesis is concerned. This, and the cognate categories of risk, welfare and subjectivity which the New Labour government have elaborated, are the starting point for the thesis’ analysis of the projects in question.

(ii) ‘Governing the margins’: inclusion and exclusion

The project’s four chapters take categories which have organised New Labour’s social and cultural policy as a guiding analytical principles: ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’.\(^{45}\) The uptake of these categories in policy witnesses the


\(^{45}\) Janie Percy-Smith (2000, pp. 1-3) shows that ‘exclusion’ was first institutionalised in Europe in French social policy and then the EU during the 1980s. In *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour* (1998), Ruth Levitas provides a comprehensive analysis of New Labour’s appropriation and elaboration of the concept. For an historical review and critique of inclusion and exclusion from a human geography perspective, see Angus Cameron’s three reports for *Progress in Human Geography*, which I have drawn on extensively in this study: ‘Geographies of welfare and exclusion: initial report’. *Progress in*
entrenchment of neoliberalization in Britain. During the industrial twentieth century, the welfare state redistributed resources in what Harvey describes as an “uneasy compact between capital and labour brokered by an interventionist state that paid great attention to the social (i.e. welfare state) as well as the individual wage”.46 Nikolas Rose draws attention to the manner in which

through mechanisms of social insurance – unemployment benefit, accident insurance, health and safety legislation and so forth – and through an array of forms of economic government – tax regimes, interest rates and other techniques of ‘demand management’ – the state assumed responsibility for the management of a whole variety of risks – to individuals, to employers, to the state itself – in the name of society.47

Narratives of social justice and national coherence legitimised the welfare state’s redistributions, which worked to bound the uncertainty for citizens of the nation state produced by the prospect of poverty and in so doing decreased economic

---


inequality. The British nation state and others in the ‘developed’ west thus elaborated modes of governing subjects specifically as territorially situated wage labourers, a project treated simultaneously as economic and ethical. After 1979, Thatcher’s Conservative government embarked on the likewise simultaneously material and ideological project of transforming the country into a post-industrial global hub of finance, information and services, the inculcation, in individual citizens and institutions, of an entrepreneurial ethic of enterprise and the ‘roll-back’ of the welfare state. Writing in 1992, Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller theorised this as a project of governance which deploys as a technique not collective responsibility but the ‘freedom to choose’:

For neoliberalism the political subject is less a social citizen with powers and obligations deriving from membership of a collective body, than an individual whose citizenship is active. This citizenship is to be manifested not in the receipt of public largesse, but in the energetic pursuit of personal fulfilment and the incessant calculations that are to enable this to be achieved.

In re-constituting the values of the Labour party and drawing them into alignment with neoliberal market logic, New Labour’s philosophy absorbed this principle. In place of a ‘collective body’, it now imagined the citizen as a member of a caring ‘community’. Compare the differences between the Labour Party’s original Clause 4 and the revised version adopted in 1995:

---

To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.\(^{50}\)

The Labour party is a democratic socialist party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many, not the few. Where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe. And where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect.\(^{51}\)

‘Common ownership’ and ‘equitable distribution’ as principles for political action cede to ‘community’ and ‘opportunity’. Gordon Brown’s short essay ‘The Politics of Potential: a New Agenda for Labour’ which appeared in Reinventing the Left (1994) (edited by David Miliband) elaborates these values further. He describes the relationship between state and citizen as one of the paternalistic ‘empowerment’ of individuals whose guiding principle is “not what the state can do for you, but what the state can enable you to do for yourself”.\(^{52}\) The mutable, undefined site of socially interdependent ‘community’ acts as the basis of individual autonomy. But it also represents a kind of state apparatus: sometimes the work of ‘the community’ will be actualized through central government, and at other times through local government, voluntary organizations and trade

\(^{50}\) Michael White, ‘Blair defines the new Labour: Leader on the verge of a coup over the Clause Four pledge to nationalise: delegates warm to ‘90s socialism’, The Guardian, 5 October 1994, p. npg.


unions. ‘Community’ is no longer the ‘grassroots’ beyond the state but the ethical scene of New Labour’s programme for economic change, the meritocratic realisation of ‘inclusion’ for its citizens. “At root”, Brown writes,

our objective is that individuals should have the opportunity to realize their potential to the full - that individuals should be enabled to bridge the gap between what they are and what they have it in themselves to become.

He continues: “it is indeed people’s potential - and thus the value of their labour - that is the driving force of the modern economy”. For this reason, access to training and skills development is the key to both economic growth and social emancipation. In a post-industrial knowledge economy, he emphasises, “individual liberation arises from the enhancement of the value of labour”. As Foucault described in a lecture at the Collège de France in March 1979, this political position conceives of the citizen as ‘human capital’. The ‘human capital’ will wager him or herself competitively on the market for employment: an “abilities-machine” investing consistently in him or herself as a lifelong capital project.

This represents ‘inclusion’: both process and outcome of active, entrepreneurial participation in the economy (although rarely if ever identified explicitly as such

---

53 Gordon Brown, p. 119.
55 Gordon Brown, p. 113.
56 Gordon Brown, p. 113.
in policy documents). A managerial cultural policy formed part of New Labour’s programme for addressing ‘exclusion’:

a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas face a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown.

New Labour established the Social Exclusion Unit in 1999, the most significant of the several cross-departmental bodies it then set up to deliver public services. And in terms of the work the arts would do on behalf of this agenda, Policy Action Team 10: A report to the Social Exclusion Unit (1999) consolidated and institutionalised the work of former community arts worker François Matarasso, author of the landmark study Use or Ornament? The social impact of participating in

59 DCMS reported the successful uptake of inclusion in the subsequent document Building on PAT 10: Progress Report on Social Inclusion (2001, p. 4) with the headline point that “the sponsored bodies have accepted social inclusion as a genuine objective for culture and sport”. A raft of ensuing documents and research papers associated with projects, among them The Arts and Social Exclusion: a review prepared for the Arts Council of England (2001), Count Me In: a Review of the Dimensions of Social Inclusion through Culture and Sport (2002) and The art of inclusion: research report 35 (2004) all variously refer to the importance of addressing ‘objectives’, ‘strategies’ and ‘targets’ associated with inclusion. However, none define what ‘inclusion’ or ‘social inclusion’ actually are. Helen Jermyn’s reports make the most systematic attempts: the first (2001, p. 2) draws on the Community Development Foundation’s understanding of exclusion as a dynamic concept which, distinct from ‘poverty’, “‘draws attention to people’s experiences of being prevented from being full members of society. Social exclusion is more than a material condition’”. The second distinguishes between ‘exclusion’ and ‘inclusion’, but only by reviewing arts workers’ application of the terms to project participants in the everyday and the ethics thereof, thus displacing the problem of definition altogether.

60 OPDM, Breaking the Cycle: Taking stock of progress and priorities for the future: a report by the Social Exclusion Unit (London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2004), paragraph 3.

61 Tom Ling, ’Delivering joined-up government in the UK: dimensions, issues and problems’, Public Administration, 80, 4 (2002), 615-642 (pp. 622-624).
On the basis of a series of case study evaluations, *Use or Ornament?* had staged a set of claims regarding the benefits arts participation can deliver: on an individual basis, enhanced skills, self-esteem and employability, and at the level of the group, greater social cohesion and a strengthening of national cultural life. These benefits, he argued, flow from an ‘active’, participatory engagement qualitatively different to a ‘passive’, spectatorial absorption of culture. The authors of the *PAT 10* report likewise rehearsed these claims. Though they made it clear that they did “not believe that every artist or sportsperson should be a social worker by another name, or that artistic or sporting excellence should take second place to community regeneration”, they nonetheless insisted that “arts and sports bodies should acknowledge that social inclusion is part of their business”. This view was enshrined in policy via Public Service Agreements made between the Treasury and the new central government Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which (in terms of the scope of this thesis) were refined and augmented over three spending reviews in 2000, 2002 and 2004. For the period 2005-2008, for example, the arts were specifically required to deliver against three PSA targets: halting the increase in child obesity (PSA 2), increasing attendance and participation in cultural events by priority groups (PSA 3), and improving the productivity of the creative

---

64 DCMS, *Policy Action Team 10*, p. 5.
industries (PSA 4).\textsuperscript{65} PSA 3’s supervening aim of “breaking down barriers to access and exploiting the full wealth of UK culture”\textsuperscript{66} was to be delivered expressly through Arts Council funding strategies. As Michael McKinnie observes, this organisational move eroded the ‘arms-length’ principle, enabling central government to influence arts work in an unprecedented style.\textsuperscript{67}

Though these actions, directed by central government policy, proceed at a local level, the concepts of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ relate to the development of neoliberalism on a global basis - the argument Angus Cameron and Ronen Palan advance in \textit{The Imagined Economies of Globalization} (2004). Forms of ‘imagined community’ linked to the territory of the nation-state\textsuperscript{68} have, in policy terms at least, partially ceded to an alternative imaginary, a ‘cognitive map’ based on three fundamentally economic categories: the ‘off-shore’ domain of globalization, the ‘private economy’ of the competitive nation-state and the ‘anti-economy’ of social exclusion. As the trope of economy implies, these categories do not refer to bounded material spaces but horizontally distributed socio-economic velocities of practice\textsuperscript{69} which flow over administrative boundaries.\textsuperscript{70}


\textsuperscript{66} DCMS, \textit{Autumn Performance Report}, p. 24.


\textsuperscript{69} The concept of ‘cognitive map’ and its interaction with practice clearly resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘rhizome’ (2004 [1980] p. 23): “Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a
'velocity' (instead of, say, 'category' or 'arena') signifies that these conceptual schema - or as Cameron and Palan describe them, 'imagined economies' - represent dynamic, incessant action. They are co-constitutive, and exert material influence over institutional formations which, despite the rhetoric of globalization as taking place 'offshore', are firmly embedded in state infrastructures.71 ‘Inclusion’, defined negatively against ‘exclusion’, implies modes of postnational social integration (economic participation and wealth, lifestyle, consumption, the internet, networked urban societies and so on) most commonly associated with globalization.72

In circumstances in which states increasingly delegate responsibility for economic welfare to individuals, those people who are favourably defined as ‘included’ actively have a hand in the development of competitive national economies. Those who are ‘excluded’ – “the static, the redundant, the pathological, the feckless, the workshy”73 - do not. The social inclusion discourse thus correlates valued subjectivities to implied and actual economic productivity

map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. In contrast to centred (even polycentric systems) with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths, the rhizome is an acentred, non-hierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automation, defined solely by a circulation of states”. Cameron and Palan do not cite Deleuze and Guattari but A Thousand Plateaus appears in the text’s bibliography.

71 Doreen Massey makes this argument vehemently in her two most recent books, For space (2005) and World City (2007).
72 Angus Cameron, ‘Geographies of welfare and exclusion: social inclusion and exception’, p. 397.
73 Angus Cameron, ‘Geographies of welfare and exclusion: social inclusion and exception’, p. 403.
and, therefore, mobility. Metaphorically reflecting the idealised circulation of capital on the global stage, the ‘included’ subject is one who is able competently to negotiate global networks of action and communication. Integration across territorial boundaries, the endgame of inclusion, is a scene in which the ‘included’ freely exercise their mobility and cultural differences have been unproblematically sublated into the single regime of the global market.

(iii) Regimes of value

This project examines the interaction of theatre and performance with neoliberalization in Britain. Neoliberalism is an ideological project whose values of enterprise and competition have become hegemonic. To this extent, Peck and Tickell observe that “proselytizing the virtues of free trade, flexible labour, and active individualism has become so commonplace in contemporary politics - from Washington to Moscow - that they hardly even warrant a comment in many quarters”. With the aim of elaborating alternatives to neoliberal hegemony, they argue that

there is more to be done, both theoretically and empirically, on the specification and exploration of different processes of neoliberalization. This would need to take account of the ways in which ideologies of neoliberalism are themselves produced and reproduced through institutional forms and political action, since ‘actually existing’ neoliberalisms are always (in some way or another) hybrid or composite structures.

---

74 Peck and Tickell, p. 381.
75 Peck and Tickell, p. 383.
I frame my analysis with this in view. For British arts workers in the education, ‘community’ and participatory field now discursively elaborated (in higher education at least) as applied performance and theatre the flexibility, even emptiness of ‘inclusion’ has been of particular relevance and expediency. In *The art of inclusion* (2004), a report for the Arts Council (which signally fails to define ‘inclusion’), Helen Jermyn cites an artist (anonymously) who diagnoses the discursive change which ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ represent:

> In some ways those phrases are entering the national vocabulary if you like. I think in some ways that's been a bit of a gift for us, in that that's always what we've been about, you know we might talk about the disadvantaged or lacking opportunities, *we've always been working with what we find is now social exclusion*. But I don't think we have a problem with it. I would have a problem with it if I was talking to kids we were working with. (my emphasis)\(^{76}\)

This assessment demonstrates a form of industrial pragmatism in workers whose chosen area of artistic engagement (‘the disadvantaged’), itself historically marginal, suddenly acquires discursive legitimacy. It also shows that the ambiguities of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ include a critical slippage between ‘society’ and ‘social’ – the one, a descriptor of a more or less objectifiable set of institutions which also engage popular identification; the other, forms of relation among people which may proceed in and through such institutions but are not restricted to them. The problem of publicly naming (stigmatising) young participants themselves as ‘excluded’, from a position of assumed ‘inclusion’, exemplifies this slippage. However, the dominant anxiety for cultural producers has not been the stigmatising effects of the ‘social exclusion’ discourse but its

---

reconstitution of the value of culture to the state. In the early 2000s, debate and resistance to the managerial injunction to produce ‘inclusion’ began to gather pace. In June 2003, for example, the National Gallery, National Theatre and AeA Consulting convened *Valuing Culture*, a conference whose speakers included Nicholas Hytner, Robert Hewison, Chris Smith and Deborah Bestwick to debate the issue. Adrian Ellis of AeA Consulting characterised the problem as follows:

> the argument runs that British public policy with respect to the arts has become lop-sided. Specifically, the very strong emphasis in current policy on the actual and potential contribution of arts organisations to wider social and economic goals leaves under-articulated and, given an environment where there is a strong bias towards the quantifiable, undervalued the intrinsic worth of these organisations and their activities.  

In May 2004, Tessa Jowell, Minister for Culture herself published *Government and the Value of Culture* (2004), a pamphlet which asked of cultural producers “how, in going beyond targets, can we best capture the value of culture?” and unequivocally recommended artistic ‘excellence’ as a principle for public subsidy. The struggle between government’s elaboration of a communitarian neoliberalism trading on the benefits of ‘access’ and sedimented discourses of art as ‘intrinsic’ and ‘ineffable’ in nature pervaded the discursive environment in which the projects under discussion in this thesis were commissioned.

---

79 Tessa Jowell, p. 16.
My treatments of each of the four projects in this thesis take their departure from the figures of ‘risk’ that they engage: the asylum seeker, the ‘young person at risk’, the sex worker and the entrepreneur. These are figures of mobile inclusion, abject marginality and radical exclusion from the form of the social which neoliberal political economy proposes – a global, all-encompassing zone of marketised productivity. My analysis is predicated on the understanding that the symbolic is the site of the entanglement of ‘economy’ and ‘culture’, and thus (as Gay Hawkins and Stephen Muecke insist) that “value is neither the province of the economy nor of culture, but is constantly transacted between the two in multiple sites and regimes”. I therefore examine how the symbolic work engaged in theatre and performance negotiates, establishes, challenges and protects social and industrial structures and the values which legitimise them. Though it takes its lead from the figures which the case studies narrate, my analysis is not necessarily ‘about’ the search for asylum, the experience of living ‘at risk’ or the pursuit of entrepreneurialism. It examines the way in which theatre and performance bring these figures into representation.

In this sense, it is also an analysis of and about the apparatuses for representation and the effects of representation under the conditions of neoliberal capital accumulation. Along with John Frow, I understand representation and the value or values assigned to it to be an effect of social organisation, a phenomenon which is “relational and practical, the outcome of processes of negotiation and

---

Frow proposes a theoretical model he describes as ‘regimes of value’, informed in part by Susan Stewart’s article ‘Ceci Tuera Cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art’. Stewart analyses different cultural inscriptions and responses towards graffiti in the United States in the late 1980s: as criminal act, virtuoso performance, art, dirt, and brand identity. Graffiti’s multiple appearances across the cityscape – notices anonymously pasted to car bumpers, insignia hastily scrawled across walls by apprentices honing their skills under the tutelage of more experience graffers, images pulled within the fine art gallery’s discourse of the avant garde – signally draw attention to the understanding that “the crime of graffiti is a crime in mode of production. Unlike pornography, graffiti is not a crime of content” (my emphasis). Stewart’s insight allows Frow to suggest that acts of valuation, or determinations of what is to be valued, should be treated not as a problematic of identity but one of institution. This position insists that the relation between artistic interventions and their readers is not fully determined by cultural background, which in any case would be exceptionally difficult to wholly delineate “since most people belong to many valuing communities simultaneously; since communities overlap; and since they’re heterogeneous”. Instead, Frow’s model is not simply able but actively looks to account for “the possibility that different (institutionally constituted) cultural domains might have quite distinct problematics of form and of audience”. A ‘regime of value’,

---

83 John Frow, *Cultural Studies*, p. 143.
84 John Frow, *Cultural Studies*, p. 21.
in which case, to follow Frow’s earlier definition, is “a semiotic institution
generating evaluative regularities under certain conditions of use, and in which
particular empirical audiences or communities may be more or less fully
imbricated”.85 I examine each case study’s imbrication in multiple discourses of
culture in order to demonstrate ‘the public’ as a site of agonism – disagreements
which are not the function of individual opinion but collective, material interests.
To return to the dyad value-values, my argument in this regard has been
substantially influenced by that of anthropologist David Graeber, who argues
that the separation of the two categories is tendentious: “the ultimate stakes of
politics […] is not even the struggle to appropriate value; it is the struggle to
establish what value is”86 (original emphasis).

**Performing ‘risk’: neoliberalization and contemporary performance**, the title of the
thesis, reflects the questions in play. I seek to emphasise the functionality of
performance in public to the reproduction of culture; to describe
neoliberalization as an ongoing process engaging with existing historical forms;
and to demonstrate that ‘risk’ – a meaning adhering to enterprising action and a
category based on the statistical aggregation of ‘fact’ – is actively constructed.
Bringing the temporal, epistemological and thus performative implications of a
logic of risk clearly into view, Randy Martin87 writes that “risk can be

---

85 John Frow, ‘Regimes of Value’, in *Shakespeare’s Books: Contemporary Cultural
Politics and the Persistence of Empire*, ed. by Philip Mead and Marion Campbell
86 David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: the False Coin of Our
87 Randy Martin’s most recent work has concerned finance as a technique for
socialising capital. In both *Financialization of Daily Life* (2002) and *An Empire of
distinguished from uncertainty as an expected outcome whose likelihood or value can be quantified. For risks to be reliably calculable, the future must look like the present”. 88 This tyrannous performativity evacuates repetition from the scene, but can only remain hypothetical. Its remainder, uncertainty, introduces dynamism, the possibility of disruption and the potential for gain or loss. In this sense, the work of the artist and, for example, ‘fluidity’ and ‘liminality’, categories which the late twentieth century phenomenon of performance studies has celebrated, are those in which the exercise of subjective agency takes place in relation to and actualises knowledge as uncertain in foundation. The work of meaning-making thus pursued in art, by disclosing the uncertain basis of the apparently given, may destabilise existing norms or structures. This does not entail, however, that ‘all artists take risks’, nor that ‘liminality’ is progressive when experienced as the condition of everyday life, as is the case, Michel Agier writes, for the refugee, who resides in “a place of waiting apart from society”. 89

It is to this figure that the first chapter now turns.

---


CHAPTER 1
Performing ‘exclusion’: The Margate Exodus

Introduction

This discussion of Artangel’s commission The Margate Exodus (2005-2007) takes its departure, like the project itself, from the representational questions raised by a contemporary figure of exile: the refugee in search of asylum. Under the terms of the 1951 Geneva Convention, the British state must provide hospitality and support to people in flight from persecution and torture as an absolute principle. However, the material encounter with the contemporary nation state demonstrates the conditionality of that principle’s enactment. Although forced migrants have sought refuge in Britain for centuries, the term ‘asylum seeker’ is a legislative construction specific to the 1990s, and indicates the legitimacy of the person’s presence within the territory of the nation state as provisional and subject to authentication. The critical issue in the contemporary mediation of asylum in both the rituals of the state and its treatment in the media is whether or not claims are genuine; indeed, Rosemary Sales, writing in 2002, suggests that “the terms of mainstream political debate have been predicated on the notion

that the majority of asylum seekers are ‘bogus’ and therefore undeserving of
entry into Britain and of social support”, under the influence of the conservative
press which mobilises ‘asylum seeker’ as shorthand for grasping fraudulence. A
convincing, ‘real’ performance of the entitlement to asylum – in which claimants
may rhetorically stage distress or composure in their performed narratives,
depending on the legal advice given - will result in the granting of refugee status
and thus access to welfare support. The question of welfare is worth
emphasising, because, as John Crowley writes

welfare issues are of considerable significance in contemporary migration
debates: indeed, it is precisely as, among other things, welfare states that
contemporary states are confronted with migration. (original emphasis)

With this in view, if, as Sophie Nield argues, “we are able to move only in so far
as we are able to appear at the margins, at the borders, only in so far as we are
able to accurately represent ourselves to the audiences we encounter there”, it is
the accuracy or, better, the realism of such representations which functions to
authenticate the validity of a claim to resources. In other words, the rhetorical
force of representation is a question of value. The asylum seeker, having risked

4 Rosemary Sales, ‘The deserving and the undeserving? Refugees, asylum
5 Alison Jeffers, ‘Dirty truth: personal narrative, victimhood and participatory
theatre work with people seeking asylum’, Research in Drama Education, 13, 2
(2008), 217-221 (p. 218).
6 John Crowley, ‘Where Does the State Actually Start? The Contemporary
Governance of Work and Migration’, in Controlling Frontiers: Free Movement Into
and Within Europe, ed. by Didier Bigo and Elspeth Guild (Aldershot: Ashgate
2005), pp. 140-160 (p. 140).
7 Sophie Nield, ‘On the border as theatrical space: appearance, dis-location and
the production of the refugee’, in Contemporary Theatres in Europe: a critical
companion, ed. by Joe Kelleher and Nicholas Ridout (Abingdon and New York:
Routledge 2006), pp. 61-72 (p. 69).
his or her life in flight from persecution, must then perform to the standard set by the contemporary neoliberal state for which the additional welfare burden is a liability.

Though this chapter is not about the search for asylum in a strict sense – and nor, I will argue, is *The Margate Exodus* – it will address the questions of rhetorical performance, theatrical realism and exclusion from the social that the figure of the asylum seeker invokes. *The Margate Exodus* was itself made possible by a novel form of welfare provision: the presence in Margate of Creative Partnerships Kent, an arts education programme initiated under the New Labour government. Set up in 2002 under the national remit of Arts Council England and with a strategic relationship to local area-based programmes of regeneration, the national programme Creative Partnerships was designed to introduce bespoke programmes of artistic work to schools in the thirty-six most deprived areas of the country as identified by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s Indices of Deprivation.\(^8\) The struggling seaside resort of Margate in Thanet, the most deprived district of Kent, was one such area. Through examining and experimenting with teaching and learning processes in schools with the use of artistic practice, education would become more responsive to the learning needs of individual children. The bespoke nature of Creative Partnerships would likewise enable each headteacher “to realise their personal vision for a school,

---

freeing them up to innovate and succeed”. The governmental aim, in effect, was to entrepreneurialise individual schools and the learners to whom they catered, producing in children and young people “an ability not just to cope with change, but also to positively thrive on it and engineer it”.

Appointed in 2002, director Anna Cutler’s stated intention for Creative Partnerships Kent was to work with artists of the highest quality, “raising the quality of work in schools and in the community as well as increasing the capacity of arts practice in Kent”. A chance telephone call in 2002 between Artangel co-director Michael Morris and Anna Cutler resulted in an idea for a collaboration. Initially envisaging a term- or perhaps year-long project with Artangel,

what actually arose from this conversation, and a follow-up visit from Michael, was the decision by them in agreement with Channel 4 to work on a film commission with Penny Woolcock for the summer of 2006. This film was to involve the entire local community in a contemporary re-telling of the epic *Exodus*. This shifted the project from a stand-alone education project within schools into a significant piece of art in the public domain that impacted on the community at large and fed in to the ongoing regeneration of the area.

---


10 Creative Partnerships | Why creativity? <http://www.creative-partnerships.com/aboutcp/funding> [accessed December 2007]. The work of projects which have taken place under the auspices of Creative Partnerships is not reducible to rhetoric such as this. See Wolf (2006) for an analysis of a visual art project commissioned by Creative Partnerships Kent in Hythe Community School and Thomson et al (2006) for a more critical account of the tensions circulating around a playwrighting project staged in a school in Nottingham.


12 Anna Cutler, pp. 196-197.

13 Anna Cutler, p. 197.
Artangel had been interested in the work of director Penny Woolcock since 2000. Her filmmaking, an innovative variant of social realism, utilises documentary methods to create fiction, their problematisation of the boundary between ‘life’ and ‘art’ in harmony with Artangel’s own curatorial and aesthetic interests. The film *Exodus* (2007) would be the final outcome of a four year process in Margate, incorporating *Towards a Promised Land* (2005-2006), a photography and public art project made by American photographer Wendy Ewald with young people in schools, the Nayland Rock Induction Centre and another local facility dedicated to unaccompanied children;[^14] *Waste Man* (2006), a giant temporary sculpture designed by Antony Gormley; and *Plague Songs* (2006), a concept CD release featuring songs by, among others, Rufus Wainwright, Imogen Heap and Brian Eno. With about a third of its funds from Arts Council England, *The Margate Exodus*’ ambition was to involve hundreds of Margate residents in the making of the works, which would reflect on Margate’s difficult encounter with immigration, asylum and dispersal. Protest and violence in the resort had intensified during the 1990s in response to processes of housing refugees arriving at Dover in the struggling guest houses along the south coast. In 2000 the National Front marched on Margate’s seafront, threatening to institute fortnightly protests, an action which prompted the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* to launch a detailed and thoughtful series of awareness-raising articles to explode ‘urban myths’ about ‘asylum seekers’ being automatically “given council houses, mobile

[^14]: The real name of the centre was withheld from publication to protect the identities of the children.
phones, free food, free taxis”\textsuperscript{15}. Five years on, the repeated defacement of a gigantic banner bearing Wendy Ewald’s portrait of a young South African girl, displayed semi-permanently on the sea wall\textsuperscript{16} violently demonstrated that in 2005 racism and anti-refugee sentiment in the town remained acute.

Writing on *The Margate Exodus* in *The Sunday Times* – a paper not ordinarily quick to report on community arts events – AA Gill advanced the point that Artangel co-director Michael Morris

> believes in moving art out of its building box and putting it into communities, ones that don’t get much access to culture or anything that looks nice or relevant to them. This is a good thing, a fine ambition, and who is to gainsay him even if, here on the seafront, he does look like a windblown Dr Livingstone offering missionary art to the natives?\textsuperscript{17}

These remarks invoke and strategically modify Artangel’s avant garde mission to take art ‘beyond the white walls of the gallery’ – a procedure which, regarding *The Margate Exodus*, Gill referred to in the piece as “Victorian cultural imperialism”.\textsuperscript{18} This discursive modification constituted, I suggest, part of *The Margate Exodus*’ producers’ pragmatic (in this case, somewhat counterproductive) construction of the project’s identity, given its association with Creative Partnerships and ‘community-based’ regeneration, in terms of a


\textsuperscript{16} For a short critique of *Towards a Promised Land* and its politics, see Caroline Blunt, ‘Neither Last Resort nor Promised Land’, *Street Signs*, Autumn (2006), 28-29.

\textsuperscript{17} AA Gill, ‘Something biblical for the weekend? As Margate prepares for a plague of frogs and film crews, AA Gill asks: can they be serious?’ *The Sunday Times*, 27 August 2006, pp. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{18} AA Gill, p. 7.
governmental discourse of ‘social cohesion’. As in the case of ‘inclusion’, the policy documents that refer to this term rarely provide a definition; Angus Cameron quotes (and critiques) John Gray’s characterisation of cohesion as “a general consensus on basic values, a lack of widespread alienation and anomie and an absence of marginalized and disaffected social groups”.\textsuperscript{19} DCMS’ simultaneously entrepreneurialising and communitarian rhetoric elaborates ‘cultural activities’ as substantial contributors to the production of social cohesion:

highly effective in improving the skills and confidence of individuals and improving the quality of life and the capacity of communities to solve their own problems. Such activities can contribute to the physical, economic and social regeneration of an area if they are meaningful to and ‘owned’ by the local community. […] Participation in cultural activities can and does deliver a sense of belonging, trust and civic engagement.\textsuperscript{20}

‘Strategic Priority 2’ of DCMS’ Strategic Plan 2003-2006 specified the aim of “opening up our institutions to the wider community to promote lifelong learning and social cohesion”.\textsuperscript{21} a task delegated by the Treasury and passed on to arts producers, via the Arts Council, with the injunction to increase attendance and participation of under-represented groups at arts events and in projects, in particular “socially excluded groups (social class C2, D, E) and Black and

\textsuperscript{19} Angus Cameron, ‘Geographies of welfare and exclusion: social inclusion and exception’, \textit{Progress in Human Geography}, 30, 3 (2006), 396-404 (p. 397).
\textsuperscript{20} DCMS, \textit{Culture at the Heart of Regeneration}, (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2004), p. 31.
minority ethnic communities”. To be clear, what is at stake for government is not the production of opportunities for inter- and intracultural exchange (the statistical rendering of identity makes that apparent) but the service that interaction and participation in the arts, as instances of ‘togetherness’, might provide to the objective of economic regeneration. For an Artangel commission to align itself conspicuously with this discourse was unusual.

Gill’s commentary, however, belongs to a different political and historical paradigm than the responsibilising discourse of cohesion. By the Victorian period, ironically, Margate was in fact a cheap and convenient space for working people’s expenditure of an increasingly routinised leisuretime which did not necessarily take the guise of reformist ‘rational recreation’. And, notwithstanding some unevenness in its fortunes in the war-torn 1940s, in the first part of twentieth century Margate’s tourist industry continued to thrive, the demotic pleasures of its amusement park represented sardonically in Lindsay Anderson’s Free Cinema short O Dreamland! (1953). The Margate Exodus’ citation of culture as a practice of ‘community-building’, meanwhile, is a phenomenon specific to neoliberalization, and one accompanied by a discourse of evaluation, measurement and accountability. My own research about The Margate Exodus was initially functional to this discourse. An impromptu conversation with Anna

Cutler following a talk at the Royal Society for the Arts made apparent an opportunity for me to volunteer my services (in precisely the entrepreneurial mode I critique in this thesis) to *The Margate Exodus* as an evaluator, the outcome of which was a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with participants, submitted to the Arts Council at the project’s conclusion.\(^{25}\) Other discourses of cultural production in the Margate running with and alongside that of ‘community’ relate to the resort’s historic and, since the 1970s, failing status as a tourist destination,\(^ {26}\) now re-imagined, in paradigmatically post-industrial style, as the scene of culture. Thanet District Council, Kent County Council and SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) each support arts projects as a means to catalyse an increase in visitors to the area and to rejuvenate Margate’s Old Town, of which the Turner Centre contemporary art gallery is the town’s most significant capital project. It has not been without controversial problems: the £7m prototype of the first design, commissioned from architects Snøhetta and Spence in 2001 to sit adjacent to the town’s listed pier, disastrously floated out to sea. And in dialogue with new forms of culture-led consumption is the ongoing effort to protect and preserve amusement park Dreamland and the Grade II-listed Scenic Railway, whose status has acted as a valuable resource in protecting the park from demolition and commercial redevelopment. The locus of continued struggle regarding the future of Margate as a viable resort and its


history as a place of working-class holidaymaking, an arson attack on the Scenic Railway in 2008, destroying a third of the structure (with much speculation regarding the blaze’s role in clearing the ground for a housing development on the Dreamland site) violently indicates the continuing force of competing investments. If anything, the material reshaping of the town in the image of developments on the quaysides of Gateshead and Salford is a far more culturally imperialist move than The Margate Exodus; nonetheless, the project’s entry into the formerly thriving tourist town throws attributes of the artistic practices concerned into relief. As I will show, these relate to the volatile dynamic of ‘tourism reflexivity’ concerned, in economic globalization, to identify and exploit a particular place’s location within the contours of geography, history and culture that swirl the globe, and in particular identifying that place’s actual and potential material and semiotic resources.

This action engages forms of risk-taking quite different from those exercised by the asylum seeker – the mobile, economically ‘productive’ entrepreneur’s other.

---

27 Nick Laister, town planner and author of Pennies by the Sea: The Life and Times of Joyland Amusements, Bridlington (St. Albans: Skelter Publishing 2006) leads the Save Dreamland campaign. For exhaustive documentation and regularly updated details of the history of the campaign, see <http://www.savedreamland.co.uk/> [accessed July 2009]


I: ‘Off Limits’: Artangel’s commissioning practice

Announcing the re-launch of the Artangel Trust in an article for *The Times* in 1992, Robert Hewison offered a dismal diagnosis of the state of the arts in Britain: an endless parade of safe theatrical classics on the National Theatre stage and the reliably consistent presence of long-running West End musical shows, enlivened only by the occasional gallery closure. Its atrophied state had, however, managed to produce an unexpectedly benign outcome. “In the depths of this imaginative depression”, he wrote,

we are witnessing the emergence of a new breed of artistic entrepreneur, someone neither artist nor bureaucrat, who will take the risks and make the judgements that the institutions seem too distracted to make. Engineers of the imagination, impresarios of the avant garde, they are independent producers who will work with the institutions without turning into one. Typical of this new breed are Michael Morris and James Lingwood.30

Following Hewison’s suggestive rhetoric, this section traces forms and uses of rhetorical performance in and for Artangel’s commissioning practice. Now one of the most important British curators of art and performance, the company espouses a straightforward aim: to commission “exceptional projects by outstanding contemporary artists”.31 The realisation of that aim is complex. As Lingwood stated in an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* in 2002, “there’s no Artangel production line – there can’t be. Equally every project is a logistical nightmare presenting a completely fresh set of problems…We’re big on

sleeplessness”. The incidence of sleeplessness, functional to the work of creating and adapting structures to serve individual artists – which Lingwood’s vocabulary frames as a post-Fordist model of flexible accumulation – is perhaps less important to the statement than the logic of its disclosure. The narratives Artangel’s curators offer in interviews often constitute what might be understood as ‘backstage’ insights into disasters, problems or failures which have afflicted commissions, which, by the time those insights are uttered, have metamorphosed into success and achievement. Such narratives fortify a notion of the ‘artistic entrepreneur’, taking risks and establishing ‘new territory’ for practice.

Important for the argument that follows is accordingly the question of rhetorical agency: the expedient generation of forms of persuasive speech. The scene of Artangel’s commissions is predominantly the post-industrial city. Marked by changes in capitalism’s mode of production and the gradual emergence of a paradigm of urban regeneration in which public funding and private sponsorship are imbricated, authorities mobilise artistic production to assert the uniqueness of a place, its competitive edge in a global tourism marketplace and to attract other forms of inward investment. Buildings and land, speculatively appropriated, perform a new role for consuming tourists in pursuit of leisure.

32 Rupert Christiansen, ‘Ambition: to surprise and amaze For 10 years, one organisation has been behind some of art’s most exciting projects. Rupert Christiansen meets the men who run Artangel’, The Daily Telegraph, 12 February 2002, p. 23.


That appropriation is as much a matter of discursive re-inscription as it is capital investment. Indeed, just as the conversion of agricultural land during industrialization involved “the application of capital to land”\(^\text{35}\) we might understand the temporary introduction of the site-specific artwork to an ‘outmoded’ site to perform a cognate function, a possibility which Artangel’s rhetorical performances strongly suggest. In aesthetic terms, the form and relations between artwork and spectator cultivated by Artangel’s commissions ritually model a tourism of spectacle and experience. The departure of radical arts practice from the artistic ‘production line’ of the theatre and gallery thus throws into relief changing discourses of cultural production and the opportunities they provide for discursive leverage regarding governmental support for the arts, which remains a primary source of funding for experimental practice. These circumstances raise a set of questions regarding the contemporary relation between cultural and market exchange, the social subjects both model and interpellate and the oppositional status, or otherwise, of avant garde practice.

(i) Impresarios of the avant garde

In 1991, then in their mid-thirties, James Lingwood and Michael Morris took over the running of Artangel as co-directors. Founded in 1985 by Roger Took, Artangel was a small, privately-sponsored producer of radical conceptual and

performance art undertaking to “‘fund the unfundable’”. In its early years it presented a series of interdisciplinary works with subversive, often anti-capitalist politics in public spaces in London and cities across Britain. Its commissions included ‘culture-jamming’ pieces on advertising hoardings by Barbara Kruger and Conrad Atkinson, a series of Krzysztof Wodiczko’s controversial City Projections – an artist who, as a gesture of protest in response to the British government’s granting of funds to the apartheid regime, had in 1985 notoriously abandoned a work he had created for Nelson’s Column and projected instead a swastika on the side of South Africa House in Trafalgar Square – and live performance projects created by Station House Opera and Bow Gamelan Ensemble. In this sense, the curatorial profile of Lingwood and Morris reflected that of the Trust. Lingwood had been curator of Exhibitions at the ICA between 1986 to 1989, before directing visual art projects on a freelance basis - for example, the collaborative TSWA Four Cities Project (1990), an assemblage of twenty two temporary site-specific pieces by artists such as Stuart Brisley, Peter Fischli and David Weiss. Morris worked at the ICA as director of Performing Arts until 1987, departing once “the black box of the ICA theatre began to feel like a constraint” to establish Cultural Industry, an independent company producing the work in the UK of internationally established artists in dance and

theatre, including Pina Bausch, Robert Lepage and Robert Wilson. More recently, Cultural Industry produced Improbable Theatre’s ‘junk opera’ Shockheaded Peter (1998), a touring piece whose gradual emergence Morris described in an interview in terms characteristic of Hewison’s risk-taking cultural entrepreneur:

The resulting show was not initially auspicious. “I well remember the awful night when our PR man came to see a dress rehearsal”, Morris recalls. “He was horrified to find that everything was made of cardboard and string. I even had to convince myself that it would be alright on the night”. It certainly was: a smash-hit in several countries besides Britain, it’s now licensed to 12 German theatres.40

This form of producerly uncertainty - for which the insubstantial cardboard and string provides an apt focus and metaphor - is functional to the pursuit of Artangel’s central aim: the creation of conditions for commissioned artists to realise the project of their choosing in complete freedom. It fulfils what the 2006 promotional brochure for the organisation articulates as

the need for an arts organisation that is inspired and shaped by the vision of artists, and is committed to realising them, no matter how challenging or ambitious they may be. Artangel exists to realise the full potential of compelling ideas in whatever form or context seems best.41

The implication is that no other such organisation exists, and, as a matter of course, artists find themselves compromised and compromising with

institutional forces which constrain the realisation of artistic vision. Artangel by contrast refuses to impose limits on the artist, but assembles resources and develops structures to facilitate the artist’s emerging concept, which might take any number of aesthetic forms - public sculpture, film, visual art, sound, music or performance. In a round-table interview appearing in the edited collection *Off Limits: Forty Artangel Projects* (2002), Morris states “the one thing I think we would always want to feel, having completed a project, is that whatever ideas were there initially have been explored to the fullest potential. That whatever the artist or artists wanted to do was as uncircumscribed as possible”.42 This ethic of practice, oriented towards the free creation of as yet unspecified, unimagined meaning, instantiates a productive sense of bewilderment and difficulty for both producer and artist. Morris’ comments regarding *The Margate Exodus* (2006) in a discussion with Brian Eno (a regular collaborator with Artangel) published in *The Producers: Alchemists of the Impossible* (2007) disclose insomnia and anxiety, “waking up in the middle of the night yet again and thinking I will never again allow myself to be in this position, where it feels so difficult”.43 In the mid-1990s, Artangel invited Robert Wilson to make what ultimately became installation piece *H.G.* (1995), a collaboration with sound artist Hans-Peter Kuhn, staged in the Clink Street Vaults (now Vinopolis Museum of Wine) near London Bridge. Wilson’s praise for Artangel in an advance press interview also gestures towards the exercise of freedom as overwhelming and confusing: “they say you can do

whatever you want. I had no idea what to do. I didn’t know whether it should be indoors or out, in a park or a factory building or someone’s house”.44

This affective burden follows Artangel’s flight from routinised institutions in the service of providing an alternative, more welcoming ‘home’ for avant garde artistic practice – both in the sense of the conditions of production which make the work possible, and the space of presentation, which is, more often than not, the ‘non-art’ or public site. Conspicuously absent from Wilson’s list are the more habitual domains of artistic presentation: the gallery and the theatre. Artangel’s continuing aim is “to take art ‘beyond the white walls of the gallery’”45 and thus (in another Artangel-produced slogan cited by a national arts critic) to make “‘extraordinary things happen in ordinary places’”46 through the provision of beautiful and technically complex works like Roger Hiorns’ Seizure (2008-2009), which introduced 75,000 litres of copper sulphate to the interior of an “abandoned”47 council flat near the Elephant and Castle, producing the growth of a layer of blue crystals all over the flat which audience members, equipped with Wellington boots, could enter free of charge. Yet Artangel’s projects compellingly demonstrate that departure from the usual infrastructures for art

44 Michael Ratcliffe, ‘The magus of Clink Street: Adored abroad but hardly known here: Robert Wilson is plotting his first major British show, writes Michael Ratcliffe’. The Observer, 3 September 1995, p. 11.
46 Rupert Christiansen, ‘Ambition: to surprise and amaze For 10 years, one organisation has been behind some of art’s most exciting projects. Rupert Christiansen meets the men who run Artangel’, p. 23.
practice does not entail exception from ideologies of artistic production and reception, and, furthermore, the historicity of discourses of art and the public in circulation. In 2002, for example, in response to a question from Lisa Jardine about Artangel’s ambitions for audiences, Lingwood acknowledged the performativity of contemporaneous policy discourses:

it’s hard not to use certain buzz-words of the moment. We do have an ambition that the projects should have the potential to be genuinely inclusive. It’s important that they can engage people who come intentionally – and often with a considerable amount of previous knowledge – and those who arrive accidentally.48

Staged well before ‘inclusion’ had become common currency,49 Rachel Whiteread’s House (1993) first catapulted the organisation into wider public awareness. It exemplified a curatorial position interested in facilitating both accidental and informed encounter with art and, in view of the comments above, the consistency with which Artangel have held it. It also usefully demonstrates the extent to which the ideological work of practices with and alongside policy changes – for example, DCMS’ introduction of free admission to museums and galleries in 2001 - have recalibrated public consumption of art and understandings of ‘public art’ since the early 1990s. Morris:

Twenty years ago I felt lonely and isolated. I assumed the things I cared about would only get a small audience. But I always wanted to take things out of the ICA and put them in a wider context – I didn’t want to ghettoise them. Now partly thanks to the push from the Tate Modern – they’ve actually become the mainstream. Art is no longer the funny item at the end of the news, it regularly makes page 3.\(^{50}\)

With *House*, Whiteread extended her earlier experiments with negative concrete casting, creating a sculptural representation of the inside of a terraced house on Grove Road, Mile End by pouring liquid concrete into the last remaining building in a demolished row of houses and removing the outer brick ‘shell’. The artist and organisation unveiled the sculpture on 25 October 1993, with information about the piece released to the press only one day beforehand. Public debate in response to *House* slowly began to gather momentum, erupting stormily when, in November, Whiteread received the Turner Prize, and Bow Neighbourhood Councillors, who had granted permission for the use of the site, elected to proceed with the sculpture’s demolition according to the schedule agreed contractually at the beginning of the project’s life, despite the work of building the sculpture starting months later than initially arranged. A tussle between Artangel and Cllr. Eric Flounders, leader of Tower Hamlets Council, subsequently played out in (among other places) the letters’ pages of broadsheet newspapers, sustaining the profile of the debate and that of the sculpture itself. The languages and ideas each party mobilized in support of their case forcefully demonstrated the discursive resources then available to each position, broadly associated with concepts of public relevance, individual and institutional probity and artistic legitimacy. Cllr. Flounders, in *The Independent*, 25 November 1993:

\(^{50}\) Michael Church, p. 6.
Surely those like Mr Glendinning [art historian Nigel Glendinning] should not be whining about a local authority wishing to stick to a universally agreed contract, but should be grateful that this piece of experimental nonsense which they love so much was permitted to exist in the first place. The antics of Artangel in failing to abide by the agreement, of course, will make this and other councils wary of such agreements in the future.51

James Lingwood, in The Independent, 30 November 1993:

Once more, Eric Flounders conflates private prejudice with public interest (Letters, 25 November). The decision by the Bow Neighbourhood Committee, on his casting vote, not to allow Rachel Whiteread’s House a briefly longer life takes no account of the prodigious interest this sculpture has generated. Only last weekend more than 3,000 people signed a petition on site in only 12 hours. Many of these were not representatives of the ‘chattering classes’ whom Mr Flounders acknowledges may be interested, but people who live and work locally.52

Each of these salvos feeds on rhetoric associated with the politics of the other – law-abiding public servants working in the interest of the common good pitched against the nonsensical antics of whining, childish, self-interested artists and their fancy supporters (the class basis of the critique is acutely apparent) and an individual abuse of publicly delegated power and wilful refusal to recognise a large constituency’s own recognition, in public, of the legitimacy of the sculpture’s cultural contribution. Not addressed directly in either of the passages above, the argument which haunts them is one of utility: the appropriate expenditure of public resources. To take a cognate example, Ash Wall (1993), a

permanent public sculpture by Vong Phaophanit sited by the Thames Barrier in Charlton was unveiled only weeks before House. Less immediately controversial, it similarly became the target of a utilitarian critique in commentary two years later, published strategically to trail the launch of Sara Selwood’s Policy Institute pamphlet The Benefits of Public Art (1995). Patrick Wright, a feature writer for The Guardian, interviewed workers at the adjacent salvage yard about Ash Wall, by then abandoned and dilapidated:

‘Everyone thinks it’s rubbish’, said one, ‘a waste of taxpayers’ money, total crap. Nobody understands it. All we know is that we went out one day and there it was’. Told that this extra-terrestrial visitation had cost £60,000, he ventured that the money should have been given to Greenwich Hospital.53

The journalist’s framing of the sculpture as descending from outer space at the taxpayer’s expense suggests the artist himself as ‘alien’ and the work in turn as unproductively alienating. More bluntly, Cllr. Flounders advanced a similar view in an interview with The Guardian about House as the renegotiated demolition date in 1993 drew nearer. Asked what his response would be to a request from artists for a grant to produce the ‘sentimental Victorian paintings’ of his preference, he declared he would “tell them to fuck off. It is nothing to do with what I like or don’t like, it has got to do with reality and funds not being

53 Patrick Wright, ‘In your space: They’re big. You’ve paid for them. And they’re meant to make you feel better. But ever since the Sixties, Britain’s public art developments have caused more aggro than uplift’, The Guardian, 25 August 1995, p. 2.
diverted from real needs”.54 House’s discursive imbrication in this ongoing
debate became graphically inscribed on the sculpture’s surface, one graffiti tag
reading ‘WOT FOR’ on one side of the building and beneath it, a response, ‘WHY
NOT?’, the ‘O’ in ‘not’ the basis of a jolly cartoon stick figure with large ears and
a cheeky smile.

The relish with which Artangel engaged in the controversy was importantly
predicated on a conceptual position resistant to the prevailing variant of
utilitarianism, which, alongside the more or less procedural scuffles enacted in
letters’ pages, Lingwood articulated in an article for the The Times:

in this particular local contest (I am not prepared to generalise about the
attitudes of local authorities), contemporary public art must aspire to
anonymity if it is to be allowed to exist at all. In short, it is only OK if it is
close to meaningless. This culture of the lowest common denominator is
exemplified by the decision of three councillors of Bow neighbourhood to
insist on the immediate demolition of House on the same night that Rachel
Whiteread was awarded the Turner Prize.55 (my emphasis)

Introducing the book of essays, photographs and press cuttings documenting the
project – a publication to which the lengthy public debate manifestly added
substantial value - Lingwood extends this argument further, writing that “House
did not seek to manufacture some confectionary consensus, as many public
works of art are compelled to do. Indeed it laid bare the limits of language and

54 Peter Lennon, ‘Home truths from a street fighter: Tower Hamlets council
leader, who is nearly always in the line of fire, talks to Peter Lennon’, The
55 James Lingwood, ‘Our house is a very nice house’, The Times, 27 November
1993, p. npg.
expectation which afflict the contentious arena of public art”, an assessment that resonates with a project like Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* (1981), frequently referenced in argument around the project. Lingwood’s, and by extension, Artangel’s interest in dissensus of this sort was informed by a curatorial desire to introduce “a specific iconography or modus operandi developed by an artist over a number of years” to a place or set of circumstances with which the artist might be unfamiliar and which, in so doing, might expose naturalised patterns of action or thought. But its prioritisation of dissensus as a value is also related to the historic development of the British institutional context for the production of public art – and particularly ‘community art’ and its negative connotations.

In a discussion published in 1990, Lesley Greene, director of the Public Arts Development Trust commented that “ten or fifteen years ago, it was actually very hard to interest first-rate artists in making public commissions; the activity was too closely associated with community art” such as the ubiquitous mural projects which companies like Freeform or Greenwich Mural Workshop designed and created for the sides of buildings in run-down urban areas (Brick Lane, Deptford, Brixton) in the 1970s and early 1980s. These projects, which explicitly positioned themselves outside of institutional frameworks for art

---

57 For an analysis of Serra’s intervention see Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (MIT Press 2004).
60 ‘Community art’ here specifically signifies visual art and media work, as distinct from theatre or dance.
catering to those in possession of intellectual and cultural (if not economic) capital sought the joint aims of inspiring ‘community spirit’ and improving the visual appearance of decaying architecture. Broadly, however, they counter-productively came to signify either the imminent destruction of the building in question or the reinforcement of its locus as socially marginal.61 The participants in this published discussion hazarded a series of suggestions as to the failure of community art as a movement – ‘amateurism’, its status as an initiative based on the concept of concession to ‘failure’, a confusion between aesthetic critique and political attack upon community art makers themselves, the movement’s reluctance to question its own ideologies – all of which, Malcolm Miles (then director of British Health Care Arts) suggested, had “actually distracted attention from the more interesting problems of what artists might really be adept at addressing. It’s about chemistry, and you don’t get a chemical reaction without different elements”.62 Lingwood agreed, emphasising art’s potential to trigger combustive reaction:

The directional pull of most community arts has been towards a lowest common denominator, the desire not to displease. I’m not interested in commissioning projects which have as their base the need not to displease a particular audience or a particular funding body. On the contrary, they should show that the meanings of places are in contest, they should work to unfix them. They have to be prepared to displease.63 (my emphasis)

The connection between the institutional construction of community art as

Lingwood frames it here, and the space of the public as he imagines it to be

falsely and hegemonically constructed by House’s detractors, is clear – a zone of ideological consensus, whose actually existing fissures and complexities the introduction of art might throw into relief.

By the early 1990s, new forms of funding for public art – percent-for-art, private commissions, and publicly-funded regeneration initiatives\(^{64}\) – had diversified and shifted the scene of practice, making it more attractive to artists who did not align themselves with the marginal movement of community art.\(^{65}\) The ACGB report *An Urban Renaissance. The Role of the Arts in Urban Regeneration: the Case for Increased Public and Private Sector Co-operation* (1988) had argued for the arts’ capacity to produce the entrepreneurialising social effects that Thatcher’s Urban Development Corporations, founded in 1980, sought to catalyse in areas like London’s Docklands and Liverpool’s Albert Dock, claiming that the arts create “the ‘can do’ attitude essential in developing the enterprise culture’ this government hopes to bring to deprived areas...The arts provide a means of breaking this spiral and helping people believe in themselves and their community again”\(^{66}\). And despite community art’s industrial marginality (as Justin Lewis has it, “the community arts ghetto”),\(^{67}\) lobbying from ‘minority’ groups as part of the 1991 *National Arts and Media Strategy* – “youth arts,

\(^{64}\) For a review of these various funding streams specifically in respect of permanent art works, see Sara Selwood, *The Benefits of Public Art* (London: Policy Studies Institute 1995).

\(^{65}\) ‘Lesley Greene, James Lingwood, Declan McGonagle, Malcolm Miles’, p. 152.


community arts, folk arts, Cypriot culture, amateur arts, arts in rural areas, arts and disabilities and women and arts”⁶⁸ - also provided the conditions in which the Arts Council “affiliated, as opposed to disassociated, itself with work promoted in ‘non-art’ contexts, including art employed in urban regeneration”.⁶⁹

Both curators situate the organisation’s development in the specificities of this changing industrial landscape, responding, in particular, to culture-in-regeneration’s growing impetus and legitimacy in the lead up to and following Glasgow’s year as European City of Culture in 1990:⁷⁰

We felt intuitively that there was a space which we could open up alongside the mainstream institutions and that Artangel could offer an alternative means of production and presentation, another way of working closely with artists. But we didn’t want alternative implicitly to mean marginal or secondary, to be in any kind of hierarchical relationship to these institutions.⁷¹

For Artangel the figure of the artist is the priority, and the organisation seeks to make the artist’s work available to the greatest number of potential spectators, pragmatically exploiting opportunities to create and present the work. Budgets and resource generation are not matters Artangel wants “to trouble an artist with necessarily. We’ll go off and find a way of doing it”,⁷² a point Morris reiterates in a press interview launching the publication Off Limits (2002): “None of our

---

artists has ever had to fill in a form’, Morris says proudly. ‘We are only interested in their vision, and all we ask is that they are as obsessed by it as we are’.

