

The Way to Optimistic Land:
The role of attunement and theatre in reducing child and adolescent mental distress

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Statement of Originality:

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Publications

Emily Hunka, 'Method in Our Madness: Seeking a Theatre for the Psychically Disabled Other', *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, 5.1 (2016), 83–113.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of an original applied theatre practice of attunement, on reducing the mental distress of children and adolescents with experiences of trauma. This practice, the Theatre Troupe Model (TTM), was tested out in a pilot project that I designed and delivered with a group of young people with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties in London, in the UK, in 2016 and 2017. 'Attunement' in the context of this thesis, is the process in which two or more people come together in interactions and relationships. My research crosses two disciplines - applied theatre and psychology - and as such I draw on Attachment Theory and ideas about attunement from neurobiological research. I apply these to the methodology of the TTM as informing the research. I combine these ideas with my theory of change for the TTM in which I have posited that a theatre "troupe" working together in the process of making a theatre production is a powerful vehicle for healing to take place. My findings from the pilot project suggest that the TTM provides an ameliorative community for young people who have experienced mental distress and that the labour of the troupe - what I call the *Festivalesque* - enables healing. Primarily, my research is situated in the applied theatre field, and I contribute original ideas to this paradigm. I offer a new way for applied theatre practitioners to work with those who have experienced trauma, which differs considerably from existing models in its unique attunement-based methodology. In this regard, my research also adds new knowledge about socio-political contexts of arts with/for/in health: it shows that attunement is a powerful way to resist divisive neoliberal agendas that can be found in Arts and Health/Wellbeing work. I use Bourdieu and Passeron's theories of Symbolic Violence, and William Davies's *The Happiness Industry: How Big Business and Government Sold us Well-being*, to critique the Arts and Health movement and give opportunities for practitioners to approach work differently. However, given my research is psychologically informed and works in interdisciplinary ways, I contribute original ideas to this field also. I argue, after psychiatrists Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon, that artists and scientists find some common ground in the realm of poetry.

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Preface

1990: I am in the wings at the Thorndike Theatre in Leatherhead, a small commuter town in South East England. I feel the light, I smell the face-paint, behind me I hear scurrying of actors, the scuffle of costume changes. Before me, I watch the dame dancing, and I listen for my cue. I am about to make my entrance as a firefly. An 'extra' selected from the local youth theatre to appear in the local pantomime. In that moment, I experienced what Schechner refers to as transportation: 'leaving [the] daily world...in transportation, one is "moved" or "touched" (apt metaphors), and then is dropped off about where he or she entered.'¹ I needed transportation that year. Tormented, physically, emotionally and verbally, every day by other children at school, a torment ignored by school management, and an eventual withdrawal from the school, I was vulnerable and distressed. The Panto, *Cinderella*, and Willy Russell's *Our Day Out*, at the Thorndike, and a school production of *West Side Story* were my solace. The parts were minimal - as well as the firefly, I was "village child," "kid on a bus" and "Shark Girl three," – but each offered a chance to escape the everyday, to enter a sacred time/space and crucially to do so in the company of others. A lived experience of being a member of a performing group of disparate individuals, united by what Victor Turner terms a liminal communitas:

In the workshop, village, office, lecture-room, theatre...people can be subverted from their duties and rights into an atmosphere of communitas...is there any of us who has not known this moment when compatible people – friends, community – obtain a flash of mutual understanding on the existential level, when they feel that all problems, not just their problems, could be resolved, whether emotional or cognitive, if only the group which is felt (in the first person) as "essentially us" could sustain its inter-subjective illumination...²

Being 'dropped off' and finding this new world showed different possibilities. There is no doubt that my applied theatre practice of some twenty years, and now my practice-based research, has a golden thread back to my own experiences in a theatre group, a hybridity of aesthetic-social functioning. Experiencing first hand how cruel every-day living can be, I

¹ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd edn, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p 72.

² Schechner, p.72.

wanted to believe in Schiller's aesthetic assertion that '[b]eauty alone makes the whole world happy and each and every being forgets its limitations whilst under its spell'.³

2011: I am watching an episode of the British television series, *Twenty-Four hours in A&E*. It is a fly on the wall documentary set in Kings College Hospital, in which cameras follow the lives of the patients through the events that unfold in the Accident & Emergency Department, and through face-to-face interviews with patients, family members and staff. Its formula is, more or less, a series of true love stories, when in moments of pain, families, friends and neighbours come together in moments of tenderness, and compassionate staff support and nurture their patients. Sometimes small interactions in the waiting room are filmed. Sometimes stories are more dramatic, a terrible motorbike crash, an horrific fall. The way the formula usually works is to deliver a happy ever after moment at the end of each episode. Even a twenty year old who is paralysed from the chest down after a quad bike accident is filmed six months later, showing courage and optimism, as he adapts to a new way of life. But the episode I saw was not like this. It showed a young man who had come into the hospital because he had been beaten up. He hadn't been beaten up that day, he didn't really need medical attention, but he was homeless and didn't have anywhere to go. He was dragging a large suitcase behind him that clearly had his worldly possessions packed in it. At first the nursing staff were caring and attentive – they spoke of their sadness that lost souls like him came in through their doors - but there was nothing, ultimately, they could do. The final shot pulled away on this thin, lost boy, with his swollen face, lying across a row of hard-plastic chairs with no-one in the world to go to. The reason I remember this episode in particular is because I recognised the boy. He was a young refugee I had worked with in 2006, on a workshop programme for new arrivals who didn't have school places. When I met him, he must have been about twelve. I remember he loved playing the drama games. He loved the chance to meet other children his age, to practise his language skills playing a market seller. He stayed with the

³ Friedrich Schiller, 'On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a series of letters', in *Beauty and Education*, Joe Winston 1st edition, (Routledge, 2011), p.3.

project once a week for a term before he got a school place. Watching that homeless, stateless boy from the comfort of my own home, I had to question of my profession: what's the point?

Given that my central question in this thesis is to ascertain whether a specialist, potentially replicable model of applied/social theatre can reduce (or heal or treat) the mental distress of those children in which it is most pervasive and extreme, it is a crucially important question for me. There is significant weight to arguments that an ambition for lasting change is not possible, nor should be sought. These often pivot on the notion that neoliberal hegemony is so integrated into everyday life, that any action for transformation will be, at best, stymied, or, at worst, complicit in a 'brutal and virulent' capitalist narrative.⁴ 'The creation of this neoliberal system' suggests David Harvey, 'has entailed much destruction, not only of prior institutional frameworks and powers (such as the supposed prior state sovereignty over political-economic affairs) but also of divisions of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life, attachments to the land, habits of the heart, ways of thought.'⁵ Jen Harvie outlines inherent danger. Whilst yearning for 'social engagement and equality of opportunity,' she also professes to be a sceptic:

I have to question how on earth [artists] could ever [make a difference]...in the kinds of existing compromised social and political circumstances...The skeptic in me asks whether these trends in art and performance are not in fact complicit with neoliberal capitalist culture like so much else is, passed off as critical social interventions when they are actually nourishing to neoliberalism inequalities.⁶

The problems raised by applied theatre theorists highlight the dangers of becoming complicit. Michael Balfour advocates an awareness of agendas within the 'tautologies of

⁴ Henry A. Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics & the Promise of Democracy*, (Boulder: Aurora, Ontario: Paradigm; Garamond Press, 2004), p. Xiii.

⁵ David Harvey, 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 610.1 (2007), 21–44, p.23.

⁶ Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.2.

transformation.⁷ He fears that a socially applied theatre discourse may develop in response to the prevailing culture of what Nick Kershaw calls ‘monetarist and market led policies,’⁸ ‘as a way to continue the principles of participation by carefully stripping away overt political allegiances and deliberately re-phrasing ideology in more pragmatic and marketable terms.’⁹ Kershaw suggests that this is ‘debilitating’ as ‘the movement/sector is cast as an object, always, as it were, at the beck and call of the dominant order.’¹⁰ In stating an intention for *Applied Theatre and Mental Health*, its editor, Kat Low, acknowledges, ‘we are ... conscious of a neoliberal agenda whereby arts practice is being employed as a salve or plaster for widespread and complex social ills.’¹¹

An alternative, suggests Balfour, is to reject the idea of lasting transformation, cure or amelioration, to embrace ‘little changes.’¹² ‘Perhaps a radical gesture would be to question the relationship between theatre and ‘change’, to break the assumption that this is an obvious partnership.’¹³ He advocates a move away from ‘change rhetoric’ to create a ‘playful’ arena. Sheila Preston advocates a ‘critical pedagogy perspective’ to be ‘committed to radical ideals [which] enables a critical analysis of the challenge of achieving such aims in the face of the social and material conditions.’¹⁴

However, seeing the young man in A&E did not make me hopeful that a theatre of little changes could – or had – made an impact that was acceptable: it was not enough. He may have benefitted in small ways from the ‘play’ that was very much part of my workshop practice at the time, but “doing” a workshop had ultimately been inadequate and was

⁷ Michael Balfour, ‘The Politics of Intention: Looking for a Theatre of Little Changes’, *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 14.3 (2009), 347–59, p.354.

⁸ Nick Kershaw in Balfour, ‘The Politics of Intention’, p.351.

⁹ Kershaw, in Balfour, p. 349.

¹⁰ Kershaw, in Balfour, p. 349.

¹¹ *Applied Theatre: Performing Health and Wellbeing*, ed. by Veronica Baxter and Katharine E. Low, (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017), p. 6.

¹² Sheila Preston, *Applied Theatre: Facilitation: Pedagogies, Practices, Resilience*, Applied Theatre, (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016), p. 22.

¹³ Preston, ‘Applied Theatre: Facilitation, Pedagogies, Practices, Resilience’, p.22.

¹⁴ Preston, ‘Applied Theatre: Facilitation, Pedagogies, Practices, Resilience’, p.22.

buried somewhere too deep under horrific real-life circumstances of loneliness, physical abuse and homelessness. And now, my early encounters with children from Theatre Troupe's demographic suggest that creating little changes can be as moot a suggestion as struggling with neoliberal edifices. Young people who have experienced trauma live in the heat of its pervasive distress, as they are stuck in fight-flight mode, held hostage by their trauma-affected biology. Little changes are too little to be anything but skin-deep: in such a position, it may even be distressing to imagine 'possibilities for humankind.'¹⁵

How could I square both of these experiences? My thesis has emerged from this dichotomy, from a never-relinquished optimism in the power, utopian wonder and hope that theatre can be fundamentally transformative, combined with a need to know whether a uniquely devised model of theatre in the applied paradigm can really make a difference to children who are deeply distressed. It has been a process of trial and error, missteps, frustrations, confusions and sometimes - especially when children in the Troupe Intervention Model (TTM) seemed to be so far from amelioration, for so long - despondency.

I am in accord with those who shine light on the divisive and pervasive effect of the neoliberal hegemony. Indeed, it is the young people with whom Theatre Troupe works, instead of being respected, listened to, and cared for, who have been abandoned to shame and hopelessness. But I believe this is all the more reason to try for a socially engaged theatre practice that can proactively mount a resistance to the hegemonic forces at play as part of its design and substance, whilst aiming for lasting change. This is also important because the combination of biological, emotional and social factors that children face, combined with the indignities of an individualised culture mean they are the most difficult children, not only for education, health and social services to work with, but for applied theatre practitioners also: children who can't sit in a circle; children who will swear

¹⁵ Michael Etherton and Tim Prentki, 'Drama for Change? Prove It! Impact Assessment in Applied Theatre', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 11.2 (2006), 139-55. 146.

whenever the mood takes them; children who respond to an adult's mild request not to do something by doing it all the more; children who seem to have no empathy and find it a natural part of life to abuse and bully others; children who escalate from one to ten when provoked, and cause violence because of this; children who can't work with other children; children who think nothing of engaging in risky behaviours such as climbing on roofs, dangling over balconies and running into busy roads (yes in Treasure House Youth Troupe (THYT), the subject of this research, all these precipitations occurred); children who can't get through half an hour without self harming; children who disassociate or have PTSD flashbacks right in the middle of a drama game; children labelled with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; conduct disorder; oppositional defiant disorder; a personality disorder. These are children that we find a challenge to work with, whom we may start to work with but even with the best of intentions end up saying things like 'we just needed to put the needs of the group first' or 'we'd like to include him but he's a risk to himself' or 'It's doing her no good coming each week and doing nothing. I mean it is a drama workshop after all.'

I know I have. I know, in the process of this research, I did. But whilst I often felt like giving up, the children at the heart of this process had no intention of doing any such thing. It was Melekodium, a fourteen year old participant in Treasure House Youth Troupe (THYT), who created Optimistic Land. Abused by one parent in earlier childhood, coping with the dying and death of the other parent as an adolescent, she had more reason than most to fear and dread the world. Yet this was the land that she chose to design, and it was the Queen of Optimistic Land that she chose to play. In this extract of her scene, the Queen is approached by a frantic priest, as she is about to ride her unicorn:

PRIEST Your royal highness!

QUEEN Brother Simeon.

PRIEST Thank goodness I caught you! *(He starts to gabble)*

QUEEN Slow down! I can't understand what you're saying!

PRIEST I was up in the steeple, polishing the weathervane and I saw her.

QUEEN Who?

PRIEST She's from Pessimistic Land. She's come in on the North Wind from the ice palace to destroy us. She's already destroyed Sections A, B and C of the East Quarter and she's coming towards the castle.

QUEEN Show me (*They climb the steeple*).

PRIEST See? She is dressed all in cold black ice and swirls of snow. She must have been sent by the Dark Queen Lucia

QUEEN Yes, I'd know that icy blast anywhere.

PRIEST What does she want, Queen Charlotte?

QUEEN What she always wants. To take my happy citizens and freeze their hearts.

PRIEST May God have mercy on all our souls. What shall we do Queen Charlotte?

QUEEN For goodness sake man, we'll be optimistic. It's what we do!

It is in this spirit, I present my research.

Introduction

This thesis explores the feasibility of a new model of applied theatre practice - the *Theatre Troupe Model* (TTM). I set out to answer my primary research question: how can a theatre “troupe” reduce child and adolescent mental distress and to do so by focusing on how the inherent qualities of theatre may play a part in healing distress in those in whom it is most acute.

Between 2013 and 2016, I developed a methodology for a new approach of applied theatre, inspired by notions of Attachment Theory and ideas corresponding to theories of attunement. I developed ideas for the model over a three-year process of refining and distilling and, in October 2016, began a pilot project to test its central theories. In this introduction, I will give context to this process and to my thesis.

Treasure House Youth Troupe (THYT) was an after school youth theatre, in which my theories for the Theatre Troupe Model (TTM) were tested. Twelve young people aged 10-14 were recruited to take part in the year-long project in the London Borough of Southwark. Young people worked together, alongside staff members and volunteers, creating, devising, rehearsing and performing two pieces of theatre, one which was produced in December 2016 and one which was produced in July 2017. This is the central case study of my thesis. Young people were referred from one of four routes: from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), from Southwark Social Services Safeguarding Teams, from Alternative Education Providers for children who have been excluded from mainstream schools, and from Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or inclusion departments in mainstream schools. All were described by the professional referring them as in some way having emotional and behavioural difficulties. All but one child (whose background was not provided to us) had trauma or loss in their lives. Eight had been abused or neglected at home or through Child Sexual Exploitation. One was a survivor of

extreme peer bullying, and one had both parents deceased and was a Child Looked After (CLA).¹⁶

In addition to managing the project overall, I was the lead theatre artist. I delivered drama games and exercises, led writing and devising work and scripted material for our two performances. Oliver Campbell was our Artist-Therapist. The Artist-Therapist - a core role in all Theatre Troupe projects - was the second workshop artist, and Campbell led visual art activities. He was also a qualified art therapist and, as such, additionally provided safeguarding support and therapy intervention should a child be in crisis in a workshop. He also fulfilled the role of supporting volunteers and staff each week in post-workshop feedback, and gave termly individual and group therapeutic supervision sessions.

Joining us were a team of volunteers that came from a range of backgrounds: MA and BA students, volunteers from the local community, and my parents and their labrador-lurcher cross dog Jasmine. Staff and volunteers received training in Theatre Troupe's methodology and practice, and took part in evaluation sessions as is standard for Theatre Troupe's work. Across the year, we ran thirty workshops, roughly spread across three school terms: Autumn, Spring and Winter. In December 2016, we did a work in progress performance for parents, carers, teachers, social workers and friends. In July 2017, to a similar audience, we staged two performances of our play *The Way to Optimistic Land*.

The TTM was intended to be a defined approach to making theatre with young people with trauma-experiences. It aimed, by applying ideas of Attachment Theory and neuro-biological attunement research, to reduce distress, enabling young people to have better chances in the future. I have defined this as a model because I believe it has fixed and replicable tenets. These are a) a direct attachment/attunement focus as a means by which the negative effects and affects of trauma may be reduced; b) a prerequisite that the work happens in a dedicated "Troupe" which consists of, at least, a theatre artist, an artist-

¹⁶ The legal term for a child who is in local authority foster care, or kinship care.

therapist and a number of volunteers; c) the work of the Troupe is to make one or more theatre productions. This is a loose requirement and may manifest in very many different ways, according to the artistic skills in the Troupe in both adults and children, and according to the children's needs. It could be *any* kind of production. However, this intention is hypothesised to be an intrinsic part of the ameliorative work the TTM should do. I test these aspects of Troupe work in the attempt to answer my research questions, and do so with its accompanying theory of change.

Terminology

I use the term "t/Troupe" in different ways in this research. For clarity's sake, I give an overview here. When I write "troupe" I am referring to a theatre company. This is mostly in the context of a medieval theatre troupe, but not always. When I write "Theatre Troupe," I am referring to the organisation that I founded with Natasha Bergg, the organisation which hosts THYT. "Theatre Troupe Model" refers to the specialist practice I have designed and tested in this thesis. Finally "Troupe" tends to refer to the group of people - adults and children - that formed the Treasure House Youth Troupe (THYT). "Troupe" is also used when describing the social unit in the Theatre Troupe Model (TTM), which may, in time, be formed in other organisations.

I come to my research from a practice-based position influenced by twenty years' work in the field of applied and social theatre, and, as such, I base my research on an insider's perspective throughout. In this sense, it is practised based research. The way I have navigated my research is through a mixture of desk-based research, artistic practice, applied theatre management practice, and ethnographic processes. This combination of labour has always been a feature of my Applied Theatre career. Overall, this has included: constituting, evaluating, fundraising, teaching, training, line-managing, administrating, workshop leading, mentoring, volunteer-coordinating, being the named person in safeguarding, and being the named person in health and safety. I have also delivered drama and creative writing workshops and programmes in mainstream and special schools,

from one off sessions to programmes running over two years or more. I have delivered youth theatres for children aged 5-25 and projects for babies and toddlers. I have developed training programmes for students and teachers, and written several Theatre in Education and community performances for which I have delivered accompanying workshops and teachers' packs. I have also written and staged over forty productions with community organisations and groups, in a range of professional and non-professional settings. Thus, I bring the insight of Jack (or Jill) -of-all-trades to my doctoral enquiry. Furthermore - and I am far from alone in this - the work has been accompanied by varying measures of high stress, exhaustion and frustration, but also intense passion, which often threatens to flicker out, but never quite does. This, then, is my research-based methodology, and whilst I hope my readership is diverse, I write for those who, like me, are Jacks and Jills -of -all -trades, or for students and new practitioners who are considering entering this world as a career, or undertaking their own version of the TTM.

The insiders' perspective that drives my research is augmented by another, which is inextricable from the first. That is because I am, to use a common phrase, a mental health service user. This has a direct link to the fact that I started working with young people with mental health problems. In 2009, I was diagnosed with Bi-polar disorder. The first engagement I had with the NHS mental health acute services was grim: threadbare chairs and blank receptionists, who did not seem to hear patients who were shouting random sentences at them about Jesus and bears. When I saw the psychiatrist, she rattled off a series of questions, gave me the diagnosis, mentioned the medication I should take, and then, when I expressed worry, told me to look it up on the internet. This just terrified me all the more. I learnt that people with bipolar disorder die earlier than other people, that medication subdued and stultified those who took it. I saw clips on soap operas of people raving and screaming before being dragged off to a psychiatric ward. But, as I adapted to the diagnosis, it also felt like a revelation. The way I had been buffeted by my moods did make sense against this diagnosis. It also connected with my identity and productivity as an artist, a trait linked to the condition by Kay Redfield Jamieson, in *Touched with Fire*, in which

she claims, '[t]he fiery aspects of thought and feeling that initially compel the artistic voyage - fierce energy, high mood...and the sense of the visionary, and the grand, a restless and feverish temperament, commonly carry with them the capacity for vastly darker moods, grim energies and occasionally bouts of "madness".'¹⁷ Once I had met other people with the diagnosis, including inspiring artists, I was able to reframe the diagnostic adversity. I managed it as an identity on one hand and as a disability on the other, which gave me access to extra financial and employment support.

This new knowledge had a direct impact on options for theatre work with young people with mental health problems. I saw there was an imperative to provide something other than threadbare seats or strip-light functional waiting rooms: to be received with compassion rather than to be blanked or defined as a set of symptoms. This was also informed by some brief work that I did in an acute adolescent psychiatric admissions unit, and visiting friends or colleagues on locked psychiatric wards. I have been fortunate never to have been an in-patient myself, but all the wards I have visited have been shockingly dehumanising. I have yet to be disabused of the fact that statutory mental health care equates with bleakness. In 2010, I got a job in the local branch of the national mental health charity MIND, Mind in Harrow. Over two years, I led creative writing and theatre work with adults with severe and enduring mental health problems. I met those with diagnoses of obsessive compulsive disorder, depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, schizo-affective disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, and several of the many personality disorders. Mind in Harrow was largely service user led, and was a well-supported, warm, passionate organisation. I felt something I had never known in my professional or personal life before: I belonged to a community of the neuro-diverse, understood the people behind their diagnoses, and, in being someone with such a disability, had authenticity in doing what I did. Professionally, I was better equipped to do work with this "demographic" than I had been before. Therefore, two aspects of me intervened in my PhD research process and its

¹⁷ Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1994). P. 2.

outcomes. As well as working as an applied theatre practitioner with Theatre Troupe throughout my research, I also experienced the emotional vicissitudes that come with my disability.

My Applied Theatre Background

In 2000, I founded the charity Rewrite with a friend and colleague, Sian Perez, in response to negative press coverage and attitudes towards refugee and asylum seekers, rife at the time. *Rewrite*, based in the London Borough of Southwark, brought young people together from refugee and non-refugee backgrounds to develop creative writing and theatre that would challenge prejudice and injustice. I led the organisation as Director for approximately five years. In 2005, I passed the reins to another project manager, and began working for Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre (GLYPT), as Refugee Voices Project Leader. In this role, I had the remit of developing applied theatre projects to support integration and belonging of young refugees in their communities. These included: projects for newly arrived refugees without school places, adapted practice for those who had no English; projects for adult refugee artists to build employment skills; projects which brought young people from migrant and non-migrant communities together in arts work. I also became a writer-in-residence for the company, creating Theatre in Education productions about social and cultural issues. In addition to my GLYPT employment, which was part-time, I also worked for a series of other organisations, as a freelance drama practitioner or external evaluator.

Background to the Theatre Troupe Model Pilot Project

In 2010, the Refugee Voices project ended and I was appointed as GLYPT's Associate Director, with a specific remit for diversity and inclusion. Artistic Director, Jeremy James, asked me to do a scoping exercise to ascertain whether there was a youth demographic that might benefit from applied theatre work. Influenced by my own experiences with mental health, I began consulting with professionals from Oxleas NHS Mental Health Trust and South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust (SLAM) Child & Adolescent Mental

Health Services (CAMHS). They said that young people with mental health problems missed out on educational and social opportunities, because their emotions and behaviour made it difficult for them to participate. A deciding factor in developing work for this group, was when a Service Manager for Lewisham CAMHS told us that a drama-based intervention 'may be more suitable for some of our young people than services we provide.'¹⁸ I accessed a TellUs4 survey in Greenwich, which showed that young people felt that they had no-one to talk to about their emotional experiences and wanted opportunities to meet peers and be able to safely engage in positive activities.¹⁹ Also, I held a focus group with the Youth Panel of the national mental health charity Young Minds. Based on this research, I developed the methodology and structure of a model of work that I thought might be suitable for young people with mental health problems. I called this Whatever Makes You Happy (WMYH). I ran a ten week pilot project in the summer of 2011, for young people aged between eleven and fourteen, in Woolwich, in the London Borough of Greenwich. Each session consisted of an hour-long drop-in workshop, called Safe Space, in which young people could come and chat to each other, sit with comfortable cushions, and other home touches, and have food. This was followed by a drama workshop. The project was staffed by two tutors, myself, and a dramatherapist. This personnel structure took into account feedback from CAMHS professionals, who suggested that having a therapist on site, for safeguarding and support, would make them more likely to refer. Subsequently, this project was funded by a three year grant from *Children in Need*, a national funding initiative, financed by a popular national television campaign.²⁰ I was the lead artist on this project until 2013, and manager until 2012. The success of the Woolwich project led us to expand into the London Borough of Lewisham, this time in partnership with the Horniman Museum, in Forest Hill. I left GLYPT in 2014.

¹⁸ Nick Topliss, interview by email, 2010.

¹⁹ Graham Kelly and others, *Tellus4 Evaluation, Department for Education, 2010, p11.*

²⁰ 'Together We Can Change Young Lives', *BBC Children in Need* <<https://www.bbcchildreninneed.co.uk/>> [accessed 17 December 2019].

There were several contributing factors to why I left WMYH behind, and, with Natasha Bergg, started Theatre Troupe. The first was personal circumstance: I set up WMYH before a mental health crisis, which resulted in my being unable to work for a considerable length of time. By the time I returned, the project had moved on. The format had shifted, and the evaluation methodology had changed. I needed to be able to design and manage methods, and lead artistic work if I were to use it for my PhD. I had also developed a working relationship with Bergg, who had worked alongside me in setting up WMYH. Bergg had her own practice, called Connect Play Create (CPC!), which shared considerable ground with WMYH. CPC! was a creative arts project, co-founded by Bergg and Jamie Wilcox, both graduates in MA Applied Theatre from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Its primary aim was to bring young people together through art activities, in a safe, relaxed and playful space. CPC! ran in 2013 and 2014, in Salt Lake City and Park City, Utah, in partnership with the Egyptian Theatre.²¹ Bergg and I both felt that our passion for the kind of work we did with marginalised young people would be suited to a new organisation for this demographic. It was an exciting opportunity for Bergg and me to collaborate and for us both to develop a distinct model with a defined practice and ideology.

Theatre Troupe

Bergg and I started Theatre Troupe in 2014. In our first year, we became a Community Interest Company (CIC) and set about preparing for the way forward. This involved a period of intense labour: having our organisation formally constituted, writing policies, finding and booking a venue, recruiting staff and volunteers, recruiting participants, fundraising, forming partnerships, producing publicity material. At the time, we were doing this voluntarily, attempting to fit it around other work and study and, despite our passion for what we were doing, it was taxing practically and emotionally. We were excited, but we were also frazzled. Neither of us had quite anticipated how hard it would be.

²¹ 'About', *Connect, Play, Create!*, 2013 <<https://connectplaycreate.wordpress.com/about/>> [accessed 19 December 2019].

In 2015, we received a funding grant from the John Horniman Children’s Trust, to fund our first project, TT@InSpire, named after the venue that we had selected for the workshop, a community hall underneath a church called InSpire.²² I had done work with Rewrite here over the years, and knew it not only as a pleasant and accessible space, but as a venue with a responsive and friendly management team. Knowing from previous experience, including at GLYPT, that a venue could “make or break” a workshop, this was an important consideration. We had spent a lot of time and effort arranging meetings with CAMHS professionals in inpatient and outpatient services, who had told us that they were sure they could ‘fill the places several times over.’²³ However, three days before the project began, we only had one referral from Southwark CAMHS. In haste, I went and presented at one of *Rewrite’s* projects for young refugees and was able to recruit two more participants. A further one joined from InSpire’s youth employment programme. TT@InSpire ran from November 2015 to July 2016 and was of variable success. We received further referrals from CAMHS, although not many, and from local schools services, which we pitched to once we realised CAMHS would not be a beneficial route. We always struggled to retain participants, and would often have sessions with only one or two young people. This could make workshop energy hard to manage, and workshops difficult to plan. Low attendance has been a problem across my career, and its roots would become clearer to me during the pilot project for this research. Nevertheless, we had some positive experiences with this project, establishing ourselves more firmly in the London Borough of Southwark, producing some strong artistic work and partnerships that would last into the future, and meeting and working with some inspiring young people.

As part of our drive to recruit young people for TT@InSpire, we had made contact with Treasure House CIC, an alternative education provider for young people who were not able to cope in mainstream settings due to school phobia, anxiety and other emotional barriers,

²² ‘Inspire at St Peter’s’, *Inspire at St Peter’s* <<https://www.in-spire.org.uk/>> [accessed 17 December 2019].

²³ Partha Banjeera meeting with author 15 July 2015

such as autism and dyslexia.²⁴ Treasure House operated from The Livesey Building on the Old Kent Road in Peckham, a listed building that had originally been built by Charles Livesey, owner of the gas works in the area 'for the benefit of the people in the [old] Parish of Camberwell.'²⁵ Beginning as a library in 1890, it had become the Livesey Museum of Childhood in 1966, a popular local museum that was eventually closed by the building's caretakers Southwark Council in 2008.²⁶ In 2014, Treasure House won the tender to run the building as a school and also develop it as a community resource. Staff at Treasure House were interested in our work and, because part of their remit for occupying the building was to open it up to the local community, they asked us to deliver a summer holiday programme for 9+ year olds, to help fulfil this commitment. We designed *Treasure Seekers* in accordance with Theatre Troupe's methodology.

In order to recruit for this project, we changed our recruiting strategy. Although we did outreach to CAMHS again (no referrals resulted from this route), we focused energy on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) departments at local schools. Then, we discovered a new referral route which was to streamline our recruitment strategy. Treasure House, as part of publicity for the project, sent a general mail-out about the project to the whole of the Social Services Safeguarding team in Southwark. Almost immediately we had several phone calls about places on the project, and, through this route, recruited sixty percent of all our participants. All of these were children who had acute and complex emotional difficulties as a result of abuse and neglect, and, therefore, were the demographic we wanted to target. Furthermore, although none of the referrals came via CAMHS, all the young people coming via the safeguarding team, were either current CAMHS' patients or had been offered appointments at CAMHS and had not taken them up. We came to understand a crucial factor in our referral process: unlike in CAMHS, social workers had a duty of care to young people to ensure that their clients engaged in meaningful extra-curricular activity. This was

²⁴ 'Providing Education for 14-19 Year Olds Who Cannot Cope in Mainstream Settings', *Treasure House (London) CIC* <<http://www.thlcic.org.uk/>> [accessed 17 December 2019].

²⁵ 'Livesey', *Treasure House (London) CIC* <http://www.thlcic.org.uk/?page_id=36> [accessed 17 December 2019].

²⁶ Naomi Long-Sriroktiam, interview with author, 7 November 2018.

often a challenge because the children found it difficult to engage in such activities, due to emotional and social difficulties. Because of the social workers' vested interest, retention and attendance were far better in Treasure Seekers than in TT@Inspire. At the end of the programme, seven young people of the eleven originally recruited had remained. Four of these were safeguarding team referrals. Whilst some young people left quite early on, the remaining children attended consistently throughout the week. Oliver Campbell and myself, with support from Bergg and with film-maker Kim Morrison, ran this art and drama group for five afternoons at the beginning of the summer holidays.

Readership

For this thesis, I was co-supervised in the Drama Department and in the Psychiatry Department at Queen Mary University, London (QMUL). Seeking to transfer new knowledge into the research canon, I write for two readerships that broadly correspond to these disciplines. As an applied theatre practitioner, I write from a position of expertise and experience in this field. My research and knowledge generation is directly relevant to these scholars and practitioners. As well as guidance on practice, I intend to define, for other practitioners, a moral/ethical framework that may be drawn on for their own work. I plan that this be helpful to those who conduct their own practice in sites where trauma experiences are high.

Also I write for a clinical or public health readership. My original intention was to put far more emphasis on framing the work in line with clinical paradigms and practices, especially by choosing a methodology and methods recognisable in these. This was with a view to funding other Theatre Troupe Models, as well as opening up these possibilities for other theatre-for-health initiatives. This intention broke down or, in Jenny Hughes's term, 'decomposed' during the research process, considerably shifting my evaluation

methodology, which I explore in detail in Chapter four.²⁷ I started by trying to keep myself out of the research, in the name of rigour and minimal bias. I finished embedded in it at every turn, including in my presentation of “findings” and “results”, which I write in the first person subjective, as a piece of storytelling. Therefore, for my readers in psychiatry, psychology and public health, I offer a story. It is the story of what happened in the TTM across the year, of the young people participating in the TTM. It gives a window into the applied theatre labour of working with the particular demographic. In clinical terms, these young people may have diagnoses or disorders. But in my account of the project, they are children who come in with holes in their shoes, with black eyes from yet another fight in the playground, with looks full of range and despair. I invite a readership of health professionals/researchers to see the way we, as artists, work with such children, and how this may offer new insight into their ways and needs. Importantly, this is, I hope, the meeting place for both readerships. For the children who are difficult to work with in applied theatre are also those who are resistant to other more formal interventions. They are also the children who don't turn up to appointments or for whom tried interventions do not seem to have an effect. I believe the account I give of the TTM pilot project shows why this might be, and, therefore, I hope it contributes to the field in an interdisciplinary way. Psychiatrists Lewis, Amini and Lannon state: ‘Long before science existed, sharp eyed men and women told each other stories about how people are, and stories have never lost their power to enchant and instruct.’²⁸ Their book, *A General Theory of Love*, has been a lyrical inspiration in this research, because it is written by psychiatrists, and champions a different perspective. They suggest, ‘Poetry [transpires] at the junction between feeling and understanding; because of the brain's design, emotional life defeats reason as much as a poem does.’²⁹ Poetry, I think, is a place where we all can meet, to consider what we might do for the children in our care.

²⁷ *Critical Perspectives on Applied Theatre*, ed. by Jenny Hughes and Helen Nicholson (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

²⁸ Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 1. Vintage edn (New York: Vintage, 2001), p.15.

²⁹ Lewis and others, p.4.

Research fields

In *Theatre and Therapy*, Fintan Walsh suggests that theatre and the therapeutic both have a long history, and similar approaches. They can ‘prompt’ us to reflect on our own thoughts, feelings and behaviour in the presence of others.³⁰ Theatre, like therapy, can ‘illuminate and stimulate mental and emotional activity.’³¹ Walsh suggests there are two ways in which the quest for individual change via theatre may be perceived: therapeutic *effect* and therapeutic *affect* [author's italics]. The former may be seen in a reaction to theatre that, by being so emotionally powerful, it may give a different perspective on life, changing tangible things. Theatre *affect* stems from an emotional impact that may, or may not, over time have subtle and resonant impact.³² Walsh delineates between “therapy” and the “therapeutic” in theatre.

Therapy

My research is situated alongside the formal therapies, but it is distinct from it. Walsh defines “therapy” as referring to a Western practice, which is particularly based on a Freudian therapeutic tradition. It is practised by those who train in and deliver a professional practice: psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors, who engage in ‘a structured encounter between an individual, and a group, and a therapist.’³³ This practice is, in the UK, provided predominantly through talking therapy, but has been taken as the basis for a number of art-based therapies, including psychodrama, and dramatherapy. A formalised theatre and therapy model emerged when Jacob Moreno pioneered a practice in the 1920s called Psychodrama (or the now rarely-used ‘Sociodrama’), which, in a departure from the theories of psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, was based on the concept of creative spontaneity. This developed into a model of group psychotherapy in 1932, in New York, and resulted in the founding of the American

³⁰ Fintan Walsh, *Theatre & Therapy* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).p.1.

³¹ Walsh, p.1.

³² Walsh, p.2.

³³ Walsh, p. 2-3.

Society of Group psychotherapy and psychodrama in 1942.³⁴ The British Psychodrama Association was established in 1984.³⁵ This is distinct from dramatherapy, although, as Walsh suggests, 'it shares clear links in its exploration of the value of creative engagement.'³⁶

Augusto Boal's *Rainbow of Desire* work is in a similar tradition, although it is not accredited practice. Boal is best known for his *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which has been highly influential in applied theatre. Inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), Hannah Fox and Abigail Leeder suggest it is a community-based theatre model that 'encourages participatory democracy, in which people can "reclaim their role as active transformative agents in the world" and liberate themselves from personal and institutional oppression.'³⁷ Boal wrote *Rainbow of Desire* in 1995, and in it he states that while *Theatre of the Oppressed* is interested in educational, social and therapeutic outcomes, *Rainbow of Desire* deals with therapeutic dimensions, to explore subjective experiences. Boal refers to 'theatric therapies,' in which those taking part in *Rainbow of Desire* exercises, take control of a course of action in view of others' stories.³⁸ Although Boal claimed 'theatre is not therapeutic, it is not therapy...' I believe that this belongs more readily in a paradigm in which drama/theatre techniques are used to explore 'psychological ... conscious and unconscious forces...'³⁹

Another unaccredited model, but again drawing on personal psychological material, Playback Theatre was developed by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas in the 1970s. In an improvisational model practised by a self-formed community of adults, the audience

³⁴ Walsh, p. 40.

³⁵ Walsh, p. 41.

³⁶ Walsh, p. 41.

³⁷ Hannah Fox and Abigail Leeder, 'Combining Theatre of the Oppressed, Playback Theatre, and Autobiographical Theatre for Social Action in Higher Education', *Theatre Topics*, 28.2 (2018), 101–11, p. 103-4., p.103.

³⁸ Walsh, p.46

³⁹ Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*, (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), p.27.

members' personal stories are told spontaneously by other members of the group, with the aim of enabling emotional and social understanding and healing.⁴⁰ Influenced by both psychodrama and concepts of ritual, Fox suggested that the impetus for Playback came from the instinct to 'recapture that kind of ceremonial enactment in which there is no distinction between art and healing, [and to] embody a transformational ritual that could be a source for hope without whitewashing what is wrong with the world.'⁴¹ Fox and Leeder suggest that although Playback grew up from 'therapeutic and artistic arenas', it is now used as a vehicle for social change.⁴²

Sitting alongside the practice of psychodrama, playback and rainbow of desire, it is fair to say the most widely practiced and known form of therapeutic drama/theatre today is dramatherapy. Dramatherapy as an exemplar, it is a useful point of comparison to Theatre Troupe's work, to understand the crucial differences of approach. From its emergence in the 1950s it is now widely practiced in countries across the world, and represented in the World Alliance of Dramatherapy, which was founded in 2017.⁴³ Unlike psychodrama, Walsh suggests that dramatherapists tend to be both artists and therapists [with] the artistic process usually leading to therapy' or as an early dramatherapy pioneer, Phil Jones, states: 'The drama does not serve the therapy. The drama process contains the therapy.'⁴⁴ Walsh states that there have been several significant influences and practitioners including: Peter Slade's *Child Drama* (1954); Brian Way *Development through Drama* (1967); and Marian Lindkvist who founded the Sesame Institute (1964). Dramatherapy also draws on some specific techniques and methodologies of applied theatre, especially Dorothy Heathcote's work, an educational drama approach that uses imaginary contexts to generate purposeful

⁴⁰ *The Applied Theatre Reader*, ed. by Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston, (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁴¹ Fox and Leeder, p.92.

⁴² Fox and Leder, p.103.

⁴³ 'World Alliance of Dramatherapy | Collaborating Members', *Wadt*

<<https://www.worldallianceofdramatherapy.com/collaborating-members>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

⁴⁴ Walsh, p.42.

and engaging activities for learning.⁴⁵ Dramatherapy seeks to ‘focus the intentional use of healing aspects of drama and theatre as the therapeutic process’, through ‘working and playing, [using] action methods to facilitate creativity, imagination, learning, insight and growth.’⁴⁶ Dramatherapy draws on several drama devices, and shares some ground with play therapy, both influenced by the work of Jean Piaget, as first laid out in *The Moral Judgement of the Child*, in 1982, and Psychoanalyst D.W Winnicott, who suggested, ‘Psychotherapy has to do with people playing together.’⁴⁷

Walsh considers Sue Jennings work as highly influential in ‘bridging educational and clinical contexts.’⁴⁸ Jennings’s influence on dramatherapy came initially from working in ‘remedial drama’ at a psychiatric hospital in the UK in the 1950s, when she was a drama student. In the 1970s, she completed a PhD in anthropology and began to call her work ‘dramatherapy.’⁴⁹ Walsh describes her as ‘a leading figure in development of drama in education and Dramatherapy worldwide.’⁵⁰ Given this influence, Jennings’s *Dramatherapy with families, groups and individuals* provides a useful overview for my purposes, of the form and practice.

“Drama” and “theatre,” suggests Jennings, have been used as part of ritual and healing process ‘for hundreds if not thousands of years.’⁵¹ ‘Dramatherapy as an art form’ states Jennings ‘has the potential for healing.’⁵² She suggests it is heavily influenced by the facets of history, including the presence of ritualistic and ancient forms such as masks, ritual performance events, and concepts of ‘sacred spaces.’ In this, it shares ground with theatre history and practice, which can be seen in, amongst others, the work of Richard Schechner,

⁴⁵ ‘Introduction to Mantle of the Expert’, *Mantle of the Expert* <<https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/what-is-moe/introduction-to-moe/>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

⁴⁶ Walsh, p. 44.

⁴⁷ D.W Winnicott in Walsh, p.14.

⁴⁸ Walsh, p.43.

⁴⁹ Walsh, p.44.

⁵⁰ Walsh, p.44.

⁵¹ Sue Jennings, *Dramatherapy with Families, Groups, and Individuals: Waiting in the Wings* (London: J. Kingsley Publishers, 1990).

⁵² Jennings, *Dramatherapy with Families, Groups and Individuals*, p.12.

who cites anthropologist Victor Turner as a major influence in performance (studies), in his perception of human behaviour as performative, and a matter of 'ritual drama and spectacle.'⁵³ Jennings also acknowledges that a Dramatherapy "toolkit" may include more recent practices such as improvisation and script-work; and a thorough knowledge of theatre practitioners, such as Stanislavski, Brecht and Grotowski.⁵⁴

Theatre/drama influences, Jennings maintains, must be combined with knowledge from clinical practice: psychology, psychiatry, human development and an understanding of the development of the brain, a precondition, given that dramatherapists, like art therapists, music therapists, dance and movement therapists, require accreditation from the Health and Care Professionals Council (HPCP) to practice. In this spirit, dramatherapy draws on strands of psychotherapy from Anna Freud, Melanie Klein and Carl Rogers.⁵⁵ Most recently, Jennings has advocated for the form to be examined in the context of neurobiology in her book *Attachments and neuro-dramatic play*.

The "drama" in dramatherapy, as Jennings writes of it, is often approached from a position of human development from infancy into adulthood. Drama can be seen as a process of rehearsal and performance in everyday life. As we develop, we play different roles, to understand multiple "selves". Central to this process, and consequently a formidable tool for dramatherapy, is play. Play is central to the human experiences and starts when babies start to dramatise through its means, a tenet of the 'ontological development of human beings'.⁵⁶ Jennings explains that dramatic play contains symbolism and is a liminal state, that '[d]ramatic play gives us a chance to keep a balance between our inner and outer selves.'⁵⁷ This developmental play necessarily includes the making and playing out of stories, 'which are not simply told but enacted and embodied.'⁵⁸ Jennings also argues that,

⁵³ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2006)., p.16.

⁵⁴ Jennings, *Dramatherapy with Families, Groups and Individuals*, p.9-10.

⁵⁵ Walsh, p.41.

⁵⁶ Jennings, *Dramatherapy with Families, Groups and Individuals*, p.15.

⁵⁷ Jennings, *Dramatherapy with groups, families and individuals*, p.14-15.

⁵⁸ Jennings, , *Dramatherapy with Families, Groups and Individuals*, p.17.

in dramatherapy, the deconstruction of the content of dreams, which contain aspects of the symbolism of myth, may allow 'the re-working of personal dramas' in order to deal with them' as they can show links or breaks between private and public stories and in doing so healing them.⁵⁹

Unlike Playback, Rainbow of Desire and Psychodrama, dramatherapy, Jennings strongly asserts, draws more readily on a 'once-removed' approach, using tools of myth and storytelling that may cause reflection on personal experiences without – necessarily – having to deconstruct them. In her book, Jennings presents several case studies which include imaginary scenarios carefully written by the therapist to be relevant to personal experiences, or texts which already exist, chosen to be relevant to individual's dilemma's and stories. For example, in Chapter one, Jennings describes using the Ancient Greek text *Antigone* for a group of clients from an academic institution, who had been referred for a dramatherapy programme to explore 'problems with pressures of expectation: she deems that this group can cope with the emotionally deep/heavy themes and language of Antigone at the remove from their actual situations.'⁶⁰

In sum, Jennings outlines five dramatherapy principles: '*The paradox of the drama*' that distance be established through role, scene or text enabling greater depth; '*the transformative potential of drama*' to enable a shift of self or other; '*the symbolic nature of drama*', enacting, telling and exploring material that is representative of someone's life; '*the dramatic metaphor*, an embodied, projected and enacted instrument that allows change to take place and '*non-interpretive drama*' the requirement not to interpret personal stories formally, in order not to block a complex multi-dimensional nature of a person's experiences. [author's italics].⁶¹

⁵⁹ Jennings, *Dramatherapy with groups, families and individuals*, p.17-18

⁶⁰ Jennings, *Dramatherapy with Families, Groups and Individuals*, p.23-24.

⁶¹ Jennings, *Dramatherapy with groups, families and individuals*, p.25.

Therapeutic

Walsh suggests the “therapeutic” ‘encapsulate[s] aims, practices, effects and affects of work that engages purposefully with mental and emotional experience.’⁶² Arguably this is exactly where Theatre Troupe’s practice sits. But, like much of the language that describes practices in which the “arts” in some way are connected to “wellbeing” or “health”, its vagueness for my research, is its pitfall. “Therapeutic” covers wide ground. Walsh’s book gives examples of practice that include actor training, audience engagement, therapeutic, dramaturgies, and relations in community theatre.⁶³ In *Applied Theatre: Performing Health and Wellbeing*, Katherine Low defines the categories of case studies represented in the book as two-pronged: ‘arts in health’ and ‘arts for health.’ This book also incorporates the same kind of practice described by Walsh: there are examples of performances about personal mental health journeys, projects that work with communities to improve health, projects that make performance from a health promotion perspective, and practice-as-research work that seeks to find new performance and dramaturgical forms.⁶⁴ There is not much variation between the “therapeutic” and arts for/in health in these texts. Where dramatherapy, *Rainbow of Desire* techniques and Playback Theatre have clear approaches, with theoretical influences and boundaries around the practice, applied theatre approaches for/in health, or “therapeutic theatre” are extremely broad.

My inquiry is firmly in the applied theatre paradigm. But beyond this, for me, Walsh and Low’s descriptions are too nebulous. Low’s definitions of ‘Arts for Health’ and ‘Arts in Health’ collide in their language, with descriptions of Arts for/with/by Health that are part of the neoliberal-focused Arts and Health/Wellbeing field. This I critique in Chapter One. *Applied Theatre: Performing Health and Wellbeing* is firmly in opposition to the capitalist bent, but, nevertheless, the language used is too similar for me to the neoliberal language use of wellbeing.⁶⁵ There is also a matter of perspective. The book firmly asserts that it

⁶² Walsh, p. v.

⁶³ Walsh, p. v.

⁶⁴ Low in ‘Applied Theatre: Performing Arts and Wellbeing.’, p.7.

⁶⁵ Low in ‘Applied Theatre: Performing Arts and Wellbeing’, p.7.

must be the arts that lead the way: 'we believe that without a creative, aesthetic focus, arts and health practice can be commodified whereby the art should serve the goals of the health message, public health provider or funders...' Where instrumentalist practice is discussed in this book, it is rigorously critiqued.⁶⁶ I believe this is a pertinent concern. It is one I have encountered throughout my research. The Arts and Health field seems to be spearheaded by non-artists, who are enthusiastic about the arts' (in general) as a way to improve health, but show little interest in the individual qualities that different art-forms might bring.

Therefore, to extricate myself from some of these confusions, and what Walsh calls 'therapeutic', and Low calls Arts for or in Health, I situate my research at a short distance from the above fields of research. By doing so, I intend to highlight problematic semantic constructs and how they relate to ideological or artistic agendas. This is not to say that my work stands entirely alone. There are many clear links to other practice, described by Low and Walsh. But for the purposes of my study, I find it helpful for the research to be kicking around in the long grass, at the perimeters of a series of these fields, acknowledging that I am a little out in the cold, but also gaining fresh perspective by watching from the sidelines.

Research imperatives and contribution to research

It is in my research's imperative to stress that the unique marginalisation factors that Theatre Troupe children face, make them especially hard to reach. Economically, socially, and educationally, they are used to being rejected and excluded. There is a real need, I argue, for work with this demographic. The link between mental illness and trauma is strong. Some estimates indicate that children exposed to multiple traumatic events are thirty times more likely to have behaviour and learning problems than those not exposed.⁶⁷ The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, a longitudinal research project in 1998,

⁶⁶ Low in 'Applied Theatre: Performing Arts and Wellbeing', p.7.

⁶⁷ V. G. Carrion and others, 'Reduced Hippocampal Activity in Youth with Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms: An FMRI Study', *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 35.5 (2010), 559-69.

claims that indicators of adult morbidity and mortality are correlated with ACEs, with outcomes poorer according to the number of ACEs experienced. This includes a higher likelihood of being involved in the criminal justice system, and becoming addicted to substances.⁶⁸ A report from the NSPCC suggests that young people who have been abused or neglected have a significantly higher chance of developing mental health problems. 'Abuse can derail a child's development' state Bentley et al, 'and can have a significant impact on their health, wellbeing and on how their life turns out.'⁶⁹ Sixty percent of Children Looked After (CLA) have experienced some form of abuse and neglect. CLA in England are four times more likely to develop a mental health difficulty than their peers.⁷⁰

The need for a way to reduce distress for these survivors is urgent, as Bentley et al outline:

Ask people what childhood should be like, and they'll say it's about playing with friends and exploring new worlds. We want our children to have a childhood full of fun and learning and love. Contrast this with the fact that, in the last year, there were more than 23,000 ChildLine counselling sessions with children about their experiences of abuse and neglect...This is not what we want childhood to be like. It's time to fight for the childhoods we want our children to have.⁷¹

In trauma survivors, mental health care is especially poor. Bentley et al state '[t]here is no automatic entitlement to an assessment or on-going support for a child who has experienced abuse. Too often they do not reach the rising clinical thresholds for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and many are at crisis point before they receive help.'⁷² In a 2015 NSPCC survey of professionals from across the UK, ninety eight per cent said that there were not enough therapeutic services for abused children in their area.⁷³ Snelle suggests it is time to '[acknowledge] our own failure to protect vulnerable children, and

⁶⁸ Vincent J Felitti and others, 'Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14.4 (1998), 245–58.

⁶⁹ 'Bentley and others, How Safe Are Our Children? The Most Comprehensive Overview of Child Protection in the UK 2016', p.6.

⁷⁰ David Berridge, 'Theory and Explanation in Child Welfare: Education and Looked-after Children', *Child & Family Social Work*, 12.1 (2007), 1–10, p.7.

⁷¹ Bentley and others, p.6.

⁷² Bentley and others, p.6.

⁷³ Bentley and others, p.6.

[take] responsibility for the suffering they have experienced...More than anything it means finding it in ourselves to offer compassion to those who need it.⁷⁴ This, then, needs to be considered in the context of a national picture of child and adolescent mental health which, to take a cross section of words and phrases used to describe it, is to paint a picture of a catastrophe: 'a Cinderella service';⁷⁵ unacceptably poor,⁷⁶ 'woeful',⁷⁷ 'inadequate at best'⁷⁸, 'disgraceful and utterly shaming'.⁷⁹ Young people who have experienced trauma may have another factor in common. They often live in poverty. Although '[p]overty is neither a necessary nor sufficient factor in the occurrence of childhood abuse and neglect,' writes Bywater, 'there is a link between those in poverty experiencing high rates of abuse and neglect.'⁸⁰ A report, *The relationships between poverty child abuse and neglect*, concludes that this may be because of several factors, including the effect of the stress, of material hardship or lack of money to buy in support, and the effects of shame of being in straightened conditions.⁸¹

The poverty that children and their families face is, as of itself, traumatic, and, I assert, amounts to neglect. The NSPCC defines neglect as, 'the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's

⁷⁴ 'From Care to Incarceration: The Relationship between Adverse Childhood Experience and Dysfunctionality in Later Life' | The Independent' <<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/from-care-to-incarceration-the-relationship-between-adverse-childhood-experience-and-10409737.html>> [accessed 11 December 2019].

⁷⁵ 'NHS Providers' <<https://nhsproviders.org/news-blogs/blogs/the-cinderella-service-there-s-no-fairy-tale-ending-for-children-s-mental-health>> [accessed 11 December 2019].

⁷⁶ All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health (2015), *Parity in progress? The All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health's inquiry into parity of esteem for mental health*, UK Parliament, p.10.

⁷⁷ Denis Campbell and Jamie Doward, 'Care for Children with Mental Health Problems Is Woeful, Say GPs', *The Observer*, 14 May 2016, section Society <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/may/14/children-mental-health-care-woeful-gps>> [accessed 11 December 2019].

⁷⁸ 'NHS Mental Health Services Failing Young People, Say Psychiatrists | Society | The Guardian' <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/26/nhs-mental-health-services-failing-young-people-say-psychiatrists>> [accessed 11 December 2019].

⁷⁹ James Munby (2017) in Neutral citation number [2017] EWHC 2036 (Fam) 'In the matter of child x', London: The Royal Courts of Justice ,p. 3.

⁸⁰ 'Paul Bywaters and others, The Relationship between Poverty, Child Abuse and Neglect: An Evidence Review', *JRF*, 2016, p.2.

⁸¹ 'Paul Bywaters and others, The Relationship between Poverty, Child Abuse and Neglect: An Evidence Review', *JRF*, 2016 <<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/relationship-between-poverty-child-abuse-and-neglect-evidence-review>> [accessed 19 December 2019].

health or development.’⁸² The increase in child poverty over the last decade has resulted in children living, on average, further below the poverty line than they did seven years ago.⁸³ This has been attributed to an ideological rather than necessarily economic cause, despite what the UK government has claimed. In 2016, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights found British economic reforms to be against human rights. Its authors were ‘deeply concerned’, singling out various changes in entitlements, and cuts in social benefits. It concluded that the UK government was failing ‘to meet their obligation to mobilise the maximum available resources for the implementation of economic and cultural rights.’⁸⁴ In 2018, Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, concluded in his statement on visiting the UK and talking to its citizens:

The UK is the world’s fifth largest economy, it contains many areas of immense wealth, its capital is a leading centre of global finance, its entrepreneurs are innovative and agile, and despite the current political turmoil, it has a system of government that rightly remains the envy of much of the world. It thus seems patently unjust and contrary to British values that so many people are living in poverty. This is obvious to anyone who opens their eyes to see the immense growth in foodbanks and the queues waiting outside them, the people sleeping rough in the streets, the growth of homelessness, the sense of deep despair that leads even the Government to appoint a Minister for suicide prevention and civil society to report in depth on unheard of levels of loneliness and isolation.⁸⁵

Given this, it is fair to assume that the trauma young people face is more complex than being survivors of relational abuse and neglect. The existing burden is further intensified by the dire state of a range of social and health care services for young people.

⁸² Bentley and others, p.6.

⁸³ Abby Jitendra (2018) ‘You can;t live on this air: The Wait for Universal Support’, *Poverty*, 160, London: Child Poverty Action Group.

⁸⁴ ‘The UN Declares the UK’s Austerity Policies in Breach of International Human Rights Obligations’ <<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/06/un-declares-uk-s-austerity-policies-breach-international-human-rights>> [accessed 18 June 2019].

⁸⁵ ‘OHCHR | Statement on Visit to the United Kingdom, by Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights’ <<https://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=E&NewsID=23881>> [accessed 22 June 2019].

Symbolic Violence and the Arts and Health/Wellbeing movement

If my research is not situated within the Arts and Health field, then I hope I may contribute new research by casting a lens on its ideology and practices. A discussion of this forms Chapter One. Arts and Health is a burgeoning field. An All Party Parliamentary Group report, *Creative Health* states ‘that the time has come to advertise the fact.’⁸⁶ But, a key finding for me, in the course of my doctoral study, is that Arts and Health/Wellbeing stems from a neoliberal agenda, because it is rooted in the Positive Psychology movement and Happiness Economics. In this context, the arts are seen as primed to usefully accrue capital for Big Business and Government.⁸⁷ The hegemony compels those in mental distress to improve themselves by proactively taking steps to become well. If they fail in this, blame is squarely placed at their door. However, this divisive agenda is obscured from view by use of words such as “positive” or “happiness,” and those of us who seek to use arts to ameliorate distress, can be manipulated into jumping on the bandwagon. As Farah Jarral comments about the Positive Psychology current craze, Resilience, ‘what’s not to like?’⁸⁸ I state this because, for a while, I too succumbed. In my applied theatre work Arts and Health/Wellbeing seemed an exciting place in which to be situated, with potential to open up funding strands. However, that is, I assert, an example of what Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron call Symbolic Violence. This is their term for ‘the imposition on subordinated groups by the dominant class of an ideology which legitimates and naturalizes the status quo.’⁸⁹ In my critique of Arts and Health/Wellbeing, I use, in particular, William Davies *The Happiness Industry: How government and big business sold us wellbeing*.⁹⁰ I hope that this critique will be useful for those in applied theatre fields, but also other artist-

⁸⁶ ‘Creative Health Inquiry Report 2017 - Second Edition by Alexandra Coulter - Issuu’ <https://issuu.com/alexandracoulter5/docs/creative_health_inquiry_report_2017_bd5edea9d662b7> [accessed 11 December 2019].p.4.