In financial terms, “each project is a kind of patchwork of fundraising from the public sector and the private sector; there’s no formula or rule of thumb for how resources gather”; indeed, Lingwood explicitly states that the stability of the public sector has “been the foundation on which Artangel has continued to build”. Arguably, in the broadest terms, for Artangel the public sector represents welcome material stability but ideological limits to be challenged and disrupted, and the private sector a generative ethic of entrepreneurialism and diversification. A critical attribute of the producer’s work in this scenario is the generation, among multiple ‘stakeholders’ perhaps with no necessary connection to artistic work, of a form of collective belief:

you have to communicate with them, gain their trust, and ask them to help you do things that appear quite mad, actually. And you’ve got to position the whole project so that it has credibility with all of its constituents. It can take a very long time.

Artangel’s commission Imber (2003) staged Georgian choral music in the village of the same name by singers who remained out of the audience’s sight. This gesture evoked the area’s history: the War Department requisitioned Imber in 1943 and its residents have never been allowed to return. Morris reflects, again

---

73 Rupert Christiansen, p. 23.
76 ‘Michael Morris: from a conversation with Brian Eno in January 2007’, p. 58
in The Daily Telegraph, on the organisation’s incursion to the area following a two year negotiation with army personnel:

‘It’s important that we’re not seen as a bunch of trendy Londoners’, Morris says, ‘and that’s why we broke the story in the Wiltshire Times and not a national broadsheet. Goodwill is the fuel of these projects’.

Not simply a public performance of class identity which multiply disavows the category ‘trendy Londoner’ to assert common cause, the logic of this pronouncement is one of publicity. Discursively modelling communicative relations in public performatively produces those communicative relations, which thereby act as ‘fuel’ for projects. This is both practice and outcome of what Hardt and Negri might term ‘affective labour’, producing “social networks, forms of community, biopower” and thus the conditions for the outstanding contemporary artist to pursue his or her work.

(ii) Entrepreneurial subjects

Yet, despite its consistent emphasis on artistic freedom from material and ideological constraint, the organisation’s commissions clearly enunciate a distinctive curatorial logic. And, I will suggest, this curatorial logic is also an aesthetic and spatial logic peculiar to an entrepreneurial ethic of practice. If, as Lingwood commented in the early 1990s, Artangel “is not an oppositional

77 Dan Synge, ‘Requiem for a ghost town: A deserted village in Salisbury Plain’s military zone is the backdrop to a most unusual musical event’, The Daily Telegraph, 16 August 2003, p. 6.
organisation. That kind of early 1970s rhetoric is inappropriate now. The utopian momentum has been dissipated, our aims are more modest”, a pattern can be detected in the aesthetic address of its commissions which is symptomatic of this ideological stance. The works promise unique, reflexive experiences occasioned by the specific interaction between the art work, the audience and the space and time of their meeting. Further, they seek to problematise sites which represent forms of power or received ritual via an artistic commentary which neither suggests nor recommends revolutionary change, but simply bears witness to change that has already happened. Tatsuo Miyajima’s installation Running Time (1995) staged a clash between modalities of time by blacking out the windows in Inigo Jones’ Queen’s House in Greenwich, and releasing tiny electric dodgem cars bearing red LED representations of time on their backs into the space. Critic Jonathan Glancey commented of the piece that “time is represented as a kind of hypnotic chaos, a lovely conceit in a building where absolute and permanent mathematical ratios and proportions rule”.

Gabriel Orozco’s Empty Club (1996), an installation placed in a disused gentleman’s club on St James’ Street in central London interrogated the constitution of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ through a series of works, including a participatory game of billiards, which audience members could play upon an unorthodox oval-shaped table, a piece which found favour with Jean Fisher for its refusal to provide “‘a privileged position from which to survey the field, but an indefinite number of equally tangential points of

---

Musician Jem Finer’s millennium composition *Longplayer* (2000), a thousand-year-long piece running without repetition or break, online and at venues across the world, was framed as a playful challenge to the monumentality of other millennium projects even as it was transmitted, from a lighthouse at Trinity Buoy Wharf, directly into the Millennium Dome’s Rest Zone. These projects witness historical changes in global capitalism’s mode of production: they gather together concepts of Enlightenment rationalism, imperial power and networked, global relations, and stage contemporary meaning production as uncertain, actualised not through the exercise of stable subject positions but interactive, participatory comment on those positions. They bear a characteristically post-modern interest in what Lingwood articulates as the “seepage of the work into the world and vice versa, to break down where the edge of the ‘made’ work might be, and where the edge of the ‘found’ world might be”, an interest which art historian Claire Bishop compares favourably to Allan Kaprow’s use of the installation space as a training ground for audience members to test and thus develop a more flexible approach to dealing with the uncertainties of everyday life.

---

82 Michael Church, p. 6.
84 Claire Bishop, “‘As if I was lost and someone suddenly came to give me news about myself’”, p. 22.
This sort of ‘theatrical’ aesthetic reflexivity does not preclude curatorial aversion to aesthetic realism conventionally associated with the theatre. Morris says that in his teenage years “I found – and continue to find – most live narrative drama somewhat antiquated as an experience. It often looked like bad TV”.\textsuperscript{85} This simile also points toward Artangel’s resistance to a frontally oriented aesthetic address. Although Lingwood comments of painting, photography and proscenium theatre that “the best of those ways of working also offers a challenge back”,\textsuperscript{86} Artangel favours a horizontality of meaning production.

Lingwood:

> When you’re looking at work in a frame, your eye zooms in, it settles within the frame. You have a space to concentrate on. The frame cuts off any relationship to the outside. Alternatively, there’s the idea of a pan across space which provides a range of different visual information, a changing set of relations ... [On Rachel Whiteread’s \textit{House}] If you looked at the work from the North to the South, you would see it in relation to Canary Wharf. If you were looking at it from the park at the back, you would see various attempts to organise housing by metropolitan authorities from the Victorians to the 1960s, from terraces to high rise blocks. From one particular angle you could see three different churches in the background, encouraging a reading of how social stability was transferred from organised religion to an idea of home in the nineteenth century. There’s always this sense of moving the eye from what the artist might have placed in front of you or around you, to what else is there and wanting to stimulate meanings through that relationship.\textsuperscript{87}

In its departure from an institutional space, the artwork and spectator enter into a complex triangular relationship with the ‘found’ environment, an exchange which exceeds a singular frame. However, as Lingwood’s description of the

\textsuperscript{85} ‘Michael Morris: from a conversation with Brian Eno in January 2007’, p. 57.
multiple meanings of *House* shows, this exchange is located not in the work as such, but premised on the audience member’s ability to access and negotiate the meanings of the material and ideational landscape in which it is situated. The richness of the signification he is able to attribute to *House* flows from a working acquaintance with social, political and architectural history which, in this imaging, is isomorphic to the audience member’s freedom of movement.

In fact, Lingwood metaphorizes the production process of *House* as a theatrical tour, a piece that “could have been made elsewhere, in a different place, at a different time; perhaps with another cast list and chorus”. The figure of the mobile audience member and his or her experience of travelling to see an Artangel piece reflects the mobility of the artistic concept, becoming specific to site only when material production and spectatorial orientation toward the work commences. In autumn 2007 Artangel staged *The Saints*, a sound and video installation by Paul Pfeiffer about the 1966 England World Cup victory sited in an empty retail unit, sitting, as the programme notes put it, “in the shadow of Wembley Stadium”. My journey to Wembley alone in the dusk of a chilly evening to attend this event had the magical character of a desolate urban fairytale, each moment experienced on the way woven tightly into its narrative. A request for directions from a station guard and his sexist response, my precarious Busby Berkeley-esque descent in foolishly chosen shoes down the steep granite steps of the Jubilee line development, and a missed turning in an industrial estate resulting in my stumbling on to an audition line for yet another

---

series of *The X Factor* (lacking of course the presence of chirpy Kate Thornton, microphone in hand) each became as much a part of the encounter, aesthetically and critically, as the mustiness of the carpet in the cold retail unit, a tiny grey screen bearing the solitary moving figure of Bobby Charlton blinking from a partitioned area at the back of the unit, and the disembodied echoes of exuberant cheers rebounding from its high walls.

The mode of my narrative here follows Claire Bishop’s own individualized reflection upon her experience of attending Artangel events, a writing towards the event which appropriately trades on the atomisation and singular contemplation the works seem to invite. (Making my journey to Wembley in the company of others would undoubtedly have stripped it of its auratic intensity.) She theorises the works as faithful to Kaprow’s “requisite of ‘risk and fear’ in that their identity bleeds out from the work itself to the unforeseeable conditions under which we come to experience it”. In opposition to Jameson, she stages an argument ascribing a variety of anti-capitalist oppositionality to post-modern performance and installation works of this kind, suggesting the experience of subjective decentring which they model to offer a critique of contemporary capitalism, in part by affording reflection on the movement of history in and through the defunct urban spaces appropriated for the works, much in the manner of the ‘chance encounter’ with the outmoded prized by the Surrealists and the Benjaminian *flâneur*. “Although it is imaginary”, she writes, “this ‘fantasy’ experience of decentring may nonetheless prompt not only memory but

---

90 Claire Bishop, “‘As if I was lost and someone suddenly came to give me news about myself’”, p. 26.
a questioning and re-evaluation of our environment”. Yet the article discloses some anxiety as to whether or not installation art is merely complicit with a contemporary form of experience economy which derives profit from the provision of individually tailored consumer services and thus lacking the requisite capacity for anti-capitalist critique. Certainly, her remark that “the whole experience of visiting each work acquires a purposive character comparable to that of a pilgrimage. You need your London A-Z and your wits about you” seems unwittingly to enact a slippage between the morally impelled religious expedition and the pleasure-seeking, consumerist act of tourist travel without acknowledging either their differences or (perhaps more interestingly) the mutuality of commerce and ‘otherworldly’ engagement that they imply.

I disagree with Bishop’s view that these works can be understood as querying capitalist development. While the re-evaluatory function of Artangel’s commissions may not be in question - the ‘re-’ introducing a motive dynamism as opposed to a final judgement of value - the re-evaluation, or regeneration, of ‘outmoded’ or ‘marginalised’ sites for economic benefit is precisely what contemporary models of culture-in-regeneration seek to achieve. Not only that, it is a rationale for cultural production foundational to Artangel’s expansion and success. Artangel’s commissions repeatedly appropriate industrial, post-industrial and disused spaces for temporary use. Self Storage (1995), a promenade sound and art installation by Laurie Anderson and Brian Eno

---

91 Claire Bishop, “‘As if I was lost and someone suddenly came to give me news about myself’”, p. 27.
92 Claire Bishop, “‘As if I was lost and someone suddenly came to give me news about myself’”, p. 25.
appeared in Acorn Storage Centre in Wembley. *The Vertical Line* (1999), a theatre piece by John Berger and Simon McBurney led audience members into the disused Aldwych underground station (a performance which, Morris confesses, “could never have happened if every council body officially meant to inspect us for fire and safety regulations had appeared. It was a terrifying risk, but it paid off brilliantly”). Michael Landy’s *Break Down* (2001) initiated a Fordist process of destruction of all the artist’s possessions on a conveyor belt in the empty C&A store on Oxford Street. As in the case of *Break Down*, by calling detailed attention to the normativity of overabundance and casual disposability in contemporary capitalism, the artistic work may perform opposition to consumerism as practice in the form of a quasi-pedagogic encounter. But through their staging in sites of ‘anti-tourism’ within the grander touristic site of the capital and the invitation to audiences to temporarily occupy them, works such as *Break Down* operate in complicity with a logic of post-industrial capitalist expansion. They engage in spatial, material and semiotic appropriation and a reframing of devalued sites for acts of consumption within the boundaries of an urban space, and the encouragement of active spectatorial participation in those rituals. In this sense, the adventuring commissioner displays greater entrepreneurial enterprise and foresight than the corporate brands themselves. As Morris reflects of the mid-1980s,

it was a time when the lure of an untouched Docklands provided

---

93 Rupert Christiansen, p. 23.
performance spaces both large and small. A time when Royal Victoria Docks hadn’t made way for a City Airport and Butler’s Wharf had not yet been colonised by Conran.95

And with a vocabulary of pioneering action, he continues:

There are certainly uncharted areas on the map. We don’t know where they are and the conduit to those areas is the imagination and the vision of the artist. We arrive there because of them, not because we’ve set out to get there… It’s about being prepared to work in the dark.96

This reflection responds to Michael Craig-Martin’s regarding Artangel’s continuing provision of opportunities for artistic practice that would not otherwise be realised. The map in question is of a specifically ideational landscape, generated through the exercise of the individual imagination given free rein, originating extraordinary artistic works which enable the world to be perceived afresh. But the action of charting the uncharted, bringing into representation areas hitherto ‘off limits’, resonates strongly with another contemporary entrepreneurial figure – the property developer.

II: The Margate Exodus

In 2003 Artangel initiated *The Margate Exodus*, a series of commissions in photography, music, sculpture and film whose primary outcome would be *Exodus* (2007) directed by Penny Woolcock. The project, Artangel’s first feature film and “the biggest community feature film ever made in the UK” would be a contemporary ‘re-enactment’ of the Biblical Exodus story, using Margate as source and stage, with the ambition of recruiting hundreds of Thanet residents as participants. The project was a scene of extraordinary ideological and practical contradiction, though not in the same nostalgic, post-modern mode as the Artangel commission most similar to the project, Jeremy Deller’s *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001). Re-enacting the 1984 clash between picketing miners and police that had marked a turning point in Thatcher’s attack on the trade unions, *The Battle of Orgreave* recruited both ex-miners and police to participate alongside historical re-enactment societies, some of whom switched roles to perform as the people they had fought during the struggle. *Exodus* would of course not feature a cast of hundreds of ‘real’ asylum seekers living in Margate, but for Woolcock there was a narrative continuity between *Exodus* and her earlier works. To make *Tina Goes Shopping* (1999), a story about a professional shoplifter, Woolcock had worked with residents of an estate in Leeds, none of whom had acted in film before. Real-life stories about life on the estate became the basis for the film’s fictional narrative, whose scenes the actors would improvise several times for editing into a final cut. Its similarity to *The Margate Exodus* was, for Woolcock, both canonical and conceptual:

97 *The Margate Exodus* flyer.
A few years ago I did this film called *Tina Goes Shopping*, which was this improvised drama on a housing estate, and right the way through till the editing stage it was called ‘Exodus’. What interested me was this idea of people kind of being in exile in their own country and you know the whole ‘us and them’ thing. The thing with Moses is that he’s brought up in this very affluent place; in the original story in the Old Testament he thinks that he’s the Pharaoh’s son. And then he discovers that he’s a Jew, he’s not one of us, he’s one of them. So this idea that there is no difference between us, it’s just who you think you are and the kind of judgements that you might be making about other people are often so mistaken. So that idea of migration and identity – seems to me that it’s completely timeless.98

Despite her assertions of its transhistorical and universal relevance, Woolcock’s reading of the Book of Exodus discloses a distinct historical position. In her account, the political content of exile resides not primarily in ideological difference resulting in expulsion from the territory of the state. Instead, exile, now conceived as a condition internal to that territory, is predicated on access to wealth.

For Woolcock, exile appears equivalent to the position of a notional underclass: a state of exclusion. In its use of Margate as location, *Exodus* joins other recent films *Gypo* (2005), a Dogme 95 project starring Paul McGann and *The Last Resort* (2000), Pawel Pawlikowski’s documentary-style, partially improvised feature about immigration and asylum. Making reference to these and other projects, Samantha Lay advances the view that “in contemporary social realist filmmaking the seaside towns of England, long abandoned by the tourists, have

---

98 ‘The Making of Exodus’, dir. by Andrew Palmer, in *Exodus*, dir. by Penny Woolcock (Soda Pictures, 2007) [on DVD]
become the new symbolic locations of the nation’s fragmentation and decay”.

As a cinematic work, however, *Exodus* is a piece of hyperreal science fiction fantasy with more in common with Alfonso Cuarón’s dystopian *Children of Men* (2006). It is a more or less straightforward and thus rather awkward transposition of the Exodus story to contemporary Britain, the oppression of the Hebrews rendered as the confinement of “recidivist criminals, travellers, the mentally ill, the long term unemployed – the unwanted, the Jews of the 21st century” to a shantytown, ‘Dreamland’, whose set was built in the grounds of Margate amusement park of the same name. Establishing ‘Dreamland’ is the first governmental act of fascist leader Pharaoh Mann (Bernard Hill), having secured electoral victory on a nationalist political platform (“we’ve become the dustbin of the world!...sinking under the weight of people nobody else wants!”). The film ultimately imagines Moses (Daniel Percival) as a terrorist unleashing a series of plagues (biological warfare, internet viruses) on the world beyond the shantytown. It is resolutely secular: the release of the ‘Dreamlanders’ results not in their collective expedition towards a contemporary Mount Sinai and the establishment of law, but rather an explosion of conflict which the film leaves unresolved – represented with historic resonance as a violent encounter on the beach between groups symbolically akin to the Mods and Rockers – and Moses’ dreamlike suicide and departure, alone, into a valley created by the parting of the sea.

---


100 *Exodus*, dir. by Penny Woolcock (Soda Pictures, 2007) [on DVD]

101 *Exodus*. 
In public discourse, many of The Margate Exodus’ commentators framed the town
of Margate in its entirety as representative of the excluded state on which the
film’s concept, as I read it, was based. One exception was national arts journalist
and author Iain Aitch, originally from Margate himself, whose review of Exodus
Day - a day of live events on which (as the Artangel website describes it three
years after the event) “the many strands of Exodus came together”102 – appeared
in the Isle of Thanet Gazette. Ruminating on the surreal experience of his ‘worlds
colliding’, he remarked that

the oddness began at the lunch for journalists and Artangel patrons at the
Greek Taverna, which afforded a great view of [Antony Gormley’s] Waste
Man from its lofty position in Grosvenor Place. Playing dumb, I listened
intently as one art fan painted a picture of Margate as a place where semi-
literate locals spent most of their time burning tyres in gardens or
banging rocks together. She also expressed surprise at how many white
faces she had seen on her way along the seafront, as she assumed the
town’s population was 95 per cent refugees. Another particularly
haughty diner said: ‘Yes, I thought you looked out of place’ when I
revealed my place of birth.103

In contrast to Aitch, opening her review of the event for The Spectator, critic Ruth
Guilding submitted to the reader a piece of neoliberal common sense: “Places,
like property prices, go up and down. Margate, in the most northerly corner of
Kent, is just beginning the uncertain journey upwards again”.104 ‘Place’, the
project’s primary justification and organising concept, is a volatile asset whose

[accessed July 2009]
103 Iain Aitch, ‘Exodus fires up the imagination of thousands’, Isle of Thanet
Gazette, 6 October 2006, p. npg.
value might be represented (as Guilding imagines it here) on a line graph; Margate, poverty-stricken site of exclusion, currently languishes at the bottom of the scale. The graph’s X axis, ‘time’, unproblematically spans the 1700s to date: Guilding’s introductory sketch name-checks the Regency period, Turner, mass tourism, culture-in-regeneration and immigration and asylum, concluding with ‘Margate’s only success story’ Tracey Emin. “This”, she continued, “is where that strange, magical organisation Artangel comes in. It aims to make art outside the gallery, matching up artists, contexts and audiences to get something relevant, democratic and unmediated”.105 Her conceptualisation of place as the bearer of cultural capital subject to dynamic processes of re-valuation is more or less aligned with the imaginary of Artangel’s commissions over the preceding decade and a half. Her invocation of unmediated democratic experience – integration – is at some distance, however, from James Lingwood’s earlier resistance to public art’s production of a ‘confectionary consensus’. The review makes only the most oblique of references to the film.

If, as Woolcock insists in her commentary on her idea for Exodus, difference is a function of perception, this section examines the politics of the ways in which ‘exclusion’ and the measures taken to address it came to be constructed in The Margate Exodus. The section will not offer a close reading of the film but rather of the project’s representational action in the space of the everyday. Chief among its representations was an insistent foregrounding of face-to-face communication and community-based participatory interaction, presented in the media as characteristic not only of Exodus Day but the project itself, suggesting the

---

governmental definition of cohesion as (local) consensus to be a standard to which the project conspicuously and strategically performed. In what follows I draw analytical attention to these strategic performances. By staging this analysis I emphatically do not intend to suggest that the project didn’t in fact do the things that its rhetorical performances assert. In the process of producing the evaluation of the project I was able to meet six of the project’s participants on three different occasions over the course of a year, to question them about the project and to hear their reflections on their experiences. Irreducible to a discourse of cohesive ‘community’, these complexly demonstrated the town as a social and historical site and the ways in which, by accident as well as by design, The Margate Exodus and its practices introduced people who might not otherwise have met to one another, produced relationships and the conditions for people to pursue their interests in making art and to develop new skills. In short, its participants saw the project as an initiative in nature precisely the opposite of AA Gill’s “Victorian cultural imperialism”. My argument seeks not to invalidate or deny these effects, but rather to understand the project’s engagement with the force and logic of governmental discourse and value production under conditions of neoliberalization, and its conflicts and complicities with the ideology of art-making I discussed in the previous section. In particular, I aim to theorise the rhetoric which supplemented the film project, which insisted, intriguingly, on its engagement with the ‘live’. The final part of the analysis examines Exodus Day itself to identify, among other questions, the material implications of a rhetoric of ‘togetherness’.

106 AA Gill, p. 7.
(i) Cultural recognition

_The Margate Exodus_ received substantial press coverage, ranging from local stories from the project’s media partner *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, to broadsheet commentary and magazine diary listings, including, extraordinarily, possibly the first appearance of information about a community arts project in *Vogue_. On the process of participating in the project, coverage favoured tropes of breaking down barriers, cultural recognition and ethnic mix. Indeed, ‘community cohesion’ was represented as an item on a job description: *The Guardian* reported that Lucy Pardee, Woolcock’s assistant casting director and outreach worker on the project was “the person with most responsibility for bringing about community cohesion”. According to *The Independent*, Woolcock was “determined that the resulting film, for Channel 4, would involve people from all walks of life”. In an interview with *Screen International* after shooting was complete, Woolcock offered a particularly unambiguous assessment of the efficacy of the film’s working process: “the film features a huge cast of local extras: ‘Chinese people, African people, local people who’d been racist up to then, all mixing together’”. And in harmony with the governmental

---

108 Ian Aitch, ‘Culture: Plagues of frogs and lice…and artists, including Antony Gormley and Rufus Wainwright, have descended on Margate. Ian Aitch on a huge project that’s transforming the town’, *The Guardian*, 26 September 2006, p. 22.
construction of cohesion, this integrationist narrative ran with and alongside another, of competitive excellence. Michael Morris in *Thanet Extra*:

> The *Waste Man* is a very strong image and it will be remembered forever. But the real legacy is in the communication between people who live in the same town, who live next to each other but don’t know each other. All the way through we have been making alliances between people who have never had any opportunity to show their talents\(^{111}\).

Articles in the *Isle of Thanet Gazette* recruiting participants for the project likewise appealed to readers’ sense of celebrity, but now largely in relation to the film itself – “Your chance to be a star”,\(^ {112}\) “Be a star in movie of town”,\(^ {113}\) “Chance for all to shine with film project”,\(^ {114}\) “Your invitation to create an art legend”.\(^ {115}\) This aspirational myth-making achieved an unexpected form of completion when, galvanised by their participation in the project, Bill Calder (one of the evaluation participants) who in the 1960s had sung regularly in hotels and talent contests in Margate, his daughter and grand-daughter formed a group entitled *Gen3*, successfully auditioned and appeared on ITV’s *The X Factor*.

Though the demotic pleasures of the twenty-first century TV talent show seem incompatible with Artangel’s work, the values of entrepreneurialism and

---


excellence are aligned. To this extent, Michael Morris suggested the purpose of both *The Battle of Orgreave* and *The Margate Exodus* as

to rethink what used to be called community art: how a disenfranchised or deprived group of people can view itself differently with the collaboration of an exceptional artist.\(^{116}\)

This meritocratic politics of aspiration is at substantial variance from the anti-canonical values that the community arts movement in the 1970s and 1980s espoused. In *Community, Art and the State* (1984), one of the handful of texts elaborating the movement’s position, Owen Kelly (then a community artist working in film and video) makes the economic dimension explicit:

> The idea of ‘individual’ creativity, removed from social influences and springing whole from some secret internal landscape, is a deception. It is advanced at the expense of social co-authorship because, crudely speaking, co-authorship is bad for business. The mysterious genius which is alleged to lie behind ‘individual’ creativity has twin advantages. Firstly it creates what are, by definition, scarce resources, which can be bought and sold for profit. The notion of genius effectively prevents the intellectual marketplace from being flooded with cheap goods.\(^{117}\)

In Artangel’s discourse, the ‘exceptional’ artist and his or her excellence takes the place of ‘genius’, a discursive move Nicholas Garnham identifies as characteristic of ‘creative industries’ rhetoric in a more general sense.\(^{118}\) The community arts


movement in the 1970s and 1980s had desired, with decidedly uneven success,\textsuperscript{119} to bring about “democratic and equitable access to the means of cultural production which community artists have claimed as their ultimate aim”.\textsuperscript{120} In an article responding to Roy Shaw’s \textit{Arts for All} (1985) – doubling also as advance notice of the Shelton Trust’s \textit{Culture and Democracy Manifesto} (1986) – Kelly insisted that “our concern is not with producing the 'right art', but rather with producing the right conditions within which communities can have their own creative voices recognised and given sufficient space to develop and flourish”\textsuperscript{121} (which, notwithstanding Kelly’s anti-capitalist rhetoric regarding the value of cultural goods, constitutes not a communist politics of collectivism but rather a liberal politics of self-determination). If one purpose of \textit{The Margate Exodus} was to re-think community art as a principle for action, this consisted in facilitating exposure to excellence and hunting out existing talent. \textit{Plague Songs} (2006), the project’s CD release inspired by the Biblical plagues featured compositions by a set of internationally renowned and commercially successful artists including Brian Eno, Imogen Heap, Cody ChestnuTT and Rufus Wainwright. Local singers and musicians, recruited via open auditions led by musical director David Coulter and voice coach Mary King, star of Channel 4 reality TV show \textit{Operatunity} (2003), gave the songs their first ever live performance on \textit{Exodus Day}. One of these was Anthony Johnson, aka Spooka,\textsuperscript{122} a young MC from

\textsuperscript{119} See Justin Lewis (1990, pp. 110-115) for a wry critique.
\textsuperscript{120} Owen Kelly, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{121} Owen Kelly, ‘In Search of Cultural Democracy’. \textit{Arts Express}, October 1985. \url{http://www.mpmw.co.uk/archive/articles/owen_k.html} [accessed May 2007]
\textsuperscript{122} Spookasonic. \url{http://www.myspace.com/dnbmcspooka} [accessed July 2009]
nearby Ramsgate whose accomplished musicianship BBC 1Xtra had already
recognised with an award for his first self-produced song, put together in a
studio in Ramsgate and sent in to the station speculatively. He also played
Morris are speculating about his future career in both film and music”.123

Thus, like the dramaturgical form of the TV talent show, the project generated
two reciprocal tracks of public representation regarding the participation of local
people: biographical narratives of the ‘real’ which promoted and justified the
artistic work, and the artistic work itself. Biographical narrativization took
multiple forms – press coverage, Waste Man (2006) a documentary directed by
Caroline Deeds and screened on Channel 4 before Exodus Day to controversial
effect,124 and evaluation based on in-depth interviews with participants. The
artistic work likewise appeared in multiple and complex iterations – the
production of the Waste Man statue and shantytown set, the songs performed in
the Plague Songs at the Winter Gardens, actorly performances in Exodus and Exodus
Day’s own staging of Margate as destination. In the conceptual content of the
artistic works, the two tracks collided. And, like the discourse of cohesion,
though they explicitly cited ‘community’ and ‘belonging’, the works’
predominant aesthetic concern was the creation, appearance and destruction of
value.

123 Ian Aitch, ‘Culture: Plagues of frogs and lice’, p. 22.
124 Editorial, ‘Was it all just a waste of time?’, Isle of Thanet Gazette, 8 December
2006, p. 10.
The works generated aesthetic effects of volatility or scarcity, in contradiction to the precise industrial processes that produced them. For Gormley, *Waste Man* represented “the displaced and disadvantaged everywhere...shouting out ‘I want to be recognised! I want to belong! I want to be part of this world!” The chosen mediation of this political demand was the conversion of discarded consumer goods into a human shape. The sculpture was torched and consumed by fire before its audience on *Exodus Day*, resulting in further waste in the form of piles of ash. The evanescence of the sculpture in its ‘made’ form – it burned only for half an hour in the grounds of Dreamland on *Exodus Day* - gestures towards fugitive movement, appearance and disappearance, clearly invoking the search for asylum, but the predominant impression is of the volatility of material structures and their meaning. The rapid transmutation of the work in performance from wood to fire to ash belied the exceptionally complex and laborious technical process of its making, which professional production company Unusual managed with assistance from a number of local volunteers, and not, though *Guardian* journalist Madeleine Bunting reported otherwise, undertaken by local volunteers spontaneously responding to Gormley’s call in the local news. If *Waste Man* represented value’s lability, the hyper-realism of Penny Woolcock’s film was in part produced by the active construction of an aesthetic predicated on the visual appearance of bodies. Woolcock and her casting team recruited performers from local schools, via open audition, and - less like the ethnographic process of the *Tina* films than a project like Shane

---

126 Madeleine Bunting, ‘Culture, not politics, is now the heart of our public realm: The cynics who ridiculed Margate’s Exodus Day miss the point: art has broken its elitist leash to inspire collective purpose’, *The Guardian*, 3 October 2006, p. 30.
Meadows' *This Is England* (2006) - from local housing estates, in search of “people who had an interesting face”; reflecting on the process for the ‘Making Of’ documentary which features on the film’s DVD, Woolcock comments that “it wasn't difficult to find a really rich mix of people who I think are incredible, actually, and could act as well as anybody in anything; I would recommend them to any agent”. Asked in a press interview ‘why was it important to you to involve the local community?’, Woolcock replied:

> As opposed to filming entirely with ‘professionals’? It never occurs to me to do it any other way. It bores me to just ‘land’ in a place like Margate and do it. Today we were shooting a battle on the beach and the faces I saw were not the faces you buy from an extras agency and that gives me a huge thrill. Those faces are wonderful.

The primary value here is not of community as a scene of togetherness, but its significatory relationship to the ‘formal’ economy. Woolcock’s interest is, arguably, the aesthetic distinction between bodies ‘fit’ and ‘unfit’ for work as professionally engaged performers. In this realist cinematic project, the body which signifies as ‘unfit’ for work, the ‘anti-celebrity’ perhaps disinclined or unable to invest in the body as capital, constitutes the ‘real’. The consequences following this construction of realist representation faced a certain amount of controversy among the production team on set, not because of disagreements regarding its aesthetic project, but because of the failure of some of its representatives to sit comfortably within professional systems of production:

---

127 ‘The Making of Exodus’.
128 ‘The Making of Exodus’.
At the moment I am having battles with my ADs about the fact that I have a lot of old boozers and junkies and naughty boys who smoke weed on set. Not professional apparently. But I love them and they are great in the film and I won’t have Dreamland inhabited by f**king stuntmen or middle class extras who are happy to play sudoku and be meekly crap.130

(ii) Exodus Day

Exodus Day took place on 30 September 2006, a few days into the seven week shoot. Among the earliest pieces trailing the event, in October 2005, was an Arts Council South East news bulletin – its theme, “Focus on sustainable communities” – which announced that

Margate is playing host to a high profile community arts event in late summer 2006 when The Margate Exodus will be staged, with all the roles played by the people of Thanet. The performance will form part of a film for Channel 4, written and directed by Penny Woolcock, and produced by Artangel, with support from Creative Partnerships Kent.131

In this account, The Margate Exodus – not just Exodus Day – is first and foremost an event, a performance in which people will act; it also happens that the performance will subsequently feature in Penny Woolcock’s film. Two weeks in advance of Exodus Day, a headline in local newspaper Thanet Extra reported that “preparations are under way for the filming of one of the Isle’s largest artistic events: Margate Exodus”;132 the main article doesn’t mention the filming process at all. In a different genre of media altogether, urban style magazine Flux

---

130 ‘Interview with Penny Woolcock’.
132 Chris Denham, ‘Margate Exodus is more than a great arts event’, p. 39.
reported to its readership that “The Margate Exodus is a day of live events, taking place in the seaside town of Margate on Saturday 30 September, and also a Channel 4 film, documenting the events and due for release in 2007”. Read together, it is not at all clear what The Margate Exodus is going to be. According to even these three summaries from the coverage the project attracted in the lead up to the event it could be a theatrical performance woven into a larger film. It could be a series of arts events to be filmed. Or, it could be a series of performance events produced and documented for Penny Woolcock’s Channel 4 film. Their critical commonality is an emphasis on the category of the live event.

At midday I caught the train to Margate from Charing Cross to attend. Supplementing the scheduled train departures, Artangel had arranged a dedicated coach to Margate, the ‘Exodus Express’, with National Express. Many others nonetheless had decided to take the train; such was the unusual popularity of the service to the south coast that day, the ticket inspector took the opportunity to ask me what on earth could be going on. On board, reading Lyn Gardner’s preview in The Guardian Guide encouraged an anticipation of a day of theatrical performance:

Artangel is responsible for some of the most stupendous live art events of the last decade, and this two-day performance, taking place as part of the filming for Penny Woolcock’s film, should be a genuine marvel […] a fiesta of performances, speeches, songs, processions and even plagues.  

An hour and a half later I disembarked onto a train platform thick with people. At this point hints of the extent to which the event had attracted a professional class of cultural producers began to become clear; I recognised in passing the performance artist Julian Fox and a girl I had met at the Camberwell Arts Festival earlier in the year. Having progressed through the swing doors of the station, past one of Wendy Ewald’s pictures from *Towards a Promised Land* displayed behind glass in the lobby, a representative of the Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company approached, pressing a leaflet into my hand encouraging me to subscribe to their events’ text messaging service. Unsure of the direction to take next (the crowd by now dispersed into the streets beyond) I followed the sunlit sweep of road down towards the sunken clock tower on the sea front. An encounter with a T-shirted guide provided a *Margate Exodus*-branded map of the town bearing a schedule for the day, and a similarly branded stick of rock. Thus equipped, I made my way towards the shopping precinct. En route, the first signs of the performance began to appear. In the recess of a doorway two homeless people were smoking, a campaign poster featuring Bernard Hill as Pharaoh – neon-conspicuous, the legend ‘NOB’ scrawled across it in thick felt tip – posted on a doorway just above. As the fiction-effect of the poster registered – and a moment’s indecision regarding the status of the people beneath - I recognised that the town was being imagined to function as the immersive site of the film’s action, and its visitors, its characters. Continuing onward towards the precinct, a second enterprising leafleter targeted me as a likely customer for Ann Summers.
Approaching the entrance to the precinct, a narrow covered arcade, I waited for a woman with a pram to come through, and while waiting read the full text of a sign displayed at the opening of the arcade’s passageway:

PLEASE READ THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY

TODAY’S EVENTS ARE BEING RECORDED AND MAY FORM PART OF A FILM

BY ENTERING THIS VENUE YOU ARE CONSENTING TO OUR INCLUDING YOU IN OUR RECORDING OF THE FILM AND YOU FURTHER IRREVOCABLY AND UNCONDITIONALLY GRANT TO US ALL CONSENTS WHICH MAY BE REQUIRED FOR OUR EXPLOITATION OF YOUR PERFORMANCE BY ALL MEANS AND IN ALL MEDIA WHETHER NOW KNOWN OR HEREAFTER DEvised THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR THE FULL PERIOD OF COPYRIGHT, INCLUDING ALL EXTENSIONS, REVIVALS, REVERSIONS AND/OR RENEWALS IN PERPETUITY.

WE HOPE THIS WILL NOT INCONVENIENCE YOUR VISIT

THANK YOU
If *Exodus Day*’s framing of the town theatrically hypothesised its visiting spectator as ‘character’, this pre-emptive staging of the shopping precinct, a zone discursively partitioned, or better, enclosed from the surrounding environment promised swiftly to divest the ‘actor’ of rights to the image that their public ‘performance’ – in fact, mere presence - might produce. The logic of pre-emption is worth emphasising: a discursive insurance policy against future claims.

Within, a more explicit form of ‘character’ asserted itself: a line of uniformed actors performing as military police secured the interior of the precinct. A large podium festooned with posters would accommodate Pharaoh Mann. Following some hanging around characteristic of a film set, Woolcock’s crew shot Bernard Hill’s rendition of Mann’s election speech, a torrent of fascist rhetoric, before its live audience of ‘real’ people. The speech concluded with the news that Mann had won the election and a decorative, celebratory explosion of streamers popped into the air, whose ungovernable distribution mitigated against the possibility of re-staging the scene. Like the staging of Moses and Aaron’s speech from the belly of Antony Gormley’s *Waste Man* and the sculpture’s burning later that day, this was film-making in a definitively ‘live’, evental mode: there would be no second takes of this moment. During the shoot, however, after a particularly incendiary passage of hate speech, a member of the crew called ‘cut’ and took to the stage to assure the assembled audience comically that “this is just a film, we don’t endorse any of these views” – Bernard Hill interjected, “Particularly me! Particularly me!” – “we’re peaceful people, we love
everybody”,135 to a gale of complicit, ironic laughter. Shooting complete, Mann and his entourage dismounted the podium, and the crew invited the audience to follow the victorious politician down towards Dreamland, some carrying placards bearing his election poster. Progressing down the street outside, I passed a woman being interviewed for a local radio station enthusiastically testifying to the dynamising and celebratory benefits of the day for Margate. As the crowd made its plodding journey, the ‘police’ would seize and assault ‘dissenters’, the holiday atmosphere of the scattered crowd in uncomfortable dialogue with the acts of staged and filmed violence being perpetrated in the immersive environment of ‘the street’.

Maddy Costa’s disappointed review of Exodus Day appeared in The Guardian the following Monday, her critique based largely on her sense of listless inaction during “great expanses of time when it’s clear that we are just sitting on the sidelines of a film set, waiting, bored, for the cameras to roll”136. The burning of Gormley’s sculpture was the day’s high point, an awe-inspiring spectacle, a lifetime of Guy Fawkes Nights all rolled into one. What it all means, though, is anybody’s guess. And that’s the problem with Exodus Day. It is not designed as a piece of integrated street theatre, so audiences have no narrative to follow, no sense of how each scene fits in with Woolcock’s story...the common cry, heard throughout the day, is: ‘I’m confused’. The day needed more cohesion, more activity – more theatre, essentially – for audiences truly to feel involved.137

135 ‘The Making of Exodus’.
136 Maddy Costa, ‘Reviews: Film sets and reality blur into one as Margate takes starring role’, The Guardian, 2 October 2006, p. 36.
137 Maddy Costa, p. 36.
If the day’s disparate proceedings lacked an intentional and unified narrative construction - what she suggestively calls ‘cohesion’ - they manifestly did not lack theatre. Costa’s implicit definition of theatre as a representational procedure which materially organises space and ideas – the same definition Sophie Nield adopts in her discussion of the production of ‘border’ space - enables a precise understanding of the several ways in which theatre made its appearance on Exodus Day and their importance for the questions of performance, governance and value production at issue in this chapter. At the most banal level, the staging of the journey from London to Margate both cited and materially performed a model of tourism – the day trip to the seaside – whose audience did not consist of pleasure-seeking city-dwellers intent on a day at the beach, but a group including myself whose (professional) interest in common was The Margate Exodus as art. Testament to the cultural capital of the figures involved in the event’s production, the spectacle of Waste Man’s burning at least had attracted well known performers and artists – Peter Capaldi, Tracey Emin - I’d only ever seen on film or in magazines. By evening, every restaurant in the town was packed and the queues from the fish bar adjacent to Dreamland snaked around the block; in a particularly bizarre and alienating moment, Will Self, Deborah Orr and their children beat myself and my partner to the last table in Margate’s branch of Pizza Hut. Though the project sought out ‘real’ performers to act as both backdrop and protagonists in the fictional ‘Dreamland’, Self, Orr and other such figures were recognisably part of a spectacular economy of celebrity, now made simultaneously hypervisible and oddly ordinary in appearance in the seaside town.
But more than this, the project’s use of theatrical mechanisms in pursuit of the realisation of the film in the town-as-set complexly modelled the authoritarian representational politics which the film’s narrative challenges, exposing, without intention, the logic of a governmental discourse of cohesion. The representational logic in question is one of immersion; its double, to be banished from the immersive, cohesive scene of consensus, theatricality. *Exodus Day’s* immersive staging of the town bore an aesthetic relation to work by companies like Blast Theory. The basis of its chosen mode of staging meanwhile was not performative experimentation with new technologies but the representational imperatives of making a commercial film product in the realist mode and, functional to it, the social relations established by a claim to private property. The member of the public wishing to avail him or herself of the precinct’s resources with no prior knowledge of the film project, and wishing not to give a ‘performance’ on film, was peremptorily offered the choice of whether or not to enter, which is to say, no choice at all; the scenario evacuates ‘consent’ of all substantive meaning. While trading on the enclosed site as aesthetically ‘real’ in order to produce the film commodity, its liberal makers were nonetheless compelled to acknowledge the productivity of utterances and the competing political positions present in the ‘really real’ public space of Margate by confirming Pharaoh Mann’s fascist rhetoric to be ‘theatre’, before once again inviting its audience to enact a theatrical, non-serious, but, in appearance, ‘real’ support for fascism in the procession down the street towards Dreamland.

Michael Morris published a rejoinder to Maddy Costa’s critique of the day in *The Guardian* a few days later:
It never occurred to those of us involved in the planning and execution of the day that we were engaged in producing ‘street theatre’, a quaint term that has little resonance for today’s highly sophisticated, visually literate and rapidly expanding public, hungry for immersive cultural experiences. Those who came from far and wide to Margate - just like those who came in their thousands to witness an outsize romance between an elephant and a child on the streets of London in May, were not looking for a storyline. Nor did they come just to see a film being made. What they discovered was an emotional connection, not only with the unfolding live events but also - and perhaps most importantly - within the crowd itself: large numbers of people from very different backgrounds coming together fearlessly to transform a public space in a fleeting but unforgettable moment. In Margate on Exodus Day, themes of violence to achieve political ends were explored - but they were never intended to be part of a narrative. By contrast, Penny Woolcock’s Channel 4 film Exodus, shooting until mid-November and screening next year, will have a clear and flowing storyline incorporating and recontextualising the live events staged in Margate on September 30, a key part of the film’s unusual process. In another Guardian article about Exodus Day, Madeleine Bunting understood that work like this means "the walls between the elite who produce art and those who observe it are disappearing". Equally, the dividing line between where art stops and where the world begins is breaking down, a belief that has been at the core of Artangel’s work since the early 1990s. The urgent expression of ideas can no longer always be framed on a wall, put on a plinth or stuck safely behind a proscenium.138

Drawing rhetorical force from its citation of the Artichoke-produced The Sultan’s Elephant (2006), Royal de Luxe’s extraordinarily ambitious, expensive and spectacularly well-attended four day event in London, Morris doesn’t initially invoke a public sphere in a Habermasian sense, but the public as consumer group, ‘opting-in’ to experience. A spectatorial desire for aesthetic immersion is radical and fresh. While readily prepared to engage innovative consumer experiences, the members of this public are fearful of one another; the material, public space of encounter is a site of intersubjective uncertainty which may be

fleeterly sutured by the cohesive effects of live performance. The ultimate objective, however, is the production of the ‘flowing narrative’ of the film.

As Morris affirms, Madeleine Bunting’s piece had re-stated The Margate Exodus’ claims to social cohesion, which in diametric opposition to Lingwood’s claims for House in the early 1990s, framed ‘culture of all kinds’ as a prophylactic force, “a vital arena in which to explore hopes and defuse fears before the latter take violent or political form”.\(^{139}\) Obliquely rebuking AA Gill’s critique of The Margate Exodus, she insisted:

this is a new kind of public art. It marks a departure from the iconic monuments - such as the Angel of the North - with which we have become so familiar, but which were so dramatic in their novelty back in the 90s when they took visual art out of the institutional settings of galleries and into the furniture of everyday lives. What characterises this new public art is engagement and participation. Gormley’s Waste Man in Margate was built by volunteers; he issued a call for help in the local newspaper. The walls between the elite who produce art and those who observe it are disappearing, and art has broken out of the reserves offered by institutions such as museums and galleries. This kind of art is not something you choose to go and visit - it goes out to make itself an audience.\(^{140}\)

Bunting metaphorically dismantles the walls of an undefined space of consumption, thereby happily mingling elite and audience together – though on the day, artists, volunteers and VIPs watched Waste Man burn from a roped-off enclosure separate from the public audience - and releasing ‘art’ (an entity with its own agency) to travel freely. Though ‘the elite’ should continue to act unhindered as the producers of art, they now also benevolently oversee

\(^{139}\) Madeleine Bunting, p. 30.  
\(^{140}\) Madeleine Bunting, p. 30.
engagement and participation in making art that is voluntary and civic minded; thus it follows that “culture and its funding is no longer an add-on but central to any politics committed to the vitality of the public realm and how societies build collective purpose”.141 Her account makes no reference to the functionality of voluntary labour to the realisation of the vision of the individual imagination, a primary category in an economy of artistic production managed by such an elite. The volunteers on the Waste Man project (and another evaluation participant) had included Emma Impett, a local primary school art teacher who, as an art student a decade earlier, had volunteered on The Field (1996), an Antony Gormley project at the Hayward Gallery. Writing in the The Observer (a piece for which Emma was interviewed), Jay Rayner remarked on the repetitive tedium of the installation process, and Gormley’s exacting directives, also manifest during the building of the Waste Man: “the Arts Council may own it and the volunteers may be putting it out, but this is still Antony Gormley’s work. And don’t they know it”.142 For Waste Man, ironically, the incorporation of volunteers into the process was far less expedient, and involved training which Unusual provided as part of the project and which Impett pursued in the months after the project’s conclusion.

The pragmatism of the project’s citation of the cohesion discourse became apparent after the film’s release. The first screenings of Exodus took place in Dreamland’s cinema to an appreciative audience of the film’s participants who

141 Madeleine Bunting, p. 30.  
142 Jay Rayner, ‘Gorms to the left of me, Gorms to the right…’, The Observer, 15 September 1996, p. 6.
cheered its introduction enthusiastically; towards the end of her speech, as Penny Woolcock thanked everyone present, a voice from the back called ‘no, thank you Penny!’, producing a loud murmur of assent and warm, resounding applause.

Notwithstanding the good feeling and sense of collective achievement apparent in the cinema that afternoon (a dynamic so readily amenable to governmental co-optation as ‘cohesion’) a discourse of international excellence rapidly took precedence in public communication. Following the selection of the film in the Orizzonti section of the 64th Venice Film Festival in 2007, Artangel sent a bulletin to its email list:

Inspired by the biblical story of Exodus and shot in the derelict Dreamland funfair in the English coastal town of Margate, Exodus explores timeless themes of identity, migration and great movements of people across the globe.

Leading actor Bernard Hill takes the part of Pharaoh and Ger Ryan plays Pharaoh’s wife, Batya. RADA-trained actor Daniel Percival plays Moses’ brother Aaron. All other speaking parts and the many hundreds of extras are all non-actors from Margate and the Isle of Thanet.

The Orizzonti section of the Venice Film Festival aims to provide an overview of new trends in cinema, and in particular cinema which merges fiction and documentary. It was set up by Marco Müller in 2004 during his first season as director of the Venice Film Festival. [143]

The participants whose integration into a cohesive community played a starring role in the framing of the project took a back step; professional training, celebrity and exclusivity became the work’s primary values.

[143] ‘Exodus Venice’, [received via email 1 September 2007]
Conclusion

Unlike Artangel’s other commissions, the visit Exodus Day staged from London to Margate did not model tourism in quite the same hypothetical sense: it encouraged acts of tourism to a once thriving tourist town. Though The Margate Exodus narrated exile, asylum and recognition as questions of identity, the dominant questions emerging from its practices seem rather to relate to the production of value. In closing, I would like to reflect a little further on the implications of the construction of an anti-theatrical, immersive space whose narrative structure, established in advance, would seek to actively exclude certain forms of action or appearance from the scene. As the crowd progressed towards Dreamland on Exodus Day, we reached the crossroads. There I noticed a set of competing placards in the crowd - handmade fluorescent orange signs wielded by a group of protestors. These read:

ACTION NOW! WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

HOUSES HOUSES HOUSES HOUSES
WHERE’S THE DOCTOR, DENTIST, HOSPITAL AND WATER?
The protestors, from an association called Save Thanet, had chosen to hijack the public events to advance their cause, a fight against a decision to build 4,000 houses in the Thanet area. This was not a spontaneous incident of protest: Save Thanet had launched their intervention with an announcement in the local press about their plans the day before *Exodus Day*:

'We know the film-makers are planning some spectacular public events for Saturday in Margate, and we aren't going to spoil the fun', said organiser Norman Thomas, 'but we are going to make our voices heard. After all, the theme of Exodus is all about people looking for a promised land. The problem for Thanet is that our land has been promised away to be built over - and we are not prepared to accept this. All over Thanet housing developments are springing up. We have to say enough is enough...Thanet depends on tourism and visitors. Who's going to want to come and visit a huge urban sprawl?'\(^{144}\)

Though not mentioned in the piece, film-maker Norman Thomas, the campaign organiser, ran for the European Parliament in 2004 as a Kent-based representative of RESPECT; part of his campaigning on this platform included the organisation of a protest at the closure of Dreamland on 1 May 2004 in concert with the Save Dreamland campaign.\(^{145}\) He has subsequently continued to voice opposition to capital development in Thanet, organising rallies to protest the introduction of the ‘China Gateway’ business park, the first phase of which Thanet Council approved in October 2008.\(^{146}\) Of the demonstration on *Exodus*

---


\(^{146}\) ‘China Gateway Approved’, *This is Kent*, 10 October 2008. [http://www.thisiskent.co.uk/news/China-Gateway-Approved] [accessed
Day, firstly, though the chief issue for the campaigners is one of property
speculation, they pragmatically cite tourism to lend the protest rhetorical force.
Secondly, it demonstrates a logic of pre-emption, which states that it is no longer
enough simply to act in public space; actions must be supplemented with other
(archivable) representations. And finally – and perhaps most germane to the
representational logic I have explored in this chapter - their demonstration had
the effect of denaturalising the fake placards, paradoxically disclosing the public,
a site of agonism and struggle over the terms of social life and its material
shaping, to have characteristics akin to the representational logic of the theatre.
To turn finally to John Frow:

the public sphere is constituted in a process of alienation from self-
identity (which of course we may in turn want to understand as similarly
constituted); and that such a division of the self in the 'moment of special
imaginary reference' is a proper use of the suspension of belief and
passion that allows the fictions of sociality to work. This suspension, let
me emphasise, is as ordinary and trivial a thing as the willingness to hold
two contradictory beliefs at the same time, or rather simultaneously to
believe and not to believe; and yet it is this moment of paralogic that
makes possible any complex co-existence with others147.

The scene of immersion – its protagonist, the reflexive, active, consuming subject
- seeks to deny this, and to insist that there is no alternative. This is the
conceptual basis of neoliberalism’s practice of excluding from the social those
bodies who appear as its encumbrance, a practice which, as Save Thanet’s

August 2009]. See also ‘Thanet: Gateway to China?’, *BBC Inside Out*,
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/content/articles/2008/10/06/south_east_th
anet_chinese_s14_w4_feature.shtml> [accessed August 2009]
representational work aptly demonstrates, is not spontaneously occurring but actively, theatrically constructed.
CHAPTER 2
Performing ‘inclusion’: *From the favela to the world*

Introduction

This chapter examines the intended production of ‘inclusion’ through art, music and performance of a figure of twenty-first century ‘exclusion’: the young person ‘at risk’. The term gained currency in the US in the 1980s, designating, like Charles Murray’s ‘underclass’ thesis, “a new class of untouchables”:

> young people who are functionally illiterate, disconnected from school, depressed, prone to drug abuse and early criminal activity, and eventually, parents of unplanned and unwanted babies. These are the children who are at high risk of never becoming responsible adults.¹

This list demonstrates the diagnostic, actuarial logic of the managerial neoliberal state and the exercise of ‘foresight’ through statistical aggregation. The ‘young person at risk’ is an organising concept of New Labour’s social policy and the object of variously holistic and punitive interventions. *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* (2003) (original title: *Children at Risk*) placed “being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being”² at the centre of reforms to the social services. Passed into law in the Children’s Act 2004, its recommendations were devised in response to the torture and death of Victoria Climbié at the hands of her abusive carers, to ensure that in future “necessary intervention takes place before

children reach crisis point and protecting [sic] children from falling through the net’.3 Meanwhile, embodying the logic that “‘publicity is part of proper enforcement’”,4 the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) (introduced to the statute in 1998) and the electronic tag spectacularise and responsibilise young offenders. Unevenly cited across policy programmes, including the arts,5 the ‘young person at risk’ is an historically specific category of governmental concern and action, the basis for policy programmes designed to produce social and economic ‘inclusion’: a mode of subjectivity and conduct which, unlike the ‘young person at risk’, works for and on behalf of the political order that has imagined it.