⁸⁷ William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being*, (London: Verso Books, 2015).

⁸⁸ ‘BBC Radio 4 - Keywords for Our Time, Resilience’, *BBC* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09wg6gp>> [accessed 12 December 2019].

⁸⁹ Oxford reference dictionary online

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100546777>

⁹⁰ Davies, p.7.

practitioners who may encounter the opportunity to, or not, join the Positive Psychology movement.

Attunement

In Chapter Two, I discuss the underpinning theory that informs the Theatre Troupe Model (TTM). To my knowledge, there is no theatre work that specifically uses both ideas from Attachment Theory and concepts from theories of neurobiological attunement, what Alan Schore has coined Regulation Theory.⁹¹ There have been some explorations into areas of this in the United States. Neurobiologist Bessel Van Der Kolk has tracked three theatre initiatives, Urban Improv, The Possibility Project and Sentenced to Shakespeare, which have worked with trauma survivors. But these are shorter studies, and do not involve a specific model of theatre.⁹² Apart from this, there is little practice or research. There are several reasons why I believe this is an apposite approach. Firstly, it is evidentially resistant to neoliberal Wellbeing agendas, which place “self-sufficiency” and “resilience” as desirable goals. It is useful to be able to challenge Positive Psychology with the alternative theories of attachment and attunement. The psychological, biological evidence of these suggests that it is actually vital to interact with others for fundamental health. Lack of caring relationships have been shown to lower immunity, and lead to a range of diseases in later life.⁹³ Attachment Theory and Regulation Theory also are germane to the group of young people that TTM works with because, although they have been neurobiologically damaged by trauma, brain plasticity may allow that trauma to be healed by effective interventions. The work of the research is to question whether theatre might be one of these.

⁹¹ Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development*, (Hillsdale, N.J. Hove: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1994).

⁹² Bessel A Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*, (UK: Penguin Books, 2015), p. 330-346.

⁹³ Sue Jennings and Chloe Gerhardt, *Healthy Attachments and Neuro-Dramatic-Play* (London ; Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011), p.118-119.

Although my research looks to apply Attachment Theory, I do not claim that I apply it rigorously or with psychological qualification. This is clearly beyond my expertise as a theatre practitioner. But I intend it to reflect the “spirit” of the research, in as detailed and grounded way as possible. Interestingly, the language that is used to describe attunement and its neurobiology is often described by clinical researchers, when communicating ideas to a wider public, in poetic terms, such as describing the intricate neural engagement between child and mother as ‘communicative musicality’⁹⁴ or describing emotions’ synaptic processes as ‘mental mayflies, rapidly spawned and dying almost as quickly as they arrive’.⁹⁵ This is one of the reasons I have been drawn to these theories. In this context, it is another place where the two disciplines meet.

In terms of specific theory, I am drawing on the Dynamic Maturational Model of Attachment (DMM), developed by Patricia Crittenden. (Crittenden 1981; 1982; 1983; 1985; 1988; 1992; 1994; 1995; 2000; 2006; Crittenden & Ainsworth 1989; Crittenden et al 2007; Crittenden et al 2013; Crittenden et al 2014; Crittenden & Baim 2017; Crittenden & Spieker 2018). This theory suggests that, rather than seeing children as being damaged by trauma, and therefore victims, we should instead see the effects of trauma in adaptation terms: the strategies that young people have unconsciously developed to help them survive, but which, to an outside observer, look like patterns of deviance. This means that the lens with which we perceive them should be respect rather than pity. I especially rely on Clark Baim’s clear and accessible work *Attachment Based Practice with Adults* to make the wider theory relevant and usable for non- psychotherapists.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Colwyn Trevarthen, ‘Infant Semiosis: The Psycho-Biology of Action and Shared Experience from Birth’, *Cognitive Development*, 36 (2015), 130–41, p. 131.

⁹⁵ Lewis and others, p.23.

⁹⁶ Clark Baim, Tony Morrison, and Jo Hathaway, *Attachment-Based Practice with Adults: Understanding Strategies and Promoting Positive Change: A New Practice Model and Interactive Resource for Assessment, Intervention and Supervision*, 2011 <<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10863023>> [accessed 6 November 2019].

In Chapter Three, I start from the concept of vulnerability and neuroplasticity. The use of Attachment Theory for the Theatre Troupe Model (TTM) differs from the majority of research in the field in that it does not focus on the infant period. In this regard it interests itself in the growing field of neurobiological plasticity in later childhood and adolescence. Also, the TTM is premised on the fact that a system of people interacting together, rather than being alone, may provide good attachments. I hypothesise that a theatre company, or a “troupe”, is a useful vehicle for reducing mental distress. These are that a theatre troupe belongs in its local community, is *of* its community, a respected and sought after group of people for the important communal occasions of carnival and festival. I explore theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and the medieval carnivalesque, but also suggest a new theory, the *festivalesque*, my term after Bakhtin. This is the focused process of labour that is required to prepare for community festival celebrations. I include as part of this element of my Theory of Change an idea that a Troupe community is a place to be safely vulnerable. Historically, troupes have faced rejection: they have been chased out of the church or been shut down by city officials, with players imprisoned or reviled. But the troupe offered protection against a hostile world. Certainly this is one of the ambitions of the TTM, for its members.

Methods

To present the evidence gathered from the TTM, testing its Theory of Change and exploring other outcomes and learning, I use a piece of original writing - a lyrical subjective account of the year's activities. Melisa Cahnman and Teri Holbrook suggest that creative writing, as an ethnographic tool, is useful because writers ‘bring the rhythm and imagination of creative writing to an anthropological tradition.’ It is freeing, they state, because they can ‘name and claim feeling, story and relationship.’⁹⁷ This was far from my original intention. I entered into my research with a determination to adopt an objective, quantitative, clinically recognised methodology. But ultimately, wrestling with competing

⁹⁷ Melisa Cahnmann and Teri Holbrook, ‘Uncovering Creative Writing in Anthropology’, *Anthropology News*, 45.9 (2004), 27–27

methodologies, which included understanding their political agendas, brought me back to where I first started my professional life, as a writer. The Theatre Troupe model pilot project was an exhausting, confusing, soul-destroying experience, yet it was also uplifting, breathtaking, and life-affirming. I felt the need to articulate this, as an intrinsic part of the research process. Also, a particular finding in the pilot project - and one that evidenced the value of such an approach for trauma survivors - was that incremental changes or fleeting moments found in the rich description were important signs of change, and recognised by the Troupe team as such. Each week, after each session, staff and volunteers met to evaluate/feedback on the session. These conversations were recorded. They included all of the voices of the team, and directly reported speech and actions of young people. As well as this, they gave a sense of the emotional labour of the project, which was considerable, and of the attunement practices that not only were observed and recorded as having occurred in the workshop, but were occurring, in that moment, as staff came together in camaraderie, and support. One of the findings of this research is that this sense of togetherness between adult members of the Troupe strengthened opportunities for a sense of belonging and a reduction of distress in children. They are augmented by interviews with young people, volunteers and staff, professionals and a parent, and additionally, some feedback questionnaires. My utilisation of methods is addressed in Chapter four.

This is why I present my findings as a piece of autobiographical creative writing. This is closely informed by the transcripts and other additional qualitative methods. It is also informed by my insider's perspective, of being an artist and manager of THYT. This is presented in Chapter Five. I have called it *The Way to Optimistic Land*, which references the name of the play that THYT produced and performed in July 2017. Because it is a story, it is my longest chapter. In this study, it is the account of a pilot project testing its theory of change.

My final chapter is an analysis of the happenings at THYT. I focus on key findings and codify them in terms of what I think the major insights from the pilot project have been. I focus

this particular chapter at an applied theatre reader, offering a how-to approach to replicate the TTM in other settings, but subversively, since I suggest the work is not reducible to ‘techniques and toolkits.’⁹⁸

In *Fruits of Solitude*, in 1693, William Penn wrote, as part of his “enchiridion,” or life manual:

We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive or gain by Love and information. And yet we could hurt no Man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do. For if men did once see we Love them, we should soon find they would not harm us.⁹⁹

Penn’s purposes were on a somewhat grander scale than mine: he was to found Pennsylvania in the United States, and was ‘also an early champion of democracy and religious freedom, notable for his good relations and successful treaties with the Lepage Indians in 1682.’¹⁰⁰ Yet it is a useful maxim for an ambition for the Troupe Intervention Model. Let us *try* what love can do, suggests Penn [my italics]. Let us see beyond the behaviours and actions that make it seem like the children we work with want to harm not only us, but themselves, the children that try to make loving them almost impossible. Let us try what happens when we cast a compassionate lens upon them. For if we do, then we shall see that they do not want to harm us. We will see that they are oppositional and defiant not because they choose to be, or have inherent malice within them. We will see that actually they want to love us, and to be loved by us, but that everything that life has thrown at them, including the shame and desolation created by punitive neoliberal policies designed to deliberately isolate and individualise them, makes this a hard thing to do. ‘Youth culture is cynical about love.’ writes bell hooks. ‘And that cynicism has come from

⁹⁸ Prentki, ‘The Applied Theatre Reader’, p.2.

⁹⁹ William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude in Reflections & Maxims*, (Place of publication not identified: Hardpress Publishing, 2012). Verse 543-545.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Some Fruits of Solitude in Reflections and Maxims, 1682 Ebook by William Penn’, *Rakuten Kobo* <<https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/some-fruits-of-solitude-in-reflections-and-maxims-1682>> [accessed 18 December 2019].

their pervasive feeling that love cannot be found.¹⁰¹ So, we start with tackling this. We start with an attunement, a process of love, with “love” as a verb rather than a noun.¹⁰² Both in the work of the Troupe and through this research process we - me, the young people, other staff and volunteers on the programme - have tried what love can do. This research is the account of what happened when we did.

¹⁰¹ bell hooks, *All about Love: New Visions*, First Perennial edition (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), p.4.

¹⁰² hooks, p.4.

Chapter One: Arts and Health

In July 2017, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Arts and Mental Health, with support from inquiry partners the National Alliance for Arts, Health and Wellbeing, King's College London, the Royal Society for Public Health and Guy's and St Thomas' Charity, published *Creative Health*, its inquiry report on Arts, Health and Wellbeing.¹⁰³ It states 'it is time to recognise the powerful contribution the arts can make to health and wellbeing.' There are, suggests the report, 'many examples and much evidence of the beneficial impact they can have...the arts can help keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives better lived. We think that the time has come to advertise this fact.'¹⁰⁴

Creative Health is an extensive report - at almost two hundred pages - that covers the beneficial role of arts in health contexts from a range of perspectives. In broad categories, it examines arts and health projects in place, environments and communities, and arts intervention for health at different stages through the life course. The report defines a working definition of "the arts" as 'the visual and performing arts, crafts, dance, film, literature, music and singing...gardening – which is considered as a form of creativity... and...the culinary arts.'¹⁰⁵ It is thorough in advocating for practice from several angles: listening to, reading or being read to, seeing, witnessing, experiencing and in participation, making, doing, learning. It is extremely enthusiastic that the arts can intervene in all health contexts and situations, and 'increase control over life circumstances, inspire change and growth, engender a sense of belonging, prompt collective working, promote healing and much more besides.'¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ 'Creative Health Inquiry Report 2017 - Second Edition by Alexandra Coulter <https://issuu.com/alexandracoulter5/docs/creative_health_inquiry_report_2017_bd5edea9d662b7> [accessed 11 December 2019]. p.7.

¹⁰⁴ Coulter, p.4.

¹⁰⁵ Coulter, p.18.

¹⁰⁶ Coulter, p.20

This seems exciting. Those of us already passionate about the impact of the arts on feeling and being, and doing better, have validation here, and from Parliament no less. The report gives considerable space to ways in which arts work may reduce the cost burden of disease by creative means, and makes a case for organisations to be part of a commissioned model, as for example, in ‘social prescribing.’ It seems to make a case for arts organisations to be funded in this way. This, I considered, when I first read it, could be an excellent way for my/our work to be taken seriously and funded accordingly. It was a fair assumption that Theatre Troupe was at home in the field of Arts and Health (and/or its subtype Arts and Wellbeing). It would, therefore, also be a fair assumption that this research would also fall into this paradigm. Indeed, there are several dedicated research centres for this cause including, The Sidney de Haan Centre for Arts and Health at Canterbury Christ Church, Kent, Manchester Metropolitan University Centre for Arts and Health, The Arts and Health Research Programme at the University of the West of England, and The Centre for Arts and Wellbeing at the University of Winchester.

This chapter, however, explores why this assumption is dangerous. The Arts and Health movement, I suggest, is complicit in neoliberal agendas. Yet it is presented as benign. It is important to me that my work does no harm. Given that part of my research is to open up possibilities for approaches in the work to others, a political and ethical position needs to be part of its methodology. The Arts and Wellbeing movement does seek to ameliorate, but it does so, I believe, to the end that its beneficiaries may offer utility to the neoliberal project. I hope other artists drawing on the Theatre Troupe Model’s theory can resist these pressures. Therefore, to critique the “naturalness” of Wellbeing, I am applying Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s theory of Symbolic Violence.

Capital

In 1948, the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued a definition of “health” as a ‘state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.’ A 2005 report *Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice*,

focused specifically on the “Wellbeing” part of the definition, which, its authors suggest, ‘has been historically misunderstood and often forgotten.’ The report accentuated its importance in the light of this.¹⁰⁷ ‘Mental Health’ they say, ‘is everybody’s business.’¹⁰⁸ The report puts “wellbeing” in the context of many different determinants including social brain research;¹⁰⁹ international mental health;¹¹⁰ mental health and human rights;¹¹¹ and the social and economic determinants of mental health. The overall thrust of the report is to suggest that “wellbeing” shifts the emphasis from a disease-centred perspective to positive mental health.¹¹² Positive mental health encapsulates mental health promotion and illness prevention. It advocates, therefore, for a social capital approach.

Whiteford and Cullen describe social capital as ‘networks of relationships:... institutions, networks, norms, reciprocity and social trust that shape the quality and quantity of social interactions and facilitate collective action, coordination and mutual benefit.’¹¹³ Twenty years research, they claim, links social capital ‘with economic development, the effectiveness of human service systems and community development.’ It ‘has also been shown to decrease transaction costs in the production and delivery of goods and services, thereby improving productivity and efficiency. The authors of the report maintain that ‘the functioning of democracy, more efficient government, decreased corruption and the reduction of inequality within a society can be brought about by social capital as an important global asset.’¹¹⁴

Creative Health engages with the notion of social capital, in which it suggests ‘the importance of networks in sustaining solidarity and mutual support.’¹¹⁵ It is ‘part of the

¹⁰⁷ *Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice*, ed. by Helen Herrman and others (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005), p.7.

¹⁰⁸ Herrman and others, p.11.

¹⁰⁹ Insel in Herrman and others, p.13.

¹¹⁰ Sturgeon and Auley in Herrman and others, p.59.

¹¹¹ Drew and others in Herrman and others, p.81.

¹¹² Koves-Masvety and others, in Herrman, p.35.

¹¹³ Whiteford and Cullen in Herrman and others, p.52.

¹¹⁴ Whiteford and Cullen in Herrman and others, p.22-23.

¹¹⁵ Coulter, p.78.

social dimension [which also] includes belonging and identity, sociability and new connections, bonding...reducing social inequalities and reciprocity.¹¹⁶ This rendering of “capital” has inveigled its way into other accepted terminology in other forms, especially in Wellbeing arenas. In 2008, the UK government’s Foresight project, part of the Office for Science, published *Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the Most of ourselves in the Twenty-first Century*. The report suggests that ‘to prosper and thrive in our changing society and in an increasingly interconnected and competitive world, both our mental and material resources will be vital.’¹¹⁷ In furtherance of the ideology that the market could be used to define and determine all aspects of life, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government, in 2010, implemented a survey to gauge the nation’s wellbeing levels, with a view to assessing and capitalising on what they called GWB (General Wellbeing), a deliberate echo of the economic acronym GDP (Gross Domestic Product). In a speech introducing this concept, Prime Minister David Cameron stated ‘We’ll continue to measure GDP as we’ve always done, but it is high time we admitted that, taken on its own, GDP is an incomplete way of measuring a country’s progress.’ The report would give ‘a general picture of how life is improving, and help the country to re-evaluate its priorities in life.’¹¹⁸

The term “social factory” was coined by Mario Tronti in 1966 in *Workers and Capital*.¹¹⁹ Tronto, a member of the ‘Italian Laboratory’ was one of several writers who suggested that late twentieth century/ early twenty first century notions of ‘the “social” had become a useful commodity for capitalist production.’¹²⁰ The Italian Laboratory transposes Marxist theories of material labour and capitalist production from the factory to the realm of the

¹¹⁶ Couter, p.18.

¹¹⁷ ‘Mental Capital and Wellbeing: Making the Most of Ourselves in the 21st Century: (592742011-001)’, (2008), p.1.

¹¹⁸ ‘PM Speech on Wellbeing’, *GOV.UK* <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-wellbeing>> [accessed 11 December 2019].

¹¹⁹ Mario Tronti and David Broder, *Workers and Capital*, English-language edition (London; New York: Verso, 2019).

¹²⁰ Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, ‘In the Social Factory?: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25.7–8 (2008), 1–30, p.10.

social, the 'factory without walls.'¹²¹ In the decades in which neoliberalism has taken hold, they attest, there has been a shift towards a different competitive arena of capitalism, which takes as its mode of transaction a 'social reconstruction.' The social has become a useful commodity for capitalist production. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggest that, in place of economic capital, a new way to look at work and its place in capitalist society is the existence of 'immaterial labour' which produced immaterial goods such as 'service, cultural product knowledge or communication.'¹²² In original Marxism, factory workers are forced to produce economic capital for the dominant classes. In the 'social factory', they contribute mental/social/cultural capital for the same cause.

William Davies rigorously challenges a human-as-capital agenda in *The Happiness Industry: How Government and Big Business Sold Us Wellbeing*. Davies claims that the acceptance of people as commodities is not a 'natural' way to think as the Foresight Project report, *Wellbeing in the Twenty First Century*, suggests, but has emerged from a dominant neoliberal agenda, controlled by 'those with an interest in social control... very often for private profit.'¹²³ Davies argues that an enthusiasm for social/cultural/mental capital developed in response to the need for profit margins to improve. Big Business found itself in trouble, Davies argues, when, in the 1990s, a decline in employee engagement manifested as a lack of enthusiasm and a general ennui. Hitherto fears of mass protest and violence did not materialise but this new phenomenon arguably threatened to drive productivity down.^{124 125} In state contexts, this '[l]ack of engagement from the workforce also registers as a problem for governments inasmuch as it bites into economic output and in doing so hits tax receipts.'¹²⁶ A rise in chronic health problems related to mental

¹²¹ Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005), p.79.

¹²² Gill and Pratt, p.11.

¹²³ William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (London: Verso Books, 2015), p.7.

¹²⁴ The autonomists actually suggest this should be part of resistance of the status quo in which the precariat deliberately engage in 'slacking' to undermine work-force agendas.

¹²⁵ Davies, p.105.

¹²⁶ Davies, p.106.

discomfort caused by loneliness and stress, led not only to work absences but to higher spending in health and social care. 'The hard economic costs that ennui now places upon employers and governments means that human misery has shown up as a chronic problem that the elites cannot simply shove aside.'¹²⁷ "Happiness Economics" is one of the responses to such a problem. Rather than addressing the social conditions that workers face, a cheaper (and ideologically more appealing) option was found: through training, education and product, people would be pushed to address their own misery through personal "striving". Neoliberalism, suggests Lazzarato, is against "social justice" that is non-economic.¹²⁸ Wellbeing is made capital.

Pierre Bourdieu uses the term 'cultural capital' to explain the dynamics of social inequality that are replicated through education (1973; 1977). Social capital, is 'the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.'¹²⁹ Like the autonomists after him, Bourdieu wrote of non-economic capital to describe a process in which those in positions of power (generally he refers to the bourgeois classes) maintained that power due to a predetermined cultural asset. This "capital" gave them access to opportunities and influence not available to the working classes.¹³⁰ *Habitus* describes the process in which forced habits and norms are so ingrained in people that they do not recognise they are there and therefore accept dispossession as the "truth". Although *Habitus* is imposed by those in a dominant position, it is so invisible that the underclass assumes this is how it should be. Bourdieu particularly focuses on the way in which bourgeois society, whilst having received social advantage through (not always known) collusion with those in political power, would reinvent the status quo by imposing their own agenda from generation to generation.

¹²⁷ Davies, p.108.

¹²⁸ Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Neoliberalism in Action: Inequality, Insecurity and the Reconstitution of the Social', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26.6 (2009), 109–33, p.117.

¹²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p119.

¹³⁰ Bourdieu and Wacquant, p.119.

Cooper et al state '[t]he idea of "capital" naturally sparks association with ideas of financial capital and it is ...natural to think of the mind in this way'.¹³¹ Bourdieu's concept of Habitus is expanded in a theory of Symbolic Violence, in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, co-authored with Jean-Claude Passeron in 1977. Whilst drawing on many of the same ideas as Bourdieu's earlier work, *Foundations of a theory of Symbolic Violence* gives a distinct critical framework of the dynamic between dominant agendas (Pedagogic Actions or PAs), the dominant classes, groups or individuals applying those agendas (Pedagogic Authority or PAu), and how these interplay in a process of dissemination to the oppressed classes (Pedagogic Work or PW). The authors suggest that the mechanism of Symbolic Violence is 'a substitute for physical constraint: physical repression (internment in a prison or asylum)...bought to substitute the failures of a cultural arbitrary.' They argue, '*[e]very power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations*'^{132 133} In this rubric, they suggest, the hegemony - whether religious, political, or educational - presents an arbitrary idea, but does so in a way that its arbitrary nature is taken as the truth:

The selection of meanings which objectively defines a group's or a class's culture as a symbolic system is arbitrary insofar as the structure and functions of that culture cannot be deduced from any universal principle, physical, biological and spiritual, not being linked by any internal relation to 'the nature of things' or 'any human nature.'

'[T]he PA seeks to reproduce the cultural arbitrary of the dominant or dominated classes'¹³⁴

The PA is the way in which knowledge or 'diffuse education' is conveyed. The taught concepts are transmitted messages that simply appear as common sense or 'just the way

¹³¹ 'Mental Capital and Wellbeing', p.2.

¹³² Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, Theory, Culture & Society, 1990 ed (London; Newbury Park, Calif: Sage in association with Theory, Culture & Society, Dept. of Administrative and Social Studies, Teesside Polytechnic, 1990), p.4.

¹³³ All italics are the authors' unless otherwise stated.

¹³⁴ Bourdieu and Passeron, p.5.

things are. Pedagogic Work (PW), is the symbolically violent industry of the dominant group, a powerful system of messages designed and delivered to effect social control. PW is, in the long run, at least as efficacious as physical constraint - which can continue to produce an effect once it has ceased to be applied.’¹³⁵

Wellbeing

In Wellbeing, this is cleverly oxymoronic. The Pedagogic Work imposes an agenda that is packaged with positivity - *the* right way to heal from distress. In the same year as the government’s Foresight Project’s *Mental Capital*, another report was also published. *Five Ways to Wellbeing: The Evidence* also emerged from the Government’s Foresight project, which commissioned the New Economics Foundation (NEF) to develop a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal well-being.¹³⁶ In their report, the authors identify five important components of wellbeing that have the best chance of making a person happy and healthy. Each individual should: “Connect”; “Take notice”; “Be active”; “Keep learning”; “Give.” Colourful postcards, featuring the Five Ways, were the original vehicle through which the message was disseminated, but since the publication of the report, they have also been produced in a range of different formats including ‘puppets, fairy tales...a quiche’, and an app for android and i-phone.¹³⁷ The Five Ways were, and continue to be, highly influential and, according to the NEF website, ‘successful in capturing the imagination of many people working in a variety of fields[...] used in a number of innovative ways, from school-based educational programmes to public festivals, and picked-up as far afield as Australia and New Zealand’¹³⁸ The claims of this success appear to be genuine, as my internet search of “Five Ways to Wellbeing” in December 2019 attests. The top five on this particular search, excluding the Five Ways website itself, and the government department National Office for Science which commissioned it, are: The Mental Health

¹³⁵ Bourdieu and Passeron, p.36.

¹³⁶ Jody Aked, Nic Marks, and Corrina Cordon, ‘A Report Presented to the Foresight Project on Communicating the Evidence Base for Improving People’s Well-Being’, p. 1.

¹³⁷ Andy Wimbush, 2010. *The Five Ways to Wellbeing: Now as giant puppets, fairytales and a quiche*. New Economics Foundation Blog post

<http://www.neweconomics.org/blog> [accessed 7 March 2016]

¹³⁸ <https://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-postcards> [accessed 7 March 2016]

Foundation (the five ways to wellbeing are simple and proven actions); National Mind (researched and developed by the New Economics Foundation); The NHS Information pages (...evidence suggests there are 5 steps); What Works Well blog page (a set of evidence-based actions); Health in Mind (research carried out by the New Economics Foundation) It is notable how prominently “evidence,” “research,” and proof are featured.¹³⁹ Before I read the report in full - I had come across them as postcards, at work - I assumed that the “evidence” referred directly to a study set up specifically to test the validity and effectiveness of those “Five Ways” as a framework for improving wellbeing. But the “evidence” is, in fact, little more than a literature review of what the authors call ‘a broad evidence base.’¹⁴⁰ The review is complemented by consultation with NEF’s “experts” and material taken from interviews with Challenge Leaders, who are drawn from the small pool of people interviewed for the other Government Foresight report *Mental Capital*. In the larger report, the authors do, in fact, qualify the limits of their “study”:

It should be noted...that there is little epidemiological evidence examining measures and determinants of wellbeing...confidently asserting causality is, in most cases, difficult.... It should also be noted that there is very little literature, if any, on effect sizes. Therefore, it is difficult to specify and compare the impact of different actions on the promotion of well-being.¹⁴¹

Such nuance, however, does not seem to have been transferred to the many organisations that confidently assert the *Five Ways* are evidence-based. In a Symbolic Violence model this may be read as deliberate obfuscation. The report has an agenda. Its authors have been specifically tasked with developing ‘a generic set of actions that have wide-ranging appeal.’ The raison d’être of the research is to be reductive. The Five Ways are, I maintain, a critical example of the process of Symbolic Violence. The commissioners of the report, the government, state the Pedagogic Action. The authors affect the distillation of complex and nuanced ideas pertaining to the psychic, into colourful everyday tools and thus complete

¹³⁹ Search conducted on 19 December 2019.

¹⁴⁰ Aked and others, p.4.

¹⁴¹ Aked and others, p.3.

the Pedagogic Work. *Five Ways to Wellbeing: The Evidence* is a cog in the social factory's machine, in which its workers have its oppressive agenda hidden from view. For the evidence is not actually rigorous, and certainly not exhaustive. It is entirely drawn from one ideological strand: Positive Psychology and its accompanying Happiness Economics.

Positive Psychology is 'the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions.'¹⁴² Martin Seligman, its founder, began to develop the theory of positive psychology throughout his tenure as president of the American Psychological Association from 1998. Seligman worked alongside Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in 2000, who was also the originator of the notion of 'happiness and flow.'¹⁴³ Other key researchers in the field, as the movement gained momentum include Sheldon and King (2001) Fredrickson (2001), Lyubomirsky (2001), Masten (2001), and Schneider (2001), Snyder and Lopez (2002), and Haidt and Gable (1993). Positive Psychology is not, claim its supporters, an arbitrary concept dreamed up by those in power but an 'evolution' from 'psychology as usual' into the impressive sounding 'fourth wave' of psychology.¹⁴⁴ It is, they say, a welcome departure from a disease-centred model that other psychology models represent. Positive Psychology is based on the idea that all individuals can become well through changing their own behaviour. The Pedagogic Actions it has developed, come in a range of corrective measures which, as William Davies discusses, originated in the commercial world. Its Pedagogic Work has produced a behavioural model including 'behavioural activation courses, personal coaching, mindfulness, self-help toolkits ...'¹⁴⁵ Positive Psychology ignores social ills and their role in mental distress, and suggests it is always within a person's own capabilities to improve their lot. As Richard Layard, Happiness Economist, states, happiness does not equate with

¹⁴² Shelly L. Gable and Jonathan Haidt, 'What (and Why) Is Positive Psychology?', *Review of General Psychology*, 9.2 (2005), 103–10

¹⁴³ Martin E. P. Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 'Positive Psychology: An Introduction.', *American Psychologist*, 55.1 (2000), 5–14

¹⁴⁴ 'PositivePsychology.Com - Helping You Help Others', *PositivePsychology.Com* <<https://positivepsychology.com/>> [accessed 12 December 2019].

¹⁴⁵ Davies, p.111.

wealth.¹⁴⁶ So whilst it seems like a straightforward achievable approach to feeling better on the surface, it really places the responsibility to make that change on the individual. A marginalised person who does not achieve this, therefore, is not just unhappy, but culpable for her unhappiness. If the packaging of measures such as the *Five Ways to Wellbeing* is stripped away, and the Pedagogic Action exposed, the unhappy individual can be seen as a unit of capital that is not contributing to the corporate purse and consequently represents a failed investment. This is, of course, the very worst fate that can befall neoliberalism. Thus, the logic follows, those who flounder economically-speaking should feel the shame their failure affords.

Resilience

A common trope of wellbeing is Resilience. Postivepsychology.com states, 'resilience is the ability to cope with whatever life throws at you. A resilient person works through challenges by using personal strengths and other positive capacities of psychological capital such as hope, optimism and self-efficacy.'¹⁴⁷ In previous funding applications, I have written that I will increase resilience in children. In continuing work in educational settings, I encounter it often. This year, for example, I have seen the word displayed in large letters onto walls throughout a secondary academy in Southwark in a colourful font, alongside the term 'self-management'. I have seen it in the school reception at a Pupil Referral Unit for young people permanently excluded from school. I have seen it on the wall of an infant school in Sussex, on the English South coast, on a neatly mounted piece of card with a chicken on it. There are many organisations devoted to providing training to instil this apparent elixir of happiness. Here it is described by organisation Resilience Doughnut:

Resilience is at the heart of wellbeing, success and long term mental health. With The Resilience Doughnut, you can raise the wellbeing, morale and resilience of pupils, staff, parents and families so they can connect within a positive school community. Our aim is to foster resilient individuals within resilient communities,

¹⁴⁶ Richard N. Cooper and Richard Layard, 'Happiness: Lessons from a New Science', *Foreign Affairs*, 84.6 (2005).

¹⁴⁷ 'PositivePsychology.Com - Helping You Help Others', *PositivePsychology.Com* <<https://positivepsychology.com/>> [accessed 12 December 2019].

with the capacity to grow and flourish.¹⁴⁸

Like the *Five Ways to Wellbeing*, Resilience heavily relies on its claims of “evidence” and the organisations who offer training and resources in its name are keen to point this out.

‘Research is at the heart of our work.’ suggests *Bounce Forward*. ‘We deliver inspiring courses that are based on solid research, theory and evidence.’¹⁴⁹ Resilience Doughnut claims it is ‘research validated.’ *Worth It* bases its training programme on ‘the evidence.’

¹⁵⁰ Farrah Jarral, the Alistair Horne Fellow at St Anthony’s College Oxford, explores resilience in a pithy “pitch” for BBC Radio 4’s *Keywords for Our Time* in 2018.¹⁵¹ She argues that the way Resilience is used in the twenty-first century has drifted from a specific psychologically grounded context in child psychology to become ‘wearyingly familiar to anyone working in the NHS, law, finance, IT or teaching.’ It is, she suggests, ‘a buzzword... ‘splashed across the last decades worth of self-help books, sitting alongside its cousins grit and growth-mindset.’ ‘The resilience circus’, she says, ‘has an opinion on everything. From how you should ram more blueberries and running into your life, to shaving minutes off the school run, and even how the ebola virus might have been prevented.’ She makes a nod to its Symbolic Violence: ‘Resilience?’ asks Jarral ironically ‘what’s not to like?’¹⁵²

Jarral suggests resilience’s most proper home is in physics and mathematics: a material’s capacity to absorb energy under stress. But human beings are not like steel rods, she argues, they are ‘tender complicated creatures.’ Resilience is presented as a panacea across all sectors and situations. ‘It can mean tolerating absurd working conditions, unreasonable demands or outright bullying.’ Furthermore, an individualising approach is applied:

¹⁴⁸ ‘The Resilience Doughnut | Building Resilience in the UK and Ireland’, *Resilience Doughnut* <<https://www.resiliencedoughnutuk.com>> [accessed 12 December 2019].

¹⁴⁹ ‘Resilience Training’, *Bounce Forward* <<https://bounceforward.com/>> [accessed 12 December 2019].

¹⁵⁰ ‘BBC Radio 4 - Keywords for Our Time, Resilience’, *BBC* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09wg6gp>> [accessed 12 December 2019].

¹⁵¹ BBC Radio 4 ‘Keywords for our time’.

¹⁵² BBC Radio 4 ‘Keywords for our time’.

'[Resilience] locates the problem with you, little old soft bellied you exhausted after work, full of despair, lonely and isolated... Better be more resilient! And it's this that is the most sinister aspect of the way resilience is most used today. How it hides the structural problems behind so much human suffering. It doesn't just hide them though. It places the blame for misery squarely on the shoulders of the person who apparently just needs to be a bit more resilient. It's an ideology that engulfs and colonises the human self..' ¹⁵³

Resilience actually does have a longer history in a different strand of psychology related to Attachment Theory. In relation to young people, it can be traced back to the field of child psychology and the work of Michael Rutter and colleagues. (Anthony and Cohler, 1987; Egeland et al., 1993; Fonagy et al.1994; Haggerty et al., 1994; Luthar, 1993; Rolf et al., 1990; Rutter; Siefer, 1995). Rutter defines 'resilience' as 'the capacity of individuals, schools, families and communities to cope successfully with everyday challenges, including life transitions, times of cumulative stress and significant adversity or risk' (Rutter, 1990, 84). Definitions of the 'phenomenon of resilience', Rutter writes, '[require] attention to a range of possible psychological outcomes':

[T]here is no necessary expectation that protection from stress and adversity should lie in positive experiences, nor indeed is there any assumption that the answer will lie in how the individual copes with a negative experience at the time, or in personal traits or characteristics. The starting point, then, is simply the observation that, in all studies of risk experiences, there is enormous variation in children's responses. ¹⁵⁴

Rutter particularly highlights the fact that resilience should not be seen outside the context of 'people's patterns of interpersonal relationships; hence the topic has to be viewed as relevant to the field of family therapy.' He insists 'it is important to emphasize that it is *different* [my italics] from the acquisition of social competence (e.g. Masten et al., 1995) or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995, 1997) or of positive mental health. (Ryff and Singer, 1998) ¹⁵⁵ He is also clear to state that definitions of resilience should 'not just focus on an unusually

¹⁵³ BBC Radio 4, 'Keywords for our time'.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Rutter, 'Psychosocial Resilience and Protective Mechanisms', in *Risk and Protective Factors in the Development of Psychopathology*, ed. by Jon Rolf and others, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 181–214, p.119.

¹⁵⁵ Rutter, p.119.

positive one or on super-normal functioning.¹⁵⁶ Even those responsible for early research in children and resilience are concerned about how the word is being applied in broader contexts. Child Psychology researchers Luthar et al suggest “resilience” requires a critique around its becoming a ‘construct’:

We conclude that work on resilience possesses substantial potential for augmenting the understanding of processes affecting at-risk individuals. Realization of the potential embodied by this construct, however, will remain constrained without continued scientific attention to some of the serious conceptual and methodological pitfalls that have been noted by sceptics and proponents alike.¹⁵⁷

Arts and Wellbeing

Matthew Taylor describes ‘artistic instrumentalism’ as an important way to ‘better understand the value of the artistic experience for producer and consumer.’ ‘Public good instrumentalism,’ he suggests, ‘[focuses] on the wide range of positive economic and social outcomes flowing from the arts, and active participation in the arts.’¹⁵⁸ Firstly, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) report *Creative Health* appears to distance itself from this approach. Citing William Davies, it states:

‘In seeking to improve wellbeing through the arts, this report remains mindful of the pitfalls of individualism to advocate community based and societal approaches. In the process, it maintains a scepticism towards attempts to use the arts as a cure all for an unhealthy society.’¹⁵⁹

However, shortly afterwards, the report does fully endorse the idea of arts as being of economic value. It gives an economic analysis cost-benefit model as its central claim to

¹⁵⁶ Rutter, p.119.

¹⁵⁷ S. S. Luthar, D. Cicchetti, and B. Becker, ‘The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work’, *Child Development*, 71.3 (2000), 543–62. p.543.

¹⁵⁸ John Knell and Matthew Taylor, ‘Arts Funding , Austerity and the Big Society: Remaking the case for the arts’, *Royal Society of the Arts: Paper 4*, (2011), p.18.

¹⁵⁹ Coulter, p.19.

arts' efficacy in health.¹⁶⁰ The report is influenced by a prevailing ethos where the arts can represent value:

One of the strengths of a wellbeing approach is its ability to better value non-market goods which we value for reasons that have little to do with the market. In a climate where the arts community feels under increasing pressure to justify its activities in terms of their instrumental benefit, we set out to explore whether a wellbeing approach can better capture the true value to society of arts and culture subsidies to human lives - thus helping to make a case for both the arts and culture spending and to identify priorities for that spending.'¹⁶¹

Although the APPG report may be written in the spirit of non-partisan inquiry, it never breaks free from a model seeking to individualise, in which '[n]eoliberalism intervenes in the domain of the social by converting the latter into a function of enterprise.'¹⁶² '[T]he neoliberal generalisation' suggests Lazzarato 'is, in a sense, absolute, limitless, since its matter of extending the economic form of the market to the entire social body does not pass through, or is not authorised by the market.'¹⁶³ Andrew Ross claims that cultural production is like the oil of the twenty-first century.'¹⁶⁴

Be Creative Be Well

*'I have no problem with what people call "instrumentalism". So what if artists want to change the world through their practice? What's so terrible about that?'*¹⁶⁵

In 2009, Arts Council England received money from the Well London Foundation to run a project that sought to reduce deprivation by delivering a wellbeing agenda through arts intervention. The project was called Be Creative Be Well (BCBW). BCBW was part of an

¹⁶⁰ Coulter, p. 7-8.

¹⁶¹ Coulter, p.37-38.

¹⁶² Lazzarato, p. 120.

¹⁶³ Michel Senellart, 'Naissance de La Biopolitique: Cours Au Collège de France (1978-1979) / Michel Foucault', 2004, p.248.

¹⁶⁴ Andrew Ross, 'The New Geography of Work - Power to the Precarious', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2008, 31-49, p.32.

¹⁶⁵ Karen Taylor in Richard Ings and others, 'Be Creative, Be Well: Arts, wellbeing and local communities: An evaluation', Arts Council England (2012).

initiative from the Well London, an alliance of agencies brought together by the London Health Commission to explore new ways of improving the health and wellbeing of some of the poorest communities in the capital. Well London was awarded a Health Promotion and Community Wellbeing award from the Royal Society for Public Health, in recognition of Well London's 'achievements and innovative approach,' in promoting health and wellbeing in its most disadvantaged areas, called Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs).¹⁶⁶ Well London put out to tender for projects to fulfil their brief and it was, in this process, that Arts Council England was awarded a grant for BCBW.

Artists and arts organisations originated and developed a wide range of arts and cultural activities – around one hundred different creative projects – in consultation with local residents and agencies.¹⁶⁷ These were 'to engage communities and individuals in a process of change to improve health and environments, to increase community cohesion.'¹⁶⁸ By March 2011, a total of nearly £1.3 million from the Well London programme budget had been spent on implementing BCBW. The authors write that '[n]o artform was left untouched across the programme and local activities ranged from painting workshops to dance classes, parades to musicals, personal poetry to communal sculpture – and some way beyond.'¹⁶⁹ BCBW was clear from the outset that it boldly adopted a social capital approach, which it defines as 'experiences and connections to a wider social world that could give a new sense of wellbeing.'¹⁷⁰ It could also increase mental capital, which Ings et al describe as 'resilience, self-esteem, cognitive capacity and emotional intelligence.'¹⁷¹ BCBW aimed to '...contribute to the growing dialogue between arts and health professionals offer[ing] recommendations on how to ensure that the commissioning process is most likely to give

¹⁶⁶ Ings and others, p.2.

¹⁶⁷ Ings and others, p.13.

¹⁶⁸ Ings and others, p.13.

¹⁶⁹ Ings and others, p.13.

¹⁷⁰ Ings and others, p.29.

¹⁷¹ Ings and others, p.46.

rise to work that will result in a sustainable legacy.¹⁷² The report took ‘evidence-based research into ‘ways to wellbeing,’ at least partially based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing.¹⁷³

I consider this to be a pertinent example of a process of Symbolic Violence, because I was a Pedagogic Worker for its cause. In my role as Associate Director at Greenwich and Lewisham Young People’s Theatre (GLYPT), between May 2009 and July 2010, I ran a project called *Happy and You Know it*, with BCBW funding. We won a pot of funding to work in the LSOA OF South Bellingham, along with several other artists and organisations. In the application form, I wrote that our project would ‘build resilience, increase feelings of belonging locally and increase positive feelings about the local area’, and would also ‘[help] people build self awareness and manage feelings, and support people in developing a sense of motivation and a sense of empowerment through creative ideas and skills.’¹⁷⁴ This language directly echoes that in the funding criteria (which is what you do to get the funding!). I worked with a composer leading a series of drama and music workshops with children, and made up a song, and created a book. The finale of the project, and a requirement of it as stipulated by BCBW funding, was to deliver a performance at the Bellingham Festival, taking place that summer.

Although I did not quite understand why at the time, I recall that I felt uneasy as I was delivering this project. We were not the only project to offer intervention to this tiny population, clambering to work here were no less than eight organisations: Sage Educational Trust (video project); Trinity Laban (dance); Elevating Success (site specific creative activities); Standnotamazed (magic); Entellecy Arts (Creative activities); Stories in the Street (storytelling); Lewisham Youth Theatre (drama documentary) and Artefacts Edutainment (storytelling, drama and music).¹⁷⁵ We were not required to consult with residents before we put in our completed applications. In fact, it was one of the features of

¹⁷² Ings and others, p.8.

¹⁷³ Ings and others, p.8.

¹⁷⁴ Emily Hunka, funding application for Be Creative, Be Well, 2009

¹⁷⁵ Ings and others, p.113.

the project to cast artists as entrepreneurs. We were expected to arrive in the LSOA and recruit from the streets - literally - knocking on doors, distributing leaflets and so on. In *In the Social Factory? Immaterial labour, precariousness and cultural work*, Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt suggest the place of “creatives” in a social factory theoretical framework, means they often, unwittingly, serve the hegemony. ‘[Artists] are the apple of the policymaker’s eye’ because of their ability to produce emotional capacity and reinforce capitalism’s need for worker insecurity.’ An artist’s role, therefore, is portrayed as having freedom and flexibility, despite frequent working in unstable and unsupported conditions. Gill and Pratt claim: ‘creativity is viewed as a wonder stuff transforming workplaces into powerhouses of value.’¹⁷⁶

The evaluation report *Be Creative Be Well* suggested that evidence post-project was strong: that the arts in the project had helped ‘people to develop a range of positive behaviours, improving their ability to learn, to take responsibility, to act prosocially, to take pleasure in creating things and so on.’¹⁷⁷ But my memory is that there was little enthusiasm. The children at the nursery enjoyed it but, although I did not articulate it at the time, I didn’t really believe that resilience or other behaviours could be instilled in four year olds by singing a song, especially as this was a daily activity in the nursery anyway. There was also little ‘pleasure’ when two children turned up to perform in a completely empty square.

What was so dubious about this project, I considered in hindsight, was that it not only embraced a Positive Psychology mantra (well demonstrated in its language alone) but that it did so by directly targeting the marginalised. The unusual remit of BCBW, after Well London’s aims, was to target small areas which were said to represent the most deprived residential areas in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics, LSOAs were small. Each had 1,500 to 2,000 residents. Four of these LSOAs would make up one of the eight

¹⁷⁶ Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, ‘In the Social Factory?: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25.7–8 (2008), 1–30, p.19.

¹⁷⁷ Ings and others, p.14.

areas in a local council ward.¹⁷⁸ Because the LSOA is defined by postcode, an LSOA could consist of just a few streets, and sometimes cut across one street. Those in or out of the LSOA could be next door neighbours. BCBW was stringent in their commitment to keeping projects within the LSOAs, requiring artists delivering projects to give the postcode of every one of the participants involved, as evidence they were working with the correct people. The very poor, the poorest in the country, in fact, had been singled out for this initiative, as needing to change their behaviour in the way that their more wealthy neighbours did not: to have more positive behaviours, to take better responsibility, to be more 'prosocial'. And apparently, so the initiative suggested, they also needed to take more pleasure in things. Stating the inverse of these, uncovers the agenda at play: that very poor people are considered to have negative behaviours, to be bad learners, to be irresponsible. They are anti-social, refusing to leave the house and get involved. Or, in another definition of 'anti-social', they are behaving in a way that 'causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress' to others.¹⁷⁹ In short, they are poor *because* of these personal deficits and inappropriate behaviour. Yet, when I was leading our BCBW project, I did not see this agenda. Any discomfort I had was, in my mind, nebulous. In Symbolic Violence terms, I was a hapless 'creative', imposing the enthusiasm that the report suggests is the most important feature an artist can bring: 'If one word could sum up the nature and power of the artists' role in the *Be Creative Be Well* programme, it is 'energy.'¹⁸⁰

Whatever I felt then, steeped as I was in the *Arts and Health/Wellbeing* doctrine, now I deliberately denounce it for the Theatre Troupe Model.

¹⁷⁸ 'Supporting Information: Lower Layer Super Output Area'

<https://www.datadictionary.nhs.uk/data_dictionary/nhs_business_definitions/l/lower_layer_super_output_area_de.asp?shownav=1> [accessed 12 December 2019].

¹⁷⁹ 'Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014'

<<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/contents/enacted>> [accessed 19 December 2019].

¹⁸⁰ Ing and others, p.18.

Chapter Two: Attachment and Attunement

How better, then to practise?

This chapter suggests a theoretical model that is structurally different from the Wellbeing way. I argue for an applied theatre approach that is diametrically opposite and, by dint of this, ideologically resistant to the “capital” agenda. This, I suggest, is a practice of attunement. Instead of resilience, it provides ways to be vulnerable. Instead of independence, it is an endorsement of interdependence. Instead of placing blame, it brings engaged, responsive compassion. Louis Cozolino tells us ‘[f]rom birth until death, each of us needs others who seek us out, show interest in discovering who we are, and help us feel safe.’¹⁸¹ ‘Our social brains have been shaped by natural selection’ he suggests ‘because being social enhances survival.’ This means ‘[b]oth our physiological systems and our mental systems are developed in relationship with other people.’¹⁸² Sue Gerhardt focuses on the notion of neurobiological “flow” maintaining that ‘the individual with good regulation also has the ability to coordinate his or her states with other people, can adjust their moods and demands and can make his or her demands on others. ‘Crucially, there is flow, not only within the individual but between the individual and others.’¹⁸³ Lewis, Amini and Lannon similarly point to this ongoing and subtle interpersonal dialogue in neurobiological attunement. ‘Evolution has given [us] a shimmering conduit,’ they suggest, ‘and [we] use it to tinker with one another’s physiology, to adjust and fortify one another’s fragile neural rhythms in the collaborative dance of love.’¹⁸⁴

For trauma-survivors, the Wellbeing approach is especially grim. The impact of trauma on their behaviour, which also translates into their neurobiological mechanisms, means that

¹⁸¹ Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 1. Vintage ed (New York: Vintage, 2001), p.11.

¹⁸² Sue Gerhardt, *Why Love Matters: How Affection Shapes a Baby’s Brain*, Second edition, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), p. 10.

¹⁸³ Gerhardt, ,p.4.

¹⁸⁴ Lewis and others, p. 84.

they simply cannot function in the way the Positive Psychology movement requires of its subjects. 'Traumatized adolescents' writes Bessel Van Der Kolk, 'are a jumble: inhabited, out of tune, inarticulate and purposeless. They are too hyper-aroused to notice what is going on around them. They are easily triggered and rely on actions rather than words to discharge their feelings.'¹⁸⁵ Louise Bomber suggests that such children occupy a reality that is not compatible with so called normative behaviour. She likens the experience of working with trauma disordered young people as an act of listening related to language and culture:

As soon as I get alongside a child who has experienced trauma and loss, I quickly realise that I have entered a world that is alien to that inhabited by often well intentioned adults and bewildered peers. They are in a very different culture in this 'other world.' Movements, gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions all have very different meanings to these children.¹⁸⁶

Because it is the Theatre Troupe Model's (TTM) imperative to listen and understand the children which Van Der Kolk and Bomber describe, with a view to intervening in their distress, I posit an alternative to the so-called New Wave psychology: the well-established (old wave?) psychological Attachment Theory. Also, to foreground the decisions I made in my choice of method to report the findings of my research - an account of the Theatre Troupe Model pilot project with a literary turn - I introduce the notion of a lyrical humanism as an attunement practice in itself.

Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory emerged from the research of John Bowlby, which spanned four decades. Bowlby pre-empted neurobiologists in his concept of 'attachment behavioural system,' in which systems 'are organised by experience-based "internal working models" of

¹⁸⁵ Bessel A. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*, (UK: Penguin Books, 2015), p. 336.

¹⁸⁶ Louise Michelle Bombèr, *Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools*, (London: Worth, 2007), p. 1.

self and environment, including, especially, the caregiving environment.’¹⁸⁷ ‘It is by postulating the existence of these cognitive components and their utilization by the attachment system,’ writes Bowlby, ‘that the theory is enabled to provide explanations of how a child’s experiences with attachment figures comes to influence, in particular, the ways the pattern of attachment develops.’¹⁸⁸

In the 1940s, when Bowlby first posited his theories, the parent-child relationship was a staple of psychoanalytic theories of development, drawing on Sigmund Freud’s theory of distribution of libido. According to Freud, infantile neurosis was a process in which parents’ behaviour and beliefs were instilled in children from infancy therefore influencing them in later life. The libido’s sexual force ‘when dysregulated aberrantly,’ should be dealt with by accessing the subconscious in therapy.¹⁸⁹ Bowlby was a psychoanalyst himself, but became curious about ideas departing from these theories. He gathered ideas from others in differing fields including Konrad Lorenz in ethology, Margaret Mead in anthropology and Jean Piaget in epistemology.¹⁹⁰ ‘I loved the way,’ Patricia Crittenden writes, ‘Bowlby scooped it all up and found a way to make integrated understanding.’¹⁹¹ Bowlby’s first publication on the matter was *Forty-four Juvenile Thieves*, in which he suggested that early separation from the subjects’ mothers had induced a risk factor which, in this study, resulted in offending behaviour. In 1951, Bowlby published a key paper, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, in which he claimed that dependent relationships or “attachments” between child and caregiver were healthy and natural. After an expansion of the concept (1959; 1960), Bowlby published what was to become a seminal three volume series: *Attachment and Ethology* (1969); *Separation* (1973) and *Loss* (1980). These made clear his

¹⁸⁷ Jude Cassidy, Jason Jones and Phillip Shaver, *Contributions of Attachment Theory and Research: A Framework for Future Research, Translation, and Policy*, 2013, xxv, 1415- 1434, (P. 1416).

¹⁸⁸ Bowlby J. *Attachment and loss: Vol 1. Attachment*. 2nd. New York, NY: Basic Books; 1969/1982. (p. 373-374).

¹⁸⁹ Regina Sullivan and others, ‘Infant Bonding and Attachment to the Caregiver: Insights from Basic and Clinical Science’, *Clinics in Perinatology*, 38.4 (2011), 643–55, (P. 3).

¹⁹⁰ Bretherton, I. (1992). The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, *Developmental Psychology*, 28, 759-775, (p. 762).

¹⁹¹ Patricia M Crittenden, ‘Gifts from Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby’, *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 22.3 (2017), 436–42 (P. 438).

ideas that the instinctual response of the caregiver to the infant, was a fundamental necessity for healthy life. He writes: 'the infant and young child should experience a warm intimate and continuous relationship with mother (or permanent mother substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment.'¹⁹² Bowlby also highlights the detrimental consequences of 'separation anxiety' on the infant if the attachment figure is not available. The infant, he suggests, develops maladaptive responses of protest, despair or denial should that attachment figure not be reliably and warmly available.¹⁹³ Whilst so much of the developing literature did, and still does, focus on the child's relationship with her mother, in *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, (despite the title) Bowlby noted the attachment figure does not necessarily have to be maternal.¹⁹⁴

Mary Ainsworth, a student of Bowlby's, is generally seen as the other most influential attachment theorist for her development of the Strange Situation Test and differing 'styles' of attachment, a body of research that has '[generated] thousands of studies since 1978, when Ainsworth first introduced the idea.'¹⁹⁵ Ainsworth demonstrated that the mother, as the primary caregiver, needed to be available to her child so that it may build a complimentary self image.¹⁹⁶ Her seminal work, *Patterns of Attachment*, was published in 1978, and established the idea that there were individual differences in infant-parent relationships. Ainsworth saw that an infant would closely concentrate on a mother's 'adjusting cues', adapting her own response as she tuned in. Her findings were incorporated into the Strange Situation Test, in which a psychological observational instrument assessed the kind of attachment a child had to her main caregiver. Once interactions in controlled conditions had been observed, an attachment style would be attributed: A (insecure avoidant), B (secure) or C (Insecure Ambivalent/Resistant). This framework was extended by Mary Main and Judith Soloman, who introduced a further

¹⁹² Bowlby, J (1951), *Maternal care and mental health*, World Health Organisation.

¹⁹³ Bretherton, p. 761.

¹⁹⁴ Crittenden, 'Gifts from Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby', p. 437.

¹⁹⁵ Crittenden, 'Gifts from Mary Ainsworth and John Bowlby', p. 438.

¹⁹⁶ M. D. Ainsworth, 'Object Relations, Dependency, and Attachment: A Theoretical Review of the Infant-Mother Relationship', *Child Development*, 40.4 (1969), 969–1025.

category D (insecure disorganized).¹⁹⁷ Since Ainsworth's research, concepts of attachment styles have been explored in a range of different contexts such as styles and consequences of attachment in adults (Fonagy, Steele and Steele, 1990; Ward, 1996; Cassidy 1996; 2006,2009); patterns of adult attachment across the life-span (Bowlby, 1970; Parks 1972; Weiss 1973; 1977 ; Shaver & Hassan, 1988; Cicirelli, 1989-1991); and developmental psychopathology (Sroufe 1988; Radke-Yarrow, Cummings, Kuczincy & Chapman 1985; Crittenden 1983).¹⁹⁸ A focus on maternal care proliferates in this research, but there has been some work that explores attachment and non-mother figures, as Cassidy and Shaver's literature review in *Contributions of Attachment Theory and Research* (2003) shows, although they also argue it is an under-researched area. They recommend that more research on fathers and other attachment figures, such as siblings and grandparents, is needed, and also cite the possibility of child-care providers as attachment figures, suggesting a new perspective in which 'researchers presume it is the nature of the interaction rather than the category of individual that is important to the child.'¹⁹⁹ Van Der Kolk suggests more research could be done in the importance of peer to peer attachments: '...The motto is "one caring adult - that's all you need." However, it is natural for teenagers to pull away from adults, the best form of permanency for teens is a steady group of friends.'²⁰⁰

Neurobiological attunement

From the 1990s, attachment theorists and their associates began to explore brain processes that may be related to attachment, including Main, in 1996, who recorded endocrinological correlates to insecure attachment.²⁰¹ Research on the development of the brain in infancy advanced considerably (i.e Field et al, 1995; Chiron et al, 1997; Jones et al, 1997). On the

¹⁹⁷ Mary Main and Judith Solomon, 'Discovery of an Insecure-Disorganized/Disoriented Attachment Pattern', in *Affective Development in Infancy* (Westport, CT, US: Ablex Publishing, 1986), pp. 95-124.

¹⁹⁸ Bretherton, p. 769.

¹⁹⁹ Cassidy and others, p.1432.

²⁰⁰ Van der Kolk, p. 340.