In 2006, People’s Palace Projects launched the AfroReggae UK Partnership, a collaborative arts initiative with and for young people ‘at risk’. People’s Palace Projects’ artistic director Paul Heritage6 has over several years produced and directed transnational projects with artists and activists from Brazil and the UK in theatres and prisons in both countries. The inspiration for this project,

---

6 Paul Heritage is the joint supervisor of this PhD thesis. Alongside my doctoral research, he invited me to produce a bulletin about the activities of the AfroReggae UK Partnership in 2007. I had planned a chapter for the thesis about the Artichoke-produced The Sultan’s Elephant (2006), treating the work as the focus of a comparative inquiry regarding French and British funding structures and the constitution of ‘public space’; during the course of research towards the bulletin, the greater relevance of the AfroReggae UK Partnership to the concerns of the thesis became apparent.
Brazilian Grupo Cultural AfroReggae, is an activist cultural organization and now internationally touring band first established in 1993 as a small participatory percussion project in the suburban *favela* (shantytown) of Vigário Geral in Rio de Janeiro. Both AfroReggae and the AfroReggae UK Partnership are projects which seek to provide art and education to young people in situations of disadvantage, and to use art as an agent of change; in the case of AfroReggae, to provide meaningful alternatives for youth, living in poverty, to employment in the profitable drug trade whose violent factions occupy the majority of Rio’s *favelas*. My analysis takes its departure from a visit to Rio to see AfroReggae’s permanent centres for the performing arts in four *favelas*, and experiencing, in the midst of unfamiliarity, an uncanny sensation of ‘home’. To enumerate first a handful of differences: though AfroReggae mediate successfully with the factions, even assisting senior members in leaving the drug trade, certain restrictions relating to the drug gangs’ violent control of space pertain. Inside AfroReggae’s centre in Complexo do Alemão (literally ‘complex of Germans’, or, ‘strangers’), the company’s workers warned us not to move too near the windows with our cameras. In brilliant sunlight in Vigário Geral, we passed a solitary teenage boy who loitered in the concrete street beside AfroReggae’s centre, casually holding an automatic weapon. A loudhailer, blasting out an announcement for the benefit of the whole settlement unexpectedly punctuated our clambering departure from hillside *favela* Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavazinho, accompanied, for our safety, by a participant wearing an AfroReggae T-shirt.

Again and again AfroReggae’s mission statement appeared, prominently stencilled or hung on the centres’ walls:
Our Mission: to promote inclusion and social justice, using art, Afro-Brazilian culture and education as tools to bridge differences and serve as foundations for sustainability and the exercise of citizenship.

By then, ‘inclusion’, a term insistently circulated in the UK, had become a reflex descriptor for artistic work with non-professional participants, conceptually interchangeable in the discourse with ‘communities’. The appearance of the mission statement as a textual form and AfroReggae’s citation of ‘inclusion’ in these circumstances produced a strangely familiar and thus denaturalizing effect. In Vigário Geral, following a territorial clash between drug factions, forty per cent of the *favela*’s residents had recently taken flight; meanwhile, painted on the wall of AfroReggae’s Vigário Geral centre, beside the logos of AfroReggae’s corporate sponsors Natura, Banco Real and Petrobras, ‘inclusion’ appeared as an *unheimlich*, jarring reminder of the slick presentation of contemporary British arts organisations. With scholarly scepticism, I dismissed this apprehension of sameness. Like ‘citizenship’, I imagined that that ‘inclusion’ must mean something different in and for Brazil.7

7 Though ‘inclusion’ and ‘citizenship’ are necessarily imbricated, the discussion will not examine the different meanings which ‘citizenship’ carries in the variants of liberal democracy established in the UK and Brazil. For accounts of citizenship in the British context see Charles Pattie, Patrick Seyd and Paul Whitely, *Citizenship in Britain: Values, Participation and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004); Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2003); Noel Smith, Ruth Lister, Sue Middleton, Lynne Cox, ‘Young people as real citizens: towards an inclusionary understanding of citizenship’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8, 4, December (2005), 425-443. For Brazil see
This assumption was misguided. The projects under discussion embrace many points of translation, interruption and miscommunication, but ‘inclusion’ is not one of them. Though invested with meaning locally, the capacity of ‘inclusion’ to travel transnationally, the source of its uncanny appearance, suggests it to be an abstract signifier of the same representational order as the AfroReggae T-shirt and the various logos: a brand identity. The brand values it represents are the opposite of poverty, itself now rebranded as ‘exclusion’. Thus, if ‘development’ signifies (as Regina Gagnier efficiently puts it) “a discourse about economic transformation, specifically the integration of less developed states into the global market or, in fully depoliticized terms, the ‘war on poverty’”,8 ‘inclusion’ represents a corresponding action: the putatively free, unencumbered movement of persons, meanings and things across borders. Flexible enough in lexical terms to accommodate other, more politically progressive meanings – say, the development of modes of education more responsive to different styles of learning or forms of disability, or challenges to deep-rooted exclusionary prejudices such as racism, sexism, homophobia (and in this regard, the extent to which the development of capitalism itself enables such challenges while

---

instantiating other forms of regulatory oppression is of particular interest)—‘inclusion’ stands for the exercise of an actively entrepreneurial and therefore, in neoliberal political economic thinking, ‘productive’ subjectivity. ‘Inclusion’, a zone of entrepreneurial self-making, is a simultaneously spatial and ethical construct; as Peter Kelly argues, the signification of “the population of Youth at-risk, in its negativity, illuminates the positivity that is the entrepreneurial Self” (original emphases).

Governmental valorization of individual and individualising entrepreneurialism is the correlate of neoliberal structural adjustment in both Latin America and the West, an ideological vindication of state reduction and privatisation of the Keynesian welfare state apparatus which, though different in scale and formation, facilitated urban industrial expansion in both Britain and Brazil at roughly contemporaneous moments. In both scenarios now “the management of risk within institutionally structured risk environments is thus constructed as the responsibility of the individual”. The critical question for this comparative analysis of the projects under discussion, AfroReggae in Rio and the AfroReggae UK Partnership in London, is precisely the institutional, performative

---


construction of those ‘risk environments’. The point is not that the categories of ‘inclusion’ or ‘at risk’ themselves have different meanings in both sites; they are part of the conceptual architecture of neoliberal globalization, an architecture which, as the discursive work undertaken to produce the legibility of ‘inclusion’ in Brazil demonstrates, is far from naturally arising.13 The point is rather that institutional practices mediate them differently, and that these mediations demonstrate ideological and practical struggle.

Thus, though the ‘young person at risk’ and their transition to productivity through access to ‘legitimate’ work constitutes the explicit focus of the projects – in Britain, for example, those understood to be ‘not in education, employment or training’ (NEET); in Brazil, those engaging in profitable but exceptionally dangerous illegal work – the focus of my argument is the interface of this neoliberal, global category of subjectivity with historical discourses of cultural value. Their collision makes manifest Britain and Brazil’s asymmetric relations to the development of capitalism and concomitant ideologies of culture. Artists and writers in modernity in Brazil – Oswald de Andrade, the countercultural tropicalia movement of the 1960s, AfroReggae themselves - have grappled successively with its postcoloniality, elaborating and rearticulating a concept of

13 At the conference *Overcoming Social Exclusion: Brazil in Comparative Perspective* in 2004 Peter Townsend (2004, p. 9) noted (in response to a paper about social credit programmes given by Marcelo Cortes Neri, director of Centro de Políticas Sociais, Fundação Getúlio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro) that Brazil “had come relatively late to this [the social exclusion] debate” and called for greater attention to the detail engaged in the transfer of international social policy paradigms. The World Bank’s recent publication, *Social Exclusion and Mobility in Brazil* (2008) opens by stating explicitly that as part of research into the incidence of poverty in Brazil “little attention has been given to social exclusion processes to explain why certain groups lack equal access to resources”.

111
antropofágia, a cultural ‘cannibalism’ that consumes dominating influence to vomit forth a new cultural mix, producing, as Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira writes, “the contamination of colonial/hegemonic univocality”. The renowned musician Gilberto Gil, Brazilian Minister for Culture until 2008, cited antropofágia in a speech in Rome in 2003, in which he asserted culture as an agent of national identity, communication with other countries, economic participation and full citizenship. But he defined culture

not only as the limited array of traditional cultural forms canonised by Western Europe but as a dynamic constellation in which all the creative acts of our people appear. From architecture to candomblé, from capoeira to literature, from samba to theatre, from town planning to crafts, from heritage to laser art, from the aesthetic of the favelas to culinary techniques, from the cultural fragments of street children to the way of life of the Xinguano, from football to carnival, from scientific research to the knowledge of Amazonian healers.

In Britain, a liberal discourse of cultural production holds sway, and cultural institutions reply to the contemporary governmental injunction to produce ‘inclusion’ – a category which collapses ‘culture’ and ‘economy’ - by invoking a binary discourse of ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’ value. The most recent

---


contribution to the ‘value’ debate is Sir Brian McMaster’s DCMS-commissioned
on the relation between ‘culture’ and ‘economy’ in a more general sense, Paul du
Gay and Michael Pryke insist that

any attempt to instigate categorical distinctions between ‘intrinsically’
and ‘instrumentally’ oriented activity in order to support a general
normative analysis of economic and cultural life will quickly come up
against brute empirical realities that it will not be able to account for or
make much reasonable sense of.\(^\text{16}\)

With this in view, it is difficult to read the ‘intrinsic’-‘instrumental’ debate in
anything other than two ideologically linked ways: the first, a conservative
attempt to protect support for the arts on the basis of its absolute exteriority from
the economy, and the second, an effort to arrest cultural developments-
instantiated, in part, by managerial policy decisions introduced by government
and exploited pragmatically by artists and organisations - which challenge the
dominance of a small coterie of large and very well resourced metropolitan arts
institutions. Participants in the debate regularly cite ‘aesthetic quality’ and
‘excellence’; these have conceptual antecedents in nineteenth century European
thought which elaborated artistic practice “as a distinct domain - distinct not just
from the activities of the state, but also from all other institutions and forms of

\(^{16}\) Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke, ‘Cultural economy: an introduction’, in
*Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life*, ed. by Paul du Gay and
human labour”, a position radically at odds with the mestizo of Brazilian cultural practice.

If McMaster’s framing categories bear witness to this history, ‘inclusion’ bears witness to the contemporary phase of global capitalism. It signifies both entrepreneurialism as a mode of conduct and the outcome of efforts to produce it, thus privileging ‘creativity’ and the managerial measurement of productivity. At this point the actuarial category ‘young person at risk’ comes back into view, as the “dramaturgical performance” of audit, Michael Power avers, has “much to do with articulating values, with rationalising and reinforcing public images of control”. Government exercises this control to a greater extent over small ‘community-based’ cultural producers who may no longer share the anti-capitalist principles that informed the community arts movement in the 1960s and 1970s but demonstrate alignment to the principles of the competitive society – like Hackney-based Rising Tide, who offer music industry ‘training, enterprise and professional development’ to young offenders and young people at risk of offending, and the Brady Centre in Tower Hamlets, whose programme for young people is called ‘A’ Team Arts. In lieu of social services in the favelas, AfroReggae tabulates and stores demographic data about its participants, but this is not a determining factor for its practice in the same way. The transnational AfroReggae UK Partnership makes cultural difference apparent,

---

and throws into relief the performativity of ideologies in ‘institutionally structured risk environments’ thousands of miles apart. This discussion examines the representation of young people ‘at risk’ and the uses to which artists and practitioners put multiple forms of representation to advance a progressive agenda, which locates risk not in the person of a deficient subject, but in the material circumstances of action, circumstances nonetheless constrained and overdetermined by the ideology of the competitive society.
I: ‘Culture is our weapon’: Grupo Cultural AfroReggae

Grupo Cultural AfroReggae is now enough of a household name to warrant a mention in Lonely Planet’s *Rio de Janeiro* city guide.\(^{21}\) The group’s activist work pivots around the making of art and performance which cites, valorizes and remixes Afro-Brazilian culture. Internationally renowned for its hybrid of Bahian percussion, funk, hip hop and drum & bass, Banda AfroReggae’s profitable touring practice partially supports the organization’s music and performance projects for young people based in the permanent centres for performing arts it has established in five *favelas* across Rio de Janeiro, the most impoverished parts of the *cidade partida* (divided city).\(^{22}\) In what follows I offer a contextualising account of AfroReggae’s emergence in Rio de Janeiro and its simultaneously local and global organisational strategy. Next, I theorise a representational dynamic which AfroReggae calls the ‘Shiva effect’. The organisation uses this concept, derived from Hinduism, to describe processes of social and artistic crisis and productivity; it is also associated with its multiple and favourable definitions of risk and uncertainty as principles for action. The final section describes AfroReggae’s pedagogical strategy, not in terms of workshop practice but the institutional framework it has established within the *favelas* to enable its participants to become more culturally mobile by encouraging the development of what its practitioners call an ‘exchange mechanism’. I argue that AfroReggae’s ethic of practice is largely in ideological alignment with the competitive society,


its practice encouraging in the young person ‘at risk’ of involvement in criminal activity in the *favelas* an entrepreneurial openness to the new. Artistic practice is supplemented in the centres by the work of freelance social workers and psychologists, effectively providing a consistent, informal mode of welfare provision in sites where gang violence disrupts what little is available.

AfroReggae’s work is concerned with long term change: to destabilize race and class prejudices which have functioned to legitimize successive initiatives to entrench, destroy or hide the *favelas* and their economic subordination to the *asfalto* from view.  

(i) From the *favela* to the world I: cultural exchange across borders

The residents of Rio’s roughly seven hundred *favelas* now house about one third

---

23 In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Haussman-esque modernisation of downtown Rio initiated by Mayor Pereira Passos expelled many black and mixed race residents from the city centre, increasing the incidence of squatter settlements; during the 1940s, as state sponsored industrialisation encouraged people to migrate from the *interior* to the city, shantytown growth exploded, in particular in the new industrial bases of the Zona Norte (Pino 1997, especially chapter 3). As an umbrella term, ‘*favela*’ now also refers to settlements which were in fact built by the state, as part of clearance programmes of centrally located slums launched as the city’s industrial base rapidly grew in the north and west. Vigário Geral (full name: Parque Proletário de Vigário Geral), a mass of concrete dwellings with a rail link into the city centre, adjacent to Parada de Lucas, a similar and now rival settlement in the Baixada Fluminense, is itself one such example. Strategies such as the mass demolition of centrally-located *favelas* by the military dictatorship and the forcible relocation of 100,000 *favelados* in the 1960s and 1970s to serve what Mike Davis (2006, p. 108) calls “urban bourgeoisification” have been superseded by interventions like the integrationist project Favela-Bairro. Launched in 1994, this project continues to resource improvements to the structural conditions of buildings in the *favelas* to make them similar in appearance to the surrounding neighbourhoods.
of its population\textsuperscript{24} and, as João H. Costa Vargas demonstrates, a disproportionate number of Brazilians of African descent, producing, in the society Gilberto Freyre mythologized as ‘racial democracy’, “an inescapable concrete embodiment of a multitude of other marginalizations to which people of African descent are subjected in Brazil”.\textsuperscript{25} Their residents’ work was critical to the city’s industrial growth while the workers themselves were restricted from access to its wealth, supported by narratives framing them as ontologically workshy – even evil, the view of Rio’s chief of police in 1950s\textsuperscript{26} - in popular, governmental and social policy discourses. In the 1960s these forms of poverty attracted the essentialising label ‘marginality’. Anthropologist Janice Perlman’s pathbreaking text \textit{The Myth of Marginality} (1976)\textsuperscript{27} refuted narratives of endemic marginality through a close ethnographic analysis of three settlements and in-depth interviews with more than 750 people, research she revisited in the early 2000s in the wake of the \textit{favelas’} colonisation by professional drug gangs over the preceding fifteen years.\textsuperscript{28}


Three major factions, Comando Vermelho (Red Command), Comando Terceiro (Third Command) and Amigos dos Amigos (Friends of Friends) now occupy most of Rio’s favelas, using the settlements as processing centres and points of sale.

The factions compete for territorial control, and thereby market protection, through extreme violence. Historic constructions of the favelas as the modern city’s illegitimate other are thus now also overlaid by fears of this violence.

Between 1982 and 2002 deaths by firearm in Brazil tripled from 7 to 21 per 100,000; in Rio de Janeiro, homicide rates are more than double the national average at 50 deaths per 100,000, a figure which rises to 230 per 100,000 among people aged 15 to 24, the age group most likely to be employed in the tráfico as a consequence of systemic exclusion from other education and employment opportunities. Elizabeth Leeds describes young favelados as “a reserve army for drugs traffickers, with children in that army becoming increasingly younger”.

An overwhelming, and seemingly intractable matrix of circumstances secure the conditions for this employment – de-industrialisation and ensuing high levels of 

---


unemployment, access to education compromised by schools’ absorption into the drug gangs’ territorial manoeuvres, the complicity of an institutionally racist and corrupt police force in consolidating the drug trade and a lack of political will for reform. Drug-related homicides result from repressive police action as much as territorial in-fighting. In one incident among thousands, in 2002 representatives of BOPE (Battalion for Special Operations of the Rio de Janeiro Military Police) shot AfroReggae percussionist Paulo in the foot as he made his way to a concert because, the organization’s executive co-ordinator José Júnior writes, the police thought “he looked suspicious’, which is to say, he is black, dresses well and has a cool car”. If the iconicity of the Pão de Açúcar and Cristo Redentor draws tourists and their money to post-industrial Rio, then, as Enrique Desmond Arias puts it, “the young, poor, non-white men who dominate trafficking in the favelas are the public face of the city’s drug trade”.

Demonstrating the functionality of publicity to AfroReggae’s activist agenda, Banda AfroReggae’s lead singer LG offers this comment at the beginning of Nenhum Motiva Explica A Guerra [No Motive Explains War] (2006), the second documentary film to be produced about the group:

---

We do not only have the issue about criminality, issues about negative things in the favela, what we have are great groups which are trying to show that all the favelas have something good to offer.

AfroReggae’s name demonstrates its anti-racist valorization of black Brazilian cultures and histories; its agenda points towards its aesthetic and political status as a product of contemporary economic globalization. AfroReggae vigorously promotes the active participation and recognition of both the company and the favelas themselves in the global economic and cultural scene. Da Favela Para O Mundo [From the Favela to the World], the title of a book length history of AfroReggae written by Júnior, funded by the US-based Ford Foundation, and which the AfroReggae UK Partnership events programmes took as their name, indexes both this status and AfroReggae’s expansionist orientation. The organisation expressly seeks to attract young favelados away from affiliation with the drug trade by offering workshops in percussion, dance, drama, ICT, radio production, hip hop and circus in permanent facilities, either modified from existing buildings or designed and built from scratch. It also addresses audiences worldwide through a range of media, including two documentary films with international distribution, its website and Banda AfroReggae’s international touring practices and CD releases - Nova Cara (Polygram 2004), Nenhum Motiva Explica A Guerra (WEA Brazil 2006) and Favela Uprising (Mr Bongo 2007). Patrick Neate, British journalist, novelist and hip hop enthusiast

---

36 Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra, dir. Cacá Diegues e Rafael Dragaud (Warner Music 2006) [on DVD]
37 Favela Rising, dir. Matt Mochary and Jeff Zimbalist (HBO Documentary Films 2005) [on DVD]; Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra.
makes the global dimension of AfroReggae’s work clear in his adrenalized account of an interview with Júnior appearing at the end of *Where You’re At: Notes from the Frontline of a Hip Hop Planet* (2003):

My mind is racing as Júnior talks. Maybe it’s just that my thoughts are coalescing or maybe this is exactly what I’ve been looking for all along without knowing it. Put simply, this is an oppositional voice that stands against exclusion with full knowledge of the possibilities of imagined identity and the value of its capitalized reputation; that truly acts locally, connects globally and thinks glocally. And, more to the point, it works.39

The company’s gradual emergence in the early 1990s similarly bears the signs of a global and globalising culture. Rio de Janeiro was and remains an urban space whose violence prompted journalist Zuenir Ventura to write *Cidade Partida* (1994), an influential book which conceives of the city as divided and governed by the ‘parallel powers’ of the state and the drug gangs, and which takes AfroReggae as a hopeful case example of resistance. Problematising Ventura’s chosen dyad, Paul Heritage historicizes it as specific to Rio in the mid-nineties, as acts of violence which disrupted both long-established class boundaries and ideas of acceptable targets for police violence were increasing in number.40 In response to the *arrastões* (mass muggings) on Arpoador Beach in the Zona Sul in October 1992 and insistent media representation of *funkeiros* and black *favela* youth as the culprits,41 the Rio authorities instituted a ban on *baile funk* parties. At that moment Júnior was a small-scale funk promoter living hand to mouth;

---

following the ban, he had to think of something else to play at a party for which he had already sold tickets. He chose reggae. This event was a disaster, but *Rasta Reggae Dancing*, a second party created in collaboration with DJ Luis Fernando Lopes (Tekko) turned a profit. Using this income, Júnior and some friends began to publish *AfroReggae Notícias*, a free monthly newsletter about black cultural politics and music - “a communications vehicle for Afro-Brazilian culture”\(^42\) - which they distributed by hand in *favela* communities, launching the first edition in January 1993, and using the income from further parties to finance further editions. In *Da Favela Para O Mundo* (2004), prefaced by Ventura, Júnior writes that

*Rasta Reggae Dancing* did its job, and created a brand which stays with us until today: to bring together people of different social classes and distinct localities in one place.\(^43\)

Leaving aside for a moment the conflation of social production with brand, it is clear that, from the outset, AfroReggae has both explicitly and implicitly challenged Ventura’s notion of the city, even as he publicly endorses its activities. Its early work, presenting and celebrating forms of black culture from Brazil and internationally, never articulated a bounded urban space divided in two, but movement across multiple real and imagined urban and international borders producing new iterations of cultural interaction – whether this was Júnior and his fellow group members hawking the increasingly popular *AfroReggae Notícias* and its interviews with Family Man and Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers in

\(^{42}\) *Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra.*

\(^{43}\) “A Rasta Reggae Dancing cumpriu o seu papel, e criou uma marca que nos acompanha até hoje: juntar num mesmo lugar pessoas de diferentes classes sociais e de localidades distintas”. José Júnior, p. 22.
favela communities, or assembling people from across the city to dance to roots and dub in a venue in Centro. Its production was implicated in a dispersed but nonetheless globally networked economy - like baile funk, whose DJs accessed Motown, hip hop and soul from the US by engaging, Yúdice writes, “in a dizzying transnational traffic in records, tapes and CDs”.

In its everyday participatory work and musical experimentation the company also embraces multiple cultural forms. As Banda AfroReggae developed its fusion of hip hop and Afro-Brazilian percussion, Júnior writes that “we listened to various musical genres from inside and outside Brazil. It was all good, all there to be taken advantage of: drum’n’bass, maracatu, rap”. The turntablism and video animation in their shows recall Ninja Tune artists like DJ Shadow and Mr Scruff, and their aesthetic hybridity and play with costume, colour and dance, artists from the Tropicália movement - in the AfroReggae shows at the Barbican in 2006 and 2007, MC Anderson Sá wore a military coat with golden epaulettes, very similar in style to that of Gilberto Gil on the cover of Gilberto Gil (1968). But their performances also insistently stage the band’s favela roots. Dominating the stage at the opening of their show at London’s Barbican Centre in 2006 as part of the UK Partnership events was a huge projection of a world map, whose focus zipped from city to city – Johannesburg, Los Angeles, Paris – finally alighting on Rio de Janeiro, and zooming in to the favela of Vigário Geral, while three percussionists, diminutive before its scale and with their backs to the audience,

44 George Yúdice, p. 123.
drummed rhythms on the instruments slung around their waists before launching into the gig’s first song. Visually and lyrically, these performances do not represent the favelas as chronically excluded and parochial spaces, but as nodes on a global economic and political network, just as the band’s touring practices to venues across the world – in the US, for example, headlining at the Carnegie Hall with Caetano Veloso, playing to an audience at the Temple Bar, Santa Monica which included producer Quincey Jones;\(^46\) back in Rio, opening for the Rolling Stones on Copacabana Beach – engage in market economy.

Internationalism is a critical component of AfroReggae’s strategy, which, driven by its executive co-ordinator José Júnior from an office in the Zona Sul – who playfully compares himself to Che Guevara\(^47\) - is premised on the construction and exploitation of similar networks. Interviewed in Patrick Neate and Damian Platt’s *Culture Is Our Weapon: AfroReggae in the Favelas of Rio* (2006), itself a product of and mechanism for networking, written first in English by two British advocates of AfroReggae, published by the Latin American Institute in London and addressed to new readers of AfroReggae’s work outside Brazil, Júnior comments “‘You can say ‘I’m this’, or ‘I’m that’ but it’s all bullshit. Without partnerships, you’re nothing’”.\(^48\)

The argument I am seeking to evidence is that AfroReggae, product of and response to global cultural and political change, sustains itself by engaging


\(^{47}\) In an image in Ings (2007, p. 22), Júnior strikes a genial pose next to the framed poster of Che Guevara in AfroReggae’s head office.

enthusiastically with the market as a political tactic. This point emerges only in relatively recent writing about the company. Earlier critiques, by contrast, explore questions of identity politics, or the company’s imbrication in the discourses and institutions of civil society. In an essay in the edited collection Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements (1998), Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha theorizes AfroReggae’s early work – her focus is AfroReggae Notícias - as symptomatic of a paradigm shift in black activist politics in Brazil, in which its actors “update discourses on race by conjugating them with other issues”.

For AfroReggae this is the favela - “the shantytown as a geographical reference and the ‘community’ as a political reference”. In her analysis, AfroReggae facilitates the provision of opportunities to exercise citizenship and ‘community self-esteem’ in part via a representational strategy which conflates the identity of the favela with AfroReggae’s own; the “‘community’ is no longer merely the territory in which the GCAR was formed; it has been transformed into an emblem of its presence - local as well as global”.

George Yúdice’s analytical priorities regarding AfroReggae in The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era (2003) are similar; in a chapter addressing AfroReggae, he describes the dual structure of AfroReggae as profit-making enterprise and not-for-profit NGO, and refers to the uses made by both AfroReggae and fellow Brazilian hip hop collective Racionais MCs of commercial music television, to raise awareness of their music and politics among young

50 Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha, p. 242.
51 Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha, p. 242.
audiences and the institutions keen to capitalize on them. Nonetheless, like da Cunha, Yúdice privileges, both analytically and as a matter of principle, AfroReggae’s work to build ‘community’ (now in the sense of ‘local resources’ rather than ‘identity’). Rio de Janeiro, he writes,

is the site of a very special cultural economy, and AfroReggae has found a way to give life and partake of it as well in the process. If one is left asking what there is to that life apart from spectacle and performativity, I suggest focusing on the community-building activities undertaken by AfroReggae. Although they may depend on the media and the markets, this is not an exclusive dependence.\textsuperscript{52}

In terms of institutional partnerships, this is undoubtedly the case. Alongside its sponsorship from big national and international brands (Natura, Red Bull) since its inception AfroReggae has negotiated progressively more ambitious and numerous partnerships with artists, NGOs and university institutions on a national and international basis, collaborations which themselves contribute to the growing scholarly literature about its work. These include the recruitment of Caetano Veloso as \textit{padrinho} (godfather) to the company and collaborations with internationally famous Brazilian cultural figures like Marisa Monte, Xuxa and Gilberto Gil alongside activist hip hop artists (MV Bill, Racionais MCs, O Rappa) as part of the large scale concert series Conexões Urbanas staged on massive temporary stadia within the \textit{favelas}. They simultaneously align AfroReggae with a cosmopolitan scene of artistic practice and local political engagement. Júnior approached sociologist Silvia Ramos with a proposition to produce a project ultimately realised as \textit{Juventude e Polícia} [Youth and the Police], a percussion initiative with the military police in Belo Horizonte supported and evaluated by

\textsuperscript{52} George Yúdice, p. 156.
CESeC, the Rio-based research centre where Ramos is based. In an article about this project published in 2006, Ramos echoes da Cunha in reflecting upon the distance that AfroReggae and other young black Brazilian music artists stage between themselves and formal, collectivist, identity-based movements, while simultaneously identifying themselves as black and from the favelas. But she clearly states that, in order to challenge existing stereotypes, these artists also seek to create powerful images of young people of the favela who, against all expectations, become filmmakers, stage actors or musicians. In other words, in these groups the media, success and fame are understood as ingredients of political militancy. (my emphasis)

Categorically, “they are market-oriented…the opposite of the ‘non-profit’ culture that characterizes the Brazilian NGOs”. Culture Is Our Weapon (2006) pursues this line of thought most systematically; Neate and Platt apply the work of Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto to suggest that AfroReggae strategically solicits written representations – which de Soto theorises as generative of the form of capital – in order to accumulate value, remarking in particular that “it is arguable that the most important written representations of AfroReggae’s work are the numerous press articles they attract (in both local and international media) that allow them to develop a kind of ‘cultural asset base’”.

56 Patrick Neate and Damian Platt, p. 150.
In other words, AfroReggae recognises discursive production and circulation as a source of value production – in this case, the more-or-less informal production of reputation capital over against monetised value captured through the exercise of intellectual property rights. At this point I want to examine De Soto’s work in slightly more detail – a writer Mike Davis characterises as “the Peruvian businessman who has become the global guru of neoliberal populism”\(^{57}\) – for the reason that Neate and Platt read de Soto’s reference to writing literally. They quote only the first half of the first sentence from this section of de Soto’s *The Mystery of Capital*:

> Capital is born by representing in writing – in a title, a security, a contract and other such records – the most economically and socially useful qualities about the asset, as opposed to the visually more striking aspect of the asset. This is where potential value is first described and registered. The moment you focus your attention on the title of a house, for example, and not on the house itself, you have automatically stepped from the material world into the conceptual universe where capital lives.\(^{58}\)

*The Mystery of Capital* aims to show why in developing nations, it is not participation in the mainstream economy, but extra-legality that is the norm, the legacy of substantial historic and contemporary barriers to migrant workers’ participation in the formal urban economies which developed rapidly in the mid-twentieth century\(^{59}\) - to which the *favelas’* expansion in Rio may be attributed - and the absence of a single, easily negotiable\(^{60}\) system for the representation of

\(^{57}\) Mike Davis, p. 79.
\(^{59}\) For an historical account, see Davis (2006, chapter 3).
\(^{60}\) De Soto (2000, p. 15) and his research team staged a series of experiments to test legal infrastructures in place in Peru. In one instance, they found that a
property rights. In their extra-legal form the assets of those outside the formal economy are what de Soto defines as ‘dead capital’, like “isolated ponds whose waters disappear into a sterile strip of sand”.\textsuperscript{61} The solution to the problem of mass exclusion from this economy, in his view, is to introduce these assets to formal representation. As a theory which draws a strict distinction between materiality and representation and use and exchange value, and suggests the possibility of unproblematic transition of an ‘unregistered asset’ into formal representation, it offers exemplary support for a developmental theory of ‘inclusion’. De Soto describes assets brought within representation as leading “a parallel life as capital outside the physical world”,\textsuperscript{62} as a mechanism creating “individuals from masses”\textsuperscript{63} and affording freedom from “primitive economic activities and burdensome parochial constraints”.\textsuperscript{64} This representational process, in de Soto’s view, effectuates a smooth transition to modernity. “People with nothing to lose”, he writes, “are trapped in the grubby basement of the pre-capitalist world”.\textsuperscript{65}

Quite apart from its apparent denial that value can inhere in anything other than private property, what de Soto’s theory refuses, and AfroReggae see as central, is the complicity between production and circulation; the scene of value production

---

\textsuperscript{61} Hernando De Soto, p. 192.
\textsuperscript{62} Hernando De Soto, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{63} Hernando De Soto, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{64} Hernando De Soto, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{65} Hernando De Soto, p. 48.
as temporally and spatially emergent and subject to interruption and failure.

Inviting Gilberto Gil, then Brazilian Minister for Culture, to play on a stage to the residents of the favela of Vila Vintém materially refutes a framing of the favela as hermetically sealed ‘grubby basement’; similarly, Júnior and LG appearing as interview guests on RJ TV.\(^\text{66}\) De Soto, by contrast, understands culture as static.\(^\text{67}\)

Rather than writing \textit{per se}, the concept that better explains why press coverage would function effectively as a cultural asset base is ‘contract’, a form of performative codification whose efficacy resides in the mutual recognition of its value and assent to its terms – underwritten in the case specified above by the force of law – and which regulates the ‘conceptual universe’ which de Soto moots. To return now to the academic texts cited earlier, the point of drawing attention to the differing analytical priorities and findings of the writers addressing AfroReggae is not to suggest faults in the earlier scholarship which later critiques rectify. Instead, it is to argue that these critiques, by engaging with AfroReggae as an institution\(^\text{68}\) address themselves to and, by circulating information about it to audiences engaged in particular interpretive frameworks, are themselves implicated in AfroReggae’s institutional development, the matrices of practice (state, market, civil society) and associated regimes of value which enable it and the promulgation of its agenda at particular points in time.

The publications commissioned by People’s Palace Projects about the UK

\(^{\text{66}}\) Projeto Conexões Urbanas na Rocinha. \(<\text{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_jeb2Kd9IU}>\) [accessed April 2008]

\(^{\text{67}}\) De Soto (2000, p. 207): “All people in the world have specific preferences, skills and patterns of behaviour that can be regarded as cultural. The challenge is fathoming which of these traits are really the ingrained, unchangeable identity of a people and which are determined by economic and legal constraints”.

\(^{\text{68}}\) For example, Yúdice (p. 376) writes that AfroReggae spoke at a conference he organised at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 1994.
Partnership’s work in 2006 and 2007 and for that matter this chapter are no less implicated in such a process.

AfroReggae presents itself rhetorically as a self-determining alternative to state services:

In the time that we currently live, where the mentality of economic liberalism dominates and government authorities insist that there are not enough resources to fight poverty, AfroReggae has stepped in to invest the few resources it has into the potential of youth born into poverty.

AfroReggae’s production of resistant subjectivities which (as AfroReggae’s statement regarding the investment of resources suggests) is not anti- but pro-capitalist in their logic. Resistance entails not the overthrow of, but an assertion of the right to participate fully in capitalism, a right made possible through their provision of resources to realise ‘the potential of youth born into poverty’.

Despite its critique of economic liberalism, reflecting both the conditions of the company’s development and its entrepreneurial business practice, readily apparent in AfroReggae’s most recent publications, videos and presentations are tropes of risk, uncertainty and creative destruction which bear a substantial relationship to those associated with neoliberal political economy.

---


(ii) ‘The Shiva effect’: creative destruction, risk and productivity

The cultural and economic churn, uncertainty and violence which neoliberalism’s instabilities produce was reflected in the violent event which was a founding moment for AfroReggae as a social movement: a brutal massacre in Vigário Geral in 1993. It remains pivotal to its agenda and organisational narrativization. Members of the police force had attempted to claim their regular bribe from the Comando Vermelho faction; Flávio Negão, then leader of the faction, arranged to meet four members of the police and instead of presenting them with money, shot them dead. On 29 August, thirty policemen responded by storming the favela. With the use of guns and grenades, they killed twenty-one unarmed people at random, including an entire family of eight who were at prayer in their home, and seven men who were celebrating Brazil’s defeat of Bolivia during qualifiers for the 1994 World Cup in a bar. In response to the massacre and the feelings of outrage, grief and powerlessness it launched, residents in Vigário Geral formed the Movimento Comunitario de Vigário Geral (Mocovide) and, with money from NGO Viva Rio, purchased the house in which the murdered family had lived, renaming it Casa de Paz (House of Peace). Mocovide invited AfroReggae to run participatory drumming workshops, which it offered in partnership with fellow company Afro Tafaorogi. Anderson Sá, AfroReggae’s MC and a teenage resident of Vigário Geral at the time, reflects that

the massacre was like a spark, you know, negative which was turned into something positive, destruction for transformation. The Shiva effect, which we talk about a lot.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra.}
To the extent that the massacre galvanized residents into action, and created the conditions for a limited truce between the factions governing Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas, Júnior represents the story of Vigário itself as “entwined with that of Shiva, the Indian god who first destroys in order to transform”.  

The ‘Shiva effect’ is the lynchpin of AfroReggae’s philosophy. Júnior writes that his commitment to this idea, derived from Hindu spirituality, is a product of distressing experiences of criminality, violence and death in Rio de Janeiro and his search as a young man for a supervening logic governing the social and material world, a search reflecting the syncretism of Brazilian culture. But the Shiva effect also invokes a Schumpeterian conception of capitalism as creative destruction, a dynamic of ‘competition from within’ which David Harvey specifies as the force impelling the “vast tidal wave of institutional reform and

---

72 “mesmo interligada com a de Shiva, o deus indiano que primeiro destrói para depois transformar”. Júnior, José, p. 52.

73 Júnior (2004, p. 22): “Muitos amigos nossos, envolvidos na criminalidade, morriam. Isso me abatia muito. E me levou a frequentar diferentes igrejas, setas de todo tipo. Ia a cultos da Assembléia de Deus, a terreiros de umbanda e candomblé, a missas católicas, a palestras sobre religiões orientais. Não buscava exatamente uma crença para seguir, mas uma lógica, uma explicação. Até que descobri a cultura hinduista, que me ajudou a entender muita coisa. O deus Shiva, um deus que destrói para depois transformar, a partir de então seria uma referência na minha vida.” [Many of my friends, involved in crime, were dying. This upset me greatly. And it led me to frequent different churches, sects of all kinds. I went to the churches of Assembléia de Deus and of umbanda and candomblé, Catholic mass, lectures about Oriental religions. I wasn’t searching for a faith to follow exactly, but a logic, an explanation. Until I discovered Hindu culture, which helped me to understand a lot. The god Shiva, a god who destroys in order to transform, from then would be a reference in my life.]

discursive adjustment”\textsuperscript{75} in the globalization of neoliberal political economy. It also aptly describes AfroReggae’s thinking in regard to representational processes and their liberatory potential. In \textit{Nenhum Motiva Explica A Guerra}, Altair Martins, now a member of AfroReggae’s main band and president of the organisation, recalls Afro Tafaroqiri’s first presentation:

I was thirteen at the time. I was at home and I heard it... a real weird noise, I had never... we were used to gunshots lulling us to sleep.

\textit{[interviewer]} \textit{What were you doing?}

I was at home, flying a kite on the roof, and I began to hear the noise, a real racket, and I thought, "I'm going to go see what's making all the racket". I rushed down... It was something I'd never seen in Vigário, it looked like a mass rip-off, the only mass rip-off that we knew about around here was the one that took place on Arpoador Beach in 92. And so, the whole community and I went along and followed everyone, people dancing, smiling, really great vibes. It was the Afro Taforagi group. And then their presentation ended and they announced, "listen, we're going to have a workshop next week, every Saturday, a percussion workshop and things like that. And I thought, "sh*t, I'm going"\textsuperscript{76}

Martins’ account of these experiences, here staged within a documentary film co-produced by AfroReggae, exemplifies not only the company’s production of consistent narratives around their work - the metaphor of a gunshot lullaby appeared regularly in British press coverage and the presentations Martins made during the AfroReggae UK Partnership sessions in London in 2007 - but also a demonstration of the possibility of change found in the oscillation between representational stability and instability. This logic governs AfroReggae’s conceptualisation of representation in social and artistic performance. It is


\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra}.
likewise discernible at the institutional level of its practice; AfroReggae constructs durable stories with which to advance its agenda for change, an agenda which, paradoxically, is predicated on loosening and re-signifying existing forms of hegemonic and prejudicial representation. The Shiva effect – interpretable not only as a conceptual position but also as AfroReggae’s brand narrative - witnesses exactly this paradox.

In the dramaturgy of the story, Altair makes a life-changing decision - to participate in the drumming workshops. The story doesn’t clearly disclose whether or not he was involved in drug-trafficking before this, but the innocent childhood diversion of the kite also conventionally represents a tool which children employed by drug dealers in the favelas as olheiros (look outs) used to alert their bosses of the approach of enemies. This image gives way to a series of representational approximations. Gunshots are like drumbeats; rampaging crowds of mass-muggers similar to the celebratory procession. Action reveals the possibility of difference, at first misrecognised as sameness, and thus the possibility of producing development for the better. This dynamic appears across AfroReggae’s promotional materials. In a film fragment created to mark the twelfth birthday of the organisation,77 for example, a camera slowly zooms in on a shadowed concrete wall blasted with gunshots, the shot occasionally jerking closely towards the individual fissures. After a pause, a young black man probably in his early twenties appears at the edge of the shot with his back to the camera, holding a stick of chalk. One by one, he scratches solid chalk lines above and between the gunshots, creating a set of musical notes scattered across the AfroReggae website.

77 AfroReggae website.
wall. The film concludes with the legend “Onde os outros só enxergam violência, a gente vê arte” [Where others see only violence, we see art]. Similarly, a huge poster near to AfroReggae’s base in Complexo do Alemão reads “Onde os outros não vêem saída, a gente vê arte!” [Where others see no way out, we see art!], recalling the colloquialism beco sem saída [alley with no exit], signifying both the seemingly omnipresent power of the drug gangs and the favelas’ spatial complexity.78

Corresponding to AfroReggae’s conception of the lability of meaning are multiple articulations of risk. Where the organisation uses ‘risk’ directly, it is generally in the form of NGO fail-safes such as “creating opportunities for those who are in situations of personal risk”79 which tend to objectify and individualise their subjects as both victim and origin of action. Some of the images it mobilizes also reflect these formulations; AfroReggae’s website frames participants in the circus-oriented Cantagalo centre as “youth that live on a tight rope, in many senses of the meaning”.80 Elsewhere a more sceptical view of ‘risk’ as a descriptor emerges; at the beginning of Nenhum Motivo Explica A Guerra, Júnior explains that AfroReggae works in the “so-called high risk areas, Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas”.81 More often, however, though the word may not be used, ‘risk’ represents the active decision to invest time, energy and money in shaky or uncertain propositions, whose outcomes, though uncertain, critically

79 AfroReggae website.
80 AfroReggae website.
81 Nenhum Motivo Explica a Guerra.
matter. The shakiness or uncertainty is represented as resulting from a lack of expert knowledge or resources, either on the part of AfroReggae’s organisers or participants, but wagered in pursuit of a vision. This vision is not initially of the production of new aesthetic, but new social forms. Júnior:

The people who started AfroReggae were all losers in their personal lives but full of utopian dreams. I think this combination of losers and dreamers was the differential. And a lack of preparation, because only a very unprepared, very unqualified, very disorganized group could create a newspaper which didn't have ads, and wasn't sold and was for free. Only a group completely out of tune with reality would have gone into Vigário Geral at a time when Vigário Geral was the worst favela in Brazil without any direct or indirect relation with it. So, that was what marked our group, this... this intuition, this betting on the unknown.82

If the group risked themselves by entering Vigário Geral at this moment of crisis to pursue an agenda for cultural exchange and social change, Júnior and Martins represent elements of AfroReggae’s pedagogy in a similarly entrepreneurial style, for example, the approach of Eduardo, Tafaorogi’s percussion instructor:

[Júnior] On the first day of class he looked at Altair, just like he could have looked at any other kid in the room and said, 'you're going to be the drum major', out of the blue, that's what he said.

[Altair] That's the power of AfroReggae, because Júnior is something else, Eduardo too, at the time, out of sight, of making you believe even in the things that you... even in the things that you aren't, because I had never played any kind of percussion instrument, never not even rapped on a table and I don't have any special gift. A lot of people are born with a gift. I wasn't born with any kind of gift for music or percussion, but he saw something in me and made me believe that I was a leader from the first day.83

82 Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra.
83 Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra.
The process of encouraging belief is a form of speculative investment. The production of such belief, in its ideal form, is performative inasmuch as it ‘brings about that which it names’, suggesting, in relation to the productivity AfroReggae seek to engender, an additional set of questions regarding the relationship between performative speech acts as theorized by Austin, and other forms of speculation in pursuit of return.\textsuperscript{84} Imported into artistic practice, such speculation is a levelling force. It insists that, given the appropriate conditions of production, the ability to create meaning through artistic work which is taken seriously is available to anyone. The capacity to produce art is not ineffable, but the outcome of work, triggered (if necessary) by a psychic investment which, though it may be based in fiction, activates in the actor a productive reflexive attention to him or herself and his or her capacity for action. The film itself dramatizes representational reflexivity: a second camera regularly stages its interview subjects speaking to camera. The effect is to signal its constructedness, but in so doing also to suggest that to be represented is itself to be worthy of being represented.

AfroReggae’s conception of ‘culture as weapon’ – the focal image of Patrick Neate and Damian Platt’s book - bears substantial ethical similarity to that of the fellow Brazilian activist theatre practitioner Augusto Boal;\textsuperscript{85} likewise, their ideas regarding processes of reflexive questioning which artistic practice effectuates.

\textsuperscript{84} Christian Marazzi, \textit{Capital and Language: From the New Economy to the War Economy}, trans. by Gregory Conti (Los Angeles, California: Semiotexte 2008 [2002]), pp. 33-36
\textsuperscript{85} Boal (2000 [1979] p. 122) writes “the theatre is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it”.
However, Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, a system devised in the 1960s and 1970s, conceives of the theatre as a means of production in which power is initially sedimented in its architectural and institutional form, thereby creating ‘character’ as the “private property”\(^{86}\) of professional actors, whose capacity to ‘act’ is legitimised by the theatre institution. There is no such institutional comparator in AfroReggae’s philosophy. Instead – an idea which is no less theatrical - the legitimised capacity to ‘act’ relates to forms of appearance particular to the global economy; specifically, the acquisition and wearing of items such as branded sports goods, the status costume which the narcotraficantes adopt. Instead of positing the theatre as a privileged, spatially circumscribed domain of action whose tools “can be placed at the service of the oppressed, so that they can express themselves and so that, by using this new language, they can also discover new concepts”,\(^ {87}\) for AfroReggae, oppressive forms of subjectivisation are already theatrical, but misrecognised by the young people they want to work with as a paradoxically desirable reality. AfroReggae’s artists don ‘real’ costumes, both to attract young participants with objects of desire, in pursuit of which they may enter the drug trade (Altair: “if Nike only knew the evil they do in these communities”)\(^ {88}\) and to demonstrate the costumes’ ‘fictionality’:

we use branded clothes, because we like them and because also in this way we can arouse greed, vanity and self-esteem in the young people. Our major objective is that young people in the favelas no longer only have drug traffickers as their idols. In place of rifles, we would offer

\(^ {87}\) Augusto Boal, p. 121.  
\(^ {88}\) *Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra*.  

140
them musical instruments. Our power was not of death, but of life. We would engage in a traffic of sounds, of possibilities and of culture.89

An interruption to this traffic of sounds was precisely what pushed AfroReggae towards professionalisation of its main band. In *Da Favela Para O Mundo*, Júnior describes an excruciating moment at the celebratory opening of AfroReggae’s Centro Cultural in Vigário Geral in 1997. In honour of the event and the British and Canadian funders of the centre, the band performed a medley of Beatles tunes interpreted with samba, samba-reggae and samba-funk rhythms. In performance this was “a huge *embronation*. The public laughed compulsively – including the representatives of the British Council. We had become a reason for mockery”.90 *Embronation* is a hybrid piece of idiomatic Brazilian Portuguese which derives from the verb *embrornar*: to cheat, to make empty promises, with an English suffix attached. It refers to the aesthetic of utterances produced by non-English speaking Brazilians when singing songs in that language.91 This scene of humiliation, the failure of what they had produced to be taken seriously, was, for Júnior, the “hour of risk”:

if the band didn’t generate resources and didn’t support itself as a professional artistic group, we could lose part of a generation, beyond

89 “usamos roupas de marca, porque gostamos e porque assim também despertamos a cobiça, a vaidade e a auto-estima dos meninos. O objetivo maior é que os jovens das favelas não tenham mais só traficantes como seus ídolos. Em vez de fuzis, ofereciamos instrumentos musicais. O nosso poder não era o da morte, mas o da vida. Fazíamos o tráfico dos sonhos, das possibilidades e da cultura.” José Júnior, p. 128.


simply frustrating it, since they [the band] were its maximum self-esteem; they believed in it, in the institution and the offer of work.\textsuperscript{92}

AfroReggae’s social aim, to act as the provider of routes out of poverty through artistic practice, is intrinsically staked upon receptions of the band’s own productivity. The desire to eliminate the possibility of laughter from international audiences – a response to an effect of the out-of-place – interfaces with the construction of common languages. To use such languages effectively is to enter into market participation, whether commercial or third sector, and therefore to function as the mobile subjects of global capitalism, evading reification within orientalist imaginaries such as those espoused by representatives of international development organisations who, Júnior suggests, “would like to see favelados in rags, children with dirty noses and rotten teeth”.\textsuperscript{93}

In their business practice, AfroReggae have “always rejected what we call ‘antimarketing’. We never acquire partnerships like beggars”.\textsuperscript{94} AfroReggae’s aim, as it is metaphorised in another of its promotional films, is to function as a productive operation able to clothe the barefooted favelado in AfroReggae branded boots, who uses their support to stride with confidence.\textsuperscript{95} The film dramatises a boy’s precarious journey across a terrain of mud and sharp rocks while a voiceover explains, ‘for many young people in Brazil, life is like this’; the

\textsuperscript{92} “Se a banda nao gerasse recursos e nao se mantivesse como um grupo artistico profissional, poderiamos perder parte de uma geracao, alem de frustra-la, pois eles estavam com a sua auto-estima maxima, acreditavam em si, na instituicao e na proposta de trabalho”. José Júnior, p. 124.

\textsuperscript{93} “queria ver favelados maltrapilhos, criancas de nariz sujo and dentes cariados”. José Júnior, p. 142.

\textsuperscript{94} “sempre rejeitou o que chamamos de antimarketing. Nunca procuramos os parceiros como pedentes”. José Júnior, p. 142.

\textsuperscript{95} This film was screened at the AfroReggae UK Partnership events at Rich Mix in 2007 and Toynbee Hall in 2008.
style of the boots he eventually puts on is identical to the Timberlands favoured by hip hop stars. The film enacts a slippage between the identity of the boy and the space of the favela; the acquisition of ‘AfroReggae’ renegotiates the meaning of both. It isn’t simply the boots’ brand identity, but their functionality which the film stages. While stars like Busta Rhymes and Missy Elliot conspicuously keep their boots box-fresh, re-signifying the work boot as status consumer good and implying a continuous cycle of purchase and re-purchase, the muddy terrain through which the boy walks shows that AfroReggae’s adoption of the brand is not restricted to ideational and material consumption, but serves the provision of a form of informal welfare.

(iii) ‘The exchange mechanism’

AfroReggae’s careful self-presentation as a product for consumption to specified audiences, exploiting narratives and images of commercial productivity - thereby asserting ‘inclusion’ in the global cultural and economic scene - supports holistic, long-term programmes of artistic work which themselves seek to produce ‘inclusion’ for their participants. If, as I am suggesting, ‘inclusion’ is a narrative which seeks to produce forms of organisation and subjectivity amenable to global capitalism, it is logically therefore engaged in value production, one ‘cultural’ manifestation of which is the exercise of mobility. This, David Harvey argues, is a function of exchange value, the availability or lack of which will produce forms of spatial practice:

Low income populations, usually lacking the means to overcome and
hence command space, find themselves for the most part trapped in space. Since ownership of even basic means of reproduction (such as housing) is restricted, the main way to dominate space is through continuous appropriation. Exchange values are scarce, and so the pursuit of use values for daily survival is central to social action. This means frequent material and interpersonal transactions and the formation of very small scale communities. Within the community space, use values get shared through some mix of mutual aid and mutual predation, creating tight but often highly conflictual interpersonal social bonding in both private and public spaces. The result is an often intense attachment to place and ‘turf’ and an exact sense of boundaries because it is only through active appropriation that control over space is assured.\footnote{David Harvey, ‘Flexible Accumulation Through Urbanization: Reflections on ‘Post-modernism’ in the American City’, in Post-Fordism: A Reader, ed. by Ash Amin (Oxford: Blackwell 1994 [1987]), pp. 361-386 (p. 371).}

In Rio’s \textit{favelas}, a territorial sub-culture has emerged among young people deriving from the professional drug gangs’ occupation of the \textit{favelas}; it valorizes familiar \textit{traficantes}, celebrates their violent action against the police and speedy acquisition of wealth through drug dealing, and apes its material acquisitiveness. Dowdney observes that

\begin{quote}
\textit{in Comando Vermelho} (Red Command) \textit{favelas}, youth may use the word ‘vermelhou’ to refer to something good. Literally translated, this means ‘to become red’, as anything that becomes red (such as a \textit{Terceiro Comando} community that is taken over by the \textit{Comando Vermelho}) is perceived as being positive.\footnote{Luke Dowdney, Children of the Drug Trade: a Case Study of Children in Organised Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras 2003), p. 134.}
\end{quote}


production are at the core of the work, but AfroReggae does not fetishise the artist as producer. Johayne Ildefonso, artistic director, describes this in terms which, again theatrical, invoke Harvey’s thinking regarding spatial appropriation:

The first thing we do in the workshops is move – percussion, theatre, dance, circus. Only bit by bit when we have trust… but it’s not that we try to change them, we try to mould them. We show that you don’t necessarily have to be a part of the fiction that controls the area. It’s not a quick process – there are parents and other influences – it takes a long time, and it’s not an easy process. (my emphasis)\footnote{AfroReggae UK Partnership Mini-Projects showcase: artist seminar, Wednesday 27 June 2007.}

The núcleos - permanent facilities for practice in the favelas - are tailored to specific circumstantial need. In Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavazinho in Copacabana, AfroReggae run scheduled activities in circus and dance in the huge basement of what used to be a casino, with an eye to developing professional performers, a curatorial decision based in part on the competition presented by the availability of other activities in the Zona Sul, especially its proximity to the beach. The members of AfroCirque, its performing circus troupe, earn a regular monthly wage of 300 Reais, rising to 500 Reais (roughly minimum wage) if they undertake any performance or workshop work for the company; they are also free to seek employment elsewhere. In the neighbouring favelas of Vigário Geral and Parada de Lucas in the Baixada Fluminense in the poor ex-industrial north of the city, far from Rio’s tourist district and its cultural resources, the organization has instantiated entirely new provision. In November 2007, building was in progress of a large centre with an open public piazza space at its entrance, to be open 24
hours a day for dance, capoeira and percussion classes, internet access and unstructured leisure-time for everyone in the settlement, and studios to host visitors from outside the *favela*. Parada de Lucas’ new building, which opened in 2006, is called the Lorenzo Zanetti Centre for the Democatisation of Intelligence [Centro de Inteligência Coletiva Lorenzo Zanetti], and offers IT classes, violin lessons, percussion, capoeira and houses AfroReggae Digital, its digital radio station. In Complexo do Alemão, AfroReggae’s circus, dance and percussion activities were initially held in the Villa Olimpica, a SESC[^100] building just outside the favela, and the open air *quadro* within the favela, a space used for sports and *baile funk* parties. They now take place in a refurbished community association building, a once dingy site whose multiple purposes included laying out the dead prior to burial. The establishment of the centres has resulted from careful negotiation and pragmatic exploitation of partnerships with funders and NGOs, but also demonstrates a commitment to developing resources with and for the *favelas*, in distinction to other initiatives. The formation of Casa de Paz, the site of AfroReggae’s initial work in Vigário Geral was a matter of considerable controversy in the *favela*. Arias quotes a local activist who describes its chief organisers as “parachutists”[^101] exploiting the massacre to give its funder, NGO Viva Rio, greater profile. Though AfroReggae was founded outside of Vigário Geral, it found praise for its active incorporation of *favela* residents into its administrative structures: another activist reflected that “they are more

[^100]: SESC (Serviço Social do Comércio) is a commercially supported welfare organisation founded in Brazil in 1946, the year in which the Arts Council was established in the UK. [http://www.sesc.com.br/](http://www.sesc.com.br/) [accessed July 2009]

[^101]: Enrique Desmond Arias, p. 141.
democratic and include people from the community”.

One form this takes is of peer recruitment and facilitation – just as Júnior appointed Anderson Sá and LG, residents of Vigário Geral, as its centre co-ordinators in the mid-1990s, in Complexo do Alemão, young community residents and long-time participants in the organisation act as paid ‘project agents’, advocating on behalf of the centre, encouraging others to get involved, monitoring groups and teaching.

The núcleos offer the security of regular routine, following a clear structure with centre co-ordinators leading their operations, but are holistic in their aims and intentions. AfroReggae’s pedagogical approach places the experience and knowledge of each young person at the centre of the practice. For AfroReggae, children and young people already have expert knowledges, developed in the circumstances of their daily lives, which others would not be able to teach them; the task of AfroReggae’s practitioners is to bring those knowledges into dialogue with artistic work, to generate capacity to experiment with different narratives. On each centre’s staffing team are social workers and psychologists, whose pastoral work supports AfroReggae’s activities, following different patterns in each centre. In Cantagalo, a monthly meeting also invites participants’ family members into the centre to talk about the artistic work and to exchange ideas and local news. By speaking with the centre’s social workers about the content of group meetings with families and young people, Carla, a theatre and dance artist working in Cantagalo is

---

102 Enrique Desmond Arias, p. 155.
better able to bring their universes into the universe of popular dance. It is about work with young people’s capacity to confront the new. People don’t cope with the new if the exchange mechanism is not there. (my emphasis)\textsuperscript{103}

Within this definition of subjectivities which are resilient to change – another idea which dovetails comfortably with neoliberal ideology - ‘new’ means ‘new to the participant’. The popular dance forms which Carla teaches emerged from rural north-eastern Brazil and have an aesthetic and performative relationship to Catholic ritual. When she first started working with popular dance, there was enormous resistance to the forms from the young people; now she sees them practice the moves in the corridor. When we met her in October 2007, Carla enthused that “there has been a shift in attitudes and it is because the organization is about developing a whole knowledge”.\textsuperscript{104} This particular performance programme had been running for eight months. She noted that at that moment she and the other practitioners were “starting to see the results. We want to see the results for the young people”.\textsuperscript{105}

AfroReggae privileges the health, welfare and intellectual development of its participants and seeks to cultivate awareness and exploration of black Brazilian cultures and histories. But even as AfroReggae denounces (neo)liberal capitalism, José Júnior, executive co-ordinator of AfroReggae is clear to state, pragmatically, that “this is a capitalist world and we have to survive”.\textsuperscript{106} Their

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{103}] Interview with Carla Martins, AfroReggae, October 2007.
\item[\textsuperscript{104}] Interview with Carla Martins.
\item[\textsuperscript{105}] Interview with Carla Martins.
\item[\textsuperscript{106}] Patrick Neate and Damian Platt, p. 153.
\end{itemize}
mission statement thus aligns ‘social justice’ and ‘citizenship’ with ‘inclusion’ and ‘sustainability’. Miranda Joseph writes that this latter term is often associated with the notion that development should sustain the lives of the poor and the health of the environment. It is also used with regard to the management of NGOs, suggesting that they should be if not actually profitable, then at least not ongoingly dependent on philanthropy. However, I would suggest that it is the sustainability of capitalism that is really at stake.\textsuperscript{107}

The doubling of meaning which Joseph excavates here is present also in ‘inclusion’; although it may harbour a communitarian affect, what is really at stake is the expansion of the global economy. I suggest that AfroReggae recognises this, and acts strategically to advance, through performance, the ideals of anti-violence and anti-racism to which it is committed, and to provide a structure to enable its members to participate in the economic system which constructs the \textit{favelas} as its natural other. Their entrepreneurialism is not a subterfuge: as Harvey writes - in regard to the specific example of neoliberal reform imposed in Mexico - “increased social inequality within a territory was necessary to encourage the entrepreneurial risk and innovation that conferred competitive power and stimulated growth”.\textsuperscript{108} AfroReggae insistently reiterates the size of the cultural and economic gap to be bridged in and through the work, and capitalism’s tendency to monopoly and crisis is visible in the company’s brand narratives – its presentation of the company’s identity as covalent with the spaces of the \textit{favelas} themselves, their conceptualisation of the \textit{favelas} as a unitary

\textsuperscript{107} Miranda Joseph, \textit{Against the Romance of Community} (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2002), p. 96.

\textsuperscript{108} David Harvey, ‘Neoliberalism as creative destruction’, p. 152.
block (as opposed to heterogeneous sites, which AfroReggae’s resistance to expansion on a franchise model, what it calls ‘McDonaldization’, in practice actually refutes) and the creative destruction of the Shiva effect. But the company aims to develop resources with longevity and stability, to offer meaningful material alternatives to, and cognitive distanciation from, the ‘pursuit of use values’ entrenched by the favelas’ territorial occupation by the drug gangs. AfroReggae seeks to invert the rules of the neoliberal capitalist game; what Júnior calls “a quiet revolution, the revolution of the social capitalist movement”. 109 The next section moves to the UK, to examine the contradictions this ambition represents.

II: ‘Can culture be our weapon?’: The AfroReggae UK Partnership

This section examines the AfroReggae UK Partnership, a project its producer People’s Palace Projects frames pragmatically as a contributor to “the development of arts and social inclusion programmes in the UK within the context of international practices”\(^\text{110}\). Like AfroReggae, the project crosses institutional borders strategically and in so doing discloses the extent to which naturalized assumptions and forms of power govern the possibilities of artistic work in the UK, and the ways in which they take representational form. In the manner of the analysis of AfroReggae above, I first elaborate the AfroReggae UK Partnership’s structure and institutional collaborations. Then, through a close reading of *From the favela to our manor* (2006) I consider meta-discursive questions regarding the value of artistic production in relation to ‘inclusion’ as it is mediated in the UK. Written by Richard Ings, a British arts evaluator, People Palace Projects commissioned the text as part of the AfroReggae UK Partnership programme as a parallel to Júnior’s book, specifically to advocate on behalf of the project’s practice. Finally, I offer an account of Immediate Theatre’s AfroReggae percussion project as an example of the institutional frameworks within which artistic work with young people ‘at risk’ operates.

Before entering into this discussion, I should reiterate that the meaning of and infrastructures for arts education work in the UK have, over the period of the New Labour government, been closely matched with a discourse of cultural value dubbed ‘instrumentalism’. Commentators on the injunction to artists and

\(^{110}\) People’s Palace Projects Grants for the Arts Proposal 2007.
organisations to contribute to “wider policy agendas such as social inclusion, crime prevention and learning”,\textsuperscript{111} often commissioned by quangos like the nominally centre-left Demos and centre-right Policy Exchange (now Public Policy Exchange), have pitched this novel, ‘instrumental’ policy turn in direct opposition to the ‘intrinsic value’ of the arts, and in some cases a force which actively attenuates it. The most vociferous conservative opponents of ‘instrumentalism’ – for example Munira Mirza, the editor of \textit{Culture vultures: is UK arts policy damaging the arts?} (2006) and (at time of writing) Conservative Mayor of London Boris Johnson’s cultural adviser – collapse arts education itself and a governmentally-imposed culture of targets into one another, and negatively contrast both with the intrinsically spontaneous effects of ‘the arts’; in an essay critiquing the provision of arts initiatives in medical institutions, Mirza writes that “we know that the subjective effects of art practice cannot be predicted in any scientific way”\textsuperscript{112} and that “great art is often unpredictable by its nature”.\textsuperscript{113} In this argument, the meaning produced through artistic practice constitutes an aleatory force beyond quantification and thus irreconcilable with a discourse of ‘impact’ and, by extension, the educational or ‘applied’ practice with which it is predominantly associated. The swing towards ‘excellence’ in public discourse which the publication of Sir Brian McMaster’s report \textit{From Measurement to Judgement: Supporting Excellence in the Arts} (2008) consolidated was beginning to gain momentum as People’s Palace Projects launched the AfroReggae UK


\textsuperscript{113} Munira Mirza, ‘The arts as painkiller’, p. 105.
Partnership in 2006. It happily coincided with the ethic of the project and the social efficacy and artistic excellence AfroReggae simultaneously represents. But unlike participants in the debate in the UK, AfroReggae’s practitioners do not see these categories as binary oppositions. In this sense, the project held out the promise of problematising reflex associations of ‘education’ with ‘instrumentalism’.

(i) From the favela to the world II: cultural exchange across borders

Academic and theatre director Paul Heritage founded People’s Palace Projects, a cultural NGO, in 1999. Initially running offices in both Rio de Janeiro and London, People’s Palace Projects is now based at Queen Mary, University of London, and takes its name from the philanthropic institution founded there in 1887 to provide education and recreation to the local poor. It seeks to test and explore “where, how and why art matters,” an agenda whose idealism advances on the basis of the company’s working practices within and beyond the traditional building-based arts institution. Entitled From the favela to the world (2006-2012), the AfroReggae UK Partnership project cites both Júnior’s book and AfroReggae’s cosmopolitan ethic of practice. Heritage intended the project to be a long-term collaboration from the outset but its first phase, funded by Arts Council England, was staged as a pilot. It didn’t position AfroReggae’s particular variant of artistic practice as the privileged means of addressing issues of territorial violence – its launch roughly coinciding with the beginnings of an explosion of increasingly sensational stories about youth violence and knife

crime in the British press\textsuperscript{115} - but rather framed AfroReggae as an example of a successful model and the catalyst for organisations across the arts, public and voluntary sectors to work together.

In 2006, \textit{From the favela to the world} offered workshops in capoeira, graffiti and samba reggae run by AfroReggae’s artists to young people in schools, small scale theatres and youth clubs in London, Oxford and Manchester, and two large scale performances by Banda AfroReggae at the Barbican, commissioned by BITE (Barbican International Theatre Events) and accompanied by British hip hop stars Estelle and Ty. The gigs themselves entirely sold out, prompting the Barbican to commission three further appearances from the band in 2007, 2008 and 2012 which, in the absence of guaranteed funding for the duration of the project as a whole - which, in the case of Arts Council England, has to be solicited annually via the competitive scheme Grants for the Arts - provided a framework around which the developing UK Partnership could plan further education projects. The second phase, launched in May 2007, shifted focus from engaging young participants in artistic production to artists and teachers themselves, offering a programme of artist training, discussion and visits by AfroReggae into the settings in which participating artists and teachers worked, culminating in June 2007 with the presentation of a series of AfroReggae Mini-Projects created on the basis of the training, and two further performances from AfroReggae at the Barbican. People’s Palace Projects intended that the Mini-Projects would act as

\textsuperscript{115} A database search (Proquest) for the phrase ‘knife crime’ in the pages of British broadsheets alone turns up a mere 41 articles for the period 1 January 2000 to 1 January 2005. Between 2005 to 2009, 1398 articles were published, the bulk of them (1001) between 2008 and 2009.
the seeds for longer term work in the various settings, an ambition realised most substantially in Hackney Free and Parochial School, where drumming and dance groups were meeting on a weekly basis; Stoke Newington School, whose plans included the establishment of an offsite unit for the school’s most disruptive students which would integrate artistic practice;¹¹⁶ and Immediate Theatre, with an ongoing commission from the Shoreditch Trust NDC (New Deal for Communities). Another project, the Bigga Bloco, was launched in 2008, a collaboration with Biggafish, an entrepreneurial social arts company run by producer and musician Nii Sackey. The Bigga Bloco meets regularly at Rich Mix in Bethnal Green, and performed on the Barbican Theatre stage with AfroReggae in 2008.

Both in terms of its thematic interest in ‘young people at risk’ and the transnational, networked form of institutional organisation, the AfroReggae UK Partnership responds to cultural and economic circumstances specific to neoliberalism, whose historical geography, is, as Jamie Peck notes, “replete with examples of crisis-induced and pragmatic adjustments, uneasy marriages with coexistent ideologies and practices, and context-specific experimentation, often played out across transnational terrains”.¹¹⁷ Negotiated by Heritage, the project is a pragmatic engagement of the sort Peck specifies, strategically weaving partnerships between arts, public and voluntary sector institutions with divergent, if occasionally overlapping interests – to take one small constellation,

¹¹⁶ Interview with Helen Wood, Stoke Newington School, January 2008.
the Barbican, the Shoreditch Trust and Immediate Theatre. The UK Partnership represents a redistributive innovation designed to benefit young people and artists committed to youth arts practice by facilitating intercultural exchange and the circulation of resource and knowledge among the most and the least powerful institutions, not their transfer from the least to the most. For the Barbican to be working as a reciprocal partner with schools in Hackney and much smaller arts organisations like Immediate Theatre both asserts and conspicuously complicates notions of specialised function, and cultural ‘centre’ and ‘margin’. As such, though the impetus of the inclusion discourse is integrationist - and, although it is not always apparent, the supervening ideological framework in which all the UK Partnership partners are embedded, and not only the arts education specialists - the collaboration engaged in the project also sets the stage for dissensus. This demonstrated that antagonism between discourses of cultural value is not necessarily a question of international difference but distribution of resources; nonetheless, the introduction of AfroReggae to the scene denaturalised the languages in play. In the UK Partnership events in 2007 this played out around definitions of the nature and role of meaning-making through art: specifically, its status as a scene of value production.

(ii) ‘The spirit or integrity of the art itself’: ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’ value

The Barbican’s enthusiastic support of the project and endorsement of AfroReggae as artists and activists has been critical to the project’s success and its projected longevity. Its cultural identity, commissioning structure and resource -
in the financial year 2006-07, the Barbican’s total expenditure on arts programming and marketing was £12.8m\textsuperscript{118} - provides an appropriate touring opportunity for AfroReggae’s large scale performance. On a pragmatic level, this also means that the artists are present to engage in other work. Malin Forbes, producer of AfroReggae at the Barbican reflects that

if we weren’t involved in the UK Partnership it would probably be a struggle to bring AfroReggae over and so often. In that sense the Barbican is a baseline engine. We have X amount of funding on a rolling basis. It would be very hard to get the momentum of the project going without the involvement of those artists sharing their knowledge.\textsuperscript{119}

Notwithstanding this support, the events in 2007 began with a moment that demonstrated a fundamental ideological clash. \textit{From the favela to the world 2007} opened with a panel discussion staged at the Barbican; taking its cue from \textit{Culture Is Our Weapon}, it asked, rather more tentatively, of the assembled artists, teachers, politicians and police, ‘can culture be our weapon?’ Despite the statement’s timidity, the image explicitly frames cultural work as action, catalysis, change: production. The timidity of the proposition reflects an ideological scene which negatively associates ‘impact’ - ‘instrumental’ effects - with both state control\textsuperscript{120} and failed artistic standards. The Barbican’s artistic director Graham Sheffield introduced the discussion, remarking that

\textsuperscript{118} Sandeep Dwesar, ‘Taking greater risks to reach new heights’, \textit{Barbican Annual Review} 06/07, pp. 50-53 (p. 52).
\textsuperscript{119} Interview with Malin Forbes, Barbican Centre, December 2007.
the educational mission of this place is very close to my heart, but I’m also delighted to note that culture is really climbing up the political agenda now in a way that I think was impossible to imagine a decade ago, not only in its own right but I think also as an integral and not peripheral part of an approach to key issues in society.

But, he continued,

This approach has often been dubbed ‘instrumentalism’ and it’s become in some areas a pejorative term, and I think in the wrong hands and with the wrong artistic leaders and minds it can lead to some mediocre results. But with great artists, great musicians, great organisations working together, led by the vision of AfroReggae, I think it’s proved possible and will prove possible to harness the power of the arts to make a real difference to society without compromising the spirit or the integrity of the art itself.¹²¹

This is a model articulation of what Barbara Herrnstein Smith calls the double discourse of value: the distinction between “valuing things ‘instrumentally’ or ‘as a means to some end’, and valuing them ‘for their own sake’ or ‘as ends in themselves’”.¹²² ‘The arts’ appear as an autonomous motor whose power, not in fact directly produced by human action, might yet be ‘harnessed’ by it; each instance of artistic production an entity, in possession of a ‘spirit’, which is fully formed in advance of its encounter with the social. It gives the sense of Eurydice precariously emerging from the depths of Hades, who with a single look from her mortal partner will be sent scuttling back irretrievably into the shadows, or alternatively a charismatic but temperamental diva who needs careful handling by expert managers to produce the goods. To prioritise the elimination of

---


mediocrity, as Sheffield does here, conceives of culture not as ‘weapon’, but as an ineffable quantity, embodied in performance whose ultimate worth is adjudicated by expert spectators. Much in the manner of the arm’s length principle, this liberal humanist conceptualisation of artistic work holds it protectively at a distance from the systems through which it is made. Such a view is unable to account for a phenomenon like AfroReggae’s gradual development, with the false starts and public humiliation which Júnior actively discloses and which serve a rhetorical function as part of his narrative of entrepreneurialism. Nor can it recognise AfroReggae’s voracious assimilation of multiple aesthetic forms and the effects of the process of making, which at the launch of the 2008 AfroReggae UK Partnership events at the Toynbee Studios percussionist Juninho jokingly described as ‘a lot of noise and a lot of mess’.

In contrast to the noise and mess of production, Sheffield posits a decorous consumerism as the de facto means of understanding culture. His remarks also enact a separation of culture and economy, while naturalising a language of entrepreneurship. While AfroReggae explicitly refutes a division between culture and economy and stages risk as a function of social, artistic and business practice, the ideological position of the Barbican is one in which risk is exclusively curatorial, and the institution the entrepreneurial figure. In the Barbican’s annual report for 06/07, its finance director Sandeep Dwesar writes “we let our programmers dream their dreams and find fresh ways of testing the Finance Director’s nerves. And I wouldn’t have it any other way”.¹²³ Mark Espiner, theatre-maker, journalist and author of an article celebrating BITE in a

¹²³ Sandeep Dwesar, p. 51.
brochure marking the Barbican’s twenty-fifth anniversary, describes the festival as “a visionary performing arts infrastructure”\footnote{Mark Espiner, ‘Shows of strength’. \textit{Barbican at 25} pamphlet, pp. 107-108 (p. 107).} - oddly suggesting that qualities of enterprise and foresight to inhere in the institution itself, not its workers – which offers theatregoers an experience of “sharing a space with fellow travellers”.\footnote{Mark Espiner, ‘Shows of strength’, p. 107.} Having briefly reviewed the diversity of its programme, in which the works of Steve Reich, Duckie’s Christmas cabaret \textit{C’est Barbican!}, solo female performers like Ursula Martinez and Laurie Anderson, a Beckett retrospective and Shakespeare commingle with “the full-on pounding power of massed drums mixed with video visuals from a collaborative band of musicians born out of the slums of Rio de Janeiro”,\footnote{Mark Espiner, ‘Shows of strength’, p. 107.} he suggests that at its expansion, following the departure of the RSC in 2002, BITE became less of a festival and more of a cultural identity. It came to signify quality work that embraced the performing arts without feeling a need to pigeonhole them by style, genre or, indeed, language.\footnote{Mark Espiner, ‘Shows of strength’, p. 108.}

In this imaginary, the political content of individual performance works cannot meaningfully register, nor any ideological differences. Instead, the defining characteristics of this ‘cultural identity’ are cosmopolitanism and quality of experience directed at an audience of discriminating ‘fellow travellers’. In other words, BITE represents a model of ‘inclusion’.

\textit{Mark Espiner, ‘Shows of strength’. \textit{Barbican at 25} pamphlet, pp. 107-108 (p. 107).}
If BITE represents such a paradigm, while never explicitly making any reference to it – its ‘included’ status, of course, is given - Richard Ings’ in-depth evaluation of the AfroReggae UK Partnership projects in 2006 more explicitly rehearses its discursive partner, exclusion. Its title, *From the favela to our manor: Translating AfroReggae: the impact and implications of an international intervention in arts work with young people at risk* (2007), indicates that it will describe the project’s translation of practice from Brazil to the UK. But it also suggests itself as an agent of translation between economies of practice - the scene of artistic production and the report’s audience of (sceptical) policy decision-makers. Karen Taylor, formerly Inclusion Officer at Arts Council England articulates the intransigence of such scepticism:

> it does feel that there has never been so much art in public spaces, but we struggle to make the case for creative practice in our everyday lives and to make this integral to running those spaces and services...there is a sense that arts and creativity is frivolous, a needless and wasteful use of resources that could be used more appropriately. Evaluation plays a part in challenging these ideas but it is only through enabling the policy-makers and funders to witness or experience projects that we will make significant breakthroughs in changing policy and practice.¹²⁸

Just as Taylor stages (and refutes) the intrinsic-instrumental binary – here in the form of frivolous art for consumption as opposed to the serious work of delivering public services – *From the favela to our manor’s* narrative textual form bears little resemblance to social scientific and statistical models which, trading in 'hard evidence', funders will perceive as legitimately evaluative. For Ings, the textuality of his evaluative writing is an activist gesture, producing “a critical object. It’s criticising implicitly what happens elsewhere in the system – it’s

criticising the way these young people are treated, it’s criticising attitudes toward creativity in the mainstream classroom”. In Creating Chances: Arts Interventions in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units (2004), for example, this takes the form of attention to the young people’s art practice and behaviour in the settings as social performance. Of a group of young people in an LSU (Learning Support Unit) in Chesham he writes:

Now, as the staff remark, it is good to see them playing off each other, working as a group. They also point out something that I had missed earlier: Matt had logged Simon off the computer which he had started up, so that he would pay better attention to our meeting.

That was a hugely significant thing to do in front of the rest of the group.

If you are not working with these young people day in, day out, it would be easy to miss that tiny glimpse of personal development.

He also aims pragmatically to use the evaluatory text to strike a middle path (a third way) by “taking two cultures, two sets of languages and assumptions and everything, trying to find some common ground, trying to find a way of speaking to both at the same time”.

But the AfroReggae UK Partnership is a much more geographically expansive cultural exchange whose complexities are frequently shrouded in rhetoric reciprocally engaged with the inclusion discourse, including AfroReggae’s own narratives. From the favela to our manor tends to rehearse these unproblematically.

While Neate and Platt’s deep knowledge of Brazilian culture enables a mischievous acknowledgement of Júnior’s robust strategies of persuasion, even while they staunchly support the company – “‘Rasta Reggae Dancing’ was a great hit and, according to Júnior, the biggest reggae party Rio had ever seen”;

“Clearly [Cirque de Soleil performer, now AfroReggae tutor] Carlos is yet another who’s buckled under the weight of Júnior’s pointing finger!” - From the favela to our manor unproblematically accepts, for example, AfroReggae’s representation of its self-sufficiency. Ings writes

To understand Grupo Cultural AfroReggae, you have to go back to that moment [the massacre in Vigário Geral] and to the decision of José Júnior and his friends – including Anderson Sá, whose uncle was amongst the murdered – to turn the charnel house where the bodies were laid out into a community centre where they held impromptu music, capoeira and recycling classes as a response to the resistance to the atmosphere of violence that has suffused Vigário for a decade or more but which this latest atrocity had raised to an unprecedented pitch.

The implication, that Casa de Paz was founded by AfroReggae – never claimed by AfroReggae itself - is factually incorrect but perfectly consistent with AfroReggae’s self-presentation as an autonomous emancipatory force.

The common ground Ings finds between AfroReggae and its British colleagues is the presence of qualitatively, if not quantitatively equivalent pockets of social exclusion in both Brazilian and British locations of practice. If ‘inclusion’ is

132 Patrick Neate and Damian Platt, p. 17.
133 Patrick Neate and Damian Platt, p. 148.
predicated on competitive national economies participating in a single global market, its counterpart, exclusion, as Angus Cameron argues,

has been ascribed a specific if ambiguous 'local' geography. Whatever else it might be, social exclusion is routinely couched in terms of 'communities', 'neighbourhoods', 'worst estates' and so on (all understood to be small, subnational territorial spaces).  

Cameron contends that in such a scenario ‘inclusion’ represents not the mobility of the globally networked subject, but instead doubles as ‘cohesion’, which entails that “inclusion as cohesion is achieved when specific social problems are removed and rendered invisible such that they no longer deviate from, or threaten, the ‘reasonable’ norms of national society”.  

This has important implications for the textuality of the report and its politics. A signal that the text is playing the game of the inclusion discourse as it is constructed in relation to artistic practice in the UK is its treatment of arts education as ethical training and therefore supplementary to productive economic activity, but not in and of itself oriented towards professional artistic practice. Although it enumerates the constitution of the favela as a zone overdetermined by the drug trade, it holds AfroReggae’s participants at a distance from commercial work, thus providing a conceptual frame for the subsequent account of the projects in Britain. Its analysis begins:

A young man, Jonathan, shows us proudly around the centre. Jonathan is my first personal encounter with the powerful ethos that drives

---

136 Angus Cameron, p. 397.
AfroReggae. As he shows us the history of the organization in photographs that are mounted in the reception area, he explains that young people come here not to be artists *per se* but to value themselves and to develop personally and socially.\(^{137}\)

Nonetheless, Jonathan himself is “now studying at the Escola Nacional de Circo (national circus school) and taking the equivalent of his GCSEs there”.\(^{138}\) Ings does not acknowledge this as professional training. Occluding the question of paid work, the report trains its critical focus on how the values that AfroReggae embody might assist in mending dysfunctional social relationships.

To advance its argument regarding AfroReggae’s offer to British practice, the text must present the cultures the project engages as, in the first instance, territorially bounded. It opens with a short account of Banda AfroReggae in performance:

> I am up at the back of the main auditorium of London’s Barbican Centre, on my feet with the rest of the audience, clapping and cheering on Banda AfroReggae as they drive towards the show’s climax, the stage awash with musicians and rappers, vast slogans and images of police violence stuttering and flashing behind them. *It feels as if they really have brought the *favela* to the world. (my emphasis)*\(^{139}\)

Establishing the basis for the subsequent discussion of the UK Partnership, this remark has clear rhetorical purpose. Ings continues:

> Grupo Cultural AfroReggae is about more than Banda AfroReggae, the recording and performing stars who had us all on our feet that night. The visitors from Rio de Janeiro did much more than perform while they were here. In bringing the margins into the centre – and thus making the *favela*...\(^{137,138,139}\)
Culture here does not necessarily mean ‘artistic practice’, but rather an anthropological sense of ‘life-world’. In this account, AfroReggae’s representations of this life-world and their political message appear as something unproblematically delivered from one place to another. Initially presented as the reflections of an audience member meditating upon the gig’s transmission of the content of *favela* culture - which in the first description has something of the flavour of a sporting event, as if AfroReggae are a team to be supported - and the representations themselves as subject to a theatrical ‘as if’, the text then invokes *favela* culture (‘the margins’) as a singular entity, with AfroReggae as its representatives. The ‘centre’ appears as equally unitary. In a report devoted to exploring AfroReggae’s work in venues in Dalston, Shoreditch and Moss Side, each sites of economic deprivation which sit in close proximity to sites of wealth, it cannot logically refer to the UK Partnership project itself. Ings must therefore mean the British nation-state, which, doubling as ‘the world’, frames the UK as pre-eminent in a global hierarchy.

To justify why it would be of use or relevance to bring AfroReggae’s artists to the UK (the centre) from the *favelas* of Brazil (the margins within the margins) the report constructs a particular narrative of the social as an object of governance whose deficiency, in its present form, is functionally equivalent to the shantytown, imagined not as the site of profitable organized crime in which state actors are complicit, but social and economic dysfunction. The report asks,

---

140 Richard Ings, p. 9.
rhetorically, of Shoreditch and Hackney, ‘Our own favela?’;\textsuperscript{141} adjacent to a full-page image of a young person creating a graffiti tag reading ‘HACKNEY’, the next section is headed ‘Working with the ‘worst’’. Though the narrative of this section does not itself address the artistic work in Hackney Free and Parochial School – instead briefly citing AfroReggae’s strategy of responsibilizing young people with the most disruptive behaviour, a practice in harmony with the ‘Shiva effect’ – it opens with a conspicuous quotation from Altair Martins of AfroReggae which begins “The first thing we saw in Hackney Free was a fight, so we knew we had a lot of work to do”.\textsuperscript{142} Referring to the scale of young people’s criminalization through the use of the ASBO, Ings writes that something must have decayed within our social fabric to have allowed this to happen on such a scale and we all have a responsibility for it – and repairing those communal bonds. So, allowing for the difference in the scale and intensity of the social problems in Rio, there is still, many believe, an urgent need for intervention here of the kind provided by AfroReggae in the favela, not just so that young people can be drawn away from criminal and anti-social activity but in order to demonstrate to government that there are more imaginative and sustainable ways of achieving this than increasing punishment and extending custody.\textsuperscript{143}

This statement manifestly seeks to advance the case for the production of alternative models of criminal justice. But it grounds its argument in the uncritical advancement of communal values and in so doing ventriloquizes government’s own politics of responsibilized community. Surprisingly, having earlier condemned the public humiliation of young offenders through electronic tagging, Ings approvingly cites Richard Reeves to argue that in “relying more

\textsuperscript{141} Richard Ings, p. 29.  
\textsuperscript{142} Richard Ings, p. 35.  
\textsuperscript{143} Richard Ings, p. 33.
and more on the state and its agents to take on the functions of the traditional community and the private citizen, in everything from supporting our elders to tackling anti-social behaviour, we may have learned, in effect, to be individually helpless in the face of social challenge and risk”. Such a critical position is not merely concordant with, but actively supports neoliberal processes of anti-welfarist responsibilization – which include New Labour’s ‘root and branch’ overhaul of the youth justice system, the assiduous extension of which, John Muncie writes, proceeds on the basis of three critical arguments:

1. communities should take primary responsibility for crime prevention.
2. individuals should be held responsible for their own actions.
3. families, in particular parents, have a responsibility to ensure their children do not develop anti-social tendencies.

Although the report’s model of social and economic exclusion (culturally devalued, parochial) correlates to the model of inclusion (culturally valued, mobile) arguably embodied by a cultural institution like the Barbican, some of its articulations are at radical odds with other institutional agendas engaged in the UK Partnership. Its framing of Hackney Free and Parochial School as ‘worst’ (albeit provisionalised by inverted commas) was repeated by Altair Martins at the Barbican launch event in 2007:

When we came to work in Hackney Free we were told it was one of the most difficult schools in the region, and it was funny that people said that, as the first moment we went in, there was a fight going on in the

144 Richard Ings, p. 54.
corridors. The children, the young people themselves didn’t feel interested in separating the fight. Everyone was gathered around shouting ‘fight, fight, fight’, and we didn’t understand that, because in Brazil we don’t see that same situation in the same manner. So we thought, oh my God, how are we going to work here. After the first half hour of talking to those young people we thought this could be a success, because we gave the total responsibility of the workshop to the young people that we were told were the most difficult young people in the school. And three of those young people, who we were told were the hardest young people in the school were here playing for you today. And perhaps if the Barbican, the schools, People’s Palace hadn’t believed we could do this, we wouldn’t be here today.146

Martins describes disruption and chaos, transformed into achievement. To schools, regulated by a managerial discourse of targets and outcomes and promoting themselves to parents and carers in a competitive marketplace, the public pronouncement of any disruption and chaos is potentially damaging. The Learning Trust, Hackney’s local education authority, is an important participant in the AfroReggae UK Partnership. Introducing From the favela to Hackney (2006),147 Nick Francis’ short film about AfroReggae’s work in Hackney Free, Nicola Baboneau from the Learning Trust took the opportunity for the benefit of the assembled audience to advance a different view. Of her visit to Rio, she said

I think it was one of the most profound experiences of my life, and I find AfroReggae just an incredible inspiration. I also wanted to say that I love my work, and I love my work especially with Hackney Free. And it was such a delight when Ofsted reported back, that Ofsted reported that Hackney Free was a good school – and I’ve known Hackney Free for a long time, when it’s been a school in challenging circumstances, and I would love to think that the work of AfroReggae has contributed in some part to that.148

146 AfroReggae UK Partnership: Can culture be our weapon?
147 From the favela to Hackney, dir. Nick Francis (Speak-It Films, 2006) [on DVD]
148 AfroReggae UK Partnership: Can culture be our weapon?
From the favela to our manor testifies to the obfuscatory capacity of the inclusion discourse. The conflict regarding the status of Hackney Free demonstrates not a conflict internal to the discourse, but the purchase of the ethical paradigm to which it is connected, ‘competition’. Remaining within the discursive contours of ‘inclusion’, overdetermined by ideologies of artistic professionalism in the UK, the report is not able to argue on behalf of a concept of culture as ‘weapon’. Instead, by addressing the UK projects in the main not as instances of artistic practice as practice, but as effective models of participant recruitment, and concluding that “what is missing in this country is the political will to recognize, as Brazil seems to, that culture is central to the health and development of the country, not simply a middle class pastime and that artists can provide lasting social benefits whilst continuing to pursue excellence”,149 it counterproductively suggests assent to a dominant model of artistic practice as something ratified by competitive institutions oriented towards discriminating consumers. The work, to be produced by a professional class of artists in pursuit of ‘excellence’, can be either social palliative or object of consumption. In this imaginary, the behaviour of social actors will either already be amenable to the competitive systems in play (the mobile and discriminating arts consumer, the artist pursuing ‘excellence’), be in training to contribute (the pupil) or must be made amenable (the ‘young person at risk’).

The latter figure is the target audience for the projects delivered as part of the UK Partnership. As a political economic category the young person ‘at risk’ is, paradoxically, simultaneously victimized and responsibilized, as DCMS

149 Richard Ings, p. 75.
formulations such as “young people at risk of committing crime or being socially excluded”\textsuperscript{150} demonstrate. A paradigmatic figure of abjection, the young person ‘at risk’ is situated on systemic margins, neither inside nor outside; the system in question is the competitive national economy. In this sense, From the favela to our manor is right to avoid specifying the meaning of ‘young people at risk’, treating it instead as a generic trope of cultural valuation. Gesturing towards a generalised scene of action, Ings writes

It may well be that the goals set for projects like these [by the organisations themselves] are often too ambitious, not least to reassure funding bodies that their investment will pay dividends. This affects projects with young people at risk more than most. Given that there is no shortage of young people around who would leap at the chance of a graffiti workshop or DJing session, there is a tendency for ‘at risk’ projects not to dig deep enough to find those who could benefit most; the research process takes a lot longer and there is, at the other end, a much greater risk of low attendance, with all that implies in terms of measuring success and reporting numerical outputs to funding bodies.\textsuperscript{151}

Once again this analysis obliquely indicates that funding frameworks conceive the ‘at risk’ young person who is ‘hard to reach’ not as a maker of performance but a consumer of a participatory experience. And, according to this narrative, it is levels of consumption – or box office return – which are of interest to funders looking to justify their investment. The risk actively taken is once again curatorial in nature, and the return on investment calculated in terms of cost per beneficiary – a logic which paradoxically (and in contrast to the Barbican) does

\textsuperscript{151} Richard Ings, p. 70.
not pursue the production of profit as surplus. Instead, if attendance targets are exceeded, the cost per beneficiary diminishes.

(iii) ‘Culture is our weapon here in Shoreditch’: Immediate Theatre

These conditions demonstrably apply to the framework within which Immediate Theatre’s AfroReggae project operates. Based in an office on Shoreditch High Street, Immediate Theatre creates theatre projects in partnership, almost exclusively, with the public, education and voluntary sectors. The organisation is entirely project funded. Jo Carter, artistic director of Immediate Theatre - who characterises her work as ‘social entrepreneurialism’152 - indicates that

We receive an annual project grant of £20k from Hackney which comes closest to what you might call funding at core, but staff costs and so on are paid for from project grants. All the support we receive is monitored, which when you consider that the company has a turnover of half a million makes for quite a complicated process addressing lots of different outputs.153

Following the success of the AfroReggae project in 2006, the Shoreditch Trust put the delivery of the ongoing project out to tender. Immediate was one of a handful of organisations that responded; in view of its work on estates and with young people outside of formal educational settings in Hackney, the Shoreditch Trust felt it to be the only organisation with relevant experience and knowledge.154 It is running (at time of writing) two samba-reggae groups in

154 Interview, Damian Atkinson, Shoreditch Trust, January 2008.
Shoreditch in collaboration with percussion artists from Taru Arts, a Brazilian performance company based in Woolwich, south-east London. The specified project outputs include a target of thirty young participants, twenty of whom must be from Shoreditch and NEET (not in education, employment or training) and ten of whom must live on the Murray Grove estate in Shoreditch, and the participation of the project in Youth Music Mentors, a peer mentoring scheme delivered by Sound Connections, the London branch of national advocacy organisation Youth Music. An initiative emerging from the Respect agenda, Youth Music Mentors is intended to tackle anti-social behaviour through building mentoring strategies into arts provision; run within the framework of the Arts Award, an adult mentor supervises two Peer Mentors, who themselves mentor identified Peer Mentees within the group. Throughout the project, Peer Mentors work towards the acquisition of an Arts Award, a qualification accredited by the QCA (Qualification and Curriculum Authority). Project facilitators log quantitative outputs (number of sessions delivered and participants attending) with the use of Substance, a bespoke project management and reporting system which (at time of writing) all twenty-five Youth Music Mentors projects across London access and use.

The complexity of these overlapping administrative structures - all of which are directed towards the production of subjects who will contribute to economic growth - endorses Karen Taylor’s assertion that what she calls ‘arts and inclusive’ “projects (across artform and development) are heavily scrutinized because they

---

are complex and there is an expectation that they will deliver on many levels/outcomes”. They also imagine a form of the social which is subdivided into what might best be described as a number of target markets. Reflecting upon AfroReggae and the material differences between Rio and London, Damian Atkinson, Education, Youth and Sport Programme Manager at the Shoreditch Trust says

I don’t know whether the model translates as well to here or if it can be something quite different. So we wanted something addressing gun and gang issues, but we also talked about NEETS, young people not in education, employment or training, which is another key government target and target for us. Again I think it is an issue that it can address but doesn’t do so directly. In another sense, there’s a more general purpose around disaffected youth and showing them a different way, but with this clear message around anti-violence and solving issues in a different manner, perhaps different to what young people here might take as their normal route...it’s got potential to address all of those issues, but we’ve got to be careful about it falling between all of those and actually not addressing any of them fully.

This narrative, commercial branding’s essentializing representational processes (as the phrase ‘unique selling point’ suggests) and the exact specification of spatial boundaries urban postcode rivalry imagines each compartmentalise the social; the latter in particular constrains the action of the project’s participants. Immediate Theatre initially ran the workshops at the Blue Hut, a youth centre in close proximity to the Murray Grove estate, and the group was building successfully. The Blue Hut was too small to accommodate the specified group size, however, and local residents did not welcome the noise generated by the drums in the early evening workshops. When Immediate moved the sessions to

---

156 Interview, Karen Taylor.
157 Interview, Damian Atkinson.
Hoxton Hall, less than ten minutes’ walk away, attendance dropped off sharply and did not recover. Jo Carter says “it’s a problem, because our focus is the young people who live on the Murray Grove estate, and none of them will go to Hoxton Hall. They won’t leave their area. The barrier is Pitfield Street, which divides two different gangs”\(^{158}\). In 2008, Immediate re-launched the Blue Hut group, while maintaining the sessions at Hoxton Hall. Atkinson comments “in maximising resource you would say well look, it’s crazy to have two things going on ten minutes away, but in reality you will not make a difference [unless you do]”.\(^{159}\)

To this extent, Atkinson’s conception of the artistic practice ‘falling between’ categories is not the failing he suggests it to be, but its strength. Artistic practice ‘falls between’ because of its aesthetic and material relationship to multiple forms of action; as Derek Richards, artist and producer for the AfroReggae UK Partnership suggested at an artists’ seminar after the Mini-Projects’ sharing, “culture for young people is about themselves, it’s about geography, it’s about taste cultures. It’s tapping in to that to cut across territorialism”\(^{160}\). A professional regulatory culture of performance measurement, targets and speedy maximization of value, itself arising from a form of capitalism which dynamically produces territorialism, is inimical to that process. Compare Living on the Welfare Estate, a project developed in the mid-1980s by Hackney-based

\(^{158}\) Interview, Jo Carter.  
\(^{159}\) Interview, Damian Atkinson.  
\(^{160}\) Derek Richards, AfroReggae UK Partnership Mini-Projects showcase: artist seminar, Wednesday 27 June 2007.
community arts organisation Cultural Partnerships, for which Richards was a worker:

*Living on the Welfare Estate*…was the young people’s title itself. We spent two years on that project, and there wasn’t a problem at that time in spending two years on that project. And a large chunk of the time towards the beginning of it… very little creative production or cultural production happened on that project. There was a lot of time where I had to live on the estate with the young people and let the stories emerge and build the relationships and build the trust. And the project led to the production of what we called a ‘musical documentary’, if you like, which was a piece that was contributed to through music, film, photography, even fashion, that told the story of their lives and actually, in a very campaigning way, advocated for the change they wanted to see happening. The project secured funding for the renovation and reopening of Millfield House in Clapton as a community arts resource, it led to some regeneration money to redevelop the flats, and it led to the exoneration of a young man who’d spent time in prison for a crime he hadn’t committed. That was a big subject within the film.  

There are clear resemblances in Richards’ account of the project’s model of practice with AfroReggae’s own, not least because following the project, two groups of the young people involved formed bands. One of these was Definition of Sound:

or at least that was what they were called in the beginning. They produced work in that studio, they formed and then this group that’s kind of legendary in British hip hop and particularly the way they crossed over into rock and pop came out of that project. You can’t do that unless you’re doing something over the course of two years.

Twenty years on, the length of the project and the dynamic interaction between artistic production, the social and the economic which it witnesses starkly

---

161 Interview with Derek Richards, Rich Mix, November 2007.
162 Interview with Derek Richards.
contrasts with the short narrative about *From the Favela to the World* in the Shoreditch Trust’s delivery plan. The document, which opens with a corporate vision statement (“Our vision for Shoreditch is a strong, safe, healthy and just community, led by local people to make it a better place for all who live and work here...”) describes the project “applying the highly successful Brazilian *favelas* [sic] approach, and using their methods and leaders, to tackle the youth guns and gangs issue.” If AfroReggae have a fixed model, it does not reside in a programmatic use of samba-reggae, but a business practice geared towards resourcing long-term centres for artistic work in the *favelas*. While in Immediate’s AfroReggae project, the funder exercises tight control over the definition of its targets, the artists and young people are not able to exercise control over the spaces for making their work. To take a small but symptomatic example, an AfroReggae session I attended at Hoxton Hall concluded with the caretaker entering at precisely 9pm and beginning switch off the lights while the group, finishing the post-workshop meal provided each week as part of the project, were still in the room.

---

164 Shoreditch Trust, p. 47.
Conclusion

‘Inclusion’ equates to mobility (cognate with ‘fluidity’, the favoured term of the post-modern critic) exercised by the entrepreneurial, risk-taking subject. ‘Exclusion’, the zone of a notional ‘underclass’, is the stagnant, static reverse. The ‘young person at risk’, as economic signifier, is precariously situated in transition between these zones. These are globally circulated constructions, but local institutional arrangements mediate them differently. AfroReggae’s practice embraces a relation between the categories of culture and economy and encourages the development of entrepreneurial subjectivity through performance. British ‘community-based’ practitioners, for reasons of the discursive separation of those categories, find less freedom to develop artistic work with young people. In closing, I offer a short analysis of AfroReggae’s Barbican concert in 2008, to place a final question over the viability of ‘social capitalism’. If capitalism is an economic system which for its continued operation must construct an abject outside from which it profits, servicing ‘legitimate’ productivity, the concert demonstrated the symbolic limits of AfroReggae’s own aims of enacting social justice by asserting the right to participate fully in capitalism. For this occasion, AfroReggae had created Favelization (2008), an entirely new show directed by José Júnior and designed by Gringo Cardia. The show featured extraordinary digital projections that showed international landmarks being gradually overwhelmed by creeping shantytown dwellings; following performances of AfroReggae’s own material, juxtaposed with harsh, stark line drawings and photographic images of slavery and poverty, the singers made swift costume changes to preppy slacks and jumpers, to give
tongue-in-cheek renditions of disco and soul classics (Earth Wind and Fire’s *Let’s Groove*, Marvin Gaye’s *Sexual Healing*) on the Barbican Theatre’s stage. The ironic appropriation of popular, globally recognisable songs and their expert handling was far from ‘the huge *embromation*’ of their performance of Beatles songs which Júnior narrated in *Da Favela Para O Mundo*.

The show had opened with seventy participants from the schools and youth settings involved in the UK Partnership performing a samba-reggae routine before the safety curtain. It was to close with “sounds and images from young performers in East London, inspired by AfroReggae”. The Bigga Bloco, clad in branded orange T-shirts, casually entered the stage from the wings playing a simple, unaccompanied samba rhythm. After two phrases of this rhythm and a moment’s pause, Blackstreet’s *Don’t Leave Me Girl* kicked in, a perfectly judged citation of a late-90s US revival of New Jack Swing, ‘old school’ by 2008, that brought a sensation of ‘London’ rushing into the gig, and the cheering audience to their feet. The young performers scattered across the stage, beating their sticks together to produce a rhythm in time to the tune, an exhilarating moment of ‘cultural invasion’ which evoked AfroReggae’s own. As they performed their fusion of samba reggae and funky house (Crazy Cousinz featuring Calista’s *Bongo Jam* and Donaeo’s *Devil In A Blue Dress*, accompanied by the lyricist and producer himself) the projections behind this group were not the sophisticated digital designs produced by Gringo Cardia. An unsophisticated revolving series of slides of rehearsal images was accompanied by bald text showing the names of participants.

---

the various schools and theatre companies. This design decision, towering behind the young people’s performance, instituted an internal hierarchy, an outside within the work, accentuating, given their limited experience, the necessarily less accomplished appearance of their musicianship than that of AfroReggae and AfroLata (a younger AfroReggae sub-group which had performed earlier playing instruments made entirely of recycled materials). This is not to suggest that this moment was representative of the ‘real’ relations in play. As Miranda Joseph has it, “representation (the political economy of the sign) and production (the division of labour)”¹⁶⁶ are complicit, not identical. But it serves to metaphorise the limits of the competitive society – the putative zone of all-encompassing ‘inclusion’ - and the risks of spectacularising productivity solely by reference to performance on a public stage, whether the Barbican or the street.

¹⁶⁶ Miranda Joseph, p. 65.
CHAPTER 3
‘Homo sacer’s ghost’: Unprotected

Introduction

To use a term more conventionally applied to ‘flexibilized’ or ‘casualized’ work, the sex worker is a figure of precarity.¹ The asylum seeker and the young person ‘at-risk’, whose mediations or engagements in performance the previous two chapters addressed, likewise represent figures of precarity, but these are liminal, transitional identities, ultimately to be either excluded from or included in the apparatus of the global economy. By contrast, ‘sex worker’ denotes not a transitional identity but an occupation. Like other professions which dominate spaces of deindustrialization in the ‘developed’ west, sex work is a form of service labour. Defined by the British state as a matter of ‘private morality’, the act essential to sex work is legal: the exchange of money between client and sex worker for the provision of sexual services, or, more accurately, an exchange which offers a client temporary acquisition of powers of command over the sex worker’s actions. Julia O’Connell Davidson thus problematises the popular terminology ‘selling sex’, or ‘selling her body’: the client pays in order that he may direct the prostitute to make body orifices available to him, to smile, dance, or dress up for him, to whip, spank, urinate upon, massage, or masturbate him, to submit to being urinated upon, shackled, or beaten by him, or otherwise act to meet his desires. It is not that the prostitute contract allows the client to buy the person of the prostitute while the employment contract merely allows the employer to buy the worker’s fully alienable labour power. Both contracts transfer powers of command from seller to buyer (the extent of those powers and

¹ For example, Bourdieu (1998); Hardt and Negri (2000); Mute, II, 0: Precarious Reader (2005).
the terms of the transfer being the subject of the contract), and so require the seller to temporarily surrender or suspend aspects of her will. (original emphasis)²

Notwithstanding the “façade of voluntarism”³ which the contractuality of this legal exchange establishes, it is tightly nested with a set of other activities which are illegal, and thus sex work, and sex workers, are criminalised. In Britain, the prohibition of activities functional to prostitution such as soliciting, kerb crawling and the management of a brothel (defined, gender neutrally, as more than one person selling sex from a premises) creates, Hubbard et al write, “a situation where it has proved virtually impossible for women to sell sex without breaking a number of laws”.⁴ As such, sex workers are figures of radical exclusion from the social: “a class of women⁵ who are designated as the recipients of violence and abuse, and for whom the law offers no protection and little redress”.⁶

This chapter examines Unprotected (2006), a verbatim theatre project about street sex workers produced by the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, and its publicly communicated desire to effect a transvaluation of the status of street sex

⁴ Phil Hubbard, Roger Matthews, Jane Scoular, ‘Regulating sex work in the EU: prostitute women and the new spaces of exclusion’, Gender, Place and Culture, 15, 2 (2008), 137-152 (p. 144).
⁵ Kinnell’s detailed sociological analysis specifically addresses female sex workers; she adds that (2008, p. 37) “the available information indicates that the issues for male and trans sex workers are similar to those for female sex workers”.
workers by bringing specific stories, told by ‘real’ people, into appearance in the
theatre. By capturing and archiving the narratives of people with experience of
sex work about the conditions of their lives and delegating the performance of
the captured narratives to actors – figures of legitimate, ‘included’ service labour
– the piece sought to offer audiences a privileged, unusual and truthful access to
sex workers’ lives and practices, and therefore to catalyse a change to their
excluded status in the future. Deirdre Heddon (sceptically) characterizes
verbatim theatre as a process in which “[theatre] practitioners solicit the
unsolicited, giving those voices a public place, and perhaps then rewriting the
dominant narratives in the process (narratives of history, social justice,
community)”.

Similarly, Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson introduce the recent
edited collection Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present (2009) by noting
that in the documentary theatre encounter “audiences are often actively engaged
in dialogue as citizens and putative participants in the public sphere”. The
critique I undertake in this chapter is motivated as much by a desire to
problematisedefinitionsofthetheatreasanunproblematically‘public’place,
which tend, as the critics above suggest, to undergird claims to political efficacy,
as by a desire to examine the structural position of sex workers and the
consequences for representation and thus ‘women’ in a more general sense. To
frame the theatre institution as straightforwardly ‘public’, implying an analogical
relationship to or microcosmic instantiation of ‘society’, is to sidestep analysis of

---

7 Deirdre Heddon, Autobiography and Performance, (Basingstoke: Palgrave

8 Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson, ‘Introduction’, in Get Real: Documentary
Theatre Past and Present, ed. by Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (Basingstoke:
Palgrave Macmillan 2009), 1-5 (p. 2).
the political economy of theatrical production: firstly, to elide its status as a site of trade, the particular form of which has important implications for the constitution of audiences and thus for the conditions of any argument about the ideological effects of performance work (as opposed to individual theorizations of the performance utterance); and secondly, to ignore how public policy regimes in which the theatre institution and its actors will be embedded affect the formation of its institutional identity and, directly and indirectly, its programming decisions.

In the case of Unprotected – a title which refers to the status of the street sex worker before the law, unprotected sex and political decision-making in Liverpool and at national level regarding the possible institution of a managed zone for sex work, which first prompted the decision to commission the play – this is particularly important. Its appearance on the Liverpool Everyman stage and then at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, with funding from the Liverpool Culture Company, participated in preparations at both theatre and city level towards Liverpool 08, the chosen brand for its year as the European Capital of Culture. The political and geographical designation ‘capital’ is always strategic; the emergence of the European Capital (formerly City) of Culture award as an opportunity pursued energetically by city authorities across Europe, despite

---

uneven economic ‘impact’,\(^{10}\) is a compelling index of an aggressively entrepreneurial turn in urban governance and the shaping of cities as spaces of consumption through retail and cultural provision – seen in Liverpool with the launch, mid-2008, of the gigantic Liverpool One shopping mall, with its developer Grosvenor now responsible for the maintenance and security of 42 acres of previously public streets\(^{11}\) – and an ideological elaboration, or mapping, of cities (new capitals) active in a global regime of post-Fordist productivity through consumption. Since Glasgow’s designation as City of Culture in 1990 (the first competitive nomination),\(^{12}\) authorities have treated the award as a mechanism for transforming ‘excluded’ cities (de-industrialised casualties of the transition from the colonial mode of production)\(^{13}\) into the ‘included’ (productive participants in the global economy). This establishes ‘degeneration’ as a normative criterion for involvement, or in other words, inclusion by virtue of a currently excluded status. The force of this ideological shift is demonstrable –


\(^{11}\) Liverpool One, known initially as the Paradise Project, is a capital development project undertaken by Grosvenor, owned by the Duke of Westminster. Liverpool City Council has replaced public rights of way with a public realm agreement delegating the management of the area to Grosvenor. Annual reports detailing the development of the scheme and the emergence of the Liverpool One brand are available on Grosvenor’s website <http://www.grosvenor.com/> [accessed January 2009]. For a journalistic critique see Paul Kingsnorth, Real England: the Battle Against the Bland, (London: Portobello Books 2008), pp. 177-179.


during the competition for the 2008 award Andrew Dixon, Regional Executive Director of Northern Arts even claimed that "Capital of Culture status would enable the North East to deliver a cultural equivalent of the industrial revolution". And critical to the production of new capitals of consumption, according to a report produced for Liverpool City Council and the Core Cities Group by think tank Comedia in 2003, is the provision of security:

A well-lit, clean, well-maintained, high quality, sensitively but effectively policed, legible and well-used environment fosters a sense of security, while blindspots, dirty streets, loud noise, indefensible space, congestion and an environment unfriendly to pedestrians undermines security. Culturally, security involves acceptance, in an open and non-chauvinistic way, of the different cultural identities of a place, see the discussion of Richard Florida [sic]. This security is strengthened if there is the possibility of freely expressing oneself culturally by having access to venues, funding and information.