²⁰¹ Deborah A. Lott, 'Brain Development, Attachment and Impact on Psychic Vulnerability', *Psychiatric Times*, 1998

heels of this exploratory data, came an acceleration of research that examined the ‘affective phenomena’ (internal emotional states), which focused on ‘fine tune brain processes’ related to affect regulation.²⁰²

Attachment Theory in relation to neurobiological attunement, Dan Siegal claims, is a natural development from the original theory of attachment theory.²⁰³ Allan Schore, along with Siegal introduced a new version of attachment theory, Regulation Theory.²⁰⁴ This, he states, ‘offered support to Bowlby’s assertions that attachment is instinctive behavior with a biological function, that emotional processes lie at the foundation of a model of instinctive behavior, and that a biological control system in the brain regulates affectively driven instinctive behavior.’²⁰⁵ Schore’s work, drawing on others’ earlier investigations (Greenough and Black,1992; Nelson and Bloom, 1997; Main, 1996; Chiron et al., 1997; Field et al., 1995; Dawson et al., 1997; Joseph, 1996; Price, Carmichael, & Drevets, 1996), particularly focused on the ‘synchronicity’ in face to face contact between infant and caregiver, which supports the growth of circuitry in a similar period in infancy which Bowlby had previously identified. Following on from Attachment Theory, a particular strand of thought and evidence emerged that, therefore, moved from the psychological to the psychobiological.²⁰⁶ fMRI imagery generated new insight, enabling understanding of actual chemical processes, including the network of the one hundred billion neurons that make up the human brain. The images evidenced a straightforward fact: the more neural activity: the better life lived.²⁰⁷ Observing neurobiological activity, neuroscientists began to understand a new concept: that how we interfaced and interacted with the environment around us altered the way in which our brain developed. Rather than being an organ

²⁰² Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development*, (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2016), P. xx.

²⁰³ Mary Sykes Wylie and Lynn Turner, ‘The Attuned Therapist’, article (origin unknown), P. 1.

²⁰⁴ ‘Dr. Allan N. Schore’ <<http://www.allanschore.com/>> [accessed 19 June 2019].

²⁰⁵ A. N. Schore, ‘Attachment and the Regulation of the Right Brain’, *Attachment & Human Development*, 2.1 (2000), 23–47 p. 23.

²⁰⁶ Allan N. Schore, ‘Effects of a Secure Attachment Relationship on Right Brain Development, Affect Regulation, and Infant Mental Health’, *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22.1–2 (2001), 7–66.

²⁰⁷ Lewis and others, p.11.

providing a fixed and biologically isolated purpose, Schore writes, 'by the end of this decade there was an accepted conclusion that the brain is designed and moulded by the environment.'²⁰⁸ It was found that biological genetics are optimised by environment and have major significance in changing brain tissue and enabling the central nervous system to adapt and modify to environmental changes.

In 1990, Giacomo Rizzolatti et al, were the first to isolate mirror neurons in monkeys.²⁰⁹ The mirror neuron, they say, is a specific brain cell that responds to the actions and emotions of another by performing a similar action. Research has explored the way in which neurons in the premotor cortex discharge when the person/monkey observes the same action or hears the same sound. Rizzalatti saw that when monkeys watched an action of another, it activated a specific part of the brain. He extrapolated that the same phenomenon would occur in humans.²¹⁰ It has subsequently been claimed that mirror neurons offer an explanation as to why we are able to feel empathy for others. Such observations were complemented by research that focused on the minutiae of human interaction. In 1998, Beatrice Beebe and Frank Lachmann documented interaction between mothers and their children face-to-face, second by second, as they interlocked gazes. They were observed to be mirroring and modelling one another. They showed that it is the subtlety of attachment - facial expressions and eye contact, and the way in which the caregiver adapted her own expressions and engagement - that 'accentuates positive states of excitement, joy and pleasure, and minimises distress.'²¹¹ It is, the research suggests, crucial for a caregiver to be adroit at reading her infant's non verbal signals. As Bucci observes, 'we recognise changes in emotional states of others based on perception of subtle shifts in their facial expression or posture, and recognize changes in our own states based on somatic or

²⁰⁸ Allan N. Schore, 'Effects of a Secure Attachment Relationship', p. 12.

²⁰⁹ E. Kohler, and others, 'Hearing Sounds, Understanding Actions: Action Representation in Mirror Neurons', *Science*, 297.5582 (2002), 846-48.

²¹⁰ 'The Mind's Mirror' <<https://www.apa.org/monitor/oct05/mirror>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

²¹¹ Beatrice Beebe and Frank M. Lachmann, 'Co-Constructing Inner and Relational Processes: Self- and Mutual Regulation in Infant Research and Adult Treatment.', *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 15.4 (1998), 480-516

kinesthetic experience.²¹² Schore likens this resonance to ‘an emotional current that quickly spreads from one to the other,’ a ‘sympathetic vibration.’²¹³ Colwyn Trevarthen, Professor at Edinburgh University has specialised in the brain science of expressive movement, human intersubjectivity and cultural learning, with particular focus in his notion of the ‘musicality’ of human action and its applications in development, education, therapy and art. Trevarthen et al claim that communication in humans, compared to other mammals, is primed for a communication of creative engagement. ‘After birth,’ he claims, ‘playful rituals build a “proto-habitus”, in which the infant and parents, or other affectionate companions, enjoy repetitive invention of narratives planned in time with “communicative musicality.”’²¹⁴ Trevarthen states: ‘Our innate motor intelligence, with sensory and motor organs adapted for self-regulation and for perceptual engagement of intentions and emotions with objects, is also uniquely animated for creative communication with affectionate and cooperative companions, to build a shared life.’²¹⁵ Speech, suggests Trevarthen, is music in which a mother and infant compose a ‘melodic story’ by ‘sharing an intuitive ‘pulse.’²¹⁶ Furthermore, he posits that infants can hear and learn changes in intonation or ‘musicality’ before birth.²¹⁷ Contrary to previous theories about the primacy of physical strength and intellectual thought, survival of the fittest is, as Cozolino states, ‘survival of the nurtured.’²¹⁸

Trauma

There is no doubt that trauma in childhood is devastating. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, a longitudinal research project in 1998, showed a graded

²¹² Judith R. Schore and Allan N. Schore, ‘Modern Attachment Theory: The Central Role of Affect Regulation in Development and Treatment’, *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 36.1 (2008), 9–20, P. 19.

²¹³ Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development* (Hillsdale, N.J. Hove: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1994). p.562.

²¹⁴ Colwyn Trevarthen, ‘Infant Semiosis: The Psycho-Biology of Action and Shared Experience from Birth’, *Cognitive Development*, 36 (2015), 130–41, p. 131.

²¹⁵ Trevarthen, P. 130.

²¹⁶ Trevarthen, P. 132.

²¹⁷ Trevarthen, p. 132.

²¹⁸ Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*, The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, Second edition, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014). p.13.

relationship between the number of categories of childhood exposure to emotional, physical or sexual abuse or household dysfunction, and adult health risk behaviours and diseases. Those who had experienced four or more ACEs were more likely to suffer a series of serious physical illnesses, which were the leading cause of adult death in the United States.²¹⁹ A study at Warwick University showed that school-age children who are bullied are likely to suffer from anxiety disorders in the future.²²⁰

Schmidt et al suggest that there is a pattern of behaviours and emotional presentations that may be seen in traumatised children: affective and physiological dysregulation (the inability to tolerate or recover from extreme emotions, disturbance in bodily functions, diminished awareness or articulation of emotional states); attentional and behavioural dysregulation (hypervigilance and arousal, maladaptive self-soothing or self-protection, risk-taking, inability to pursue goals); and self and relational dysregulation (negative sense of self, distrust; maladaptive comfort seeking or attention-grabbing). Also functional impairments may be apparent: problems with school, family, peer group, the law or health. Traumatised children also experience disassociation, somatization; self-injury or risk with regard to personal safety, difficulties with executive functioning and regulation of attention and difficulties with relationships. Young people find it hard to function in everyday life since 'perceptions of social situations are altered because of sensitivity to threatening stimuli.'²²¹ For example, children may interpret neutral behaviour as hostile, and act impulsively to facial expressions. They also tend to lack empathy.²²²

Neurobiologically trauma leaves its mark, its wound in the brain, implanting the problem into the affected child. The presence of distressing emotions or feelings are embedded in

²¹⁹ Vincent J Felitti and others, 'Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14.4 (1998), 245–58.

²²⁰ William E. Copeland and others, 'Adult Psychiatric Outcomes of Bullying and Being Bullied by Peers in Childhood and Adolescence', *JAMA Psychiatry*, 70.4 (2013), 419.

²²¹ Marc Schmid, Franz Petermann, and Joerg M Fegert, 'Developmental Trauma Disorder: Pros and Cons of Including Formal Criteria in the Psychiatric Diagnostic Systems', *BMC Psychiatry*, 13.1 (2013), p.3.

²²² Schmid and others, p.3.

the neural pathways, as a result of childhood abuse, neglect and abandonment. Furthermore, when trauma events are repeated, 'neural systems pluck patterns out of the sea of experience, their presence is neurologically reinforced.' The neural network will 'connect the dots' and *strengthen* the embeddedness of feeling. 'A childhood replete with suffering, lingers in the mind as bitter, encoded traces of pain' state Lewis et al. Even a tangential reminder of the suffering can spur the outbreak of unpleasant thoughts, feelings, anticipations.²²³ Developments in neuroimaging have indicated that trauma experiences impact negatively on the brain.

The Dynamic Maturational Model of Attachment

Patricia Crittenden suggests that: 'A central function of the brain is to transform information about the past to yield representation of the probable relation of self to context in the future.'²²⁴ Crittenden suggests that '*all* behaviour is genetically based, using neurological structures and regulated by biochemical processes. [authors' italics].²²⁵ Crittenden's theories of attachment acknowledge the embedded neurological damage of trauma but, extending from this, suggests that these patterns are the result of children responding to the danger in their environment with 'strategies of adaptation' that keep them safe. She calls this the Dynamic Maturational Model of Attachment (DMM).

In the process of my research, when I was exploring a way to consolidate my attachment theory methodology I encountered Clark Baim and his work. Baim practices and trains others in practical approaches for professionals using the DMM model, and also, with Tony Morrison, has co-authored *Attachment-Based Practice with Adults: Understanding Strategies and Promoting Positive Change*. Baim has a strong connection to and understanding of theatre, as the founder of the US version of Geese Theatre, a national

²²³ Lewis and others, p.112.

²²⁴ Crittenden, 'A Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment', (p. 107).

²²⁵ Crittenden, 'A Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment', (p. 107)

organisation bringing social theatre into prisons.²²⁶ He is also co-founder of the Birmingham Institute of Psychodrama. When I met with Baim to talk through my developing thesis, he suggested that a theatre approach using a DMM framework could offer strong context to my work. On reading some of my case studies of children in the TTM pilot project, he said they were written in ‘a very DMM way.’²²⁷

Patricia Crittenden, who was a student of Mary Ainsworth, has extrapolated from, and problematised Ainsworth’s attachment styles with her concept of DMM (Crittenden 1981; 1982; 1983; 1985; 1988; 1992; 1994; 1995; 2000; 2006; Crittenden & Ainsworth 1989; Crittenden et al 2007; Crittenden et al 2013; Crittenden et al 2014; Crittenden & Baim 2017; Crittenden & Spieker 2018). She suggests that trauma behaviour in children is informed by automatic subconscious reactions to the nature of the trauma they experience. In her DMM model she posits the idea that children do not necessarily universally follow Ainsworth and Main’s existing four categories, ABC+D, but may respond in an adaptation style that reflects the nature of maltreatment they are experiencing. ‘Because children are rarely dominant, it is expected that abused children will develop models of themselves as incompetent and unworthy with an accompanying affect of anger...neglected children are expected to react to their situation of apparent helplessness of caregivers and the ineffectiveness of themselves to gain proper care, with an ‘affect of despair’ [sic].²²⁸ In this model, she surmises, ‘[w]hen the relationships fail to protect the child (or parent) more extreme strategies are organised to wrest some measure of safety and comfort from an otherwise threatening environment.’²²⁹ Crittenden, after Ainsworth, has called her model ABC+DMM, which also relates to theories of neurobiological maturation.²³⁰

²²⁶ Clark Baim, Tony Morrison and Jo Hathaway, *Attachment-Based Practice with Adults: Understanding Strategies and Promoting Positive Change: A New Practice Model and Interactive Resource for Assessment, Intervention and Supervision*, 2011, back cover.

²²⁷ Clark Baim, interview with author, 8 November, 2019.

²²⁸ Patricia M. Crittenden, ‘Children’s Strategies for Coping with Adverse Home Environments: An Interpretation Using Attachment Theory’, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 16.3 (1992), 329–43 (p. 331).

²²⁹ Patricia M. Crittenden, ‘A Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 27.2 (2006), 105–15 (p. 105.)

²³⁰ Patricia M. Crittenden and Susan J. Spieker, ‘Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation Versus Abc+d Assessments of Attachment in Child Protection and Treatment: Reply to Van Ijzendoorn, Bakermans, Steele, & Granqvist (2018)’, *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 39.6 (2018), 647–51 (p. 629).

Crittenden's observations were, in time, crystallized into the notion/theory of adaptation. In 2006, she gives a breakdown of five concepts of DMM:

1. Patterns of attachment are self protective strategies
2. Self protective strategies are learned in interaction with protective figures
3. Symptoms are functional aspects of dyadic strategy
4. Strategies change when individuals perceive that strategies do not fit the context
5. Focus of treatment should reflect on enabling individuals to reflect on conditions surrounding their behaviour, to practise new responses safely, learn to fit strategy and context to yield maximum safety and comfort.²³¹

All people need to have balanced internal working models to survive, argues Crittenden. On one hand, each individual must be able to respond to others affectively, tuning into feelings to guide interactions and the building of relationships. On the other, she must employ cognition - thinking skills - to interpret social situations and organise responses to these intellectually. Crittenden's broad categories show how this works in healthy relationships, and where these go wrong. But these strategies, looked at in the DMM way, should be considered a *strength* because they have increased a child's safety when parents/caregivers are not sufficiently sensitive or appropriately responsive. [my italics].²³² Crucial to the context of the young people in my research, is that the DMM theory recognises that professionals engaged in a young person's life are apt to misunderstand a young person's behaviour as an adaptation strategy, but sees them as "bad" or "wrong" behaviour.

In a Southwark Academy secondary school, attended by some Theatre Troupe participants, a series of laminated signs throughout the school instruct pupils:

²³¹ Patricia McKinsey Crittenden and others, *Danger, Development and Adaptation: Seminal Papers on the Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment and Adaptation*, 2015, 518-531.

²³² Crittenden and Spieker, 'Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment', p. 628.

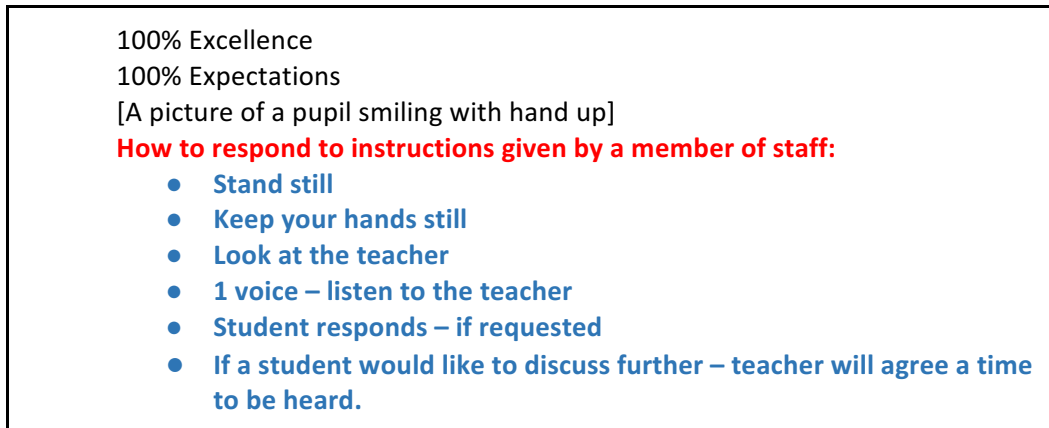


Figure 1

The failure to adhere to these will result in punishment under the Academy's 'Zero Tolerance' approach. This is the same Academy that I mentioned in Chapter One, the one with "resilience" and "self-management" plastered on the walls in corporate font. It is a good model for 'an education [that] is preparing its children for a market economy with the capacity to be a buttoned up work force of the future...' ²³³ The zero-tolerance approach is adopted as standard, across the nation, in many academies. ²³⁴ Behaviours known to have triggered punishments such as internal or external exclusion, include having the wrong hairstyle, chewing gum, or having shoes that 'aren't totally black.' ²³⁵ Isolation booths or consequence rooms have become a common way to punish offences that do not comply with a school's strict behaviour policy. Being in one involves being confined in a small booth in which a child sits alone and in silence for hours on end as a punishment. ²³⁶ When in the booths, as stated in one academy's policy, '[s]tudents cannot sleep or put their heads on the desk. They must sit up and face forward.' When in the booths, children are not allowed to 'tap, chew, swing on their chairs, shout out, sigh or any other unacceptable or disruptive

²³³ 'Keywords for Our Time - Resilience - BBC Sounds' <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09wg6gp>> [accessed 23 June 2019].

²³⁴ 'Teachers Warn Zero Tolerance Discipline in Schools Is Feeding Mental Health Crisis' <<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/31/teachers-warn-zero-tolerance-discipline-schools-feeding-mental/>> [accessed 18 June 2019]

²³⁵ 'Teachers Warn Zero Tolerance in Schools is Feeding Mental Health Crisis'

²³⁶ "'It Was Heartbreaking": Family Wins Tribunal after Special Needs Pupil Excluded | Education | The Guardian' <<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/mar/20/family-wins-tribunal-special-needs>> [accessed 18 June 2019].

behaviour. You will be allowed to go to the toilet up to a maximum of three times during the day (maximum five minutes per visit)...You will be escorted to get your lunch, but you must stay silent.²³⁷ South London teacher Michael Holland suggests, 'zero tolerance policies are cruel, Victorian, Dickensian'.²³⁸ The behaviour-modification approach does not work with trauma-survivors, who are also disproportionately represented in internal and external exclusion from school.²³⁹ Neurobiologically, and according to the DMM, an abused or neglected child cannot help her behaviour. A child may be reprimanded and given clear guidelines on how to improve her behaviour after an incident. Crittenden suggests that: 'Their lives have been lived with and near danger, from their neighbourhoods, to their bedrooms. The more individuals are in danger (or think they are) the more they must act quickly and in the safest way possible. Under condition of danger there is a strong advantage to acting prior to thinking.'²⁴⁰

Crittenden's theory is detailed. She sub-categorizes ABC+DMM. For the purpose of its application in this thesis, however, I will, on Baim's advice, use a simplified overview. Although Baim and Morrison's text is aimed at psychotherapists who might use Crittenden's attachment styles to assess and treat patients, the book does give 'a translation of theory into practice' and is clear, practical and accessible for non-clinicians.²⁴¹ I have therefore used the basics of this research in consolidating ideas and direction of practice, drawing on Baim and Morrison's work. It is an approach involving compassion from the first moment of encounter with a young person. Baim advised that there was a straightforward way to interact with the theory, which was to focus on the basic concept of DMM attachment by working from an assessment of the overarching theory of adaptation to danger; isolation; distress and chaos.²⁴²

²³⁷ 'Teachers Warn Zero Tolerance in Schools is Feeding Mental Health Crisis'

²³⁸ 'Teachers Warn Zero Tolerance Discipline in Schools Is Feeding Mental Health Crisis'

²³⁹ Jody Todd Manly and others, 'The Impact of Neglect on Initial Adaptation to School', *Child Maltreatment*, 18.3 (2013), 155-70.

²⁴⁰ Crittenden and others, *Danger*, 'Development and Adaptation,' p.518.

²⁴¹ Baim and others, back cover

²⁴² Baim and others, p.14.

If trauma has occurred in childhood, the personal stories that children use to understand their place in the world have become confused and their ability to establish a coherent narrative has been fractured. Their stories lack integration and therefore 'the story involves some degree of minimisation, distortion, exaggeration, or reliance on false information.' To work with trauma-experienced individuals, means to help and 'identify where their stories may be injured' in order to rewrite those stories to enable coherence and integration within them.²⁴³ Attachment Theory is a theory about the survival of the species in the face of danger, inbuilt in us as babies, and this can be broken down into four broad threats that we, along with other mammals, face:

1. Faced with danger, we seek safety
2. Faced with distress, we seek comfort
3. Faced with isolation, we seek proximity
4. Faced with chaos, we seek predictability²⁴⁴

In infancy, given that a child relies on close adult carers for survival, unable to care for herself, she seeks help through that carer, who needs to reassure, comfort, protect and give reliable care. Through these mechanisms an infant will *organise* her behaviour to give herself the best chance of survival. It is not conscious. It is an affective response to what she needs to survive, embedded in the brain's processes. If a child is given good enough care, and can explore surroundings whilst still maintaining proximity, and rely on predictability, her behaviour will reflect this. If a child does not receive good enough care to know she can rely on core needs being met, that child will adapt her behaviour in the best way she knows how, to try and obtain the safety, comfort, proximity and predictability she needs.²⁴⁵

Unfortunately, to a world that does not understand this is a child's strategy, that child seems erratic, disobedient, lazy, or so compliant and over-eager to please that serious

²⁴³ Baim and others, p.6.

²⁴⁴ Baim and others, p.14.

²⁴⁵ Patricia McKinsey Crittenden, *Raising Parents: Attachment, Representation, and Treatment*, Second edition (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016).

problems will be left unaddressed. Crittenden worked closely with Main and Soloman, and Ainsworth, but she believed that, in some cases, the Strange Situation Test was insufficient to understand that there were underlying attachment difficulties.²⁴⁶ She observed “switching” strategies in which a child would alternate destructive behaviours: unresponsiveness, combined with bursts of harshness for example, anxious attachments concerned with conflicting impulses and paradoxical behaviour.²⁴⁷

Although I do not intend to thoroughly or strictly adhere to or use ABC+ DMM patterns, the guide below helps to contextualise behaviour of young people we may encounter, and guides myself and my readers to be familiar with them and use some of the information as a reference. So I give Baim and Morrison’s overview here, which is user-friendly to those of us who do not have a psychotherapy or psychology background.

Adaptation Style ‘B’: Balanced Attachment Strategy

Children with responsive care are likely to follow adaptation path B. B adapted children are able to integrate the A strategy, relying on thinking patterns or cognition, and C strategy, relying on emotions or affective responses.²⁴⁸ Cognitive integration means that a child can interpret the world intellectually, because she is given the tools to explore and learn by her caregiver. Affective responses to danger are an important part of survival, and having intrinsically understood through the carer that using emotions to express fear, sadness or anger leads to safety, the child is able to internalise this to use her emotional responses in appropriate contexts. A person following attachment style B will give equal importance to thoughts and feelings when dealing with life’s challenges and when interacting with people with whom they are close.²⁴⁹ A ‘B’ baby learns that their distress - crying out - receives attuned or predictable responses. Biologically this is where attunement leads to co-

²⁴⁶ Clark Baim in interview with author. 8 November, 2019

²⁴⁷ Crittenden and others, ‘Danger, Development and Adaptation’, p107

²⁴⁸ Baim and others, p. 24.

²⁴⁹ Baim and others, p. 24.

regulation, all in a subtle adjustment of cues, an adjusted *dyad*.²⁵⁰ This is also key to being able to empathise with others, because the child has internalised the caregiver's response and is able to reflect outwards to understand the need for this in others.²⁵¹

Adaption Style 'A': Distancing attachment strategy

Children who adopt Style A are likely to have been exposed to predictable patterns of care, but without any of the intuitive attunement from caregivers as seen in 'B'. Children learn that adults will predictably be abusive or neglectful. This may include a child who is regularly harshly punished (maybe physically abused or humiliated) for doing things the carer does not like. Because she comes to understand that care will never be forthcoming, whilst at the same time requiring it to survive, she begins to rely on her cognitive function, and suppress the affect that makes her feel helpless and hopeless. Children devise strategies that help them "think" themselves out of danger. Relying on time, place and sequence and under-relying on internal emotions is essential, because they have learnt that being soothed from feelings of fear or anger or sadness has never been something on which they could rely. Baim and Morrison suggest: 'The 'A' strategy represents a continuum of self-protective strategies, dependent on the level of threat in the child's environment.'²⁵² As a child becomes older, she may turn to sexual promiscuity or violent relationships in, for example, gangs, as this is the only way she knows how to seek proximity with others, but which contains no risk of the pain that may be caused in hoping vainly for loving care (which, since it will never come, would be hard to bear).

Adaption Style 'C': Preoccupied attachment strategy

Children who adopt style 'C' are likely to have been exposed to unpredictable, uneven patterns of care. A carer may have moments when they respond in attunement to a child's distress, but at other times they will not or cannot, or respond too late. A child will learn that she cannot predict when and how she will receive this care. A 'C' strategy may develop

²⁵⁰ Crittenden and others, 'Danger, Development and Adaptation' p. 107.

²⁵¹ Baim and others, p. 26.

²⁵² Baim and others, p.29.

when a parent or carer is, for example, depressed, ill, distracted, busy with other children or dealing with high levels of threat themselves, such as being in a violent relationship with a partner. A carer may, alternatively, be needy and insecure, demanding emotional attention from a child when the child has not sought it out - a parent demanding cuddles when a child is calmly playing for example.²⁵³ A child with this type of care cannot rely on thinking to get out of danger or distress because she is unaware when or how this danger will arrive: these care-giving patterns are 'very confusing for the infant because their displays of negative affect - sadness, anger or fear *sometimes* get them the care they need and *sometimes* do not... A baby becomes preoccupied with her *own* feelings of agitation, and anxiety, because they cannot predict when their parents will be available to calm and soothe their distressed emotions' [author's italics].²⁵⁴ Exaggerating affect means a child is more likely to receive attention: uncontrollable crying, destructive (to self or others) rage, complete withdrawal of speech or other communication and hyper-activity all stand a higher chance of an adult coming to meet need because they cannot ignore it. In situations of extreme and persistent inconsistency in care, a child or adolescent might go to extremes to try and draw comfort in others towards them. They may kill or attempt suicide. 'Even neglectful parents will respond when their child is in mortal danger.'²⁵⁵ It is also important to note that children may well have both A and C strategies mixed up, in response to their treatment.

If, as theatre practitioners working with children who have "challenging" behaviour, we see this behaviour through a DMM lens, we judge them less and respect them more: 'When function and organisation of symptomatic behaviour are understood, others can think productively about alternative responses to the behaviour.'²⁵⁶ Seeing our children through this lens is also useful when interacting with families. As is certainly the case with the families of children in the pilot project, many parents or carers have also suffered abuse and neglect as children, and have accompanying attachment styles, which become

²⁵³ Baim and others, p.34.

²⁵⁴ Baim and others, p. 34-35.

²⁵⁵ Baim and others, p. 36.

²⁵⁶ Crittenden and others, 'Danger, Development and Adaptation', p.515.

neurologically embedded. They are often caught in an accusatory system. Blame, suggests Crittenden, is misplaced when it is assigned to primary carers alone. She describes her own psychotherapy practice:

Much of my ability to win their trust and enable them to try new approaches came from my unspoken knowledge of their suffering and an appreciation of their intentions and strengths...Compassion from others when you have reached a low point in your life may be crucial to being able to accept help.²⁵⁷

In alignment with theories of adaptation, and recognised as such by Crittenden and Baim, are the actual neural processes that occur as a result of the adaptation strategies on which trauma-survivors rely. As Bowlby presciently stated in 1976, '[f]or humans to respond with a fear to loss of a trusted companion is no more puzzling than if he should respond with fear to any of the other natural clues to potential danger - strangeness, sudden movement, sudden change in noise or light level.'²⁵⁸

Instead of seeing a child as rude, lazy, defiant and so on, I propose that the DMM is used as a background when we encounter her, whether this is at the start of the project or in a pattern seen over many weeks, as we saw in Treasure House Youth Troupe. It asks practitioners to step aside from neoliberal's guide to success or failure, and challenges us to see beyond our own preconceptions of what "difficult" means. Importantly, we can only do this if we attune to begin with. We must gauge a child's distress by coming alongside her, even at the earliest point adjusting to subtle cues. In doing this we start from a position of unconditional regard, which sets a precedent for the way forward.

We also start from a position of our own vulnerability. Ironically perhaps, the young people in Theatre Troupe's work are exactly what the school walls and training programmes

²⁵⁷ Crittenden and others, 'Danger, Development and Adaptation', p.515.

²⁵⁸ John R. Bowlby, 'The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds. I. Aetiology and Psychopathology in the Light of Attachment Theory. An Expanded Version of the Fiftieth Maudsley Lecture, Delivered before the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 19 November 1976', *The British Journal of Psychiatry: The Journal of Mental Science*, 130 (1977), 201–10, (p. 123).

declare are the gold standard of good mental health: they are resilient. They have learnt expertly, in the most unbearable of circumstances, by adapting relational patterns to ensure survival. The fact we are working *against* resilience, therefore, is important in the ethos of Theatre Troupe Model practice. To embrace a practice of vulnerability is actually a more honourable and more effective place to begin.

Chapter three : A Theory of Change

Vulnerability is a contested construct.

In 2013, the Children’s Commissioner launched a strategy focusing on “vulnerable” children, *On measuring the number of vulnerable children in England*. The report seeks to highlight the number of children who experience vulnerability factors and to show differential outcomes in both childhood and adulthood associated with being a member of a “vulnerable “group. Anne Longfield states:

In one sense of course, all children are vulnerable. What we are trying to pin down here is the group of children who carry with them risks and difficulties, which make it much harder for them to succeed in life, to be happy and healthy and have a chance at a good future.²⁵⁹

Cordis Bright, who was commissioned to conduct rapid exploratory research as part of this initiative, gives a definition of vulnerable child as having ‘additional needs and barriers children face that make them less likely to have happy, healthy, safe lives or less likely to have successful transitions to adulthood.’²⁶⁰ Technical Paper 2, drawing on existing data sets and samples, gives thirty-two vulnerability factors. Among them are factors that are directly relatable to young people at Theatre Troupe. These particularly include: Children in need who have experienced childhood trauma/abuse; Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP); Children in Need (a social care step down from having a CPP); Children who have mental health difficulties (those who access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services - CAMHS); Children in low income families (eligible for free school meals; in relative poverty; in material deprivation and low/severe low income; children in absolute poverty; children in persistent low income); Children who are homeless/are in unsure or unstable housing; Young Carers; Children whose parents use substances problematically; Children whose parents may have limited parenting capacity; Excluded

²⁵⁹ Anne Longfield in (2017) *On measuring the vulnerability of children*, London: Children’s Commissioner, p.2.

²⁶⁰ Longfield, p.2.

children (pupil enrolments with one or more fixed period exclusions; permanent exclusions); Children involved in the criminal justice system/young offenders; Children in gangs; and Children with BME backgrounds.²⁶¹

There is some concerning language and interpretation here too. The list includes: children in 'workless families', 'children in "troubled families"' and 'children "Just About Managing."' The latter two relate directly to government initiatives - the Troubled Families drive in 2010, and the attempt by Prime Minister Theresa May, in November 2016, to reach-out to the marginalised by using the phrase 'Just About Managing.' Potter and Brotherton suggest that using the word "vulnerable" negatively identifies groups 'at risk', in order to develop 'effective policy interventions' loaded with implications of blame. Like Walker and Chase, they note that this follows a British tradition of seeing those who have been marginalised by the powers-that-be as "helpless" or "negligent" stretching from the eighteenth and nineteenth century poor laws.²⁶² They differentiate between vulnerability as structural oppression, in which cause or potential harm in social and/or economic circumstances are largely beyond the control of the individual, and responsibility for vulnerability and its attendant risks as the 'frailty and failure of the individual.'²⁶³ They suggest:

In a time of limited resources, the argument runs, it is sensible to focus time, expertise and taxpayers' money in the form of benefit payments to those most at risk of harm...if it is possible to describe the key attributes that make a person, family or whole community "vulnerable" it becomes easier to make more resources available to them and, crucially, easier to withdraw such support if their behaviour or actions transgress the boundaries of what is deemed socially acceptable.²⁶⁴

The Troubled Families initiative is connected directly to a practice designed to punish and shame. The UK policy to reduce the government's budget deficit and welfare spending was

²⁶¹ Cordis Bright, (2017), *Defining child vulnerability: Definitions, frameworks and groups*, London, Children's Commissioner, p15-19.

²⁶² *Working with Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families*, ed. by Graham Brotherton and Terence Mark Cronin (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), p.1.

²⁶³ Brotherton and Cronin, p.1.

²⁶⁴ *Working with Vulnerable Children, Young People and Families*, ed. by Graham Brotherton and Terence Mark Cronin (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), p.1.

coined as an “Age of Austerity” by Prime Minister David Cameron at the Conservative Party Conference in 2009. A part of the Scarman Lecture, shortly after national riots in 2011, Cameron laid out his plans for a new policy initiative:

I want to talk about Troubled Families. Let me be clear what I mean by this phrase. Officialdom might call them “families with multiple disadvantages”. Some in the Press might call them “neighbours from hell”. Whatever you call them, we’ve known for years that a relatively small number of families are the source of a large proportion of the problems in our society. Drug addiction. Alcohol abuse. Crime. A culture of disruption and irresponsibility that cascades through generations.²⁶⁵

The Troubled Families initiative described as ‘[l]ife changing policies that will help families lift themselves out of poverty,²⁶⁶’ was purported to have an established evidence base, despite several researchers highlighting that family intervention programmes which attempt to tackle poverty through a behaviour-change based model, have previously shown very little success.²⁶⁷ The Troubled Families Unit was launched in 2011, costing £448 million, offering behaviour-changing routes for families, including parenting classes and harsh(er) sanctions for parents whose children did not comply with certain requirements such as school attendance. The policy is built with shame inherent. It ‘paints a picture of UK poverty that is tied up with bad parenting, highlighting cases of alcoholic, crack-addicted parents and parents who abandoned their children to play bingo.’²⁶⁸ This also rewrites the assumption that inequality is responsible for a certain level of distress, that, as Acheson reports, ‘in health are long standing and their determinants are deeply ingrained in our social structure.’²⁶⁹ A 2016 report by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, concluded that the Troubled Families scheme had no discernable impact on the

²⁶⁵ David Cameron, 15 December 2011.

²⁶⁶ Cameron

²⁶⁷ Stephen Crossley, (2017), ‘Loud and Clear’ no more: the shift from child poverty to ‘troubled families’, *Poverty* 157 London: CPAG, p15-16.

²⁶⁸ ‘Tories Have Redefined Child Poverty as Not Just about Having No Money | Society | The Guardian’ <<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jul/01/tories-redefined-child-poverty-no-longer-finances>> [accessed 18 June 2019].

²⁶⁹ Elizabeth Clery (2013), ‘Public attitudes to child poverty’, *Poverty*, 146, London: Child Poverty Action Group.

life-factors tackled, such as truancy or crime.²⁷⁰ Therefore I separate myself from these agendas.

In another definition though, the Latin root of the word vulnerable is “vulnerabilis” – meaning “wounding.”²⁷¹ It is apt in the context of detrimental changes that a child’s neuro-chemistry undergoes as a result of trauma. ‘Maltreatment during childhood is an experience that may affect the course of brain development, potentially leading to differences in brain anatomy...’²⁷² ‘A childhood replete with suffering, lingers in the mind as bitter, encoded traces of pain’ state Lewis et al. ‘Even a tangential reminder of the suffering can spur the outbreak of unpleasant thoughts, feelings, anticipations.’²⁷³ In these contexts, it could be said that young people are literally – physically - wounded. *We must never underestimate the level and intensity of emotional pain and grief these particular pupils carry with them.* [author’s italics].’ writes Bomber.²⁷⁴ The young people Theatre Troupe works with start with this livid wound and this puts them at a severe disadvantage.

But, there was a catalyst for my research’s use of attachment and attunement theories, and this came from a perspective that positive intervention in trauma effects was possible, and that theatre was a possible way to realise it. In 2010, during my period as Associate Director at GLYPT, I attended a Young Mind’s training course, *An Introduction to Adolescent Mental Health: Attachment and Neuroscience* delivered by Roger Grainger.²⁷⁵ It was to be pivotal in the conception of the Theatre Troupe Model, and my first introduction to

²⁷⁰ Laurie Day, Great Britain, and Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme: Final Synthesis Report* (London: Dept. for Communities and Local Government, 2016)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/560499/Troubled_Families_Evaluation_Synthesis_Report.pdf> [accessed 18 June 2019].

²⁷¹ Oxford English Dictionary

²⁷² Sandra Twardosz and John R. Lutzker, ‘Child Maltreatment and the Developing Brain: A Review of Neuroscience Perspectives’, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 15.1 (2010), 59–68, p.59.

²⁷³ Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 1. Vintage ed (New York: Vintage, 2001).p. 60.

²⁷⁴ Louise Michelle Bombèr, *Inside I’m Hurting: Practical Strategies for Supporting Children with Attachment Difficulties in Schools* (London: Worth, 2007), p.4.

²⁷⁵ Roger Grainger, ‘Introduction to child and adolescent mental health’ (Young Minds, London, 2010)

(neurobiological) theories of attachment. It introduced the concept that poor attachment in early childhood resulted in the malforming of chemical pathways in the brain. But, since the course was geared at those working with young people in distress, it also took an optimistic position: that the plasticity of a child's brain, especially in adolescence, when it was reforming for adulthood, could be altered by positive attachments and relationships with others: it could offer a powerful second chance for those with trauma damage. Knowing the group's backgrounds at the beginning of the training, and learning there were two of us in the room with drama backgrounds, Grainger said 'of course drama would be a really good intervention for doing this.' It was an offhand comment. Neither he nor we expanded this idea further. But it inspired me, leading to the creation of Whatever Makes you Happy (WMYH) and, subsequently, became the touch stone for the Theatre Troupe Model.

Although a lot of attachment research suggests that damage after the infant plastic window is hard, because the rapid growth of the brain in this window is like no other in the life course, others are challenging this assumption. In some ways, Attachment Theory could arguably, be pessimistic in its conclusions regarding insecure attachment. The neuroplastic period, from birth to (at the highest) age three, theorists claim, is when the impact of trauma can do the most damage. This is due to the fact that during early critical periods organized and disorganized attachment histories are 'affectively burnt in' the infant's rapidly developing right brain.²⁷⁶ But recent research is making headway into the fact that the brain is radically primed for transformation. In neurobiology, this is called plasticity. The brain has been found to change based on life experiences and it can do so throughout the life-span (Greenough and Black, 1992; Elbert et al., 1995; Ramachandran, 1995; Eriksson et al., 1998; Gould, 1999). Some longitudinal studies reveal the brain's capacity for adapting to new circumstances so that it may remain active and healthy. Several studies of adults have shown how the process involved in the acquisition of significant new learning, results in shifts in tissue and synaptic health. This includes a study comparing hippocampus size

²⁷⁶ Schore, 'Effects of a Secure Attachment Relationship', p.12.

between London taxi drivers and London bus drivers, demonstrating that navigation around London, as well as thorough learning of “the knowledge” (the exam required to drive a black cab) caused taxi drivers to have a larger hippocampus.²⁷⁷ It has also been seen in bilingual speakers,²⁷⁸ musicians,²⁷⁹ and medical students.²⁸⁰ Studies have also tracked the brain’s capacity to prevent Alzheimer’s disease. The Nun Study was a longitudinal study of 678 Catholic sisters 75 to 107 years of age who were members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame congregation. It examined how healthy aging and dementia relate to the degree of pathology present in the brain and the level of resistance to the clinical expression of neuropathology.²⁸¹

As Grainger suggested on the *Young Minds* training course, the adolescent brain is especially primed for positive influence. There is much potential neuroplasticity during this window, which can occur right the way from the onset of puberty into the early twenties.²⁸² The vulnerability of the wounded brain, at this critical time, can be rewritten if positive intervention occurs at this time. Because the highest chances for restoring damage are inter-relational, it opens chances for nuanced, embodied attunement - the resonance of human interaction - to play a strong part.

Siegel and Schore have come to some tentative assumptions about the ways in which healing may occur. As well as neurologists, they are psychotherapists, so they relate this to therapy. In general, their research suggests that "talking therapy" must do more than talk

²⁷⁷ Eleanor A. Maguire, Katherine Woollett, and Hugo J. Spiers, ‘London Taxi Drivers and Bus Drivers: A Structural MRI and Neuropsychological Analysis’, *Hippocampus*, 16.12 (2006), 1091–1101.

²⁷⁸ Andrea Mechelli and others, ‘Neurolinguistics: Structural Plasticity in the Bilingual Brain’, *Nature*, 431 (2004), 757.

²⁷⁹ Christian Gaser and Gottfried Schlaug, ‘Brain Structures Differ between Musicians and Non-Musicians’, *The Journal of Neuroscience*, 23.27 (2003), 9240–45

²⁸⁰ B. Draganski and others, ‘Temporal and Spatial Dynamics of Brain Structure Changes during Extensive Learning’, *Journal of Neuroscience*, 26.23 (2006), 6314–17

²⁸¹ David A. Snowdon, ‘Healthy Aging and Dementia: Findings from the Nun Study’, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 139.5_Part_2 (2003), 450

²⁸² Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*, The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology, Second edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), p. 44.

if the problem is in areas of the right brain unresponsive to verbal interventions. Schore believes that particularly when there is a therapeutic rupture, a misattunement with the therapist, the patient may move into a highly emotional state where the right brain becomes dominant. 'What will get through is tone of voice, demeanor, facial expressions and a sense of empathy...' says Schore. But, the Troupe can come in from another angle, using these same characteristics, which are gifts intrinsic to theatre.

A Therapeutic Community

Theatre Troupe Model should be a community with a purpose for reducing distress, to offer this as a place where young people could heal. Therefore, although not a formal therapeutic community, it seems, in some sense, to offer a similar outcome. This intention is demonstrated in the fact that young people are, in the premise of the model, offered provision for up to a year, the rationale being that this is the least amount of time that damage done by traumatic interpersonal experiences may be ameliorated. A process of becoming vulnerable, when the DMM resilience strategies are entrenched, takes time. Troupe-as-community, with a remit to deliver attunement opportunities, is a therapeutic intervention in this regard. This intention, as I have written in my introduction, has been influenced by my own experiences of mental health interventions and their inadequacy: the threadbare seats, the blank faces, the sterile wards in which the warm chatter of human beings is absent. The model aims to be protective for young people who are shuffled between services, or who experience their stigma, as a social worker of a young person in the TTM suggests: 'the fact that it's not in a kind of clinical setting is very much appealing to people like my client. He's been down to Sunshine House [a Southwark social care and healthcare hub for children], he doesn't really like to go there, he doesn't like the whole set up where you're going somewhere and it's very clinical.'²⁸³ I want the Theatre Troupe Model to offer a real alternative.

²⁸³ Interview with author, 5 December, 2018

Mental health and community

Approaches to the alleviation or control of madness, from the Dark Ages to contemporary contexts are full of anguish - a miserable picture of blood-letting, exorcising, drowning, executing, beating, chaining, detaining, electrocuting, straitjacketing, and drugging/doping, to name just some of the “therapies” applied to those in mental distress. Andrew Soloman suggests that this has always been driven by the agendas of the hegemony: In the fourth century AD, with St Augustine of Hippo, loss of reason was considered a deadly sin, and its sufferers were perceived and punished as sinners, a belief that did not lift until the renaissance.²⁸⁴ In the Enlightenment, ‘[p]rogress of scientific theories of the body and mind happened at accelerated pace, but in an Age of Reason, those without reason were at a severe disadvantage...the social position of the depressed made a great leap backwards.’²⁸⁵ As a result of this, the ‘severely mentally ill...were treated as half lab specimens and half-animal fresh from the jungle.’²⁸⁶ In the nineteenth century “mad” people were seen to be akin to unruly animals or children who needed to be disciplined out of their wayward states.²⁸⁷ Treatments included, The Tranquilizer, a chair, that, as its inventor Benjamin Rush, describes ‘binds and confines every part of the body...it acts as a sedative to the tongue and temper as well as to the blood vessels,’ and the Chinese Temple, ‘a movable iron cage’ with water running down past the patient to give the effect they were drowning... forcing [him] to sink down [trapped] under the water.’²⁸⁸ In the specific context of England during this era, a mad person had no agency whatsoever, as outlined in the Lunacy Act of 1890, which allowed a single parish doctor, without any other corroborating authority or psychiatric opinion, to confine the mad in asylums indefinitely under a label of being ‘insane’. People labelled as mentally ill were locked up for decades

²⁸⁴ Andrew Solomon, *The Noonday Demon an Anatomy of Depression*, 2016 (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 293.

²⁸⁵ Soloman, p. 308.

²⁸⁶ Soloman, p. 309.

²⁸⁷ Mike Jay and Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz, *This Way Madness Lies: The Asylum and Beyond* (New York, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2016). p.99.

²⁸⁸ Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity, from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*, First paperback edition (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016). p. 156.

for reasons such as being gay or being unmarried mothers of ‘neurotic character.’²⁸⁹ In the 1950s and 1960s, medical treatments held sway, with the mentally distressed being subject to treatments such as lobotomies, insulin comas and electric shock treatments which at the time were administered without sedation. Psychiatrist Henry Rollin, who pioneered a more compassionate approach in post-war asylum practice (he was a pioneer of music therapy) particularly hated new physical treatments such as insulin comas, ECT and psychosurgery. On prefrontal leucotomy Rollin commented, ‘I had the misfortune to recommend sixteen patients [for the operation]...it was of no benefit whatsoever, and some of those had the tragedy of personality change.’²⁹⁰

Asylums are “communities” with, generally, disturbing histories. Very early asylums had some pretensions to care and safety as almshouses, but they soon morphed into sites of dereliction and cruelty. By the sixteenth century, The Bethlem Hospital or “Bedlam”, based in London, was described by writers at the time as a ‘teeming slum,’²⁹¹ its inhabitants, cold, sleeping on straw, and subject to shaving and bleeding practices and restrained in chains and straitjackets, for months, or in some cases, for years at a time.²⁹² In the Enlightenment, ‘when the terrors of hell were waning,’ writes Jay, ‘Bedlam was their secular equivalent: the lowest level to which a person could fall.’²⁹³ It was during this period that the public were invited into Bedlam to view inmates/patients as if they were in a zoo. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the age of asylumdom, as Goffman coined it, was in full swing and, between the late nineteenth century and the mid twentieth, Soloman suggests ‘asylums pullulated like toadstools after a rainstorm.’²⁹⁴ The work of Goffman and others on institutionalization of psychiatric patients showed the poor standards of care and quality of

²⁸⁹ ‘Sin and the Single Mother: The History of Lone Parenthood | The Independent’ <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/sin-and-the-single-mother-the-history-of-lone-parenthood-7782370.html>> [accessed 18 June 2019].

²⁹⁰ ‘Asylum Portraits’, *Wellcome Library* <<http://blog.wellcomelibrary.org/2010/07/asylum-portraits/>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

²⁹¹ Jay, p. 25.

²⁹² Jay P.4.

²⁹³ Jay, p. 52-3.

²⁹⁴ Soloman, p.100.

life in asylums. Those that had been incarcerated there for decades, and often in degrading conditions, crumbling infrastructure, the stench of bodies, a dereliction of care. The Care in the Community Movement was triggered by the 1957 Royal Commission on the Law Relating to Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency; it is a legacy that continues in mental health care today. The Commission recommended that 'no patient should be retained as a hospital inpatient when he has reached the stage at which he could go home'. However, the volte-face that occurred as a result of these findings swept out one sort of degradation only, arguably, to replace it with another. In 1961, Enoch Powell's 'water tower' speech paved the way for the collapse of the asylum movement, and by 1970 half of all mental health beds had closed.²⁹⁵ There were benefits to some patients, especially those who had been falsely labelled and had languished without agency, for decades. For others it offered sanctuary and home for the most vulnerable and lonely. 'Dispersal from asylums, Killapsey suggests, 'resulted in the loss of close friends, as asylum residents were scattered into different local communities that may be long distances away.'²⁹⁶ The Care in the Community movement has created a legacy of loneliness and isolation. The lack of care has driven people to self-medicate with alcohol and narcotics to alleviate mental distress. In the community, patients can find there is no suitable help at all. In 2014, in a survey by The Mental Health Foundation, 45% of all homeless people in the UK were considered to have a psychiatric illness. 80% reported that they had a mental health problem.²⁹⁷ Solomon calls Care in the Community, the 'great social experiment of *de-institutionalisation*, people moving into the community from asylums without the shift of money and personnel with [them]'.²⁹⁸ Alongside this is the dominance of pharmaceutical treatments for mental distress, which, their critics suggest, serve the interests of the Big Business. 'Such diagnoses ...provide lucrative new markets for psychopharmacology's products' notes Scull 'which has caused some critics to question whether commercial concerns are illegitimately

²⁹⁵ Killapsey, p.245.

²⁹⁶ Killapsey, p.246.

²⁹⁷ 'Mental Health Statistics: Homelessness', *Mental Health Foundation*, 2018

<<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-homelessness>> [accessed 18 June 2019].

²⁹⁸ Solomon, p. 312.

driving the expansion of the psychiatric universe...'²⁹⁹ The dominance of a pharmaceutical approach to treating mental health has, arguably, been partly encouraged by the fact that it can subdue patients who would have needed asylum care previously, as Simon Wesley, Vice Dean of academic Psychiatry at Kings' College London suggests.³⁰⁰

A recent project called *Madlove* inspired my thinking about the kind of ameliorative community the Troupe might represent. Artists Hannah Hull and the Vacuum Cleaner's *Madlove* squares itself to Utopian possibilities. They state:

It ain't no bad thing to need a safe place to go mad. The problem is that a lot of psychiatric hospitals are more punishment than love... They need some Madlove. Is it possible to go mad in a positive way? How would you create a safe place in which to do so? If you designed your own asylum, what would it be like?

The project was originally based on Hull and the Vacuum Cleaner's own experience of mental health settings, and a desire to create a better space for dealing with 'distress and enlightenment.'³⁰¹ *Madlove* gathered creative material from a series of public events, from people who did, and did not, have mental health experiences, including mental health professionals and academics, artists and designers. *Madlove* is utopian rather than actual: its ideas exist only in theoretical form in drawings and architectural plans. *Madlove* demonstrates the yearning and need for home. Many comments from respondents centre around wanting peace and beauty: 'Northumberland – sheep farm up in the hills, views, sunsets; Garden with a stream running through; Star gazing.' The desire for pets to be part of an asylum comes up more than once.

The notion of home and family is important to consider in terms of applied theatre practice too, as I explored in my paper *It Feels Like Home: the role of the aesthetic space in*

²⁹⁹ Scull, p. 408.

³⁰⁰ 'BBC Radio 4 - All in the Mind, DSM-5; Should Therapists Cry? Sleep and Mental Illness', *BBC* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01s8cpf>> [accessed 20 December 2019].

³⁰¹ 'What Is Madlove?', *Madlove* <<http://www.madlove.org.uk/>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

*participatory work with vulnerable children.*³⁰² Heddon and Milling suggest that a landmark moment for the development of Applied Theatre as a field occurred when strata of what Kershaw dubs the 'alternative theatre movement'³⁰³ moved to 'within' the community. Initially this was to the places 'where large proportions of predominantly working-class communities had been dispersed from "slums" to new estates of tower blocks.'³⁰⁴ Applied Theatre became a distinct field, and practice in community spaces continued.³⁰⁵ Applied practice seems to reject the traditional cultural institution as bourgeois, and a mistrust in 'beauty' given its Kantian a priori associations of elitism still runs deep. But in those with trauma experiences, a lack of comfort and safety could be dangerous.³⁰⁶ 'The [person] who was abused as a child may feel the fearsome jaws of memory close in after he glimpses a mere intimation of his former circumstances.'³⁰⁷ The classroom, after the final bell has gone, may have fresh memories of punishment, humiliation or bullying. The doors of a community hall may be flung open by a theatre practitioner on a summer's day, but, in the child's mind, provide access to an abuser.³⁰⁸ Conversely, the comfort of a family space and place are crucial to therapeutic healing.

Troupe-as-community

Can theatre's mechanisms intervene in the magic interlude of the childhood plastic window, in which we may see, on an fMRI machine, the sparking and glowing synapses of healing wounds?

³⁰² Emily Hunka, 'It Feels like Home: The Role of the Aesthetic Space in Participatory Work with Vulnerable Children', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 20.3 (2015), 293–97

³⁰³ Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).

³⁰⁴ Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, *Devising Performance: A Critical History*, Theatre and Performance Practices (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.135.

³⁰⁵ Heddon and Milling, p.135.

³⁰⁶ Hunka, p.294.

³⁰⁷ Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 1. Vintage ed (New York: Vintage, 2001), p131.

³⁰⁸ Hunka, p. 295.

I have, since the beginning of my research process, been drawn to a model of theatre, based in mid to late medieval times - when the “troupe” came to be associated with theatre. The term “troupe” was heard in middle French in the 1540s to mean ‘band of people, company, troop, crowd’: troop in the British Isles, then as now, referred to a band of soldiers. Whilst, according to the Dictionary of Etymology the term “troupe” as a noun was not associated with performers until the late 1700s, it is a term, for me, that distances itself from the general term “company”, especially as it is used frequently to describe theatre groups or bands in medieval and renaissance theatre.³⁰⁹ I therefore repurpose it here. The notion of “fellowship”, is closely associated with theatre, especially as it was used in the late medieval period. Fellow’s etymology, with no gender connotations, is from c.1200 Old English *feolaga*, ‘partner one who shares with another’ (literally one who puts money down with another in a joint venture), and by the twelfth century it has become ‘one of a pair’ or ‘one of the same kind.’ The well-known phrase ‘hail fellow well met’ emerges from *Fellow well-met* in the 1580s.³¹⁰ Exploring original documents as part of *Shakespeare Documented*, an archive project by the Folger Shakespeare Library, Alan H. Nelson suggests that, at this time, “fellowship” had particular currency in the context of theatre.³¹¹ Naming your fellows, claims Nelson, acknowledges that the relationship is held as reciprocal. “Fellow” appears frequently in relation to players, in 1600 for example, Augustine Phillips refers to members of Shakespeare’s playing company as ‘hys fellows,’ and the importance of one’s fellows is demonstrated by its appearance in wills. In Phillip’s will, designating specific legatees, each of which being members of the King’s Men players: ‘Item I geve and bequeathe to my ffellowe William Shakespeare a Thirty shillinges peece in gould, To my fellowe Henry Condell one other Thirty shillinge peece in gould... [and so on]’. Shakespeare’s will, similarly, in 1616 states: ‘... to my fellows John Hemynges Richard Burbage & Henry Cundell A peece to buy them Ringes ...’ ‘In sum’ states Nelson “fellow” implies a common membership in an organization: William Shakespeare’s “fellows” were all

³⁰⁹ ‘Troupe | Origin and Meaning of Troupe by Online Etymology Dictionary’
 <<https://www.etymonline.com/word/troupe>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

³¹⁰ ‘Troupe | Origin and Meaning of Troupe

³¹¹ Alan. H Nelson, ‘Fellow as Title in Shakespeare’s England’, *Shakespeare Documented*
 <<https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/fellow-title-shakespeares-england>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

members of the Lord Chamberlain's and King's company of players. Crucially here, the reciprocity of relationships in the troupe means that players are necessarily bound together. In relationship terms, the troupe is an ideal vehicle for attunement because it relies on interdependence. There are multiple roles in the Troupe - designer, actor, writer, stage manager and so on - and each of them does not make sense without all the others. Unlike a novelist or visual artist, who stand alone with her artistic creation, the Troupe artist's work is only realised in its full form when it combines with all the others. Additionally, the artists rely on each other to make sure the production will happen. Without costumes or a script an actor cannot realise her full artistic potential. Without a stage manager, any artistic work prepared and crafted will be overwhelmed by the chaos of incongruous props cluttering the stage.

Theatre and vulnerability

The Troupe offers a kind of alternative family, a protective unit for those who are disenfranchised and most likely to suffer the degradations of austerity. They are subjected to health, social, and educational shame, and because of behaviour others find disagreeable, they are further excluded from society. However, the theatre troupe allows interconnection and vulnerability inside a protective shell. It has provided this in the face of hostile forces for theatre people throughout history. Being outside the mainstream has been a common identity for troupe players.³¹² Medieval troupes were made up of underdogs, chased, in different periods of history from the churches and state settings. Shakespeare and his contemporary players fell foul of The Vagabond Act, with its schemes of punishment for 'masterless men' including 'all fencers, bearwards, common players of interludes and minstrels'. Punishments for infringements included being 'grievously whipped and burned through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron of the compass of an inch about.'³¹³ The targeting of players and their companies in London meant Shakespeare

³¹² Doris Ruth Eikhof and Axel Haunschild, 'Lifestyle Meets Market: Bohemian Entrepreneurs in Creative Industries', *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 15.3 (2006), 234–41

³¹³ 'The "Vagabond" Act', *UK Parliament* <<https://www.parliament.uk/vagabondact>> [accessed 20 December 2019].

and his troupe were forced to abandon the law-abiding Bankside and find a new home amongst other “undesirables: in the Liberty of Southwark. There, away from the glare and judgement of officialdom, they found a new home. In Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, a collection of articles documenting the condition of working people in the capital in the 1840s. Mayhew gave his account ‘from the lips of the persons themselves - giving a literal description of their labour, their earnings, their trials and their suffering...’³¹⁴ This extract is from an interview with the ‘strolling players’, a travelling theatre troupe: ‘It’s a very jolly life strolling, and I wouldn’t leave it for any other if I had my choice. At times it’s hard lines; but for my part I prefer it to any other...for we’re all first-rate fellows, if you can get anybody to believe us.’³¹⁵ In comparison the Street Clown is isolated in his trade:

Frequently when I am playing the fool in the streets, I feel very sad at heart. I can’t help thinking of the bare cupboards at home...I’ve often and often been at home all day when it has been wet, with no food at all, either to give my children or take myself, and have gone out at night to the public-houses to sing a comic song or play the funnyman for a meal...and when I’ve come home I’ve call’d my children up from their beds to share the loaf I had brought back with me. I know three or more clowns as miserable and bad off as myself....I can’t say what I think will be the end of me. I daren’t think of it, sir.³¹⁶

Nick Ridout’s *Passionate Amateurs* describes the bond created between the players of a given company: ‘one might want to imagine not simply that the constitution of an audience in front of a theatrical event is a kind of political potentiality, but the act of dedicating oneself to acting and speaking together, the act, that is, of forming some kind of collective organisation is, in and of itself, a political act.’³¹⁷ The Troupe borrows from all these influences and seeks to create a fellowship whose passion, camaraderie, and extended care of each other can give each member safety, comfort and transcendence from the everyday and a stake in the wider societal context.