The industrial and political identity of the sex worker, whose on-street presence interrupts the legibility of the 'high quality', putatively 'non-chauvinistic' environment, is this vision of security’s constitutive aporia: a person whom cultural theorist Lisa E. Sanchez characterizes “the excluded exclusion”.

If critics have credited verbatim theatre works with reviving theatre’s capacity for political engagement by reporting forms of injustice, exploitation and

inequality to audiences,\textsuperscript{17} this chapter explores \textit{Unprotected} to examine verbatim theatre’s limits. Following Stephen Bottoms’ critique of David Hare’s turn to verbatim theatre practice and his advocacy of a masculinist “‘red-blooded realism’”\textsuperscript{18}, I argue that the logic of contemporary verbatim theatre’s aesthetic realism exemplifies a “patriarchal principle”\textsuperscript{19} reciprocally engaged with what Rebecca Schneider calls “the imperialism inherent in archival logic”\textsuperscript{20}. Schneider advances a critique of archival logic in ‘Performance Remains’, an important article challenging, among others, Peggy Phelan’s frequently cited theorization of performance’s radically ephemeral and thus resistant status. Far from presenting a resistant, anti-hegemonic challenge to an archival logic of accumulation, endorsements of performance’s capacity to disappear without trace fortify that logic. “According to the logic of the archive”, Schneider writes, “performance is that which does not remain. Radically ‘in time’, performance cannot reside in its material traces, and therefore it ‘disappears’”\textsuperscript{21}. If the material trace embodied, say, in ritualized action is illegitimate as evidence of history, what we are left with is “the solidification of value in ontology as retroactively secured in

\textsuperscript{17} For example, Morrison (2005, p. 4): “Hytner’s National has been at the forefront of the post 9/11 renaissance in political theatre and its even newsier sibling, ‘verbatim theatre’”; Kellaway (2004, p. 5) “it is not satire, it is verbatim theatre that has recently made political theatre high profile”; Gardner (2004, p. 18) “verbatim theatre is apparently the new journalism… The relentless rise of verbatim theatre over the past couple of years has once again put theatre centre stage”.


\textsuperscript{21} Rebecca Schneider, p. 100-101.
document, object, record”. She draws sustenance for this argument from Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever* (1995), in which he contends that the exercise of permanent ‘domiciliation’ – “the domiciliation”, as Schneider puts it, “of this flesh with its feminine capacity to reproduce” is constitutive of the ontology of the archive as institution. Derrida:

It is thus, in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret [...] With such a status, the documents, which are not always discursive writings, are only kept and classified under the title of the archive by virtue of a privileged topology. They inhabit this unusual place, this place of election where law and singularity intersect in privilege. At the intersection of the topological and the nomological, of the place and the law, of the substrate and the authority, a scene of domiciliation becomes at one visible and invisible [...] They all have to do with this topo-nomology, with this archontic dimension of domiciliation, with this archic, in truth patriarchic, function, without which no archive would ever come into play or appear as such. (original emphases)

Domiciliation is a project of sovereignty, engaging the reciprocal operations of spatial occupation, (restriction of) movement and discursive governance. In this project, imperialism and patriarchy are disclosed as functionally imbricated in the exercise of cultural domination but also of value extraction and accumulation (well illustrated, for example, in the injunction to originality in academic research which makes use of the archive as resource).

---

22 Rebecca Schneider, p. 104.
23 Rebecca Schneider, p. 104.
In Unprotected, as industrial project and aesthetic work, domination, value extraction and activism contradictorily interlink. The play was commissioned to provide a campaigning theatrical report on street sex work in Liverpool. But in institutional terms, the Everyman participates in and thereby reproduces a neoliberal governmental paradigm of culture in regeneration which actively produces urban centres as spaces of conspicuous consumption and which is hostile to the presence of street sex work (but not, it must be emphasised, to other ‘privately’ conducted variants of the sex industry). The decision to commission a piece of verbatim theatre paradoxically played into this process, as it represented a move to align the Everyman and Playhouse, looking to achieve national and international significance as a site of new writing, with London-based companies making similar theatrical work which, under the new artistic and executive leadership of the building – the “Magnificent Two”, Gemma Bodinetz and Deborah Aydon, appointed in 2003 - it frames strategically as its institutional peers. Unprotected thus engaged complex processes of artistic, social and institutional repetition, which, notwithstanding the work’s commitment to justice for the women it represents, reproduce a patriarchal politics. Examining

26 The first lap dancing club in Britain was opened in 1995. Loopholes in the Licensing Act 2003, which grants the same status to lap dancing clubs as to café-bars, has seen the number of lap-dancing clubs double, from 150 in 2004 to 300 in 2008. For an article on the expansion of lap-dancing club chains – whose title also demonstrates the proprietarial logic that informs debate about sex work - see Rachel Cooke, ‘Should lap dancing be run out of town?: With a new venue opening every week, lap dancing has spread into British culture. Rachel Cooke talks to the men behind the boom, the women lured by the promise of easy money, and the campaigners battling to stop the clubs opening on your doorstep’, The Observer, 8 March 2009, p. 24.

the piece disclose the complicit relationship between a patriarchal epistemology and capital accumulation; rigidly policed binaries of ‘art/life’ and ‘authentic/invented’, which may not always take familiar forms, are functional to such an epistemology. The sex worker is “the figure of eternal otherness who makes it possible to imagine the inner dimensions of community, politics and nation”.28 ‘Eternal’, like ‘authentic’, indicates permanence, a time out of time, beyond representation; this chapter seeks to demonstrate the ways in which ‘eternal otherness’ and other constitutive, spectral, exclusions come to appear both in the theatre and in the street.

—

28 Lisa E. Sanchez, p. 861.
This section examines the emergence and dramaturgies of the ‘verbatim theatre’ form to offer an historical and theoretical context for the Everyman’s decision to commission *Unprotected* as a ‘verbatim theatre’ project. ‘Verbatim theatre’ is a mode of documentary performance based on recorded speech that has come to be called a “growing canon”. Practised in the 1960s and 1970s, it had yet to be given a name. The New Victoria Theatre at Stoke on Trent and the Liverpool Everyman had incorporated the utterances of ‘ordinary’ people into works that did not advertise themselves as ‘verbatim’; their popular performance aesthetic served an irreverent iconoclasm and a socialist politics. To create *The Mersey Funnel* (1967), a piece marking the building of the new Metropolitan Cathedral, the Everyman company had taken to the streets and interviewed around seventy people, whose tape recorded comments were “woven into the dialogue” of a comedic historical treatment of the cathedral’s fraught emergence. Running in and out of the theatre during rehearsals to inspect the new cathedral only a hundred yards away, the piece’s seventeen-year-old stage manager Julian Beech created the designs for a replica cathedral to be built on-stage in performance.

This,

29 Kate Kellaway, ‘Review: Theatre: Both sides now: The latest addition to the growing canon of verbatim theatre examines the question of terrorism from all angles to impressive, moving effect’, *The Observer*, 1 May 2005, p. 9.
at the cost of less than a pound with tea chests and wooden oddments, takes only three minutes to erect – compared with the £4,000,000 original which took four years to complete.\textsuperscript{31}

Two days before its first performance, the cathedral celebrations committee at whose invitation the Everyman had made the piece had "not yet seen a script of the play".\textsuperscript{32} The result, according to Doreen Tanner, theatre critic of the \textit{Liverpool Daily Post}, was an anarchic mess - "Ian Taylor has directed the piece; no one actually seems to have written it\textsuperscript{33} - whose charm would probably be lost on those with only a passing acquaintance with Liverpool: "it relies heavily on Liverpudlian humour and a kind of in-joke – in, that is, for everyone in the city"\textsuperscript{34}. \textit{The Fight for Shelton Bar} (1974), a musical documentary project which the New Victoria's artistic director Peter Cheeseman and his company initiated in November 1973, responded to the imminent loss of 2,000 jobs at the British Steel Corporation's Shelton works; the company intended to make it "entirely from the words of the workers involved and, if they agree to participate, the BSC officials".\textsuperscript{35} Cheeseman's conception of the theatre as the appropriate scene for 'local voices' and therefore a tool for political lobbying was aligned to its function, as he saw it, in a district of working people he described as having "a curious absence of a culture-seeking middle class grouped together coherently in

\textsuperscript{31} Jane Shenton, p. npg.
\textsuperscript{32} Jane Shenton, p. npg.
\textsuperscript{34} Doreen Tanner, p. npg.
sufficient droves of white collars and little black dresses to make any real social impact”.\footnote{Gillete A. Elvgren Jr., p. 88.}

Our job is to be the theatre artists of North Staffordshire. Any excellence we may attain, any accolades we may receive from the critical pundits, are neither here nor there. If, by the end of my life, we have got a significant place in the community, and are considered to be as useful in this community as the milkman, or the miner, or the grocer, then our lives will not have been lived in vain.\footnote{Gillete A. Elvgren Jr., p. 89.}

Thirty years on, the market logic of neoliberal political economy has become hegemonic, and deregulation, privatisation and individual consumer choice are primary political values; the idea of ‘job’ or indeed ‘theatre-for-life’ seems impossibly anachronistic and, likewise, the uniform dress code of a theatre-going middle class. The emergence in contemporary British theatrical production of a conspicuous and capacious ‘verbatim theatre’ category is in part a product of the labour of the ‘critical pundits’ whose influence Cheeseman wanted to dismiss. Though both twenty-first century theatre makers and critics claim ‘verbatim theatre’ has revived the political efficacy of the theatre institution, in epistemological if not always aesthetic terms the contemporary theatre work it represents often has more in common with the anti-theatrical impulse animating nineteenth century naturalism – as Émile Zola characterized it, “direct observation, correct anatomy, the acceptance and depiction of that which is” (original emphasis)\footnote{Émile Zola, ‘Le naturalisme au théâtre’. Cited in Martin Esslin, ‘Naturalism in Context’, \textit{TDR}, 13, 2 (1968), 67-76 (p. 69).} than with the direct action and gently oppositional
subversion represented by these earlier documentary works. This proposition
informs the argument I later make about Unprotected’s representational decisions.

(i) The emergence of ‘verbatim theatre’

The first sustained comment in print, scholarly or otherwise, on ‘verbatim
theatre’ as a category of production appeared in “Verbatim Theatre’: Oral
History and Documentary Techniques’, an article published in New Theatre
Quarterly in 1987. Its author, documentary theatre, film and television theorist
Derek Paget sought to categorise recent works made using new, easily portable
cassette recorders and to disseminate knowledge about them. Paget writes that
these works captured and used as source text the voices of ‘‘ordinary’ people,
done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event
or combination of these things”.39 The article’s title indicates that both he and the
theatre-makers under discussion interpreted the practices as forms of oral
history. Sheffield-based playwright Rony Robinson, whom Paget credits as “a
pioneer of the method”40 reflects of his work:

You get a grim sense of people fighting against the dark to remember the
past. And that seems to be one of the functions of what the actual play is
doing, to deliver it back with a bit of light on it to the people who have
experienced it… That seems like a very democratic and decent thing to
do. (original emphasis)41

39 Derek Paget, “Verbatim Theatre’: Oral History and Documentary Techniques’.
40 Derek Paget, p. 317.
41 Derek Paget, p. 317.
Robinson, along with fellow practitioners Chris Honer, David Thacker and Ron Rose, made work in Chester, Sheffield and Lancaster in the 1970s and 1980s on topics such as Cheshire’s educational system (Down at Our School, 1978), life between the two world wars (The Rose Between Two Thorns, 1980) and a more conceptually experimental rendering of the city as a coincident multiplicity of experiences, which the company researched by recording people’s reflections within the timeframe of a single day (One Day In Sheffield, 1977). They cite Peter Cheeseman’s work as formative, and, via the Stoke documentaries, the documentary and ‘lay’ theatre practices of Joan Littlewood, Ewan MacColl and Charles Parker. Unlike the ‘verbatim’ pieces Paget surveys, the primary source materials which Cheeseman’s documentary projects used were largely textual – The Staffordshire Rebels (1965), a dramatisation of events in Staffordshire during the English Civil War, for example, drew on political ballads, constitutional documents and the letters and speeches of Oliver Cromwell. The practices nonetheless shared a politics of artistic collectivism which the artists felt eroded professional distinctions between playwright and performer (Robinson: “there is, I would contend, a direct connection between the collecting of the material and

42 The use of Read’s term helpfully avoids the terminological problem represented by the changing political valence of ‘community’ while signifying non-professional labour. Alan Read, Theatre and Everyday Life: an Ethics of Performance, (London: Routledge 1993), p. 34.


44 ‘Production Casebook No. 1: The Staffordshire Rebels’, p. 102.
the successful performing of it”)\textsuperscript{45} and the research and presentation of material which was meaningful to local audiences. Cheeseman’s intention for the New Victoria was to create a producing theatre organically responsive to its region and its histories, an intention he framed in terms of civic duty; “a community theatre, particularly in a district where there is only one of them (as in most British towns)”, he wrote,

has a responsibility to its rate and taxpayers to reflect the past and the present: to preserve what is best of the past, to re-enact our ancient rituals if you like, and to reflect, consider and celebrate the present.\textsuperscript{46}

This ambition reflected (and was no doubt dialogically engaged) with that of Jennie Lee, the first Minister for the Arts appointed by the Labour government in 1964, who negotiated a three-fold uplift in the Arts Council’s settlement from government and instituted redistributive measures favouring the regions. Between 1958, the year in which the first regional repertory theatre, the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, was built, and the early 1970s, as many as a hundred new theatre buildings were created across the UK. If, as Jen Harvie writes of this moment in cultural policymaking, these initiatives demonstrated “a prevailing national ‘edifice complex’”,\textsuperscript{47} ‘verbatim theatre’ practices by contrast represented a more mobile and flexible form of artistic response. Robinson felt that they represented the possibility of “an area of the theatre that should be throwaway,

\textsuperscript{45} Derek Paget, p. 327.
\textsuperscript{46} Peter Cheeseman, p. 77.
that should have a journalistic touch”\(^{48}\) and which should be made on a more frequent basis, enabling the subjects they narrated to become “part of the air again… talk again” (original emphasis).\(^{49}\) In this sense, the theatre-makers wanted to document and theatricalise local histories in order to put them back into circulation. Paget argues for verbatim theatre’s oppositional potential, declaring at the article’s conclusion that the work “involves nothing less than the continued reclaiming and celebrating of that history which is perennially at ‘the margins of the news’”\(^{50}\).

He thus also claims for verbatim theatre a release from some of the burdens “attendant upon the characteristic economic determinations of theatre production in this country”\(^{51}\) - the division of labour and the specialization of role, the apparatus required to mount performance work, and so on. His detailed survey further elaborates a set of institutional and class tensions regarding the conditions of its practice in the 1970s and 1980s, some of which pass unremarked. His first explicit critique is of the cultural ascendancy of London stages and the implications of this ascendancy for the distribution of cultural capital. He distinguishes between companies undertaking local histories, the results of which are then “fed back”\(^{52}\) in performance to particular local audiences, and work he characterizes as “present national ‘controversy’”\(^{53}\) plays - for example *Falkland Sound/Voces de Malvinhas* (1983) produced by the

---

\(^{48}\) Derek Paget, p. 335.

\(^{49}\) Derek Paget, p. 335.

\(^{50}\) Derek Paget, p. 336.

\(^{51}\) Derek Paget, p. 318.

\(^{52}\) Derek Paget, p. 317.

\(^{53}\) Derek Paget, p. 322.
Royal Court and directed by its artistic director Max Stafford-Clark. Paget situates the production of this piece, which utilized both the published letters of Lt. David Tinker54 (a naval officer killed in action at the age of 25) and interview material, in a broader and longer-term struggle for cultural audibility, in which London had thus far inevitably won out over the more marginal ‘regions’.

Though a succession of works staged in London had also toured regionally - *Falkland Sound* (Royal Court and Plymouth), 7:84 England’s *The Garden of England* (1984-85, 7:84 and National Theatre) and Doncaster Arts Co-operative’s *The Enemies Within* (1985, DAC Theatre and Young Vic) – the discursive and material apparatus of London theatre dominated production; to this extent, “*Falkland Sound* was even televised”,55 offering it a platform for access by a much larger audience and consolidating the primacy of the capital, if consolidation were needed, as a site of artistic production.

But, despite the binary oppositions (‘metropolitan’-‘regional’, ‘actors’-‘real people’) which emerge in his interviews with artists, Paget does not inspect the artists’ own perceived possession of cultural capital in relation to their subjects. Rony Robinson’s account of Peter Cheeseman’s approach to the production of *The Fight for Shelton Bar* (1974) signals differences in class position most clearly:

> What I found there was this, I would say ‘puritanism’ about it … the meticulous way in which the material had to be collected, had to be

---

55 Derek Paget, p. 322.
transcribed – and certainly at that stage they were using the methodology of linguistics to actually *annotate* the stuff. (original emphasis)56

The ‘puritanism’ of method has aesthetic implications beyond the class identities of the theatre workers using it, but Robinson’s remarks and their tone of surprise show that the actors were not from where their performances were taking place. And, if rigorous linguistic annotation instructed actors in the appropriate way to represent local vernacular, it was the task of the performer to refrain from reflexive gesture towards the role *qua* role:

If you allow your attitude towards the performance, towards the part in performance terms, to come out, the thing falls apart and it becomes deeply patronising. It becomes middle class actors taking the mickey out of working class people or whatever.57

The aesthetic demand for ‘authentic’ pronunciation and the (apparently inevitable) risk of caricature index cultural and class distance, also witnessed here in the enthusiasm of Alwyne Taylor, an actor who worked with Honer and Robinson:

We live, as actors, such privileged lives – even though we may be out of work for some of the time – and it’s so good to see another side of life. It just opened my eyes… I find it so important to go back into the community and find out what life is about – if you’re going to present it on stage, you know?58

56 Derek Paget, p. 319.
57 Derek Paget, p. 329.
58 Derek Paget, p. 327.
Although Paget suggests of verbatim plays that ‘communities’ “have, in a real sense, created them”,\(^{59}\) and claims that the form can “offer to actors a greater share in the means of production,” \(^{60}\) in the Marxist sense” (original emphasis)\(^{61}\) these optimistic remarks point towards greater internal contradiction in the work, in industrial and political terms, than his analysis admits. At its centre, however, is the position articulated by Peter Cheeseman, which he considers the various practices to share - that verbatim theatre can endow “‘that sense of pride and self-confidence that every district outside of London desperately needs – so you don’t feel you’re a nonentity’”.\(^{62}\)

It is worth looking at the statements this article makes in some detail. In July 2006 Andy Lavender, chairperson of the survey symposium *Verbatim Practices in Contemporary Theatre*, launched the event by drawing attention the article’s importance as the earliest example of scholarship articulating the by now flourishing genre of ‘verbatim theatre’. Scholarly writing subsequently published reiterates this view.\(^{63}\) Chris Megson, reporting on the symposium for *Contemporary Theatre Review*, describes the article as “prescient”,\(^{64}\) and frames documentary theatre practice in the 1990s and early 2000s as the less glamorous

\(^{59}\) Derek Paget, p. 317.

\(^{60}\) This understanding of ‘means of production’ collapses the distinction between what Althusser calls together the ‘productive forces’: ‘means of production’ and ‘labour power’, arguably indexical of the works’ historical relation to post-Fordism.

\(^{61}\) Derek Paget, p. 318.

\(^{62}\) Derek Paget, p. 322.


parallel of other forms of contemporaneous theatrical production in much the same way as Paget did in 1987:

If the first performance of Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, at the Royal Court Theatre in January 1995, has taken its place in the glittering pantheon of premières that help constitute post-war theatre historiography, so might a very different kind of performance that took place over six months before. *Half the Picture*, compiled by the Guardian journalist Richard Norton-Taylor (with contributions from John McGrath) and directed by Nicolas Kent at the Tricycle Theatre, in June 1994, offered a meticulous re-enactment of the Scott Arms-to-Iraq Inquiry and drew heavily on spoken testimony reproduced from the inquiry itself. An alternative narrative of British theatre in the 1990s might be grounded in this moment: *Half the Picture* was the first of the so-called Tribunal plays to be staged at the Tricycle, and this model of testimonial theatre, with its roots in the European documentary tradition, has been adopted or adapted by a great many practitioners and companies in the ensuing period.65

Megson’s account engages in the widespread retrospective canonisation of Sarah Kane, a writer whose politics and experimentation with theatrical form coupled, critically, with her gender and age produced an explosive and condemnatory public response when *Blasted*, then a completely unknown new piece, was first performed. His treatment of ‘verbatim theatre’ enacts a similar logic. ‘Verbatim’, and the variants ‘verbatim practices’, ‘verbatim-inspired’ and ‘verbatim theatre’ weave in and out of the report. He uses the terms more-or-less interchangeably with one another, and with ‘documentary’ and ‘testimony’; contemporary verbatim theatre appears as a trans-historical form, “a revival in what Weiss termed long ago a ‘theatre of actuality’ that uses spoken testimony, or other kinds of verbatim and empirical evidence, as its primary source”.66 In a 2008 article diagnosing the increased ubiquity of documentary performance, playwright

65 Chris Megson, p. 530.
66 Chris Megson, p. 530.
David Edgar similarly treats ‘verbatim’, ‘documentary’, ‘testimony’, ‘witness’, ‘fact-based’ and ‘reportage’ as synonymous prefixes for ‘theatre’. While Paget’s article addressed a small group of artists and their quasi-sociological working methods – and, owing to the specificity of his definition of ‘verbatim’ as speech acts recorded on cassette out in the ‘field’, struggled to define a broader movement in which they could be seen to participate - these articles stage an historical continuum and an unproblematic relationship between practices where there is likely to be much more genealogical complexity.

In the case of Half the Picture, both the symposium and Megson’s report group the production with what now appear as allied ‘verbatim theatre’ practices. (Megson’s more recent article, which compares Half the Picture’s dramaturgy to later Tricycle tribunal works does not make the same critical move.) But the artistic work itself was, initially, neither called ‘verbatim theatre’ by its makers, nor attracted the label in critical discourse. The Times, for example, characterised the piece as “gripping courtroom drama”; Daily Telegraph critic Charles Spencer’s review used ‘verbatim’ only in relation to the court transcripts

---

68 For example, Paget (1987, p. 322) describes Falkland Sounds’ use of letters “as a legitimate primary source, but not the hallmark of the verbatim play”.
themselves ("two hours of edited but verbatim highlights"). In an article previewing the subsequent tribunal plays Srebrenica (1996), playing in repertory with Nuremberg (1996), Mark Lawson described the works as "verbatim plays", but this term was not picked up by other critics. Three years on, the next tribunal play, the celebrated The Colour of Justice (1999) - which The Observer’s theatre critic Susannah Clapp called “a dramatised reconstruction of the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence” - received substantial national press attention. But only two of these articles, both by critic Alastair Macauley, referred to anything about the piece as ‘verbatim’, and again in specific reference to the court transcripts themselves (“verbatim words from the actual inquiry"), “verbatim extracts from last year’s inquiry”). Furthermore, Half the Picture was not the first of director Nicolas Kent’s experiments with theatrical re-stagings of courtroom proceedings. In an interview in 1996, he described his interests as a director first at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, and then at the Oxford Playhouse in the 1970s:

At the Traverse we used to do what we called Traverse Trials on Sunday

---

72 Mark Lawson, 'Theatre: Nothing but the truth: You couldn't make it up. For centuries the book-reading, theatre-going public want nothing but fiction - then suddenly only true-life stories will do. What's so great about reality, asks Mark Lawson', The Guardian, 9 October 1996, p. 12.
73 Susannah Clapp, 'Arts: The year ahead; Theatre in '99; Four legs good', The Observer, 3 January 1999, p. 8.
75 Alastair Macaulay, 'Going public in a way that makes a difference: Alastair Macaulay meets Nicolas Kent, the man behind The Colour of Justice', Financial Times, 20 September 1999, p. 19.
evenings. We had subjects such as ‘Scottish Oil for Scotland’, ‘Should We Abolish the Monarchy?’ They weren’t scripted but we had a prosecutor and a defence lawyer, and the audience was the jury. They were enormously popular. So when I went to Oxford and The Romans In Britain obscenity trial was on, I had the idea of putting together the transcripts each day and presenting them on the stage night by night. We had two reporters in court transcribing evidence, and someone edited it on the train up to Oxford.76

The solicitor representing Mary Whitehouse, the self-appointed guardian of public moral rectitude who had brought the action against The Romans in Britain (1980) – the last such example following abolition of formal censorship of the theatre in 196877 - went so far as to allege that the production placed Kent in contempt of court.78 Though it fell well within the period it reviewed, Paget’s survey does not mention this controversial early tribunal piece. If Nicolas Kent staged tribunal productions far earlier than 1994, works which had no apparent connection with the ‘verbatim’ theatre-makers Paget surveyed and have not been described as verbatim theatre with any consistency over time, why, in 2006, was Megson confidently able to suggest Half the Picture as a founding text for the contemporary proliferation of verbatim theatre? And why, in 2007, did Richard Norton-Taylor himself write of the tribunal plays that “this is ‘verbatim’ theatre,

---

78 Nicholas Wroe, 'Profile: Nicolas Kent: Courtroom dramas: Despite a public school and Oxbridge education, he felt an outcast because of his family background. As director of the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, he has aimed to highlight injustice with plays based on documentary evidence. After successful dramas about Stephen Lawrence and the Hutton inquiry, Guantanamo is to open in New York', The Guardian, 24 July 2004, p. 16.
an art form critics credit the Tricycle with pioneering”, when before this, his own journalistic writings on these theatrical collaborations made no mention of it at all?

(ii) A growing canon

These changing narratives are arguably an effect of genre articulation – or better, canon formation – emerging from the concurrent programming decisions, publicly represented, of various London theatres, and in particular activities associated with the Royal Court. In 1995, the same year as the production of *Blasted* to which Megson refers, the Royal Court’s international department scheduled a single rehearsed reading of *Waiting Room Germany (Wartesaal Deutschland)* a piece by German playwright Klaus Pohl, in the Theatre Upstairs. It consisted of a series of monologues researched via interviews with people across Germany about their responses to and experiences of reunification and delivered to the audience in direct address. Following disruptions to the production process of *Harry and Me*, the next piece slated for the Theatre


81 Irmer (2006, p. 24) translates *Wartesaal Deutschland* as *German Waiting Room*, which substantially alters its meaning.
Downstairs, the Royal Court offered *Waiting Room Germany* a full run. Soans narrates this story in an essay for edited collection *Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre* (2008) (which, assembling the voices of Max Stafford-Clark, David Hare, Richard Norton-Taylor, Nicolas Kent and Alecky Blythe, elaborates and contributes to the constitution of a contemporary ‘verbatim theatre’ canon). As a member of the acting company of *Waiting Room Germany*, Soans describes the experience of performing the work, in a production for which few had any expectations of success, as a moment of epiphany:

> A few lines into my first long monologue, I became aware that the audience was listening. And not just listening, but *really* listening … During my second monologue, the account of a man who’d endured a great deal in striving for the welfare of the town where he lived, I got to the point where he said, ‘Yesterday I submitted nomination papers, and I’m going to stand for Mayor’, and the whole audience burst into applause. If there has ever been a defining moment in my induction as a verbatim actor and dramatist, that spontaneous reaction was it. (original emphasis)^82

For Soans, the piece (and its ultimate popularity at the box office) was extraordinary and radical, eliciting not the self-regarding connoisseurship in audiences that he had encountered as an actor on similar stages, but “an unsophisticated attention which was new to me”.^83

The experience inspired him to research and write similar works. The Royal Court, then under the artistic directorship of Stephen Daldry, commissioned him

---


^83 ‘Robin Soans’, p. 22.
to produce a similar project. *Across the Divide* (1996) staged the reflections of constituents in Brent East about their political affiliations in the run up to the 1997 general election. Performed at the Duke of York’s Theatre, the piece prompted Max Stafford-Clark (by now artistic director of Out of Joint) to invite Soans to write a piece to run alongside a revival of Andrea Dunbar’s *Rita Sue and Bob Too* (1982), whose first production Stafford-Clark had directed at the Royal Court. Soans based *A State Affair* (2000) on three weeks of interview research on Bradford’s Buttershaw Estate, where Dunbar had lived and where her play was set, and in the manner of *Waiting Room Germany* composed the piece largely of monologues from individual ‘characters’. The piece staged their narratives of experiences of poverty, drug addiction and violence before a concrete backdrop housing ten television monitors displaying images of tuning failure ‘snow’, an image gesturing towards post-industrial disintegration as a material and psychic phenomenon.  

The play opened at the Liverpool Everyman and toured nationally with a run at the recently re-launched Soho Theatre (co-producer with Out of Joint) mid-tour. Critics greeted the piece enthusiastically and described it as ‘verbatim theatre’ with assurance. While Lyn Gardner, for example, had characterised *Waiting Room Germany* as “staged verbatim interviews”, she reviewed *A State Affair* as, explicitly, “a piece of verbatim theatre created via interviews with people who live in Buttershaw today”.

In his five star review, Phil Daoust pronounced the piece “a magnificent endorsement of what Out of

---

84 For an extended analysis, see Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt, ‘Building Bridges: Life on Dunbar’s Arbor, Past and Present’, *Theatre Research International*, 26, 3 (2001), 285-293.


Joint describes as ‘verbatim theatre’, commentary which more clearly references the company’s active discursive framing of the work; the programme distributed with the play incorporated both performed playtexts and explanatory notes. “If you’ve ever known a junkie or an alkie, or felt for a second that your own life might spiral out of control”, Daoust continues, “you’ll recognise the mix of despair and black humour as the real thing. By the end of it, you just might feel like crying”.

A State Affair received a second national tour and a longer run at Soho Theatre at the end of 2001; since then, Soans has produced a further three ‘verbatim’ pieces on the same model - The Arab-Israeli Cookbook (Gate, 2004; Tricycle 2005), Talking to Terrorists (Royal Court and national tour 2005) and Life After Scandal (Hampstead Theatre, 2007). Meanwhile, the Tricycle has continued to produce tribunal works, the most recent of which, Called to Account: the Indictment of Anthony Charles Lynton Blair for the crime of aggression against Iraq: a Hearing (2007), departs from its fidelity to real-life courtroom proceedings to stage a fictional hearing using interviews on the subject contributed by individuals of political note. By the mid-2000s, other companies’ adoption of the Tricycle’s model readily attracted the verbatim label. To this extent, reflecting upon Beyond Belief (2004), a theatrical restaging of the Shipman inquiry directed by Chris Honer (one of the practitioners Paget interviewed) at the Library Theatre Manchester, critic Alfred Hickling muses dryly that “it’s increasingly the case that no official

88 Phil Daoust, ‘Reviews: Theatre: Rita, Sue/A State Affair; Soho Theatre, London (5 stars)’, p. 29.
enquiry can be considered complete until it has been transcribed, condensed and turned into a piece of verbatim theatre”\textsuperscript{89}. In 2003, further diversifying the burgeoning scene of documentary practices, the Arcola Theatre in Dalston had staged \textit{Come Out Eli}, the first production by actor-turned-writer Alecky Blythe, an edited re-enactment of responses from on-street witnesses to the siege in Hackney, captured in situ with a dictaphone. BAC, the Bush Theatre and Wimbledon Studio have since shown Blythe’s ‘recorded delivery’ works; the most recent of these, \textit{The Girlfriend Experience} (2008), co-produced by the Royal Court, the Drum Theatre, Plymouth and her company, itself called Recorded Delivery, examines the workings of a brothel on the south coast. They each deploy a technique learned from Mark Wing-Davey, in turn picked up from Anna Deavere Smith in his capacity as director of her first ensemble documentary performance \textit{House Arrest} (1998): the actor does not formally learn lines, but instead imitates ‘ordinary’ recorded speech precisely, received in real time by the actor via earpieces worn in rehearsal and subsequently in performance.

The immediacy of response which the technique requires constitutes an attempt to close down the actor’s (intended or unintended) interpretative work in the service of a ‘natural’ aesthetic. Blythe writes that “the performances that result tend to be unselfconscious and incredibly free”\textsuperscript{90}. Perhaps the most formally


reflexive of contemporary ‘verbatim’ practices, her documentary experimentation nonetheless observe their adopted formula, or system, consistently. Similarly, each of Soans’ plays follows the dramaturgical pattern of individual interviews, staged in direct address to audiences, which Soans found so “potent and relevant”\(^91\) in his initial encounter with it as an actor. German critic Thomas Irmer throws Soans’ apprehension of innovation into relief; he understands Klaus Pohl’s \textit{Wartesaal Deutschland} not as radical theatrical ethnography but “a series of well-made character monologues”\(^92\) and, as a piece by an established playwright, a safe choice for the large repertory theatres that programmed it in Germany in 1995. Irmer critiques Pohl’s work and its ubiquity in relation to “more experimental documentary theatre practitioners [who] are searching for forms that radically depart from known formulas”\(^93\) – for example, Hans-Werner Kroesinger, who at that moment was developing \textit{Q & A-Questions and Answers} (1996) from the documents of the criminal trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the chief architects of the Final Solution. A piece in historical dialogue with Weiss’ \textit{The Investigation} (1964), the promenade performance installation, staged in three rooms, juxtaposed a re-enactment of Eichmann’s interrogation, a live feed of the re-enactment, and screenings of archive footage to ask questions of the uses of documents in the writing of history; Irmer contends that by enabling audience members to witness different iterations of the same text, the piece “did not promote historical relativism but exposed the mechanism”.\(^94\) Even

\(^{91}\) ‘Robin Soans’. p. 22.
\(^{93}\) Thomas Irmer, p. 24.
\(^{94}\) Thomas Irmer, p. 22.
a single example of competing discourses of documentary theatre in Germany problematises Soans’ understanding of *Waiting Room Germany* as revelatory new practice.

The monologue has become the normative mode of presentation for verbatim theatre practice; speaking at *Verbatim Practices* in 2006, actor Lloyd Hutchison, who performed in both *The Permanent Way* (2003) and *Talking to Terrorists* (2005) described his yearning, following these experiences, “‘to look into another actor’s eyes’”. In his 2008 survey of contemporary documentary theatre practices, David Edgar wryly observes:

> The big subjects of this decade appear to lend themselves to traditional, mimetic representation. So why have so many post 9/11 plays presented their research interviews as reportage rather than dramatising them in scenes? Why is the first question for an audience at a contemporary political play not “how have they shown the horrors of terrorism and war?” but “will it be stools or chairs?”

Edgar’s joke references the dramaturgy of Soans’ work and that of subsequent high-profile documentary productions. David Hare’s *The Permanent Way* (2003, National Theatre and tour), co-produced by Out of Joint and directed by Max Stafford-Clark, Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo’s *Guantánamo: ‘Honour Bound to Defend Freedom’* (2004, Tricycle Theatre; New Ambassador’s, then New York) and New York-based theatre-makers Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen’s *The Exonerated* (2005, Queen’s Hall Edinburgh; 2006, Riverside Studios) each make the monologue the central dramaturgical unit with limited on-stage movement – a

---

95 Chris Megson, p. 532.
96 David Edgar, p. 18.
practice at its most extreme in *The Exonerated*, in which the actors remained seated in a row throughout, reading from scripts placed on lecterns before them. In 2006 British arts critics heralded this latter piece “the latest example of verbatim theatre”. Yet Blank and Jensen had begun research towards the piece, a series of six narratives of the consequences and injustices of wrongful conviction in the United States, six years earlier, and by the time the play opened at the Edinburgh Festival in 2006, it had received an off-Broadway run in the US, undertaken a further tour, and been made into a feature film starring Danny Glover, Aidan Quinn and Susan Sarandon. The international touring practice of works like *The Exonerated*, described in the New York Times in 2002 as “an intense and deeply affecting new documentary play”, evidences increased industrial connections across the Atlantic, but also readily discloses the extent to which the meaning of ‘verbatim theatre’ at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a discursive construction specific to the British theatre industry, even while the works’ presentation might bear aesthetic resemblances to other projects made in Britain. The ease with which Edgar asserts a distinction between ‘reportage’ and ‘drama’ is predicated partially on the currency of notions of verbatim as individuals ‘talking to the audience’ as much as the tenacious representational binary of ‘fact’ and ‘value’.

(iii) Rhetorics of the ‘real’

---

With more detailed attention to the artistic practices which Edgar cites, the ‘reportage-drama’ distinction upon which his article is based soon collapses. Instead what emerges is a mix of visual, textual and performative rhetorics which, mobilised together, may seek to construct authoritative realisms, engage in the kinds of reflexive questioning which Stephen Bottoms, for example, advocates, or indeed attempt to do both at once. Most straightforwardly anti-theatrical, as Edgar points out, are the Tricycle tribunals, which obey a clear set of rules regarding the treatment and staging of source material, and aim for the greatest possible degree of experiential and visual verisimilitude. The editing process condenses the court transcripts in length, but Norton-Taylor does not change words, the order of events, or the origin and target of speech. As if in a courtroom, the actors do not remain on stage to receive applause at the end of each performance; the stage design renders the courtroom setting with minute accuracy. Symptomatic of this is the extraordinary request made to the Tricycle by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague after the staging of Srebrenica (1998), a tribunal piece which dramatised the hearing regarding the massacre in the town.

A year or so later, when the trial of Slobodan Milošević was about to begin, Kent received a phone call from the administrator of the court asking if he still had the desks used in the production. "Then he asked if he could send a United Nations lorry to pick them up", explains Kent. "It turned out that the trial was going to be bigger than the previous hearings and they didn't have enough desks. Although we hadn't actually used mahogany, we had reconstructed the furniture very carefully and we did

100 Stephen Bottoms, p. 57.
101 Chris Megson, p. 531.
still have them. So the lorry came and as far as I know the desks are still in Hague being used for the trial of Slobodan Milošević.\textsuperscript{102}

The trial ended without verdict in 2006, when Milošević died of a heart attack in detention. The desks created for the stage remain with the International Criminal Tribunal.\textsuperscript{103}

The production process of \textit{The Permanent Way} - a piece which for Edgar represents a fine example of documentary reportage - likewise demonstrates that anti-theatricality does not logically entail an abandonment of the mimetic. He writes that

\begin{quote}
far from being an abdication, much journalism-posing-as-theatre is literally and proudly that. In the 2003 play about railway privatisation, \textit{The Permanent Way}, David Hare and his collaborators did the kind of in-depth, investigative, historically analytical job on a contemporary political story that conventional journalism rarely does anymore, occupying space abandoned both by long-form print journalism and by traditional television documentary. In \textit{Deep Cut} [a 2006 verbatim drama about the deaths of four young military recruits at Deepcut army barracks], reporter Brian Cathcart is quoted as saying that 'journalism dropped the ball' after the internal enquiry into the four deaths, implying that theatre has now picked it up.\textsuperscript{104}
\end{quote}

This passage gestures towards investigative journalism of the 1970s and 1980s – represented in the US by the groundbreaking political reporting of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, and in the UK, Paul Foot’s campaigning work – a discourse to which Edgar himself contributed \textit{I Know What I Meant} (1974), a TV

\textsuperscript{102} Nicholas Wroe, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{103} Ella Paremain, Tricycle Theatre archivist and doctoral researcher at Birkbeck, told me this anecdotally at the London Theatre Seminar, October 2008.
\textsuperscript{104} David Edgar, p. 18.
drama on the subject of Watergate edited from White House taped transcripts. The Permanent Way, by contrast, followed the model Max Stafford-Clark deployed in his work with Robin Soans on A State Affair and Talking to Terrorists, a hybrid of ethnographic practice and realist technique. The actors met and interviewed their various subjects during a short two week period and brought their research back to the rehearsal room not in the form of audio recordings, but as accurate renditions, in-character, of the people they had encountered. Performed for the creative team, their utterances were transcribed by Hare and fashioned into a drama in what Bella Merlin, a member of the performing company and author of two scholarly articles on the piece, calls “the ‘verbatim’ style”. Merlin writes that “our imaginations as actor-researchers served as a creative filter for that which we deemed sufficiently theatrical or dramatically provocative to pass on to Hare as the writer”. Conversely, Stafford-Clark characterised the play’s ‘embarkation point’ as one of ‘surrender’ (“‘both actors and writer are going to surrender themselves to the words that they find [and] surrender themselves to the material in terms of the story”), functionally aligned to his assessment of verbatim theatre’s ‘raw’ status:

really what a verbatim play does is flash your research nakedly. It’s like cooking a meal but the meat is left raw, like a steak tartar. It’s like you’re flashing the research without turning it into a play.\textsuperscript{109}

The research that the male director and writer team flashes ‘nakedly’ in this scenario is the (feminized, objectified) work of the actor. Not all the members of the creative team specified here in fact enacted such a ‘surrender’ to the material, however. The construction of the play in performance was as the fieldwork of a single researcher, author David Hare, through the insistent repetition of his name by the characters onstage (“Because, David, what I do now is manage contracts”;\textsuperscript{110} “But then you work on from there, David”;\textsuperscript{111} “It’s very English, David”).\textsuperscript{112} The audience to whom the characters were shown to talk was not a team of actor-researchers, whose performances in rehearsal inescapably mediated those dialogues and were disclosed as such on the stage, but a single quasi-journalistic commentator, a role into which the play casts its audience, thereby consolidating and legitimizing, through its spectrality, Hare’s position as a theatrical “moral watchdog”\textsuperscript{113} (as one of the few pieces of arts journalism which openly questions his rhetorical self-presentation puts it). Merlin’s uncritical citation of an extraordinary piece of rehearsal room shorthand reflects the project’s masculinism. Alongside two male colleagues she played one of three characters - an ‘Investment Banker’, a ‘Senior Civil Servant’ and a ‘High-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{109} ‘David Hare and Max Stafford-Clark’, in \textit{Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre}, ed. by Will Hammond and Dan Steward (London: Oberon Books 2008), pp. 45-75 (p. 51).
    \item \textsuperscript{110} David Hare, \textit{The Permanent Way, or, La Voie Anglaise}, (London: Faber and Faber 2003), p. 19.
    \item \textsuperscript{111} David Hare, p. 26.
    \item \textsuperscript{112} David Hare, p. 50.
    \item \textsuperscript{113} Brian Logan, ‘Why do we still run with the Hare?’, \textit{The Times}, 27 November 2006, p. 14.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Powered Treasury Thinker’ – a scene which in rehearsal “became known colloquially as ‘The Three Wise Men’”\textsuperscript{114}. \textit{The Permanent Way} demonstrates a sublation of complex processes of theatrical engagement and re-enactment into a dominant narrative for public reception – the critical points here being the unmediated facticity of speech, the interchangeability of the theatrical and the journalistic and, implicitly and explicitly, the primacy and legitimacy of the single white male author as cultural critic or commentator. His own authority threatened by that of ‘fact’, the author writes himself into the drama as an absent presence.

Coined to signify a mode of theatrical oral historiography in non-metropolitan sites, ‘verbatim theatre’ now operates as a catch-all term for contemporary documentary theatres, which in aesthetic realisation may bear little relation to one another. But they arguably share a preoccupation with communicative authenticity. Accessing, representing or eliciting the authentic takes multiple forms, among them a desire to achieve anti-representational unselfconsciousness in the work of the actor and a spontaneous and unmediated attention on the behalf of audience members – an affect of authenticity - as well as a more familiar production of verisimilitude on the stage. In the case of a (putative) fidelity to source material in research and rehearsal, a work’s ‘authenticity-effect’ may only be predicated on a claim in advance to facticity, as in the case of DV\textsuperscript{8}’s \textit{To Be Straight With You} (2008), prefaced by a simple slide projection advertising its basis in interview testimony garnered by a professional ethnographer. Framing individual stories of homophobic violence, abuse and activist resistance to

\textsuperscript{114} Bella Merlin, ‘Acting Hare: \textit{The Permanent Way}', p. 131.
homophobia as, in the last instance, authentic, the multi-medial performance that follows ‘dances’ the words: a gay DJ defiantly spins Buju Banton’s homophobic anthem ‘Boom Bye Bye’, while the lyrics explode into white, projected visibility on a gauze before him; a dancer, skipping a rope with virtuoso skill, voices the words of a young Muslim teenager, whose adolescent vivacity materializes in the vibration, speed and increasing intricacy of the dancer’s action. The National Theatre of Scotland’s *Black Watch* (2006), a hybrid of realism, symbolism, contemporary choreography and traditional military song offers a satiric response to the quasi-sociological verbatim theatre research process (and by extension other productions), both via its aesthetic hybridity and a realist representation of an actor playing the writer Gregory Burke, uncomfortably and ineptly soliciting the ex-soldiers’ ‘real’ thoughts about their experiences in a bar. Earlier in the performance, soldiers in full uniform emerge unexpectedly from inside the bar’s pool table, a *coup de théâtre* disrupting the otherwise realist stage setting and severing the anticipated relationship between verbatim testimony and action.

Yet even these more representationally impressionistic works do not call into question the discursive status of testimony as unique – indeed in its realist passages *Black Watch* explicitly narrativizes the individual experience of conflict in Iraq as singular, beyond the comprehension of the researching writer. In verbatim theatre performance, then, authenticity is both an aesthetic and ideological question manifesting less as a rigidly realist representational programme than as a problematic of testimonial verifiability and, reciprocally, audience reception. Overdetermining and, often, displacing the campaigning
politics of verbatim works is therefore the question of the extent to which audiences can trust that theatre-makers are telling the truth. Lyn Gardner’s review of Look Left Look Right’s *Yesterday Was a Weird Day* (2005), a theatricalised series of accounts of the London bombings, nicely illustrates ‘trust’ and ‘transparency’ as primary values in public discourse: “simply staged, this is vivid and honest, made more transparent by the fact that the transcript of interviews is available in the foyer”.115 Here, spectacularity and archival logic collide: for Gardner, it seems unthinkable that the document, staged now in the space of the everyday as a representational supplement to the work’s truth claims, could function as anything other than evidence of the real. The reflection of Frantic Assembly’s Stephen Hoggett, associate director on *Black Watch*, in the show’s programme - “it’s very tricky to honour somebody else’s words and still make the show what you mean it to be”116 – is of the same conceptual order.

What could be at issue in contemporary verbatim works is the motive that Kirk Williams ascribes to nineteenth century naturalism, in which

---

116 Deirdre Heddon, p. 141.
There are three things to note in regard to this. Firstly, verbatim theatre’s own ethical programme likewise paradoxically proceeds through theatrical spectacle. Dennis Kelly’s *Taking Care of Baby* (2007), a fictional ‘verbatim’ work which for its first half deliberately leads its audience to believe that it is based on real events perhaps articulates this most bluntly. Furthermore, naturalism’s (mutually constitutive) aims of exploring ‘life itself’, banishing stultified convention from the theatrical stage, and placing upon the stage scenarios or constituencies of people who might otherwise be excluded from the cultural institution of the theatre bear substantial relation to those of contemporary verbatim works; the latter aim precisely engages the questions of cultural capital and audibility which motivated the earlier verbatim theatre makers which Paget was keen to support. The final point, and a key distinction to be made between the ‘verbatim’ works made thirty years ago and now, is that of the social subject in question. Where Peter Cheeseman, Rony Robinson and their colleagues worked in the (theatrical and extra-theatrical) interests of collectives of people, defined by class, locality, occupation and so on, contemporary verbatim theatre practices prioritize the individual utterance, or the representation of narratives produced through individual interaction with unforgiving, monolithic systems; the participant in ‘communal’ (as opposed to ‘collective’) interactions is the individual, and individualized, subject.

Paget (writing in 1990) saw the documentary ‘true story’ mode as “a completion in the present century of that valorization of the individual which began with the
rise of the bourgeoisie as a class”. Similarly, a twenty-first century preoccupation with authentically representing individuals giving accounts of themselves which, ostensibly, occur spontaneously in the world (although many are not found, but actively sought out and made) is arguably an effect of the rise and entrenchment of neoliberalization’s individualizing programme and the complicit incidence of spectacular, profit-oriented dramaturgies of the real in television news reporting, reality television and consumer magazines. In this sense, the dominant struggle of verbatim theatre, like nineteenth century naturalism before it, is not necessarily for systemic change but “for new modes of representation, new aesthetic strategies that seek to usurp the privilege of the old”. This is a vanguardist logic of value production aligned with, not to say instantiated by the economic system which produces the depredations some verbatim works ‘document’. Nina Raine, employed by the Liverpool Everyman to direct Unprotected, speculates regarding verbatim theatre’s broad commitment to individual testimony: “I wonder whether what we're seeing with all these types of plays is a hunger for the kind of engaged, agit-prop theatre of the 1970s […] Except that playwrights today are often much less willing to be on the nose about politics. Verbatim is a way of getting around that. It fills the void”.

---

119 Kirk Williams, p. 97.
120 Adrian Turpin, ‘Reality check: Plays using the words of real-life protagonists will abound on the Edinburgh Fringe. Do they take us closer to the truth?’, Financial Times, 22 July 2006, p. 36.
At the apex of the verbatim theatre trend, three years after the city of Liverpool’s unexpected victory in the competition for European Capital of Culture 2008, Unprotected (2006) appeared on the stage of the Liverpool Everyman. A theatrical account of Liverpool’s street sex trade, with its use of “the deeply fashionable form of verbatim theatre” the project was able to respond expeditiously to changing decisions regarding the regulation of street sex work in the city. Research and publication of the Home Office Green Paper Paying the Price: a consultation on prostitution (2004) had roughly coincided with Liverpool City Council’s own consultation regarding the possible introduction of a managed zone for street sex work in one of five areas. A vigilantly policed ‘zero tolerance’ approach would apply elsewhere. David Blunkett, then Home Secretary, was known to favour the managed zone model as a means of regulating urban prostitution; in Liverpool specifically, the proposals had gained momentum following the brutal murders of Hanane Parry and Pauline

---

Stephen, two women working as street prostitutes. Their killer, Mark Corner, a paranoid schizophrenic now indefinitely detained at Ashworth hospital\(^{126}\) whose condition was untreated\(^{127}\) had engaged the services of each woman and taken them back to his flat within twenty-four hours of one another. There he had strangled them and dismembered their bodies, placing their remains in polythene bags and disposing of them in bins in a public park. Then, in September 2005, another as yet unidentified person killed a third woman, Anne Marie Foy. She was a street sex worker who had herself participated in early research towards *Unprotected* and was known by the artistic team. Further to their interviews with her, they possessed an audio recording of her reflections. Foy’s voice, describing the occupational uncertainty of street sex work and in particular the possibilities of attack or abduction by her clients, appeared at the conclusion of the piece in performance, and likewise in the published playtext.

This section examines *Unprotected* in terms of its aspirations to and uses of ‘authenticity’. In July 2006, *The Guardian*’s theatre critic Lyn Gardner wrote a preview article for the Edinburgh run of the play, describing it as “theatre telling it straight from the horse’s mouth”.\(^{128}\) She added that

---

\(^{126}\) Diane Taylor, ‘My daughter: ‘Not just a prostitute’: Dianne Parry hoped her heroin-addicted daughter would wake up one morning, see sense, and come home. But Hanane never did - she was murdered, aged 19, while working as a prostitute’, *The Guardian*, 5 August 2006, p. 3.

\(^{127}\) Hilary Kinnell, p. 223 & p. 250.

always quoted when prostitution is mentioned.\textsuperscript{129}

Suzanne Bell, Literary Manager of the Everyman and Playhouse and the play’s dramaturg echoes Gardner’s position in the preface to the playtext. “Sex as a commodity”, she writes, “is not something people want to talk about; they want to hide behind statistics and close their ears to the human story. Verbatim theatre enabled us to go to the heart of the issue, giving a voice to those most involved with and affected by street sex work”,\textsuperscript{130} which included the mothers of the murdered women, outreach workers, clients, politicians, police and sex workers themselves. Both Gardner and Bell invoke a common-sense distinction between measurable statistical fact and the singularity of human experience, and their assessments of the play’s communicative immediacy, even-handedness and humanity reflect the project’s own liberal aspirations to transcend ideology. Bell writes that the shock of Anne Marie Foy’s death and its violence during the process of making the work “brought the situation into startling focus, spurring all on to give this issue a voice that spoke louder than governmental wrangling and political correctness”.\textsuperscript{131} Like a smokescreen, discursive conflict and rhetoric regarding the governance of the street sex trade is here understood to obscure its violent realities. By triangulating points of view and offering a forum for first-hand accounts of experience, the play might by contrast unveil those realities. Its singular ‘voice’ might be interpreted not as the text itself but more appropriately the public platform of the theatre; its ‘loudness’ perhaps a concentrated quality of

\textsuperscript{129} Lyn Gardner, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{131} Suzanne Bell, p. ii.
attention from its audience members, produced by knowledge of the play’s basis in those accounts. Dramaturg and critic alike frame *Unprotected* as a piece whose verbatim theatre form uniquely permits it to campaign on behalf of, and endow with public legitimacy, this particular constituency of women ‘at risk’. I will contest this view in a discussion that begins outside the theatre as such. Though verbatim theatre’s anti-theatrical epistemology would suggest otherwise, theatrical appearance is not restricted to the institution of the theatre, an idea essential to the argument that follows.