³¹⁴ Henry Mayhew and Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Oxford World’s Classics, Selected ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.iii.

³¹⁵ Mayhew, p.141

³¹⁶ Mayhew, p.120-121.

³¹⁷ Nicholas Peter Ridout, *Passionate Amateurs: Theatre, Communism, and Love*, 2015. p. 35.

Group Theatre

Reflecting back on the influences of therapeutic theatre/drama, especially that practised in groups, it is useful to understand how a group theatre practice for Theatre Troupe may be distinct in the theatre realm. As mentioned in my introduction, dramatherapy is perhaps the mostly widely practiced and recognised form of group therapeutic theatre and therefore it is a useful springboard from which to differentiate the kind of drama practice used in this approach and the ameliorative possibilities for the Theatre Troupe.³¹⁸ This is, of course, not to say some of the influences or techniques do not share ground, the dominant notions of “play” perhaps the most obvious. Play, suggests Jennings, is central to the human experiences, a tenet of the ‘ontological development of human beings...Dramatic play gives us a chance to keep a balance between our inner and outer selves.’³¹⁹ Many applied theatre’s influences are rooted in play-exploratory experiences. Beyond her engagement in community performance, Applied theatre pioneer Joan Littlewood engaged in projects that transformed discarded spaces and waste ground in order for young people to explore participation and agency through creative play.³²⁰ Forms such as Mantle of the Expert ask children to step into roles and improvise. Bakhtin’s widespread influence includes the role of clown in carnival and the role of clowning as introducing *playfulness*: organically following the laughter and the fun through which learning and transformation take place, rather than having set theatrical or performative outcomes.³²¹ Play is certainly influential in the function of Theatre Troupe’s work: it is a way for children to let go of their embodied trauma and enjoy life in the moment. Indeed, Theatre Troupe’s work was strongly influenced by co-founder, Natasha Bergg, from her practice in Utah *Connect Play Create* (CPC!).³²² But I exclude it here to focus on what I consider a more original understanding of theatre’s potential in work with trauma-

³¹⁸ Although as Sue Jennings points out in *Neurodramatic Play*, dramatherapy is practised with individuals also.

³¹⁹ Jennings, *Dramatherapy with groups, families and individuals*, p.14-15.

³²⁰ Faith Gabrielle Guss, ‘Dramatic Playing beyond the Theory of Multiple Intelligences’, *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 10.1 (2005), 43–54, p.43.

³²¹ *The Applied Theatre Reader*, ed. by Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston (New York: Routledge, 2009), p.96.

³²² Ernestina says, ‘About’, *Connect, Play, Create!*, 2013 <<https://connectplaycreate.wordpress.com/about/>> [accessed 19 December 2019].

survivors. My focus for the TTM, is not play but *the* play. Group theatre for the TTM begins with a different philosophy to that of dramatherapy and the play-based applied theatre approach. The potential for group-theatre-as healing-starts with the idea that theatre company in its own right, can be protective, emancipatory and redemptive. Alongside the power of fellowship and its protection from the world's hostile forces, there is a distinction between the group that sets out to heal/be healed through its methodological mechanisms, and the group that provides healing through its aesthetic social function, which is the creation and performance of theatre. It is less about exploring feelings and more about *feeling* feelings collectively. Also, differing from dramatherapy, it is the preparation of and taking part in the performance that brings feelings of pleasure. The reduction of distress may take place through two particular mechanisms: "*mucking in*" and *listening*, both of which involve a profound support mechanism for those who are individually and on a societal level are vulnerable.

The British idiom "mucking in" refers to a group of people that 'share tasks or accommodation without expecting a privileged position.'³²³ This phrase is especially useful for my purposes because it conveys a "rough and ready" kind of theatre distinct from commercial professional theatre. The mucking in community has endured powerfully across centuries and it is this vitality and group spirit, I suggest, that keeps theatre people doing what they do: the multi-rolled labour is an irresistible draw.

This troupe has been a site of collective labour for thousands of years, sustaining its members and its craft in expectation of the thrill of taking the stage. The resultant affect, I suggest, has mitigated against the mental distress brought by systems of oppression and the effects of degradation and poverty, mostly intertwined with each other. Several historical examples demonstrate this. In *Dancing in the Streets: A history of collective joy*, Barbara Ehrenreich suggests that medieval theatre literally sustained the mental survival of

³²³ 'Definitions, Meanings, Synonyms, and Grammar by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.Com', *Lexico Dictionaries | English* <<https://www.lexico.com/>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

its community: 'many weeks of heavy labour and scanty diet were compensated for by the expectation (or reminiscence) of these occasions when food and drink were abundant, courtship and every kind of intercourse flourished and the hardship of life was forgotten...These occasions were, in an important sense, what men and women lived for.'³²⁴ Ehrenreich suggests that, with secularisation, festivity was 'a product of human agency.' 'Bahktin's great insight,' she notes, is 'that carnival is something that people create and generate *for themselves* [authors' italics].'³²⁵ Four hundred years later, in Mayhew's account of the London poor, the strolling players take keen delight in the process of rehearsing and performing plays as a company. The Players chat eagerly, and at length about the collective effort of the theatrical processes, and their enjoyment of them. They delight in talking about the roles they play, and the processes of group theatre (acting, being directed) they undergo, for example:

Our rehearsals for a piece are the funniest things in the world. Perhaps we are going to play 'The Floating Beacon, or 'The Weird Woman of the Wreck.' The manager will, when the night's performance is over, call the company together, and he'll say to the low-comedy man, 'Now, you play Jack Junk, and this is your part: you're supposed to fetch Frederick for to go to sea. Frederick gets capsized in the boat, and gets aboard of the floating beacon.'³²⁶

Today, in an age of commercial theatre, with its revolving cast and crew on short term contracts, there is not an obvious professional equivalent to a mucking in theatre in the UK, especially since the post-war repertory theatre movement all but collapsed. But there is a thriving equivalent group theatre practice today, which has more successfully survived the knocks of time, holding its own with a passionate and dedicated membership: the Amateur Dramatics movement (also referred to as Am Dram). The Little Theatre Guild, which was founded in 1946, currently represents one hundred and fifteen Amateur Dramatic societies

³²⁴ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, Paperback ed (London: Granta, 2008).p. 92.

³²⁵ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, Paperback ed (London: Granta, 2008), p.95.

³²⁶ Mayhew, p. 141.

across the UK.³²⁷ Amateur Dramatic groups are rooted in their local communities, offering plays, revues, musicals, light opera, pantomime or variety in a range of venues - from community halls and outdoor spaces, to those who have their own permanent theatre. Many of these groups have been established for decades. Amateur Dramatic shows involve unpaid crafts people fulfilling all the roles required to produce and perform theatre - from the creative roles to more technical roles such as stage-manager, prompt, programme producer and refreshment-provider. In many cases, these roles are rotated: a member may be a leading cast member in one production, and a prompt in the next for example.

There has been significant scholarship on amateur theatre in more recent times, but interestingly this tends to focus on “amateur” as any non-professional theatre, rather than the movement of Amateur Dramatics. In *Passionate Amateurs: Theatre, Communism and Love*, Nick Ridout chooses not to examine Amateur Dramatics, which he describes as ‘a leisure activity for those who earn their livings by other means.’³²⁸ This, in the UK at least, is in contrast to “community theatre” which Ridout describes as ‘performance events produced by specialist professionals in collaboration with non-professional participants.’³²⁹ In *Theatre, Performance and the Amateur Turn*, Nadine Holdsworth, Jane Milling and Helen Nicholson write about “amateurism” - any theatre practice that is non professional.³³⁰ Other than this, scholarship related to amateur dramatics in the applied theatre field is more rare. Although community theatre and Am Drama have similarities - both arguably fit neatly into the concept of producing theatre for, with and by community members - scholarship seems to mostly sideline the latter. The reticence to engage may be part of a criticism of amateur dramatics in the wider theatre profession. A good example of this can

³²⁷ ‘Membership’, *Little Theatre Guild* <<https://littletheatreguild.org/welcome/membership/>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

³²⁸ Nicholas Peter Ridout, *Passionate Amateurs: Theatre, Communism, and Love*, 2015, p.29.

³²⁹ Ridout, p.30.

³³⁰ Nadine Holdsworth, Jane Milling, and Helen Nicholson, ‘Theatre, Performance, and the Amateur Turn’, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 27.1 (2017), 4–17, p.4.

be found in *The Actors Survival Handbook*. Writing to a professional readership, the book states:

The problem with amateur work is the very reason it exists - for the actor to be seen. Very often to be seen is more important for the amateur actor than to produce excellent work... The performers are sometimes happier to be seen as themselves in a wonderful costume rather [than] to create the character who would actively present himself in that way with that set of clothes.³³¹

Tucker advises would-be professionals that amateur dramatic companies 'are a good place to start to see if you really want to spend the rest of your life doing this sort of thing, and they are a good place to keep your talents up to scratch while you wait for your lucky break.'³³²

But the theory of change for the TTM actually shares more in common with the work of amateur dramatic societies than it does in professional or community theatre. In Theatre Troupe's workshop model, the presence of paid staff leading activities - the artist and artist-therapist do offer professional artistic direction, but most of the people making up the Troupe, young people and volunteers, muck in together to make sure the show goes on.

Cara Gray gives a useful and apt perspective in her thesis *A Study of Amateur Theatre: Making and Making Do*, which focuses on Gerry Beegan and Paul Atkinson's definition of amateur as 'someone who loves what they do and does it for their own sake.'³³³ Gray argues that amateur dramatic companies offer affective communities and that it is 'the spaces and processes involved in amateur theatre that are often hidden from public view' which are the most pertinent.³³⁴ Gray, who bases her research on her own experience of helping as a set designer in Am Drama company The Settlement Players, suggests '...creativity and the act of physically making something (sets, costumes, props, workshops, studios, theatre) is intrinsically entwined with love, emotion and affect.'³³⁵ Gray cites Sara Ahmed who suggests, in *Sociable Happiness*, that the hobby group or fan club 'makes

³³¹ Patrick Tucker, *The Actor's Survival Manual* (New York; London: Routledge, 2005), p.6-7.

³³² Tucker, p.6.

³³³ Gerry Beegan and Paul Atkinson, in Cara Gray, *A Study of Amateur Theatre: Making and Making Do*, (doctoral thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017), p.18.

³³⁴ Gray, p.iii

³³⁵ Gray, 290.

explicit what is implicit about social life' involving the enjoyment of 'sharing a direction' towards a quality artistic end point. She continues, 'we tend to like those who like the things we like. The social bond is thus rather sensational.'³³⁶ Accordingly, Gray adopts Vannini and Atkinson's concept of an adaptation of the well-known phrase "do it-yourself" (DIY) to "Do it with" (DIW). She interviews Jim, a member of the Settlement Players:

You start off with an idea and that grows. When the actors come together for the first time to read through a play, nobody really knows where it is going. Then together, we work and mould the words on the page to be something much more. Slowly, it takes shape and then the technical people become involved, the set is finished off and painted, the lights and sound effects and everything else come together and, there you have it, you've got a show.³³⁷

Gray recognises the link between the mucking in of the theatre process and the emotional impact it has. It is a heady experience because it mixes in so many different aspects. Like the medieval festival theatre, the theatre of Mayhew's strolling players, Am Dram is a theatre that, in Gray's words is always about 'making and making do' and, by this status, it allows for attachment and attunement on multiple levels.

The reputation of in-fighting in Amateur Dramatics, often apocryphally attributed to the presence of people with big egos wanting to control and demand the process for their own benefit, may have truth in some cases (although it is hardly the only theatre practice that is at risk from this). But it is also true that these companies endure and sustain over decades, which suggests there is something about the process that mitigates against more difficult aspects of the interpersonal experience. Am Dram mucking in involves shared experiences of frustration and annoyance, and overcoming them. It provides passionate debate and challenging interpersonal conflicts that become resolved because the play and putting it on is a greater shared aim than any of the needs or wishes of individuals in the group. Just as you would find conflict and love in a "good enough" family, the Am Dram actors and other creatives find their way through together. The derogation that Amateur Dramatic

³³⁶ Sara Ahmed in Gray, p.291.

³³⁷ Gray, p.264.

organisations face is misplaced. Stephen Knott suggests its craft is ‘complex, innovative, unexpected, roguish, humorous and elusive.’³³⁸ Gray argues it is humanly sophisticated: ‘It is through the process of having to make-do that amateurs can be understood as skilled practitioners bringing together varied outside knowledges, whilst combining them with particular skill sets that have been learnt and practiced in the ‘doing,’ through ongoing and iterative participation.’³³⁹

Listening

In their article, *Critical Geographies of Love as Spatial, Relational and Political*, Carey-Ann Morrison, Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst suggest there is an imperative ‘to think critically about love in its entire multisensory, lived, embodied, felt and contradictory guises.’³⁴⁰ Group theatre practice, I suggest, can be a unique holding place for care of the most vulnerable. Alongside the camaraderie of the fellowship in degrading and distressed circumstances, it offers multiple creative opportunities for reciprocal listening, transcending the everyday verbal-aural process, allowing troupe members to tune in multi-sensorially to experience and portray an embodied representation of humanity and, consequently, humanity’s capacity for love. In Ben Cameron’s words, it is ‘paying attention to atmospheres’³⁴¹ Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and his World* and the earlier collection of essays *The Dialogic Imagination* suggest dialogism, rather than the monologism of a single individualised voice, creates powerful new chances for new possibilities and futures, for a work to be effective, it must be in a continuing and shifting dialogue with itself and the context in which it exists.³⁴² A single act can be interpreted or enriched only by other surrounding voices. Bakhtin maintains that ‘[t]he dialogical word is always in an intense relationship with another’s word, being addressed to a listener and anticipating a

³³⁸ Stephen Knott in Gray, p. 44.

³³⁹ Gray, p.293.

³⁴⁰ Carey-Ann Morrison, Lynda Johnston, and Robyn Longhurst, ‘Critical Geographies of Love as Spatial, Relational and Political’, *Progress in Human Geography*, 37.4 (2013), 505–21, p.505.

³⁴¹ Ben Cameron in Gray, iii

³⁴² Michail Bakhtin, Michael Holquist, and Caryl Emerson, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, University of Texas Press Slavic Series, 1, 18. paperback printing (Austin, Tex: Univ. of Texas Press, 2011).

response.³⁴³ Neurological attunement has strong parallels and resonances with Bakhtin's theories of dialogism in that the listening processes can happen on the level of fine tuning of communication through the minuti of facial expressions and body language. His theory of the carnivalesque proposes that the theatrical event is a place where new collective meaning can be made.

Empathy - 'the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation' - is, to use a colloquial idiom, in theatre's DNA.³⁴⁴ Like so many terms associated with the psychic state, the concept and function of empathy is contested, with some struggle within and between disciplines to claim its worth. In *Zero Degrees of Empathy* Simon Baron Cohen, Professor of Developmental Psychopathology, University of Cambridge, makes a case for empathy being pathological, measurable on an empathy bell curve, and through an EQ (empathy quotient).³⁴⁵ Baron Cohen suggests that a lack of empathy in an individual can be clinically categorised into three types of empathy-deficiency: antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. In the Wellbeing circus, empathy is often seen as a tool in a wellbeing toolkit alongside resilience or self-reliance. Any person may strive for better empathy and can learn it, thereby equipping them to be more useful citizens.

But Amy Cook sees an essential link between theatre and psychological processes. Empathy 'play[s] on the beachfront of theatre and performance studies, watching the waves of research from the cognitive sciences come in and alter the shoreline,' she suggests, a useful notion for my interdisciplinary research, which might seek to understand theatre as having a privileged role in eliciting empathy for ameliorative purposes, especially in the attachment

³⁴³ 'In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia', *Ceasefire Magazine*, 2011 <<https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-bakhtin-1/>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

³⁴⁴ 'EMPATHY | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary' <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/empathy>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

³⁴⁵ Simon Baron-Cohen, *Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Theory of Human Cruelty* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 14-15

and attunement context.³⁴⁶ In 1873, German psychologist Robert Vischer, used the word *Einfühlung*, (literally “feeling”) to suggest that empathy was about injecting an object with imagination, and therefore grounded in aestheticism. In 1905, Theodor Lipps expanded on the idea. Alice Devecchi and Lucia Guerrini suggest that Lipps transformed empathy in ‘a central category of the philosophy of social and human sciences, accounting empathy as the primary basis for recognizing each other as like-minded creatures.’³⁴⁷ Aesthetic empathy is always the experience of another human being. Opportunities for empathy come in multiple forms in theatre - playing other people in the form of characters, acting alongside others, entering a shared journey of empathetic discovery together, undergoing a shared process of devising and rehearsal to discover together how to convey emotions to an audience, and to enter a process of empathy in the live performance moment. Empathy is often described as a process in which one can ‘walk in someone’s shoes’, a phrase that can most probably be traced to Mary T. Lathrap’s poem *Judge Softly*.³⁴⁸ Given theatre offers the chance “play” others - to become them through voice, gesture, costume and so on - its an obvious place to offer the healing effects empathy, importantly doing it as part of a shared emotional experience - between actors who face one another, communicate with one another, or between spectator and audience who feel each other’s feelings.

Performance artist and curator Claire Patey takes this literally in *A Mile in my Shoes*’ part of her Empathy Museum live art and participatory theatre project ‘dedicated to helping us look at the world through other people’s eyes.’³⁴⁹ *A Mile in My Shoes* is a ‘roaming exhibit’ in which visitors enter a mocked up shoe shop. Each person chooses a pair of shoes - literally - and is invited to put them on. Through headphones, they then listen to a verbatim telling from the “owner” of that pair of shoes - a Syrian refugee or a doctor's receptionist

³⁴⁶ Amy Cook, ‘For Hecuba or for Hamlet: Rethinking Emotion and Empathy in the Theatre’, *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 25.2 (2011), 71–87, p.78.

³⁴⁷ Lipps in Alice Devecchi and Luca Guerrini, ‘Empathy and Design. A New Perspective’, *The Design Journal*, 20.sup1 (2017), S4357–64, p.S4358.

³⁴⁸ Mary T. Lathrap and Julia R. Parish, *The Poems and Written Addresses of Mary T. Lathrap* (Palala Press, 2016)

³⁴⁹ ‘Empathy Museum –Empathy Museum’ <<https://www.empathymuseum.com/>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

for example.³⁵⁰ Patey's work also emphasises theatre's capacity to use empathy in storytelling. Unlike a literary work or a film, television programme or computer game, theatre demands that we make and tell stories together in union. For trauma survivors, this may be especially useful. In *The Body Keeps the Store* Van Der Kolk devotes a chapter to the experience of theatre and healing, which he titles *Finding Your Voice: Communal rhythms and theater*. He was inspired by watching his son benefit from membership in a youth theatre:

Unlike his experience with numerous therapists who had talked with him about how bad he felt, theater gave him a chance to deeply and physically experience what it is like to be someone other than the learning disabled over-sensitive boy he'd gradually become. Being a valued contributor to a group gave him a visceral power and confidence. I believe that this new embodied version of himself set him on the road to being the creative, loving adult he is today.³⁵¹

through the Trauma Center, Van Der Kolk took interest in and, studied three separate theatre programmes targeted at working with those with trauma experiences *Urban Improv*, a project that gave high school children to take part in theatre activities, *The Possibility Project*, for foster care youth and *Sentenced to Shakespeare*, for prisoners in Berkshire County Juvenile Courts in Boston.³⁵² 'Love and hate, aggression and surrender, loyalty and betrayal are the stuff of theater and the stuff of trauma' he writes. '...the essence of trauma is feeling godforsaken, cut off from the human race. Theater involves a collective confrontation with the realities of the human condition.'³⁵³ Holly Hughes suggests storytelling in theatre comes with 'a craving to tell a story that is balanced by a hunger to listen.'³⁵⁴ Jill Dolan argues that, in turn, this is 'a way to practice and imagine forms of social relations [where] you connect with others emotionally and spiritually...'³⁵⁵

³⁵⁰ 'A Mile in My Shoes', *Empathy Museum* <<https://www.empathymuseum.com/a-mile-in-my-shoes/>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

³⁵¹ Van Der Kolk, p. 331.

³⁵² Van Der Kolk, p. 337-344.

³⁵³ Van Der Kolk, p.335.

³⁵⁴ Holly Hughes in Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p.18.

³⁵⁵ Dolan, p.61.

If empathy through character, and a mimicry of each other, is a vital way for us to find ourselves and find each other, there is also the capacity of theatre to put individuals in a space together, to find each other and be with one another for the hallowed moment of the live theatre experience. Despair can break us' writes Dolan 'theatre might renew us by inviting us to imagine, along with the material, fleshy vulnerable and so mortal performers bodies that create fantasy pictures for us embellished with light and colour, sound and depth, - ways to be fully human together In a communion with other actors and the audience.'³⁵⁶ Dolan imagines performance represents a Utopian ideal - 'a glimpse of the no place we are feeling together.'³⁵⁷ She suggests that theatre can be 'in times of crisis like the embrace of the family...A connectedness between us all as a species.'³⁵⁸ For the young people Theatre Troupe work with, this is an expansion of the troupe itself, the performers and those practically and artistically contributing to the show enter, as a group, into a relationship with those dedicated to listening to them for the time that they hold the stage. Their audience is most often a familiar one: parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, social workers. Whilst in daily life there may be a listening of sorts (with a therapist for example), these relationships come with an agenda of instruction and an expectation that a young person changes: to behave better, to get well, to stop hurting and disappointing others. Instead, in performance, audience members must become attuned to them and their generous artistic offering, which is 'about love in its entire, multi-sensory, lived, embodied, felt and contradictory guises.'³⁵⁹ Vitality, theatre offers its group aesthetic communal liberation. In *Beauty and Education* Joe Winston makes the case for aesthetic embracement, what he calls an 'ethic of care' - that is a recognition of 'Virtues associated with care and attachment -love, generosity, trust, gentleness, sympathy, cheerfulness, patience and so on.'³⁶⁰ Winston cites Iris Murdoch who offers insight into the connections between beauty and caring: 'Let us cultivate (beauty) to the utmost in men, women and

³⁵⁶ Dolan, p.163.

³⁵⁷ Dolan, p.66.

³⁵⁸ Dolan, p. 73.

³⁵⁹ Carey-Ann Morrison, Lynda Johnston, and Robyn Longhurst, 'Critical Geographies of Love as Spatial, Relational and Political', *Progress in Human Geography*, 37.4 (2013), 505–21, p.505.

³⁶⁰ Joe Winston, *Beauty and Education*, 1 edition (Routledge, 2011), p.64.

children - in our gardens and in our houses.' she writes. 'But let us love that other beauty, too, which lies in no secret of proportion but in the secret of deep human sympathy.'³⁶¹ Robin Kelley suggests that 'the most radical art is not a protest art but works that take us to another place, envisioning a different way of seeing, perhaps a different way of feeling.'³⁶²

In Situations for Living: performing emplacement, Misha Myers refers to "attunement" in the context of bodies adjusting to places, seeing it as a process of 'attention and perception.'³⁶³ A special kind of listening care for therapeutic effect, the embodied experience in participatory group theatre is critical. Peter Levine, a colleague of Van Der Kolk along with other colleagues at the National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral medicine (NICABM) has created and coined a specialist type of therapy intervention called Somatic Experiencing.³⁶⁴ Van Der Kolk concludes that one of theatre's specific and unique attributes is its capacity to address trauma embedded in the body: 'our sense of agency, of how much we feel in control' he suggests 'is defined by our relationship with our bodies and their rhythms... Acting is an experience of using your body to take your place in life.' For Van Der Kolk, the collective movement is critical to living, a need for 'keeping together in time.'³⁶⁵ Kevin Coleman of *Sentenced to Shakespeare* speaks of a range of drama exercises he does, little by little enabling participants to let go of their trauma by simply walking around the room, as they are, then adjusting movements (standing straighter, striding greater for example), and very gentle introduction to eye contact. He suggests: 'They don't make that kind of eye contact in their normal lives, not even with a person they're talking to. They don't know if that person is safe or not. So what you're doing is making it safe for them not to disappear.'³⁶⁶

³⁶¹ Iris Murdoch in Winston, p.63.

³⁶² Robin Kelley in Winston, p.181.

³⁶³ Misha Myers, 'Situations for Living: Performing Emplacement', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 13.2 (2008), 171–80, p. 176.

³⁶⁴ 'ABOUT US', *Somatic Experiencing - Continuing Education* <<https://traumahealing.org/about-us/>> [accessed 4 August 2020].

³⁶⁵ Van Der Kolk, p.333.

³⁶⁶ Van Der Kolk, p.336.

In 2015, I was external evaluator for Green Shoes Arts *Creative for Life* programme for adults with mental health concerns in Barking and Dagenham, East London. The programme offers activities across the arts spectrum, including drama, dance, music, visual art and an ongoing cross-arts group.³⁶⁷ For the purposes of the evaluation, I asked both staff and participants from the drama and dance programmes about the benefit of certain activities for them and how they manifested themselves. The power of an embodied group spirit is expressed here as both Nikki Watson, Director of Green Shoes Arts and workshop facilitator, and a participant, describe the same moment in a theatre project, which comes several weeks after the group have started working together:

Up until probably last week I wouldn't say there was a huge difference [to the group's participation]. But this week...you know when something just clicks with the group and all of a sudden, they go from being a group that meets, to suddenly a performance group. We had everybody involved in some physical theatre and dance and movement. Which you know, beforehand, they would maybe not do anything. This week we had them up on their feet. They were all moving, all stretching, all verbalising, all communicating loudly.³⁶⁸

'Well yesterday was absolutely sensational. We were doing improvisational acting roles, to build up the short play we were doing. It was lovely to see those who are more anxious get up and just let go of their insecurities and that further encouraged me to let go...just enjoy it fully and I really, really did. I left feeling incredibly amazing and I even connected to what I'd been blocking. That was such a mind blowing moment for me.³⁶⁹

The potential for embodied care in group theatre is expressed by Rosemary Lee, both in her interview with Martin Welton as part of *Performing Community: Commentary and case studies* and in *Paying Attention to Lee's Common Dance*. Lee is described by Welton as one of the UK's leading choreographers, with '[m]uch of the inspiration for her work in the stuff

³⁶⁷ 'Green Shoes Arts – Inspiring Local People to Make Positive Changes through the Arts' <<http://www.greenshoesarts.com/>> [accessed 2 August 2020].

³⁶⁸ Nikki Watson, Interview with author, 14.5.2015.

³⁶⁹ Participant, anonymous, interview with author, 14.5.2015.

of human relations.’³⁷⁰ *Common Dance* was a commission for the Dance Umbrella Festival and Greenwich Dance Agency. The performance had fifty three mostly non-professional performers aged between eight and eighty-three.³⁷¹ Lee suggests that performance-making and sharing requires us to ‘pay attention to each other with care.’³⁷² The physical predominance of dance, tending to exclude speech, gives enhanced possibilities for a physical listening, ‘because things can get left unsaid that are difficult, you can investigate how you can connect better. If you can connect well, I think you can care well. And so I feel that caring for someone is about connecting, is about empathising.’ Lees suggests ‘there is an extraordinary attentiveness that I find beautiful.’³⁷³ Welton writes, ‘listening conceived as a mode of touch might offer a means of describing the experience of performance as ‘paying attention’ or ‘listening as touch.’³⁷⁴ He suggests that ‘metaphors...are borne out of the fact of our being a certain kind of organism (binocular, bipedal, warm-blooded’) in an ecology of physical complexity.’³⁷⁵ In watching the *Common Dance* performance he is struck by ‘...their attentiveness – both a mirror for or invitation to our own - was also the subtle ground in which they were indeed, in common.’³⁷⁶

Here then, in sum, I put forward my theory of change: that a practice of vulnerability could heal wounds in a crucial window of brain plasticity; that this practice in a community brings opportunities to do this for children who may be resistant to other interventions; that those mostly marginalised can find this amelioration in the protective fellowship of the theatre Troupe; and that a productive passionate labour, alongside embodied listening can bring about change through, in Dolan’s words, ‘sharing breath.’³⁷⁷

³⁷⁰ *Performance and Community: Commentary and Case Studies*, ed. by Caoimhe McAviney (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), p.141.

³⁷¹ Martin Welton in ed. McAviney, p.142.

³⁷² Welton in ed. McAviney, p.143.

³⁷³ Welton in ed. McAviney, p. 143

³⁷⁴ Welton, ‘Listening-as-Touch: Paying Attention to Rosemary Lee’s *Common Dance*’, *Performance Research*, 15.3 (2010), 47–54, p.47.

³⁷⁵ Welton, *Listening-as-Touch*, p.47.

³⁷⁶ Welton, *Listening-as-Touch*, p.49.

³⁷⁷ Dolan, p.66.

Chapter Four: Methods

This chapter will outline the journey I have undertaken to ascertain the best methods and methodological approach for my research project, and here present an in-depth case study of my specific inquiry. In *The Usefulness of Mess: Artistry, Improvisation and Decomposition in the Practice in Applied Theatre* in 2011, Jenny Hughes, Jenny Kidd and Catherine McNamara write about ‘the usefulness of mess’ in evaluation, focusing on the need for applied theatre to engage in evaluation from a radical, critical perspective. They argue for an approach that calls out power structures and refuses to acquiesce to agendas that seek to evidence “change.” Citing Donald Schön, they write of ‘traversing the swamp’: ‘the “reflective practitioner” has a capacity for creative, tacit and improvised responses to the “confusing messes” and “swampy lowland” of unpredictable contexts of practice that challenge the designed “method.”’³⁷⁸ The “mess” part is certainly apt to describe the process of establishing a research methods framework for this research project. In hindsight, so, too, is its usefulness, although it has taken me the length and breadth of this thesis to conclude that this is so.

Considerations

Academic explorations of methods in applied theatre arguably tend towards the idealistic and radical. Nick Kershaw and Helen Nicholson suggest the “liveness” of theatre has shaped the methodological debate. Theatre research, they argue, needs to be ‘dwelling in an ambiguous place, challeng[ing] boundaries.’³⁷⁹ ‘[G]etting lost are signs of good collaboration rather than failure... Ecologies are necessary in an anti-reductionist approach.’³⁸⁰ In alignment with Hughes, Kidd and McNamara, they state that a new spirit

³⁷⁸ Catherine McNamara and others ‘The Usefulness of Mess: Artistry, Improvisation and Decomposition in the Practice of Research in Applied Theatre’, *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, ed by Baz Kershaw, *Research Methods for the Arts and Humanities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 186-209 (p.187).

³⁷⁹ Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson, in ‘Introduction: Doing Methods Creatively’, *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, ed. by Baz Kershaw, *Research Methods for the Arts and Humanities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 1-15, (p. 1).

³⁸⁰ Kershaw and Nicholson, p.2.

of pedagogically innovative research has grown up in drama departments.³⁸¹ There should be a challenge to what they call ‘outmoded perceptions which erroneously attempt to capture, codify and categorise knowledge,’ and a need to ‘establish imaginative uses of methods that trouble the boundaries between creative practice and critical analysis, between epistemology and ontology.’³⁸²

In Drama Departments, optimistic about troubling the existing boundaries, this is more possible than it is for a practitioner in the field. In the research spirit, there is space to explore, to challenge, to politicise. But in the daily work of an applied theatre practitioner/manager, such an approach is difficult to implement. I have evaluated since the beginning of my applied theatre career. It has been an ever-present thorn in my side, alongside its close companion Fundraising. By way of introduction to the start-point of my research methods, I first give a snapshot into my experience of evaluation as an Applied Theatre practitioner/manager in Theatre Troupe. The smallness of Theatre Troupe is important because being diminutive in the funding arena puts constraints on a range of factors which limits possibilities. Smallness means little access to dedicated fundraisers as larger organisations have. Larger grant-makers tend to give to larger organisations who can “prove” they are able to manage sizable amounts. Small organisations, therefore, are less likely to grow because they can rarely get the funds to do so. Evaluating is necessarily functional, and constrained by agendas because of it. In 2016-2017, Theatre Troupe was funded by nine different funders:

³⁸¹ Kershaw and Nicholson, p.2.

³⁸² Kershaw and Nicholson, p.1.

Trust	Aims & Objectives	Amount
John Horniman Children's Trust	To assist the relief of sickness and the advancement of the education of children who are sick, convalescent or have learning difficulties	£5000
Open Wing Trust (grant towards my personal project management)	To 'enable the enablers'. Financial support to individuals who are in the process of inner change and who are changing the focus of their work towards working with others who are in need.	£2500
John Thaw Foundation	To support charities, education organisations and drama students	£2000
London Quaker Service Trust	To make grants to organisations and activities closely in sympathy or run by The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), particularly those which benefit people who by their reason of need or economic circumstances have a need of educational and recreational facilities and where there is an opportunity to improve the quality of life and develop mental, physical and spiritual capacities	£1500
Newcomen Collett Foundation	To promote the education of persons under the age of 25 years resident in the London Borough of Southwark.	£1000
St Olave's Foundation Fund	To provide support for Youth Organisations/ Groups/ Schools based in the London Borough of Southwark that provide activities for young people under the age of 25 years old	£1000
Boris Karloff Foundation	To issue grants to charitable organisations with particular emphasis on those connected with the performing arts and the promotion of cricket.	£500
Unity Theatre Trust	To foster, promote and increase the interest of the public in the art of drama and in the co-related arts	£300
Individual donations	No formal criteria (no reporting necessary but individual letters required for each)	£50-£500

Figure 2

These amounts together just about funded our project for one year. Each of them required a report at the end of the project. The length and detail required in a report does not necessarily correspond with the amount of funding given. In reporting on very different outcomes, a tailored and specific report using the funders' language to evidence impact is required. Some details can be copied and pasted, but most of the work must be done individually. For Quaker charities there is an emphasis on social justice, for theatre charities, theatrical output. Some trusts focus on illness/disability, and some require local emphasis in reporting. Consequently, I would not necessarily use the same tool to assess the impact for each one, because such a tool would not cover all the varied outcomes that each funder requires us to report on to demonstrate impact. If our tool was a semi-structured interview, or a questionnaire, for example, we would need to ask young people ten different sets of questions to ensure we had all the required outcomes covered. Weary with twenty years of this process, I was also troubled by the value of vague and broad required outcomes: to raise confidence, to develop team-building skills, for example. And also I felt there was always the temptation to be dishonest in what I did. In 2017, the Culture Capital Exchange, in collaboration with the Cornelius Arts Foundation and DataKind UK, hosted a roundtable event, *Distributed Data and the Science of Art*.³⁸³ In groups, we were invited to discuss issues around the subject from our experience. We also had a series of presentations from individuals. One individual, when talking about how we made sure we evidenced well, made the aside remark 'everyone knows that, whatever, you *will* evidence impact.' One person protested against this point of view, but most nodded in tacit acceptance. In order to do the work we believed in, in order to be funded for this, we chose evaluation methods that would most likely demonstrate the "right" results. It was not that we were making up that the project had been effective, but we were marketing it in a way that would most appeal to a given "consumer." This moment in the conference also underlined the point that not having a positive impact is not an acceptable outcome in the funding landscape.

³⁸³ <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/impossible-partnerships-distributed-data-and-the-science-of-art-somerset-house-for-academics-and-tickets-31443877484>. [Accessed 1.11.19]

I wanted better ways to measure more tangible changes. I wanted to be able to evidence an improvement, or not, in the health of our participants on the Theatre Troupe Project, and not continue to pedal applied theatre's capacity to build "soft" skills. I thought finding a more scientific way to measure work that would appeal to health commissioners, would not only bring clarity to my processes, but would reduce the need for multiple applications and would also give better access to larger grants. This was not just mercenary. It related back to my ambition to achieve more than little changes. I was hopeful that the Theatre Troupe Model (TTM) would significantly improve the mental health of young people, and if I was able to reliably measure this, it could open the way to more Theatre Troupe Models, within our organisation, but also managed and led by others. This means there would be the scope to reach more young people. I embarked on my research with a need to know whether it was possible to measure that lasting change had occurred, and if it had occurred, understanding why as specifically as possible.

The Oxford English Dictionary states - in one of four definitions - that '(arts) are the subjects of study primarily concerned with human creativity and social life, such as languages, literature, and history (as contrasted with scientific or technical subjects): *the belief that the arts and sciences are incompatible* [their italics].'³⁸⁴ In an article in *The American Psychological Review* in 1959, Leslie Kish made a case to separate humanities from statistics, frustrated by the fact that a statistician is frequently in the territory of 'the borderline between statistics and other aspects, philosophical and substantive, of the scientific search for explanation.' He advocated for a differentiation system for identifying distinct strands of research: explanatory controlled, confounded and randomised.³⁸⁵ Kish's work pressed for greater clarity and scientific rigour, privileging experiments, surveys and other investigations because they bring 'better control, representation and measurement.'

³⁸⁶ Accordingly, this approach of positivism rejects the idea of mind as an important

³⁸⁴ Oxford English Dictionary online [accessed 10.9.19]

³⁸⁵ Leslie Kish, 'Some Statistical Problems in Research Design', *American Sociological Review*, 24.3 (1959), 328,

³⁸⁶ Kish p. 328

influence in understanding social behaviour, and tends to ignore symbolic or communicative levels of explanation.³⁸⁷

The landscape of methodological approaches to assessing a social impact of the arts is a rocky one, with passionately angry feelings from both artists and non-artists. In a symposium *Choreographing Evaluation* held by Children and Youth Evidence Hub Project Oracle, delegates heard contrasting approaches to arts and health methodology, from evaluators, policy-makers and artists, and participated together in a co-production of knowledge through break-out discussions and a Long Table event.³⁸⁸ During this Long Table discussion, artists reacted with dismay at being forced to comply with others' agendas, as John Martin, Artistic Director at Pan Intercultural Arts and an attendee at this event later blogged about the problem of 'having to evidence the arts work [artists] do through TERMINOLOGIES and TEMPLATES which are stark and *business-influenced* [authors capitals and italics].'³⁸⁹ In the event, artists had the loudest voices. But non-artists felt that artists were not allying themselves with appropriate rigour. Holly Donagh, Partnerships Director of *A New Direction*, presented on the problem of a dearth of randomised control trials in the arts. Subsequently, she wrote an article for Arts Professional, *Impact in the Classroom*. She suggests that whilst there may, one day, be a case for arts-led evaluation, initiatives need to compete in a market as a cost-effective intervention for social change:

The arguments are complex but essentially boil down to the fact that the evidence that exists is not rigorous enough to be trusted and what is left is not particularly compelling when put in the context of other interventions. This is the case not only for academic impacts but also for behavioural or non-cognitive impacts.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Nicky Hayes, *Doing Psychological Research: Gathering and Analysing Data*, (Buckingham ; Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2000), p.6.

³⁸⁸ <http://www.mitapujara.com/journal/2016/2/25/choreographing-evaluation-19th-november-2014>

³⁸⁹ 'Project Oracle', *The Centre For Youth Impact* <<https://www.youthimpact.uk/projectoracle.html>> [accessed 8 August 2020].

³⁹⁰ Holly Donagh, 'Impact in the Classroom', Arts Professional, October 2016, <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/298/feature/impact-classroom> [accessed 10.12.19]

In *The Therapeutic effectiveness of creative activities on mental well-being: a systematic review*, qualitative research is pretty much condemned out of hand. Responding to art therapist Louis McNiff's assertion that: 'The arts emerge spontaneously as remedies, soul medicine,'³⁹¹ J. Leckey responds 'How can spontaneous remedies, soul medicine be measured? What does it mean?'³⁹² Leckey utilises a series of databases - CINHAL, Psych-INFO, Arts Council England database, and the DOH Review of Arts for Health Working Critical Appraisal Skills Programme Tool – to present an overview of arts-health evaluation practices in the UK between 1990 and 2010. He concludes:

Results from this review indicate that creative arts may be one way of... improving psychological and physical well-being although there appears to be no clear evidence to support this claim.³⁹³

His concerns relate to 'a lack of clarity' in almost every aspect of the evaluation process where different organisations use very different baseline measures from each other. There were no controls, for example, in sample size. Nor were there consistent follow-up measures at six and twelve months. His conclusion: 'evidence to support these claims is weak and assumptions were made that lacked reliability and validity.'³⁹⁴

Intentions

I did not know to disagree with Leckey or Donagh at the start of my doctoral research: from my experience as an evaluator, I concurred, and I was keen to address some of these points. My first engagement with the issue of methods for the Troupe Intervention Model was just before I became a PhD student at Queen Mary University London (QMUL) and attended a research group at the Wolfson Institute (Psychiatry), the department in which I have been co-supervised. The group gave me some useful input in terms of possible appropriate

³⁹¹ Shaun McNiff, *Art as Medicine: Creating a Therapy of the Imagination*, (Boston: [New York]: Shambhala; Distributed in the U.S. by Random House, 1992), p.501.

³⁹² J. Leckey, 'The Therapeutic Effectiveness of Creative Activities on Mental Well-Being: A Systematic Review of the Literature: Effectiveness of Creative Activities on Mental Well-Being', *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 18.6 (2011), 501–9, p.501.

³⁹³ Leckey, p. 501.

³⁹⁴ Leckey, p. 509.

methods with which to measure impact, and whether these might work in the context of my research. Several possibilities were mooted in the research group, and they were all from a quantitative methodological perspective. It was suggested that I might develop a questionnaire or questionnaires, possibly based around moods and feelings, and gauge how the study sample might respond to it. The group offered some options through which I might assess and measure the more specific arts practice within my research model against other arts practices in other organisations, that I might conduct a randomised mini-trial which could measure the efficacy against a control group. There was also a suggestion that it may be feasible to measure and evaluate biomarkers objectively, as indicators of biological and pathological processes. The research group suggested some specific instruments that already existed, specifically the Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS),³⁹⁵ as well as the possibility of using Tim Joss and Norma Daykin's framework in *Arts for health and wellbeing: An evaluation framework*, for evidencing the impact of arts on health.³⁹⁶ After this meeting, I was inspired by the idea that any methods system I might produce could carry the potential to solve a problem of non-specific, multiplicitous and mildly dishonest arts evaluation for arts and health work, and speak to a wider audience. Although I was excited, I was also ignorant. The methods and their language were unfamiliar to me. But I decided that I would go ahead and test a quantitative methodology.

The Arts and Health: An Evaluative Framework, by Tim Joss and Norma Daykin, states the need for 'robust evidence of their (the arts) effectiveness and costs.'³⁹⁷ They suggest that 'artists can find it challenging to navigate the terrain of evaluation and access the language and frameworks that are required.'³⁹⁸ To address this, they have created a new "framework", given as a standardised template for any artist or arts organisation to complete, so that every part of their project may be recorded. It is a seven page, forty-two

³⁹⁵ Ruth Tennant and others, 'The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS): Development and UK Validation', *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes*, 5.1 (2007), p. 63.

³⁹⁶ Norma Daykin and Tim Joss, *Arts for health and wellbeing: An evaluation framework* (London: Public Health England, 2016). p.7.

³⁹⁷ Joss and Daykin, p.5.

³⁹⁸ Joss and Daykin, p.5.

item document, which guides artists through many steps, from basic information - project title or name of activity, aims and objectives, contact details and so on,³⁹⁹ to 'desirable Information, such as a 'rationale or theory of change,' 'special conditions of attendance and incentives, details of quality impacts,'⁴⁰⁰ and a separate section 'Evaluation Details' which includes 'type of evaluation and evaluation design.'⁴⁰¹ Within each item, the authors give instructions in very detailed guidance for artists to follow. This is one item of the forty two:

It is important to record any special conditions that may affect participants' experiences of the project. For example, are there any incentives to recruit and retain participants and if so what are they? If incentives are used, it is important to record any evidence of impact. Are there special features of this programme such as the use of a prestigious venue, which may have impacted on a participant's experience. This is important as incentives and special features may influence the effectiveness of an intervention and the sustainability of any outcomes.⁴⁰²

Although the report does, in its methods overview, briefly mention qualitative evaluation and arts-based evaluation as possible methods, its emphasis is on the quantitative and, as the example above shows, is tightly controlled, more or less sentence by sentence. Here, there is no room for 'the swampy lowlands.'⁴⁰³ Its language is indicative of a quantitative approach: it asks for 'outcomes', 'quality assurance', 'core staff competencies', 'impact quality assessments' and so on. It also devotes a section of options for likert scales.⁴⁰⁴ At this point in my research it was an apparently useful guide: standardisation and rigour.

Research into methods for the Theatre Troupe Model

I started to explore which specific method or methods may be appropriate for my research project in 2014. Figure 3 gives an outline of this process. I wanted a way to rigorously capture data, but also something with maximum usability, for us and for our stakeholders.

³⁹⁹ Joss and Daykin, p.15-16.

⁴⁰⁰ Joss and Daykin, p.18.

⁴⁰¹ Joss and Daykin, p. 19-21.

⁴⁰² Joss and Daykin, p. 17.

⁴⁰³ Mcnamara and others, p.187.

⁴⁰⁴ Joss and Daykin, p.13-14.

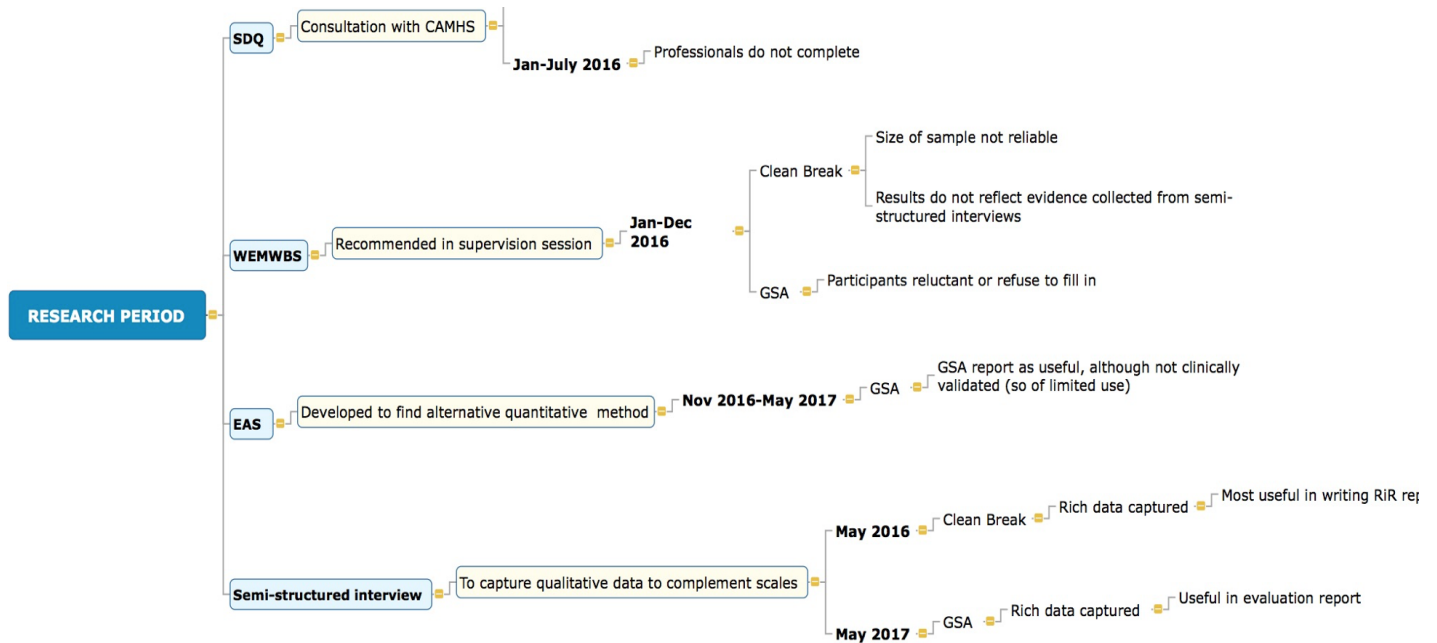


Figure 3: Methods research and outcome

Because we were primarily recruiting for our workshop programme through CAMHS at this stage, I began there. I met Partha Banjeera, Lead Consultant at Southwark CAMHS, and I also met Richard Corrigan, Lead Consultant, and Dionne Warwick, Occupational Therapist, of South London and Maudsley (SLAM) Trust’s in-patient adolescent psychiatric unit. They were all enthusiastic about our project and the value of the arts in alleviating mental distress. Using their diagnostic criteria to measure a baseline, therefore, seemed an efficient approach, especially as we could, with consent, collect data that had already been completed. Southwark CAMHS used the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), an emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people, their parents and teachers (Appendix C). It has twenty five items - five scales of five items each, with subscales in emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems, and prosocial behaviour problems. It is used for various purposes,

including clinical assessment, evaluation of outcomes, research and screening.⁴⁰⁵ But, by the time we were ready to start the project in October we had only one CAMHS-referred participant and others did not materialise. So we were unable to collect the baseline data, as had been intended. Although we had no CAMHS data, I persevered with this method in part. I included the scale in the referral form itself to be completed by the professional referring. However, not one of these was ever completed.

In 2014, I was appointed as Researcher-in-Residence at Clean Break Theatre Company through the Creative Works scheme, which was to be influential in a shift in my thinking about research methods. The Researcher-in-Residence scheme (2011-2016), an initiative jointly funded by Creativeworks London and London Creative and Digital Fusion, invited arts, cultural or creative industries companies based in London (CCIs) to identify an area in which they would benefit from academic support and expertise.⁴⁰⁶ I was matched with Clean Break Theatre Company. Clean Break produces professional theatre with and by women who have been involved in the criminal justice system and, alongside this, runs theatre based education and training programmes, which consists of a series of short courses. The courses aim to enable women offenders, and those at risk of offending, to develop social, professional and creative skills and, therefore, support transition into education and employment.⁴⁰⁷ In addition, all women taking part in education courses can have a cooked lunch, tea and coffee, use of a small computer room and full access to Student Support, a service which offers advice and support on a range of issues and services such as housing, benefits and transport. There was the opportunity to speak to support workers, if a student became distressed.

I worked with the company between January 2014 and December 2015. Clean Break were keen to find a quantitative instrument that would help evidence the impact of their

⁴⁰⁵ 'Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire' <<https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/strengths-and-difficulties-questionnaire/>> [accessed 10 August 2020]

⁴⁰⁶ <http://www.creativeworkslondon.org.uk/phd-in-residence-scheme/>

⁴⁰⁷ Emily Hunka Clean Break report for undertaking methods for health (2015) (unpublished)

Education Courses on mental health. It was, as Anna Herrmann, Head of Education stated, 'part of our commitment to deepening our understanding the impact of our Education Programme on women's lives...in the hope that it would give us some robust quantitative data that was considered reputable in the health commissioning environment to support our internal evaluation procedures.'⁴⁰⁸ Throughout my placement, I worked with Herrmann and other Clean Break staff to explore the feasibility of a method to evidence the impact of Clean Break's education and training programme on the mental health and wellbeing of its participants. Particular consideration was not to add to the considerable burden of work of staff, in an 'already over-stretched service.'⁴⁰⁹

After a scoping exercise, and following the Joss and Daykin report and the QMUL research group's recommendation, I considered the Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) an appropriate instrument (Appendix D) Developed in 2006 by researchers from the universities of Warwick and Edinburgh, with funding from NHS Scotland, it sought to provide a reliable measurement of wellbeing in adults in the UK.⁴¹⁰ WEMWBS represents mental wellbeing as: 'both feeling good and functioning well'. The scale covers: 'eudemonic and hedonic wellbeing (as talked about in the ancient philosophical context), psychological functioning and subjective wellbeing (as talked about in current psychology and social science research)'.⁴¹¹ Its authors suggest: 'mental wellbeing defined by WEMWBS is...much more than the absence of mental illness. People who have been given a diagnosis of mental illness can and do experience wellbeing when their illness is not making them feel bad or function poorly.' Wellbeing is relationally connected to physical, social and the spiritual, they suggest.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ Anna Herrman, by email, 9 December 2019.

⁴⁰⁹ Herrmann.

⁴¹⁰ Stewart-Brown and others, 'The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS): A Valid and Reliable Tool for Measuring Mental Well-Being in Diverse Populations and Projects', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 65.Suppl 2 (2011), A38

⁴¹¹ 'The Conceptual Framework for (S)WEMWBS'

<<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/research/framework>> [accessed 3 August 2020].

⁴¹² 'The Conceptual Framework for (S)WEMWBS'

<<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/research/framework>> [accessed 3 August 2020].

There were several reasons I opted for this tool. I deemed it was 'usable' by the organisation and by Clean Break students. At fourteen items, WEMWBS was relatively brief. Results could be processed easily by a stretched staff. I consulted personnel from Camden Health Commissioning services, who endorsed its suitability from their perspective. In addition to WEMWBS, I also designed a semi-structured interview, with questions mirroring the items on the WEMWBS scale. Clean Break identified twelve new students to be in the sample. Women completed WEMWBS before and after the education course they attended. I conducted interviews with five women, and a post-project focus group with three additional women.

But, when I reviewed the evidence, there was considerable incongruity between WEMWBS and the interview/focus group evidence. Fifty percent of women had increased their scores in some areas, but barely. Two had decreased their score. In contrast, all women in qualitative information stated that, since taking part in the course, it had had a beneficial emotional effect. Anna Herrmann suggests that the challenges were mostly around the administering of the tool, which meant that 'it didn't service [Clean Break] well': 'The nature of our programme was that all women engaged with us for different periods, in different ways, and in many different circumstances. The sometimes ad-hoc and fluid nature of engagements alongside the lack of capacity... meant that there were many variables in how the tool was implemented.' Herrmann suggests that it is difficult to establish why this variation may have occurred: '...when the results didn't evidence the positive improvements on women's wellbeing that the women themselves reported, it left us very unclear whether the tool itself was not appropriate or whether the necessary conditions required to implement it effectively were not in place.'⁴¹³

But for me personally, as I considered which methodology and methods I might use for my research, philosophical concerns began to edge into my optimism about the quantitative. Firstly, evidence from semi-structured interviews seemed to directly contradict those from

⁴¹³ Herrmann, by email

WEMWBS. On the WEMWBS, there are three items relating to sociality: 'I've been feeling interested in other people', 'I've been feeling close to other people', and 'I've been feeling loved.'⁴¹⁴ Improvement in these factors did not register on the scale. Contrast this with a comment from a woman in interview, which is representative of many similar comments:

Something very special brings out the best in women, caring for each other, nurturing each other. We all know we're here because we've had some tough times...we all know we've had terrible things happen to us, but everyone looks out for each other in a nurturing, camaraderie type way. We're women together which makes it very warm or safe.⁴¹⁵

Also, In Clean Break's students, social circumstances were dire. Most had diagnoses of mental disorders and symptoms to accompany them, such as insomnia, anxiety and flashbacks/nightmares. There was a very high level of trauma-related distress from childhood abuse and neglect and domestic violence. Eight women were either homeless or living in temporary accommodation. One other had no heat or running water. One woman had to sleep on a sofa positioned directly in front of her front door, with her dog, so she was ready in case her abusive former partner came to call. According to the women interviewed, no other intervention in their lives had been as positive as Clean Break's, but these immense structural oppressions they faced were hardly in Clean Break's capabilities to fix:

I'm going up, when I'm going out, [to Clean Break], but when the courses are finished I'm going back down again. That's just the situation...When I'm back in my situation I can't see the improvements. The environment they put me in. I have a very serious housing problem which if I talk about I cry a lot. I come here as a break away from it all.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ 'The Conceptual Framework for (S)WEMWBS'
<<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/research/framework>> [accessed 3 August 2020].

⁴¹⁵ Hunka *Clean Break report*

⁴¹⁶ Hunka, *Clean Break report*

During this period, I was also doing some external evaluation work for Green Shoes Arts, who ran a programme for mental health service users called *Creative For Life*.⁴¹⁷ Participants took part in twelve-week courses in a range of art forms, as well as being able to join an ongoing multi-arts group if they chose. Green Shoes Arts had funding from the Big Lottery Fund and wanted an instrument to measure change to support their application for the funder. I suggested WEMWBS. They used it for a short time and similarly it did not capture change. It was mostly discontinued though because the company was dissatisfied with its usability. Several participants were angry that they 'had to fill in yet another bloody form.' One participant said: 'I was feeling so much better when I walked in, [as a result of arts activities] but filling out this form, reminded me of all the bad things in my life. It brought me right down and that's how I felt when I left Green Shoes that week.'⁴¹⁸ Individuals want to escape relentless self-reliance and self-reflection', suggests William Davis.⁴¹⁹ In this case, rather than recording wellbeing levels, the instrument had reduced them through its administration.