(i) The ‘excluded exclusion’

The production of citizenship status and its ‘rights and responsibilities’ bears a striking resemblance to the production of ‘character’ in the theatre. This insight is of significant relation to the administration and security of citizenship status. To make reference again to the essay I cited in Chapter 1, writing of the uncertain identity of political refugee as he or she waits to move across the border from one nation state to another, Sophie Nield argues that

the issue is not whether a person is there. A person is clearly there. The issue is precisely ‘who is there?’ - whether the person who is there is who they *represent* themselves to be, and is, in fact, the legal/juridical object that the legal/juridical mechanisms require them to be in order to assign the rights and freedoms that are being claimed. This representation may take the form of documentation (passports, permits to travel, proofs of nationality, photographs); verbal accounts of reasons for travel; narratives of suffering or oppression, which have caused a person to be in flight. It may, in other words, be more, or less, ‘performative’, but nevertheless this strange double exposure would seem to me, in any event, to echo the simultaneous presence of actor and character. As you move from one state to another, you ‘play’ yourself, and hope you are convincing. As W. B. Worthen notes in discussing the work of Judith Butler, ‘the
performance of identity is never sovereign; it is always an elaborate process of citation.\textsuperscript{132}

In elaborating this argument, her discussion takes up Giorgio Agamben’s theorization of \textit{homo sacer}, a figure consigned to the ‘state of exception’ and, marking the boundaries of what lies within its ambit, the guarantor of the sovereign power of liberal government. Agamben sees three mechanisms at work in the production and enactment of sovereign power under the conditions of liberal democracy:

1. The original political relation is the ban (the state of exception as zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion)
2. The fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, \textit{zoe} and \textit{bios}.
3. Today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West.\textsuperscript{133}

Nield considers Agamben’s thought (in particular perhaps the second of these points) to provide a more nuanced understanding of the theatrical: as she writes elsewhere, not concerned with artificiality or surface but with “the actual manifestation of power, and the ways in which power acts on people”.\textsuperscript{134}

Representation distinguishes the rights-bearing subject and the subject without


rights; in other words, who may appear as legitimately ‘human’ and is therefore entitled to the state’s protection, and who may not. The subject in a ‘state of exception’ is liminally suspended between these zones, or states.

Other recent scholarship which, like Nield’s, is concerned with representation and its politics from feminist and geographical perspectives finesses Agamben’s thought. Geographer Geraldine Pratt notes that “Agamben is offering a philosophical analysis, and is preoccupied with a general topological process that produces exclusion within inclusion in liberal democratic societies”,\textsuperscript{135} which suggests (like Derrida’s neologism ‘topo-nomology’) an imbrication of the discursive and the spatial. Agamben’s own practice, however, is inattentive to questions these critics are concerned to address: the processes of gendering and racialisation which attend the production of ‘exception’. Katharyne Mitchell draws attention to Agamben’s work’s treatment of homo sacer as “an undifferentiated, interchangeable (male) figure”,\textsuperscript{136} a critical move which forms the basis of Lisa E. Sanchez’ critique of Agamben and her theorization of the prostitute, and the street sex worker in particular, as ‘the excluded exclusion’.

Sanchez argues that homo sacer, reduced to bare life, is in fact not a figure of exclusion but of displacement. In the paradoxical, liminal position of being included-through-exclusion, he “retains within his body to the possibility of return to the social, thereby maintaining a special entitlement to the male outlaw

as errant, but not as alien or inhuman”. In a section provocatively entitled ‘Homo sacer’s ghost’, she conducts a brilliant analysis of Agamben’s treatment of the French myth of Bisclavret (which he cites to specify the relationship between banishment and the maintenance of order), demonstrating that it is a feminized (and in this case female) figure that functions as an absolute exteriority against which homo sacer might be defined, and which enables his return. In the tale, a metaphoric rendering of the state of nature, the nobleman Bisclavret by night sheds his clothes and, taking the form of a werewolf, rapes and pillages in the countryside away from his own domicile. While in this animal guise, he is presented with the constant threat that the loss of his clothes will cause him to be exiled from culture, permanently trapped in the form of the werewolf. To curtail these nightly sprees of destruction, his wife steals his clothes. But Bisclavret does not face consignment to a permanent state of exclusion; he petitions the king, who re-ends his with his land and his title, which for Sanchez demonstrates “a second exclusive power of the sovereign next to the power of life over death – that is, the power to banish and return subjects to his domain and to restore men to authority after transgression”. Bisclavret’s return is conditional: his wife - who by now has divorced her husband and taken a lover, a transgression against patriarchy which may not be forgiven - must be expelled from the home. Agamben’s treatment of this turn of events is peremptory: “The inevitable encounter with the ex-wife and the punishment of the woman follow. What is

137 Lisa E. Sanchez, p. 865.
138 Lisa E. Sanchez, p. 867.
important, however, is that Bisclavret’s final transformation back into a human takes place on the very bed of the sovereign”.  

Sanchez:

Here, Agamben himself reenacts the very terms of displacement and exclusion I have been trying to expose... What I am arguing is that the prostitute is the excluded exclusion that makes homo sacer’s displacement and return to the social possible. Agamben’s abrupt dismissal of the woman in the text as not part of ‘what is important’ is symptomatic of precisely the kind of erasure we see repeated in the myths and legends of our history. (my emphasis)

The Prostitution-Free Zone Ordinance enacted in Portland, Oregon which she goes on to discuss bears some similarity to the proposal for a managed zone made in Liverpool, which she also references in the article, for the reason that the zone’s introduction, as reported in 2003, would entail zero tolerance of prostitution elsewhere in the city. Passed into legislation in 1995, the Ordinance in Portland also specifies areas historically associated with street sex work as zones of zero tolerance, and permanently excludes those caught soliciting from those areas. This has had a dual effect. It has assigned a reified public identity of ‘prostitute’ to women and men, thereby denying the legitimacy of other non-professional identities which may necessitate use of the space (collecting children from a babysitter, catching public transport, and so on). In Britain, community protests (not legislative measures) enacted against street prostitutes in Balsall Heath in Birmingham in the mid-1990s likewise encouraged

---

139 Giorgio Agamben, p. 107.
140 Lisa E. Sanchez, p. 868.
142 Lisa E. Sanchez, p. 872.
generalised harassment of women known to be prostitutes, here narrated by one woman:

I will be walking up the road with my daughter and they will stop me. I say to them at night when I am on my own and I am dressed in mini skirts then they have got a right to stop me but not at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, with my baby in the push chair with about six carrier bags. I mean am I really doing business in that state?¹⁴³

The (reified) identity of ‘sex worker’ marks the person as radically and permanently out-of-place. The introduction of the zero tolerance zone therefore displaces the on-street sexual transaction to less populous areas where the risk of arrest is more slight, which exponentially increases the risk of violence to the sex worker; here, as elsewhere, the effect is to produce “nomadic and anarchistic spaces outside [of the zero tolerance zone] where men can execute their own private sovereignty upon the bodies of prostitutes, through violence, rape, mutilation and murder”.¹⁴⁴ The horrifying exercise of such sovereignty is precisely what impelled Councillor Flo Clucas, Liberal Democrat executive member for social care at Liverpool City Council to support the plans for a managed zone in Liverpool, and to consent to participate in Unprotected. She appears in the play in the guise of a character with a different name – a role which she openly discloses in press interviews for the project (the representational peculiarity of which I discuss below). In one such interview in The Guardian she states “‘My position is that I am a married, middle-class

¹⁴⁴ Lisa E. Sanchez, pp. 871-872.
Catholic morally opposed to prostitution. But, she says, ‘I am even more strongly opposed to girls being raped, murdered and mutilated on my doorstep’.”

(ii) Public nuisance, zero tolerance and the production of space

The exclusion of sex work from public space is a matter of the production of space ‘itself’ as the site of materialized values, the simultaneously material and imagined ground for the reproduction of cultures. Though prostitution is characterized as illegitimate labour, it should be emphasized that under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the UK’s most recent legislation, the exchange of money for sex is legal. Since the early nineteenth century, the dominant legal discourse regarding prostitution in the UK has been one of public nuisance, with the responsibility for that nuisance resting with the ‘common prostitute’, a term introduced to the statute in 1824 and with which a woman could be labelled after a single offence, a stigma which situated her, feminist campaigners argued in the 1920s, “‘beyond the pale of justice’”. The Wolfenden Report (1957) distinguished between the phenomenon of public nuisance as ‘governable’ and private morality as a matter ‘beyond the remit of the law’, a distinction which

---

147 Julia Laite, p. 4.
continues to pertain, as does the term ‘common prostitute’ (although its removal was among the propositions tabled in Paying the Price). This contradiction discloses the discourse of nuisance as the exercise of control over what is to appear in public, a control which, under neoliberalism, authorities exercise in the interests of producing the narrative ‘security’ of spaces of consumption.

The Consultation on a Managed Zone for sex trade workers in Liverpool (2004) likewise rehearsed the discourse of nuisance. It argued, following the example of informal and formal models in the UK and Holland that a demarcated, serviced public zone for solicitation “would provide a safer environment for street sex workers to operate in, whilst removing the nuisance of prostitution from residential areas”. The proposed zone arguably represents an alternative state of exception: a regular, temporary, active cessation of the rule of law governing actions associated with commercial sexual transaction, but which seeks not to alter structural logics in any fundamental way. In any event, the managed zone in Liverpool was not to be: the Home Office’s A Coordinated Strategy on Prostitution (2006) and the associated Regulatory Impact Assessment (2006) ruled out the possibility of managed zones altogether. Instead it proposed more rigorous enforcement of zero tolerance and measures encouraging sex workers to leave the trade. Framed with a twenty-first century vocabulary of transition from exclusion to inclusion, injunctions to these ‘risky subjects’ to assume

149 Pete Clark, Mark A. Bellis, Karen Tocque, p. 1.
individual responsibility for their progress to legitimacy – which Scoular and O’Neill identify as congruent with other forms of neoliberal governmentality - rehearse gendered, linear nineteenth century narratives of prostitute victimhood and salvation.\textsuperscript{150} The Home Office published the decision on zero tolerance during research towards the full production of Unprotected, which sent the writers back to their interviewees to garner responses.

There is no publicly disclosed link between the Home Office decision regarding zero tolerance and the Capital of Culture programme in 2008 with which Unprotected was associated, but the promulgation of measures to minimize the visibility of street sex work and the propagation of the culture-led regeneration model are mutually supporting and historically specific. In a recent article, urban geographer Phil Hubbard argues that the consistency with which British governments have stigmatized prostitution in modernity has impelled critics to understand the most recent iterations of this stigmatization – for example, the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to clear women assumed to be sex workers from the streets, and the criminalization of sex advertising in public telephone boxes as specified in the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 – as “merely the latest in a long line of strategies of containment”.\textsuperscript{151} But he argues that attending only to the continuities of repression fails to take account of the contemporary specificity of these particular


measures and their objective of ‘purifying’ city centres of sex work’s ‘polluting’ presence. In the ‘industrial’ era, the sex trade would tend to be concentrated in red-light districts in close proximity to the poor in the inner cities. ‘Post-industrial’ cities by contrast seek to displace these practices from newly gentrified city centres to ex-industrial or residential sites elsewhere. It by no means follows that the goal is to eliminate sex work practices – rather, it is to hide them from view in peripheral or private sites. He argues that these forms of pursuit of capital accumulation represent

the reinscription of a virile masculinity, the authority of which was seriously undermined in the economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s (with the disappearance of a once familiar division of labour organized around the labouring male body and a procreative female body).\textsuperscript{152}

Drawing attention to the imbrication of patriarchy and capitalism, he insists that “neoliberal urbanism is not just about the re-centralisation of capital; it is also about the re-assertion of the father figure in Western consumer society”.\textsuperscript{153}

Liverpool’s campaign to construct its position as a viable Capital of Culture advanced images of ‘virile masculinity’; its resulting, unexpected success in the competition in 2003 made its continuing efforts to remodel the deindustrialised city as a site of tourist pleasure through culture a more credible proposition.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{152} Phil Hubbard, p. 683.
\textsuperscript{153} Phil Hubbard, p. 682.
\textsuperscript{154} The practice of culture-led regeneration is not new to Liverpool. In his capacity as the Thatcher government’s Minister for Merseyside, appointed following the violence of the Toxteth riots in 1981, Michael Heseltine established the Merseyside Development Corporation, and in 1984 staged both the Liverpool Garden Festival and the opening of Albert Dock, closely followed in 1988 by the
Towards the end of the 1990s, Liverpool City Council began to develop strategic inter-agency partnerships typical of the New Labour model of joined-up governance, and a new administration, elected in 1998, advertised its entrepreneurial ambition of transforming Liverpool into a ‘premier European city’. This coincided with the European Commission’s decision, in 1999, to devolve selection for the former European City of Culture award\textsuperscript{155} to member states, and the award’s renaming, placing the ‘Capital’ concept at the centre. The UK was allotted the year 2008, and DCMS put the opportunity to receive the nomination out to competitive tender in 2000. Liverpool was the first city to declare its interest in participating. Its £2m Capital of Culture bid jointly engaged New Labour’s communitarian definition of culture\textsuperscript{156} and a masculinist rhetoric of capitalist vanguardism. Liverpool Culture Company articulates the city’s unique selling point thus:

Liverpool is not a chocolate-box city. It is unconventional, pioneering, unruly, unpredictable. It lives on the edge of Europe, the edge of America, and the edge of Africa, on the fault lines of culture...both local and international – the World in One City.\textsuperscript{157}

---

\textsuperscript{155} Founded in 1985, the European City of Culture award was at first presented as a mechanism for enhancing dialogue between Europe’s nation states and showcasing artistic excellence and innovation. The first five chosen cities - Athens, Florence, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris – were either state capitals or already significant sites of cultural production and heritage.

\textsuperscript{156} Ron Griffiths, p. 424.

Running in tandem with a concept of culture as scene of ‘togetherness’ – to which Sir Jeremy Isaacs, chairman of the awards committee, similarly attributes the success of Liverpool’s bid (“If you had to say one thing that swung it for Liverpool, it would have to be that there was a great sense that the whole city was involved in the bid, was behind the bid and was shouting on behalf of the city”) - these tropes of challenge and resilience demonstrate a virile frontier logic which positions the city as fundamentally enterprising, ready to participate aggressively in the global economy, a game at which, given its imperial history, this passage implies, it is already an old hand.

But, despite its victory, Isaacs stated publicly that the weakest element in Liverpool’s Capital of Culture bid was its theatre provision, then consisting largely of venues receiving touring productions. The Playhouse, founded first as a music hall in 1866 and as the UK’s first repertory company in 1911 (with, like other subsequent repertory companies, an artistic policy oriented to “selecting the best of the London drama and re-presenting it in Liverpool for the benefit of

---

158 Sally Pook and Nigel Bunyan, 'Liverpool walks tall with hope in its heart: Merseyside expects a £2bn investment boom after beating the odds to be named as Europe’s Capital of Culture, write Sally Pook and Nigel Bunyan', The Daily Telegraph, 5 June 2003, p. 4.


160 Alongside the Everyman and Playhouse, Liverpool’s city centre theatres consisted of the Liverpool Empire, run and managed by entertainment giant Clear Channel Entertainment as a receiving house, The Royal Court, a commercial venue with a popular comedy club, The Unity, a middle scale subsidised community theatre, and The Neptune Theatre, a Grade II-listed ex-music hall in need of refurbishment.
the Liverpool public’’).

161 Martin Jenkins, Terry Hands and Peter James, all then in their mid-twenties, set up the Everyman in 1964 in the former Hope Hall meeting house as a multidisciplinary and radical alternative to the Playhouse. Investment from the popular bistro beneath the theatre rescued it from seemingly terminal financial crisis in 1993. In 1999 the newly incorporated Liverpool Merseyside Theatre Trust assumed the management of both struggling institutions, and the Trust’s board of directors, the Arts Council of England and Liverpool City Council formulated a policy which prioritized new writing. In 2001 Suzanne Bell was appointed as the Everyman and Playhouse’s first Literary Manager, with a brief to seed work with local artists, and with a small amount of funding from the BBC’s Northern Exposure programme, began to develop scripts. The theatre returned to producing following the joint appointment of Gemma


162 Lynne Walker, ‘Theatre: The quality of Mersey: Gemma Bodinetz and Deborah Aydon, the new team at the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, are determined to put the two theatres back on the map. Lynne Walker hears how they plan to do it’, *The Independent*, 15 January 2004, p. 12.


165 At *Between Fact and Fiction* (2007), a symposium at the University of Birmingham, and in our interview, Bell recalled an angry scene at a developmental meeting she staged in the second week of her job at the Everyman. When she arrived, there was “no system for receiving scripts”; one writer, who had been regularly submitting work to the theatre, only adding to the “piles of scripts dumped in rooms”, furious at the lack of communication and opportunity provided by the theatre, punched her in the face.
Bodinetz and Deborah Aydon in 2003, both women with substantial experience and connections in new writing in London, as artistic and executive directors. Bodinetz had worked as Associate Director at Hampstead Theatre, and director at the National Theatre and the Royal Court; Aydon, formerly of the Bush, arrived from a post as administrative director of Rough Magic in Ireland. Their appointment garnered substantial attention in the national press and a spate of articles meditating the revival of regional theatre’s fortunes elsewhere.\textsuperscript{166}

Interviewed in the \textit{Daily Post} not long after her appointment to trail a reading at the Soho Theatre of the work of three Liverpudlian writers developed as part of Bell’s programme, Bodinetz framed the theatre’s new function with an entrepreneurial language of excellence and renewal:

\begin{quote}
Our city is renowned for its strong voice. By the time Liverpool holds the Capital of Culture title in 2008, we hope to have positioned the Everyman and Playhouse as one of the leading centres for new writing in the whole of Europe. I really believe we are on the threshold of a dynamic new era.\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

Like the Royal Court, the Everyman’s now publishes its new writing commissions, which carry the ‘Made In Liverpool’ brand, as playtexts which double as show programmes. The theatres have attracted £6m of capital development funding for refurbishment purposes; in 2006 Steve Tompkin was recruited to act as architectural consultant, having overseen the renovations of the Young Vic and the Royal Court. This process of institutional elaboration

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{166} For example, Paul Taylor, ‘Review of the Year 2004: Arts: Theatre: The further you went, the better it was’, \textit{The Independent}, 27 December 2004, p. 40.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
reflects the theatre’s mission, “to create theatre of the highest quality which is firmly rooted in our community, yet both national and international in scope and ambition”.168

(iii) ‘Turning headlines into human stories’

The commissioning of Unprotected in 2005 is intimately related to the delivery of this mission. Importantly, the decision to produce a piece of verbatim theatre came before the selection of the topic. Although Out of Joint’s The Permanent Way had toured to the Everyman in 2003, and elicited impassioned responses from audiences in unusually lengthy post-show discussions, its favourable reception was secondary to Bell’s awareness of the emergence of other forms of verbatim theatre;169 accordingly,

I’d gone to Gemma and said, ‘Gemma, I think we should do a piece of verbatim theatre’. We then got five very political writers around the table and said ‘what shall we do’.170

This phase of Unprotected’s development was entitled the Headlines project; each of the five writers was asked to pitch an idea, with the brief “a local headline


169 This observation is based on this section from my interview with Bell (2008):
LO: The choice of verbatim – from what you were saying earlier about the incredible response to The Permanent Way, was that what impelled you to push for that?
SB: Yeah, a bit, yeah. You know, I knew The Colour of Justice, and Guantanamo, the tribunal plays, and I knew Come Out Eli, Alecky Blythe’s Recorded Delivery work, and I knew Talking to Terrorists and Robin Soans’ work, A State Affair, so I knew all that history of the various different kinds of verbatim.

170 Interview with Suzanne Bell, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, April 2008.
with a national resonance”.\textsuperscript{171} Esther Wilson, a writer with whom the Everyman had had a relationship since 2001, had recently interviewed a prostitute on a witness protection programme, with the idea of developing their conversation into piece of radio drama. This theme was chosen, but modified to the immediate concerns of Liverpool and the possible introduction of the managed zone, which Bell states specifically “seemed to touch a nerve with, and have connections with other things, like regeneration, and the Capital of Culture”.\textsuperscript{172}

Each writer, equipped with a dictaphone, was allocated an area of interest to research; Wilson, for example, made contact with the play’s primary informant, ‘Ali’, and Tony Green, via website Punernet (“TripAdvisor for brothels”)\textsuperscript{173} and classified advertising, men who use indoor and street sex workers. With its basis in the recorded utterance, Bell describes the project as “in the strictest sense of the word, ‘verbatim’”.\textsuperscript{174} As the writer-interviewers submitted their tapes, Bell undertook the laborious exercise of transcription with the assistance of a team of volunteers. With funding from the BBC, the writers produced a script for a rehearsed reading at Everyword, the Everyman’s new writing festival. The funding agreement gave the BBC first option to commission the play for radio, which it did;\textsuperscript{175} to develop the play further, it entered into a full commissioning agreement with each of the four writers who proceeded to the next stage of the project. Esther Wilson was nominated as lead writer. The full-length version of the play, produced from a thousand pages of transcription, staged three key

\textsuperscript{171} Interview with Esther Wilson, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, April 2008.
\textsuperscript{172} Interview with Suzanne Bell.
\textsuperscript{173} Interview with Suzanne Bell.
\textsuperscript{174} Interview with Suzanne Bell.
\textsuperscript{175} Unprotected was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 17 March 2006.
narratives, interspersed with complementary reflections from other figures: the stories, told by their mothers, of Hanane Parry and Pauline Stephen and the abusive events that led to their addictions to heroin which both serviced through street prostitution, and that of ‘Ali’, also addicted to heroin, whose work as a prostitute resulted in her exposure to a man who abducted her, raped her three times and attempted to kill her. The play was staged at the Everyman in March 2006, and at the Traverse as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, where I saw the play, in August 2006.

The byline on the flyer advertising the Edinburgh run reads “It could be anyone’s daughter… it could be any city”.176 A knowledge of the play reveals this to be a reference to its representation of heroin addiction as catalyst to prostitution, but superficially it implies female subjectivity as fundamentally precarious; furthermore, it suggests the local specificities of its story to be geographically transferable. Its rubric firmly locates its representations in the real, and denies both the interview processes and the theatre as mediating apparatuses:

Four writers researched all viewpoints, in what is now a national debate for cities including Edinburgh; allowing the real people involved to speak for themselves. This courageous and vital piece of theatre seeks to find the humanity in all these experiences, turning headlines into human stories.177

This promotional narrative is anti-theatrical; the material site of the transformation it describes is the theatre. Through the positioning of bland,

---

176 A5 flyer, Unprotected, Traverse Theatre, August 2006.
177 A5 flyer, Unprotected.
generic office furniture, Unprotected's stage is divided into four rough quadrants. A square office table and two chairs sits in each corner of the stage, each bearing various objects (an urn, a photograph on a tray, a polystyrene cup containing plastic spoons, a box of tissues); at the centre of this onstage formation is a plant, also surrounded by four plastic chairs, and before this, downstage centre, a round table also bearing a plant. At the back of the stage is a slightly raised, thin platform, immediately above which is a neutral backdrop, and before this, directly behind one of the four tables, a bench, such as you might find in a public park, divided into seats. The effect, viewed from the raked seating of the Traverse, is of gazing into a dreary public sector waiting room, the anomalous bench barely registering at the beginning of the performance. The play's action opens here, at 'The Drop In'; in Unprotected's introductory scene, 'Ali' enters and engages in casual banter with outreach worker 'Colin', a discourse which establishes the healthcare function of the service (and by extension, the play's didactic function in communicating to audiences the support available to street sex workers), and the recent death of a fellow sex worker which obliquely frames the play's action:

    ALI  (inspecting candles, chocs, etc) Oh, is all this for -
    ANDY Yeah. Wanna light a candle for her?
    ALI  Fuckin' ell! Gis' a minute.\(^{178}\)

This conversation - which puts a distance between the play and any sense that we will see a sentimental camaraderie or idealistic evangelism on behalf of

women working as sex workers - establishes a theatrical ‘fourth wall’ which it quickly proceeds to interrupt.

**ANDY (gesturing to audience)** Have you heard about the project that these’re doing?

**ALI** *(in a mock St Helens accent)* No.

**ANDY** Are you taking the piss out of my accent?

**ALI** *(in the same voice)* No love.

**ANDY** Are yer interested?

**ALI** No.

**ANDY (laughing)** I didn’t think ye would be.

**ALI** *(in her own voice now)* What is it love?

**ANDY** If I talk scouse will you talk to me?

**ALI** Yeh. Go ‘head. Alright then.

**ANDY** They’re doing a project about managed zones.

**ALI** Yeh? So what happens?

**ANDY** Well they’re gonna get actors and actresses to portray your words.

**ALI** And what do we get, like?

**ANDY** Goody bags, what they brought today.

**ALI** *(inspecting the pile of stuff)* Three lippy bits and a bracelet? That’s crap! *(Coming forward.)* My face isn’t going to be on that is it? It’s just using the voices, isn’t it? Okay. That’s cool. Alright. Cool. Cool.

**(Speaking to audience)**

I don’t think that a managed zone’s any good because alright, it’s legal in Amsterdam, but people are on holiday there, they’re home here, de ye know what I mean? Like if anyone got murdered, say if they wanna vehicle recognition – registration and all that –
people getting letters through the door. Now I wouldn’t want that
if I was a family man, de ye know what I mean? 179

‘Ali’s public confirmation of consent to participate and this first instance of
interview material marks the transition from a mode of realism, which opens
both of the play’s two acts, to the familiar monologic mode of verbatim
dramatization, addressed to a spectral interviewer elsewhere, even as the
audience is understood to function as its stand-in. It also marks the production’s
approach to generating the authenticity in representation crucial to its political
agenda of ‘giving a voice’ to its subjects. The first thing to note is the play’s
essential legitimization of the individual and the individualized voice as
communicative source. A fundamental category of liberalism, as one academic
ethnographer writes, ”the fetish of individualism creates its ironic counterpart:
the individual as the source of data may not be revealed”. 180 The same is the case
here, but the words of the anonymised subject are to be performed by an actor.
The veracity of the words is corroborated in performance through realist visual
and aural signification associated with character. ‘Ali’, who appears without
makeup and with her hair roughly scraped into a ponytail, wears a thin jersey
top, tracksuit bottoms and a grubby pale blue coat with a fur-trimmed hood, a
tiny trail of dried blood visible on her shin. Leanne Best, the actor who portrays
her – and the only actor in the company of six who does not double as another
character - was selected in specific consultation with Wilson during casting for
the play in London. For the writer, herself born and bred in Liverpool, Best “set

179 Unprotected, p. 2.
180 Will C. Van Den Hoonaard, ‘Is Anonymity an Artifact in Ethnographic
a benchmark because her rhythm was so correct, because she knew those people, because she comes from this city. She’s known those people, she’s met those people, so she has the same energy as those people. She made us cry.”.181 And, as in the passage above, the fictional text likewise dramatizes distinctions of speech which index a person’s background and which therefore enable or inhibit communication, a feature of the verbatim theatre-making process to which Paget’s interviewees drew attention. The aim here is not to avoid patronising the audience in quite the same way, but to produce a credible performance. Wilson:

I said to Nina, ‘if the cast isn’t right this play’s dead’. Because they’re very harsh in this city, and they have this phrase called ‘jarg’ – ‘yarg’ – ‘it’s jarg’, it’s false, it’s false. And I’ve been in the theatre here, and you get someone with an Aveline accent out of Bread182 and it sounds awful, and you just go no no no no, you know, that’s the one you focus on.183

But the person who grants consent for the use of the non-fictional speech, whom the production frames as categorically authentic, is not the ‘real’ ‘Ali’, but her fictional counterpart. This representational peculiarity – like that of Cllr. Clucas publicly disclosing her participation in the drama, but not granting consent to appear as ‘herself’ – implicitly points towards an understanding of the productive powers of rhetoric, even as the play insists on its obverse, ‘authenticity’.

181 Interview with Esther Wilson.
182 Bread (1986-1991) was a BBC sitcom about the lives of the impoverished Boswell family living together in the district of Dingle in Liverpool. Aveline was the only sister among the five grown-up siblings.
183 Interview with Esther Wilson.
As the ‘verbatim’ sections begin, the ceiling-to-floor backdrop at the rear of the stage becomes a surface for real time video projection. The theatre space makes a transition from a closed room into which audience members gaze voyeuristically, a voyeurism interrupted by the outreach worker’s acknowledgement of our presence and our interpellation into the structure of the play’s production, to a porous site in which the action emerging on the stage becomes temporally coincident with events elsewhere, the outside not simply brought within but framed as co-extensive with the conversations staged in the theatrical space. As the mothers talk, seated in the quadrants of the stage to which their characters have been assigned, video footage, taken from a distance, displays cars driving around a green. One refers to the release of a man from jail; as she does so, an anonymous man, unacknowledged by anyone on the stage, strolls past before us on the screen. The production ironically contrasts the sense of the banal which the projections build incrementally during the performance with the extremity of the violent acts - as well as resilience and humour - which the performers’ speech describes. However, its presentation of visual information does not show consistent fidelity to the real time conceit, but strategically shows different locations, serving, ambiguously and inconsistently, to orient and locate audience members. When the ‘punters’ appear, the projection shifts to the interior of a car moving down a road, the night-time exterior of the street visible through the windshield, placing the audience in the position of kerb-crawler. A view of Liverpool’s grey governmental buildings from above inaugurates the politician’s contribution; it gradually zooms in more closely, both endowing the audience with a God’s eye perspective and disclosing a rhetorical intent to represent the administrative process as solid, immoveable, immense.
If these representations emphasize chance, violent incident in a world of multiple coincident spaces and events, in the process imaginatively dissolving the effective boundaries of this particular theatre, the play’s treatment of language reinstates representational order. The script picks a journey through the reflections its various subjects (local residents, drugs workers, other sex workers) offered in the one-to-one interviews, occasionally staging thematic links or ironic juxtapositions, and sometimes introducing direct speech between characters:

ALI There’s this Derek – this is a sergeant in St Anthony’s, pulls up in a van, ‘Get in Cows. I’m herding up the cows. Get in’.

KEVIN I mean it’s happened, of course it’s happened, it’s always going to happen ‘cause there’s rogue police officers.

ALI The total lack of respect off police officers where... (Addresses KEVIN directly.) ‘Listen, he’s just raped me’... ‘You’re a prostitute, how could he rape you’... ‘It was a business arrangement. I said no. No means no.’

In the process of production the writers made strategic omissions in the interests of the play’s argument. The police officer continues:

KEVIN I’ve found... there’s situations throughout my career that you cry... you’ve gotta, you’ve gotta go... I mean, people react differently of course, but, you go into, you’ve gotta go into a room on your own sometimes, some of the things you see... you’ve gotta go into a room on your own...”

---

185 Unprotected, p. 27.
As Suzanne Bell and Esther Wilson discussed in our interview, the ‘real-life’ police officer was in fact discussing the Jamie Bulger case:

SB And there was stuff as well that we couldn’t have, because it would have hijacked the play – like the policeman, when he says ‘sometimes you go in a room and you cry, you have to cry’, in the interview he’s talking about finding the body of Jamie Bulger. Because he was the policeman who discovered it on the train tracks. But you couldn’t have that because people would have gone suddenly ‘whoa, this play’s about something else’.

EW And also, whether we like it or not morally, people, particularly in this city, will go ‘death of a small child, terrible; death of a prostitute, not so terrible’. They would, wouldn’t they. They’d make a decision and switch off.186

The staging of action in relation to speech constructs communicative relations between characters who, as part of the play’s process, did not meet. ‘Brian’, the character who regularly uses street sex workers:

BRIAN I’ve been for a meal with Debbie, taken her for a meal and that. She is, she’s spot on, she’s a diamond. Debbie’s on the gear, but she’s not on the street no more. She works off the phone. It’s only Debbie I have unprotected with.187

As he voices the word ‘unprotected’, the other two characters in the space, the businessman and parlour-goer ‘Stephen’, and sex worker ‘Ali’, turn their heads and fix ‘Brian’ with a look. The effect of this device, used more than once during the play – and it should be reiterated that the work in performance tends to assign specific portions of the stage to characters, the only character able to roam

186 Interview with Suzanne Bell and Esther Wilson, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, April 2008.
about freely being the sex worker ‘Ali’ - is to imply the characters’ occupancy of a
universe of shared discourse in which communication is transparent and
borderless, lacking antagonism between discourses which the representational
apparatus of the theatre might make apparent.

As the play reaches a conclusion, the actors playing ‘Diane’ and ‘Pat’, the
mothers of Hanane Parry and Pauline Stephen, render emotionally charged
accounts of the brutality of the women’s murders, quickly followed by what
appears in the playtext as an ‘epilogue’. The police officer ‘Kevin’ reads from the
text of two official statements about the deaths of the women and that of Anne
Marie Foy, which, in a final dramaturgical iteration of the distinction between
‘statistic’ and ‘story’ – the distinction which substitutes for a clash between
political discourses - segues into the recording of Anne Marie Foy’s voice, taken in 2005.

ANNE ‘You’re never safe. Ye know out there, ye – it’s – it’s – it is – like
MARIEevery every car you get into ye don’t know whether ye gonna get (VO)
out of it. It’s it’s dangerous all the time, ye don’t realize how
dangerous. And me of all people do realize ’cos I have been in
situations where I’ve nearly died.

(A projection shows the dates of ANNE MARIE’S life. ALI comes
forward.)

ALI It could be anyone’s daughter, I know but... people don’t see it
like that. You’re just dirt to them. (Pause.) My dad said... he
never mentioned it until he was dying... he said... ‘Listen, I’ve
never spoke to you about it but... you never changed in my eyes’.
That’s all I needed to hear from him, do you know what I mean?
It killed me, but I really needed to hear it from him.

(Lights fade.)

188 Unprotected, p. 67.
Although rhetorically it frames an absolute distinction between measurable fact and authentic individual experience, from beginning to end the play engages multiple constructions of risk and uncertainty in relation to the sex worker in which both are imbricated – the rational actor who ‘knows the risks’ in juxtaposition to the aleatory question ‘it could be me’; the edgework\textsuperscript{189} of male clients gambling with unprotected sex, itself a concept epidemiologically produced in relation to statistical measurables; the interface between police targets and an ideological, misogynist assignation of blame. The play does not question the discursive basis of the violent acts it catalogues in compelling detail, demonstrated in its concluding gestures – the archived utterance played back to evidence the play’s argument about the fundamental insecurity of the sex worker, and the final approbation of a father figure. But the emotional force of the production’s well-crafted representations is strong: like many other fellow audience members, by the end of the performance I watched, having heard story after story of desperation and violence, and, despite my scepticism regarding the availability of communicative transparency upon which the play insists, and the politics of verbatim theatre in a wider sense (reinforced by the performance’s final symbolic capitulation to patriarchy), I was crying.

I have been arguing that the street sex worker, plying a trade in public, makes visible a moral contradiction internal to patriarchal discourse: its logic dictates

\textsuperscript{189} ‘Edgework’, as Deborah Lupton (1999, pp. 155-157) is a term Hunter S. Thompson used in relation to the hedonism he reported in \textit{Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas} (1973) and taken up by sociologist Stephen Lyng in 1990 to theorize voluntary acts of risk-taking. A subsequent edited collection examines and historicizes ‘edge-work’ as functional to the ‘risk society’.
that she must be punished. This punishment takes the form of police brutality, unequal treatment before the law and routine stigmatization by members of the public. Under the conditions of neoliberal political economy, which facilitates increasing liberalization of the regulations governing the corporate indoor sex trade, the regulation of the street sex trade becomes more punitive. As the anecdote told in relation to the protests in Balsall Heath demonstrates, the job of street sex work and the subject performing the work accordingly collapse into one another. The woman’s identity as ‘sex worker’ takes precedence over the paradigmatically ‘normal’ identities of mother or consumer, performed in public space, to their exclusion, resulting in her continual harassment. In aesthetic terms, the woman is the object of performative, realist representation. Mobilising a specific form of aesthetic realism based on the archived utterance to campaign on behalf of its subjects, I understand the terms of Unprotected’s strategy to be counterproductive if not impossible.

The distraught response from the women’s families on the night of one of the performances at the Everyman compellingly demonstrates the limits of verbatim theatre’s ‘efficacy’. The mothers represented in the play had been involved in the play’s development, had met the actors and watched the dress rehearsal. Their extended families, and the family of Anne Marie Foy had given their support and permission, but had not seen the play in rehearsal in advance of public performance at the Everyman in March 2006. In our conversation, Esther Wilson described the force of their distress on attending the play:
The actors had to stop the action. People just wailed. It was just awful. I’ve never experienced anything like it in my life. I suddenly thought ‘what have we done, what have we unleashed here’. One girl started to wail, another girl said ‘that’s my mum, that’s my mum’, and then people started – [X’s] son ran out and punched the wall. It was just awful. People were just wailing. The actors just stood on stage, just stopped for about five minutes and then continued. They were choked.\textsuperscript{191}

If the street sex worker makes the moral contradiction internal to the production of a ‘safe’, ‘secure’ space for consumption visible, and perhaps, for verbatim theatre – an aesthetic form which, I have been arguing, operates according to an archival logic, a logic which Derrida characterizes as “paternal and patriarchic”\textsuperscript{192} - the response of the dead women’s families is analogous. The aim of the play, to make their stories public (“the human heart around which the political debate moved”)\textsuperscript{193} deploys a form of realist representation which cannot accommodate an idea of discourse implicated and performed in and through multiple “valuing communities”.\textsuperscript{194} The families’ distress causes the flow of information from the stage to stop. It gives the lie to verbatim theatre as unproblematically ‘transparent’ and demonstrates, as Derrida writes, that

the structure of the archive is spectral. It is spectral \textit{a priori}: neither present nor absent ‘in the flesh’, neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met.\textsuperscript{195}

\textsuperscript{190} Wilson withdrew this person’s name from the interview transcript.
\textsuperscript{191} Interview with Esther Wilson.
\textsuperscript{192} Jacques Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{193} Unprotected, p. ii.
\textsuperscript{195} Jacques Derrida, ‘Archive Fever’, p. 54.
The actors, re-animating such traces in performance, face audience members in grief for ‘another whose eyes can never be met’. Their outpouring of grief interrupts both performance and the decorum of the theatrical encounter - giving rise to the question of the constitution of the audience which the verbatim work, in a methodological, institutional sense, imagined. This is a problematic which a short section in a chapter of Deirdre Heddon’s Autobiography and Performance dramatises, the only piece of academic critique (at the time of writing) published on Unprotected:

Hearing Foy’s voice, having just learnt of her death, is shocking, particularly given her prophetic vision. As stressed throughout this book, this appeal to the real is precisely the powerful potential of auto/biographical performance; but this close proximity to the real also encourages a realist mode of representation (including the recordings, videos and photographs) which risks masking mediation and construction. Though the real voice may be heard, or the real photo projected, the image may nevertheless be the playwright’s (and surely the fact that these plays carry playwrights’ signatures is clear evidence of this). Also, what agency does Anne Marie Foy have here? Is she used, even in death, for emotional effect and impact? (my emphasis)\(^\text{196}\)

The distress Wilson described demonstrates the limits of any such claim to intellectual property ownership and likewise the limits of liberal critique, which fails to recognize audience members’ different historical and subjective relations to a work and seems interested in production (construction) only insofar as it relates to processes of aesthetic self-making; the assumption that underwrites this critique is the ‘agency’ of the sovereign subject. This obscures the status of value as, in the last instance, a social relation. To refer again to Rebecca Schneider,

\(^{196}\) Deirdre Heddon, p. 133.
it is not *presence* that appears in performance but precisely the missed encounter – the reverberations of the overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten. Taken from this perspective, performance does not disappear though its remains are immaterial – the set of acts and spectral meanings which haunt material in constant collective interaction, in constellation [...] performances-as-remains are suited to psychoanalytic analyses of traumatic repetition, to Althusserian analyses of the ritual tracks of ideology, and to Austinian analyses of enunciation, or citationality: repetitive *act*.197

197 Rebecca Schneider, p. 104.
Conclusion

I have suggested that verbatim theatre, a fashionable theatrical methodology, represented for the Everyman an opportunity to align itself with fellow theatre institutions to produce reputation capital. *Unprotected* engaged the kinds of complex repetition to which Rebecca Schneider refers, but was framed by the institution and its supporters in a definitively entrepreneurial rhetorical register. Liverpool Culture Company funded the play to tour to the Traverse Theatre at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the first play ever to be staged by the Everyman and Playhouse at the festival. Robyn Archer, then director of Liverpool Culture Company reported this as evidence of the Capital of Culture’s snowballing success, speculating that “more and more productions will be exported out of the city as the success grows”.198 In a *Daily Post* article, vigorously headlined ‘Liverpool artists stage an invasion of Edinburgh’, Deborah Aydon reflected that they felt “Edinburgh was perfect as it would provide a shop window for us… It’s not only critics but producers, directors and theatre owners who come here”.199 At the festival, the play won the Amnesty Award for Freedom of Speech; Nina Raine was named Best Director at the 2006 TMA Awards. And the play continues to represent an opportunity for this form of value production. On the New Writing section of the Everyman’s website, a quotation prominently appears from critic Susannah Clapp’s review in *The Observer*:

---

198 Sam Lister, ‘We’re well on course: Sam Lister speaks to Robyn Archer, who is in charge of Capital of Culture year – and who is delighted by the talent of local people’. *Liverpool Daily Post*, 8 May 2006, p. 6.
The Everyman in Liverpool is living up to its name. Thanks to a new play, it is doing what theatres all over the country dream of: pulling in scores of first time theatre goers alongside loyal subscribers… blazes with energetic intelligence… this will change people’s hearts and minds in unexpected ways
(The Observer on Unprotected)\textsuperscript{200}

This narrative of simultaneously commercial and ‘communal’ ‘inclusion’ is where I would like to conclude the chapter, by arguing, after Esther Wilson, for the productive aspects of theatre attendance not in the future, but in the there and then. As part of the run, the Everyman invited sex workers and support workers as guests to a performance of the play. In our discussion Wilson described the Everyman bistro bustling with unlikely customers, to the scene in the theatre:

That night you’d get these people sat in the theatre eating chips, and when Paul - who played the policeman - would come on, they’d shout out ‘fucking liar, I know him, he’s a bizzie, that’s not true!’ And they were bantering with the actors, or they’d boo him, booing him off, because he was a bizzie, or one of the girls would mention a punter - ‘I’ve had him! I’ve had him!’ And I’m thinking ‘go on, shut up’. But you know there was this human interaction of… It’s not a celebration. Because it’s not a celebratory thing, what those women have to do. It was an affirmation of their existence. And what I said was I never - you don’t want to change the world practically, you just want to tell a story. And some people will engage with it, and some people won’t. That’s all.\textsuperscript{201}

I began this chapter by referring to the sex worker as a figure whose occupation renders her life precarious; the feminized ‘excluded exclusion’ critical to the

\textsuperscript{200}Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres – New Writing. \<http://www.everymanplayhouse.com/new-writing/index.asp> \[accessed February 2009]\textsuperscript{201} Interview with Esther Wilson.
systemic maintenance of liberal democracy. Here, the working women enjoy the theatre as a space of leisure. This passage represents acts of seeing and being seen, not only disrupting the orderliness of behavioural convention in the theatre, but interrupting the emptiness and non-specificity of the ‘verbatim’ gaze into the audience. The women’s act of talking back to the performance, which ostensibly stages acts of speech directly to its audience, discloses its ‘authenticity’ to be a fetish. Though it is as well not to romanticise the past, the moment Wilson describes harbours something of Peter Cheeseman’s ambition for the New Victoria in Stoke: to make of the theatre not a machine for producing value which is yet to come, but a site “to reflect, consider and celebrate the present”\textsuperscript{202} and the co-presence which that entails.

\textsuperscript{202} Peter Cheeseman, p. 77.
CHAPTER 4
Enterprising subjects: La Ribot’s 40 espontaneos

Introduction

The final chapter of the thesis moves its analytical focus from the spectator to the performer. It examines the manifestation in dance performance on public stages of a figure closely associated with the ideological work of all of the practices I have discussed so far: the entrepreneur. This figure, as Pat O’Malley demonstrates in close genealogical detail, is the primary character in liberalism’s economic ‘drama’. Restricted in nineteenth century liberal thought to a small number of individuals of sufficient strength of character, thrift and sharpness of judgement to successfully capitalise on the ‘spirit of enterprise’, neoliberal governmentality has recalibrated the entrepreneur’s cultural significance and function. The epoch of the welfare state and the planned economy was an historical phase during which the entrepreneur ceded from view as a governmental concept. Neoliberalism has revived entrepreneurialism, and institutionalised it as a practice in which all citizens should engage. This discursive move entails a reconstitution of subjective action in relation to uncertainty. Neoliberalism rejects the welfare state’s prioritisation of a calculative rationality that attempts to create certainty through a combination of science, statistics and bureaucracy. By taming uncertainty, government would tame the future, achieve stability and efficiency and thereby maximise freedom for all. From the standpoint of

---

its protagonists, this rationality was and still is an immensely optimistic project. Set against it, however, is a governmental rationality that regarded it – and still regards it – as immensely conservative, counterproductive and anti-democratic. For its present day neoliberal opponents, uncertainty is a creative force. Through the charismatic figure of the entrepreneur, the risk-taker, neoliberals supplant ‘rigid’ calculative knowledges with an agentive subject that valorises flexibility, imagination, inspiration, acuity and inventiveness.\(^2\)

Thus, O’Malley confirms, “the uncertain world of competition is once again the ideal and the figure of the entrepreneur is once again its hero; but now the entrepreneur has to be all of us”.\(^3\)

The enterprising subject and the dynamic of enterprise both manifest in the historical development of a series of related artistic practices – community dance, post-modern and experimental dance and live art - which collide in the final case study of the thesis, La Ribot’s 40 espontaneos (2004-2007). Spanish live artist La Ribot began to devise 40 espontaneos towards the end of the time she spent living in London, attracted by the burgeoning scene of live art whose interdisciplinary and experimental principles coincided with her interests as a solo artist. 40 espontaneos dramatised one of La Ribot’s long-term interests: the bullfight, and the unexpected intervention of the espontaneo, “the person who jumps into the bullring and steals the show from the bullfighter”.\(^4\) This action embodies La Ribot’s enduring fascination with the constitution of the ‘live’ moment and the uncertain interplay, in performance, between instinctual, spontaneous action and the rational exercise of planning. Responding to a question in an interview

\(^{2}\) O’Malley, p. 59.
\(^{3}\) O’Malley, p. 57.
published in *frakcija* (staged before the process of making *40 espontaneos* began)

about the importance of spontaneity for her practice in a general sense, she commented

> I have looked in the Spanish dictionary and *espontaneo* means: 1 – on its own impulse, 2 – unpremeditated human action, 3 – the person who jumps into a *corrida*. I like the third definition. I believe the *espontaneo*, the person who jumps in the bull fight has been thinking about doing this for years. He could have been planning every single movement, but the reality will surely surprise him. The bull, ‘la plaza’, the people, that’s why theoretically I love *corridas*. It is the best performance plan ever and the most spontaneous one at the same time. Spontaneity is inside any live performance at some level. It depends how much you appreciate the present, how much you can work with the present.\(^5\)

The successful capitalisation on the spontaneity which is paradoxically intrinsic to the ‘live’ depends on the skill of the artist to ‘work with’ the labile time of the present – in other words, the reflexive action of the dynamic, ‘agentive’, entrepreneurial subject.

*40 espontaneos*, however, did not simply address ‘liveness’ or ‘the present’ as performative dynamics – which, I will argue, all her works to some degree test - but utilised the figure of ‘the person who jumps into the *corrida*’ as a narrative resource. As the publicity rubric for *40 espontaneos*’ performances in Britain in 2005 and 2006 read,

> Choreographer/artist La Ribot combines her fascination with the dynamic of film-extras who throw themselves into the battle and *el espontaneos*, the spectators who unexpectedly jump into the ring after the

bullfight and steal the show from the bullfighter, to create a ‘raw’ and sometimes dangerous performance.⁶

The people performing as espontaneos, driven (according to the project’s narrative) “by passion and a hunger for fame”? were large groups of people (to a maximum of 40) who had never performed in public before. 40 espontaneos’ short ‘manifestations’ (on average, a run of two or three performances) would each follow the same ‘performance plan’ which La Ribot devised in collaboration with other performance makers in a series of residencies and workshops in various dance institutions internationally. Giving the performers freedom to roam the stage, 40 espontaneos did not require the performers to learn steps as such, but to memorise its structure, the actions necessary to generate the structure and the rules governing the actions, thus performing the reciprocity between the spontaneous and the planned. Each company learned 40 espontaneos’ choreography in a rehearsal period of no more than five or six evenings. By the time the piece was produced in Britain in 2005, it carried the additional stipulation that all the performers involved should be over 40 years of age. An unusual hybrid of experimental dance, live art and community dance, 40 espontaneos would “explore simultaneously within the performance how (i) rules are created then transgressed and (ii) the nature of risk”.⁸

40 espontaneos’ model thus frames ‘rules’, ‘risk’ and ‘reward’ as mutually defining. It suggests that the ‘reality’ of action, typified by the espontaneo’s dash

---

⁶ La Ribot, 40 espontaneos leaflet, UK (2005-6).
⁷ La Ribot website.
⁸ La Ribot (36 Gazelles) Grants for the Arts Proposal [received via email from Artsadmin, August 2006]
into the bullring, is where ‘risk’ might be found and explored in performance. La Ribot describes this as “the transgression of jumping into a place that’s not yours”. Pursuing glory by risking death, the espontaneo makes an illicit appearance in a ‘real’ space of performance in which audience, performers and event meet in ‘real’ time; a spectacle of a ‘real’, uninvited body choosing autonomously to enter a domain off limits. In other words, the espontaneo ventures into new territory, bearing all the risk that action entails, an action analogous to that of the entrepreneur. This is a figure who, in Peter Drucker’s words, “always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity” (original emphasis). But in practice 40 espontaneos did not dramatise individualised heroics. Each ‘manifestation’ of 40 espontaneos - a term which, unlike production or presentation, suggests a sense of spontaneous uprising – was performed by a company, recruited in each of the twenty cities across Europe and Brazil in which the project was made between 2004 and 2007. I suggest that the conceptual paradox the piece represents – for the piece did not stage the action of a single body and the espontaneos did not rise up spontaneously – metaphorises and enacts the way in which institutions under neoliberalism frame subjects as bearers of their own risk.

My discussion explores the consequences of this institutional turn in terms of the artist-entrepreneur, whose livelihood consists in the ‘immaterial’ labour of meaning production. As a practising solo artist La Ribot represents such a figure.

Gabriele Klein avers that

the knowledge society’s new ‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault) have long been an everyday experience for dancers; the neo-liberal model of providing and being responsible for oneself is practised daily in the world of dance. It is thus that the figure of the flexible, footloose, wandering subject, living by his/her wits found its prototype in the ‘freelance artist’ back at the dawn of modernity. However, in contrast to other artistic disciplines, the dancer’s artistic existence seldom lasts a lifetime. Once they are in their mid-30s, many dancers know that their artistic experience is coming to an end and that they will go on to practice one or more further professions.¹¹

The title of Dance UK’s ‘health and wellbeing’ handbook, Your Body, Your Risk (2001) consolidates this understanding of the body as site of value production to be carefully maintained. But La Ribot’s practice not only draws on the body as resource. It places a challenge to disciplinary security, which the London-based Live Art Development Agency’s director Lois Keidan describes as the staging of “choreographic enquiries...that test the tensions and borders between dance, performance and visual art”.¹² Keidan frames live art in more general terms as ‘risky’ with language that is explicitly entrepreneurial. Live art is an artistic practice which intends “to open up new artistic models, new languages for the representation of ideas, new ways of activating audiences and new strategies for intervening in public life”;¹³ it operates “in the cracks in our culture, in the kinds of places synonymous with the innovation, risk and dissent inherent in radical

¹² Lois Keidan, ‘This Must be the Place: Thoughts on Place, Placelessness and Live Art since the 1980s’, in Performance and Place, ed. by Leslie Hill and Helen Paris (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2006) pp. 8-16 (p. 9).
¹³ Keidan, p. 9.
ideas”;¹⁴ it is a movement which “privileges artists who choose to operate across, in between, and at the edges of more conventional artistic forms”.¹⁵ The artist pursuing such a practice is a vulnerable figure, and the disciplinary term “live art” and the Live Art Development Agency itself have emerged specifically to protect such interests: “a cultural strategy to include processes and practices that might otherwise be excluded from more established curatorial, cultural and critical discourses”.¹⁶

If live art is a late twentieth and early twenty-first century practice of destabilising received cultural wisdom and entrepreneurially seeking out the new, it is historically comparable in Britain with both post-modern dance, to which live art readily aligns itself, and community dance – superficially, a more uneasy comparator. Nonetheless, all bear the marks of an entrepreneurial practice. In the 1960s, as Judson Church, the celebrated hub of post-modern choreographic experimentation continued to flourish in New York, The Place – home of the London School of Contemporary Dance and London Contemporary Dance Theatre from 1969 onwards - germinated an avant-garde alternative dance scene in London¹⁷ which came to be christened retrospectively as ‘New Dance’ with the publication of its first magazine in 1977. The magazine appeared not long after the opening of X6 in 1976, a space for performance and home of a

¹⁶ Keidan, p. 9.
dance collective named after its location, Block X, Floor 6 of a disused warehouse in Butler’s Wharf.\textsuperscript{18} New Dance’s practitioners’ flight from choreographic convention prompted their continuing and precarious search for alternative sites for practice, responding pragmatically to opportunity; on the closure of X6 and the commercial redevelopment of Butler’s Wharf in 1980, Chisenhale Dance Space was established, converted from another ex-industrial space, a warehouse in Bethnal Green. Opposed to classical dance’s industrially regimented pursuit of profit through the display of motile ‘excellence’, the philosophy of artists like Lloyd Newson, Julyen Hamilton and Laurie Booth - “prospectors for dance gold”\textsuperscript{19} - was “strongly democratic maintaining that everyone had a right to try and to fail”\textsuperscript{20} (a ‘gold’ perhaps therefore more alchemical in formation than the fixed ‘gold standard’ of classical practice). In 1986, Fergus Early – the Royal Ballet-trained artistic director of Green Candle,\textsuperscript{21} a community dance company he founded in 1987 – delineated New Dance’s inclusive ethic, with echoes of Yvonne Rainer’s ‘No to Spectacle’ (1965),\textsuperscript{22} at a symposium at Chisenhale:

New Dance is not:

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] Brinson, p. 30.
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] Brinson, p. 30.
\item[\textsuperscript{22}] Rainer (1965, p. 178): “NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe no to the glamour and transcendency of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved”.
\end{itemize}
baggy trousers, rolling about, chinese shoes, contact improvisation, ballet to rock music, release work, image work, outside performances, postmodern dance, martial arts, self-indulgence, American, non-narrative...

New Dance does not exclude:
formal choreography, tap, ballet class, baggy trousers, rolling about, chinese shoes, jazz shoes, no shoes, army boots, self-indulgence, contact improvisation, rock music, virtuosity, stillness, narrative…
 […]
The one and only essential concept to New Dance is liberation.23

With liberation likewise as its political principle, Peter Brinson, a passionate advocate of all forms of dance - and a figure whom Chris Thomson insists “almost single-handedly created and promulgated the term ‘community dance’”24 – suggested community dance to be a movement of which “in a way, New Dance was a part”.25 In common with avant-garde and post-modern dance forms, the community dance movement which emerged in the 1970s sought to challenge and disrupt aesthetic limits by asserting movement as a political practice, and the consequent viability and necessity of dance making beyond rarefied theatre spaces catering to the classical tastes of the economic elite. (To offer an index of cultural priorities in the early 1970s, in England, only 4% of the Arts Council’s grant-in-aid was allocated to dance, and of that, 86% went to support ballet companies and ballet schools.)26 Community dance practitioners, termed ‘animateurs’, performed pioneering incursion into areas where people lived and were educated, in particular those “populations generally not touched

---

25 Brinson, p. 31.
by theatrical dance or dance education systems, or unable to participate in those areas”.

Despite the movement’s resistance to the commoditisation of dance as form, its ‘founding’ logic was intriguingly entrepreneurial, the figure of the ‘animateur’, for example, expressly invoking an action of breathing metaphoric life into the unused or inoperative. This action was predicated on a humanist understanding of creativity as innate and universal but constrained by exposure to the dehumanising routines and hierarchies of industrial capitalism; ‘creativity’ would be accessed and actualised through supportive and appropriate dance education practice. In 1976 three animateur posts were created in Cardiff, Swindon and Cheshire, funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation and local authorities; the Cheshire post, a residency in a comprehensive school, acted as the seed for the establishment of dance agency Cheshire Dance. By the mid-1980s around 35 animateurs were practising across the country with Arts Council support. Narrating the emergence of dance animateurs in Regular Marvels: a handbook for animateurs, practitioners and development workers in dance, mime, music and literature (1994) François Matarasso reminds his reader of the exigencies of Britain’s economic circumstances in the mid-1970s, and commends the way in which

---

27 Brinson, p. 107.
dance practitioners made a virtue of necessity, creating a way of working which was flexible, sensitive to different communities and, by developing partnerships, maximised resources. The animateur model, as defined by its pioneering practitioners, won respect on all sides and showed how a relatively small investment could provide a valuable link between artists and arts organisations, local authorities and the general public. And where there were no arts organisations – as in many rural areas – animateurs became a sort of human arts infrastructure, reaching places and people that others could not.\footnote{François Matarasso, Regular Marvels: a handbook for animateurs, practitioners and development workers in dance, mime, music and literature, (Leicester: Community Dance & Mime Foundation 1994), p. 11.}

Community dance continues to insist, simply, that irrespective of age, income, cultural background or physical capacity, everyone can and should be able to dance. Helen Poynor, an artist who trained with Anna Halprin and now director of the *Walk of Life* centre in Dorset thus insists that if we accept that any body is potentially a dancing body (and without this premise it is not possible to work in community dance), then we need also to accept that any movement has the potential to be a dance movement.\footnote{Helen Poynor, ‘Yes, But Is It Dance?’, in *An Introduction to Community Dance Practice*, ed. by Diane Amans (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2008), pp. 87-98 (p. 88).}

And its practitioners continue to seek to provide an experience of dance and critical thinking which models that of the professional artist:

an engagement with the art of dance, providing opportunities for ‘untrained’ people to experience the world as artists do and to have a critical engagement with their own dance and the dance of others. [...] to operate as professional artists do – with an artist’s questions, perspectives, intuitions, feelings and responses, to make sense of and create meaning in the world – is of itself a hopeful, empowering and
humanising activity for people to engage with – and by the way you get some good art.\footnote{Foundation for Community Dance, \textit{Mapping Community Dance: a research report for the Foundation for Community Dance}. (Leicester: Foundation for Community Dance 2001) p. 17.}

But during the 1990s and 2000s, community dance – now framed institutionally as a category embracing “all dance activities at every level but not professional dance performance”\footnote{Anthony Peppiatt, ‘What is a Framework and Why Does it Matter?’, in \textit{Thinking Aloud: In Search of a Framework for Community Dance}, ed. by Chris Jones (Leicester: Foundation for Community Dance 1996), pp. 2-3 (p. 3).} – came, and continues to be professionally aligned with ‘inclusion’ and the practice of community engagement. While its participants may not be pursuing a professional career in dance, the facilitators of community dance are. ‘Community’ refers to the promise of the practice: as Chris Thomson, director of Learning and Access at the Place writes, the production of “the experience of communitas, of solidarity and significance, in an immediate and grounded way”\footnote{Chris Thomson, ‘Foreword’, in \textit{An Introduction to Community Dance Practice}, ed. by Diane Amans (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2008), pp. ix-xi (p. xi).} Not simply a case of people associating through the pretext and experience of participation in dance, Thomson’s account represents caring ‘community’ as a valued outcome and attribute of “a body of professional practice that is increasingly admired and emulated by dancers and policymakers worldwide”.\footnote{Chris Thomson, p. x.} In 2004 DCMS described dance’s value to the inclusion agenda: it “can positively aid social cohesion; it is embraced by different cultural backgrounds and religions; it has no language barriers; it is generally not competitive and anyone can take part; it has positive effects on social behaviour; and, it can encourage people to express themselves through creative
experiences”. If in aesthetic terms, the ‘field’ of dance performance and what constitutes dance movement has expanded, in institutional terms in Britain, the professional status of bodies performing or facilitating dance movement has come to be more tightly defined. This chapter addresses the cognate themes of the body (re)conceived as capital, enterprise as spatially and institutionally situated action, and the frames of and practices for dance. It asks some historical questions of an ideology of enterprise as it relates to the appearance of the performing body on the stage; specifically, the artist-entrepreneur La Ribot herself and the espontaneos she recruited.

---

I: ‘Not dance’: La Ribot

La Ribot is the spectacular and ironic ‘diva’ stage name chosen by Maria Ribot, the internationally renowned Spanish live artist, dancer and choreographer. This section examines La Ribot’s identity as an artist and a selection of her performance works. I suggest that they conduct an ongoing inquiry into the status of representation and its relation to the economic predicament of the experimental solo artist, wagering the self – both object of consumption and site of production - in an uncertain market. La Ribot’s practice is distinctive: her classical dance training informs an experimental, interdisciplinary performance practice. Her contemporaries and sometime colleagues include figures such as Xavier Le Roy, Jérôme Bel, Jonathan Burrows, Vera Mantero, Felix Ruckert and Boris Charmatz who now also enjoy internationally iconic status within the scene of avant garde practice. André Lepecki, a prolific scholarly advocate of this “nameless”36 movement enumerates a series of characteristics their works have in common:

a distrust of representation, a suspicion of virtuosity as an end, the reduction of unessential props and scenic elements, an insistence on the dancer’s presence, a deep dialogue with the visual arts and with performance art, a politics informed by a critique of visuality, and a deep dialogue with performance theory. The most important element behind all these aspects would be: an absolute lack of interest in defining whether the work falls within the ontological, formal or ideological parameters of something called, or recognised as, ‘dance’.37

---

This aesthetic logic bears a clear relation to earlier post-modern forms of British
dance practice such as those to which I referred in the introduction to this
chapter, and the works of, for example, the Judson group which Nick Kaye
surveys in detail in *Postmodernism and Performance* (1994). But the work of La
Ribot and her colleagues bears the marks of a different historical moment. In
refusing disciplinary ‘domestication’ and insisting on the epidemiological,
reflexive and linguistic nature of choreography it typifies a performance practice
specific to the current phase of globalization. Their makers’ aesthetic and
industrial approach, roaming freely across artform and state boundaries to
produce performance, might appropriately be characterised as an
entrepreneurial search for new territories in performance - not uncoincidentally,
the title of one of the biggest live art festivals in Britain – and reflected, for
example, in Bel’s deliberate departure from the dance studio to create his
works.

My analysis of La Ribot’s performances takes its initial impetus from a blind spot
in Lepecki’s writing about the movement: the relation of its artists to dance and
performance art as industry. This is surprising, because his monograph
*Exhausting dance: performance and the politics of movement* (2006), a rich and
intricate analysis of the work of Bruce Nauman, Juan Dominguez (a regular
collaborator with La Ribot, and co-director of *40 espontaneos*), Xavier Le Roy,

38 Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
Available at <http://www.siobhandavies.com/relay/parallel-voices-
2007/events/not-conceptual.html> [accessed June 2007]
Jérôme Bel, Vera Mantero, Trisha Brown and La Ribot begins with a critique of elements of the industrial apparatus for producing and consuming dance performance. He juxtaposes the *New York Times* Ann Kisselgoff’s insistence that dance rightly consists in “‘flow or a continuum of movement’” with an account of the legal action that Raymond Whitehead, an attender of the 2002 International Dance Festival of Ireland unusually launched in regard to its presentation of Jérôme Bel’s *Jérôme Bel* (1995):

In a statement to the *Irish Times* of 8 July 2004, Mr Whitehead articulated a clear ontology of dance that was not at all dissimilar to Kisselgoff’s. According to the *Irish Times*: “There was nothing in the performance [he] would describe as dance, which he defined as ‘people moving rhythmically, jumping up and down, usually to music but not always’ and conveying some emotion. He was refused a refund.”

The artists featured in *Exhausting dance* refuse to capitulate to spectatorial desire for a display of unfettered movement - the “spectacle of flowing mobility” ideologically specific to modernity - and instead stage intellectually provocative critiques of its limits and exploitations. The extent to which critics in the press, denying the legitimacy of the works, perform “an ideological program of defining, fixing and reproducing what should be valued as dance and what should be excluded from its realm as futureless, insignificant or obscene” provides the political platform and conceptual frame for Lepecki’s text. But the industrial dimension of the festival’s refusal of Whitehead’s refund and the

---

41 André Lepecki, *Exhausting dance*, p. 2.
42 André Lepecki, *Exhausting dance*, p. 3
43 André Lepecki, *Exhausting dance*, p. 4
ensuing legal action pass without further remark; the text thus dispatches the
cognate question of the construction of audiences and their response to the works
beyond the position Lepecki himself articulates. Speaking at ‘Not Conceptual’, a
symposium held at the Siobhan Davies Dance Studios in London in 2007, Jérôme
Bel recounted that the bewildered audiences of his first piece Nom donné par
l’auteur (1994) simply got up and left, leaving the work playing to no-one.44 A
decade later, by contrast, notwithstanding Lepecki’s representation of the works’
marginality, Exhausting dance is itself a powerful index of the movement’s
acceptance and celebration in the academy which represents an important
market and curatorial resource. When Sadlers Wells programmed Nom donné par
l’auteur in 2008 as part of a retrospective of Bel’s works staged at the Lilian Baylis
Theatre, a substantial proportion of the audience for the sell-out event (which
included myself) consisted of academics and students.

As Bel affirms, the artists themselves are acutely conscious of this politics and
active in curatorial work, industrial lobbying and institutional networking.45 The
Manifesto for a European Performance Policy (2001), for example, was devised and
published following an artists’ symposium at Tanzquartier Wien in October 2001
which La Ribot organised with Jérôme Bel, Xavier Le Roy and Christophe
Wavelet. Its introductory rubric insists that “contemporary performance artists
are increasingly concerned with being able to decide on their means of
production independently. As citizens, they also actively take part in the process

44 ‘Not Conceptual’.
45 ‘Not Conceptual’. For example, La Ribot curated Performing ARCO with
Adrian Heathfield and José Esteban Muñoz, as part of ARCOmadrid_
of decisionmaking in terms of cultural policies”; the Manifesto itself, whose primary demand is an end to “the drive by cultural institutions and the art market alike to fix and categorise contemporary art practices” rehearse with extraordinarily direct and presumably strategic accuracy the policy priorities of neoliberal states and transnational organisations intent on producing enterprising subjects. Thus the Manifesto claims

Our practices are synonymous with funding priorities in terms of innovation, risk, hybridity, audience development, social inclusion, participation, new cultural discourses and cultural diversity, cultural difference. They offer new languages, articulate new forms of subjectivation and presentation to play with the cultural and social influences that inform us, to create new cultural landscapes. […] We consider the borders between disciplines, categories and nations to be fluid, dynamic and osmotic. We produce work that develops partnerships, networks and collaborations, disregards national borders and actively contributes to the local, European and transnational contexts.

And in terms of artists’ work in a specific sense:

We consider dialogue, thinking, research and making as equal constituents of our labour. These activities are not only the search engine for our art and related practices, but also for our societies, for our cultures. We are calling for innovative artistic structures, but also a new social status that would acknowledge new concepts of work that have altered the distinction between so-called ‘productive’ and ‘non-productive’ periods.

In other words, the Manifesto accepts neoliberal globalization as a fait accompli.

47 ‘Manifest für eine europäische Performance-Politik’.
48 ‘Manifest für eine europäische Performance-Politik’.
49 ‘Manifest für eine europäische Performance-Politik’.
with which, in many respects, its writers’ aesthetic interests harmonize; having
accepted this, the task at hand is to find non-punitive artistic (or better,
employment) structures for those artists who, like La Ribot, use daily life as
resource and who, unlike La Ribot, may not have the curatorial support of
producing organisations such as Artsadmin, the London-based producer of her
work. In his reference to the *Manifesto* in a 2004 article, Lepecki does not address
its political economic implications, citing only the fashionable trope of border-
crossing and the first two sentences of the passage above which collapse
scholarly, curatorial and artistic practice into one another and thus into the single
industrial role of the artist.\(^50\) Below, I examine some of the representational
moves La Ribot’s works make to present the case for their altogether more
complex treatment of the solo performance artist as an industrial figure.

(i) ‘Still distinguished’: La Ribot’s piezas distinguidas

La Ribot’s career in dance began, as she recounts in in Luc Peter’s documentary
film *La Ribot Distinguida* (2004), with a fascination with the Russian Romantic
ballet:

> One day, when I was a little girl, my mother took me to a Russian dance
> film, *Swan Lake*, I think, or *Sleeping Beauty*, and I cried, I cried desperately
> because I loved it so much. It was exactly what I wanted to do with the
> rest of my life. I was only a child, I was six, maybe eight years old, but... I
> thought I had to go and live in Moscow and I didn't want to... I never
danced, but when I was fourteen or something, I told my mother that I
> should get myself ready to leave for Moscow. I told her I wanted to be a

\(^{50}\) André Lepecki, ‘Concept and Presence’, p. 171
ballet dancer.\textsuperscript{51}

Having attended a local dancing school, in her early twenties La Ribot trained under the tuition of Rosella Hightower at a “traditional ballet school”\textsuperscript{52} in Cannes, and subsequently in Cologne, Paris and New York. In 1986, she set up artist collective Bocanada Danza with Blanca Calvo in Madrid to make choreographic works, but in the early 1990s her interests began to migrate towards more experimental forms. \textit{12 toneladas de plumas} (1991), a performance for three dancers and twenty ‘extras’ (La Ribot: “‘a terrible, bad piece’”\textsuperscript{53}) featured a section consisting of a comedic ‘striptease’ which she performed herself. This fragment, which she named thereafter \textit{Socorro! Gloria!} functioned as “‘the seed of distinguished pieces and the end for a while of working with people - or the beginning of working alone in the distinguished pieces’”\textsuperscript{54}.

Distinguished pieces - \textit{piezas distinguidas} - is La Ribot’s chosen name for her experimentations in performance as a solo artist over the following decade: humorous performative challenges to - or games played with - the disciplinary security of dance, visual art and performance.

\textit{Socorro! Gloria!} became the first piece in the first series, \textit{13 piezas distinguidas} (1993-94), which she presented as a single event. Performed in the black box of the ICA’s theatre space in 1995, \textit{Socorro! Gloria!} is itself an apt exemplar of their

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{La Ribot Distinguida: un film de Luc Peter}, dir. Luc Peter (Intermezzo Films 2004) [on DVD]  
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{La Ribot Distinguida}.  
\textsuperscript{54} André Lepecki, ‘Toppling’, p. 102.
playfulness: its game consists in the relation of the performer’s overstuffed, excessive and ridiculous outfit to her confidence to speak. Seated on a chair, a microphone standing adjacent, accompanied by a recording of a rousing concerto, La Ribot tugs nervously at her improbably pudgy garments, looking with consummate deadpan shyness towards the audience before her and, making a move to speak into the microphone, thinks better of it. Beginning almost involuntarily to discard layer after layer, she hesistantly ventures towards the microphone several times but fails to speak. This process, performed again and again, becomes more curious, silly even, as time elapses – at one moment, a pair of ballet shoes embedded between layers flaps to the ground – and she gains in assurance with every item she removes. Towards the piece’s end, she positively revels in the act of expertly peeling multiple silk stockings from the same leg; she finishes the act, one leg crossing the other, on her chair, by swiftly removing her hands from her by now naked breasts with a coy look to the audience before a blackout quickly plunges all into darkness. No words have been uttered, but its emphatic assertion of the relation between speech and movement, object and action – asking, in short, how a dancer, not ‘dancing’, is to articulate herself in public - marks the piece’s interdisciplinary character.

Over the course of the three series of distinguished pieces (13 Piezas Distinguidas (1993-94), Mas Distinguidas (1997) and Still Distinguished (2000)) and performed as Panoramix (2003) a three hour survey event of all thirty-four distinguished pieces in theatres and galleries in Madrid, Geneva, Brest and Paris, La Ribot’s preferred working environment shifted from the frontally oriented black box theatre whose limitations afforded certain opportunities for play with light and spatial depth, to
the less regimented environs of gallery spaces, enabling audiences to move at will and lending the works a sense of the ‘happening’ in performance. Each piece has a duration of between seven seconds and only a few minutes. They incorporate nakedness, everyday movement, throwaway props and cardboard into their action, their brevity and the disposability of the materials with which La Ribot performs frustrating whatever spectatorial desire there may be for plenitude and solidity. The method of the piezas’ devising, worked out in the studio, takes a characteristically interdisciplinary and also autobiographical form, both in terms of the source of the events represented in performance and the objects which feature – personal mementoes, clothes with sentimental value, objects with stories attached to them, mediations of events witnessed in the street. This information is not necessarily made apparent to audience members but deeply saturates the works – a mode of presentation which La Ribot (vol.1) (2004) a compendium of sketches, rehearsal notes, photographs, advertisements and fragments of photocopied text likewise rehearses. Without page numbers, the text discloses the source and meaning of each image via a series of complex footnotes at its end, requiring the interested reader to undertake a complicated recursive process of matching to make discoveries about the artist’s working methods and influences, modelling the work of search and detection intrinsic to the pieces in preparation and in performance.

José A. Sánchez historicizes these dramaturgical decisions in relation to cultural policy changes in Spain after 1993; following the post-Franco administration’s vast investment in a project of reclaiming cultural ‘heritage’ and national cultural institutions for the purpose, the government radically scaled back funds in the
early 1990s and aggressively asserted the desirability of an expansion in private sector sponsorship:  

the ‘great crisis’ of contemporary creation took place in Spain due to the end of cultural politics, which had marked the previous decade; and signalled the beginning of a period of regression, which forced artists to look for survival strategies, such as reducing their work to a much smaller format. Many were finally forced into exile. Turning her back on the conservative grandiloquence of institutions, La Ribot reacted pretty quickly to this hecatomb, and decided to be radical. If one had to impoverish the conditions of production, then she would go so far as nakedness; and if one had to reduce the format, she would go all the way imaginable.  

This ‘reduction’ of format demonstrates an acute consciousness of the relation between conditions of production and the way in which the performer’s body is to appear. Many of La Ribot’s distinguished pieces perform a critical preoccupation with the affective and economic transaction performance enacts and, in that regard, how a woman’s body is to signify in performance before an audience. Images of blood and a fantastical showbiz femininity constructed through the display of elaborate dresses, sequinned garments and wigs interact with performative blankness, physical nakedness and gestures of anonymisation. With subtle theatrical imaging and matter-of-fact directness, pieza distinguida N 14 hints towards a relation between prostitution and the work of the ballerina, and between the categories of role assigned and role performed. First hanging a cardboard sign around her neck which reads SE VENDE, La Ribot then hangs a

folding wooden chair around her waist; having held her arms in fourth position for a moment (and in performance in theatre spaces, while walking on tip-toe backwards upstage) she allows her hands to fall to the seat of the chair and slowly begins to open and close it, slowly speeding up to produce a violent clacking and squeaking; gradually, and with virtuoso control, she descends to the floor to lie supine, battering the chair methodically against her hips to produce what resembles a loveless and barely consensual sexual encounter. A controlled descent to the floor, appearing repeatedly in the pieces, constitutes, Laurent Goumarre suggests, an historical critique of the falling female body in classical dance, for whom, as in the case of Giselle, to fall means, helplessly, to die; La Ribot “knows she is breaking a taboo; that she is rewriting history; and if she keeps her posture, it is because she now knows she will not die during the first act”.

The distinguished pieces probe these themes with intellectual seriousness but often exercise a sly comedy that elicits laughter from audiences. Manual de uso, part-slapstick sketch, part-DIY lesson, demonstrates an absurd performance of instructions for a recently purchased appliance, which La Ribot reads aloud and performs; the appliance is the manual user’s own body and the instructions, if followed to the letter, will result in the body’s suffocation inside a clear plastic mac. Outsize Baggage sees La Ribot tying up her naked body and head with string and attached a label marked ‘LHR’: its presentation of the naked, unprotected body as air freight might also be thought as a commentary on her

status as an internationally touring artist. For these performances, theatricality’s “play of disjunction/unification”\(^{58}\) mediating the relation between personhood and objecthood is a comedic resource; of *Outsize Baggage*, for example, Sánchez writes that “‘it could be me, or it could also be a package’ seems to be the message”.\(^{59}\) *pa amb tomàquet*, the only distinguished piece to take the form of film, reflects most explicitly on the reciprocal and contradictory relation between ‘performer’/‘performed’ and ‘consumer’/‘consumed’, or, in other words, ‘use’ and ‘exchange’. In this piece, La Ribot documents with a video camera her creation of a tomato sandwich made with and from her own body. One unseen hand holds the video camera, while the other awkwardly chops garlic and tomatoes, rubs both all over her naked body, and unscrews and pours upon it a glut of green olive oil; the urgent and necessarily jerky camerawork, vibrant colour and spike of accompanying music offers the appearance of a quasi-Hitchcockian murder scene (the body gorily smeared with red, blood-like slush but the real victims of course being the tomatoes). As an aside in an analysis of La Ribot’s works in relation to Benjamin’s concept of melancholy, Gerald Siegmund writes that in this performance La Ribot “transforms her body into an object ready to be looked at, consumed and even bought”.\(^{60}\) This is, I suggest, a recurrent and even central thematic in her work.

\(^{59}\) José A. Sánchez, p. 40.
(ii) ‘There is no more representation, only presentation’: theatre, disavowed

La Ribot’s treatment of production and consumption manifestly proceeds in terms of an inquiry regarding theatre as cognitive, social, spatial and institutional construction. But if La Ribot’s work thus exhibits an intrigue with duality, repetition and apperception, she refuses to call this ‘theatricality’. In Live: Art and Performance, a volume published following Live Culture at Tate Modern in 2002, a selection of her writings appears under the title ‘Panoramix’, the name of the retrospective of the distinguished pieces performed at that event. One fragment reads:

I would like to speak about presentation, rather than representation. The quietness can be seen in Still Distinguished as a means to speak about presentation – in the sense of being, or of feeling a corporeal presence and of contemplating inside a non-theatrical time, understanding ‘theatrical’ as something that starts and finishes. With ‘stillness’ I am trying to convey an approximate time that can break, change or vary depending on the necessity of each person. I am not enforcing an exact length of time, I am simply giving an approximation, a possible time, in which one must decide while living, doing, observing, changing…

Now the space belongs to the spectator and me without hierarchies. My objects, their bags or coats; their commentaries and my sound; sometimes my stillness and their movement, other times my movement and their stillness. Everything and everyone is scattered around the floor, in an infinite surface, in which we are moving quietly, without any precise direction, without any definite order.

The spectator now works in his space and has a relative period of time to use, a period of time that begins to be understood, and is made up by, each of us individually.

London, 15 April 2000 (my emphases)\(^{61}\)

For La Ribot, a fascination with performance’s mutable relationship to time, and

its capacity to generate an experience of non-linear temporality – as Adrian Heathfield puts it, “not the progressive accumulative time of culture, but a time that is always divided and subject to different flows and speeds”62 – is incompatible with the theatre. A modernist, linear notion of time is ‘theatrical’: ‘something that starts and finishes’. She seeks to cultivate the opposite, a teleologically undetermined co-presence – or rather, multiple and individualized co-presences. This effect is covalent with audience members’ distribution around and within a performance space and, in particular, whether or not the space determines the possibilities for movement in advance through fixed seating arrangements. She understands such spatial fixing to produce a sensation of linear time, also understood here in terms of ‘representation’. Like the collectivising theatre ‘machine’, this for La Ribot is antithetical to a model of ‘each of us individually’ experiencing the work. Indeed, as her writing constructs it, to be present to the work without spatially determined constraint is to engage actively in making it: her framing of the act of individualised spectatorship as an act of artisanal ‘work’ is notable. In this sense, Heathfield is wrong to call ‘progressive accumulation’ the time of ‘culture’ as such; the machine-like teleological procedure, the object of La Ribot’s critique, is the time of Fordism, and her preferred temporal construction the time of flexible accumulation. This critique of the theatrical machine has little to do with theatricality’s cognitive and representational dualisms, which her work repeatedly takes up. Indeed, in its engagements with theatricality, her work seems to address in a much more complex way the scenario of post-Fordism than

her definition of theatre will allow; as Christian Marazzi writes, “in post-Fordism the *general intellect* is not fixed in machines, but in the *bodies* of workers. The body has become, if you will, the tool box of mental work” (original emphasis)\(^{63}\).

More faithful to the representational paradoxes in play in her work is this fragment, also appearing in *Live: Art and Performance*:

> There is no more representation, only presentation.
> There is no more magic, only reality.
> There are no more surprises, only variable perceptions.
> There are no more statements, only ambiguity.
> There is no more stability, only imbalance.
> There is no more theatricality, only plasticity.

*London, September 1999*\(^{64}\)

The statement at the centre – ‘There are no more statements, only ambiguity’ - undoes the candidness and incontrovertibility of the others; if each is taken seriously, then none can truly apply.

This question, of discursive frame and inter- and intra-textual play, is critical to her practice. La Ribot’s group-devised performance *El gran game* (1999), produced in the same year as these remarks and presented in a series of theatre and non-theatre spaces across Europe, addressed ‘variable perceptions’ by asking the question ‘why do we like to watch some performances and not others?’\(^{65}\) In collaboration with a sign-language practitioner, the performing company devised a number of fragments of movement through multiple processes of translation:

---

\(^{63}\) Christian Marazzi, *Capital and Language: From the New Economy to the War Economy*, trans. by Gregory Conti (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2008 [2002]), p. 44.

\(^{64}\) La Ribot, ‘Panoramix’, p. 30.

\(^{65}\) *El gran game* publicity material.
from written text, to sign-language, to action using the whole body. A fragment entitled ‘Legs Gazelles’ took as its basis a sign language translation of the phrase “Here we are trying to imagine a political speech which looks like a gazelle”, which La Ribot asked the company to translate choreographically using only their legs, “since”, she remarks, “[in its sign language form] it was a dance already”. Working to a set of rules, the piece in performance orchestrated chance juxtapositions of the fragments, performed on the roll of dice; signs bearing the names of each of the fragments, taped to the floor in a grid formation, would be ripped up once performed, narrowing the options for the company as the performance drew out. Thus ‘Sylphide’, a tall, thin ballerina’s delicate execution of an enchaînement, coincided with a shorter, bigger dancer’s semi-naked jog around the performance space, her hair falling out of a hair-band and her underwear askew. Dancers would hang signs around their necks as they executed certain actions bearing legends like ‘Is this political?’, ‘Is this a gazelle?’, ‘Try to imagine’, which did not appear to correspond securely to the actions themselves. Periodically a small group of non-trained ‘extras’ – such as those recruited for 12 toneladas de plumas, and subsequently for 40 espontaneos - would take the stage with La Ribot, unzipping grey sweatshirt tops, removing them, folding them, and re-donning them. Even from the limited perspective a video recording offered – some moments literally being outside the frame – the performance space seemed to stretch beyond its perimeters, gesturing beautifully towards almost incomprehensibly expansive possibilities for hybrids of meaning. As the piece’s performative options dwindled, the same space seemed to collapse in on itself - a miniature implosion - until only a single action was left, then

66 Goran Sergej Pristas, p. 23.
nothing. But if *El gran game* can be taken as an exemplar of La Ribot’s performative questioning, then its complex interrogation of significatory codes signals not simply a postmodern disruption of logocentrism, but a staging which locates itself very specifically in a historical trajectory of dance practice and - as Lepecki argues of La Ribot’s work in a general sense - critiques modernity’s demand that the body should, simply, ‘move!’ The first example of Romantic ballet’s continuous motion - as Randy Martin, Susan Leigh Foster and others affirm - is agreed to be Filippo Taglioni’s 1832 production of *La Sylphide*.

While La Ribot’s critics invoke the democratic and anti-hierarchical spirit of radical artists and collectives from the 1960s and 1970s such as Judson Church and Grand Union as forebears of the live art discourse with which she is associated, the relationship between their aesthetic propositions and La Ribot’s more recent works seems only partial. La Ribot’s use of everyday movement and the aleatory as a principle is certainly consonant with their performances. But the practice of total frame-switching, central to Grand Union’s practice, seems antithetical to La Ribot’s mode of address. Sally Banes wrote in 1978 that in a typical presentation from Grand Union, “narratives emerge, only to be destroyed; a collective agreement is reached about the frame currently in

operation, and it is collapsed in an instant”.70 The multiple enunciations of *El gran game* meanwhile remain governed by a discernible set of rules which, though they produce uncertain outcomes, are never themselves in question; likewise *Panoramix*, which initially seems to offer audience members an anti-hierarchical freedom to move in the performance space. Lepecki noted that audience members of La Ribot’s performance of *Panoramix* at Tate Modern were reluctant to embrace this freedom, initially remaining “glued to the wall as audiences of live art tend to be when not sure where the proscenium is”.71 The absence of a place of physical retreat nonetheless cultivated particular conditions of seeing: an environment of multidirectional looks exchanged between La Ribot and her audience. Adrian Heathfield, also in the audience, positively characterised this multidirectionality as “reciprocal”72 and “openly social”,73 in contradistinction to the “voyeurism”74 of the theatrical gaze: “in these utterly bare and open conditions of seeing, there are no revelations of previously unseen depths. Nothing is hidden behind these surfaces...What we see is what we get”.75 The sense of bareness corresponds to Lepecki’s interpretation of the performance’s destabilisation of the authority of the gallery space, in which a flood of cardboard stretching horizontally across the floor – whose use he saw originating La Ribot’s deployment of a single square of cardboard in *Fatelo Con Me*, the second *pieza distinguida* – met the vertical positioning of the various

---

72 Adrian Heathfield, p. 23.
73 Adrian Heathfield, p. 23.
74 Adrian Heathfield, p. 23.
75 Adrian Heathfield, p. 22.
objects used in the *piezas distinguidas* (rubber chicken, dress, sign, and so on) affixed with brown adhesive tape haphazardly to the walls. The introduction of these objects (“not quite art objects, not even (or no longer) ready mades”) created a sense of disturbance through “the constant menace of impending falling: their physical falling, and their linguistic one.” Working with a definition of representation as hegemonic propriety, accumulation and sequence, a definition which accords with La Ribot’s own, he suggests that her intervention in the formality of the gallery space reoriented the horizontal and vertical planes of representation to produce “the oblique – a plane on which everything is already sliding, falling, hard to hold” and thus a sense of “generative spatial instability” which undermined its architectonic power. This, and La Ribot’s physical address to the space and her use of stillness and silence accordingly constructed a sense of contracted temporality, a perpetual, vibrating, unstable present by instantiating a “contraction of all that has happened with all that is to come but still remains unannounced”.

The prevailing effect of instability seems the opposite of release from hierarchical constraint; what underscores it is a paradoxical logic of performative representational control. If past and future – including the as yet unarticulated future – are subject to performative collapse, there seems to be little latitude for occurrences which the performance does not itself sanction, unlike, for example,

---

76 André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p. 80.
80 André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p. 86.
performance artist David Hoyle’s improvised response in his onstage persona, the Divine David, to the sound of police sirens bleeding through the walls of the Vauxhall Tavern, south London, and which, Dominic Johnson writes, became “the foil for a gag at the expense of theatre itself”.²¹ Compare Lepecki’s description of the action of two museum stewards during La Ribot’s performance of Fatelo Con Me. Standing at either end of the gallery, he suggests that they “kept the audience behind an imaginary line running between them”,²² becoming “living proxies of the proscenium arch”,²³ a moment which Lepecki reads as a sabotage of the performance effected by “a representational inertia embedded in the visual machines of the theatre and the museum”.²⁴ Surely this moment demonstrates quite the opposite: the power of a performative approach to space to generate a set of hypothetical conditions upon which that space might be received. The spectator’s response arguably constitutes a shifting series of hypotheses regarding the information being presented²⁵ which may or may not affirm these conditions, and may be disrupted by events or perceptions over which the performance itself can exercise no control. Although the proscenium arch is a recognisable, ubiquitous architectural form, to understand two bodies as reinstalling such a spatial condition within an undemarcated space is nonetheless an interpretive act. The conspicuousness of the stewards speaks less to a repressive architectural apparatus – a theory regarding theatrical architecture

²¹ Dominic Johnson, ‘It Only Hurts Because It’s True: Recent Live Art and Performance in the UK’, Western European Stages, 19, 1 (2007), 9-14 (p. 9).
²² André Lepecki, Exhausting Dance, p. 84.
²³ André Lepecki, Exhausting Dance, p. 84.
²⁴ André Lepecki, Exhausting Dance, p. 84.
which Lepecki brings to the performance as audience member - than to the performance’s attempted aesthetic command over space of presentation, in which unanticipated or uninvited interventions may thus appear as sabotage. Lepecki elaborates a form of anti-theatricality which, framing itself as liberatory, functions as the cover for a form of immersive theatrical construction altogether more tyrannical than that of the naturalist theatre presented in proscenium spaces. Everyday action, governed in those environments by social convention in supplementary relation to the on-stage spectacle, becomes immersed here in the performance’s work. Where Grand Union played interpretive games with the performative constitution of space, La Ribot’s strategy in the gallery-based performance of Panoramix (in Lepecki’s reading at least) seems rather to seek to produce a paradoxically constant, uninterrupted spatial condition of inconstancy – an intention her promotional materials describe as “exact uncertainty”. This is legible simultaneously as ‘unique selling point’, cultural critique (though not necessarily of the desirability or otherwise of a paradoxical state of ‘exact uncertainty’) and assertion of the artist’s self-determination in an (economic) environment which is itself unstable and uncertain.

This performative exactitude corresponds to that enabled by La Ribot’s classical dance training, and the physical control it affords with and alongside the possibility of critique. Manuel Vason’s photographic collection Exposures (2002) documents La Ribot’s commitment to questioning the basis of representational

86 La Ribot website.
One particularly striking image of Chair 2000, the twenty-ninth *pieza distinguida*, shows her standing naked, tiptoeing feet in fourth open position, body angled slightly away from the camera’s lens; face, bearing a blankly melancholic expression, casting over her arms (held aloft at right angles to her body) towards something unseen, beyond the reach of the frame. Against her body, tight coils of tape secure the struts from a dismantled wooden chair of the sort she uses repeatedly in performance; tape and wood bind her rotating ribcage, solid hip, straight knee, outturned ankle, elongated neck and tilted head. Her trussed-up body speaks forcefully to the violent, correctional impositions bodies suffer in the name of weightlessly danced elegance. Yet simultaneously it is clear that La Ribot’s body, beneath the guides of wood and tape, does not require any assistance. The line initiated by her strong toes, planted firmly on the ground, culminates in unbound fingertips held just so. Dance critic Sara Wolf celebrates the effect in performance (specifically, *pieza distinguida* no. 26)\(^8\) that this capacity allows as an “exacting precision that uplifts what otherwise would be just another stale performance-art tactic”\(^9\); her performance problematises theatrical illusion “even while adhering to such basic modernist principles as rhythmic unity and the marriage of music and movement”\(^9\).

---

\(^8\) Manuel Vason, Lois Keidan & Ron Athey, pp. 30-33.
\(^9\) Wolf (2003, p. 47) describes how in No. 26 “she draws on her body by holding a blue grease pencil in place and ‘dancing’ against it, with long strokes and short staccato moments creating designs across her skin in tandem with the music. She’s a mess by the end, but this is no raw, cathartic experience; every minute is rigorously choreographed”.
\(^9\) Sara Wolf & Ron Athey, p. 47.
\(^9\) Sara Wolf & Ron Athey, p. 47.
(iii) Distinguished proprietors: ‘La Ribot’ on the market

La Ribot’s insightful and often beautiful body of work has thus engaged in a deep inquiry regarding the histories and conditions of production of radical, experimental choreographic practice in the 1990s and 2000s. It is also a site of fascinating contradictions, both acknowledged and unacknowledged. Not surprisingly, it shows an acute consciousness of the market. Her ‘distinguished proprietors’ project reflects this consciousness: a project in which La Ribot offered each of the *piezas distinguidas* for sale to an individual or company for several hundred pounds. Heathfield suggests that the initiative mimics earlier systems of art market patronage, and asks “what could ownership mean in the context of performance, where the work is repeatable but cannot exactly be reproduced, or easily subjected to a capitalist system of exchange?”, a position which clearly takes its lead from Peggy Phelan’s famous and influential concept of performance as “representation without reproduction” and which seems reluctant to admit to the imbrication of performance in the mechanics of capital accumulation. In an interview with La Ribot, Goran Serjes Pristas asks how the notion of ownership operates in the distinguished proprietors project. She offers a very direct and clear response:

> The distinguished proprietors are the proprietors of a distinguished piece. They are not the owners because the concept of ownership doesn’t exist in the distinguished project. They know where their piece is taking place or being presented because I inform them, and if they want to see their piece they always have a place at the venue. There is a real moment when a

---

91 Adrian Heathfield, p. 25.
distinguished piece is being produced, presented, when it’s alive or whatever. Instead of having the detritus or the documents of something that happened, I value ‘the ephemeral’ moment and I sell it as a work of art. I have defined what a distinguished piece is and that is what a distinguished proprietor gets.93

In other words, she asserts the right of the artist to command the meaning of the transaction. The proprietor thus has a ‘proprietary’ relation to the ‘immaterial’ gestures in which the work consists; one in which, in paradigmatically theatrical style, it is ‘as if’ he or she is its owner. The ‘distinguished proprietors’ project does not question the material tangibility of the commodity as the source of value in exchange, as Heathfield implies, but models both the imaginative relationship capitalism cultivates between the commodity and its buyer or user and the question of contract. The artist dictates the terms of the sale: the item in question is not the performance ‘itself’ but the idea of the performance’s ephemerality and the status it confers upon the buyer, in the manner of corporate sponsorship. The product’s failure to act as a stable commodity simply adds to its desirability. But unlike Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst, La Ribot will not be able to retire on the proceeds of the ‘sale’ of her works. The project, like her works more generally, both models and ironises its proposition, of necessity (would the works attract ‘distinguished proprietors’ at higher prices?) or otherwise.

Nonetheless, if “contemporary performance artists are increasingly concerned with being able to decide on their means of production independently”,94 the project demonstrates that intrinsic to this in the contemporary moment is not

---

93 Goran Sergej Pristas, p. 23.
94 ‘Manifest für eine europaïsche Performance-Politik’.
simply access to appropriate resources for making performance but control over
the discursive apparatus. This is the issue in play in the controversy over
Raymond Whitehead’s refused refund, which, though his case was thrown out of
court in 2004, cost the festival 10,000 euros in legal fees. Bel’s complex address to
the performativity of genre (“a set of conventional and highly organised
constraints on the production and interpretation of meaning”)\textsuperscript{95} meets
Whitehead’s outrage at being lured into the theatre and, importantly, parting
with his money on a ‘false’ promise, which Paul Ben-Itzak, a critic sympathetic to
his outrage described explicitly as “‘breach of contract’”.\textsuperscript{96} In this sense, the locus
of struggle in Whitehead’s case – and, I would argue, in La Ribot’s practice - is
not the generic recognisability or validity of dance movement \textit{per se}, but the
functional, institutional and discursive basis of the theatre, the site of its
presentation. Simultaneously the site of commercial and symbolic transaction,
the theatre, a place for producing culture, discloses the contradiction embedded
in the claim that economic exchange is not social exchange - which, as I will
argue in the next and final section of this chapter, the production of \textit{40
espontaneos} makes apparent.

\textsuperscript{96} Una Bauer, ‘The Movement of Embodied Thought: the Representational
Games of the Stage Zero of Signification in Jérôme Bel’, \textit{Performance Research}, 13, 1
(2008), 35-41 (p. 35).
II: ‘Mission impossible’: 40 espontaneos

In 2002, La Ribot began research and development towards 40 espontaneos (2004-2007), “a piece with a lot of people for the theatre…[whose] title could be ‘Mission Impossible’ or ‘Espontaneos’. As I described in the introduction to this chapter, the bullfight, expertly performed by a matador risking death in the space of the bullring, inspired the work, which imagined the bullring and the theatre as equivalent sites of expertise. In an extended piece featured on her website delineating the project’s rationale, La Ribot wrote

When I asked a bullfighting expert what an ‘espontaneo’ was I was answered with a scornful look: ‘El ‘espontaneo’ is the person who jumps into the bull ring and steals the show from the bullfighter, breaking the rules of the game and adding an unnecessary overdose of danger to the celebration so that what is art can become a massacre’. The project takes off with this definition together with a few other questions that have also been raised. What rules of the game? How much dosage of risk and for whom? Is this art, fiesta, life, massacre or death?

If we disregard, along with the ‘expert bullfighter’, questions of cruelty and barbarism and whatever structuring effects these have for audiences’ reception of the corrida, the tautological phrase ‘an unnecessary overdose of danger’ nicely articulates the dynamic assumed to be in play. The expertise of the bullfighter enables the audience to experience the thrilling frisson of excitement (‘an overdose of danger’) in the face of manifest threat, while remaining securely confident that the bullfighter will win through; the practice of ‘art’ lies in the performance of such expertise. The espontaneo’s unskilled (if nonetheless

97 Goran Sergej Pristas, p. 23.
98 La Ribot website.
planned) blunder into the ring injects an ‘unnecessary overdose’ of danger, resulting not in art but a bloodbath: the violation and end of the living, acting body. For *40 espontaneos*, if the bullring and the stage are thought as equivalent phenomena, the bullfighter, whose skills enable him or her to deal expertly with the bull, is the professional artist. The *espontaneos* will run onto the stage and claim both metaphorical and material space to practise as artists through an act of theft, seizing the ‘bullfighter’s cape’, the object that signifies and legitimises a person in the role of ‘artist’ and which in the bullfight is also the object the *matador* uses to taunt the bull. But the performers in *40 espontaneos* will, of course, not encounter a temperamental bull, released by the artist onto the stage. They will perform actions learned in rehearsal. The metaphorical ‘bull’ in the act of theatrical performance is, in which case, the act of theatrical performance itself - the artist’s skilled “work with the present”⁹⁹ - taking place within the demarcated space of the stage before an audience of other people.

*40 espontaneos’* story is thus one of the professional theatre, peopled with those who make representation their business, and its ‘real’ others. The *espontaneo* is, simultaneously, a theatrical character and the real person of the inexperienced performer. In *40 espontaneos’* story – which is not narratively explicit in the performance itself, but communicated supplementary to the work in promotional leaflets, the performance’s programme and so on - its choreographed ‘deaths’ occur owing to their performers’ violation of the theatre’s institutional security. As La Ribot introduced the concept to the performers involved in the Rio de Janeiro ‘manifestation’ – the *espontaneo* is

⁹⁹ Goran Sergej Pristas, p. 22.
the person who jumps up, steals the bullfighter’s cape, runs off round the
stadium and sometimes either dies because the bull gores him, or leaves
carried on the shoulders of the people in glory. Ever since I was young, I
have interpreted this action as something involving great risk that breaks
many of the rules of bullfighting.100

By inviting the performers to the stage, the performance represents an attempt,
as La Ribot put it, “to put the structure of the theatre and its public in danger
through the destabilization or displacement of their predetermined fixed
place”.101 But the invitation radically and paradoxically corrupts the piece’s
destabilizing premise. The entry of the performers to the stage in 40 espontaneos
is not an act of theft, but a response to a casting call extended by La Ribot, the
director of the work. My analysis takes its departure from this paradox to
elucidate a series of others. These paradoxes are not incidental, but
fundamentally structural to the work. La Ribot’s concept of the theatre as
teleological machine for making meaning logically underscores 40 espontaneos.
But its construction of the inexpert dancing body as the ‘real’ other of the
professional artist – which, if the discursive materials distributed publicly about
the piece are taken seriously, is not ironic but a serious proposition – discloses
that the piece dramatises another matter: an unarticulated anxiety relating to the
discursive construction of the ‘professional’ status of the interdisciplinary artist.
In other words, it is a story about the interdisciplinary artist as viable ‘human
capital’. I elaborate here how and why this might be the case.

100 ‘La Ribot’. Panorama Rioarte de Dança Workshops: La Ribot - Pacitti Company -
Gary Stevens. Dir. Nelson Enohata (British Council 2004) [on DVD]
101 La Ribot (36 Gazelles) Grants for the Arts Proposal.
(i) “A human exchange, about people”: ‘live art’ and ‘community dance’ collide

In the interdisciplinary fashion paradigmatic to La Ribot’s practice, 40 espontaneos brought ‘live art’ (the discourse with which her work is primarily associated in Britain) and ‘community dance’ into a complex, sometimes uncomfortable dialogue. Like other pieces in La Ribot’s portfolio, the piece was constructed of everyday movements and made extensive use of disposable and recycled objects such as cardboard and vast swathes of fabric and clothing (roughly 300 garments). All of the clothes were for women, and many belonged to La Ribot herself, both establishing her continuing interest in the autobiographical as a source for performance-making and contributing to a process of ironic, reflexive canon formation. And, in harmony with these aesthetic interests, La Ribot presented the piece in Britain as part of the dance and live art festivals Dance Umbrella (London, 2005), nottdance (Nottingham, 2006) and New Moves (Glasgow, 2006). In its aesthetic and institutional construction, 40 espontaneos framed itself conspicuously as a piece of ‘live art’, but - in Britain if not elsewhere in the world\(^\text{102}\) - by recruiting companies of inexperienced performers and deploying their appearance as ‘themselves’ as a significatory resource, the piece also strongly invoked the discourse of ‘community dance’.\(^\text{103}\) La Ribot and Artsadmin, the producers of 40 espontaneos, were anxious to avoid its blunt...


negative associations (inattention to aesthetic form, “that it is just about getting people to ‘join in’",\(^{104}\) and so on) intending instead to emphasise both “the diversity of the participants and the ‘innovative’ and ‘professional’ nature of the performance, steering away from the ‘community project’ label”.\(^ {105}\) As I discussed in this chapter’s introduction, representatives of the ‘community dance’ movement in Britain have advanced an argument that individuals may undergo a process of ‘self-actualisation’ or ‘empowerment’ by participating non-professionally in dance under the professional guidance of a facilitator, an argument highly complementary to discourse of inclusion.\(^ {106}\) Funded by the Arts Council’s Grants for the Arts scheme in 2005, 40 espontaneos also rehearsed this line of thought; in an interview with dance critic Donald Hutera for Dance Umbrella News, the festival’s promotional newsletter, La Ribot stressed that “it’s a generous exchange. I have to be very patient, open, comprehensive. They give me their bodies and minds, I give them confidence. It’s a human exchange, about people”.\(^ {107}\) But this backstage peep into the project’s ‘affective labour’ – an expedient and no less public narrative than the ‘aesthetic’ constructions on the stage - ran in contradictory parallel to the ‘innovation’ and ‘professionalism’ associated with La Ribot’s avant garde practice and the performative challenges her choreographic work stages.

The piece’s dramaturgical structure and gestural content draws sustenance both

\(^{104}\) Foundation for Community Dance, p. 17.

\(^{105}\) La Ribot (36 Gazelles) Grants for the Arts Proposal.

\(^{106}\) Sara Houston, ‘Participation in Community Dance: a Road to Empowerment and Transformation?’, New Theatre Quarterly, 21, 2 (2005), 166-177 (p. 170).

\(^{107}\) Donald Hutera, p. 3.
from the ordinary person’s spur-of-the-moment dash into the bullring, a space for the performative display of a very specific expertise, and the representational function of the extra, incorporated into cinematic spectacle to lend it a sense of reality. In a short British Council-produced documentary about the manifestation of 40 espontaneos in Rio de Janeiro, La Ribot ruminates that “for a film to be real you need extras… I like very much these people who are behind the hero, behind the protagonist”.108 A photographic image of extras working on Stanley Kubrick’s Spartacus (1960) depicts a large group lying in place on a hillside between takes and, for the benefit of the production team, holding aloft identificatory numbers, scrawled with thick black marker pen on pieces of paper,109 a gesture which La Ribot appropriated, adapted and choreographed as part of 40 espontaneos, and which the documentary shows her displaying to the assembled company. Calling to mind Number 6’s impassioned cry ‘I am not a number! I am a free man!’ in cult TV show The Prisoner (1967-1968), the image exemplifies the way in which the work imagines and constructs the politicised relation between individual and group, which for the piece is also the industrial relation between professional artist and layperson; in David Graeber’s words, between “the particular, ‘specific’ actor and faceless spectators”.110 If this meaning is more or less explicit, the piece’s dramaturgical basis in the espontaneo’s dash onto the stage and his or her bloody slaughter and ultimate

death is more oblique. 40 espontaneos’ initial, ‘horizontal’ phase consists of the performers walking within and around the stage, seemingly at random. Constantly laughing, they gradually construct a “collaboration network”\textsuperscript{111} by laying the clothes, fabric and objects across the floor. During this phase, they each dress as if for an absurd cocktail party, “in layers, using eight to ten pieces and one high-heeled shoe each”\textsuperscript{112} which entails the appropriation of clothes others may have laid out, and the consequent generation of a spectacle of constantly churning texture and colour. Once all are enrobed, and the floor entirely covered with fabric, the performers descend to the floor and fall to a silent sleep for a pause of a few minutes, each holding aloft a number. The next, brief phase radically ruptures the scene: the performers awake and very quickly gather up all of the clothes and dump them in a pile in the middle of the floor. Then, in the final, ‘vertical’ phase of the work, the performers construct a second network, now only with red items from the pile, metaphorising the spilling of the espontaneo’s blood. Scattering themselves all around the stage, the participants, laughing again, ‘melt’ by sliding very slowly down walls, the sides of furniture and against other people, occasionally standing upon furniture to survey the stage and its chaotic proceedings. Once the performers have distributed all the red items, they place enormous sheets of cardboard over the fabric, producing, in La Ribot’s description, “an abrupt and dry scenery...where finally everybody will die”.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{111} ‘La Ribot’. \textit{Panorama Rioarte de Dança Workshops: La Ribot - Pacitti Company - Gary Stevens.}
\textsuperscript{112} La Ribot (36 Gazelles) Grants for the Arts Proposal.
\textsuperscript{113} La Ribot website.
The ‘real’ inexperienced performers in the piece are to perform as *espontaneos*, characters signified by their action of ‘not dancing’ on the stage. ‘Not dancing’ – walking, laughing, falling to the ground - is of course exactly what La Ribot does herself in performance. The invitation to the performers to engage in an artistic process is therefore a serious one, and offers a rigorous and supportive pedagogic encounter with La Ribot’s mode of experimental performance making. The work in rehearsal teaches the structure of the piece, but also prepares the participants to perform the actions of laughing, walking and ‘melting’, a preparation which consists in an enabling experimentation with two reciprocally engaged corporeal models: the one, the body as an affective force-field which spreads its effects contagiously, and the other, a more traditional choreographic notion of the body as double. For the laughter to be successfully maintained for almost the full duration of the piece without muscular strain or exhaustion, La Ribot insists that it must not be imposed through actorly pretence but ‘discovered’ within the body. During a rehearsal I observed at gDA (Greenwich Dance Agency, London) in October 2005, with no advance knowledge of the process in play, I found myself involuntarily laughing in response, as if infected by the performers as they practised. Its capricious effects were shortlived; once I had arrived at an understanding of how the laughter was to operate within the performance and how it was produced - a representation of the procedure to myself, if you like - it ceased to have an effect. The performers meanwhile seemed to oscillate between laughing as La Ribot directed and experiencing bouts of uncontrollable corpsing as the rehearsal proceeded, suggesting a different texture or temporality at work regarding the production of laughter in the group situation. Lisa Trahair draws attention to Bataille’s theorisation of
laughter as occasioning “the principle of contagion which constitutes human society around a sacred nucleus, as a community whose fusion entails a loss of individual self”, a principle which this process arguably adopts and tests with (in this instance) an anti-representational “work by contamination”.