Because I was still consolidating my thinking over this period, I had introduced WEMWBS as a pre-project method for the Theatre Troupe Model pilot project. But, here too, there were problems administering it. The majority of young people had low literacy levels. Having to read or write made them anxious and, because of this, we read them out and they filled out their response. But this then undermined the validity of the answers, because, if they wanted to please us, for example, we may have influenced how young people answered. There was also the unique manifestation of trauma in our children. Hyper-vigilance, hyper-arousal, and disassociation patterns made form-filling challenging in the extreme.

It seemed to me, from the evidence from all three organisations, the scale threw up serious flaws in the philosophical sense. For the results not to be skewed, a respondent would

⁴¹⁷ <http://www.greenshoesarts.com/portfolios/creative-for-life/>

⁴¹⁸ Michael Dolan, Interview with author, 4 March, 2017.

⁴¹⁹ William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (London: Verso Books, 2015), p. 211.

need to already have a decent level of socio-economic stability. The respondent would need not to have any negative experiences of diagnostic tools, and to ensure this, realistically, they therefore would have to not have sought medical advice for a mental health diagnosis. The respondent would also need to have a level of competence in literacy. Also, the respondent would need to be without any of the emotional and behavioural problems that may get in the way of form-filling. And, if this is true, would it not be the case that the respondent would need to have a fair level of wellbeing to begin with?

Although I had asked myself these questions throughout this process, I had not trusted my negative response. This is because, as someone who does not understand the language around statistical analysis, I was swayed by the justification given as to how the scale was standardised for use:

WEMWBS showed good content validity. Confirmatory factor analysis supported the single factor hypothesis. A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.89 (student sample) and 0.91 (population sample) suggests some item redundancy in the scale.....Its distribution was near normal and the scale did not show ceiling effects in a population sample....Test-retest reliability at one week was high (0.83).⁴²⁰

But ultimately, my questions coincided with my wider exploration of neoliberal wellbeing, where I understood that the premises expressed in this approach, however statistically thorough, were meaningless unless it was accepted that human emotions can have a relationship with statistics. William Davies covers instrumentalism of emotion at length in *The Happiness Industry*. His argument is that the wellbeing movement colonises feelings. It suggests that being able to track and measure (and thus control) people can be achieved by giving value to something that is of philosophy, and by its very nature is difficult to put a value on. 'What precisely is emotion anyway?' says Davies:⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ The conceptual framework for (S) WEMWBS

⁴²¹ Davies, p. 75.

With something as important as happiness, no measure is quite adequate to the philosophical importance of the matter...The sense that quantified smiles, heart rate, money...miss something crucial about the emotional experience, is overwhelming...A smile may indeed reveal something of the person, but surely not as a scientific representation.'⁴²²

Davies suggests that, 'perhaps, measuring happiness and other emotional experiences may not be a way of resolving a philosophical and debate in curiosity, but may, given the power structures which have vested interest, be a way of silencing it.'⁴²³ W. Newton Smith argues that the science community sees itself as 'the very paradigm of institutionalised rationality' leading to a "'logic of justification".'⁴²⁴ 'It is assumed that there must be something special about the method and the community-wide consensus on obviously successful theories...If only the philosopher and his compatriots in the Kingdom of Darkness would emulate the scientist, he would acquire the capacity [for rationality].'⁴²⁵

This position was helpful with one of the aspects of WEMWBS that had most confused me. Item twelve on the scale is 'I've been feeling loved.'⁴²⁶ But, only a brief foray into a history of literature, I argue, undermines any sense that love is measurable:

...we need to fall, and we need to be aware of it; for if we did not fall, we should not know how weak and wretched we are of ourselves, nor should we know our Maker's marvellous love so fully..⁴²⁷

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind⁴²⁸

Nothing is so strange when one is in love ... as the complete indifference of other people⁴²⁹

⁴²² Davies, p. 37.

⁴²³ Davies, p.39.

⁴²⁴ Dyson, p.1.

⁴²⁵ Dyson, p.12.

⁴²⁶ WEMWBS

⁴²⁷ Julian, Elizabeth Spearing, and A. C. Spearing, *Revelations of Divine Love (Short Text and Long Text)*, Penguin Classics (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1998).

⁴²⁸ William Shakespeare, *Midsummer Nights Dream*, Act I:I, 230.

⁴²⁹ Virginia (Woolf and Carol Ann (Duffy, *Mrs Dalloway* (London: Vintage Classic, 2016).

Bertrand Russell suggests: 'Of all forms of caution, love is perhaps the most fatal to true happiness.'⁴³⁰ In fact, WEMWBS itself is a pretty neat example of the qualitative rendered quantitative and signals this in its own methodology. As well as psychological wellbeing measures, WEMWBS uses eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing 'as talked about in the ancient philosophical context.'⁴³¹

I had trusted the fact that WEMWBS was 'validated', even as my gut feeling was that it did not really make sense to me in arts and health literature, including Joss and Daykin, and the APPG report, in which it had been championed. I do not think Joss and Daykin or any of the APPG report authors were themselves divisive. The passionate language in the APPG report shows real excitement and deep seated belief in the arts as ameliorative. Joss and Daykin presumably believed the framework they created would be generally helpful for artists, and consequently have quality and profoundly affecting work funded. Bourdieu and Passeron suggest that Pedagogic Action is conveyed through a filtration process in which other agencies imposing Symbolic Violence onto those who are least powerful deliver the divisive message are not always aware they are doing so. '[A]ny action of symbolic violence which succeeds in imposing itself...objectively presupposes a delegation of authority.'⁴³² The authors call these delegates 'prophets of the state' suggesting that '[t]he apparent relationship between prophecy and its audience must be reversed: the religious or political prophet always preaches to the converted and follows his disciples as much as they follow him.'⁴³³ The passion and optimism convey the pedagogic action even more. Were I to adopt it myself, I would then also be doing the Pedagogic Work. It was at this crux that I decided to rupture the quantitative narrative.

⁴³⁰ Bertrand Russell, 'The Conquest of Love', *The English Review* (1930), pp. 126-129, p.129.

⁴³¹ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/research/framework> [accessed 4.8.20].

⁴³² Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*, Theory, Culture & Society, 1990 ed (London; Newbury Park, Calif: Sage in association with Theory, Culture & Society, Dept. of Administrative and Social Studies, Teesside Polytechnic, 1990), p.25.

⁴³³ Bourdieu and Passeron, p.25.

Was there still a way to measure changes meaningfully, from a position that does not damage those with whom I work? In fact, I found out that there was actually some shared ground in the disciplines. I had been so keen to “measure” change, that I had overlooked the ongoing debate in health fields, concerning the validity of clinical data. They challenged my assumptions about the scientific places where methodologies might dwell. Those challenging quantitative methods in quantitative fields have suggested that privileging them has done a disservice to scientific inquiry, depriving its practitioners of skills which can simultaneously liberate and discipline the theoretical imagination.⁴³⁴ They cite issues of reliability, parsimony, internal consistency and generality which presuppose that there is a norm of objectivity, making the assumption that the ‘knower’ and the ‘known’ can be objective from each other.⁴³⁵ John Haworth claims that ‘one of our key contentions is that doing qualitative research cannot merely be reduced to questions of gathering, analysing and reporting on non-numeric data. Rather a whole range of epistemological issues, as well as wider ones of research practice are raised.’ This has been ignored or sidelined, however, because it is ‘perceived to fall within an epistemological framework, which is incommensurate with the natural science approach underpinning the experimental method.’⁴³⁶ Meyer suggests there is an increasing concern about the “theory-practice” gap in clinical practice, because traditional knowledge, as found in randomised control trials, ‘often does not fit the uniqueness of the situation.’⁴³⁷

In An open letter to the BMJ editors on qualitative research, seventy six academics from eleven countries ‘invite The BMJ’s [British Medical Journal] editors to reconsider their policy of rejecting qualitative research on the grounds of low priority.’ and to ‘challenge the journal to develop a proactive, scholarly, and pluralist approach to research that aligns with its stated mission.’ The signatories suggest that the BMJ has a policy of rejecting qualitative

⁴³⁴ Karen L. Henwood and Nick F. Pidgeon, ‘Qualitative Research and Psychological Theorizing’, *British Journal of Psychology*, 83.1 (1992), 97–111.

⁴³⁵ John Haworth, *Psychological Research: Innovative Methods and Strategies*. (London; New York: Routledge, 2006) <<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/qut/detail.action?docID=166083>> [accessed 6 November 2019], p4

⁴³⁶ Haworth, p.4.

⁴³⁷ Haworth, p.4.

research as ‘unlikely to be highly cited’, ‘lacking practical value’ or ‘not of interest to our readers.’⁴³⁸ Qualitative data, they argue:

help[s] us understand why promising clinical interventions do not always work in the real world, how patients experience care, and how practitioners think. They also explore and explain the complex relations between the healthcare system and the outside world, such as the sociopolitical context in which healthcare is regulated, funded, and provided, and the ways in which clinicians and regulators interact with industry.⁴³⁹

Trisha Greenhalgh is a pioneer in demystifying evidence-based medicine. Her *How to Write a Paper*, gives an introduction to evidence based medicine, proposing those involved in academic literature make the qualitative approach relevant and *patient* centred. Evidence-based medicine of a certain type, or as it is perceived by some in the field is, she writes:

...the glorification of things that can be measured without regard for the usefulness or accuracy of what is measured, the uncritical acceptance of published numerical data, the preparation of all-encompassing guidelines by self-appointed ‘experts’ who are out of touch with real medicine, the debasement of clinical freedom through the imposition of rigid and dogmatic clinical protocols. And the over-reliance on simplistic, inappropriate and often incorrect economic analysis...⁴⁴⁰

She argues that there needs to be a step-away from an evangelism in evidence-based medicine, in which there is ‘the absence of common sense...without regard for the individual circumstances and priorities of the person being offered treatment or to the complex nature of clinical practice and policy-making.’⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁸ Trisha Greenhalgh and others, ‘An Open Letter to *The BMJ* Editors on Qualitative Research’, *BMJ*, 2016, i563, p2.

⁴³⁹ Trisha Greenhalgh and others, ‘An Open Letter to *The BMJ* Editors on Qualitative Research’.p.2.

⁴⁴⁰ Trisha Greenhalgh, *How to Read a Paper: The Basics of Evidence-Based Medicine*, 4th ed (Chichester, West Sussex, UK; Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. xvii

⁴⁴¹ Greenhalgh, *How to read a Paper*, p. xvii

New Choices

Greenhalgh calls for a methods approach, in which ‘patients bring experiential knowledge—the subjective, lived-body knowledge of *what it is like to live with* a particular illness or condition’. I would bring certain insight of living with a mental health disability into my reporting of research.⁴⁴² In my drive to make the process objective and scientific, I realised late that I had effectively written my own perspective, as a mental health service user, out of the picture. The blank faces I had experienced in services were, arguably, reflected in the blank face of WEMWBS. I considered that, just as a diagnosis, in which a person can be reduced to a set of symptoms on a check-list, the form also directly acted against those experiencing intense feelings, and who might be bringing those feelings to the evaluation process. WEMWBS suggests that to be “well” a person must have acquired fourteen neatly boxed factors. But there is another way to perceive mental illness, and it is one that chimes with my own experience. My bipolar tendencies are inextricably connected into my arts practice: they dance with each other in a dialogism. My bipolar diagnosis means I experience hyper-mania, during which I am at my most artistically and creatively productive. I have entrenched depressive episodes for months, but when I am not in them, my moods are cyclical; in the diagnostic language “rapid cycle”, but in a mild way.⁴⁴³ I experience joys and knocks a little more fiercely than others might. As mentioned in my introduction, Kay Redfield Jamieson’s *Touched with Fire* makes the case that part of bi-polar illness is also allied to artistic enlightenment. She argues that artistic output often corresponds with periods of mania.⁴⁴⁴ I certainly recognise this in myself, and I count this part of it as a strength. The success of any creative work I do for Theatre Troupe is linked to my psychic vicissitudes. As a service-user approach can challenge, with authority, narrow assumptions about the nature of distress I think. This is different from a more familiar kind of engagement with the service-user, in which she is consulted about an approach already

⁴⁴² ‘Trish Greenhalgh: Towards an Institute for Patient-Led Research’, *The BMJ*, 2019
<<https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2019/11/12/trisha-greenhalgh-towards-an-institute-for-patient-led-research/>>
[accessed 10 December 2019].

⁴⁴³ Some clinicians would also/alternatively call this cyclothymia, although my diagnosis is actually different again - Bipolar Disorder (Type II)

⁴⁴⁴ Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1994). P.2.

in the pipeline. It is why Greenhalgh stresses patient *led* or patient *centred* rather than patient-*informed* [my italics].

With these considerations, I turned against a purely quantitative approach but was still unwilling to let go of the possibility to capture change in a way that had some clinical value. It was at this point I developed the Embodied Attunement Scale - a subjective reporting scale for young people and a participant observer scale for volunteers and staff. Originally this was for the purposes of GSA's C4L evaluation. GSA wanted a way to capture data with which they could report to their funders, whilst simultaneously giving participants agency in reporting impact, and a measure that did not get in the way of the creative process or threatening to dissipate the reduction of distress that the session had elicited as WEMWBS had done. The Embodied Attunement Scale (EAS) was an invented quantitative-qualitative hybrid scale, drawing on some of my learning around a physiological approach to trauma. I was influenced by Van Der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score* and by Peter Levine's *Somatic Experiencing*.⁴⁴⁵ The development of the EAS was also informed by neuroscientist Tamara Russell's work *Mindfulness in Motion*, using the tenets mindfulness from her previous work, Russell presents a theory and practice of moving meditation, which she suggests can rewire the brain. It is particularly effective, she suggests, for those who struggle with traditional Zen-inspired mindfulness with its emphasis on sitting meditation.⁴⁴⁶ Russell presented at a conference I organised, which took place at Queen Mary University London in June 2016, and we subsequently began collaboration with a view to publishing a paper on how our work may interlink theory and practice.

Use of this new scale was discussed with Green Shoes Arts in November 2016, after a review of methods used on the C4L programme. The EAS asks participants to report on change in feelings by paying attention to a feeling or "sensation" in the body. At the beginning of each workshop session, participants were given a blank template of a body and

⁴⁴⁵ Peter A. Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma: The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences* (Berkeley, Calif: North Atlantic Books, 1997).

⁴⁴⁶ Tamara Russell, *Body in Mind*. (Place of publication not identified: Harpercollins, 2015).

asked to stick a post-it note on the part of the body that most represented how emotions were felt physically. Before participants began the process, an explanation was led by the workshop facilitator to explore together different ways that a range of feelings might manifest, with participants offering examples for the whole group. For example, it might be decided by the group that a racing heartbeat signals anxiety. At the beginning of the session, they would stick a post-it note on the heart writing “anxiety”, or the group may agree that a feeling of heaviness in the solar plexus represents “low mood” and stick a post-it note here. At the end of the session, the template would be revisited, with post-it notes moved. If a shift in these difficult feelings had taken place, post-it notes could be added with additional feelings that had come about from the workshop. Post-it notes could be where they were if no change had taken place. The post-it-notes would represent values against which variation pre and post session and pre and post workshop.

Dovetailing with this, was a second EAS scale (Appendix E). It was developed as a participant observer tool for use by mentors in the workshop sessions. It was designed to be unintrusive, directly attempting to address the problems that had been thrown up at GSA and, more specifically, by the reductive nature of WEMWBS. In the participant-observer EAS, mentors were asked to evaluate as part of the ongoing mentor relationship, drawing on its emotional nuances and shifts and, through this intuition, record observations that manifest beyond formal measures. Its intended strength against other participant-observer methods was that it did not require an “interloper” in the room. It was designed to eliminate the need for external evaluators, even those who take part fully in activities, which may be challenging for trauma-experienced participants, presenting a possible threat, causing anxiety and fear and thereby being responsible for interrupting the work simply by their presence. When both EAS scales were introduced at GSA for C4L, they were popular with participants, workshop tutors and managers. Nicky Watson reported:

Instead of the tick box approach, participants actually valued the opportunity at the beginning and the end of the session to express how they were feeling and to think about it in physiological terms. Because they decided where emotions were situated

in the body, they felt quite powerful. The evaluation was part of the session and not separate from it...the tutors liked [the EAS]. I thought they were going to be annoyed that there was quite a lot of things to think about for each question on the scale, but they actually wrote way more and gave a very detailed kind of picture of how our participants were moving forward.⁴⁴⁷

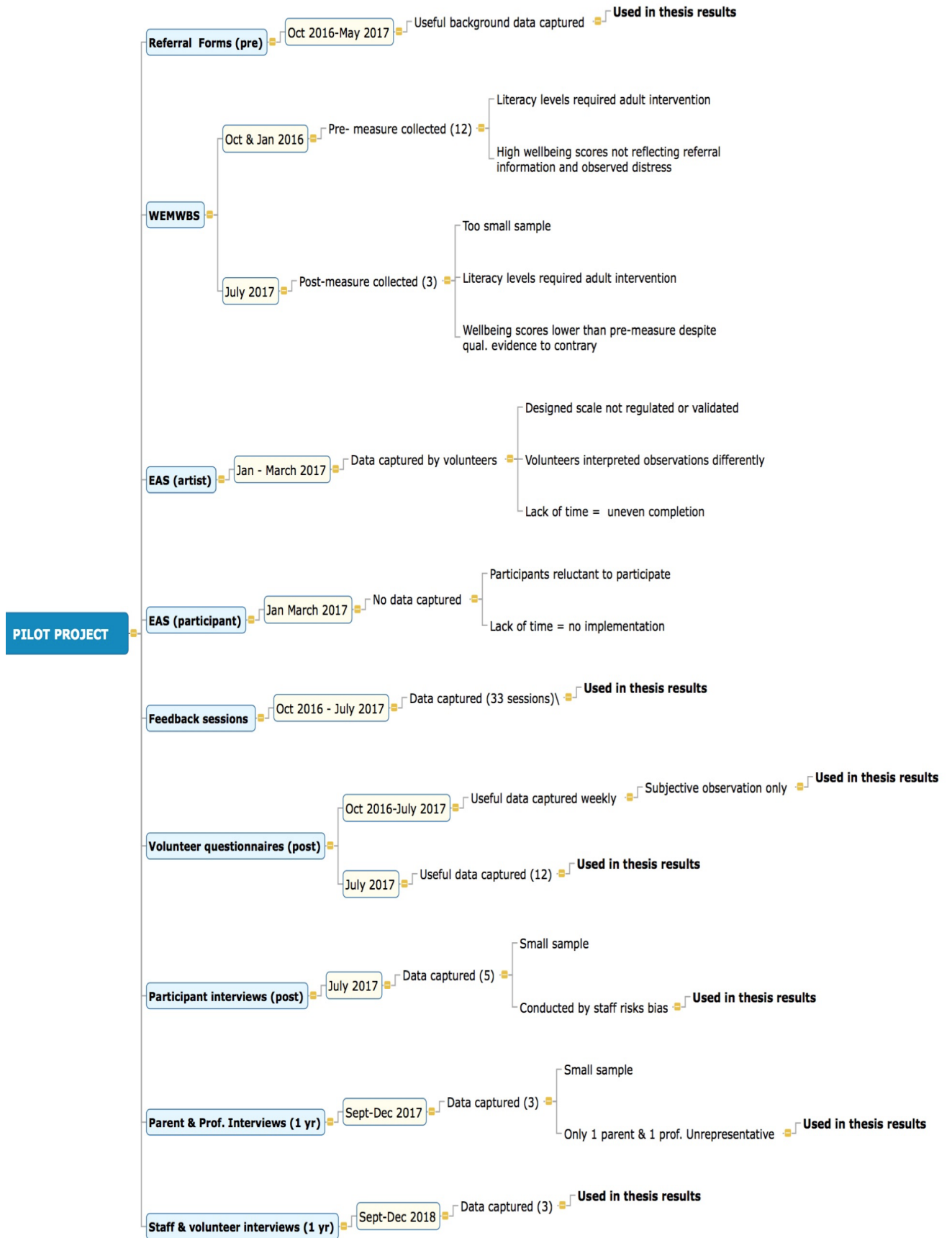
Subsequently, GSA adopted both scales for their work with young people. However, clearly a major downfall of my decision to invent a measure I thought would be pertinent to work with those with mental distress, was its lack of standardisation and validity in the academic arena. Whilst, I had concluded that the language of “measurement” was part of a reductionist approach in WEMWBS, the fact remains that it is the language that is used widely across the whole field of psychology, and whilst it may be used spuriously there, it is valid and proper elsewhere. The EAS had none of these necessary components such as content validity, test-retest and floor and ceiling effects. The original intention was to develop these with Russell, but by the time they were used by GSA, this had not occurred.

TTM Methods

In October 2016, using learnings from this research process, I designed the methodological framework for the TTM pilot project. Since, at this point, I had not fully rejected the methods I had researched, they were incorporated too. As seen in figure 4, and like in the pre-project research, it was a process that faltered and frayed. Whilst rich material was collected from the interviews and questionnaires, ultimately the data was limited. As is often the case in projects with vulnerable young people, its implementation and the information gathered from it, was limited. For example, I aimed to interview all young people in our last workshop session. But at this workshop session, for a number of reasons, we only had four young people. Three of them were happy to give interviews, but given the exercise was part of a general, emotive goodbye workshop, it would have been inappropriate to interview them for any longer than ten minutes. One of the young people, Ghost, gave an interview under sufferance. She wanted to go back to the art table and told me so after every question. What I did collect was rich, informative but sparse and,

⁴⁴⁷ Nikki Watson, interview with author, 2019.

Figure 4: Pilot Project Method Outcomes



as Herrman outlines of Clean Break, this was because of the ‘ad-hoc and fluid nature of engagement alongside the lack of capacity in an already stretched service.’⁴⁴⁸

Creative Responses

‘Our... practice best communicates our knowledge’, suggests Jenny Hughes, of practice as research (P-A-R), ‘it can make our knowledge meaningful in the world in different ways.’⁴⁴⁹ Hughes, with Jenny Kidd and Catherine McNamara, has developed a framework that, she suggests, is pertinent in measuring change in applied theatre work because it allows for surprises, contradictions, and appropriate shifts in knowledge. She gives these as three processes: “artistry” or the “designed” study which proposes that a piece of work will show particular outcomes, “improvisation” when the work throws up unforeseen developments, and “decomposition” when the research problem or question decomposes or deteriorates, leading to a collapse of the original design; ‘in this case both research design and the practice itself decomposes.’ Hughes suggests that ‘[c]rafted engagement with complex experiences remain open to the improvised encounters and settlements.’⁴⁵⁰ This is an apt description of my methods investigation: its final form was built and strengthened in the process of my floundering. Hughes suggests that decomposition is not necessarily negative because, ‘it generates new opportunities for life’ from which new things will almost certainly grow.⁴⁵¹ I consider this an important way to discern what happened on my quest for a methodological “truth.” My hope that my research would stand among clinical evidence and be seized upon by health commissioners had, by the end of my research project, deteriorated beyond repair in the onslaught of failure of administration, and in my realisation of a political agenda. But once I had acknowledged this, several years into my research process, I saw that there was rich crumbling earth ready for planting.

⁴⁴⁸ Herrmann, 2019.

⁴⁴⁹ ‘What Is Practice as Research? By Jenny Hughes and Johannes Sjoberg - YouTube’
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kENLpblA3U4>> [accessed 10 December 2019].

⁴⁵⁰ Hughes and Sjoberg, 2019

⁴⁵¹ Hughes and Sjoborg, 2019

The next, and last discovery came at this point. In a draft of my thesis, I had written a formal non-fiction account of the content of THYT and its activities, which was written from exclusively reviewing the transcripts of our post workshop feedback sessions. Feedback sessions were conducted every week after each workshop session, after the young people had left. Each lasted approximately half an hour, although they could be longer if there were significant points to discuss. The sessions were attended by the theatre artist (me), the artist-therapist (Oliver) and all the volunteers and peer inspirers present that day. They took the form of a semi-structured focus group. Each person would be invited to offer reflections on the workshop: one thing they had thought was particularly positive, one thing that had been a particular challenge and one idea they had to enhance work for the next session. Inevitably almost all discussions broadened out from the initial questions, and there was space and scope to talk together about the difficulties or successes and, in particular, how individual young people had engaged that week. There was also a certain function of emotional support for volunteers in particular. In this regard, the artist-therapist was on hand to enable a safe and “held” space for people to voice their concerns.⁴⁵² All conversations were transcribed and these transcripts used for evidence for the thesis. Originally, I perceived that the transcripts of the feedback sessions would be a background for my readers, so that when I wrote about the impact of the work, they would understand events to which I was referring. The transcripts would be used to write a factual background account. But, revisiting this, I realised that what leapt from the feedback transcript pages was that the TTYT journey was a story and its worth lay in the narrative arc of its actors. Having this material was useful, not only in providing the “rich description”, but also because it was infused with emotion of the adult team and, through our close observation, the young people too. The emotional content traced the impact in a thorough, multi-layered way.

⁴⁵² This was in addition to the opportunity to have therapeutic supervision, which was not part of the evaluation process, as it was a therapy-based process.

Using the feedback session transcripts to construct the creative story in my final draft I saw was actually a pertinent way to measure change, because they incorporated emotional content, insider expertise and a way in which the evaluation method is also part of the methodology of the work itself. For the Theatre Troupe Model pilot, this was the emotional bonding as we drank tea, ate pizza and talked. Thus it was more useful to perceive it to be in a framework of Discourse Analysis : '[h]ow talk and texts are used to perform action.'⁴⁵³ I deduced that most useful "data" of the many hours feedback transcripts captured the emotional resonances and labour of the work. It captured where relationships were formed and broken, where there was high drama, catharsis, tension and resolution. If 'long before science existed, sharp eyed men and women told each other stories about how people are, and stories have never lost their power to enchant and instruct,' as Lewis, Amini and Lannon suggest, then the best stories have dual purpose.⁴⁵⁴ They are of equal worth as the newer scientific endeavours.

My decision, finally, was to harness my own strengths and try to assert an authority that might have equivalent value to a more formal approach. Extrapolating from this, is an interesting opportunity to perceive validity in a different way, which is that artists may have superior tools at their disposal when it comes to an interpretation of the impact of the work. If artists are, by nature or reputation, prone to 'igniting thought, changing perceptions, creating chaos, forcing order on that chaos and enabling transformation, perhaps they are in a privileged position.'⁴⁵⁵ Their combined perspective may give a truer picture of change. Joss and Daykin suggest that artists can sometimes find it hard to navigate methods. Could we not suggest instead: 'scientists and public health individuals can struggle to navigate the affective landscape, which means evidence can be limited in its validity? Could omitting these elements actually represent an inaccurate picture of change? One mental health case professional suggested to me that it was inadvisable for me to work

⁴⁵³ Evanthia Lyons and Adrian Coyle, *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology* (London: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2007), p15.

⁴⁵⁴ Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 1. Vintage edn (New York: Vintage, 2001), p.15.

⁴⁵⁵ Jamison, p.5.

in the arts, as this was a trigger for my illness. I thought being an artist was, firstly, fundamentally, who I was but, according to this professional, it was a pathology. It is important that we, as artists, assert the urgency to incorporate this conversation about measuring the impact of arts on health. Which takes me back to who I am. Yes, I am a facilitator, a manager, an evaluator, a passenger assistant. But, firstly I am a writer. The thing I am most passionate about in my career is writing, and the lens through which I interpret the world is through affective perception.

The feedback session transcripts provided the material for an enchanting and instructing story that shows rather than tells. It made sense to interpret them in the same spirit. Cahnman and Holbrook explore the position of creative writing amongst ethnographic tools. They suggest that writers 'bring the rhythm and imagination of creative writing to an anthropological tradition.' It is freeing, they state, because they can 'name and claim feeling, story and relationship.'⁴⁵⁶ By writing creatively, we might strongly declare that, rather than claiming that observation is "truth," we accept that it is replete with perceptions and interpretations, and that these may be best expressed through the researcher's craft. It is important for the reader. Far from having real evidence obscured by the creative turn, it brings a level of agency, because it gives the reader 'the ultimate interpretive authority.' In addition, it allows convolution:

Creative approaches recognise multiple - at times - contradictory interpretations of cultural meaning, offering a definition of social science at the center of the literary-scientific divide. Fact/fiction, self/other, reason/emotion - ABR (arts based research) attempts to bridge these and other dichotomies that have thus far prevented healthy mergers between the social sciences and the arts.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁶ Melisa Cahnmann and Teri Holbrook, 'Uncovering Creative Writing in Anthropology', *Anthropology News*, 45.9 (2004), 27-27

⁴⁵⁷ Cahnmann and Holbrook, p.27.

It also brings ‘a troubled experimental knowledge of a self in jeopardy among others.’⁴⁵⁸ Therefore, presenting in the poetic style, I problematise the evidence, at the same time as I explain it. *The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography: Experiments in Contemporary Anthropology* challenges, through a series of essays, the notion of “objectivity” in ethnographic study, which they suggest in postmodern contexts has become degraded. ‘Ethnographic truths’ notes Clifford, ‘are *inherently* partial, committed and incomplete.’ [author’s italics].⁴⁵⁹ Bakhtin has shown, states James Clifford, that ‘dialogical processes proliferate in any complexly represented discursive space...many voices clamour for expression.’⁴⁶⁰ In addition to this, a creative ethnography may be more egalitarian. By writing in a theoretical, academically couched form, there could well be a process of exclusion: those in the academy know how to access certain knowledge, through systems of privilege that brings them to the academy. Susan Melrose suggests:

‘The uses of that banal formulation, by those of us who hold positions of authority within our institutions, produces within some of our discourse a constitutive ambiguity, which militates against the sorts of knowledge-political change in the university with regard to expert performance practices, which we also claim to want to bring about.’⁴⁶¹

I was a playwright when I wrote for *THYT*, and, as I will expand further in Chapter six, this was hopefully a gift, through an act of attunement, in which I incorporated participants’ voices, words and intentions according to who they were, what they had produced, and what they could manage to perform. In *A History of the World in 100 objects*, the book accompanying the 2010 BBC Radio 4 programme of the same name, Neil MacGregor suggests that works of artistry are important for the powerless to express who they and their people are. We can ‘try to find a different kind of knowing, aware that [art] must

⁴⁵⁸ James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography; a School of American Research Advanced Seminar*, ed. by Kim Fortun, 25th anniversary edition (Berkeley Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 2009), (preface)

⁴⁵⁹ Clifford and Marcus, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁰ <https://lcst3789.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/clifford-writing-culture.pdf> p.15.

⁴⁶¹ Susan Melrose, “‘The Curiosity of Writing (or, Who Cares about Performance Mastery?)’” (Revised 2019)’, 2003., p.26.

have been made by people essentially like us.⁴⁶² MacGregor notes that the objects that survive history's passage tend to draw our collective interest because they speak to our humanity. Those that hold power, have formal, serious records to record and chronicle their births and deaths, their wars and affairs, their appearances and habits. Or, with our current hegemony, they involve questionnaires and items on scales. But, MacGregor suggests, '[t]hose who are on the losing side, those whose societies are conquered or destroyed, often have only their things' [or words] to tell their stories.'⁴⁶³ It is '[t]he poet's capacity to tell history by connecting the dots', he suggests that elucidate a different kind of truth.⁴⁶⁴ 'There is no such thing as a scientific vision anymore than there is a unique poetic vision,' Freeman Dyson writes, 'Science is a mosaic of partial and conflicting visions.' We should, he suggests, launch a 'rebellion against the restrictions imposed by the locally prevailing culture.' The notion that science is a discipline of creativity and risk has been obscured by a view that it is incontestable as rational "truth", or at least in part, an obscuration constructed by the large corporations of the pharmaceutical industry and government that has now passed into fact. Dyson suggests:

One may believe that the historian's job is to expose the hidden influences of power and money and still recognise the laws of nature cannot be bent and cannot be corrupted with power and money. To my mind, the history of science is most illuminating when the frailty of human actors are put in transcendence with nature's laws.⁴⁶⁵

David Bohm's *On Creativity* posits that the 'utilitarian possibilities of [scientist's] work' may be of secondary interest to the creative possibilities.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶² Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (London New York Toronto]: Penguin Books, 2012), p.xvii

⁴⁶³ MacGregor, p.xvi.

⁴⁶⁴ MacGregor, p. xix.

⁴⁶⁵ Freeman J. Dyson, *The Scientist as Rebel*, (New York, NY: New York Review Books, 2008), p16.

⁴⁶⁶ David Bohm and Lee Nichol, *On Creativity*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), p.2.

Given 'ultimate interpretive authority,' the way my account is therefore given in Chapter five is from my authorial perspective and employs substantial creative/dramatic licence.⁴⁶⁷ Whilst the feedback session transcripts are a verbatim and true account of the real events of THYT, I have interpreted them artistically and subjectively. This begins when I give descriptions of each young person, beginning on page 152. I have drawn on referral forms for background information, but in addition, I write young people as "characters," albeit real people. For example, when I refer to Ghost as 'often quite scruffily dressed with wild straggly hair.' (p.156) or Kizi as 'a short, plump ten year old.' (p.154). I do this from my own subjective point of view.' I do this to give my readers an inroad into the story I tell, continuing this pattern throughout the telling *The Way to Optimistic Land*.

Because I have decided to write creatively, I have also taken some licence with including material from transcripts. Any speech in inverted commas, for example: '*I would have the shift from this to the drama would be hard and yet it happens as if by magic*' says Martin (p.165) is real lifted directly from transcripts. I have not, however, referenced this in footnotes, as I do in Chapter 6, in order that I do not break the flow of the text. There are times when one of my characters (staff or volunteers) has said something that I remember, but I do not have direct quotations. Remembered speech such as this is cited without quotation marks, for example *Let's go upstairs, I say, It's peaceful* (p. 173). In contrast, in Chapter six, which is a critical analysis of data I have collected, I cite quotations from transcripts, writing and referencing them in a form more suited to a critical analysis.

The Way to Optimistic Land story in Chapter 5 is my Treasure House Youth Troupe story written as an invitation to readers to enter the drama, either a pause between the more academically couched chapters four and six or as a standalone tale for those that just want to enjoy it as an insightful yarn - both those within and outside the academy. By doing so, it extracts itself from some disciplinary problems, and I try to make my method more intangibly of humanity. This is me trying what love can do in the context of a thesis, that

⁴⁶⁷ Cahnmann and Holbrook, p.27.

may bridge the disciplines, that does not reduce the stories of those oppressed but, through it's poetics, does them justice. It is trying what love can do for the young people also, I hope, because I do not confine them to the staid paragraphs of an academic discourse.

Lewis, Amini and Lannon state:

The scientist or the physician is not [attunement theory] terrain's sole surveyor, and certainly not its first. The aspiration to distil and transmit the secrets of the heart can attain a moment of matchless lucidity within a novel, a play, a short story or a poem. Through a symmetry as compact and surprising as the equivalence between matter and energy, love's poetry and its science share an unexpected identity...Now science has traveled into the realm of the poetic, the efforts of one can inform those of its twin.⁴⁶⁸

Limitations

Here I return to McNamara et al's notion of the usefulness of mess, but now to critique. Reviewing the strictures of my final methodological approach, mess certainly lends an important and appropriate weight to some of my material. In other places, mess is less useful. At home in a 'troubling the waters' approach in applied theatre research it may be, but beyond this there are still swathes of researchers and practitioners for whom it is not. It does not address the issue I was so keen to address at the start of my research project, which was to find a sound and rigorous methodology that would be more useful and thorough to applied theatre fundraisers and commissioners than approach currently available. Ultimately, it does not reach out to clinical, and psychology researchers in a way that is likely to convince them that the project has proper evidential legs. It was my specific hope at the beginning of the project to find a quantitative way to measure change, to escape what I considered the uneven, fly by night, and sometimes dishonest way applied theatre projects were measured. I started with an intention to justify the efficacy of the work as a healing mechanism to clinicians and health commissioners, and I finished in a

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 1. Vintage edn (New York: Vintage Books), 2001), p.15.

place of failure in this regard. I began my thesis determined to challenge the way in which applied theatre projects were evidenced, and ended it with a chaotic jumble of data that might even, at least to some, corroborate Joss and Daykin's assertion that 'artists can find it challenging to navigate the terrain of evaluation and access the language and frameworks that are required.'⁴⁶⁹

One of the main reasons for this is the uneven and ad hoc nature of the way the methodological design was constructed. This can be seen clearly in figures 1 and 2 above, which chart missteps and false starts. It is also a record of a series of blunders and missed opportunities on my part, which hampered the project. The way the evidence collection "snowballed" meant that even the qualitative data would not stand up to the kind of scrutiny that would provide a useful rigour. My enthusiasm for the quantitative until late in the research placed strictures on a thoroughness in a qualitative approach. For example, I only had a few interviews from young people, I only interviewed one parent and one professional, and did so after more than a year's gap. This follow up could have been useful to evidence ongoing impact but not only was this limited by too few numbers, but the follow up period was fairly arbitrary, more a result of my own inability to impose structure than by design. By the time I realised there were advocates for a qualitative approach amongst clinical researchers, the opportunity to create a robust design of this kind was missed. For example, there is a limited direct participant voice, due to the limited number of participant interviews possible and therefore the participant-observer voice is perhaps too dominant.

My missteps do, however, serve as a new challenge. I hope that this chapter might serve as its own roadmap, with all its potholes, a starting point for myself and researchers to grapple with some of the challenges I have encountered, and perhaps to find a better/new way together. I have not yet discovered whether there is an effective way to evidence the impact of arts projects on health in a way that is not reductionist and does not banish

⁴⁶⁹ Joss and Daykin, p.5.

philosophical positions ethically. There are therefore opportunities to review this afresh. There are chances to pick up on some of the discarded efforts, particularly perhaps a development of the Embodied Attunement Scale as a measure to be taken seriously, and to do so with Tamara Russell and/or other researchers. I have learnt that my own endeavours in this specific area may fall short, not least because my neurodiversity brings with it a built in chaotic study implementation. This is a good reason, and a real prospect to involve other researchers in a new dialogue and debate. My fierce desire to advocate for artists and to challenge those who maintained that artists were incapable of impacting their own work obscured, a reality I saw clearly at the end: that expert input and advice from psychology or other clinical researchers would have enhanced the study. I saw what the research could have been were there to be a collaboration with some person or people who really understood the landscape. The reductionist approach to arts and health methodological frameworks is problematic for me but, because I have not found a suitable alternative, finding a better way is still an active concern. I finish this methods chapter, therefore, with an intention in future research to ask old questions with new insight, but to do so in a collaborative discussion and endeavour with others.

Chapter Five: Findings

This extended chapter is a creatively-written account of the events that took place during the Theatre Troupe Model (TTM) pilot project, otherwise known as *Treasure House Youth Troupe*, between October 2016 and July 2017. Its title - *The Way to Optimistic Land* - has been appropriated from the title of the play that THYT performed in July 2017. I believe the title reflects the narrative that I tell.

Ethics

To conduct my study, I received full approval for my study from the Queen Mary Research Committee (Panel C), which was ratified by the Chair's Action in July 2017 (QMEREC 2016/06). This enabled me to collect post-project data from participants, parents staff, volunteers and referral professionals. See Appendix A for an overview of the collected data. Ethics clearance also permitted me to draw on any material that had been collected retrospectively by Theatre Troupe's for our purposes, as long as this had additional approval by parents and young people for use in research.

Methods for which approval was gained, and were used, can be found in appendices:

Appendix B: Referral form. Each young person joining the TTM pilot project was referred through a professional service: from schools, from social services or from CAMHS.

Appendix F: Information sheet and consent/form for young people aged 14 or over

Appendix G : Information sheet and assent form for young people aged 13 and under.

Appendix H: Information sheet and consent form for adults (volunteers, staff, professionals, parents) and consent form for guardians, giving permission to interview young people and to use the content of this in research anonymously.

Young people who were interviewed for this project chose their own pseudonyms: Melekodium, Fagilistic, Afireem, Ghost and Kizi. The other children have been ascribed pseudonyms. Young people who were interviewed were obviously inspired to make up fantastical names and whilst I have not done this myself for other children, I have tried to keep them in the fairy-tale realm by using pseudonyms that can be found in the Disney Film *Frozen*. Pseudonyms chosen by young people, or those chosen by me, do not have any link to names or initials that are the young person's own. To further protect the identity of children, I have not given information about the schools, teachers or professionals working with young people or, if I have, as the story has required, names are, once again, invented. There is no other information in the findings that could identify a young person. Names of staff and volunteers, however, are real.

Treasure House Youth Troupe Pilot Project

The Theatre Troupe Model (TTM) pilot project worked with twelve children aged 10-14 who had been referred to the project as having complex emotional and behavioural difficulties as a result of trauma experiences. I write of all of them, but focus especially on five young people that form more in-depth case studies, which are intertwined with other material in this telling.

I have referred to eleven of these, as one joined late and was an irregular attender. Seven of eleven young people were girls, four were boys. They came from a range of cultural backgrounds which broadly correspond to the demographic of the London Borough of Southwark. Seven young people were from Black African backgrounds, one was from a Black Caribbean background, three were from a White British background.

Young people were referred through a number of services and institutions. Six young people were referred through the Safeguarding Team for children under a Child Protection Order. Three young people were referred through a mainstream primary school, via the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) or Inclusion Manager. Two young people

were recruited from an alternative education provider for those excluded from mainstream education. Four young people had a diagnosis of a neurodevelopmental disorder, either Austistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or Developmental Coordination Disorder (also known as Dyspraxia). Three young people had been assessed by a professional at school as having Special Educational Needs, including having speech and communication difficulties and/or being below the average reading age for literacy and maths. One young person had English as an Additional Language.

Mental Distress

All young people were recruited because they were experiencing or exhibiting signs of mental distress. Seven young people had identified behavioural difficulties in school which put them at risk of exclusion or had resulted in them being excluded. One young person had a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and two had been engaged in offending behaviour. Although no young people were referred from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), most young people had a diagnosis or identified condition causing mental distress. Eight young people were under the care of CAMHS, or a psychotherapy provision through clinical practitioners in the safeguarding team and the Family Drug and alcohol team. A further young person had been offered therapy at CAMHS but had refused to take up the offer.

Trauma Factors and Experiences

All young people but one had a documented history of abuse, neglect or loss. One young person had experienced parental neglect only. One young person had experienced parental physical abuse only. Five young people had experienced neglect and either emotional or physical abuse from a parent. Six young people had experienced bereavement or abandonment of primary carers. Four young people had been exposed to drugs and alcohol at some point in their childhood. Two young people had experienced Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). One young person had a documented history of severe and pervasive peer bullying. Four young people were engaged in duties and activities that would usually

be undertaken by their carers (young carers). Two young people were living in temporary housing. One young person was in a Child Looked After in local authority care (CLA). One young person had experienced domestic abuse and sexual violence in the home. All but one child experienced two or more trauma factors or experiences.

Workshop structure

As Theatre Troupe developed, Natasha Bergg and I have consolidated the aims and objectives of our organisation for social-aesthetic function. Accordingly, we designed together a broad framework of aesthetic-social work which we have followed, and continue to follow, to enable the reduction of mental distress. Whilst there has been lots of necessary flexibility within this as the TTM pilot project has progressed, this broad structure remains as part of Theatre Troupe's model of practice:

Activity	Description	Duration
Safe Space Drop In (activities happen concurrently)	Refreshments; Art activities led by an artist-therapist. They are usually connected into the theatre work in some way, either making costumes, set and props or resources for drama games and exercises.	1 hour
Comfort Zone	A secluded space with cushions and throws and other furnishings (such as fairy lights). A chance to withdraw from general activities; to process feelings of anxiety, anger or low mood away from the main group if desired; a place to talk about feelings with a safe and supportive adult (mostly volunteers but could also be lead artist)	
Check- in	The group comes together before the drama workshop starts for the chance to show how they are feeling and therefore set up a sympathetic appropriate environment for the rest of the session. This is often done through metaphors such as naming colours or making a physical action that reflects mood. This is a chance for everyone to understand and empathise with the emotional needs in the room; the first chance to come together as a whole “troupe”	5-10 minutes
Drama games and activities	Young people work all together and in smaller groups alongside volunteers and the artist-therapist (as equal participants) to imagine, and realise their own ideas through drama processes, as well as create and build material that will eventually be consolidated into performance material	1 hour 25 minutes
Creative Listening	A group gathering in which young people and adults come together to reflect on the session. An opportunity to develop self expression; to develop trust in others; to express warm wishes and praise towards other members of the group; a held space of safety before learning the troupe.	5 mins

Figure 5

Cast

Fagilistic	Aged 13
Melekodium,	Aged 13, Fagilistic's twin,
Kizi	Aged 10
Ghost	Aged 12
Kristoff	Aged 11
Afireem	Aged 11, Fagilistic and Melekodium's sister
Olaf	Aged 12
Elsa	Aged 13
Iduna	Aged 14
Sven	Aged 10

Throughout

Emily Hunka	Theatre artist; project manager; artistic director
Oliver Campbell	Artist-therapist
Martin Hunka	Chef; storyteller
Lesley Hunka	Pastoral support; register taker; phone guarder
Zoe Dowling	Minibus driver; mentor (MA Applied Theatre , Royal Central School of Speech & drama (RCSSD)
Joy Josiah	Mentor, (from the Southwark community)
Annie Napier	Mentor (MA Applied Theatre: RCSSD)
Jasmine	A dog (belonging to Martin and Lesley)

October-December 2016

Naomi Long-strioktriam	Volunteer (co-head teacher at Treasure House CIC)
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January - July

Charlie Hurford	Mentor (BA: Drama Queen Mary University London (QMUL))
Rachel Jermy	Mentor (BA: Drama QMUL)
Blanka Plodcha	Mentor (BA: Drama QMUL)
Joel Delaney-Simpson	Peer Inspirer (Southwark community)
Remz Nation	Peer Inspirer (Southwark community)
Daniel Lizarbe	Volunteer (Child psychiatrist, Southwark CAMHS)

May-July

Halima Habil	Mentor (MA: Applied Theatre Goldsmiths College)
Lucrezia Police	Volunteer (BA: Applied theatre, RCSSD)
Bethan Illman	Mentor (BA: Drama, QMUL)
Grace Broome	Mentor (BA Drama, QMUL)
Georgia Wilkinson	Mentor (BA Drama, QMUL)

Young People for case studies

Fagilistic

Fagilistic, a slight thirteen year old of second generation Nigerian descent, was referred to Theatre Troupe, by the Southwark Safeguarding Team along with his two siblings - his twin Melekodium, and his younger sister Afireem. The children were under a prohibited steps court order because of neglect and emotional and physical abuse by their mother when they were younger. Their mother frequently engaged in what she called 'discipline', involving physical beatings for being 'bad.' The children were removed when Fagilistic was ten, into the care of their father. When Fagilistic joined the pilot project, the siblings' father had been battling a brain tumour for some time and therefore found it difficult to provide care. The siblings often came in to school at unpredictable times, unkempt. They also acted as young carers for their father, although their paternal aunt came into the carer role as the siblings' father reached his last few months of life. The siblings' father died in January 2017. At this point, they were moved into the care of their aunt, into her house alongside eight other family members. At the time of his referral, Fagilistic was receiving family therapy alongside his siblings, with the psychologist from the safeguarding team. She left the area in January, when all therapeutic support ceased. Fagilistic also had a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). From his referral, we knew he had a fractured relationship with his twin, which often escalated into emotional aggression - they would stare at each other for prolonged periods - and occasionally engage in physical violence. He was known to focus obsessively on things or events that irritated him. When Fagilistic was upset, he had a tendency to go out into the community alone, coming back late at night (midnight), after the incident had already been reported to the police. He had also been caught shoplifting, and was deemed to be unaware of the implications that this might have for him.

Melekodium

Melekodium, a tall, slim thirteen year old, was the twin of Fagilistic, older sister to Afireem. She was originally referred for our Treasure Seekers project, which she enjoyed, and did well in. She enthusiastically re-engaged with Theatre Troupe for the THYT. It was noted in the referral form that Melekodium had borne the brunt of her mother's harsh physical discipline when in her care. The social worker also suggested that she was the child in the family who took on most emotional and practical responsibility of caring for their father and her siblings also. A decision had been made by the adults in the family not to tell the children that their father was dying, but Melekodium was the only one who understood he was not going to get better. Like Fagilistic, she attended family therapy. At the time of referral, Melekodium was at risk of exclusion from school due to persistent disruptive behaviour, usually consisting of small incidents, which then blew up as she failed to accept the consequences for this behaviour.

Kizi

Kizi, a short, plump ten year old girl from Nigeria, emigrated to the UK when she was five years old, to be with her mother, June, who had been working in the UK previously. She entered school in the UK at this time. She was referred to our summer project, Treasure Seekers, by her mainstream primary school in Peckham, through the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). She returned in October for the year long pilot. Kizi lived with her single mother, June, and her younger sister, in cramped and overcrowded accommodation, and shared bathroom facilities with a number of people living in other rooms. Her mother worked long hours 'just to put food on the table', as she put it in her interview with me, which also meant Kizi and her sister were on their own in the house for significant periods. The whole family suffered isolation. As June put it, 'in my life I'm the kind of person that I hardly associate myself with people. So we don't really have friends, we don't, they hardly go to birthday parties.' June's need to work and the impact it had on her children, obviously made her distressed: 'Because...you might think their parents are not doing the best for them...maybe that's why they are joining a gang,

but no, because in some cases a parent don't even have time because they just have to work...I just have to...you understand me?'⁴⁷⁰

On her referral form, the SENCo wrote that Kizi had 'quite severe speech and language difficulties along with associated cognitive difficulties.' Although Kizi spoke English when she arrived, her mother said that the differences in pronunciation and dialect meant it was hard for anyone in her new school to understand her. It was not until Year 4 in primary school, when she was eight, that a teacher realised that the challenging behaviour Kizi had developed across the years - refusing to work - was due to learning difficulties. When this was addressed, she began to improve in terms of reading, spelling and pronunciation. Kizi struggled to make friends; the SENCo described that 'social relationships with other children have often been a problem as she finds social interaction with others a challenge. This is due to difficulty articulating her thoughts and feelings which means that her relationships with others can go awry.' Kizi was badly bullied from the age of five; 'children '[didn't] want to see her face,' said June.⁴⁷¹ Her mother thought that this stemmed from a difficult start to life in the UK socially, that children 'don't really allow a stranger to come in. When a stranger comes in they bully you.' Her mother was distressed about this, as she observed: 'the kind of humiliation she gets in school was unbearable for me.' Bullying at school was extended to targeting June too, when children would stare rudely and giggle as she waited in the playground to pick up Kizi and her sister. They would 'see you as nothing,' June said. But Kizi had also engaged in bullying, which was seen as a serious problem at school that resulted in detentions on several occasions. It was reported on her referral form, however, that this behaviour had lessened in more recent times. One of the key reasons for being referred to Theatre Troupe, and one of the reasons June enthusiastically embraced the referral, was so that Kizi was able to meet new people and associate with others outside school, but also to support her needs. When the SENCo had suggested the project to her: 'I immediately embraced it because [the SENCo] said [Kizi's] going to meet a lot of people,

⁴⁷⁰ June, interview with author 12 December 2018.

⁴⁷¹ June

different kinds of people that have something similar in behaviour with her.’ Kizi had thrived in our summer school, enjoying the relaxed atmosphere. June was very positive and supportive across the project. When we invited her back for the year-long programme, both mother and daughter were enthusiastic. June said ‘when she was going first day in Theatre Troupe we finally feel so happy about it. For me just to be able to see my daughter engaged, so just to associate herself with other people, was good.’⁴⁷²

Ghost

Ghost was a small, slight twelve year old of white British heritage. She was often quite scruffily dressed with wild straggly hair. Although she was in School Year 8 - she was aged twelve when she joined us - she was like a ten year old physically, and like a seven or eight year old emotionally. She was referred to the project by a social worker from the Safeguarding Team. The referral form suggested she ‘loved anything to do with art’, but was unable to pursue this elsewhere, because she could not manage after-school activities in other settings. The referring social worker suggested that she would benefit from ‘having a creative space to express herself [as] she may be more comfortable doing this not through words.’ Ghost lived with her mother, who was an alcoholic, her father and her four year old sister. Her family had been referred to social services when she made a disclosure to a teacher at her school, when a teacher asked about a series of bruises on her arm. She said that her father had been physically abusing her, that he had been hitting her with two different belts because she returned home late at night. She withdrew the complaint, ‘worried that her father might go to prison.’ No conclusive evidence was found from a police investigation, but Ghost remained under a child protection order. Ghost had a diagnosis of ADHD and was involved with CAMHS. She also received counselling through school and was on medication for ADHD, which was reviewed every three months. She was taking part in family therapy with a clinical practitioner.

Ghost’s relationship with her parents was fraught and the safeguarding clinical practitioner

⁴⁷² June

engaged with the family in therapy, because they ‘talked very negatively about her, and her relationship with her mother was very tense’. This also related to the diagnosis she had been given, that her parents seemed to believe that ‘an increase in Ghost’s medication is the only solution; they are not able to see that external factors and relationships can impact on the way Ghost acts and behaves.’ The clinical practitioner noted in a meeting with the family ‘[her parents] find it very difficult to describe or see any positive qualities in Ghost.’ Ghost was known, in the past, to make up ‘elaborate stories’, and arrive home with items of clothing and make-up that she may have stolen. She had a history of coming home late or absconding from school. There was also concern amongst professionals that she did not know how to manage social relationships and could be inappropriately ‘boisterous with much older boys at school.’

Kristoff

Kristoff, was a solid eleven-year old of short stature and of Nigerian descent. He was referred from his mainstream primary school, by the Inclusion Manager and SENCo, alongside another boy, Sven, who was in his year. Unlike the other four children I am following in this research, Kristoff joined a third of the way through the project in January 2017. We received little information from the referral form about Kristoff’s background, although we gained some insight into Kristoff’s family by interacting with his mother as part of the workshop management process. It seemed that Kristoff, who lived with his single mother, lived transiently and unpredictably. Although he went to school in Camberwell, in the London Borough of Southwark, his home address was in the London Borough of Greenwich, approximately ten miles away. Until we insisted on dropping him off at a home address, his aunt’s, his mother would give him directions to wait for her outside a tube station, or in a carpark. Although we could not be sure, we wondered whether Kristoff’s mother was worried about housing and her immigration status and did not want to give a fixed abode because of this. We also got the impression that Kristoff’s mother worked long hours and was unavailable to spend much time with Kristoff. Unlike many other guardians, though, Kristoff’s mother responded quickly to correspondence from us, supporting

Kristoff's regular engagement. The referral form did tell us that 'Kristoff struggles to speak respectfully to both adults and children in the classroom and the playground. He finds it challenging to express how he is feeling verbally and does not have positive relationships with peers.' Kristoff received weekly CAMHS sessions in school. He was reported as never liking to eat in front of anyone else.

Workshop venue

Our workshop venue, the Livesey Building, where THYT is based, sits on the Old Kent Road, next to Kwik Fit (the garage chain), and opposite a drive-through Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). The elegant red-brick building is incongruous with its surroundings, set on the three kilometre-long road, which is best known by those outside the area as the cheapest acquisition on the Monopoly Board, and it is not hard to see how this assessment of its value was made. It is distinctly down-at-heel. Once this area belonged to its loyal community: it had thirty nine pubs, a thriving music venue, public swimming baths and a children's museum. Now it is not much more than a thoroughfare through South East London, dotted with industrial retail units. It growls with traffic night and day, chundering loud enough to drown out voices, and frequent howling sirens. Large commercial chain stores are dotted up and down. Behind the Livesey Building is a series of tall pebbledash tower blocks, which make up the Ledbury Council Estate. The Ledbury has seen better days. The breezeblock optimism of the 1960s had been dampened over the years by rain and soot. But the Old Kent Road has its light touches, one of which is a friendly "greasy-spoon" establishment called Gourmet Cafe, where you can get a sturdy cup of tea.

The Livesey Building was the site of the Livesey Museum of Childhood, opened in 1966 and closed by Southwark Council in 2008. Architecturally, it has not been adapted for the school that now occupies it, and there are still some signs it was a children's museum: a large transfer on the wall of the mezzanine that says '*To the Treasure!*', a large white papier mache unicorn on a shelf three feet in the air. Before you enter the building, if you look up,

you will see huge stained glass windows, which distil light in reds, yellows and blues. When there is light to be distilled.

The Livesey Building is effectively one large space, with a mezzanine level overlooking an open area. There is also, up a steep flight of stairs, three rooms that Treasure House School uses for lessons and therapy sessions. This space will be known in our story as right upstairs. The mezzanine is colourful and welcoming. It has three large tables with bright yellow and orange plastic chairs around them. There are posters on the wall relating to academic learning and personal, social and health education (PSHE). There are other school things: a printer, a white bookshelf full of books, and paper and pens. Then, on large hooks hanging over the space, in a row, are large lush green plants in hanging baskets. This space, in our story, will be called upstairs, or the mezzanine. This is where we run our Safe Space art activities and serve refreshments. Around the whole edge of the mezzanine is a polished wooden bannister that is, we will find out, to our cost, perfect for sliding down at speed. Follow this round and descend a short flight of stairs. Here is a little area that the school calls The Nook. There's a small bright red table here, a bookcase and some lounging chairs. Descending further, you will reach the main space, a square grey box, open at the top. We call this downstairs. It has a little art-room off it, where we have our Comfort Zone, and also an entrance to the garden. The garden is like a place time forgot, still full of the memories of a once-loved community museum: a red postbox, a sweet shop front made of wood, protruding out as if from an upper level window and a two times life-size statue of Charles Livesey himself. The years have been kind to Charles Livesey; he is carved in bronze and smiles out benignly, surveying his gift to the public. This is more than can be said for some of the other museum touches, which are paint-peeling and weather worn. There are more recently tended touches though - a raspberry bush and side borders of grasses that fan out. But these are encircled by plastic tape, warning No Go area, as the garden still has structures that are liable to collapse from age.

The Way to Optimistic Land

*'Humans are creatures of narrative, and stories are a way we give meaning to our lives.'*⁴⁷³

There is a country. In this country, there are many different strange and wonderful, curious and terrible lands. It is always a dangerous thing to step outside the comfort of your home and travel across them. Yes, you might find wonders there. But you also might find yourself trapped and alone, confused or frightened. Worst of all, you might come across the wasteland of ice and snow. There, it is told, the Ice Bullies dwell, gnashing their pointed ice teeth and sniping at each other with cruel frozen fingers. The Ice Bullies are always looking for victims to torment. It is said that, at certain times, when the wind changes its direction sharply, they leave their home on the furious blizzard of a great storm, and descend on unsuspecting citizens. Any person an Ice Bully encounters will have shards of ice planted in their hearts. When this happens, their hearts are frozen, turning cold and hard. They become bullies to others. They are cruel and punishing, they make people's lives a misery. So the parents and grandparents tell their children to beware.

However, there is another land that is quite the opposite, a land that is so wonderful, it is hard to believe it is real. The quest for this land is where we take up our story. Once there were two sisters who were called Taylor and Lucy. Lucy had dreams of being an actress and an athlete. Sadly, their mother left them when they were just ten and twelve years old. But they knew at least they had each other and they learnt to survive together. They lived in a tent on the streets of a big city. Lucy was in a gang called The Snakes. She did bad things for them, because they told her where to get food so she could look after her little sister. Her sister worried all the time she was in a bad gang. But they got by. One day, though, the Social Enforcer arrived with the police and found them in their tent. They told the sisters they were going to look after them and keep them safe. Taylor wanted to be warm and safe so she was happy with the idea, but Lucy wasn't so sure. Then the social enforcer said:

⁴⁷³ Clark Baim, Tony Morrison, and Jo Hathaway, *Attachment-Based Practice with Adults: Understanding Strategies and Promoting Positive Change : A New Practice Model and Interactive Resource for Assessment, Intervention and Supervision*, 2011 <<http://site.ebrary.com/id/10863023>> [accessed 6 November 2019]. 6

'OK Taylor you come with me and Lucy will go with the police'

'Why are we going separately?' said Taylor

'Well you need to go to different places' said the social enforcer, 'You're going to a foster carer and Lucy is going to a Children's Home.'

'No. We're not being split up' said Lucy angrily

'But you have to be split up,' said the social enforcer. 'You've been involved in the Snakes Lucy and you're a bad influence on your little sister.'

'She's not a bad influence' cried Taylor, but they weren't listening.

'Say goodbye to Lucy,' said the policewoman firmly and began to drag Lucy away.

'But when will I see her again?' said Taylor

'We're not sure.' said the social enforcer. 'It's for your own good.' But Lucy broke free of the grip of the policewoman and ran to Taylor, giving her a tight hug. As she did so she whispered fiercely in her sister's ear. 'Listen' she said, 'there's this place that I've heard of. Optimistic Land. it's a place where everything is good. I've heard they travel around on flying skateboards and have unicorns as pets.'

'Seriously?' whispered Taylor.

'Yeah' whispered Lucy. 'If you get there you can live freely. They have mountains and ponds and fishes and it's really warm and nice.'

'It doesn't sound real.' Taylor looked unconvinced.

'It *is* real. We've got to get there. OK, so the first opportunity you have, get away from your foster home and see if you can find it OK? It's at the far edges of the sun.' Then the social enforcer was dragging Lucy away.

'I don't know what that means' cried Taylor, but Lucy was out of earshot. Taylor crumpled to the ground and cried, bitterly.

Lucy was taken to Treehouse Place, a children's home in London, where there were lots of children. It was not a happy place. The other children bullied Lucy and tried to get her to fight. Lucy had learnt to fight on the streets and would have gladly fought them in normal circumstances, but these were not normal circumstances. If she got in trouble, they'd be

watching her and then how would she make her escape? Taylor was taken to a foster home. Her foster parents, an elderly couple, were kind, but Taylor thought only of her sister and how she might reach her. At night, when she was on her own, she would whisper over and over again 'Optimistic Land, Optimistic Land, Optimistic Land' to always remember what she should do.

Perhaps it was because of a bond that sisters sometimes have, or perhaps it was a coincidence, but on the same night, when the moon was at its fullest, and the air was sharp, both girls crept from their beds and slipped into the darkness to begin their journey to Optimistic Land, and to find each other once more.

AUTUMN

Outside, the day is darkening. Autumn is drawing in its light on this cold Halloween afternoon. I am here with Oliver, with Zoe and Annie and Joy. We are waiting nervously. Oliver is laying out art materials across one of the large tables on the mezzanine, which is covered by a spotted red oilcloth. We sip our tea for warm reassurance, and I am putting on a brave face. As lead tutor, as project manager, as (co) Artistic Director at Theatre Troupe, I am there to reassure everyone: that we are at the beginning of an exciting journey into applied theatre magic. I smile to convey this. But, of course, I'm terrified. I curl my fingertips into my palms, forcing the anxiety that wants to dance around my body, into my taught knuckles. I do this again and again, this enthusiasm, brave ideas for theatre work for children and young people, this belief that things, marvellous things, will spring like verdant shoots into all our lives. But as I stand here now, anticipating the unknown with my heart knocking against my ribs like a trapped moth, I ask myself: Why do I do this?

But then, they are here, some of them. The first to arrive is Iduna, with her mother. Eyes down. We met Iduna during our summer programme when she was referred due to a court order, requiring her to engage in "positive activities" during the school holidays, in the hope that it would keep her away from gangs and Child Sexual Exploitation. It seems she doesn't

want to be here. She certainly doesn't want to speak, despite our friendly invitations to do so. Her mother, on the other hand, does want to speak. She's angry that her social worker is still casting aspersions. 'She's saying my daughter is having sex with men' she shouts, 'They're fucking accusing me of things that aren't true.' Iduna sits beside her. She is now crying silently. While this is going on, Olaf arrives, also a participant in our project last July. Then, he had severe separation anxiety from his mother, largely, his warm social worker suggests, because the courts have previously threatened his removal into care due to her addiction problems. However, unlike the summer school, he does not need his mother to stay in the building. She brings him to the door, and he comes inside warily. For the time being, that is it. Two. My heart sinks. All over again, that struggle for participants, that void, into which energy vanishes. Inside I am sagging. I ask that question again: why do I keep doing this?

Still, it is what it is, and two is better than none, and so we get on with it. Frustratingly, it is hard to get on with it, because the first thing we were going to do is to offer pumpkin soup, but there is no soup and no chef. Martin and Lesley offered to pick up the three siblings, Melekodium, Fagilistic and Afireem, from school, but it has not gone to plan. The traffic is heavy, and they are stuck somewhere on the South Circular, the busy road that strangles South London. They are but inching forward to their destination and are twenty minutes late and counting. I feel my blood pressure edge upwards, as I conduct a series of fraught phone-calls with Martin. I try to get hold of Afireem's school. I try to get hold of their Aunt. There are three children alone in the dark, maybe. Or maybe they had given up and gone home. Already it feels like we are adeptly failing, before we have even begun. No, scratch that. It feels like I am adeptly failing before we have begun. This entanglement of professional me and personal me. This mood that falls or lifts me with the vicissitudes of the work.

Oliver has finished laying out materials on the art table, so Safe Space is ready to go. Unfortunately, neither Olaf nor Iduna want to take part in the Safe Space. Olaf hangs back,

against the wall, standing by the door ready for escape, eyeing the Safe Space art table as if it is beset with landmines. Iduna has ensconced herself in the Comfort Zone. There are cushions and throws there, a piece of blue cloth draped over a white-board as a makeshift backdrop. It's meant to be beautiful but it's a little ad hoc. Iduna sits on the floor and wraps herself in a blanket, mobile phone in hand. 'I want to go home,' she says. 'I wouldn't even be here if my social worker didn't make me.' I said, 'OK, but anyway, I'm really glad you're here. It's lovely to see you.' Then Kizi arrives. She seems a little thrown that she is so late into the group (because of bad traffic). She won't put her bag down or take off her coat, but she sits down at the art table. Oliver tells her we are making masks for Halloween.

At last, Martin, Lesley and the siblings arrive, fifty five minutes after the session had begun, five minutes before Safe Space is meant to finish. The children had sat patiently with their Aunt to await Martin and Lesley's arrival. 'What kept you?' Fagilistic said nonchalantly, as they drove up. When they arrive, the girls are in good spirits. Melekodium and Afireem had both taken part in the summer school, and seem pleased to be back. They fill the room with smiles and I have a rush of warmth seeing them again. I remember Melekodium's enthusiasm at her scene of a talking chicken leg. I remember Afireem creating, on the spot, a sung narrative about a place, a magical new world. I remember how happy they were. I also remember how they phoned me when I was on holiday in Norfolk, the week after the summer school had finished, asking if they could come to the Theatre Troupe activities. I had to tell them that there weren't any. I felt guilty then, and so I am glad they are back with us. Kizi seems a little relieved to see some friendly faces.

As well as a car full of children, Lesley and Martin arrive with a car full of Halloween-themed stuff. Martin carries up a huge vat of pumpkin soup and swings into action heating it on the hob, also laying out sausage rolls, sandwiches and grapes. Lesley has lovingly carved out some pumpkins. We put candles in them. They grin amber light.

The three girls start making Halloween masks. Fagilistic helps himself to a pile of food. He sits there behind it 'barricading himself', as Martin refers to it later. Iduna chooses to emerge from the safety of the Comfort Zone, and come upstairs. Martin offers her some soup and she takes a spoon and a bowl, tasting it gingerly. She stays upstairs, much to our surprise, standing up against the wall, scanning the room, but nevertheless present among us. Olaf and Lesley have a chat. He has relaxed a little, and while he is clear he wants nothing to do with the art activity, and doesn't want to eat, he tells her about what's going on in his world. The fact that he is living in one room of an abandoned office block that had been provided to his mum as a temporary residence, and how he hopes that they will have a Christmas tree this year. That, recently, his Nan had died and also his dog. Fagilistic has begun to get restless. Once he relinquishes his plate of food, he gets up, flits downstairs, goes to the door, comes back upstairs. The task of following him falls to Joy. The Livesey Building flows in a circle. You go up one flight of stairs from the back door, cross the mezzanine, go down another flight of stairs to get to the downstairs and then exit from there to find yourself at the front door again. It means that Fagilistic, (along with - soon - other children), is able to run round and round. If you are the person to go after Fagilistic, you will loop the loop until - if - you are able to catch him. Over the course of this project, I will lose about a stone in weight. This cat and mouse exercise plays no small part. Nor does the fact that I rarely spend more than five minutes in a session sitting down.

We are very late getting to the drama. We move down with about half an hour of the workshop to run, but everyone is game. I brace myself for a collapse of the peace negotiating anxiety around different spaces, but in fact the transition is smooth and comfortable. Martin says: 'I would have thought the shift from this to the drama [would be hard] and yet it happens as if by magic.' 'One of the things that struck me' says Lesley later, 'is this amazing feeling of light and air, [as] the children move around up and down, it's just magic. Using these two spaces, it's totally unique, quite different from moving into a different classroom.' I ask everyone to make short scenes about Halloween. Although enthusiastic, the children struggle. 'it [is] a challenge to get them to come up with their

own ideas,' says Joy. Nevertheless, some fun if rudimentary scenes are created, which we present to each other in our customary end of session "sharing." In this process, flibbertigibbet Fagilistic has become focused and creates a scene in the space of two minutes. 'He was totally absorbed in what he was doing,' says Naomi later, 'and in the acting just blossomed.' Then I teach the group a fit-for-Halloween-purpose round written by Benjamin Britten: *Old Abram Brown*. I love singing more than most things in the world, but I am often disappointed by how flat a singing exercise can fall in a drama workshop. Melodies falter in dissonance and embarrassment. Children and adults alike are often too shy to raise their voices. However, this time, everyone learns the song, cheerfully and, as a group, we make a nice sound. When we are familiar with the round, we go outside and in the darkness, sing around the flickering pumpkin. I suggest that we all engage in a spooky laugh to 'terrify the people of Southwark.' Fagilistic leads the charge in this, throwing his head back and mimicking, perfectly, a horror guffaw. After that, we have our Creative Listening session around the pumpkin. A gentle silence settles around us. Fagilistic takes the opportunity to say he has enjoyed himself. Olaf says that 'I've never had a good Halloween until now.' Everyone leaves with a homemade Halloween biscuit courtesy of Annie and Zoe - ghosts and bats. Unfortunately though, our peace is fractured, as little slivers of the dark world outside elbow their way in. Iduna and Melekodium seemed to know each other from a previous school, and start sniping at Fagilistic in whispers. Olaf's sister has come to pick him up, but as they are leaving, his mother bursts into the building raging and aggressive. Her daughter did not let her know she was coming to pick Olaf up and she is fuming about this. Olaf 'became a completely different boy,' says Lesley. He crumples.

But, nevertheless, it has been a good session. Six participants, art done, drama done, good bonhomie. The team retires upstairs to soup and biscuits and talk about what we have done, have seen, have lived.

Lesley takes some children home in her car. Most children live on vast council estates and many on the sprawling Aylesbury: almost three thousand dwellings for something between seven and ten thousand people. Built between 1963 and 1977, a hotpotch of looming tower-blocks and some squat houses, stuck onto the blocks as an afterthought, a 'sixty acre wedge', one of the biggest housing complexes in Western Europe.⁴⁷⁴ Sat navs can't navigate the Aylesbury. Lesley asks Kizi which way she should turn to get to where her flat is, but Kizi doesn't know.

We have a bigger group this week. Our seven, plus two new members: Ghost- scruffy and small - and Anna. Everyone is on time. The atmosphere is buzzy. This time, Martin is on hand from the start to make food. My heart soars a little, as I watch everyone filling their plates busily. Since I started doing applied theatre with marginalised children, I have wanted to offer substantial refreshments, feeling that there is something important about "breaking bread" together. However, before this, all I have managed is a few unappealing snacks, breadsticks, carrot-sticks and the like. A solemn duty not to contribute to the rising obesity epidemic, but depressingly drab. Here is a buffet of many colours and textures: warm homemade pizza and homemade sandwiches and grapes. Yes grapes. These children are eating fruit, a small miracle. People drift over from the food table to the art table and continue to make masks.

Ghost is enthusiastic and 'sweet,' as I say later. Iduna is much happier at the beginning, joining us upstairs and chatting, risking a few grapes. She goes to the kitchen where Martin is preparing food and hovers at the door.

'I had a kitten' she says

'Really Iduna?' says Martin

⁴⁷⁴'The Fall and Rise of the Council Estate', *The Guardian*, 2016
<<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jul/13/aylesbury-estate-south-london-social-housing>> [accessed 7 August 2020].

'I hated it.'

Martin tries to keep the conversation flowing, but this is all she'll offer today in terms of conversation. When she wears her face of thunder she makes us all feel anxious, like she hates us. Fagilistic comes into the workshop from school, but the flighty energy of last week has gone. When he arrives, he brings despair into the space. His black puffer jacket is closed around his slender frame, the hood pulled over his eyes. He sits down at the food table and takes a plate, once again, a mountain of food, once again barely touching it. We approach him tentatively, ask him if he's OK, whether there is anything we can do for him, Oliver, Joy and I. But he is in a kingdom far, far away. In our feedback session, for the first time in many, we fret that we can't break through. It is a disquieting thing to be locked out of a child. The children most of us know cry when they are sad. They reach up their arms to be comforted.

Other children are raring to go though. I set them and the adults the task of making up a Theatre Troupe rhyme that I will subsequently set to music. The group, children, adults both, get swept up in a creative energy. In no time at all, they have produced a poem:

Theatre Troupe is a dream with laughter and good deeds
Every single person here has very different needs
We make cool stuff, even when we're feeling rough
So and nevertheless never the more
Theatre Troupe is here forever more.

Then we make some group frozen images of what we think our perfect "troupe" might be. I clap my hands and they are brought to life. And then - are our eyes deceiving us? - there is Fagilistic. I have been preoccupied by leading the drama exercises, so I don't see him come in, but, there he is, hood down, back straight, making a frozen image. He has his hand out in front of him as if he is some great bard. I ask afterwards, when did that happen? It was the dog, someone said. He had reached out to Jasmine and gradually came out of his shell.

In Creative Listening, as an electronic candle glows in front of us, Fagilistic takes the stone and says: 'I think everyone did very well.' At the end of the session, before we go home, Martin conducts a straw poll regarding food choices in the coming week. The front-runner: spaghetti Bolognese.

But, beneath this, there is something else that disquiets the team. An atmosphere. Whispering, giggling. It seems to be led by Melekodium this week. Emotionally she has already drifted away from us. Her eyes no longer meet ours, her smile is dulled. When she whispers and giggles with Iduna and with Afireem, clearly sniping at her brother, I ask her to stop. She steps away from me, ignores me, continues louder than before. It has been a good session, we all agree on that. But there is something we can't tie down. Not outright cruelty, not malice as such, but a discomfort. The peace, the moments of levity in making songs or freeze frames or masks is fragile. Works of glass. It won't take much for them to break. We know that.

As Oliver is laying out materials for making mini cardboard puppets, Ghost flurries in. There is usually a honeymoon period for new members, as they have a few sessions of impressive behaviour and creative endeavour, before all the fears about abandonment or bullying or danger of the night outside find their way in. Ghost's honeymoon period has been one week. Today she begins an oft repeated pattern that we might as well call The Chase To The Door. She does not take part in more than a few short seconds in an activity before she is tearing off to see who has rung the bell, and then tearing up again to see what she has missed on the mezzanine. Children cannot open the door or go into the kitchen, because these both carry health and safety risks: traffic, knives, intruders. The children know this. Ghost should know this, but she does not hear it, either the first time we ask her not to or the seventeenth. 'You find yourself saying no to her alot' says Lesley; 'I felt like a broken record' says Zoe. For health and safety reasons, therefore, we are forced to scramble after

her, whoever's to hand, whatever they're doing. Because she has arrived on her own from school, she is always the first to arrive. All the other children and the volunteers arrive in dribs and drabs. There are, therefore, lots of door-bell rings. Lots of leaping up and running. Then, when she seems to have stilled (temporary, this - the Chase to the Door will continue in many future sessions), Martin finds her in the kitchen, merrily taking handfuls of sausage rolls and slices of pizza. Lesley observes this comes from the buzz of being at Theatre Troupe. She is 'desperate for attention, for someone to talk to, she's on a high when she arrives, so excited to be coming and then she lets herself down.'

Up to this point there have been two weeks of transport misery. There are no parents to pick the children up, except Ghost's mum who has agreed with the Safeguarding teams that this should be used as an opportunity for taking responsibility to engage positively in her daughter's life. Other parents work round the clock, or they are queuing in housing offices all day, or they are attending a mandatory parenting class. We have used a system of putting children on buses by volunteers, and we texted parents to say they were on the way. But it feels risky. The Old Kent Road, which connects dangerous places to dangerous places, snaking through the territory of different gangs, and children have to get off buses and negotiate dark corners and huge rats, which commonly root around on the estates, (although, in fairness, children are used to the rats. In their lives, they carry less threat than people). Last week, one of our children got lost on her way home on the bus. She got confused about what bus stop she was supposed to get off at, and, because one of our texts didn't arrive, her mother wasn't there to meet her. I hear about it from her mother who is understandably angry, and I feel sick to my bones about all the many things that could have happened.

So, at speed, I have arranged a minibus from a local community transport scheme. Zoe has driven a minibus before and she offers to do it now. Zoe is always willing to do things like this. She always goes above and beyond to help, does things out of the goodness of her heart. At this point in the project, she does it as a volunteer. This, it turns out, will require

an exceptionally good heart. So here we are. It means we can collect children from school and take them home afterwards. Serendipitously, there is a community transport scheme on the Old Kent Road itself.

When this is all over, when I think back, I will, more than anything, remember the minibus. I remember that when good things happened on the minibus they were a surprise, I remember the sinking of my heart before every journey, and how I felt lighter as every journey finished. But this is the beginning. It has not been a promising start, because when we arrive at the community transport scheme, they have made no preparation for our arrival. There's one person in the office, who says he doesn't know anything about it. They need to get hold of the person who organised it, but he is not here. We stand awkwardly in a cold prefab building that reeks of petrol as they try to find out what's going on. Then, the bus is not ready. It has no seats. And they haven't done the check they need to do in order that we can drive it. We arrive at 2.30pm and leave at 3.10pm. We are meant to be at the first school by 3pm. When we arrive at the school at 3.30pm, the woman in the office is furious. Everyone else has gone home and Afireem sits alone in the school reception. I apologise, but her rage, though controlled in a taut throat, pursed lips and cold eyes, stabs at me. Then we go to the next school where Kizi and Anna are also waiting at reception. It is 4pm, and their school finishes at 3.30pm. I am faced with the same cold fury. And then again at the third school. My voice is light and measured as I apologise, but most people who are closest to me, know I don't have a thick skin. Bad things strike me more easily than most. I feel a low mood inching in. I want to cry. I want to go home and find some darkness to curl up in, but alas, I have a drama group to run. I have volunteers to support, I have children's behaviour to manage. When we get to Treasure House, we are an hour late. Young people's nervous energy is brittle, spilling into the workshop as they tumble off the bus.

It means the workshop atmosphere is edgy. Feeling anxious, Afireem dives straight into the Comfort Zone, prostrate in a mess of cushions and blankets. The twins niggle each other,

'rubbing each other up the wrong way,' as Naomi says. Olaf, comes in, sky high in spirits 'up in the air.' He tells Lesley that he had been off school in order to see his mother get her Parenting Skills certificate from Southwark Council. He eats no food and does no art but chats to Lesley whilst glugging an energy drink. He takes what will be his signature place on the balcony of the mezzanine, not quite with us, but not quite away from us. Iduna, in contrast, seems to have a good time this week. She is a little taller, her eyes further away from the floor. Like a 'different person,' says Joy. She chooses to stay on the mezzanine with us for the whole session. She had three portions of bolognese. After this she makes a drawing: a swirly figure in pencil, hair like ice-cream. Ghost has been up and down and up and down the stairs for a good hour, but about ten minutes before the art activity stops, she suddenly becomes focused. Oliver is making the mini cardboard puppet theatre and Ghost wants to do it too. As the drama starts, she chooses to stay upstairs and works industriously. 'I was like "Oh God, I don't know if this is going to work,"' says Oliver 'but she made something actually quite brilliant and found her own way of doing it.'

In the drama session, we create characters to go in our stories. This is done by asking a young person to draw a body outline/stick figure and add details to elucidate who and what the character might be: name, age, family, friends, home, worst fears, greatest hopes. Some get on with this. Others are stuck. Kizi can't get any words out. She's asked questions about who this person might be, but she just shakes her head. Fagilistic is doing very little. Volunteers are trying their best to nudge him on: 'Is your character male or female?' (nothing) 'How old is your character?' (nothing). He has a piece of paper and a pencil and is drawing a picture of a Nike trainer.

A minacity has bedded in. Children getting at other children, laughing at them, calling them names: fat, ugly, stupid, dumb. Your Mum. Your Dad. We try again and again to halt it, to defuse it, to squash it flat, but they don't listen to us. They don't listen in the workshop and they don't listen on the minibus. I will learn that this is a default position, to them, normal,

natural. This is the way to be us, they show us, it is a language in which we are fluent. We know its dialect. We know its inflections.

Fagilistic is back in the low place, inside his coat 'like a snail disappearing under his shell,' says Martin. But others are lighter. We make puppets for our puppet show. Little drawings of their characters, cut out and mounted onto cardboard and sticks. Annie sits with Kizi in the Safe Space. In feedback, Annie smiles at the memory. Her eyes are lit with it. Kizi is actually calmly doing something, painting, talking a bit. 'Look', she says with delight, 'I made a magic tree.' Iduna sits at the art table, chatting to Joy. The session is quite focused and each child makes something. It is not a completely settled session - some sniggering, a couple of people 'going off on one,' as Zoe expresses later, but we are getting used to the fact that settled sessions are fairly unusual events. Ghost says she had a sore knee and keeps going to Lesley, to tell her. 'She needed to be soothed,' Lesley says. But each time, despite 'having her moments' she is quicker to return to the process of industry. She does some drama this week, about a monkey character, who (after the children's storybook or the subsequent film presumably) she has called Curious George.⁴⁷⁵ She plays monkeys with Anna downstairs, and does cartwheels. Olaf has come in quite calm today. He hovers in his usual place.

Children drift downstairs to start making scenes about their characters. Fagilistic continues to sit at the table. Maybe, I say to Fagilistic and Olaf, we could make a scene together. What do you think? These boys have not spoken to each other before, not circled in the same sphere. Fagilistic looks up. Let's go upstairs, I say, It's peaceful, and they come, remarkably. These moments always feel porcelain-like, when children who do not, and do not, and do not, suddenly are there with you. You never feel you can relax into them and

⁴⁷⁵ *Curious George Classic Collection: The Seven Original Books*, ed. by H. A. Rey and Margret Rey (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1993).

take them for granted, but when they happen, they are rare and beautiful. We sit down together in the largest room right upstairs, Olaf at one end of the table, Fagilistic at the other. Fagilistic has brought his pencil drawing of a trainer. 'I wonder what character might wear that trainer?' I say, 'What do you think?' Fagilistic says quietly: a DJ. A DJ' I say, what's his name? Tom,' says Fagilistic. Then I ask Olaf what he would like to do. He has been watching a video about bullying at school. He would like to do a scene about bullying. I think about how we might combine these ideas. Olaf wonders whether the DJ could be an expert on bullying. A great idea, I say. And another expert maybe? Yes, says Olaf. He could be an expert. A professor. 'What's his name?' I ask. Professor Derek is born. Then Fagilistic begins to talk, quietly but assuredly. He addresses Olaf. I think that's a good idea. Well done for that good idea. Fagilistic has found one of his things: he likes being kind to others. This is not straightforward. There are plenty of times when he is anything but, but he has been listening to how we talk to children, singling out what they have done, praising them. When he feels able, he tries to do the same. We gather at the end to share our work. For the first time, Iduna has joined us in the audience. Fagilistic and Olaf both choose to perform. Wow, everyone says, that was so good. As they are leaving, Olaf tells Lesley about the bullying video at school. He says, my last school was the only school I wasn't bullied in.

In our feedback session, we are all really animated about that scene. About the fact that Olaf had performed. As a group, we wonder whether we can use the theme to, indirectly, address some of the peer aggression that has been happening. We decide to wind it into the story of the Snow Queen we have been working on. We will add Ice Bullies to the story, a nasty bunch of thugs sent by the Snow Queen to pinion people's hearts with icicles, which, in turn, make them cruel to others (this is a direct reference to Hans Christian Anderson's story, although in that version, the shards of ice make their way into people's hearts on their own). We decide to devise and perform a scene in which the adults play the bullies - so the children can empathise with the victim rather than the bully. That's the idea.

I know people in my profession who think pantomimes are an affront to theatre, but I love them. I love that they have songs with massive songsheets, and cross-dressing and special effects. I love the fact that they are peculiarly British, that, in the most part, everyone knows its audience participation tropes: 'Oh no she hasn't', 'It's behind you.' But of course, most of all I love pantos because I was in one. I was a firefly.

Tonight, Treasure House Youth Troupe are going to the Pantomime, Mother Goose, at Wilton's Music Hall. We start the evening at Treasure House, where we have food. Iduna is not with us to start with because she's been in court with her mother to hear whether or not she will be taken into care. But her mother did call me a couple of nights previously, to say: would it be OK that she brought Iduna to the panto in East London so she didn't miss it? I found this very moving, that, perhaps, on the most stressful day of their year, her mum would entertain the idea of tearing across London so Iduna might not miss seeing the show with us. In the event, because the panto doesn't start until 7.30pm, and we are going to leave later than normal, she is in time to come with us from Peckham. Iduna arrives agitated though because, although the hearing has resulted in her not being taken into care, it's clear the experience has been unsettling. Joy stays by her side. This is also the first week Elsa joins us. Elsa is from Iduna's school, an alternative education provider for girls excluded from mainstream. Elsa is only thirteen but she is very tall and maturely developed and easily looks sixteen. She arrives off the minibus on her own, and stays downstairs with Jasmine, asking her to 'give a paw' in return for treats. She is like an eight year old. When Iduna turns up, however, she becomes restless, domineering, sweetness vanishes, a scary energy filling up the room. How sad, I think, and have often thought, these alter-egos such children must manage. Girls who need to be little, but in situations of threat are forced to be big and fierce. The adults find Elsa threatening, and there are, for the rest of our engagement with her, very few glimpses of the little girl again. Unfortunately, Martin, Lesley and Naomi are unable to come with us to the panto, and Annie is ill, which makes us

short on numbers. Tension bubbles up as soon as we get onto the minibus. Mild “banter” begins. Joy and I, the only two adults in the bus, try to somehow manage the clamour. We would have spaced them out, had adults between them, but there are only two of us. Afireem, Melekodium, Fagilistic and Elsa shout a lot. We arrive. I am flustered, which is par for the course on any trip with young people. Fortunately, for us and for the paying audience, we are sitting removed from the main auditorium, almost exclusively having the balcony to ourselves. The balcony is a horseshoe, with a stage at the open end. Our seats are split on either side of that horseshoe. Ghost, Anna, Kizi, and Afireem sat on one side with Zoe. Fagilistic, Elsa, Iduna and Melekodium sat with me and Joy on the other side.

I discover that there is another reason I love panto. The audience is allowed to make noise throughout. Given the sound effects and the songs, it really doesn’t matter too much if people interrupt proceedings. I’m guessing that it is useful to apply this to three year olds who may struggle to sit through a show in silence, but today it is a group of ten to fourteen year olds who bay from the top of the theatre. This is a little unfair: the children sitting with Zoe are settled and appropriately enjoying the play, shouting out when shouting out is required. But on mine and Joy’s side, the children are not watching the panto at all. They are pushing and shoving and antagonising each other. Next to me Fagilistic is restless. I have told the children that they can all have an ice-cream in the interval. Fagilistic doesn’t know what an interval is, but knows he wants his ice-cream. When will I get my ice-cream? he asks me as the show is starting up. In the interval I say. When’s that? he says. About half way through the play, I say. Ten minutes later he asks me whether it’s the interval yet. You’ll know it’s the interval, I say because the lights will come up and nobody will be on the stage. Thus follows an ongoing dialogue between us at roughly ten minute intervals:

FAGILISTIC Is it time to get my ice cream now?
ME Is there someone on the stage?
FAGILISTIC Yes
ME Then it’s not time to get your ice cream.

Most of the second half is far worse than the first. As well as bellowing at each other, they stand up and push. Stop, we say, please stop! Please stop right now, *right* now! They don't stop. Fagilistic and Elsa are engaging in spirited rough play, wavering perilously over the balcony. I tell Fagilistic he has to move away from Elsa, to sit on the other side of me. He won't, so I have to force myself into the seat he is sitting, elbowing him next to Joy. This is the opposite way I would normally work with children. A practice of safe touch and an awareness of people's bodies are all the more important in working with trauma-survivors. Nevertheless, I calculate, better to employ this technique than cope with the injury or death that may result from no intervention. He can't push or poke Elsa anymore, but only because I stand up as a human shield between them. With all my might, I will the panto to end, so we can get out and end this horror, which plays out in the dusky heights of the auditorium.

As is customary, near the end, the Dame asks for children to come up onto the stage. Bizarrely - the show is still in preview - only one little girl is in the audience. The Dame is obviously thrown by this. For all panto's flexibility, this is obviously a set piece that requires more than a shy eight year old to fill a ten minute slot of witty repartee. Then I surprise myself. Though I am in a state of despair, the side of me that loves panto kicks in. We have children. They are not sweet six and seven year-olds, but children nonetheless. Children here, I shout, waving over the balcony and, like lightning, I hurry members of the Treasure House Youth Troupe down the stairs and to the stage. Not everyone comes, but a good number do. I guide them up the steps and onto the stage. First Anna and Afireem. Then Ghost. The usher implores: Just the little ones. I ignore her. Fagilistic and Mel take the stage. The Dame is having a good time with our children. There's banter about the mean streets of Peckham, they answer her questions, she joshes some more. The audience begins to laugh a lot. Then Fagilistic begins to act out a scene from *The Wilds of Peckham*, a slapstick race away from zombies. The Dame is laughing herself now, the audience is roaring. The set piece finishes and the children are ushered from the stage with sweets. Fagilistic, so bitten by anxiety and agitation just moments before, appears on a public stage

in front of hundreds of people and brings the house down. 'leaving [the] daily world...in transportation, one is "moved" or "touched" (apt metaphors), and then is dropped off about where he or she entered.'⁴⁷⁶ As we all pour out of the theatre, audience members pass by us. That was brilliant, they say. It was fantastic.

But though it should be held and cherished, that moment from that boy, it fizzles out once the reality of the minibus journey and of home comes to settle. It is a horrific journey back, taking two and a half hours, as we drop each of them at their homes. Kizi is bullied, and although others strongly encourage it, it is Fagilistic who leads. He shouts abuse at her the whole way, mostly 'Fat' and 'Ugly'. Melekodium laughs her dangerous laugh, Elsa screams. Zoe keeps stopping the minibus because the noise level and the fact children have taken off their seatbelts make continuing unsafe. Kizi is frozen in the front seat. We tell Kizi they are stupid, that it is untrue, but our words are so impotent in the circumstances. Fagilistic is so frenzied in this attack, it strikes me that he is out of control and probably can't help himself. But the effect is, of course, toxic. By the end of this long, brutal journey, Fagilistic is excluded from the group for one week. Bullying is the one "zero tolerance" policy we have.

We get back to the transport depot just before midnight. Zoe is in a state of shock. I am in a state of shock. Also I haven't eaten since breakfast. I get a take-away off the Old Kent Road, and eat it on the bus home. But I feel bleak. I wonder: Why Do I Ever?

Chaos follows chaos. We arrive next week and, at first, it is a good start. 'Ironically, everyone came in really brightly,' says Naomi, 'everyone was eating and not holding back and some of the people who are a lot more wary were right in there, and people were doing stuff, it felt like it was a lot more upbeat at the beginning and everyone was happy to be there.' But then Fagilistic arrives. He is, of course, not meant to be here, but he says he has

⁴⁷⁶ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd edn, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p 72.

come to apologise to Kizi. He goes downstairs and finds Kizi and apologises to her. I am not there, but Zoe says that it sounds genuine. He is quiet and humble. Kizi accepts his apology. However, when he returns upstairs, I make a mistake. I decide that - to send a message that bullying is not OK, that we take it seriously - that the exclusion must still stand. It is a mistake because I don't acknowledge what Fagilistic is doing by coming back and apologising. I don't see that he is saying to us: I want to show you I'm sorry. I want to show you that this place is very important to me. He's come on his own and he's taken the risk.

So it is really unsurprising that everything goes completely wrong. I have opened a tinderbox. We try to send Fagilistic home, but we can't get an answer from his aunt, so we don't know whether or not there is someone to receive him. So we have to keep him at the workshop, among us but not with us. And he *is* among us. He forces himself into all the spaces, shouting, running all around, throwing items of stationery from the balcony. And he causes the domino effect. Those 'who usually managed the sessions quite well, were drawn into difficult behaviour, and those who had previously been on the borderline, went over the edge,' says Naomi.

Oliver is disturbed, and upset: this has strayed so far from the protected space of the art therapy room: 'It seemed very uncontained from the outset, they weren't really able to be in a safe space to deal reflexively with conversations,' he says. Oliver is uncomfortable in the disciplinarian role, but he has to reprimand Fagilistic when he is (emotionally at least) destroying everything in his wake. 'I don't know if I actually raised my voice' he says, 'I corrected him and it whipped him up.' Elsa, and Melekodium speak loudly, jostle each other, ignore us. Joy feels helpless. 'I felt I fell into a role,' she says later. 'I did feel like - they're not even listening. Why do I tell them they need to be quiet? They're not listening to me, they're clearly not listening to me, and I continue to keep trying to get that message across and be "No. You need to be quiet."'

Iduna does her best to cope with this fraying of safety, but it is hard, especially as Elsa is riled up and physically unwieldy, like an uncontrolled spinning top, knocking into people. In snatched moments, Iduna manages to be calm and present. 'I can see she is trying,' says Joy 'when I ask her to stop.' She sits at the art table. At one point she stomps downstairs then comes back. She makes a picture, which is full of colour and texture. We all comment on it. 'That's really special' says Oliver. In response, she sticks her hand in the black paint pot, and 'daubs it all over it,' as Martin puts it. The destruction of the beautiful. Her beautiful. How hard must it be to be terrified by the praise and positive reinforcement of others. Although, Oliver notes later, this is not an entirely futile act. From a therapeutic standpoint, '[it] was a fine line, but actually she was doing something quite enjoyable and it's good that she is able to do what she wants: she was feeling quite uncomfortable [before] and it was pleasurable.' Martin observes, 'actually the final effect was rather good.' 'Yeah it is!' agrees Oliver, 'it would be a great backdrop.'

Melekodium seems to have been unsettled by the previous week. We ask her to be quiet, so she can hear us (over and over again), but she deliberately raises her voice to talk over us. She is 'wall eyed, says Annie.' She moves close to people, into their personal space, and is intimidating. When challenged again she becomes furious and storms out of the building. She does come back quickly when asked though. Olaf does not cope well with the mayhem. He becomes hugely distressed and starts self-soothing by rocking back and forth. He is at the top of the stairs, and rolls down a couple. Naomi asks him to stop, but instead he plants himself in a chair and, in it, tries 'to ski' down the stairs. Naomi says, 'you can't do this, I need to protect the furniture at Treasure House.' But he doesn't hear it, and so Naomi forces her full weight against the chair to stop it going any further. 'If you keep doing this, we'll need to call your mum and you'll need to go home.' He pauses: 'I don't want to go home,' he says. I arrive and he gets up off the chair when I ask him to, but then he decides to slither down the bannister instead. At the bottom, he collapses into a beanbag and is calm for a little while, but then, agitated again, he walks out of the door and stands with his

toes off the edge of the pavement. Lorries roar past. He comes in and goes out three more times.

However, astonishingly, in the gaps between pandemonium, there is a little magic. Martin tells an African Folk tale, *Uncle Bouki's Wow*, in the space downstairs. Kizi, Anna, Ghost and Afireem sit on the floor and listen intently. 'I had no expectation that people would listen to my story, so I was delighted about that,' says Martin. 'You could have heard a pin drop.' says Lesley. 'It was actually the perfect thing then, part of the healing process,' says Oliver, 'it's kind of being held.' 'Amongst the mele there were other shining lights,' says Martin. Zoe says Afireem has created 'a lovely song.'

Despite the Fagilisitc debacle, Kizi has a good week. At the very start she is anxious about eating, maybe because he is sitting at the food table, but Naomi makes her a plate of food so she can have it later. She works with Naomi to create a whole scene and performs it at the end. She is beaming. So proud of herself. Oliver observes:

Kizi made something in a really confident way and afterwards [was] looking really proud. In the middle of everything she was doing some really creative work. She's very locked in and unable to be creative and playful and just shuts down...the fact [this week] she was able to be a creative child in a really useful way, using her creative intelligence and being playful and seeing her being really pleased with herself, that was great.

Although she still engages in Chase To The Door, Ghost is able to focus a little more this week, despite the tumult around her. Zoe sits with her and makes her monkey drawings, which Ghost colours in and makes into puppets. She is able to keep coming back to the task even when she runs away. Lesley is away for jury service, or she was meant to be, but she finishes early and comes to the session after all. We often think the children don't care about who is or isn't in the room, but Ghost is so excited about this. Oh! You weren't gonna come! she cries I'm gonna tell Martin you've come! She races up the stairs to find Martin. 'It was positively romantic' says Martin, 'she came up and said "there's someone special

here to see you.” At the end of the session, her mother arrives a little earlier. I get a chance to talk to her while Ghost is occupied elsewhere, in a rare period of focus. I ask whether she is coming to the show and she says, ‘Believe me, I’m not going to be able to miss it! We were at her appointment at CAMHS, and she went straight up to the desk and said: “I can’t have an appointment on Mondays. It’s my drama on Mondays.”’ Later I say in feedback: ‘I know from her referral that her parents barely ever praise her or see her in a positive light.’ This felt positive.

Then it is time to go home. Surprisingly on the minibus, Olaf seems fine. He is chatty and smiley. Meanwhile though, in other transport news, things are not so sanguine. Lesley sets off to take the siblings and Kizi home. Fagilistic’s extreme behaviour is not a good fit for the confined space of the car, and he begins to engage in exactly the same behaviour that he had, but two hours ago, sincerely apologised for. Lesley says: ‘It was horrible, with three of them in the back, screaming and shouting and bad mouthing Kizi, who was stuck between Fagilistic and Melekodium in the back. I couldn’t hear what was happening, but Afireem suddenly said that they were being horrible to Kizi.’ Lesley stops the car and asks them to get out to go with Oliver back into the building, but they refuse, ‘screaming and shouting and you know, answering me back.’ Eventually, after a lot of this, they are persuaded back into the building (with their sister), as Lesley takes Kizi home. Fagilistic is ‘really angry,’ Oliver notes later. He engages in loud and uncontrolled behaviour. However, Naomi and Oliver facilitated him to calm down, by letting them play the keyboard and being by his side. He does eventually respond to this.

The feedback is particularly long this week, as we all reel from the session and try and unpick it. There is lots of frustration, a little despair. We feel like we are not sure how to cope with anything, that progress is slow and faltering. We recognise the trip the week before had raised anxiety and that this spilled over into the workshop, but we also recognise what it feels like to be out of control. However, this marvellous group of adults are tenacious and compassionate. We fret but we also celebrate. Despite the most grim of

situations in the car, Lesley is more animated about what happens later. On returning to the car:

I couldn't believe it...I came back and I took them back and they were quiet, niggling each other but not as much as they might have but just as we got to [their home], Afireem said: "Fagilistic is apologising to you" and Fagilistic said "I'm sorry for what happened" and Melekodium said "We're very sorry too." And they genuinely were, with quiet voices but they wanted to be heard, then they said, 'we're really looking forward to next week.'

Others join her, wondering at this moment:

Oliver And Fagilistic was really angry when he came back in. It's quite something to be able to go from there to apologise.

Lesley Yes! Absolutely, absolutely, it's so much effort to do that. It's *really* hard

Naomi It also shows they value you [they find] a way back in

Lesley It's a huge effort to do that then.

After what we have just experienced, it would be understandable if these people ran into the darkness of that urban night and never returned. But they hold candles to the children and find the good. We are also able to laugh. Even me.

Emily You know what I did. I couldn't admit it to you because I knew you would be so disappointed in me, Oliver.

Laughter

Oliver What did you do?!

Emily After I left you, I was starving. I hadn't had anything to eat since really. I had a bit at the Theatre Troupe but really since breakfast, and it was really late and I was like, there's a twenty four hours McDonalds.

Laughter

Emily And I went in and I got a whole thing and I sat at the bus stop in the freezing cold and it was the best meal I've had in the whole year.

Zoe Well I noticed about four doors up, as I arrived at the depot at 12.30am, there's a breakfast place that does waffles, pancakes and cocktails. I was tempted.

Laughter

Oliver Wow!

Naomi I was going to say, the other one down there, but it has had its licence taken away because of a stabbing.

Zoe Ah the old Kent Road!

PERFORMANCE ONE

It is a bitterly cold evening and you can see your breath. Treasure House is toasty. Children scramble off the minibus in a bundle of coats, scarves and hats. Emily, where's my costume? Emily, when's my social worker coming? Emily, where's my costume? Emily, do I have to wear this hat? Emily, where's my costume? I'm pulled hither and thither up and down the stairs at least fifty times.

'Personally' said Naomi, at the weary conclusion of last week's session, 'I think, in my experience, what often happens after a week like this, is that we'll have a really brilliant week the next week.' 'Shall we take bets on that?' I say. The idea was that last week, we would rehearse material for this little show, perhaps doing a run of the whole evening, at least finishing scenes that were half started (or not started at all). This of course did not happen. So we are underprepared to say the least. But Naomi, having worked with young people with complex needs for some years, is wise. Around the edges of the performance there is a fair amount of chaos, understandably as anxiety quickens. The idea that there is time for a run through is truly ridiculous. But, as luck would have it, we are staging two performances. One for an invited group of professionals and the other for family and

friends. It means that we can couch the one for professionals - one therapist and two social workers - as a 'work in progress', which doubles up as a dress rehearsal. They are a warm group of people, and respond with loving delight at our scratchy, patchy theatrical offering: a promenade performance that winds up and down in the building, and also into the frosty garden. Ghost, in particular, is ecstatic that her social worker is there. Then, in the gap between this performance and the next, there is a little more mayhem, but, unlike the previous week, it is good natured. Olaf and Fagilistic are only just in control, rushing around and rolling on the floor beforehand, but quite cheerfully. We are a cast member down, and Ghost asks if she can play the part. I'm a little sceptical given Ghost has not managed more than a cartwheel for her monkey character, Curious George, but I give the go-ahead. Surprisingly in the cramped dressing room space, entirely under their own volition, the girls re-devise the scene. This is all happening as the audience is ushered onto the mezzanine to wait for the show to begin. They are served non-alcoholic mulled wine by Martin. I have put on Christmas choir music very loud, which is quite successful at drowning out downstairs' din.

The atmosphere feels cosy and buzzy. The children and the adults pull out all the stops. We begin with a puppet show in our mini-puppet theatre. Iduna has not really produced much more than that pencil drawing of the person with ice-cream hair. Oliver has perfectly scaled it down, and I have given the character a name: Ice-cream Man, a cheery comedian, who appears half-way up the mountain on the journey to the Snow Queen. Iduna is offered the chance to be a puppeteer, and she takes this up. Her mother has come straight from a prize-giving ceremony for parenting classes on the other side of Southwark. She arrives with minutes to spare. In fact, almost all young people have someone coming from their family to see them. Ghost's brand-new, barely devised scene runs beautifully. Olaf and Fagilistic perform well as DJ Tom and Professor Derek in their improvised chat show. The play finishes with the whole cast together, in slow motion, passing a ball of glowing white light (a disco ball re-appropriated) from one to the other, as if the Angel Gabriel (Olaf's other character) has blessed all. Then we sing Let it Go from the animated movie *Frozen* (I

can never resist a good pop-culture melody). The audience join in. Then I talk to the audience about the show and the award ceremony to come and Ghost keeps interrupting me to ask whether her four year old sister can come on stage, and whether she can get a certificate. After the award ceremony, everyone is invited to a meal of pizza from a local pizza outlet.

After this event, as we all break up for Christmas. I write to volunteers in a thank you letter:

When we started Theatre Troupe, central to its ideology was a creative family, a labour of theatre and love, coming together in the transcendence that theatre and performance can bring. The “magic” of theatre brought to those who need magic in their lives more than anyone. I’ve had lots of different times over the years when there have been moments of this, but I don’t think I’ve seen it realised so profoundly in the way it was on Monday 19th December. No doubt there will be all sorts of difficulties still to face, but as the old adage has it: there may be trouble ahead but while there’s music and moonlight (well, street light) and Theatre Troupe, we can face the music and dance!!!

Little do I know.

SPRING

It is bitterly, achingly cold when we meet for the first time after the Christmas holidays. Frost mingles with soot on the cars outside Treasure House, the air crackles with winter. We are bundled in our gloves and Christmas knits. This year furry pom poms are the rage, topping and tailing scarves, wafting atop beanies. And red is the colour. Warm burgundy red. We are glad to be back, greeting each other, the volunteers from last year and new ones. Three undergraduate students from Queen Mary University London who I have been teaching, Charlie, Rachel and Blanka have arrived. They are as bright as the hats and coats and gloves they wear. A rosy energy. They are welcomed by our friendly bunch. And our

friendly bunch welcome each other back. You're gluttons for punishment, I say. Nah, they say we love it. I am relaxed as we are only expecting four children, an ease in for new members. No minibus, fewer children. I am feeling rosy too. Perhaps that's why none of us notice that there is a reason for the crackles in the air, why none of us turn our ears to hear what they say. If we had, then we would have known: the ice bullies have come.

Kristoff and Sven arrive with their two teachers. Sven is small, slight and quick. He's known to be a talented footballer and you can see this about him, he bounces everywhere on his toes, rounds corners, like he is a whisk frothing up an egg. He is quite different from his schoolmate Kristoff who is solid, with a more brooding energy. They come in and take off their bags and their coats. They are both shy, their teachers are both smiley, willing them to do well, two boys who most of the time do no such thing. They come up and tentatively help themselves to a plate of food, then sit down at the art table and start to do some colouring. We stand back with the teachers. One of them whispers to me, of Kristoff, he *never* normally will eat in front of people.

Then Kizi and Anna arrive. I have asked Anna back because she won the kindness award last term, and I thought she could be a good mentor. It would be an empowering step, I thought. I've invited Kizi back too, to be with her. But they are reticent, they don't want to be here. Kizi lingers with her bag and her coat. It surprises me. But maybe they have sensed in the air what we did not, the dullness of adults to the needs of children. They come up in the end, and eye the new boys warily.

When the art is done, we move downstairs for some drama games. By this time Joel and Remz, our Peer Inspirers, arrive. They are not rosy in the same way as the other new volunteers, but they are way cool. I've recruited them from Rewrite's youth theatre where they used to be participants and are now mentors, so they're excellent role models. They are seventeen and nineteen. Joel and Remz improvise effortlessly, making us all guffaw and clap our hands. They are both good at physical theatre. This spurs the little boys on,

who join in. Again, hushed wonder from their teachers: they *never* usually can do anything with other children. Well pleased with their progress the teachers head off. 'New people coming into the space and doing so really brilliantly was actually great,' says Oliver. 'I really loved seeing everyone get comfortable with each other, playing the games. 'I could just see everyone's personalities shine through and just being really easy with each other,' says Blanka. 'I think they blended in and settled in really nicely, and were really engaged.' says Joy.

Which is why what happened at the end of the session surprises and shocks all of us. As we only have a small number of children, Lesley is taking them all home. They are all in the car, but Kristoff, who is in the front of the car, turns around and starts shouting about Kizi, saying she is fat. Over and over and over again. She's the fat, fat, fat one (which strikes us as odd considering he is just as large as her, if not a little more so). Sven giggles and shrieks. After Lesley tells him to stop and he has not stopped, she tells them to get out. I didn't start it, rages Kristoff, dark scowling face. I don't care who started it, says Lesley.

In the end she manages to get them home, but when we gather for feedback, our merriment, our excitement at the success of the session, has drained away. I feel lead sink inside me. We wait for Lesley and try to understand things, to try and understand anything. When Lesley returns, she says:

They were very over-hyped and excited coming out of the session, and not entirely in control of themselves. But it was totally unprecedented, I couldn't believe that it was happening *again*, they were just different boys.

And she says what we are all thinking 'What *is* it about Kizi?' 'It was really, really bad' says Charlie 'I don't get what it is about human nature, it's the ones who are easy to make them feel terrible, which are the ones who are targeted.' I think about human nature and I want to cry. Theatre Troupe is meant to be about the light-giving qualities of empathy. Any light

that came in with the children is now snuffed out. Kizi's mother calls me when Kizi gets home. She has been crying and saying she doesn't want to come back.

I have to exclude the boys - that is the Theatre Troupe golden rule after all - so I talk to their teacher. Their teacher agrees it is not acceptable, but she also tells me that when she asked them about it, they told her that the girls had kicked and pushed them before they got in the car. She thinks they're telling the truth. I mention it to the team. Joy says that the boys also told her the girls had been kicking them and pushing them before they got in the car. I ask Kizi and Anna the following week, and they are incredulous. No, It Was Not Us! They seem so innocent, so sincere.

From last term, we have the first bit of the Snow Queen under our belt. The scene is set. Lucy and Taylor, having escaped from their respective Child Looked After care arrangements, are about to embark on their journeys to find Optimistic Land. On their way, they will encounter a series of strange lands, and, in them, a series of quirky characters. Over the next few weeks, therefore, we begin to make up these lands. Oliver sets up a 3D map/landscape making activity, in which each child can scape their own land in a shoebox, with paint and tissue and large clumps of glue. In tandem, we make tableaux to show what it is like to be in these brave new worlds.

In these first few weeks of the new year, the weather of the workshop is settled with some isolated bouts of high pressure. Children mostly come in calm. They smile mildly, they make territories and topography. The New World grows. Afireem makes a land called Confusiasticality. There are people lost in it, people who you love who are there but you can't find them. Who are you in this land? I ask her. I am the Queen of Confusiasticality, who has lost her father, Afireem says. Elsa's land is called the Kingdom of Jollof Rice. Everything in the kingdom is made of jollof rice, the trees, the rivers, the flowers. Another Queen lives here, and she loves Jollof rice, but she hates mushrooms. Other children

struggle more: Ghost, Fagilistic, Iduna, Olaf. Iduna has drawn back into herself. She's back in the Comfort Zone and back on her phone. Her eyes once again fixed on the ground.

Whilst some art and drama is happening, there is that threat in the workshop again. Just hints of it, and it's hard to grasp. If you put out your hand to catch it, it will wisp away and you will open your fist to find your palm empty. Ghost snipes at Olaf, although it's gone before anyone has the chance to challenge it. And people are sensing the underhand nature of some of the bullying: sly looks, kicks. It is difficult to manage because we don't see it, or only half see it, and when we reprimand someone, they say: I didn't. It wasn't me! Mock outrage. Children cluster into cliques, like closed fists. There's something about Elsa and Melekodium too. Together they are powerful. They have the height to tower over younger children, and they both have force. Melekodium in particular has this loud harsh laugh that makes something catch inside me, some distant memory of being hurt by the sound of a laugh like that. It is empty and cold and it is deliberately crafted and nurtured to do injury.

Each week it seems the atmosphere becomes sharper. We cut ourselves on it. Little cuts, not that serious, but they are the kind of cuts that hurt more than they should. It's this constant sputtering current of cruelty we can't understand. How pauses will be filled with it, how, suddenly, in the middle of a drama exercise there are looks and whispers, and sniggering. At times, I find myself confidently being a professional, steering the energy of the work, apparently, with assured expertise. Resting back for a moment, leaving a pause for a freeze frame, or an instant impro scene. Suddenly I realise with shock that I am not in that confident professional place at all, but in a field of landmines, and that I can't get off because these looks and whispering and sniggering are all around me. This isn't the world we thought we adults had finally found ourselves in, where empathy is a given, where gestures of kindness are just expected. All of us, in these moments, however old we are,

are back in the school playground. But we don't like to be there, so, as sensible reasoning adults, we decide to turn to the thing that all of us have the greatest faith in - theatre. Maybe we could use the drama, Joy says. We could present a scene of bullying and ask them to reflect on it. We could do Forum Theatre, Annie says. I have my misgivings about Forum Theatre, but since nothing I hold dear about drama processes works in this group, and if anything can reach out to them and make them understand how much it hurts to be the victim, then theatre is it. Because theatre allows us to step into each other's shoes. Joy and Annie and Charlie come in early the next week to get the piece of theatre made.

Then, things fall apart. The centre does not hold. It is a blustery February day. Ghost's hair is bird-nest like. The little boys blow in energy all awry. This, at first, makes us roll our eyes in good humour. They have already caused a mini-safeguarding crisis since they were not at school when we went to pick them up in the minibus, which has resulted in a delay while we try to call parents and aunts, while the school staff run up and down the tall narrow staircases that typify Victorian-build primary schools in London, dipping in and out of classrooms to see if they are hiding. However, it is rather nice that they've chosen to come. They could be over the road at KFC after all.

Safe Space is a little scattered, energy wise, but it goes smoothly enough. Then, we play *Grandmother's Footsteps with Keys*. It's one of those derivations of the classic children's game that I've picked up on my Applied Theatre travels, from some wise colleague I have met along the way. It suits groups who may have "challenging" behaviour because it removes the individual competitive element and encourages team-work. Behind Grandma is a set of keys that the whole group together must get back to the start by subterfuge. Each time Grandma turns round, she has to guess who's holding the keys. If she guesses right at any point she wins. If the keys get back to the beginning, the group wins. But unfortunately, as Remz later points out, with our group if someone is caught with the keys

in their hand, 'they put the blame on them.' So then I move onto *Park Bench*. But the failure of Grandmother's footsteps has torn a hole in the fabric of the workshop. The energy dives in head first. Several young people are refusing to take part. Knees hurt or legs hurt or arms hurt. The Comfort Zone becomes crowded with lolling bodies. It is a good thing that people can hide a little if they're feeling anxious, but then, suddenly there are no participants at all. Or at least there are some, but they're the ones who are peppering the activities I am trying to run with name calling. Volunteers try to sit one adult to one child in the circle, but this has little effect as children reach across each other to shove or stare at each other.