If, in its affective transmissibility, the laughter flows over the multiple boundaries separating performers, performance and audience, La Ribot’s movement practice reinstates limit and expressly invokes the duality of cognition. Demonstrating, by collapsing against a chair, the action of ‘melting’ to be performed in the final phase of the piece, La Ribot advises the performers to assume a reflexive orientation to their own action:

Try to make your body go through all the moments, always working much more slowly with the weight, to see where the problems are, where I need to alter my weight so I don’t jerk. To overcome the problem. It’s slow so we can think with our body.

The more traditional choreographic instructions which La Ribot and her three co-facilitators deploy - such as communicating action in terms of metaphor - productively suggest a doubling of the body. The collapsing in 40 espontaneos is conceived as ‘melting’; balance and confidence “like a tree, fixed, rooted to the ground”; stretching legs “as if you wanted to separate it from the body”.

115 ‘La Ribot’. *Panorama Rioarte de Dança Workshops: La Ribot - Pacitti Company - Gary Stevens*.
116 ‘La Ribot’. *Panorama Rioarte de Dança Workshops: La Ribot - Pacitti Company - Gary Stevens*.
117 ‘La Ribot’. *Panorama Rioarte de Dança Workshops: La Ribot - Pacitti Company - Gary Stevens*. 
During rehearsal, the performers stretch, run around the space together, ‘melt’ against each other’s bodies and surrounding objects, repeatedly testing and exploring physical limits. Practical engagement is generative, and leaves its mark both cognitively and as a visible index of the body’s capacity. In Susan Leigh Foster’s terms, the participating body exercises its capacity as “a body-of-ideas”, 119 becoming more able to work instinctively. La Ribot urges the group to explore movement that becomes awkward in search of a more fluid form of action. In a sense, her rehearsal practice dramatizes the reciprocal nature of heterogeneity and limit; the laughter unpredictable and uncontainable, the physical work pushing the manifest limits of the materiality of the body, which, encouraged to imagine itself differently, learns how to do things differently, and in doing so, becomes different.

But – a further paradox integral to the piece - the physical adaptation and transformation which the dance practice encourages is precisely what La Ribot does not want to stage. The ‘ideal’ body for 40 espontaneos is unmarked by the disciplinary force of dance training, as the evidence of such training, as Foster elaborates in her discussion of the ‘hired’ body in dance in the 1990s, is evidence of employability in the dance industry. Foster writes that the heterogeneity of methods appropriated by contemporary choreographers requires

---

**Gary Stevens.**

118 40 espontaneos rehearsal session, 26 October 2005.

a new kind of body, competent at many styles. The new multitalented body resulting from this training melds together features from all the techniques discussed above: it possesses the strength and flexibility found in ballet necessary to lift the leg high in all directions; it can perform any movement neutrally and pragmatically, as in Cunningham’s technique; it has mastered the athleticism of contact improvisation, enabling a dancer to fall and tumble, and to support another’s weight; it articulates the torso as a Graham dancer does; it has the agility of Duncan’s dancers… Uncommitted to any specific aesthetic vision, it is a body for hire: it trains in order to make a living at dancing.  

Jacques Blanc, director of Le Quartz in Brest which co-commissioned and programmed the premiere of 40 espontaneos in 2004, frames “Fame Academy, Pop Idol, Big Brother… [shows which] exhibit non-professionals – humans turned into a merchandise, up for bidding, with nothing in mind but the fake dream of celebrity” as the diametric opposite of the espontaneos, who by contrast “climb on the stage with all their humanity, with their lives and emotions”. But the significatory resource that fortifies the piece’s narrative of institutional destabilization is not the presentation of subjects whose ‘humanity’ is somehow more clearly apparent. It is the un-dancerly physicality of people who, lacking the training which would render their bodies ‘flexible’ in both literal and metaphoric senses, are ill-equipped to perform as professional ‘merchandise’ in dance and thus appear out-of-place on the theatrical stage. As La Ribot confirmed repeatedly, non-performers “‘are more real’”:

\[\text{\textsuperscript{120}} Susan Leigh Foster, pp. 254-255.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{122}} Jacques Blanc.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{123}} Samantha Ellis, ‘Spontaneous co-operation: Maria Ribot takes on untrained performers for her dance work about bullfight spectators, reports Samantha Ellis’, What’s On In London, 26 October 2005, p. npg.}\]
In the beginning I worked with professional choreographers and dancers... Thanks to them, I realised I have to do the piece with people who have no experience on stage. Venues and programmers find them in the community. It makes it much more real.  

For this reason, and to cultivate a sense of greater spontaneity in action, not rehearsed, polished practice, the manifestations’ rehearsal periods were no more than five or six sessions. And, as the project progressed, La Ribot sought out ever more ‘real’ performers; finally, when the piece arrived in Britain, the age limit for the non-dancers to be recruited was set as over 40.

(ii) 40 espontaneos in Britain

40 espontaneos made an enthusiastic and often colloquial address to its potential performers, situating it, unthreateningly, in a discourse of community dance. Artsadmin suggested to prospective participants in the Dance Umbrella manifestation “if you are over 40 and have never performed in public (but have a hankering to) - now is your chance”. New Moves departed from its usual Winter School course (oriented towards professional development for artists, staging, in 2005, intensive workshops with Goat Island, Franko B, Raimund Hoghe and Lone Twin) to programme 40 espontaneos for 40 people over the age of 40, with no performance experience whatsoever! You are someone who would like to work with a major international artist over 5 evenings, culminating in a performance on the Tramway

---

124 Donald Hutera, p. 3.
125 Interview with Nicky Childs, Artsadmin, July 2006.
126 Artsadmin Events, ‘La Ribot Comes to Greenwich’. [received via email 27 September 2005]
stage at the end of what promises to be an exciting and very rewarding process”.

The nottdance festival’s flyer, however, made another fact unusually explicit: the performers would be remunerated.

Calling all non-performers: If you have a secret desire to get on the stage but usually leave it to others to lap up the attention, then you are exactly the sort of person we are looking for! nottdance is an annual contemporary dance festival known for offering audiences something innovative and exciting. Taking the theme of Nottingham and its community, internationally renowned artist La Ribot will be inviting 40 over 40s, with no previous performance experience, to work with her on creating a unique piece to perform at the opening of nottdance06!

40 ESPONTÁNEOS will be performed on 28 & 29 April and will require participants to attend rehearsals from 23-27 April at Sandfield Theatre from 6-10pm. Participants will be paid £20 per rehearsal and £40 per performance.

The question of payment did not appear in any other promotional material or press coverage. A contractual agreement, which guaranteed payment for rehearsals and performances attended, was established between La Ribot’s company 36 gazelles and each of the performers. Producer Nicky Childs:

it was really important for Maria, and I agreed, that they get paid […] There is a concept when you are working with non-professionals that you have to be very clear about, and say, ‘this is a commitment’, and I think the way you do that is by having an agreement and saying ‘you are going to be paid for this’ […] Because they’re not professionals, you forget. You assume that there’s a commitment there, which there is, but they don’t realise what the commitment has to be: incredibly fixed.

---

128 Dance4, ‘Exciting opportunity to perform at nottdance06’, publicity flyer.
129 Interview, Nicky Childs.
Adding to the already substantial number of paradoxes structuring the work, 40 espontaneos’ narration of the ‘theft’ of the professional stage, performed by dancers being ‘themselves’, is not the function of voluntary action – as the trope of community implies - but a relation of waged theatrical labour.

If this contractual agreement staged relations on the basis of fixed conditions for action, the piece’s travels from performance space to performance space ranged internationally across decidedly more uneven historical, material and ideological territory, confirming its image of transnational industrial hierarchy in the theatre to be a metaphor. First staged in 2004 at Le Quartz, a proscenium arch theatre in Brest, the piece made full use of the spatial distinction between seating and raised stage, scattering clothes, fabric and inverted furniture throughout the space. Martin Hargreaves describes its initial effect as to “particularly violate the architecture of the proscenium. The frontal representational apparatus of the theatre has collapsed producing a strange feeling of vertigo”. In Le Quartz’s performance space, 40 espontaneos’ conception of the hegemony of the theatrical machine, decoded on the basis of semiotic associations of elitism with the proscenium structure, makes narrative sense. The spaces in which it was made in Britain, meanwhile, were architecturally and institutionally dissimilar both to the proscenium structure and to one another. gDA presents itself as a means for people of all ages and abilities to access dance, offering a range of participatory dance projects alongside presentations by artists such as Shobana Jeyasingh and

Russell Maliphant. Akram Khan, one of the prestigious dancers whose work the organisation has shown, lends his voice to gDA’s promotional DVD:

You have this sense of exchange, between different people, coming into the space, and it almost feels like a people's space, rather than a quite exclusive thing just for professional dancers.¹³¹

Brendan Keaney, artistic director of gDA, argues that a reason for the strength and continuity of Dance Umbrella’s relationship with the institution, housed in an art deco construction which formerly acted as the headquarters of the London Borough of Greenwich is that “we can offer something that genuinely isn’t a theatre, that is a space”.¹³² The Tramway, Glasgow was converted from a 19th century tramshed in preparation for Glasgow City of Culture in 1990. In 1988 it hosted the only performances in Britain of Peter Brook’s Mahabharata (1985)¹³³ and has shown performances by Robert LePage and the Wooster Group; it acts as the base for the annual live art festival New Territories. The Sandfield Centre in Nottingham houses a rough black box performance space, and also the City of Nottingham’s Children’s Services. Nicky Molloy, former director of Dance4 – like gDA, a dance agency providing education and community dance practice as well as the annual live art and dance festival nottdance – chose the venue for 40 espontaneos “because of its ruggedness. We are not blessed with great venues in Nottingham unfortunately […] most of our artists prefer Sandfield. It is not so

¹³¹ Greenwich Dance Agency promotional DVD.
¹³² Interview with Brendan Keaney, gDA, April 2006.
¹³³ Tramway, Glasgow <http://www.tramway.org/content/index.htm> [accessed May 2006]
glamorous but the stage area is fantastic’.

My own reception of the manifestations of 40 espontaneos in London and Nottingham was ghosted, with varying degrees of uncanniness, by familiarity – the experience of dancing in gDA’s hall as a participant in a contemporary class, and that of living for two years as a student a few streets from the Sandfield Centre’s location in Nottingham.

In performance, 40 espontaneos’ aesthetic sought to enact an Artaudian closure of representation effacing historical distinction. But at gDA, in contrast to the work’s chosen aesthetic, on the evening of the first presentation of 40 espontaneos in Britain the building’s quotidian appearance had given way to a pre-performance atmosphere of celebration which marked it clearly as theatrical ‘event’. Soft up-lighting gently illuminated its usually gloomy stairwell and large decorative posters advertising past gDA and Dance Umbrella events greeted audience members ascending the stairs to the main hall; at the top, a makeshift café-bar created from small wooden tables and chairs clustered around the walls, and a long trestle table hung with a pristine white tablecloth extended the length of the wall. A grand piano - usually resident in the performance space itself - imposed itself upon the scene; adjacent, a board bearing photographic images of each of the participants, and a short piece of text describing their feelings or aspirations about the process: ‘I have always loved dance and to dance. It would fulfill a dream to try and dance in some kind of performance. I imagine it would be a great experience’; ‘Bodies do not have to be young and little and perfect. It is about being spontaneous - that appeals to me. I want to

134 Interview (email), Nicky Molloy, Dance4, July 2006.
join in with the spontaneity!'; ‘I turned 40 last year in October, my birthday celebration never happened... this year I want to celebrate my 41st birthday doing something daring’. Semiotically and ritually contextualized by the apparatus of ‘first night’ - white tablecloth, bottles of wine, smartly dressed stewards - the headshot board seemed to mime that of a drama school showcase. Yet the photographs, lacking the artful stylings and sun-dappled backdrops of the conventional industry headshot, and juxtaposed not with a biographical list of achievements but affirmative personal testimony from each participant, produced an uncanny clash between a conventional discourse of professional commercial theatre - which live art has tended either to shun or to critique - and that of community dance, consolidated by a conversation I overheard (“Are you Guardian-ing?”; “No, I’m Dancing Times-ing”) as I approached the space.

In ironic juxtaposition to this representational apparatus, 40 espontaneos in performance generated a spatial, visual and affective field ultimately ungraspable in totality. It seemed in a sense to dramatize Bataille’s concept of general economy, whose characteristics Derrida ascribes to Artaud’s impossible theatre of cruelty, an energetic singularity that “would be the art of difference and of expenditure without economy, without reserve, without return, without history”,¹³⁵ deliberately withholding the completist gratification afforded by a theatrical frontality. This became immediately apparent as I entered the performance space, several minutes before the start time of the performance, and saw that 40 espontaneos had already begun. From the outset, a dimension of

meaning was inaccessible, having taken place in a past to which I was not present. Seating for audience members lined the back and side walls of the room, requiring that audience members walk across the performance space, already peopled with wandering *espontaneos* and a few sparse swatches of colourful fabric. Although the relationship between audience and stage determined by the material fixture of the seats was, in this manifestation, fairly orthodox, the responsibilising demand that the individual audience member actively engage the performance space before settling into anonymity in the audience carefully initiated a singular relationship to the work. After a moment’s hesitation, I selected a seat at the back, adjacent to a gigantic cardboard poster stuffed into a seat, and walked around the performance space, accompanied by some other audience members who likewise seemed to feel the stage to be an unbreachable zone.

Covered with an artificial material, the floor appeared almost entirely black. As the twenty seven ‘*espontaneos*’ gradually surged over the stage with seemingly aimless, solitary wandering, I found it impossible not to fix my attention on a single person – a man, whose journey around the space, fetching and carrying strips of fabric, donning a shirt here, a skirt there, removing a shoe and placing it on the ground, wrapping material around the body, removing it, finding some more, donning a hat, plucking the hat from his head and placing it on the floor, finding another shoe, putting it on, walking across the floor with a comical gait, one hip high, the other low, all the while laughing, discovering the laugh in the body, which set his face in a sightless, concentrated grimace. Once I had lost interest in tracking that particular individual’s movements around the space and
turned my gaze to take in the stage, I saw with surprise that it was entirely swamped with a patchwork sea of fabric. I strove to see as much as I could, yet the events on the stage unconditionally exceeded my capacity, dramatizing the limits of my vision. The performers continued to wander aimlessly among the upended chairs and tables, upturned sofa and dry piles of cardboard posters. At one moment, an older woman grasped the poster adjacent to my seat, looked me dead in the eye, and said ‘excuse me’ as she removed it, an unauthorised act of speech in the midst of the laughter’s irrationality which momentarily pierced the piece’s aesthetic immersion. Once the performers seemed satisfied that the black floor was sufficiently obscured they began, patchily, to sink to the ground. The laughter’s contagious infection - the moment I had fleetingly experienced in the rehearsal - didn’t appear to affect anyone in the audience. As it faded, an eerie silence took hold, the performers gradually laying themselves down, one by one, among the bright fabric, the occasional unsettling laugh penetrating the stillness of the space. Each performer held a number, printed boldly on a tatty piece of paper, to their body - 402, 13, 666, and so on - the corners unfurling, the folds moving slightly against the moving ribcage of each performer. Having listened to La Ribot instruct the group in rehearsal – remembering now her insistence that no-one should remain standing alone - I watched as the final performer stood on top of the block of cardboard sheets, surveyed all that was around her, and laughed. This gesture of sovereignty (whether intended as such or otherwise) appeared subversive, majestic, a magnet for attention. This performer finally joined the group, and for a stillness that seemed far longer than the time it really must have taken, a total silence descended. Then the performers woke up, getting up very quickly and gathering up every scrap of fabric with speed,
efficiency and care, a rushed swirl of colour that formed an elaborate, ragged pile. At this moment I recognised the pile of clothes as a dressing up box, and began to formulate an understanding of the piece as metaphorising a playground licensed by the artist. Several participants righted the sofa, chairs and tables, and each participant launched their body at a surface, melting, throwing themselves onto the ground, resting, sliding off the upright furniture, jerky yet liquid movement taking place in small spots all over the space. Two women ran lightly down from the audience – a role developed during the various iterations of 40 espontaneos in performance, which La Ribot called the “stowaway”\(^ {136} \) - and threw themselves into the fray, an action whose affected failure to appear as the realisation of a spontaneous desire, acted upon in the moment, was for me more interesting than the action itself (its putatively radical strategy of rupturing the ‘fourth wall’ already familiar to me). Another woman melted, laughing, into the arms of another, the one stiff and upright, her arms a cage, the other helpless, abject. This spectacle, colliding with the piece’s pre-performance frame of ‘real’ celebration gave me a sensation of acute discomfort and problematic, guilty embarrassment. By the time the performers began to fetch cardboard sheets from the three piles at the edges of the stage, I had barely noticed that the red fabric had inched its way across the floor. The cardboard, brown and dry, laid on the top of the vividness of colour, swiftly and quietly quashed its loudness. The performers left, leaving two or three remaining, lying ‘dead’ on the surface, clutching their numbers, silent, with a blue light washing over them from the rig above.

Conclusion

I argue that the spectacle La Ribot constructed in *40 espontaneos* theatrically modelled a form of entrepreneurial action that she undertakes in performance herself. Not simply a matter of a destabilising aesthetic logic which admits action of all kinds to the stage as ‘dance’, she frames the action the performers undertake explicitly as an entirely novel incursion into a new territory of experience. The performers are entrepreneurs of ‘themselves’, wagering their action in a theatrical zone, and thus their value as performers. What distinguishes this practice from the movements of a professional dancer is a recognisably embodied expertise. But as I have discussed, *40 espontaneos* was riven with paradox. The project faced a lack of interest from its target participant ‘base’ – none of the manifestations in Britain attracted a company of more than twenty-seven - but a high level of interest from dancers-in-training, aware of La Ribot’s practice and aspiring themselves to enter dance as industrial workers, as, for example, in the first manifestation in Brest. Nicky Molloy of Dance4, which recruited a company of performers for *40 espontaneos* whose appearance in performance was, for La Ribot, “the rawest and the most edgy” confirms that “it is actually quite hard to get people with no experience involved in something like this (would have been easy to get someone already interested in performing to do it)”.

---

137 Interview, Nicky Childs.
138 Interview, Nicky Childs.
139 Interview (email), Nicky Molloy.
To a large degree, this work, seeking to distance itself from a ‘community project’ model trailed by “old, tired assumptions [about] community dance”\(^\text{140}\) enacted the impulse which drove the action of the animateur practitioners in Britain in the 1970s themselves – to engage participants in a form of dance practice which was choreographically and discursively ‘new’. The reflections of two performers from the Glasgow manifestation whom I was able to contact in my research confirms this; in response to my question ‘what is your strongest memory of from participating in 40 espontaneos?’ one replied

> The training was fantastic. La Ribot (Maria, Tania, Janice)\(^\text{141}\) are brilliant teachers. I saw how it was to be a dancer ‘up close and personal’ and that being one transforms one’s body and spirit. La Ribot were like magicians, they worked magic on us! The workshops were very important to me. They enabled me to participate in the performance with the audience.\(^\text{142}\)

Another participant described similar feelings regarding the rehearsal process:

> It was intense but very enjoyable. We were very well looked after by the team involved and encouraged and supported all the way. It was physically challenging and stretched muscles I didn’t even know I had. Maria is a very warm, passionate and personal teacher, and Tania, her assistant in Glasgow, was fabulously patient and encouraging. It was great to be encouraged to push myself further than I thought I could go by people whose judgement and experience I trusted.\(^\text{143}\)

And, though the piece allegorised entrepreneurial action as spontaneous, it required a large effort and considerable planning to produce the conditions for

\(^{140}\) Foundation for Community Dance, p. 17.  
\(^{141}\) That this participant misunderstood ‘La Ribot’ to be a group speaks perhaps to the collectivity of the working process.  
\(^{142}\) 40 espontaneos research email questionnaire, May 2006.  
\(^{143}\) 40 espontaneos research email questionnaire, May 2006.
its theatrical dramatisation of ‘spontaneity’. The labour of instantiating a new market for the show’s ‘product’ – a participatory experience of dance making and performance under the tutelage of an expert and highly esteemed practitioner – took place off-stage, not in the mind of the entrepreneurial actor but in the institutional apparatus the performance on stage seeks to destabilise. Nicky Childs remarks that 40 espontaneos was “more popular in Europe than in England”\textsuperscript{144} for curators and programmers, as community dance represented more of a novelty. Her insight confirms that the form of the theatre as institutional apparatus is materially and ideologically specific to geographical location. The history and familiarity of community dance in Britain, the negative association of community performance practices of all kinds with aesthetic mediocrity, coupled with the contemporary governmental prioritisation of ‘inclusion’ and the resulting controversy about ‘cultural value’ (described in the Introduction and Chapter 2 above) meant that 40 espontaneos was neglected in critical discourse in Britain. Of Glasgow, for example, Colin Richardson-Webb, New Moves’ Company Manager confirms that “sadly the Glasgow press did not cover this piece”.\textsuperscript{145}

40 espontaneos’ critique of ‘the theatre’ is therefore not of specific institutions. ‘The theatre’ in La Ribot’s practice more generally seems to signify an industrial apparatus imagined to constrain the action of the self-determining figure of the artist; in dramatising an oblique fantasy of institutional ‘theft’ and

\textsuperscript{144} Interview, Nicky Childs.
\textsuperscript{145} Interview (email), Colin Richardson-Webb, New Moves International, July 2006.
entrepreneurial failure, *40 espontaneos* reiterates this concept. That this is an ideological position is aptly demonstrated by the fact that in Britain, during the historical period that this model of architectural hierarchy most forcefully pertained, there were no singly dedicated theatrical spaces for the performance of dance. The object of La Ribot’s critique in which case is discursive: the contractual regulation and staging of relations between bodies and the value of their movements. Its ideological content again finds confirmation in the exercise of contractual agreement in securing the labour of the inexperienced dancers in *40 espontaneos*. The piece demonstrates that on- and off-stage representational forms are in complicit relation – as I have suggested of all the projects under discussion in this thesis – and that a challenge to signifying hierarchies is not necessarily a challenge to institutional ones. As Bojana Cvejić writes of “the choreography of the 90s”:

The power of self-determination in the concept of dance could be potentially transformative if it also applied to the frame of working, production and presentation. At the moment, it is capable of articulating something like speech-act: ‘This is performance, this is choreography’, assuming the role of analytical or critical self-interpretation, similar to the conceptualism in visual art. So far it produces open, flexible and contingent definitions of dance and critique and how we are habituated to perceive it, but it remains dependent on internal, medium-specific matters of dance because operating in the institutional context of theatre makes its critique bound to the theatre dispositif.

---


Earlier in the same piece, Cvejić writes that “the only tactic of resisting the institutional market for the freelance artist is to become the mediating machine of him/herself, producing productivity and a self-governed networking”.\textsuperscript{148} This (and I suggest that Cvejić might agree) is of course not resistance, but the performance of a novel form of institutional practice under the conditions of capitalism, in which the theatre \textit{dispositif} and the body of the freelance performer to at least some degree collapse into one another. La Ribot’s solo work models such a process, the performer functioning as ‘mediating machine’ and ‘machine’ at once.

La Ribot intended \textit{40 espontaneos} to dramatise exploitation. In a passage on her website, La Ribot described her vision for the piece:

I am speaking of the anonymous, of the person used, or hired, of that person that in the cinema for example, passes by as if he or she did not exist, who drinks in a party or kills a Roman, makes us believe that what we see is more real. I am speaking of the soldier used to defend illegal homelands, the worker who sews T-shirts in filthy factories for somebody else’s homeland. I am speaking about the reality that is too big for us, out of our limits, out of our rules, a reality that is interpreted like in the cinema, an ‘illegal’ reality.\textsuperscript{149}

The performers and the piece’s totalising aesthetic were thus to represent the ‘informal’ economy in globalization in a general sense. The passage also gestured specifically towards the economy of theatrical performance, its division of labour and separation of producer and consumer. The \textit{espontaneo} “finally plays a conciliatory role between the public and the professional. This is due to

\textsuperscript{148} Bojana Cvejić.

\textsuperscript{149} La Ribot website.
the basic actions that he carries out, because he is not a professional (so the spectator can identify himself/herself with him). To conclude, I offer an anecdote which demonstrates the vulnerability of the discursive authority upon which the value of the freelance artist ‘machine’, risking themselves as capital, depends within the contemporary iteration of this economy.

During a discussion after the manifestation of 40 espontaneos at gDA, La Ribot, her team and three or four of the performers fielded a series of questions from the audience, some about danger, others about the spectator-performer relationship, and the choreographic process. At the close of the discussion, an audience member asked La Ribot:

“Does it matter to you that I didn’t know about the bullfighting idea?”

A rather awkward silence fell. Nervously, he reposed the question:

“Did it matter to you?”

La Ribot then confirmed emphatically that the concept was intrinsic to the performance and thus very important. Her hesitation before she did so suggested a desire to assert an anti-theatrical authorial control over the performance’s narrative and ultimate meaning for its audience - a rule regarding how a ‘reality that is too big for us, out of our limits, out of our rules’ should appear. In other words, as I have argued, her critique of the theatre’s

---

150 La Ribot website.
exploitation, conceived as covalent with other forms of exploitation, needs the theatre to produce the desired effect. The assertion of control, as her hesitation also suggested, is vulnerable to the theatre and the duality in representation it initiates. By drawing attention to the constructedness of representation, the theatre and the affect of theatricality discloses representation’s basis in ideas and structures. In this process, ideas and structures themselves become open to question – including the form of the theatre institution itself.
CONCLUSION

Risk, I have argued, is a concept with a specific relationship to liberal capitalism and its forms of government. The artist as figure does not have a monopoly on risk: the objective of neoliberalization is to institutionalise the global free market economy and a form of enterprising, risk-taking and risk-bearing subjectivity as a general principle for action. This serves the pursuit of unencumbered capital accumulation. In the concept of risk, just as in value, symbolic practice and the form of the social coincide. In terms of the totalising ideology and institutional frame of globalization, the responsibilized subject is either the included, entrepreneurial ‘in’ or the stagnant, excluded ‘out’. Though it presents certain progressive advantages – who would argue with the desirability of an education system that accommodates, or ‘includes’, multiple forms of need? - the discourse of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ functions both to protect and entrench neoliberal political economic organisation. To dramatise the politics of social exclusion, Nikolas Rose cites Julia Kristeva’s theorisation of the abject (itself substantially influenced by Mary Douglas’ anthropological work on ‘matter out of place’ in Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (1966)). He writes that

characteristics of vile and degraded subjectivity are frequently ascribed to the subjects of practices of security, charity, welfare and reformation.

Abjection is an act of force. This force may not be violence, but it entails the recurrent operation of energies that initiate and sustain this casting off or a casting down, this demotion from a mode of existence, this ‘becoming abject’. Abjection is a matter of the energies, the practices, the works of division that act upon persons and collectivities such that some
ways of being, some forms of existence are cast into a zone of shame, disgrace or debasement, rendered beyond the limits of the liveable, denied the warrant of tolerability, accorded purely a negative value.¹

In conducting detailed analyses of projects and practices associated with the ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ discourse under New Labour, I have sought to explore the ideological and material elaboration of a culture of enterprise in British artistic practice. The ideology of enterprise the works display demonstrably engages the ‘works of division’ to which Rose refers. As I stated at the outset, my analysis of the projects has been less ‘about’ figures of ‘risk’ than the way in which representation brings, or might bring them into appearance. Likewise, my intention was not to identify what constitutes ‘a risk’ in and for theatre and performance. Such an objective would invalidate the argument I have endeavoured to make throughout the thesis regarding the co-existence of multiple and antagonistic discourses of culture, the interface between meaning production, institutional structure and political economic change as historical processes and the way in which signification itself changes in response. However, taken together, the projects I have discussed exhibit representational similarities which might reasonably be attributed to their historical relationship to neoliberalization. In drawing the discussion to a close, I will specify what these similarities are, and the questions for further research that they suggest.

The first thing to note is the projects’ engagements with aesthetic realism. The realisms in question are by no means straightforward or uniform across the projects. Nor are they necessarily identifiable in a visual sense but rather as a

matter of logic. Artangel’s consistent interest, for example, has been to explore the “seepage of the work into the world and vice versa, to break down where the edge of the ‘made’ work might be, and where the edge of the ‘found’ world might be”.2 The conceptual form of these explorations bears a distinct relationship to the experimentation with discourses of dance, visual art and performance which La Ribot undertakes, and her valorization of chance procedure, presentation of everyday movement as dance and interest in ‘the present’ as a performative dynamic. The practice of verbatim theatre at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, which the Everyman Theatre pursued with Unprotected, similarly operates on the basis of the capture of a ‘live’ moment of testimony as ‘authentically’ representative of a given situation, the conspicuously advertised ‘authenticity’ of the material represented constituting, in effect, the works’ political position. AfroReggae, meanwhile, defines the appearance of everyday life as a theatrically produced ‘real’, and is thus interested in producing in its participants an awareness of its constructed status. This is an activist project, for the reason that the favelas function in public discourse as the unfortunate but nonetheless ‘natural’ site of criminal activity in Rio de Janeiro. The question of the ‘natural’ points towards the politics of representations of the ‘real’ in a more general sense. As I have shown throughout the thesis, for these projects the ‘real’ - or ‘found’ - signifies action or entities which reside beyond the boundaries of the formal economy. In other words, ‘found’ is effectively equivalent to the ‘natural’: the untutored, the unskilled, the extra-discursive and (in its most extreme iterations) the non-

human. AfroReggae seizes upon the ‘found’ as the constructed; the other projects under discussion here do not. The ‘real’ beyond these boundaries is also the site of a vanguardist, pioneering masculinism; if meaning is ‘found’, then it is original, non-reproducible and appropriable.

The second important commonality is the question of aesthetic immersion and anti-theatricality, which has a reciprocal relationship to the projects’ interest in realism. Noticeably recurrent is an aversion to the theatre as an institutional form explicitly dedicated to the practice of representation. This ranges from matters of aesthetic ‘preference’ to dramaturgical decisionmaking. As I noted in Chapter 1, for example, Artangel curator Michael Morris “found – and continue[s] to find – most live narrative drama somewhat antiquated as an experience. It often looked like bad TV”. Verbatim theatre is an aesthetic form which, in many of its contemporary manifestations, is determined to deny the apparatus of the theatre, either by refusing its dramaturgical possibilities or by producing naturalistic or immersive spectacles. La Ribot’s practice, notwithstanding its fascination with theatricality, disavows the theatre as a viable medium for an experimental practice, and, in her most recent works, plunges audiences into immersive gallery-based performance in order to produce a sensation of “exact uncertainty”. AfroReggae’s work, less a case of anti-theatricality, understands entrepreneurial subjects to be operating in the immersive space of everyday life which ultimately, again, practice might reveal to be constructed. I suggest that aesthetic immersion in these projects correlates

---

4 La Ribot website.
to the all-encompassing ethico-political space of community and also to narratives of border-crossing and institutional escape in globalisation. When read in juxtaposition to the flight of capital and the desires of its protagonists to shed fiscal responsibility to the state infrastructures – structures of representation – which have facilitated this flight under neoliberalism, a logic of extra-theatrical immersion appears not radical and liberatory but quite the reverse. Consider, for example, Adrian Heathfield’s introductory essay in Live: Art and Performance (2003), the book of essays accompanying Live Culture at the Tate Modern in 2002. He suggests that “by frequently deploying a contemplative and ‘wasteful’ expenditure of time, performance continues its long wrangle with the forces of capital”5. Citing the erosion of public space by privatised space, “where sociality is conditioned by a prevailing individualism and action is strictly regulated and surveyed”6, he confirms that these shifts in space and place have been the context and catalyst for performance to become ever more migratory, challenging the forces that try to locate it, leaving its institutional homes, running a restless and errant course into other places, other spheres of art and life, ‘sitting’ itself wherever the necessities of expression, relation and finance dictate. In this emigration, performance has become a means through which to test the foundations and borders of identity, to bring the self into new relations with its ‘outsides’ and others. Having left home, performance has tirelessly proved its unrivalled capacity to generate new forms of relation, collaboration and community that negotiate and traverse once solid divisions.7

---

6 Adrian Heathfield, p. 10
7 Adrian Heathfield, p. 10.
The sentiment is anti-capitalist; the metaphorical rendering of performance is not. In this migratory form, performance appears as an exemplary mechanism of generating and discarding new forms of social relation, much in the manner, as Randy Martin writes, of capital itself: “capital flees not just persons and places but its own categories and forms of development – such as cities, nations, races, and civilizations [...] Capital is hypermobile”.8

Reading Heathfield’s rhetoric (and it is important to emphasise it as such) against an older text accentuates the longevity of capital’s hypermobile logic. In 1872, in the midst of the nineteenth century industrial boom,9 Marx and Engels insisted that

Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere.10

If ‘performance’ appears as the privileged site and exercise of mobility, entrepreneurially engaged in the production of the new, the ‘once solid divisions’ it traverses and dismantles are strikingly akin to those Marx and Engels invoke.

---

The scenario of ‘everlasting uncertainty’ they describe resonates strongly with the ‘inconstancy’ to which Claire MacDonald referred. The prevalence of ‘risk’ – which represents simultaneously a discursive effort to manage uncertainty, an enterprising action which engages uncertainty, and an item packaged as liability - is emblematic of liberal political economy, and has deep historical precedent.  

In this thesis I have staged a challenge to certain rhetorics of performance. The analysis has indirectly suggested some possibilities for future inquiry regarding the relationship between performance and liberalism – for example, the productivity of the private made public as a technique of governance and in relation to the body as capital. I have also sought to demonstrate the manifold limits to globalization’s totalising ideological ambitions. If ‘risk’ is the condition of everyday life for an abjected class of ‘excluded’ people, and impetuous ‘mobility’ the logic of capital under neoliberalism, we should at the very least be wary of invoking these categories as positive values.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works cited


Ackerman, Alan and Puchner, Martin, ‘Introduction: Modernism and Anti-Theatricality’, in *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage*, ed. by Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner (New York: Palgrave 2006), pp. 1-17

Ackerman, Alan and Puchner, Martin, eds., *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage* (New York: Palgrave 2006)


Aitch, Iain, ‘Culture: Plagues of frogs and lice…and artists, including Antony Gormley and Rufus Wainwright, have descended on Margate. Ian Aitch on a huge project that’s transforming the town’, *The Guardian*, 26 September 2006, p. 22

Aitch, Iain, ‘Exodus fires up the imagination of thousands’, *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, 6 October 2006 p. n.pg


Bennett, Susan, ‘Theatre Audiences in the Experience Economy’, presentation given to ESRC Active Audiences Conference, Milton Keynes, 7 July 2006, pp. 1-21


Bishop, Claire, “‘As if I was lost and someone suddenly came to give me news about myself’”, in *Off Limits: 40 Artangel Projects*, ed. by Gerrie van Noord (London: Merrell 2002), pp. 22-29


Boon, Richard, ed., The Cambridge Companion to David Hare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007)


Bunting, Madeleine, ‘Culture, not politics, is now the heart of our public realm: The cynics who ridiculed Margate’s Exodus Day miss the point: art has broken its elitist leash to inspire collective purpose’, *The Guardian*, 3 October 2006, p. 30


Butler, David and Reiss, Vivienne, eds., *Art of Negotiation* (London and Manchester: Cornerhouse 2007)


Byrne, David, *Understanding the Urban* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2001)


Cameron, Angus, ‘Geographies of welfare and exclusion: initial report’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 29, 2 (2005), 194-203


Cameron, Angus, ‘Geographies of welfare and exclusion: social inclusion and exception’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 30, 3 (2006), 396-404


Christiansen, Rupert, ‘Ambition: to surprise and amaze For 10 years, one organisation has been behind some of art's most exciting projects. Rupert Christiansen meets the men who run Artangel’, The Daily Telegraph, 12 February 2002, p. 23


Clapp, Susannah, 'Arts: The year ahead; Theatre in '99; Four legs good', The Observer, 3 January 1999, p. 8

Clark, Pete, Bellis, Mark A., Tocque, Karen, Consultation on a Managed Zone for sex trade workers in Liverpool: Views from Residents, Businesses and Sex Trade Workers in the City of Liverpool: Executive Summary, June 2004 (Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University 2004)


Cooke, Rachel, ‘Should lap dancing be run out of town?: With a new venue opening every week, lap dancing has spread into British culture. Rachel Cooke talks to the men behind the boom, the women lured by the promise of easy money, and the campaigners battling to stop the clubs opening on your doorstep’, The Observer, 8 March 2009, p. 24

Costa, Maddy, ‘Reviews: Film sets and reality blur into one as Margate takes starring role’, The Guardian, 2 October 2006, p. 36

Cotton, Georgina, ‘Previews: The promised land beside the seaside; Film THE MARGATE EXODUS’, The Independent, 25 September 2006, p. 21

Creative Partnerships | About CP. <http://www.creative-partnerships.com/aboutcp/> [accessed December 2007]


Daoust, Phil, ‘Reviews: Theatre: Rita, Sue/ A State Affair; Soho Theatre, London (5 stars)’, The Guardian, 9 December 2000, p. 29


Davies, Andrew, Other Theatres: the Development of Alternative and Experimental Theatre in Britain (London: Macmillan 1987)


Davis, Mike, Planet of Slums (London and New York: Verso 2006)


DCMS, Building on PAT 10: Progress Report on Social Inclusion (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001)

DCMS, Culture at the Heart of Regeneration (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2004)

DCMS, Policy Action Team 10: A Report to the Social Exclusion Unit (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport 1999)


Denham, Chris, ‘Margate Exodus is more than a great arts event’, *Thanet Extra*, 15 September 2006, p. 39


Dwesar, Sandeep, ‘Taking greater risks to reach new heights’, *Barbican Annual Review 06/07*, pp. 50-53


Edgar, David, ‘Doc and dram: why has this decade seen the rise of a vibrant theatre of reportage? Playwright David Edgar points to a decline in conventional journalism and TV documentary’, *The Guardian*, 27 September 2008, p. 18


Editorial, ‘Was it all just a waste of time?’, *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, 8 December 2006, p. 10

Editorial, ‘Your chance to be a star’, *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, 9 June 2006, p. 13


<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/valuingculturespeeches> [accessed March 2006]

Ellis, Samantha, ‘Spontaneous co-operation: Maria Ribot takes on untrained performers for her dance work about bullfight spectators, reports Samantha Ellis’. *What’s On In London*, 26 October 2005, p. npg.


Esslin, Martin, 'Naturalism in Context', *TDR: the Drama Review*, 13, 2 (1968), 67-76

*Exodus*, dir. Woolcock, Penny (Soda Pictures 2007) [on DVD]

*Favela Rising*, dir. Mochary, Matt and Zimbalist, Jeff (HBO Documentary Films 2005) [on DVD]


Forsyth, Alison and Chris Megson, eds., Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2009)


Foundation for Community Dance, Mapping Community Dance: a research report for the Foundation for Community Dance (Leicester: Foundation for Community Dance 2001)


‘Fringe six-pack’, Sunday Times, 30 July 2006, p. 6

From the favela to Hackney, dir. Francis, Nick (Speak-It Films 2006) [on DVD]


Frow, John, Genre (New York: Routledge 2006)


Gill, AA, ‘Something biblical for the weekend? As Margate prepares for a plague of frogs and film crews, AA Gill asks: can they be serious?’, *The Sunday Times*, 27 August 2006, pp. 6-8


Guilding, Ruth, ‘Unforgettable fire’, *The Spectator*, 7 October 2006, p. 56


Hare, David, The Permanent Way, or, La Voie Anglaise (London: Faber and Faber 2003)


Harvey, David, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005)


Harvie, Jen, Staging the UK (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2005)


Heathfield, Adrian, ‘In Memory of Little Things’, in La Ribot (vol. 2), ed. by Claire Rousier (Pantin: Centre National de la Danse 2004), pp. 21-27


Hickling, Alfred, ‘Sex and the city: can a play make a difference to the lives of prostitutes? Alfred Hickling investigates’, The Guardian, 14 March 2006, p. 21


Holden, John, Capturing Cultural Value: How culture has become a tool of government policy (London: Demos 2004)


Hoonaard, Will C. Van Den, 'Is Anonymity an Artifact in Ethnographic Research?' Journal of Academic Ethics, 1 (2003), 141-151

Houston, Sara, ‘Participation in Community Dance: a Road to Empowerment and Transformation?’, New Theatre Quarterly, 21, 2 (2005), pp. 166-177


Hubbard, Phil and Sanders, Teela, 'Making Space for Sex Work: Female Street Prostitution and the Production of Urban Space', International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 27, 1 (2003), pp. 75-89

Hubbard, Phil, Matthews, Roger, Scoular, Jane, ‘Regulating sex work in the EU: prostitute women and the new spaces of exclusion’, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 15, 2 (2008), 137-152

Humphries, Paul, ‘Green light districts: Liverpool wants to operate colour coded zones to show where prostitution will be tolerated. Paul Humphries reports’, *The Guardian*, 14 March 2003, p. 4


‘Inclusion Under Pressure’, *engage review: promoting greater understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts*, Winter (2001), 1-72


Ings, Richard, *From the favela to our manor: Translating AfroReggae: the impact and implications of an international intervention in arts work with young people at risk* (London: People’s Palace Projects 2007)


‘Interview: Intelligence Agency: Theorist Sylvere Lotringer talks to Nina Power about art and the market, the failings of capitalism and how radical thinking can help us survive 'the system'', *Frieze Magazine*, 125, September 2009 <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/intelligence_agency/> [accessed September 2009]


Johnson, Dominic, ‘It Only Hurts Because It’s True: Recent Live Art and Performance in the UK’, *Western European Stages*, 19, 1 (2007), 9-14

Jones, Alice, ‘Arts: Behind closed doors: Installation: Gregor Schneider’s mysterious terrace-based project is set to intrigue’, *The Independent*, 21 September 2004, p. 18


Keidan, Lois, ‘This Must be the Place: Thoughts on Place, Placelessness and Live Art since the 1980s’, in *Performance and Place*, ed. by Leslie Hill and Helen Paris (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2006), pp. 8-16
Kellaway, Kate, ‘Theatre of war: the Iraq war has energised dramatists, with David Hare’s new play the latest in a surge of political theatre. Pinter, Frayn and others on the front line talk to Kate Kellaway’, The Observer, 29 August 2004, p. 5

Kellaway, Kate, ‘Review: Theatre: Both sides now: The latest addition to the growing canon of verbatim theatre examines the question of terrorism from all angles to impressive, moving effect’, The Observer, 1 May 2005, p. 9


Kelly, Owen, Community, Art and the State: Storming the Citadels (London: Comedia 1984)


Kent County Council, Regeneration of East Kent Coastal Towns: A review by a Select Committee appointed by the Strategic Planning Policy Overview Committee, August 2004 <http://www.kent.gov.uk> [accessed April 2007]


Key, Philip, ‘Liverpool artists stage an invasion of Edinburgh’, Liverpool Daily Post, 8 August 2006, p. 17


Kingston, Jeremy, ‘Trials of a court reporter: All the world’s crime is a stage for Nicolas Kent’, The Times, 7 October 1996, p. 1


Kwon, Miwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (MIT Press 2004)

La Ribot Distinguida: un film de Luc Peter, dir. Peter, Luc (Intermezzo Films 2004) [on DVD]


Lawson, Mark, ‘Theatre: Nothing but the truth: You couldn't make it up. For centuries the book-reading, theatre-going public want nothing but fiction - then suddenly only true-life stories will do. What's so great about reality, asks Mark Lawson’, *The Guardian*, 9 October 1996, p. 12
Lay, Samantha, ‘Good intentions, high hopes and low budgets: contemporary social realist film-making in Britain’, *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 5, 3 (2007), 231-244


Lennon, Peter, ‘Home truths from a street fighter: Tower Hamlets council leader, who is nearly always in the line of fire, talks to Peter Lennon’, *The Guardian*, 4 December 1993, p. npg.


Lewis, Justin, Art, Culture and Enterprise: the Politics of Art and the Cultural Industries (London: Routledge 1990)

Ling, Tom, ‘Delivering joined-up government in the UK: dimensions, issues and problems’, Public Administration, 80, 4 (2002), 615-642


Lingwood, James, ‘Our house is a very nice house’, The Times, 27 November 1993, p. npg.


Lingwood, James, ed., New Works for Different Places: TSWA Four Cities Project (Plymouth: TSWA 1990)

Lister, Ruth, Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2003)

Lister, Sam, ‘We’re well on course: Sam Lister speaks to Robyn Archer, who is in charge of Capital of Culture year – and who is delighted by the talent of local people’, Liverpool Daily Post, 8 May 2006, p. 6

Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres – Mission. 

Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse Theatres – New Writing. 


Logan, Brian, ‘Why do we still run with the Hare?’, *The Times*, 27 November 2006, p. 14


Macaulay, Alastair, 'Going public in a way that makes a difference: Alastair Macaulay meets Nicolas Kent, the man behind The Colour of Justice', *Financial Times*, 20 September 1999, p. 19


MacDonald, Claire, ‘Editorial’, *Performance Research: On Risk*, 1, 2 (1996), vi-viii

MacDonald, Robert, ed., *Youth, the ‘underclass’ and social exclusion* (London and New York: Routledge 1997)


Marazzi, Christian, *Capital and Language: From the New Economy to the War Economy*, trans. by Gregory Conti (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2008 [2002])

Marió, Estanislao Gacitúa and Woolcock, Michael, Social Exclusion and Mobility in Brazil (Washington: World Bank 2008)


Massey, Doreen, World City (Cambridge: Polity Press 2007)

Matarasso, François, Regular Marvels: a handbook for animateurs, practitioners and development workers in dance, mime, music and literature (Leicester: Community Dance & Mime Foundation 1994)

Matarasso, François, Use or Ornament? The social impact of participating in the arts (Stroud: Comedia 2003 [1997])


McGuigan, Jim, Modernity and Postmodern Culture (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press 1999)

McKenzie, John, Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance (London and New York: Routledge 2001)


Mead, Philip and Campbell, Marion, eds., Shakespeare’s Books: Contemporary Cultural Politics and the Persistence of Empire (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press 1993)


Miles, Malcolm, Art, Space and the City. (London and New York: Routledge 1997)


Morrison, Richard, ‘Power to the people, write on’, The Times, 8 October 2005, p. 4


Munck, Ronaldo, ed., Reinventing the City?: Liverpool in Comparative Perspective (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2003)


NEF, Coasting along: a study of business impacts and regeneration in south east coastal towns: a report from nef (the new economics foundation) for the South East Enterprise Development Agency (SEEDA), August 2005 <http://www.seeda.co.uk> [accessed April 2007]

Nenhum Motiva Explica a Guerra, dir. Diegues, Cacá e Dragaud, Rafael (Warner Music 2006) [on DVD]


News from Arts Council England South East, Issue 9, October 2005


Osgerby, Bill, *Youth in Britain since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell 1998)

‘Overcoming Social Exclusion: Brazil in Comparative Perspective’, Conference held at St. Antony’s College, Oxford, Tuesday 22 June 2004


Paget, Derek, *True Stories?: Documentary drama on radio, screen and stage* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 1990)


Peck, Jamie and Tickell, Adam, ‘Neoliberalizing Space’, *Antipode*, 34, 3 (2002), 380-404


Perlman, Janice, ‘The chronic poor in Rio de Janeiro: what has changed in the last 30 years?’, Conference on Chronic Poverty, Manchester, 7-9 April 2003, pp. 1-21


Pook, Sally and Bunyan, Nigel, ‘Liverpool walks tall with hope in its heart: Merseyside expects a £2bn investment boom after beating the odds to be named as Europe's Capital of Culture, write Sally Pook and Nigel Bunyan’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 June 2003, p. 4


Poynor, Helen, ‘Yes, But Is It Dance?’, in *An Introduction to Community Dance Practice*, ed. by Diane Amans (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2008), pp. 87-98

Pristas, Goran Sergej, ‘‘Whispering with our bodies’: interview with La Ribot’. frakcija magazin za izvedbene un jetnosti: performing arts magazine, 24/25, Autumn (2002), 18-23


Ratcliffe, Michael, ‘The magus of Clink Street: Adored abroad but hardly known here: Robert Wilson is plotting his first major British show, writes Michael Ratcliffe’. The Observer, 3 September 1995, p. 11

Rayner, Jay, ‘Gorms to the left of me, Gorms to the right…’, The Observer, 15 September 1996, p. 6


Rousier, Claire, ed., La Ribot (vol. 2). (Pantin: Centre National de la Danse 2004)


Schneider, Rebecca, ‘Performance Remains’, *Performance Research*, 6, 2 (2001), 100-108


Seymour, Anna, ‘Culture and Political Change: British Radical Theatre in Recent History’, *Theatre Research International*, 21, 1 (1996), 8-16


Siegmund, Gerald, ‘Emblems of Absence: La Ribot’s piezas distinguidas’ in *La Ribot* (vol. 2), ed. by Claire Rousier (Pantin: Centre National de la Danse 2004), pp. 79-87


Smith, Noel, Lister, Ruth, Middleton, Sue, Cox, Lynne, ‘Young people as real citizens: towards an inclusionary understanding of citizenship’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8, 4 (2005), 425-443


Synge, Dan, ‘Requiem for a ghost town: A deserted village in Salisbury Plain’s military zone is the backdrop to a most unusual musical event’, The Daily Telegraph, 16 August 2003, p. 6


Taylor, Diane, ‘My daughter: ‘Not just a prostitute’: Dianne Parry hoped her heroin-addicted daughter would wake up one morning, see sense, and come home. But Hanane never did - she was murdered, aged 19, while working as a prostitute’, The Guardian, 5 August 2006, p. 3

Taylor, Paul, ‘Review of the Year 2004: Arts: Theatre: The further you went, the better it was’, The Independent, 27 December 2004, p. 40


‘Thanet Gateway to China?’, BBC Inside Out <http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/content/articles/2008/10/06/south_east_th anet_chinese_s14_w4_feature.shtml> [accessed August 2009]

The Exonerated, dir. Bob Balaban (Radical Media 2005)

‘The Making of Exodus’, dir. by Andrew Palmer, in Exodus, dir. by Penny Woolcock (Soda Pictures 2007) [on DVD]

The Prince’s Trust, The Cost of Exclusion: Counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK (London: The Prince’s Trust 2007)


Thomas, David, Carlton, David and Etienne, Anne, Theatre Censorship: From Walpole to Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007)


Tramway, Glasgow <http://www.tramway.org/content/index.htm> [accessed May 2006]


Tulloch, John, Shakespeare and Chekhov in Production and Reception (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press 2005)

Turpin, Adrian, ‘Reality check: Plays using the words of real-life protagonists will abound on the Edinburgh Fringe. Do they take us closer to the truth?’ Financial Times, 22 July 2006, p. 36


Ventura, Zuenir, Cidade Partida (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras 1994)


Walker, Lynne, ‘Theatre: The quality of Mersey: Gemma Bodinetz and Deborah Aydon, the new team at the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse, are determined to put the two theatres back on the map. Lynne Walker hears how they plan to do it’, The Independent, 15 January 2004, p. 12


Williams, Kirk, ‘Anti-Theatricality and the Limits of Naturalism’, in *Against Theatre: Creative Destructions on the Modernist Stage*, ed. by Alan Ackerman and Martin Puchner (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2006), pp. 95-111

Wilson, Esther; Fay, John; Green, Tony; and Nunnery, Lizzie, *Unprotected* (London: Josef Weinberger Plays 2006)


Wright, Patrick, ‘In your space: They’re big. You’ve paid for them. And they’re meant to make you feel better. But ever since the Sixties, Britain’s public art developments have caused more aggro than uplift’, *The Guardian*, 25 August 1995, p. 2

Wroe, Nicholas, ‘Profile: Nicolas Kent: Courtroom dramas: Despite a public school and Oxbridge education, he felt an outcast because of his family
background. As director of the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, he has aimed to highlight injustice with plays based on documentary evidence. After successful dramas about Stephen Lawrence and the Hutton inquiry, Guantanamo is to open in New York', *The Guardian*, 24 July 2004, p. 16


Primary documents cited

AATE/ATHE, Risking Innovation, August 8-11 2009, New York Marriott Marquis, New York, conference programme

AfroReggae UK Partnership Mini-Projects showcase: artist seminar, Wednesday 27 June 2007, pp. 1-6

AfroReggae UK Partnership: Can culture be our weapon? Raising the stakes in the fight against gun crime and gang culture, Monday 14 May 2007, Garden Room, Barbican Centre, pp. 1-25

Artangel brochure (London: Artangel 2006)

Artangel, ‘Exodus Venice’ [received via email 1 September 2007]

Artsadmin Events, ‘La Ribot Comes to Greenwich’ [received via email 27 September 2005]

Dance4, ‘Exciting opportunity to perform at nottdance06’, publicity flyer (2006)

Espiner, Mark, ‘Shows of strength’, Barbican at 25, pp. 107-108

Greenwich Dance Agency promotional DVD

La Ribot, El gran game publicity flyer, UK (1999)

La Ribot (36 Gazelles) Grants for the Arts Proposal [received via email from Artsadmin, 2 August 2006]

La Ribot, 40 espontaneos publicity flyer, UK (2005-6)


Liverpool Everyman, Unprotected, A5 flyer, Thursday 3 August to Sunday 20 August 2006, Traverse Theatre

Paul Pfeiffer, The Saints programme 2007


People’s Palace Projects Vision Statement 2008

The Margate Exodus recruitment flyer
Personal interviews cited

Interview, Brendan Keaney, gDA, April 2006

Interview, Carla Martins, AfroReggae, October 2007


Interview, Damian Atkinson, Shoreditch Trust, January 2008

Interview, Derek Richards, Rich Mix, November 2007

Interview, Esther Wilson, Liverpool Everyman, April 2008

Interview, Helen Wood, Stoke Newington School, January 2008

Interview, Jo Carter, Immediate Theatre, December 2007


Interview, Malin Forbes, Barbican Centre, December 2007

Interview, Nicky Childs, Artsadmin, July 2006

Interview (email), Nicky Molloy, Dance4, July 2006

Interview, Richard Ings, May 2007

Interview, Suzanne Bell, Liverpool Everyman, April 2008

Interview, Suzanne Bell and Esther Wilson, Liverpool Everyman, April 2008