So, I decide that it may be a good time for Joy, Charlie and Blanka to perform the scene about bullying, and for us to facilitate a conversation that needs to be had *to deal with this once and for all*. The scene is good. It is designed to appeal to them, set it in a classroom. Joy is the bully and Annie is the bullied. But they're not having it. They're wise to this well-meaning thing adults do, showing them *theatre* to change their hearts and minds. They've seen it when visiting Theatre in Education companies come in with their earnest attempts to reach out to young people. The children laugh at us. Then they start laughing at each other. Melekodium laughs and laughs, hard and grating. From Elsa, there is 'an explosion at the end' as Rachel puts in, in which she begins to hurl abuse at Fagilistic. Fagilistic swings at Elsa. The children bay at each other, and ignore us. We try to stop them running into each other, or running away from us. We try to get them on the minibus. Zoe waits in the loading bay for forty minutes, a loading bay you can only wait in for twenty minutes before you get a hefty parking fine. The volunteers manage to get everyone on the bus, and although no-one is physically hurt, it is emotionally bruising.

Meanwhile, in the mele, I have forgotten to tell Kristoff about the minibus. We are, by now, into a system of highly supported taxi travel for some children and highly supported minibus travel for others. Usually Kristoff goes home in the taxi with Sven, but his mum has texted me another address in another part of Southwark, where another relative lives and

he has to go on the minibus instead. This is not popular, to say the least. We do manage to get him on the bus, but he is furious, and his eyes flash with rage but also something else beneath, something like hurt. I have no time to attend to it though, to really even think about it, because now Kristoff is threatening to jump off the minibus. He dives towards the handles and tries to pull at them. I'm gonna jump off, he says. Luckily he doesn't pursue this. Despite me being there, he's not a light boy and it would be quite hard to wrestle him away from the door and stop him tumbling into one of Southwark's fast roads.

We are low at the end when we meet for tea and pizza but Lesley and Oliver try to reassure us. It's to be expected because of the 'existing relational difficulties in their lives,' says Oliver. 'Even small steps are significant achievements,' says Lesley. But they are so small they are barely visible. And it's so much effort to lean in, to peer, to screw up your eyes and make out the little tiny footprints, half rubbed out anyway.

It is a dark year so far, outside under heavy clouds like black eyes, and pelting rain. Before the spring term is up, it often feels bleak inside the workshop space, despite the appearance of light and air. But March finally brings a little warmth.

On the minibus, today, for example, we start at Iduna and Elsa's school. When I arrive, they are being shouted at by a teacher and Elsa storms out. I am on tenterhooks, but Iduna is actually quite peaceful. I tell her that Joy is absent today - Joy is her rock - and I brace myself for her potential flip out, but she doesn't, she calmly says, OK. On the way, I ask her if she would like to make a piece of art. Yep, she says. When she arrives, for the first time proper, Iduna is at the art table. In front of her is a clean piece of A3 paper that Oliver has given her. Shall I describe this character we're making? She nods and Oliver describes it. She asks me then, do you want me to devise the body to go with the wings?

Elsa then arrives separately. She has a piece of art she has done at school, a piece of pottery with bright graffiti letters across it. She cradles it like it is a wounded bird. I see a flash of that little girl again, so proud and protective of her achievement. For a moment, she is vulnerable. I recognise that while she has it to take home, and this is her excuse for bringing it, she also wants us, especially Oliver, to see it. I go and get him and he comes down and praises it, suitably impressed, picking out its qualities with an artist's eye. She doesn't smile or look at him, but she doesn't sabotage the moment, or push him away either. She asks Lesley to keep it safe in the Comfort Zone. We spread the word of this piece of art and lots of adults go to the Comfort Zone to see it, and they praise her. 'I think she came to show us that artwork.' says Lesley. She has a good week. Not consistently, but definitely. For some of the time she sits with Rachel, relaxed and engaged. 'We had a nice conversation.' says Rachel. However, she finds it hard to appreciate others' work. When children share scenes at the end, she is disruptive. But, as we all acknowledge gleefully afterwards, Iduna shares her art work with the group for the first time. Oliver describes that as 'very significant.' Kristoff comes in and stays calm for a sliver of time, but as the activities start, he won't do anything. He sets his jaw, he leans against the wall. He refuses to follow Remz upstairs for the art activity, he refuses to budge for the drama. It is probably not helped by the fact that Sven has edged himself away from Kristoff, moving more into the drama activities as he - and we - see his talent for comedy emerging. He improvises with aplomb during *Park Bench*. 'What a little star he is,' says Oliver, 'a funny guy.' Kristoff watches scowling. His eyes say he is hurt by this betrayal. Sven has gone over to the light side.

Creative Listening is 'quiet and reflective.' At the end of Creative Listening, Elsa reflects, 'I like the way everyone worked together. I like it when it's quiet.' A little oxymoronic, I note, given that much of the noise is her loud and consistent vocality. Still, perhaps she's saying something about the different her. The one that needs peace in her head to take steps forward. The one she wishes could be quiet.

And yet and yet. Later in March there are some especially soul-destroying moments. It seems like winter, inside and outside this workshop, is back. The bullying continues unabated. Now they are using the food table as a battlefield. They refuse to take part in any of the activities we offer. None at all, not drama, not art. But they gather round the buffet, neck blackberry squash, and snigger and snipe and shout. Elsa and Melekodium are at the heart of this. That laugh. Ghost calls Olaf names, Sven calls Anna names.

On the surface of it, Kizi is now a model student. Relaxed and chatty. But, we are sensing that Kizi the bully, the manipulator, is really real, like the children tell us she is, but that we never catch because she is, with us, sweetness and light, the victim, the wronged. We still don't see or hear anything obvious, but volunteers see her whispering and giving threatening looks. She also pushes Sven, we are told by Kristoff. We confront her about it but she is wide eyed in earnest.

Afireem, who has hitherto been calm, friendly and kind, and has left her older siblings to rabble rouse, is now drawn into their midst. In one terrible week towards the end of the month, Ghost becomes the target of other children's abuse. 'They all ganged up on Ghost, Afireem, Melekodium and Elsa,' says Charlie. Ghost leaves the room crying and they continue to target her, calling her 'retarded.'

We try our futile attempts at grasping it, but one of the things we find so hard is that when we think we hear something and challenge it we either get the standard 'I didn't' but also that it's just (and I never think of this word lightly again) "banter." In one particular instance, we challenge Melekodium for some biting things she is saying to Ghost and she says: It's banter. That's what young people do. Normal. Just what you do if you are a young person surviving in the world.

By the end of the month, we have lost Olaf. I go round to the tiny office unit that he and his mother have been allocated by the council while she fights her being made 'intentionally homeless' by the courts.⁴⁷⁷ I talk to him, I talk to his mum, who is rough and tough and has a wicked sense of humour and an intense sense of (fully warranted) injustice. She wants to do right by Olaf, but he won't go to school and she's being threatened by legal action because of it. He won't leave this little room with its low stucco ceilings and a heat so searing, bottled up behind double glazed windows, that I nearly pass out. His mum says she has had money stolen from an ex, so he can't open the door and he can't open the windows in case the ex comes back, so he sits just playing video games. We both try to convince him and he does come once more, but then there is an incident with Kristoff, who bullies him and mild-mannered, gentle Olaf turns into a terrifying snarling animal. He won't come back after that, and I can't say I blame him.

Probably because of the bullying and the brittle mood it brings to everything, participation has taken a nosedive:

1. There are now a remarkable number of sore knees and sore ankles that mean it is impossible to take part in any kind of drama exercise
2. The Comfort Zone becomes the Ennui Zone. It becomes so crowded with non-participants that there are more people in the box of a room, than there are in the rest of the building
3. Children's bodies become devoid of bones. Ask them to stand up and they droop lower in their chairs. I caaan't, I'm too tired.

I get fed up. I say things like: 'this is a drama group and you don't have to come but if you are here, you need to do drama.' As a team, we agonise over the problem, we discuss

⁴⁷⁷"Intentional Homelessness" is a phrase in the 1996 Homelessness Act, which denies the right to housing to some people. It states 'Applicants who have a priority need, and whose homelessness has not been successfully relieved, are owed a lesser duty if they have become homeless intentionally than would be owed to them if they were homeless unintentionally. This reflects the general expectation that, wherever possible, people should take responsibility for their own accommodation needs and not behave in a way which might lead to the loss of their accommodation.' It has been noted by campaign groups that this definition is often applied harshly and without due consideration of an individual or family's complex circumstances. In Marion's case it means she is only entitled to hostel accommodation until a court case can be brought.

whether, instead of saying the children have to do everything, maybe we ask them to choose one thing. Art or drama. But when we try it, this backfires. They choose neither. Then there are the ones who are wild and restless, who sweep in with chaos at their wings. Fagilistic and Kristoff. It is a very different energy they bring. Kristoff is rooted to the earth by his rage, and his wounded-ness. We can see this in him, although it's so bound up in his obstreperousness and defiance, it's difficult to get beyond that.

Kristoff attempts to "play" fight (he calls it this) with others, but there is little playfulness about it. He cuts off and takes himself off into the Comfort Zone. When I ask him why, he says, cos I don't want to do it. Then, he goes right upstairs, into the counselling room and refuses to come out. It is a thankless task for Remz, who loves drama but doesn't even graze the drama activities. When we share our work at the end of the session, Kristoff, having come down from the rooms upstairs, stands on the mezzanine, and keeps appearing like a rabbit in a hat, to shout one insult or another, to laugh at anyone who dares to get onto the stage. At the end of the session he is wild. He runs away into the garden. Remz goes out there to catch him. Kristoff dodges round Remz and locks himself in the toilet, refusing to come out. When I read the transcript of this session, I can see he's telling us something very clearly: I don't want to go home. Unfortunately at the time, in the context of getting everyone safely on the minibus, we - I - find it irritating in the extreme.

The next week Kristoff is 'quite closed off' to engaging with anyone or anything in the session. He refuses to eat, but he is upset that others around the food table exclude him. He goes on the disruption campaign trail again. One of us asks him to participate, then another and then another. He gets in the middle of other people's work. He opposes adults. Remz trails after him. 'He just wants to be the centre of attention' he says. Joy observes that he has a need to feel in control and can't cope when he's not. 'He was really, really struggling' says Oliver, 'needing a lot of attention.' One of the other children is playing with a drumstick and he snatches it off her. When we tell him he needs to give it

back, 'he got really, really upset' Oliver observes, 'he wanted it because it belonged to someone else. He often feels he is not getting what other people are getting and this makes him distressed.' Kristoff wants something special for him. Just for him. We discuss him at some length in our feedback. One of the difficult things about Kristoff is that we know very little about him - the referral form was sparse. Remz is fed up. He is frustrated that the only participant he has got to know is Kristoff. 'I want to spend time with other people' he says.

Then there is Fagilistic. Fagilistic has been in and out of sessions emotionally, sometimes low, sometimes dashing around, but then things take a turn for the worse. The siblings' father died in January. They had been managing that, and the significant change of being moved into the care of their aunt. But now their father's body is about to be flown back to Nigeria, where the funeral is to be held. The children want to go, their aunt wants them to go, and their social worker wants them to go, but their mother does not want them to go and is blocking the move through the courts. She's angry because social services have recommended that the children are moved under the guardianship of their aunt, which is also what the children want. Their mother wants them back in her care and when she is told it isn't possible she is angry. When I attend a social service meeting, the outcome is still up in the air, because they are hoping that a court order will be granted in time. It's possible they might go. So I don't want them to be there when I go to pick them up. But they are. They have won their case and are able to go, but it's too late for them to apply for the funding they'd need for the flight. There is an additional layer to an already unhappy week. The children have learnt that their social worker, who has worked with them for five years, and their therapist, are moving on to other jobs.

No sooner he hits the workshop, Fagilistic unravels. 'He was in a very bad place' says Annie later. He sets the tone for the whole session, and Blanka says, 'he 'caused a disaster.' He makes it his sole purpose to disrupt any situation, dashing around into the middle of drama scenes or art work, pushing children: 'endless, endless disruption', says Zoe, 'the worst he

has behaved in any workshop.’ When we are trying to share our work, he pelts his water bottle into the stage area we’ve set up. He also burps loudly. ‘Nothing has worked,’ says Joy. On the other hand, given his week, why should it?

Our final session before the Easter holidays, it is bright and sunny all day. A balmy nineteen degrees. It is a welcome relief to feel the dull, grey grip of the year beginning to loosen. The clocks sprung forward yesterday, so it is lighter later. The Livesey Building is flooded in lemon. Do we sense the enfeeblement of winter? Do we think that, maybe, the Ice Bullies finally may melt away?

Fagilistic, in the grip of his confusion and despair, does not. He continues his destroy-everything-in-wake mission. He whirls around us, shouting and laughing. He begins to play the keyboard, discordantly, when we are trying to share our work. Bash, bash, bash. Lesley suggests that whilst this seemed unproductive and deliberately disruptive, she has noticed that he was trying to ‘find tunes.’ It is suggested that maybe he could do some sound effects for the play. There is a serendipitous moment when he crashes out ominous dischords at the same time a Zombie comes onto the stage. We laugh about it afterwards. ‘It was totally at the perfect place,’ says Charlie.

It doesn’t start well for Melekodium either. She comes into the session shouting at Elsa - their relationship seems to have broken down. Annie asks her if she would like to do some art, and Melekodium hisses: Go away. Leave me alone. She walks away but then pauses, coming back to the art table and starts to make. She is making a crown for the Queen of Optimistic Land, but she doesn’t like it. Her hard face sets in. But then - then she goes over to Annie and asks for help. She starts making something new. We celebrate in feedback as if she has won the Turner Prize: ‘She made something new and she was so happy with what

she'd done which was really, really nice.' says Annie. 'I was amazed at Melekodium...it was brilliant wasn't it?' says Lesley, 'she was just so engaged.'

Elsa acts in her vibrant, hilarious scene: She plays The Queen of The Kingdom of Jollof Rice, who is something of a petulant tyrant. The scene depicts her discovering that someone has put mushrooms in the river and she is absolutely incensed. She is very pleased at the reception. Oliver says that being able to praise her was important, that 'through this we can say, "we care about you", and was a way she felt held and reached.'

But, most of all, everyone in the team is feeling elated for another reason. Kristoff participates! At first, he runs around shouting, Noooo, no I'm not doing it, at the top of his voice, but then suddenly, with Blanka, he creates a short scene in which he is the King of an island called I-Phone Land. Unable to get out of him what the King might be called, we decide he can be King Kristoff. Blanka says 'I thought it wasn't going to really work, to create anything, but for some reason, he got on it and rehearsed the scene and performed it.' 'It was just brilliant to see,' I say. It is noted that It is the first time he had managed really anything creative or shared anything with other children and adults. 'It just goes to show he can be a valuable member of our group too,' says Lesley.

As we break up for the term, we are left with a theatrical parting shot. Normally Ghost's mum comes to collect her, but she can't today. Her father (who, when I talk to him, always makes me feel uneasy) demands on the phone, after the session has started, that she go on the minibus. I explain that wasn't our arrangement with the family, and that adding her to our route is not possible given she lives in a different part of the borough, far from the homes of other children. She should go home on her own then, he snaps. We tell her this. At the end of the session, Ghost is in the toilet for a long time. When she comes out, she is clutching paper towels to her nose. They appear to be stemming a heavy nosebleed. We are surprised and confused how this has come on so quickly and profusely at the end of the session, but I realise I can't possibly send her home alone with this, and so she needs to go

on the minibus. We clean Ghost up and she gets on the bus. When she has gone, I see a red smear she has left on the wall. I look at it for a while, then I go and get Oliver. Oliver, I say? What is that? Oliver looks for a very brief moment, with a trained eye. It's paint, he says. Ghost has obviously squirreled the red paint away until she could affect her master plan. Oliver and I agree though, it's a fittingly dramatic way to get a ride home on a minibus.

SUMMER

Before we start the new term, the adults meet. Two terms in and, despite some good moments, we are still in the eye of the storm. But, nevertheless, we try and try and try again. We decide to split into two groups, have one after the other. Melekodium, Fagilistic, Elsa and Iduna in the second group, the rest in the first. Less people to manage in a group, but also more mentors to go around. One to one, we have seen, is the way to go. More people join us because of this: Grace, Bethan, Georgia, Halima and Lucrezia. Then, we decide to try a menu system. Instead of the young people helping themselves, an act which has become scrum-like, each will be given a menu. They will tick what they want as much as they want, the order will be delivered to Martin by their mentor, and he will prepare each order. There has also been a drift away from the art activity, so we try to apply a radical approach, combining this with the food, so everyone sits round one table with their mentors. Oliver goes white, glue and pizza don't traditionally mix. Neither does the hallowed process of artistic endeavour and fruit squash. But we'll give it a go. The Comfort Zone has become more like the War Zone, so we decide we will reinvent this, providing sensory spaces in The Nook. Oliver converts children's tents into an underwater experience for juniors and a jungle scene for seniors.

I am not really confident any of this will help, given all our other valiant efforts. There is no breezy optimism in the room, as there was at the start of last term. I know that we have been failing a lot. I know that, by now, there should be at least tinges of transformation. Little emergent moments from Kristoff, from Melekodium, they are not enough.

After a long break, for the school holidays and a series of public holiday days, we return. There has been a development with Kizi in this time. I wrote to her teacher, to enquire about whether the school had seen any of the bullying behaviour we thought we were witnessing. He said no, but he also said it was possible, given her history. After this, I got a phone call from Kizi's mum, June. He'd obviously passed on the message. She was worried about the fact that Kizi was falling back into old habits and asked for my help. We agree that Kizi should be absent for a week, to try and nip it in the bud. Normally I never agree to exclusion as a result of wrongdoing - we are a therapeutic provision and to deny that intervention through punishment is unfair. But it's a little different with Kizi, given the behaviour happened in the workshop, and her mother is managing this in a supportive and measured way. 'She dearly loves this group,' she said. Like everything else, we'll see how it goes.

It is a scorching May day. Too hot for May really, but after the winter we've had we don't mind a bit of melting. On the minibus, I tell Kristoff about two things. One that he has a new mentor, Georgia, and two that we have changed Safe Space, and that he needs to sit at the table to have food and do art. I hate Safe Space, he says. That's fine, I say, you don't have to do art, but we want you to sit with Georgia anyway. He sets his jaw and turns away from me. But when we get to Treasure House, although he is scowling, he does put down his bag and go upstairs. He does go and sit next to Georgia. Georgia has already started making some artwork for his scene - a crown for King Kristoff. She asks him if she can measure his head to see if it fits. I wait for the explosion. Kristoff doesn't like to be touched. But it doesn't come. He lets her do it. Then he starts helping Georgia glue on some shiny stuff. I exchange a glance with Oliver. This is amazing, our eyebrows say.

Ghost is sad. In our check-in we ask children to show how they are feeling, using their feet. Ghost has turned her feet in to demonstrate she isn't happy. She describes herself as

feeling 'sad and angry.' Later in the session, she turns to Anna, and tells her about a list she has on a piece of paper in her pocket. She says she is going to get revenge on someone, that she will 'slap them in the face' and 'punch them in the stomach' and 'say something mean to their Dad'. Oliver, who is sitting next to her, says to her 'I wouldn't want to do that to anyone' but she ignores him. 'She had a totally glazed expression and she was, you know "I'm not listening to you." I don't know if she even heard me say it.' Saying that, though, Annie works with her on practising her drama scene. 'She did some really good work' says Annie, although when it comes to sharing at the end of the session, she won't do it.

Anna has decided she is going to be 'the boss' today. She declares it on the minibus. Anna is usually mild mannered and sweet. She has been struggling with participation, sitting out a lot, but she tends to use the time instead to talk about 'the bad things that happened with my mum,' to Lesley. So I decide I don't see much harm in her taking on the role if it makes her feel powerful. It turns out my judgement is ill advised though. Anna being the boss is not very helpful. She struts around shouting 'I am the boss, I am the boss.' She steals a paint-pot from Afireem and shouts loudly. 'Perhaps she feels out of control today,' says Oliver. Despite this, though, she does 'amazing work' on showing her scene. I note 'she's a good little actor.'

Iduna arrives very early, straight from school, so she is with us from 3.15pm, when she should be arriving at 4.30pm. She dives into the new jungle sensory space, which has been placed in the rooms at the top of the building. She stays there until 8pm. It's nice to see you Iduna, I say. 'I'm only coming for this,' she says, indicating the tent. Melekodium comes in and she has a calm open face, and settles in quickly next to Annie. She is almost smiling. She produces a drawing full of glee. Fagilistic comes back and sits down at the food table, ticks things on the menu. In the Check-in he says: 'I'm happy.' He does some devising work, and in the games he leaps in with exuberance. Everyone is almost giddy with joy at this. 'Amazing, huge progress.' says Charlie. Martin comments, 'knowing how

in the past he's disappeared like a tortoise and barely come out again,....I thought his performance was brilliant.' His attention is much better too. He attends politely to other's work. And then he is kind:

Lesley	He said thank you? What did he say?
Oliver	For being a great mentor and being
Blanka	Supportive

Today, in his neat frame and quiet voice, he is almost urbane in his politeness. I note to those who weren't here previously, 'this is truly astonishing if you think about him in the past.' Fagilistic showed us he appreciated people 'being there for him,' says Annie. It's not all completely plain sailing though. Elsa comes not long after like a live wire. The energy between her and Fagilistic is a bit difficult to manage. Safe Space is a little too fizzy because neither of them will stay still.

Nevertheless, overall, the adults are giddy with excitement and happiness at the end of both sessions. In general, the workshop is described by Bethan as having a 'a lovely atmosphere,' being industrious. The changes we have made seem to work! The children like choosing their food. The tents are popular, and the mentoring system, with every child sitting around the table together, brings serenity. Furthermore, Lesley comments that the battle for phones has magically been resolved with everyone either leaving them in their bags, or giving them to Lesley for safe-keeping. 'It's extraordinary, isn't it?' she says. Extraordinary to put a phone in a box? Yes, for our children, extraordinary.

Everyone has scripts now, and it really feels like we are doing a play. That we might actually do a play. Halima joins us and becomes Ghost's mentor. Ghost is shy and quiet with her, but works on her scene, joins in. Ghost has asked Afireem to be in her scene, and Afireem agrees. It's the only time Ghost has worked with another child since her impromptu

performance in December. Lesley comments, 'I was delighted to see Ghost joining in and actually doing things with enthusiasm and lack of self-consciousness. She actually got there today, it was lovely to see.' I say: 'I thought she did so well considering she struggles so much, and she didn't want to leave at the end either. You know she's always leaping up to text her mum or go out the door so that was really nice.' Halima really enjoys working with her. 'I think working with Ghost was really great. I think she is very generous,' she says.

Meanwhile, Melekodium is becoming a Queen. I remember how hard it was, last summer, for her to come up with her one idea - a talking chicken leg - how this was the extent of her imaginative capacity in a week. Now, a whole new scene is emerging. It is the scene when Lucy and Taylor are finally reunited. They have made it to Optimistic Land and the noble and magnanimous ruler of the land looks over her subjects and makes it her purpose to unfreeze cold hearts and mend sorrow. Also, Melekodium is becoming a director. 'She has so many ideas and she's so good at stage directing, you know, saying what needs to happen directing me in my role in our little performance. That was a real highlight. She came out of herself when she was doing drama,' says Charlie.

Fagilistic comes up with a story. He dictates it to Oliver who writes it down. 'He was going so fast I had a hard time keeping up with him.' I assumed maybe Fagilistic just wasn't going to get there imaginatively. That was fine. All children have their strengths after all, and he can act his socks off. I am gloriously wrong though. His story takes place in Cartoonish Land and is an imaginative mash-up of cartoons, fairy tales, video games and his very own narrative flourishes:

Scene 1

1. DJ Tom is listening to music
2. Reading to Dad and sister – as they asked for the Cartoonish World book
3. The book comes to life and draws them into the picture.

Scene 2:

1. Stuck on Cartoonish island
2. Struggling – no food or water

3. No-one around, until they find 2 characters walking called Mickey and Minnie
4. "Welcome to Cartoonish Land" they say
5. They took them through the island – there were deadly animals
6. Asked for water, taken to river, Dad said don't drink
7. A big pink castle on the island. They need to get there to save the princess because Bowzer is coming to destroy it

Scene 3

1. They show Tom the map – it is a huge map
2. They gave costumes for disguise: Knight suit – (Tom), Princess (Sister), Huntsman costume – hat, jacket, bow and arrow (Dad)
3. Epic journey through the island to save the princess.
4. Took days and nights and when they got to the middle of the island, they saw fruits and freshwater. They raced to get them, enough in the bag for leftovers
5. Continued journey and saw grizzly bear, chased them
6. Anaconda – "Dad, look behind you!" They all run

Scene 4

1. They reach the castle and see 7 dwarfs who kidnap them/tie them up
2. Taken to the cabin (don't live in a castle)
3. Happy Dopey Angry, shy, picky, mischievous
4. They ask the family for money
5. The witch comes and tries to chop them all up to put in witches brew
6. Knight came and saved the whole family
7. The Knights ask for help to save the princess and they jump on their horses' backs.

Scene 5

1. When they get there, the princess is gone and a crowd of people chanting "We want the princess back!"
2. Bowzer has taken the princess to a volcano.
3. The family join the crowd chanting
4. The knights said to calm down
5. Bowzer had an underground castle. They find him
6. What do you think you're doing? That's our princess!"
7. "Are you OK Princess? Are you hurt?"
8. Only on my arm
9. Servants put water and vinegar on her arm
10. Mickey and Minnie help them get back.

Fagilistic and Elsa don't get on at all. 'He doesn't like her,' says Melekodium to me. It's the first time I've seen her loyalty to her brother. She recognises his stress. She wants to protect him. Elsa is hard for all of us to manage. She comes in and she radiates threat. It is not threat, not really. It is a terror of the whole world, it is the only way she knows how to protect herself. Elsa refuses point blank to talk about her past with her social workers, her foster carer, her teachers. She has refused an offer of support from CAMHS. We know she came over from West Africa with a family relative who abandoned her, and that it was very possible that she had been trafficked for sex. Only she knows the agony she must be carrying inside her. The deep and livid wounds. But it is difficult when she comes into Fagilistic's sphere. She has become physically uncontrollable for us. I am standing on the stairs between the balcony and The Nook, my mind is elsewhere, when suddenly there is a commotion. A flurry of air. It happens quickly. In a flash I see Elsa and Fagilistic in combat. Instincts kick in. Before I know it, I am restraining Fagilistic, shouting at a volunteer to help. As per our training, the volunteer and I cross arms in front of him. I wrap my arms around him so they can't flail. On the other side, a bevy of other volunteers are behind Elsa, and move her backwards. It is a matter of seconds, barely any contact is made and she backs off. Fagilistic relaxes in my hold almost immediately. I take him to the Comfort Zone tent and we sit quietly together. Now is not the time for reprimand. I say to him that he must feel frightened. He nods. But he is calm. His flash of anger ebbs away fast. I find it hard not to well up at his vulnerability as I sit beside him, as the sound of waves wash over us and tissue paper fish swing amongst us. Elsa is also chastened. Shocked herself at what has happened. They completely avoid each other for the rest of the session. Elsa even manages to perform a little of her scene as the Queen of the Kingdom of Jollof Rice. Because of the fight I have to exclude them. Rules are rules. Unlike previously, Fagilistic accepts this. He goes, he stays away, and he returns peacefully.

But Elsa does not. She doesn't ever come back. At this point my practical and emotional resources are stretched. I confess I do not try as hard as I should to get her back. I don't arrange to go, again, to her lovely foster carer so we can plead together that she returns.

Two months after this incident, she will be sectioned after a psychotic breakdown, so what we saw was her breaking. But she is lost to us and we to her. It means Iduna doesn't come back again either. At the time it is sad, but it feels like collateral damage. When I look back over the transcripts of our feedback sessions, I will see how devastating this lack of effort on my part was. They should have been with us to the end. I let them down.

There is not a transcript for the next session but I have got a copy of the letter I sent home to a number of children after it. I write:

We all need to stay safe at Theatre Troupe. Some of the things you did last week in the art and drama work made it very unsafe for other members of the group. You know the important rules in art and drama but you didn't follow all of them.

Given the fairly liberal attitude to rules in the Troupe, and the fact that I am more of a soft touch than I should probably be, what this measured paragraph actually says is: *this was the very worst session we have ever had, I never want to do applied theatre again, I am going to be an accountant instead.* The letter home involves an agreement which I ask children and their parents to sign, the content of which. I ask:

CAN YOU AGREE TO THESE SENTENCES?:

I will not say or do anything hurtful to another child. This includes any "banter".

I will remain with my mentor at all times and not run away from them.

If I have one, I will put my phone in the safe box at the beginning of the session.

I will go straight home respectfully after the workshop.

If I am feeling angry or worried and this is stopping me doing activities, I will let my mentor know and she will arrange a comfortable place and sit with me.

Although I can't remember the ins and outs, I do know this terrible session involved huge swathes of the junior group being excluded for a week, and, according to this document, the reasons are legion. Clearly, in this agreement, I am not leaving anything to chance.

But there are three children who did not join the scrum. One of them, happily, is Kizi, from

the Junior group. She comes to the workshop with Afireem. Fagilistic has an appointment, so there's only Melekodium in the Senior group. Because of this, the groups join. In this little constellation, the children are happy, Melekodium joins the adults in praising Kizi. For Kizi deserves praise this week. She makes her character - Wonky Donkey the crab - into a little cardboard puppet. After colouring in with only Oliver and Rachel in previous weeks, it is a treat to see her independent and bold in her art-making. She shines, and at the end proudly shows the group what she had done; 'it was amazing that she wasn't afraid to show it to everybody,' says Grace. She has a script now. Knowing her struggles with literacy and knowing she is anxious about reading, I wrote the scene from her devising work. After being lost in a storm on her way to finding Optimistic Land, Taylor is washed up on a beach of the Island of the Dark Night. She is thrown in a cage by red-eyed robots and finds herself alongside a pert little crab called Wonky Donkey. I have written up the scene so that Kizi's lines are manageable to her, not challenging to read for someone for whom reading makes them anxious. Taylor converses with the more verbose crab, who is written to be played by an adult. Wonky Donkey has some big words and complex turns of phrase. This, I think, is the best way to enable her. But Kizi has different ideas. When she shows her scene to the group at the end, she is Wonky Donkey. She doesn't want to be the orphan anymore, lost and afraid in a place called The Island of the Dark Night. She wants to be the bright orange, impertinent crab, who, beneath the surface has a heart of gold. When she shares the scene, she declares: 'I am a much misunderstood mollusc!'

Our performance hour draws on apace. Some happy days bring in another moon. It feels more relaxed, there is an energy, the kind that might propel a bird to flight in its lightness. We drift between art and drama, doing what we need to do to make costumes and sets. There are crowns and robots and unicorn horns and the flags of made up nations. Martin says he's surprised how the less formal atmosphere now works for them. 'It is nice to do some proper drama.' I say. We continue to work on scenes and scripts. The group is small

again this week, although not for reasons of exclusion. A lot of children are taking national exams. In our feedback we laugh. A lot. We are buoyant from the session. 'Everyone was so happy and having fun and creating great stuff as well. Everyone got straight to it as well,' says Georgia.

Ghost arrives far later than usual. Lesley says 'it made me very upset and worried because she's always the first.' Her mother doesn't know where she is either. We exchange a series of phone calls. When she arrives, Ghost said she has been out with her "boyfriend". But Lesley is delighted. 'My highlight' she says 'because I thought she wasn't going to come and that would have been a real loss to us.' I'm not sure I can one hundred percent embrace the notion that her not being here would have been a real loss to us, but I am glad about Lesley and her unbounded joy. It is a challenge to get her engaged at first; 'there was a lot of chasing,' I say, 'but thanks to the large team of security guards, support workers and chasers that work with her, she came through.' At the end of the session, her mother arrives and we haven't quite finished yet. We invite her to come and sit down while we finish performing. Halima says later:

I was particularly surprised at Ghost, because again it was really difficult to get her engaged initially with learning lines, but as soon as we got her down we had three minutes solid work and then straight into the performance. Those three minutes were a good three minutes. She was able to perform it in front of her mum when she came to pick her up. I thought it was really brave for her to turn her script around and perform in front of her mother.

Lesley is 'delighted to see Ghost joining in and actually doing things with enthusiasm and lack of self-consciousness.'

Kizi sits with Oliver making artwork, and chats with Afireem opposite her 'a really lovely conversation,' says Oliver. At the end, she performs Wonky Donkey with relish. She has learnt some of her lines. She responds to stage directions given by Rachel and she is able to alter the tone of voice to fit her character and do actions to go with the words. She seems

surprised at our elation at what she is doing. 'I think she underestimates herself a lot' says Rachel. 'To see her just coming out of her shell performing was amazing to see.' I say:

I can't believe it with that girl. I just think you [volunteers] have worked wonders with her, because when she's not on script, she's proper, proper acting and there was nothing of that [when she joined]. There was no eye contact, no ideas even. She really struggles with reading, but she came and read the script because she wanted to.

'She was a star wasn't she?' says Lesley. Anna suggests to Kizi that they get together at school, and learn their lines.

Kristoff arrives clutching his agreement, which has been signed by both him and his mum. He comes straight up to me and puts it in my hand. Most of the young people who were excluded and sent a letter have forgotten, and I have let it slide (because children never bring back forms), but I understand something then, in that moment between us. He wants to be here. He really wants to be here. He has remembered his form, he has carried it with him all day in his school bag. Then, he goes straight up to Safe Space. 'He made something beautiful' says Oliver. 'It had really good colour,' Oliver tells Kristoff this. He doesn't smile, but he listens. Previously he would have behaved as if Oliver didn't exist, attacking someone else with his "banter" to deflect attention, but not today. '[He was] incredible' says Lucrezia, 'I've never seen them like that so it was a shock. I'm always used to them saying "no" or "I don't know" or me having to kind of forcing conversation, but today was actually the first day he made conversation...He wanted to engage with me.' In the drama, Kristoff does not focus one hundred percent but he continues to come back to the scene when asked. 'Getting a lot done.' In the senior group, the siblings are working 'in a really sweet way' being gentle and kind with each other. There is a special bond growing between them,' says Charlie. Melekodium, says Bethan 'was a pleasure to work with.' When we meet at the end, in Creative Listening, and Bethan tells her this, Melekodium smiles. As wide as the sky.

Near the end of the session, we gather to work on Fagilistic's scene. Martin has taken Fagilistic's narrative and created a story. With this, I decide, we will use an instant improvisation. As each bit of the story is read out, group members are invited to jump into the scene, as a tree, a fruit tree, a knight. Martin's not sure: 'When Emily said we were going to do a group improvisation with something about an anaconda I was....' he screws up his face to indicate scepticism. Fagilistic decides that he wants Afireem to play his sister and Melekodium to play Minnie Mouse. He wants Oliver to be his father. Martin starts to tell the story. The adults rise to the challenge. It is riotously joyful: Blanka and Grace leap in as the deadly anaconda, Halima is Bowser the fire breathing monster. Seven dwarfs are played by one person. Joel is the swooning princess. The central protagonists weave their way through this story, responding with each narrative turn. Rachel observes, of Fagilistic, 'he loves it, he just loves it.' Everyone else loves it too. We are happy about it in our feedback. 'Everyone lost self consciousness in acting and did it on the spur of the moment to make a 'lovely scene, it just took fire', says Martin. 'What was so lovely was not just that everyone did it with verve, but the children responded well to that.' Yes, we catch glimpses of them looking at us, looking at it, as if they didn't know adults were capable of such silliness and joy. Quizzical but delighted.

Everyone is here, for both groups. The transport delivers everyone smoothly and on time. Lesley notes that 'it has taken this long to get this right.' I know it. I have tasted its bitter fruit more times than I would care to imagine. In the workshop, finally, the centre does hold. Although there will always be a frisson of worry that everything will collapse, it feels that we are now steadier on our feet than ever before. We are finessing scenes for the final show. 'A lot of strands are coming together.' Everyone is industrious and focused and chatty and relaxed in Safe Space. Annie returns after three weeks in South Africa and says 'it's amazing what three weeks can do, everybody has come on like a million miles, and everyone seemed to focus so much.' Blanka says, 'a highlight for me was the realisation that everybody comes together and we commit one hundred percent when it comes to

performance.’ ‘Everything’s coming together,’ says Joy. ‘I’m feeling very optimistic for things in two or three weeks’ time,’ says Lesley.

Kizi says she is tired and says she has a stomach ache. But she does join in. She does a lot in art. Rachel observes:

She did a lot for her little crab head thing and it wasn't just her saying oh what do you want to do and what do you think about this, it was her making all the decisions which was really really nice to see that she is doing that now, and I was expecting her to not want to go up and perform but she did it without a script.

Melekodium continues her creative streak in her scene rehearsal. Martin notes that ‘she’s a really good actor...she projects, she adds meaning.’ Annie notes that in the three weeks she had been away, ‘it’s amazing’ what progress she has made. But Melekodium seems worried about the fact that Fagilistic is not taking part, ‘Oh, he’s not doing it again.’ She tries to tell him the performance is coming up. Fagilistic is not participating because, for the first time in many weeks, he arrives in a desperate state. He spends much of the session with his head down on the table. We feel helpless. Should we wake him up, asks Joy? Should we sit with him? When we go down to work on acting, his first love, he won’t come with us. Hood up, head down. Once we have rehearsed and seen Melekodium’s scene, we decide we need to practise Cartoonish Land again - consolidate some of the improvised material so we know what we’re doing on stage and who is coming in when. I ask Fagilistic if he wants to come down, but he doesn’t answer. So we start preparing, talking about what goes where and who comes in when. Oliver manages to get him to come down stairs, ‘maybe just to watch your scene?’ And he does come, but his hood is pulled right over his head. We’re going to start now, I say, would you like to come in? He doesn’t answer me. So we start. Charlie takes the position of DJ Tom. Then, after about three minutes, when the characters have entered Cartoonish Land and are conversing with Mickey and Minnie Mouse, he suddenly leaps up, enters his story as DJ Tom. Charlie steps back. His level of acting and commitment suggests that he has been rehearsing all evening, rather than being in a kingdom far, far away only a second before. We talk about it animatedly afterwards. It

is the highlight of the session. 'It was amazing, it was really fabulous,' says Halima, 'when he stood up 'cause I thought he wasn't going to participate. It was just magic, just wonderful.' The irresistible pull of the story brought him in, I suggest. 'But it was also because he was safe among us I think,' suggests Oliver. Fagilistic and his Troupe. Bethan says that 'he made eye contact and smiled as part of the scene, it was the first time he'd ever made eye contact with me.' He was 'smiling and nodding his head.' Whatever it was, he came into our epicentre, and glowed.

The final official session before the performance, the atmosphere in Safe Space feels like warm honey spread on toast. 'Such a wonderful atmosphere, eating and creating,' says Halima. Oliver watches it, the easy interactions between volunteers and young people. How things have changed. Oliver tells the volunteers: 'You've [had] a lot of rejection. It's been hard to hold on [but] you've still been here every week and that's amazing.' Weeks and weeks and weeks they have gritted their teeth, carried worry, frustration and helplessness. I look at the young people sitting easily by their side. There is nothing now but peace. A concerted effort is put in, to make props and costumes, an industry with the focus on the show. Blanka says 'everyone made me smile today.'

Fagilistic in Safe Space is cheerful. He and Melekodium chat to each other. I think back to how they used to be, circling round each other, avoiding each other's space, or joined together in vicious emotional assault towards others. But today 'it feels like a family reunion' Lucrezia says. I instruct the volunteers to make up a dance for the finale. Blanka is a contemporary dancer, Remz a street dancer. They have fun combining the two. Melekodium chooses not to join in this during rehearsals, but she sits and laughs at them getting it wrong. Not her signature laugh, not that anymore. It's light and soft.

When we move into the drama, Melekodium and Fagilistic both shine. Melekodium has learnt her lines, almost by heart. I say to the group afterwards, that this is a very curious

thing. Young people just don't learn lines. But Melekodium has. 'I'm scared I'll forget', she says to Annie before she goes on to do her scene, but she doesn't forget. She is word-perfect. She is 'sensational in her acting' says Halima. We practice Fagilistic's scene with him again. He is assured and confident. He gives Bethan a 'big thumbs up' when we've finished. Then Melekodium does something she's never done before. She improvises. In Fagilistic's narrative there is a bear. When the bear is mentioned, Melekodium jumps in, roaring and furious. We are delightfully taken aback. Where did this glorious ursine creature come from? Lucrezia thinks it is a watermark, 'important because she is having fun in the moment.' She is giving us lots of eye contact. Lesley sits beside her downstairs and comments: 'she glows, just so happy doing her stuff and that's just lovely to see.'

Afterwards there is a pre-show buzz. We talk in equal measures about the joy of being with them, but also the excitement of what's to come. A week to go. We need to learn our lines and put the finishing touches to props and costumes, not quite performance-ready yet. 'Brace yourself!' I say, we laugh. But overall, we recognise that we are finally pulling together different strands of the show, knitting them together, finally, finally. 'It's an exciting moment.' says Halima. Martin says: 'I've got this feeling that things were really moving forward towards performance, and I know we all had days when things seemed to be moving into complete chaos, so I think there was a real momentum today.' Yes, it feels so good to say that.

A small spanner in the works presents itself, though. I've been told that Kizi and Anna have a school trip to Brighton on the day of the Queen Mary performance. Hopefully, they can get there, but it will be an effort. I am used to these spanners now, though. I have far more of these in my toolkit than useful games or exercises.

It is Saturday. A balmy summer day. Tomorrow is our first performance and we have lots to do. I've decided to get individual children to come in at different points, so we can focus on

their scenes. A lot is not ready, and this at least moves things a bit closer. The three siblings are with us all day. They bring the breeziness of the weekend with them. We're all feeling breezy. People come in and out, children, volunteers. When we're not working on scenes, we are painting backdrops, finishing off props and costumes. Oliver instructs us what needs to be done. Kizi has learnt a lot of her lines. Not all of them, and she stumbles over some words but she has learnt a lot. She practises being Wonkey Donkey with Rachel. Ghost comes and practises being a pink zombie with Halima. Kristoff arrives on the bus. He is clearly a little anxious, especially as he has discovered that most of the others aren't here. We sit in the garden and have a break, the siblings, Kristoff, Kizi and I. Kristoff tries to stir things, make little jibes at the younger girls. I ask him to stop. 'It's just banter,' he says smirking. I open my mouth to reply, but Melekodium intervenes: 'We don't do banter at Theatre Troupe.' 'Oh,' he says, and that's that. He seems to quite enjoy the scene rehearsal with Joy. Later on, when the children have gone home, Oliver, Hamila and I stay on until midnight. We have a takeaway. Oliver and Halima paint backdrops, finish off props. In the unusual peace of the Livesey Building, I prepare all the costumes, divide them per child in plastic bags with their names on. I work out exits and entrances, set changes, audience chairs.

PERFORMANCE TWO

The next day we perform at Treasure House. But, as is so often the case with the performances I do, things which for other youth theatres would be unimaginable, step right up. I get a call from Joel to say he has to go to church and can't come to the performance. I ask him maybe he could miss church just this week and he says no, he can't. I understand this, I've encountered it before, church being a serious and important essential to the week for many people from African Christian backgrounds in the borough. But I do wish he'd told me before this morning. There's no point in saying this though, ranting and railing about the fact he does not think it important to tell me before, especially as he plays a significant part in Sven's scene. In the end, though, it is not such a devastating loss because Sven doesn't come either. In my gut, I'm not surprised about this. Sven's care and living

arrangements are split between three maternal aunts. We have the phone number of his legal guardian, but she doesn't speak English, so I never received a confirmatory text or phone call to say that he will be there. Anna is also missing because she is on a trip out of the area. I did know about this one, although it was not long ago I found out. All in all, it feels like quite a depressing start.

The pre-show chaos begins (Emily, where is my costume...), although with an adult at each of their sides, this is easier on me. Kristoff is dressed as a King. He wears a red cape with fake ermine round the sides, and his crown made of shiny stuff and glue. The audience are milling in the garden, waiting to come in. He wanders out there. I suggest that maybe he could take his costume off so it's a surprise for the audience, but clearly this is not going to happen. He is very anxious, I can see that, and he wants to see if the people who said they were coming are here. He keeps coming up to me: Where's my teacher? Where's my mum? There'll be there, I say. Miss Robson has already texted to say she's on her way. But they're not here! He says. He shifts from foot to foot, looking around him. We should have started the show, "gone up" as theatre folk say, but we are waiting for late-comers. The siblings' aunt is coming, but she's trying to juggle childcare for her others so she can get there. We sit the audience down and explain this. Both Kristoff's guests are here now. But it is coming up to twenty-five minutes late, so I feel we need to get on with it. Luckily, just as Melekodium is making her first entrance, her aunt arrives. The show sweeps along and the audience seems pleased. I find later they are appreciative, as they write on post-show feedback forms: 'It was great to see how each of the young people's unique voices and creativity were supported and celebrated within the overall storyline. Beautiful work.' 'It's good to see (and very necessary) young people from challenging backgrounds having a safe space to develop confidence and self-esteem.' another said. 'Drama/art as therapy really has the power to change lives. More work like this is needed.' 'Really enjoyed it all, especially how the young actors got more and more confident as the play went on and how hard the mentors worked to encourage...very imaginative and a *really* worthwhile project.' Nice to know, especially as it mostly feels to me that it's nothing of the sort.

People are milling around, having refreshments. Oliver has found Kristoff. He guides him inside, finding a small quiet moment. He says: I'm so impressed with you. Later, Oliver says:

I told him the things that were brilliant, how well he'd done and how hard he'd worked for it, and he did actually listen. He sort of skipped a bit, and I thought "wow this boy, who previously actually communicated that he doesn't care and is not interested, actually we do make an impact.

PERFORMANCE THREE

When my mood is up, I can only imagine magic and wonder. When it comes to writing, coming up with the play, I will walk for hours listening to music through headphones and imagine how enthralling, moving, and, yes, transcending, the theatre we are making will eventually be on stage. I have done this with this play. I have seen the play in my head, and it is extraordinary. So perhaps this is why it hasn't occurred to me that this performance will be anything other. Perhaps, if I was a different kind of person, I would put things in perspective and, on balance, see there were some glorious moments. In fact there are many, many wonderful moments. For the children, I'm sure these moments are what they take away with them. But, for me, it is a day steeped in tribulation.

We gather at Treasure House to have refreshments before we travel to Queen Mary University London (QMUL) for our second show. I have arranged this so they get to perform on a proper stage, and the Drama Department at QMUL have kindly let us use their studio theatre free of charge. But, in nine months, I haven't learned my lesson. My first mistake is that I have not foreseen the following: we are going to a new part of London, and children do not know what they will find, and will be anxious because of this. On top of this, they will be excited and nervous about the show and then on top of this, we will be travelling there by minibus. Yes, by minibus. Things are edgy anyway. No bullying, which seems to have ebbed by now, but a bit of a din. I have tried to be sensible about the transport, so apparently I am not entirely blinkered to the potential pitfalls. We know Fagilistic gets

extremely agitated by being on the minibus and he has been doing well with a separation of ages. The little boys and he wind each other up. Besides, there aren't enough seats in the minibus. So I have arranged for him to go by taxi with a volunteer. I should have introduced this idea earlier. When I tell him/them, this is going to happen, he kicks off. They all kick off. Melekodium switches from being sweet and sensible for many weeks, to entering into monster territory, this time outraged on behalf of her brother. Fagilistic himself is angry. He runs around the garden, the little boys run after him. When they appear again briefly, I say, someone has to go in the taxi because it is not safe for all of you to travel together. We can't go and perform if someone does not. Nobody hears me. And then they start to knock against each other. I shift my approach from appealing to their good will to one of threats. You will not perform if you do not get into the minibus/taxi. I make a lot of threats, which evaporate into the air unheard. At one point, I do manage to get half of them outside where the minibus is waiting, but they cluster in groups, and refuse to get on. Time is ticking on, we should have left a long, long time ago. After a lot more of this, we realise the struggle is futile. Oliver and I look at each other and I say- we need to call the performance off. I think we just can't do this, I say. I am about to phone Natasha, who is waiting at QMUL, to tell her to cancel, when, all of a sudden, Kristoff is by my side. He says: Alright, I will go in the taxi. We are stunned. None of us are quite sure exactly what's happened. Kristoff has saved the day. I thank him, I tell him he's mature, but these words seem inadequate really under the circumstances. I hope I will be able to tell him later. He follows Joy and they go in the taxi. The others get on the bus.

We go to East London, arriving on Campus fifteen minutes after the show is going to start. Children are high and uncontrollable. I send them off with volunteers while we get into the theatre and, at breakneck speed, construct our set. The peacock is a problem. Ghost has asked if the peacock she has made - a plaster of paris creation - can slide down on a string from the rafters. It's in the script, that as the prop-bird lands, there is the loud clunking of pots and pans being crashed into, and the peacock (played by the talented Rachel) dusts off her feathers as she enters stage left. We'd sort of managed it in Treasure House, but with

five minutes to go it seemed unlikely. I was sad. One of the things about the Troupe is that we always tried to honour the things that really matter to young people. Sometimes these are quite small if a child has not been able to do much, but nevertheless, you find those moments, and make them as important as you possibly can. The peacock was to be Ghost's moment. And now we were going to let her down. But I don't have time to linger. Children need to stop haring around the QMUL campus and get into their costumes.

Then finally we let the audience in. They have been too patient, given we are forty five minutes late to start. But there are only nine of them anyway, which is probably lucky, though a little sad to have such low numbers. With this and everything else, I am further crushed. However, despite the late running and, as a few members of the audience point out, it all being too long - the show goes, if not like a dream, remarkably well. One of my better efforts, I tell people. Joel is back, Sven is back, and Anna and Kizi made it from Brighton, so we are all here. Scenes are neat, scene changes are (more or less) efficient. Tech, led by Zoe and Charlie, is excellent. It happens. Melekodium is the best she has ever been, Kizi delivers with confidence and aplomb. Ghost gets a big laugh from the audience for her rendition of Zombelina the pink non-flesh-eating Zombie. Halima describes the moment:

I think my biggest positive [of the project] is Ghost getting on stage, because I was convinced she will find it hard, and I'm so proud. I just found that incredible and then her getting on stage and actually delivering her lines was quite surprising.

A member of the audience who had been invited by Halima to see the show, talked to Halima about it afterward: 'she told me how very intense that moment felt for her in the audience. And Fagilistic's scene brings the house down - of course. 'Good triumphs over evil. Hooray!' an audience member writes. But the best thing of all: unlike me, the Troupe team, the volunteer marvel-makers do not give up easily. Right on cue, a vibrant blue plaster of paris peacock slides down across the stage and lands with a bump.

After this, there is the minibus ride home, which I don't need to go into much here, except to say that it was everything that happened on the way back from the pantomime, and a great, horrifying deal more. The fact it takes forty minutes from the time we are on the minibus to leaving QMUL is some indication. The journey back brings us into the minibus depot at 1am. Zoe and I are in emotional tatters. That's it, I think. Never, ever, ever again. I think that this is a sad way to end a project.

An addendum to the performance needs to be written though:

Joy A highlight of the whole project, that stands out to me was our cab journey with Kristoff going home... he was calm, he engaged in conversation, he was really articulate, he was a boy I hadn't seen before and that was because the attention was on him and he had one to one time which he really appreciated.

Halima We played this game where he had to make up a word with two letters and he just came up with so many words.

Joy Even I didn't really understand the game, but he did.

THE END

I prepare to meet for our very last session. I realise I have an awful lot of evaluation to do, to get the material I need for my thesis. I carefully prepare eight different folders, with all the paperwork required for interviews. Still flattened by last Monday, I somewhat dread this final session. I know in my heart, though I am very grateful it is the end, we shouldn't be ending here. The idea was always to finish after a year, by which time attachment would have helped young people move on in their lives: a time-boundaried intervention. But theory and practice are different, and I know some of them, maybe all of them, need more from us. For all our ups and downs, we are a community, I am about to take that community away. Still, this is an undercurrent to the more pressing concern that there will

be physical and emotional chaos. Endings are never easy for our children, and I fear that we will have a lot more of last Monday. Zoe and I embark on our last minibus journey. But we are quite sad to find that we are missing a lot. We get to Kizi and Anna's school and they are having their school graduation and not available. The boys are not at school when we go to pick them up. They've gone home, the office says. Maybe, for them, endings really are too hard.

So we have four. Melekodium, Fagilistic, Afireem and Ghost. The fact we are missing so many is a little bit heartbreaking. Not having the evidence for my thesis is a little bit worrying. But in other ways, perhaps, it is a gift. We have space and time to let them be the people they are, rather than being caught up in the sturm und drang. It is raining outside, but it feels sunlit in Treasure House somehow. When Oliver and I are not interviewing them, children are making cards for their mentors and for each other. Volunteers fill in memory books for each child, writing a letter each about all their best memories. It is filled with vibrant adjectives: wonderful, special, kind, brilliant, all sorts. We also stick photos in each book. Blanka says: 'I just wrote 'amazing so many times in their books. It just shows how amazing it all is.'

We conduct a creative evaluation. We ask the children and the volunteers to create a scene in which someone is interviewing them and they have to talk about the things that, if they were designing Theatre Troupe activities, they would keep, change or add. Ghost has chosen to continue making her card, but the other three, and the volunteers, rise to this task. These are joyful. Volunteers are particularly excited to be able to raid our fairly diminutive costume collection. Joy throws a bright pink feather bower around her neck. Halima dresses as a fish. Fagilistic puts on the chef hat that once upon a time depicted Icecream Man. Melekodium and Afireem choose glittery dresses. Not much extractable evaluative material arises from this. However, I don't think there could be a more vivid picture of our theatre community so many smiles from those who never used to smile and

unbounded jubilation from those who used to sit and drink tea and fret about how on earth things could ever get easier, better, bearable.

Then we gather together in a circle to say the final goodbye. Each of us present cards and memory books. I have also bought each of them a soft purple sausage dog toy. If you're feeling like you're missing Theatre Troupe, I say, you can hug them and get our good vibe, and know we will think of you often. Halima has made a card for Ghost. It is a glittery bright pink high-heeled shoe, just like the ones she so loved when she played Zombelina. Ghost is clearly taken aback by this. That anyone would think to make her a card, and one that is tuned into the thing she loves. She doesn't cry, but she takes it delicately, holding it at the very edges so her fingers do not make marks on it. As we say farewell, they are all smiling. Melekodium's smile is the one I remember most, coming from over her shoulder, meeting my eyes as she says goodbye. Smiles are a natural and intrinsic part of an infant's emotional vocabulary, the research says. But Melekodium's smile is a learned language. The lexicons are beautiful.

Straight after this, we have our evaluation. We talk about them, about saying goodbye, about where they have come from, where *we* have come from. We go around the table to talk of our experiences of the workshop programme and relive weeks and weeks. I've lifted a few fragments:

Amazing, watching the kids develop
Individuals that all worked together.
This was wonderful that there is something
For the young people that don't manage
Allowing the young people to be vulnerable
This place actually creates the environment
To do that.
I just got this energy
From them and, from, you know,
From the safe space
From drawing something
This ambience of positiveness

I was coming in to help people,
We came to teach the children but
Really they taught us
I had doubts that we will be able to make it
But we made it

Laughter

At Christmas time I wrote to volunteers:

When we started Theatre Troupe, central to its ideology was a creative family, a labour of theatre and love, coming together in the transcendence that theatre and performance can bring. The “magic” of theatre, brought to those who need magic in their lives more than anyone. ... No doubt there will be all sorts of difficulties still to face, but as the old adage has it: there may be trouble ahead but while there’s music and moonlight (well, street light) and Theatre Troupe, we can face the music and dance!!

Some music. Some dance.

Chapter Six: Discussion

‘Everyone loves a toolkit,’ I say in a supervision meeting. We laugh, but it is true that, despite my/our critiquing them and their neoliberal reductionist tendencies, I do recognise there is something enticing about having a concrete, practical application of a theoretical idea. Self-help books thrive on our love for lists and bullet points, and, I would argue, Positive Psychology takes advantage of it. The popularity of scales - WEMWBS being emblematic of course - taps into something in us that wants to know more definitively than philosophers or poets can offer us, not just who and what we are, but what we can do about who or what we are. Applied Theatre is not immune, and this is unsurprising, given that its remit is the practical application of a creative pedagogy: it is useful to have a toolkit in this ostensibly practical field. Personally, I have found the best toolkit for applied theatre is in the oral tradition, with each practitioner learning from the next. I have gathered many brilliant games and exercises, and these have all been acquired through co-tutors or professional development workshops, although, for others, Boal’s *Games for Actors and Non Actors* and other similar manuals offer a more formalised approach to this and is used widely.⁴⁷⁸

But there is also considerable risk. The games get categorised: they are “ice-breakers” or “name games” or warm-ups, or activities specifically targeted at raising group energy, or bringing a group focus. For some young people such as those in THYT, using this toolkit can be problematic. They need to be used with a consideration of strengths and limitations in the room, participants’ fragilities, or resistance. It needs to be recognised that some young people are just not yet ready to have their ice broken.

Then there is the problem of models that continue to be recycled, including those that are, socio-politically, from a different era’s ideology. Augusto Boal’s Forum Theatre is, perhaps, an emblem for this phenomenon. Forum Theatre was developed as part of Boal’s Theatre

⁴⁷⁸ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2002).

of the Oppressed (1973), influenced by Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, emerging from a Latin American liberation politics. Prentki and Preston suggest that its continuing popularity, fifty years later, is, in no small part, because of Boal's 'tireless appetite for running international workshops,' which has given him 'guru' status.⁴⁷⁹ But its 'seductive power,' in which theatrical conventions are smashed as audience members get on stage and rewrite the play they have seen perform - becoming, in Boal's word, spect-actors, - seems to have become a go-to off the shelf tool which, in some cases, leaves Forum Theatre's ideology of challenging injustice and oppression behind. Adrian Jackson trained in Forum Theatre with Boal, and has extensive practice with theatre company, Cardboard Citizens. He writes: '[a]t best, Forum Theatre retains the subversive intentions of its origin as a counterweight to the standard power relations obtained in the theatre context, and by extension in the society which supports that theatre.'⁴⁸⁰ It is 'the power of theatrical solidarity.' Jackson goes on to say though:

The worst manifestations of Forum Theatre simply place one set of rigid social and theatrical conventions with another, even to the extent that the audience feels compelled to participate as a kind of penance, and sometimes even to save vicarious embarrassment for the performers as to whether the game is working or not...At its least subversive, civic duty can take the place of art and pleasure of theatre.⁴⁸¹

So, on the one hand, it is counterintuitive to make any claims or conclusions about what the Theatre Troupe Model might be, or look like. In some crucial sense it goes against TTM's ideology. Given that attunement practice is based on the notion that human relationships are irreducible, that love is unfathomable and relationships and the forming of relationships rely, primarily, on intuition and subtle adjustment of cues between two or more people in the moment, it follows, therefore, that it cannot be usefully made an instrument. It is also based on the notion of theatre and performance as exciting, terrifying and wonderful, something that can only exist in the moment between a group of people who are pulling together to put on their specific show. This is obviously not packageable. Just as we may

⁴⁷⁹ *The Applied Theatre Reader*, ed. by Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston (New York: Routledge, 2009), p.13.

⁴⁸⁰ Jackson in *The Applied Theatre Reader*, p. 41.

⁴⁸¹ Jackson, in *The Applied Theatre Reader*, p. 45.

read a novel, or a poem and extract the elements that speak to our own experiences, doing this when reading the account in Chapter Five, means, hopefully, that we discern from it what may usefully be transferred (or rejected), and that taking this practice forward is on some level, enough.

But, as also stated in my intentions for this research, I hope that a new TTM methodology may be usefully practised by others. I have, after all, called it the Theatre Troupe Model, signalling a defined and specific approach. It should not be prescriptive, of course. But isolating pertinent modes or tropes of practice might be helpful. I say this with hindsight. The pilot project involved many sharp learning curves that resulted in a practice that we adapted, right the way through the year. This has informed subsequent Theatre Troupe projects. One to one mentoring, minibuses and training for staff have become standard. These are helpful to know about and understand. I also say this because, in the years since TTM pilot project ended, I have worked with many students from drama, applied theatre, psychology and counselling and social work, who have told me that to be able to have a grounded theory which captures some of what the Theatre Troupe Model is, is helpful to their own research and practice.

I present this next section, therefore, in an attempt to provide some clarity, identifying key tropes from the pilot project. In order to try and avoid the practice becoming instrumental, though, I do this playfully. So here is the Theatre Troupe Model (anti) toolkit:

1. Eat pizza, drink tea, drive a bus.
2. You will suffer (but it's worth it).
3. Try what love can do.
4. The Show must go on (or the Festivaesque)

1. Eat pizza, drink tea, drive a bus.

Family

The most critical understanding that has arisen for use from the pilot project is that the Troupe does not just model a family-like community, but is one. This begins with its inner mechanisms of attuning in the adult team. It was not intended - our recruitment for volunteers was open and non-specific - but the Troupe somehow 'replicated family dynamics.'⁴⁸² It had a spread of ages across the team. Martin and Lesley were in their late sixties/early seventies, Oliver, Joy, Naomi and I were in early to late middle age, our students and Peer Inspirers ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-five. The transcripts show this layered support and companionship. But they also reveal that it is the feedback sessions themselves which appear to have a fundamental role in making the community real. This includes, of course, eating and drinking together. It was over tea and home-made pizza that we adults tuned into each other. The feedback was structured in a format that we use and have used in all Theatre Troupe projects: each person offering a highlight, a challenge and a thought for moving forward. But we deviated a lot. It is in the deviations that the bonding and establishing of the community is cemented: this bonding occurs in a mix of different attunement functions: camaraderie, emotional support and solidarity, professional support and praise.

The thing to come out of that is - in a way you will have said this - time. We have to give these children time and if we can hold back and wait they *will* get there. I really believe that.⁴⁸³

I was just sort of watching everyone and they were all kind of grounded. Because they were with you guys individually, and you have those individual relationships that you've built up through a lot of rejection, a lot of like slippery kind of behaviour that is very hard to hold on to, and you've still been there every week and I just think, yeah, it's amazing.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² Oliver Campbell, interview December, 2017

⁴⁸³ Lesley Hunka, Feedback session, date, 2017

⁴⁸⁴ Oliver Campbell, Feedback Session, 3 July 2017

This was layered with professional experience and support from Oliver, Naomi and me, supported by Lesley's experience as a Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

Really don't take [children blanking you] personally... the thing of consistently being there is the most important thing, and we do know there is a massive change, from past experience. We've frequently had participants who really we don't even get any eye contact from them at first. It's more about them knowing we're consistently making the offer⁴⁸⁵

I worked as a SENCo...and I'm just amazed that these children [THYT] are coming and that they do anything at all, because what they exhibited today, they exhibit that behaviour everyday at school. Today, for me it was a bad luck day, that they just came in with their own different difficulties. But they came through didn't they, by the end of the day, by the end of the session?⁴⁸⁶

See yourself as just a part of the puzzle. So it might be that you keep talking to them every week and they don't answer, and then one week you come in and they are talking to Oliver and you're like – "I've been trying for weeks and weeks," but probably you doing that allowed her to do that with someone else. There's always that to hang on to.⁴⁸⁷

This was also a respected space for listening and debate. It seemed that this coming together and caring for each other sustained us, and also transferred into the workshops, so that young people came in each week into a real loving community. Campbell observed: 'what I saw it gave them [the volunteers] was a community of their own, and you don't...really get that in our society. It's a rare thing and I think they enjoyed having that.' There is, suggests Zygmunt Bauman, a shared understanding of community which recognises that 'we can count on each other's good will. If we stumble and fall others will help us stand on our feet again.'⁴⁸⁸ This certainly felt like the spirit of the Troupe.

⁴⁸⁵ Campbell, Feedback, 7 November, 2016

⁴⁸⁶ Lesley Hunka Feedback', 6 March, 2017

⁴⁸⁷ Naomi Long-Srioktriam, Feedback Session, 7 November 2016

⁴⁸⁸ Zygmunt Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Themes for the 21st Century, Reprinted (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), P. 2.

In *The Ecology of Attachment in the Family*, Hill et al explore notions of attachment, affect regulation, interpersonal understanding, information processing and the provision of comfort within intimate relationships, suggesting that all these approaches can be applied to family systems.⁴⁸⁹ Campbell notes that with the nuclear family that ‘a lot of psychotherapists [concentrate on], there’s nothing particularly normative about that: certainly not historically and cross-culturally.’⁴⁹⁰ He suggests that THYT was able to fulfil that function. Salvador Minuchin claims that family therapy theory and practice does not often consider the family system beyond the nuclear unit, and a broader perspective is important:

The entire family—not just the mother or primary caretaker—including father, siblings, grandparents, often cousins, aunts and uncles, are extremely significant in the experience of the child, and yet, when I hear attachment theorists talk, I don't hear anything about these other important figures in a child's life...Certainly a stable early environment is important, but can...deny the full familial and social reality of children's lives.⁴⁹¹

It is likely that the way the adults came together in an extended family to form the Troupe, a close-knit group who really liked each other, meant young people were exposed to a different “way” of doing relationships. Byng-Hall claims that a whole family can provide a secure base for a child, with a reliable network of attachments, which enable all family members to feel secure enough to explore their own relationships and those outside the family. Cobb has shown that the capacity for collaboration in a family is a marker of a secure base.⁴⁹² Campbell suggests that the Troupe goes one stage further than a therapy setting: ‘the role that you’re actually occupying is not the clinician’s role, it is more the active person within a community, who is being a living part of a community.’⁴⁹³ Because

⁴⁸⁹ Jonathan Hill and others, ‘The Ecology of Attachment in the Family’, *Family Process*, 42.2 (2003), 205–21

⁴⁹⁰ Campbell, interview by author

⁴⁹¹ Deborah A. Lott, ‘Brain Development, Attachment and Impact on Psychic Vulnerability’, *Psychiatric Times*, 1998 <<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/brain-development-attachment-and-impact-psychic-vulnerability>> [accessed 19 June 2019].

⁴⁹² John Byng-Hall, ‘The Crucial Roles of Attachment in Family Therapy’, *Journal of Family Therapy*, 30.2 (2008), 129–46 P.135

⁴⁹³ Campbell, interview by author

we enjoyed being together, talking together, our easy interactions rubbed off on the children. For example, towards the end of the project, Fagilistic and Melekodium in particular were able to slot into this unit, and join its easy companionship, 'everyone sitting around relaxed and talking.'⁴⁹⁴ Lesley said she caught the young people observing the relaxed banter between the adults, as if the experience of adults being calm and unstressed with each other in their presence was new to them.⁴⁹⁵ This then influenced the way they were with each other:

My positive would probably be when everyone, like it was a very comfortable space, like they knew that this was not a space for bullying.... The discussion in the safe space, that was really nice, different age groups interacting.⁴⁹⁶

I think my positive was mostly those older young people. I looked over and Iduna was having a really positive conversation with them. She was lovely. She was being like a peer inspirer. She said to me, "This was really nice."⁴⁹⁷

One of the biggest changes we saw was in the participation of the siblings. Staying beside and sticking with Melekodium and Fagilistic had been a trial that almost every adult in THYT had experienced first hand at some point. We had also seen them through the death of their father, the fact that they could not go to the funeral and through other losses such as their social worker and therapist. We delighted in their improvement: 'They've really enjoyed it today haven't they? Having the time, having the peace, I think they've really valued that pace.'⁴⁹⁸ We are fully inside the process of caring for a child. It gives us as much delight as them:

I mean having the Fagilistic this week really happy and chatty and like in the room making things or you know saying preferences and things and then also down here he was fantastic in the scene it was so nice to see and he gave me a big thumbs up at

⁴⁹⁴ Bethan Illman, feedback 19 June 2017

⁴⁹⁵ Lesley Hunka, feedback 19 June 2017

⁴⁹⁶ Illman, 19 June 2017

⁴⁹⁷ Charlie Hurford, Feedback Session, 22 May, 2017

⁴⁹⁸ Lesley Hunka, 5 June, 2017

the end of the story which made me really happy⁴⁹⁹

We have observed how their relationship with each other had changed and how they have drawn closer together. Certainly by the end, it felt that they were one of us and, according to Fagilistic, we were one of them. His description in his interview in the final session seems to point to this: ‘The best thing about Theatre Troupe is, I love it when everyone’s here, I love it when people associate.’⁵⁰⁰ From our observations, it seemed that they had taken the relational learning from the Troupe and applied it in other contexts. Melekodium suggests that this has occurred at school:

...when I’m at school, when a teacher gets on my nerves if I *really* don’t like the teacher, I don’t know cos I’m kind of rude at times in school. So when at school I just think about here[at Theatre Troupe] and how very happy I am and everyone is very kind and also strict as well so when I think – is it really worth it to get angry with the teachers or other people? Cos I remember my behaviour used to be really bad and now I’ve actually calmed down a little bit and been more happier and if I do that the future might really be good for me.⁵⁰¹

When I followed up with Kizi and her mother, eighteen months after the project, there were two aspects of June’s interview that stood out for me. The first was that Kizi had identified the Troupe as ‘my people.’ June worked long shifts ‘just to put food on the table’ and as a result Kizi and her sister often had to be left alone in the house.⁵⁰² This clearly upset June, but she said of Kizi’s engagement in THYT:

...the child [was] so happy, she said: you go, don’t worry, I’m going to be with my people. Yes because she felt more, more comforted, more safe. “Even if you don’t talk to me here, I have my people there.”⁵⁰³

⁴⁹⁹ Martin Hunka, 3 July 2017

⁵⁰⁰ Fagilistic, interview by Oliver Campbell 19 July, 2017.

⁵⁰¹ Melekodium, interview by author, 19 July 2017

⁵⁰² June, interview by author, December 2018.

⁵⁰³ June

June said it had helped Kizi, 'it does really, really help her', to mix socially in secondary school. Kizi said it had helped her because 'in primary school I was lonely, and now I'm not.' But, although there were apparently lasting changes that came from the Troupe family dynamic and the embodied learning it could offer, *because* it was a real community rather than just an "intervention", its loss was considerable, even perhaps, although June does not use this word, a betrayal. She had not realised the group was ending. We had not managed to say goodbye because Kizi had her school graduation at the same time as the last session. Although I had sent messages about the ending, they had not been fully absorbed. The finality of it came with a shock:

I thought it was going to be a continuous, but it was so sad that, the period when the programme was cut off. Kizi had started making friends, being relaxed, getting herself then the programme just cut off suddenly, so it was so sad.⁵⁰⁴

We had become a real community and it had a significant detrimental impact to take it away. The pilot project was never going to be longer than a year, although we would have continued with it as a youth theatre had we had the funding. But this was not good enough. I asked Martin the question: 'what do you think was the offer we gave to the young people?' He said: 'the offer *was* us.'⁵⁰⁵ If the Theatre Troupe Model is effective because the community is a living breathing one, it should not be taken away.

Home

Sally Mackey suggests:

P]lace is space (or site) animated through operations and actions and made personal. Place is ... inhabited briefly or over a longer period, constructed through a range of operations, actions and behaviours and, through these, a psychological relationship is developed with place...frequently place is associated with 'attachment'⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ June

⁵⁰⁵ Martin Hunka, interview by author, 26 November 2019.

⁵⁰⁶ Sally Mackey, 'Applied Theatre and Place', in *Critical Perspectives on Applied Theatre*, ed. by Jenny Hughes and Helen Nicholson (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

The environment at Treasure House was conducive to providing the home space. It had its disadvantages, with its open-plan layout and its opportunities to run in a loop, but it did have colours and light, and home touches. It was a quirky home, but there was 'this amazing feeling of light and air, [as] the children move around up and down, it's just magic. Using these two spaces, it's totally unique, quite different from moving into a different classroom.'⁵⁰⁷ Communities for healing mental distress, which have compassion at their core, tend to have aspects of home about them. In the moral treatment movement in the late 1800s, for example the York Retreat, an approach of compassion saw a rejection of asylums as places of languishing despair, and created alternative buildings, resembling a family home where possible, with window locks and bars concealed behind hand carved panels and soft furnishings.⁵⁰⁸ For the Madlove idealists, there are always touches of home in a place for healing; 'Northumberland – sheep farm up in the hills, views, sunsets; Garden with a stream running through; 'Star gazing.' 'Books.' And pets.'⁵⁰⁹

It was always our ambition to make our Troupe warm, colourful and cosy and we tried to deliver this and improve on it right through the programme. When we were struggling to manage behaviour in the third term, it was aesthetic spaces we turned to, wanting to offer new opportunities to be at peace in peaceful surroundings. Oliver made sensory zones by dismantling and rebuilding children's tents. A notable example of the impact of a loving space was when Fagilistic and Elsa had their brief fight. It was a sanctuary to which I could immediately take Fagilistic and where, amongst tissue paper fish and the sound of waves, he and I could sit together quietly. It served a better purpose than being taken into isolation at school, or being hauled into a locked cell.

From 2012 to 2013, Bobby Baker toured a show *Mad Gyms and Kitchens*, subtitled 'Wend your way to wellness':

⁵⁰⁷ Lesley Hunka, Feedback 31 October 2016.

⁵⁰⁸ Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity, from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*, First paperback edition (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016), p. 202.

⁵⁰⁹ 'What Is Madlove?', *Madlove* <<http://www.madlove.org.uk/>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

Prepare to be surprised and delighted, moved and enlightened as Bobby demonstrates how she achieves that ultimate 'wellbeing' factor. From working-out to chilling out, via the kitchen sink, Bobby's wellness roadshow investigates how to get better at feeling...

Baker presents methods used to feel well, including working out gently at the gym, and a cosy environment in which she receives company. Audience participation is also central to the piece. At the end of the show, the audience are all offered a cup of tea from her kitchen, which is recreated on stage. The bit I remember most was when she cooked garlic on stage - the sensory pleasures of food cooked in her own home. The particularity of our taste preferences, the things that give us comfort are bespoke.⁵¹⁰ In Madlove, it is 'Marks and Spencers fruit buns and Thornton ice-cream', 'Eggs Benedict for breakfast...for lunch Porterhouse steak with chunky chips with death by chocolate for desert.'⁵¹¹

Similarly, providing food that was *particular* became a vital part of the TTM pilot. This was mostly down to Martin, Zoe and Annie, and their home-cooked, home-provided food. We ate it too; it was always a staple of the feedback sessions, as an extension of what children had experienced. At first, the offer of food in the workshop was similar to several other projects I have undertaken: snacks that young people could help themselves to as they arrived. But Martin took on the role of "chef" and this shifted the emphasis in its inherent act of nurture:

The challenge for me is getting the food ready producing the food they actually want to eat, that there's not too much of it, it'll take a little while, trial and error, but I think it's really important because we want them to have things that they want to come here for. It needs to be one of the pleasures that they enjoy.⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ Mad Gyms and Kitchens «Daily Life Ltd.» <<https://dailylifeld.co.uk/our-work/mad-gyms-and-kitchens/>> [accessed 20 June 2019].

⁵¹¹ Madlove

⁵¹² Martin Hunka, Feedback session, 31 October 2016

He tried various different options. He cooked homemade pumpkin soup in the first week for example, and, after a consultation when we asked young people what kind of food they would like, made spaghetti bolognese. Later, homemade pizza became the hot offering of choice. Children would be consulted over the toppings they would like. The process took him several hours each week, but it was a real labour of love:

I have to say , I *love* cooking for people. This is not cordon bleu you know, but I *love* it, you know, I'm up at seven, walking the dog, and back to do the sandwiches and the pizzas, you know, but I love it... so it's not a chore.

Annie and Zoe made cakes and biscuits for birthdays and public celebration days, also lovingly produced by hand, not just baked but shaped and decorated. For children's birthdays these were made to order.

But it also came with its struggles. Food was a complicated thing for our young people. Sometimes there was not enough of it at home. This could either result in either grabbing or hoarding, as Fagilistic did; he 'barricaded' himself behind a plate of food, which later had to be thrown away.⁵¹³ Also at one stage in the project, the food table became a site of aggression.

In response to this, we introduced a table service through which children would choose what they wanted from the menu (as much as they wanted so there was no anxiety about not getting enough). It was then served by Martin. It became a family sitting round the table, which, despite serious artistic misgivings, actually worked in harmony with the gentle art work going on at the same time. In Martin's thank you card at the end of the project, Fagilistic wrote: 'thank you for being a good servant.'⁵¹⁴ For a young carer in straightened home circumstances, such an act of generosity was vital. With the close attention of adults, we were often able to make children safe enough to eat:

⁵¹³ Martin Hunka, Feedback session, 31 October 2016.

⁵¹⁴ Martin Hunka, Feedback Session, 7 November 2016

Joy She was very reluctant initially. I could tell that she wanted to eat but she just couldn't physically eat at that time.

Naomi She wanted to come, after we'd finished practising, I said, do you want to come up and have your food now, because Joy had put her a plate and covered it up for later and she went, and I went, come on, I'll come and sit with you.⁵¹⁵

Coming here and going there

Providing transport was also an act of family/home but it was a more fraught experience. We found that children could not attend Theatre Troupe because they could not get to it or travel from it. At first we tried a system to help them onto public buses but travelling alone was not safe. We tried an ad hoc taxi service for some people, but this was unreliable. Attendance at workshops is something I have struggled with across my whole career, and our very first Theatre Troupe project was representative of this. But with the TTM pilot project, it was the first time I fully understood the cause. The young people we worked with were excluded from activities for social and emotional reasons, but also for practical ones, such as a parent working a twelve hour shift, or a child having an elderly or unwell carer. By the time the project was approximately a quarter of the way through, we had a minibus service, a formalised specialist taxi service and some young people going home with Lesley and Martin in their car. The amount of organisation that was taken to work out minibus routes, enter into a hire agreement with companies, arrange essential training for our driver and raise additional funds to support it, (it was the most expensive aspect of the project) was draining. But also, we realised that this was not only fulfilling a practical need but an emotional one, and what we discovered through the whole transport ordeal, was that the emotions about going home were especially high. Zoe and I found our encounters with this painful and fraught. Even when we had had calm sessions, on the minibus, behaviour could escalate to dangerous levels, whether this was the decibels of noise from the children, or Kristoff, tugging on the door and threatening to jump off. There were bullying problems in cars and taxis, and we saw all these behaviours escalate to extremes

⁵¹⁵ Naomi Long-Sriokritam & Joy Josiah, feedback session 13th December 2016

when we took children to other venues in London. Looking back, we were missing vital clues about the transition between workshop and home being a challenging one. But when we approached the problem with a greater level of empathy, tuning in to the chaotic energy and reading the distress, when we accepted it wasn't just transport but was a relational transaction, it became easier to bear (mostly - count out the minibus experiences to and from our performance at Queen Mary University London) . We began to understand where some of the behaviour came from:

[Being on the minibus] definitely opened my eyes with all of them how difficult it was, why so many of those young people in the group were very guarded because they're not going home necessarily to the nicest environments. So you would see those kinds of moments would kind of hit me that oh yeah, but it also made me think "OK we really need to make all their time with us on a Monday really special so that is the prevailing memory of that hour or that day rather than anything else."⁵¹⁶

So, our transport service provided a bridge from the safety of the workshop to home. We began taking each child to his or her door and talking to the parents/carers. This often became a warm encounter where we exchanged positive words about a child or, in good humour, would roll our eyes about their child's tendency to hide under a table (for example).

In some respects, it could be argued, transport has not much to do with the restorative work of art and drama, but it was one of the biggest learning curves, not just of the project, but of my career. It is an essential act of nurture. Many children are lucky, in that they don't have to think about how they get to drama classes, ballet classes, football training. Those who do have to think about it, never usually get there. There could be an argument that being the equivalent of the 'mum and dad taxi' is intervening too much in family life and its functions. For the neoliberals who demand we "connect," parents may be judged for shirking parental responsibility, or, perhaps, for undermining a child's necessity to build resilience, and developing life skills, travelling independently being one of these. In another

⁵¹⁶ Zoe Dowling, interview by author, 9 November 2018

sense, and this, for me, would be more concerning, we might be overstepping the line, making arrogant assumptions that our “community” is somehow superior to what a family can provide. But our families did not respond to the offer as such. Kizi’s mother expresses the importance of transport:

It depends on the month...because this period now, it’s more dark, so it’s frightening when they come on their own. It’s frightening because you can never tell what happens on the way. So it’s more reliable when there’s a private driver that drops them in their different kind of homes. ..at least your mind will not be shaky.⁵¹⁷

For other children - those whose parents were terminally ill, or those who were (possibly) trying to fly under the radar of immigration services - it was welcomed. Perhaps this offer would be part of what Ray Pahl and Liz Spencer call a ‘Friendship Community’ or ‘Personal Community.’⁵¹⁸ This unit may be made up of different people including ‘fictive kin...and significant others who occupy their social worlds.’⁵¹⁹ “[F]riendship” allows for a flexible reciprocal flexibility. Pahl suggests that micro local communities can exist within a general condition of an alienated sociality and in this there is life-blood. ‘Communities based in friendship may actually be sustaining the family of kin... [t]he family is not disappearing – it’s taking another social form.’⁵²⁰

2. You will suffer (but it’s worth it).

Helen Nicholson suggests that contemporary theatre practitioners who work in educational and community contexts are, at best, developing practices that are both responsive to the narratives and cultural memories of the participants with whom they are working, artistically and imaginatively.⁵²¹ Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton reflect on

⁵¹⁷ June

⁵¹⁸ Ray Pahl and Liz Spencer, ‘Personal Communities: Not Simply Families of “Fate” or “Choice”’, *Current Sociology*, 52.2 (2004), 199–221, p.200

⁵¹⁹ Pahl and Spencer, p.201

⁵²⁰ Pahl and Spencer, p.256

⁵²¹ Sheila Preston, *Applied Theatre: Facilitation: Pedagogies, Practices, Resilience*, Applied Theatre (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016), p.4.

responsive qualities of practitioners: ‘An applied facilitator ... will be consistently responsive to all the contextual factors at play in each session: who are these people? What do they bring with them? How are they different today from yesterday? How does this space shape what we do? What is the social health of the group?’⁵²² Nicola Shaughnessy touches on empathy: ‘for the applied theatre practitioner, empathy might be considered to be an important feature of their practical and ethical engagement with the ‘client group’⁵²³ Compared to most other projects I have done, in THYT, contextual factors in a participant’s life were very much considered. We ask how young people might be different from yesterday (or 3pm when school has finished). Before and during THYT we very much considered that other factors might be in the background to our work, and we did this with empathy. But, for large stretches of the project we were unable to practise applied theatre. Richard Sennet writes that ‘communication begins with the infant wail’,⁵²⁴ and the wail is perhaps a good place to start. For us the “wail” from the young people was constant and pervasive; it hurt our ears. Attuning was not a collaborative dance, as Lewis et al suggest it should be, but a painful struggle.⁵²⁵ One of our challenges was, often, that young people did not participate. We fretted constantly about this:

The challenge would be making people stand up. It’s frustrating, I don’t know why they don’t want to stand, there must be a reason for that, so my challenge is what to do to make them engage more during the warm up.⁵²⁶

A challenge was Safe Space which was the most fragmented it’s ever been, I think. People were not engaged and everyone sort of made an exodus outside.⁵²⁷

⁵²² Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton, *Applied Drama: A Facilitator’s Handbook for Working in Community* (Intellect, 2013), p.7.

⁵²³ Nicola Shaughnessy, *Applying Performance: Live Art, Socially Engaged Theatre and Affective Practice* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), p.5.

⁵²⁴ Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Co-Operation* (London: Penguin, 2013), P. 11.

⁵²⁵ , Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 1. Vintage ed (New York: Vintage, 2001), P.11.

⁵²⁶ Dowling, feedback session 6 March 2017.

⁵²⁷ Campbell, Feedback, 6 March 2017.

We tried to deal with this when it was particularly bad, in week eight but this failed. It vexed me considerably:

I don't know at the moment how to solve that thing to say to people, "It's fine that you want to sit out, but there comes a point when, if you're gonna sit out then really should you be doing the drama?" Maybe we should shift it, maybe we should say if you don't wanna do the drama that's fine actually, so carry on the art activity.

Oliver and I were both conversant with attachment-based behaviours especially related to the Dynamic Maturational Model, and should have known what we would be dealing with. But the knowing did not translate into understanding, as our emotions on the ground got in the way of this. Theory and practice were hard to reconcile. One of the problems was that, despite knowing better, we all brought our own experiences of normative boundaries to the project. When young people were not able to apply them, we floundered:

...so just how far do I manage behaviour? When is it appropriate to [intervene], you know, there's some times when – Melekodium was saying something, and I thought "No and I really want to address this right now," ...it's when to say something and when not to.⁵²⁸

There was some frustration in the group, that we should have been clamping down on 'bad' behaviour. Child psychiatrist for Southwark CAMHS, Daniel Lizarbe, suggested 'Moving forward I think [the challenging behaviour] needs to be stopped. They [should] think there's a consequence, and we can explain that there's a rule and that rule cannot be broken.'⁵²⁹ Joel, who has spent many years as a participant in youth theatre projects in the area, suggests that be some kind of strike system. 'Like a strike when they do something they shouldn't do. Three strikes and you're out.'⁵³⁰ The DMM model states that punitive measures will fail, and I do recognise this in my response to volunteers:

If you look at some of the literature of this, about children with attachment problems you see that they have a very different internal working model from the

⁵²⁸ Joy, Josiah, Feedback Session, 12 December 2016.

⁵²⁹ Daniel Lizarbe, 8 February, 2017.

⁵³⁰ Remz Nation, 8 February 2017.

rest of us. So most of us, who have had good enough parenting, we respond to sanctions we respond to someone saying: that isn't appropriate behaviour...they've learnt that the way they survive is to have inappropriate behaviour, so that stuff going on - that's quite a learnt response. That isn't to say we don't challenge it, but we have to be very careful ...where we put those strikes and sanctions.⁵³¹

Yet I don't think I really believed the theories in the moment. Like me, the rest of the team, have no frame of reference to process this: what we knew from our education, from our parenting, was an embedded system of sanction and reward. These methods, whether or not we were conscious of this, were the way we made sense of the world. When these failed THYT, we sought out intellectual solutions. We tried different proactive techniques to resolve it. We asked volunteers to sit between each young person. We discovered that the circle was problematic. We tried a system where we were deliberate about how we put young people into groups, so we could control challenging dynamics. We even introduced stress balls for young people who said they would be helpful to control their anxiety in the workshop. The children's response to our offer of that gesture was - in hindsight - quite apt: they turned the stress balls into weapons, lobbing them at others from the balcony. Several people asked me if there was a toolkit they could draw on to deal with behaviours. I couldn't readily come up with anything resembling one.

Because I was Project Director, I became the disciplinarian. Every session I was forced to do something I didn't believe in because the approach I did believe in failed miserably. I had not foreseen dynamics of hierarchy, and where my place would be, but I realised, because I started the project, and managed the project, I was the only person who could take overall control, or at least take on the role of the authoritarian to effect change. This, I thought, was not how I saw myself when I conceived the precious attunement-based unit of the troupe. Interestingly, it was one of the youngest adult members of the group, still in a youth theatre himself, who picked up my struggle with this. He made me cry with his empathy, as he identified the struggle to be disciplinarian:

⁵³¹ Hunka, 8 February 2017.

I think Emily is maybe the one voice that is managing the session, so all of the pressure is on her to keep everyone doing the activity they're meant to do, so I think if there's more than just one voice, you could manage it better. It's all the pressure on Emily to put the lesson on.⁵³²

But the most overwhelming struggle we faced was with bullying behaviour. Schott et al take as the definition of "bullying" from Yohji Morita: It is 'psychic torture'.⁵³³ Research has proved peer aggression can be damaging to a person's short term and long term mental health, and ability to thrive. ([Parker and Asher, 1987; Kupersmidt et al., 1990]; Parinda Khatri Janis B. Kupersmidt Charlotte Patterson).⁵³⁴ Research indicates that being bullied is correlative with developing depression, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.⁵³⁵ Although "bullying" is more commonly understood to mean acts of repeated and sustained cruelty on an individual by others, this was not completely the case with the behaviour we saw in THYT, except in the obvious incidents involving Kizi.⁵³⁶

As architects of the Troupe, the volunteers and staff were compassionate and empathetic people, and all believed in this natural impulse. I believed we were creating the conditions in which any inclinations towards cruelty would quickly become obsolete, and children would be able to leave this aggressive behaviour behind them, when not in oppressive school or community settings, the places in which they were treated with disrespect or simply had to survive. The 'Golden Rule' policy that I had introduced at the beginning of the project in which bullying was met with a zero-tolerance approach, was really meant to be preventative: an invitation to understand that the way we treat others is central to an

⁵³² Remz Nation, Feedback Session, 8 February 2017.

⁵³³ Robin May Schott, 'The Social Concept of Bullying: Philosophical Reflections on Definitions', in *School Bullying*, ed. by Robin May Schott and Dorte Marie Sondergaard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 21–46, p.21.

⁵³⁴ Parinda Khatri, Janis B. Kupersmidt, and Charlotte Patterson, 'Aggression and Peer Victimization as Predictors of Self-Reported Behavioral and Emotional Adjustment', *Aggressive Behavior*, 26.5 (2000), 345–58

⁵³⁵ Sinem Siyahhan, O. Tolga Aricak, and Nur Cayirdag-Acar, 'The Relation between Bullying, Victimization, and Adolescents' Level of Hopelessness', *Journal of Adolescence*, 35.4 (2012), 1053–59, p.54.

⁵³⁶ For example, David P. Farrington, 'Understanding and Preventing Bullying', *Crime and Justice*, 17 (1993), 381–458, [accessed 8 August 2020].

experience of care. On a personal level, this was also, I think, to provide a space that would ensure the kind of bullying I experienced at school would never happen. It was naïve. We found that for young people, an emotionally violent approach to relationships was a given, a faulty current sparking dangerously through their whole lives. Three of the seven of the Autumn terms sessions involved some kind of bullying, five of the six spring term sessions: it was a problem that escalated no matter what we tried. We were, however, able to witness, or sometimes just catch, traces of the pervasiveness of the problem, which, presumably, was played out everyday in the school playground or in clusters of gangs, places in which adults never saw or heard, and were therefore never aware.

It was difficult to absolutely pin down its causes. Was it prevalent because children in our group had attachment disorders, and bringing them together in a group concentrated the problem? Was it because this was, for all children, simply the everyday culture in which they survived? I cast back to my own experiences in the secondary school I went to, and could certainly believe the latter. It is in between education that it happens: in the scrum of the corridors, the shouted insults, the spitting. In the Troupe, there was a strong likelihood we were witnessing a toxic combination of these factors.

The subtlety of the bullying was a real frustration, described by Oliver as ‘some kind of dynamic going on underneath the surface.’ and ‘the tiniest, tiniest thing with Kristoff, and it was so small it was difficult to pick up on it and comment on it... a slight look at Sven, which made me feel...uncomfortable.’⁵³⁷ We developed an uncomfortable relationship with the word “banter.” When we challenged bullying, they always responded either: ‘it’s just a joke,’ or ‘It’s just “banter.”’ Their rebuff was scathing. It was normal, they were telling us, they were fluent in a language that we could not speak and we did not deserve to learn. Their world was one of survival and we had no right to intervene, perhaps, they thought, because adults never helped. In her interview, I ask Afireem whether she thinks the way we dealt with it worked or not:

⁵³⁷ Campbell, feedback, 30 January 2017

- Emily : Do you think that the exclusions work, when we exclude people for a week. Does that work?
- Afireem: In the middle
- Emily : In the middle. So which bits do work and which bits don't work?
- Afireem: Cos Fagilistic got excluded once or twice. He comes back, he's fine, he's quiet but then gradually he starts to behave like that again.⁵³⁸

Particularly disheartening was that the bullying behaviour seemed to get worse as the project progressed. There are several points in the project that we turn to the drama to solve the problem because we all held a belief that theatre had special qualities in this regard. Theatre, after all, has actors stepping into the shoes of others. To try and effect change through empathy, theatre gave us a good tool. In our rendering of the Snow Queen, we changed the idea of ice shards flying in on the wind in the Hans Christian Anderson's version, to ice bullies. This failed to make an impression. We tried a Theatre In Education approach, casting ourselves as the bullies, so they would identify with the victim. Instead, they laughed at us. We also have an idea of creating a character who is "different": a child with feathers who comes to earth and faces prejudice. We thought this was tangential enough. But the work never got off the ground, because of the constant sniping and pushing and surreptitious looks and kicks. So we certainly felt our resolve about the power-for-good weaken as we encountered its theatre's limitations. As for magic, we did not even have a wand for the spell. Furthermore, the zero-tolerance approach to bullying, which was to exclude anyone who engaged in it, failed miserably. This is seen obviously in Fagilistic's volte face in the session after the panto, not just because he engages in terrible bullying afterwards, but because Melekodium does too. It certainly was not a deterrent.

⁵³⁸ Afireem, interview with author 19 July 2017

I never properly considered that seeking attunement would be painful. Attunement literature tends to focus on the essentiality and power of love and nurture. In a therapy setting, of course, the therapist is there directly to hear, understand and reflect on a person's pain and, by doing so, encounter that pain in a controlled way. But as a real community, we *lived* the pain. As shown above, conditions could often feel uncontrolled. As we interacted closely with young people, we often felt helpless or frustrated. So much attention is paid to each child, as emerges in transcripts, and often this attention makes us feel helpless. In feedback sessions, we fretted constantly - am I doing the right thing for this child? Could I do something different? I don't know if I can do any more. Yet, and this is still a little unfathomable to me, none of the team wanted to leave. And the transcripts also show that this fretting was a significant device in bringing change. The anguish we suffered across the year, and a pattern of repeated failings were part of the model's unique practices.

Using the DMM

This is where DMM usefully comes into play, and where a more formal structure and support could come intervene in future work. For the pilot project, because I was still developing ideas, none of us approached the work by assessing what strategies a child might be using when they first engaged. This would have been very helpful. Therefore, as an exercise here, I have interpreted from the transcripts what may have been happening in terms of adaptation strategies of the five children I have paid most attention to in my research.

Fagilistic's adaptation to the danger in his life seemed to fulfil several criteria of the DMM type C adaptation style. He was especially struggling with the deterioration of his father's health and how he would be consistently cared for. This was acute for Fagilistic because, as someone with autism, routines and predictable outcomes are important. His running away, and contact with the legal system seemed to be cries for help, to alleviate his distress and keep him safe, which, in the C model, is an escalation to *endangering* behaviour. In the

workshop setting we saw many of the traits of a child who responded to danger and chaos by having the whole team primed to notice him, and he did this through switching strategies, of which there were several: hyperactivity, flight from adults, endangering behaviour (sliding down the bannisters at Treasure House, hanging over the balcony during the pantomime), all of which required immediate and sometimes physical intervention from adults. At other times, he entered what seemed to be states of disassociation, sitting hunched up in his coat, with his hood pulled firmly over his face, not responding to comments or questions from adults. He also used bullying and baiting behaviour towards others but unlike his sister or Kizi, when he mocked children, it was always loudly and repeated, so our obvious response was to intervene. It felt like this was also a case of *blaming others for his own feelings*, as could be seen from the extremely challenging behaviour in the week after the pantomime. After he had made a concerted effort to show us he was sorry and wanted to be accepted in the group, my insistence he still had to be excluded felt like a painful rejection and therefore he projected his feelings forward. Fagilistic could not, generally, recover from extreme states. When an incident happened, we had lost him for most of the workshop.

Melekodium adapted to the threat caused in her childhood very differently from her brother. Initially, she managed her relations in the group, but as the group became more unsettled, so did she. She may have exhibited type A compliance as a younger child, but perhaps due to her age, and the fact that other strategies may not have worked, her behaviour had shifted into an avoidant style, employing being distant, disentangled and dismissive with adults, what Crittenden calls a 'resistant, overt coping style,' which has moved into the "endangering" stage of development.⁵³⁹ Baim suggests that as a child gets older it is more likely that she will revert to a more "endangering" style, leading to more complex methods of self-protection. We judged that Melekodium had learnt through experiences with her mother, that no adult would soothe her distress, or come to her aid.

⁵³⁹ Patricia McKinsey Crittenden, *Raising Parents: Attachment, Representation, and Treatment*, Second edition (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016). P.7

In the case of her father, his terminal illness meant he could not offer her solace, nor look after her properly. These events sent a message that: ‘when I feel bad, no-one helps, if I am close to, or trust others, I am punished or ignored.’⁵⁴⁰ This manifested in blank facial expressions and emotion, and a deliberate distancing herself from potential caregivers. Her “blocking out” adults when they tried to reach her became a standard response. She would turn her back, avoid eye contact and continue conversations with other children. The more we asked her or tried to get her to engage with us, the louder her voice got. If we approached her, she walked away with no acknowledgement of us. There were moments of “rupture” of this pattern, when she suddenly became enraged. This was always when the avoidant, dismissive, ignoring techniques failed, as we persisted in asking her to comply with what was necessary in the workshop. The incident with the car in the penultimate session of the Autumn term was, I felt, a clear demonstration of this. In the car, she bullied Kizi. When it came to Lesley’s attention, and she was asked to stop, she did not engage, and simply continued. When Lesley asked her firmly to get out of the car so she could take Kizi home, Melekodium became extremely angry and verbally abusive. It seemed to be similar to the pattern seen at school, where persistent disruptive behaviour would continue until she was firmly challenged, and then she would lose control. With her peers, she became menacing and ‘highly controlling and punishingly dominating as a way of distancing.’⁵⁴¹ Often, when she became engaged with another child, she would get into their personal space, loom over them, and stare them out, as had been described on her referral form. Or she would laugh very loudly and in a cruel targeting way. She particularly targeted younger “weaker” children (Ghost and Kizi) ‘applying punishment as it had been applied to her.’⁵⁴²

Kizi’s experiences throughout her life have been lonely and painful. Adult attention is predictable but unattuned: she will be alone and either adults and children will abandon or hurt her, or they will be entirely powerless to help her. Her teachers interpret her

⁵⁴⁰ Baim and Morrison, p.28.

⁵⁴¹ Baim and Morrison, p.32.

⁵⁴² Baim and Morrison, p.32.

behaviour as insolence and rudeness. June stands by, heartbroken for her daughter, but powerless to stop the abuse. Kizi's language and learning needs are very real, but may well have been exacerbated by her trauma experiences, with an inability to focus on tasks when she is preoccupied by ever-present threat. Learning difficulties are a marked part of developmental trauma disorder.⁵⁴³ This increases her sense of isolation and it may well be significant that she was always at the back of the class, until a sensitive teacher saw she has additional needs. Kizi's self-protection strategies seem to fall into two different patterns of adaptation, both of which we saw at Theatre Troupe. With adults, she is helpless. She couldn't respond to tasks, she only answers 'I don't know' or 'I can't do it.' Adults are drawn to her as they attempt to break through these barriers. She has dealt with danger from peers by becoming the bully. She does this carefully so that it is not easy for adults to intervene and challenge her. Kizi has learnt adults will not come to her aid, so she takes matters into her own hands, being sly enough to avoid detection from adults (who cannot help her) feeling power in managing her own survival. We challenge her about bullying Kristoff and Sven, but she behaves innocent and outraged at this accusation and, as we are unable to provide proof, she maintains overall control. These adaptation styles exist side by side as she negotiates how adults are most useful to her when they can't or haven't made her feel better when she most needs soothing and protecting.

Ghost's adaptation pattern to threat seemed to be a clear C strategy in which she draws attention to her in multiple ways, so that we had to attend to her, often at speed. The way she behaved around her mother, and worried about whether or not she would be in attendance when required, would suggest that she was anxious and uncertain about whether she was going to get the care she needed. My only contact with her father was when he called in the middle of a workshop to say that they weren't going to pick her up and she needed a lift on the minibus, suggesting that literally having no-one there for her at times of need was something with which she was familiar. A pattern of staying out late and fraternising with older boys in unsafe ways, suggested that she was displaying *endangering*

⁵⁴³ Schott, p.21.

strategies. In the workshop, she absolutely kept us on our toes, frequently switching her strategies, of which she had many, making us comply; we had to race her to the front door so she did not open it, endangering herself and others. She would constantly interrupt Martin by requesting food or enter the kitchen without permission. At other times, she would complain about pains or illness that seemed to be made up, or at least were psychosomatic, but which required attention before she would think about doing any activities, or when she didn't want to do anything. The most extreme example was faking a dramatic nosebleed with paint. As Oliver put it, 'she found a very creative way of getting what she wanted.'⁵⁴⁴ She would be clingy sometimes, at others, becoming punitive towards others. Unlike in the case of Kizi, whose bullying strategies were thought out, when Ghost seemed angry or stressed she would take it out on others, such as Olaf or Elsa, rather than be able to relate it to her own feelings.

Kristoff displayed more type C traits than A, although there was certainly a mix of responses to threat. The fact that his mother could not prevent him from being out alone in the community and left him unattended in dark, dangerous places, was a clear and obvious threat, especially in a community with statistically high violence. It seemed that his lifestyle was chaotic and unpredictable, and that he frequently missed out on the kinds of experiences that other children would expect as a matter of course, such as his mother being there to protect him. The most obvious trait we observed was how necessary it was to keep adults' attention on him, to be loud and non-compliant so that he would be followed and kept in mind. The way Kristoff *exaggerated his emotions* was through anger, unable to contain fury at not being given what he needed to the extent that he would endanger himself and others, such as the incident on the minibus. He was a good example of a child who *became preoccupied by feelings of agitation*: Kristoff had predictable temper tantrums, and it seemed both at school and with us, being lost in this state meant that adults would need to attend to him, but be *unable to soothe him*. It was difficult for Kristoff to de-escalate and this in itself required us to attend to him in order that he and other

⁵⁴⁴Campbell in feedback, June 2017.

children were physically safe. Also, Kristoff had a habit of making nasty comments to other children and deliberately baiting them into reaction. The most concerning example of this was when he started mocking the siblings' father, and his death. Kristoff seemed to know the kind of comment that would provoke a swift and definitive response. In many situations, Kristoff forced us to comply. We all noticed how sad Kristoff was much of the time, how he rarely smiled or made eye contact. Oliver noted how he was so stuck in his distress, and preoccupied with getting what he needed, that he could not explore and learn through the activities we provided.⁵⁴⁵ He was extremely resistant to doing anything imaginative where he would need to take a creative risk. Unlike other children who seemed to be "stuck" in expressing their ideas, Kristoff was overtly non-compliant. He didn't want to do it because he 'hated it' or it was 'boring.'

These observations, as I have mentioned earlier, are not psychologically thorough. I use Baim and Morrison's explanation of Crittenden's theory as a guide to have compassion and to understand. But, had we been able to sit down together at the beginning as a team and considered these case studies, perhaps the situation would have been easier to bear. For work going forward, an assessment in the first few weeks would help us approach the work with informed compassion. We know, when a child runs away from us, that they are wanting us to follow them. We understand that a child who deliberately ignores us does not do so because she hates us but because this is the way she most effectively survives pain. It may also help an adult to shape her attunement practice earlier, whilst at the same time acknowledging it is the failure and the confusion that ultimately is where the healing takes place. Understanding this is also to understand that the process is a collaborative dance of love, but that the dance is a complicated one. We will trip over our feet and land painfully on the floor until we master, not only its steps, but its affective-aesthetic quality. But ultimately, in the end, we learnt this anyway. We did it the hard way. But we saw adaptation behaviour diminish, and we celebrated when it did.

⁵⁴⁵Cambell, Feedback session, May 5 2017.

Another essential needed to provide support - and this has always been part of Theatre Troupe's practice - is that all members of the team should have supervision from a qualified therapist, in timetabled regular sessions, and immediate access if required.

In this light, I am - cautiously - advocating that a practice of struggle may be important, if not crucial to the TTM. I recognise that to have pain as a requirement of a model of applied theatre is somewhat contentious. Instead of games and exercises, or structured models such as Forum Theatre or teacher-in-role, which are targeted to effect personal or social change, I am advocating that pain and gain will necessarily be part of the process. To practice the TTM methodology may necessarily involve moments of despair. If we are to do work with this demographic of young people, then we must be prepared to enter their worlds with them.

Although not in the playground or the streets, we did get an insight into this ongoing trauma that children had to live with. Because we were a small team, and were closer to children than would have been the case at school, we intuited its presence in smaller details. As we attuned into that painful atmosphere, we gained a broader understanding of the culture that they had to live with each day. It was the most pressing reason to have a mentoring system, and it was the mentoring that ultimately, if not solved it, reduced it dramatically. It meant we could draw close to them and intervene on their behalf, being there in their distress. But it was also preventative. If there were no spaces where children were left to their own devices, the need to attack others reduced also. In fact, it was a fairly significant endorsement of the TTM attunement-based practice. We tried to impose sanctions and rules and they failed. We stepped alongside them and the adaptation behaviour needed to survive, diminished.

By the start of the summer term, we had introduced mentors for everyone we could. The struggle, we realised, needed to be managed through a one-to-one relationship. We dealt with the problem of bullying, and the negotiation of boundaries best, by a one to one

interaction, in which a volunteer was literally by a child's side for all of the time. Bullying behaviour decreased, not just because it was easier to catch it, but because children seemed to relax. They were protected by an adult and therefore did not need to defend their space and personhood. We saw this working when Melekodium makes the decision to trust Annie, in May 2017, and whilst initially refusing it, accepting her help in the end. This was then enough for her to step away from any difficult behaviour in her peers. It also seemed to be a huge relief to Kizi when Rachel was allocated as her mentor. Here was someone who *would* and *did* consistently protect her. In children for whom we could not provide a mentor, until very late, we saw/felt its lack too. Kristoff was let down because of an inconsistent mentor. But we also saw how he responded when he eventually did have one, in Georgia, and when he went in the taxi with Joy and Halima and they played games together. Halima recognised that he 'saved the day.'⁵⁴⁶

3. Try what love can do

But the struggle and the resolution of that struggle is nothing without the theatre that goes with it. The mentor experience and its power was inextricably linked to making and preparing for a show. Whilst managing difficulties in their own right is certainly part of the work, it was the inclusion of theatre artistry that *made* it work. Young people's distress which manifested in bullying and the challenging of boundaries, was also present in their artistic engagement. For some, there was little imaginative input for a long time. For others, the simple act of making art and having it recognised was a threat, as seen in Iduna's destruction of her painting 'daubing it all over' with black paint as soon as Oliver praised it.⁵⁴⁷ The difficulty that many children had in making art was not necessarily one we had anticipated. We could not be "tutors" or "facilitators" in ways we were used to. Joy expressed some concern about this, when she was unable to elicit any ideas from a group

⁵⁴⁶ Halima Habil, Conversation with author, September 7, 2017.

⁵⁴⁷ Martin Hunka, feedback, 12 December 2016

working on a frozen image. I responded: 'there's no such thing as the right thing. It's.. the process, so if...they don't feel comfortable coming up with ideas then you can do that, then hand it over to them.'⁵⁴⁸

So we developed a practice in which we were not so much "facilitators" but as co-producers. For some young people their energy, imagination and focus was easier. For those in whom it was not, we began to intervene in the imagining and making. There was a moment for Kizi which encapsulates this. She could not, at first, begin the task of making the character she had come up with - Wonkey Donkey the crab - in any way at all. Weeks went by when we encouraged her but she resisted. So Oliver started the process. He designed and cut out the shape of a crab for her, the beginnings of a puppet. Then he asked her to choose a colour. It was orange Kizi said. Rachel suggested that she chose the colour from a series of crayons on the table. She chose an unusual orange - more like burnished amber. Then she and Rachel coloured the crab together. When we came together for Creative Listening, several of us commented on the choice of colour. By choosing this colour and being helped to use it, the character of Wonkey Donkey shone through, and, in feedback, we told her so. He was a cheeky crab, with a generally sunny outlook on life. This was then a catalyst for Kizi, bringing the crab to life in improvisation and ultimately performing him in a scripted scene in the play. I was also able to source almost that exact shade of orange for her costume. Georgia enabled Kristoff to be part of the play by sitting next to him and making a robot headpiece. Before this, he had done very little and whilst there was a nice scene, King Kristoff was still a concept on paper. But sitting beside Georgia he took the glue when she asked him to and stuck some golden paper on it. They measured it on his head, and he put it on and wore it for the rest of the session. Up to this point - and it was late into the project - he had said that art was 'boring' or 'stupid'. But, with the pressure taken off him, in an act of artistic generosity, he felt comfortable enough to take part. With these two children and with others, the process was a gentle and intuitive building of trust. It signalled to a child that failing alone was something we

⁵⁴⁸ Emily Hunka, Feedback, 31 October, 2016

would always prevent, because, as co-designers we could take the risks and the rewards together. These subtle acts became part of the Troupe's fabric. We entered a co-production in which there was no child-adult divide. Comments towards the end of the process show how adults valued it as much as children. 'I think we started to enjoy it more than the young people.'⁵⁴⁹

This approach in some circumstances may be considered an unnecessary intrusion into a child's creative processes. Moreover, it is certainly not in line with a Wellbeing approach in which the self-motivated action of the individual to achieve is a mark of success, and where the acquisition of new independent skills is considered an achievement. But it is a dialogic, reciprocal process in vocal, kinaesthetic acts of symbiosis, which offers chances to enter into that neurobiological co-regulation. 'Many of the scientific discoveries in the field of emotion reinvent the wheel,' suggests Sue Gerhardt 'they affirm the importance of touch, of responsiveness, of giving time to people.'⁵⁵⁰

Co-acting

As well as the attunement processes in art activities, co-acting became an important part of the Troupe's work. All young people acted on stage with adults in other roles in their scenes. This offered a range of benefits. Similar to the art-making, it made the process less frightening:

Sometimes I could be scared but if I'm with someone...but sometimes when I'm with myself I'll probably be more scared.⁵⁵¹

I feel more confident when more people are joining with me when I'm all alone. Like for example like when I'm doing the play, like I'm with someone doing it.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁹ Hurford, July 2 2017.

⁵⁵⁰ Gerhardt, p. 247

⁵⁵¹ Melekodium, interview with author

⁵⁵² Afireem, interview with author

It was a safe way to prepare for the act of being on stage in front of an audience. Kizi, for example, grew significantly more confident when she started to work alongside Rachel. The process of being with adults on stage elicited new sides to children we had not seen before. Neither Kizi nor Melekodium had expressed much emotion when they came into the Troupe but they began using facial expressions and arm gestures. Where previously they had only been on the margins of the stage space, with adults, they were able to own it.

But there was also a powerful emotional function co-acting played. All stories by children were firmly established in fantasy - our play was awash with unicorns, orphans, Kings and Queens, red-eyed robots and, of course, talking crabs. Being a far remove from anything touching reality was a deliberate strategy for this group. But, despite this, a significant number of stories had clear links to a child's own physical and emotional circumstances. The Island of the Dark Night, where Taylor finds herself is always raining, always cold always bleak and far, far away from any help or comfort. I-phone land is a cruel kingdom where a despot King punishes anyone who gets in his way. King Kristoff may have been a manifestation of a dominating figure in Kristoff's life, or a way for him to feel powerful in a general condition of powerlessness. Either way, it was a grim way to perceive the world. For Fagilistic, Cartoonish Land became a place to express his love for his sisters, to let them know he was glad they were by his side, as they are left without a father and are entering a new life in an unfamiliar world.

The Theatre Troupe Model is not a place for interpreting stories and acting on these interpretations as dramatherapy might. It would not be appropriate for us, as untrained practitioners, to try to do this. But as time went on, and relationships became more comfortable (and this happened at different times for different children), a new attunement practice, an easier one, emerged. As devising and rehearsal progressed in earnest, volunteers and staff stepped into children's scenes. They were, quietly and effortlessly, able to attune to experiences of distress, rage, fear, hope and love from inside palaces, or Zombie Land or Cartoonish World. Whilst, in many cases, it was a children's individual

mentor who acted alongside them, we were also, as a group, a whole cast, each one of us for the picking. The importance of this, interestingly, was how they used the non-actors among us, Martin, Lesley and Oliver. In my head (and I think in theirs) they were not part of our cast, because they had other roles. But in Martin and Lesley's case, perhaps because they were older and children saw them as safe elders, they did not make the distinction. The first time this happened was with Afireem in our December sharing. In our first term, Afireem had explored family loss through the drama. It was before her father died, although he was obviously very sick. The character she created was Christiana, a servant to the royal household, and best friends with the resident princess. Christiana was an orphan. Afireem's core scene was one she had been working on with two other young people. However, as performance approached, she devised an additional scene. It was a conversation about her mother, who had died when Christiana was a baby, with her grandfather. She asked her grandfather: did my mother love me? When she was asked who she would like to play her grandfather, she selected Martin for the role. They improvised it and she told him what to say. On the day of the performance, it was an affecting moment for us. Martin responded to her question: 'Your mother loved you so much. She would talk about you all the time and would be so proud of you.' It was an affecting moment for all of us. Much later, as the July show approached, we all gathered downstairs to watch some of the improvisations that children had been doing. Martin and Lesley had come down to watch. When asked who she would like to cast in the roles of policewoman and priest, Melekodium chose Martin and Lesley. Lesley had famously (in the Hunka family) refused ever to take part in a role-play at a teacher training event, and yet, faced with this generous offer, she could not refuse. Oliver had also been apart from the drama work, but Fagilistic was quite clear that he wanted Oliver to play his father. Because the times when Fagilistic had disconnected had usually been upstairs on the mezzanine where the art activity was, Oliver had probably spent most time quietly and reassuringly at his side. This attuned relationship was probably in Fagilistic's mind when he considered casting.

Here, as all of us had settled into more easy relationships with each other, the family-like model naturally became the theatre family-like model, the fellowship. At this point we very much resembled a troupe. Gathered together against the hostility of the world, in the warmth and light of Treasure House, we understood that we could enter each other's stories and be safe there. 'The kind of emotional conflict brought about by trauma is a place where feelings such as shame and fear are extremely dangerous and therefore conflict is avoided' suggests Van Der Kolk. He comments 'traumatized people are terrified to feel deeply. They are afraid to experience their emotions because emotions lead to loss of control. In contrast, theater is about embodying emotions, giving voice to them, becoming rhythmically engaged....'⁵⁵³ 'it is about '[c]ollective confrontation with the realities of the human condition... .collective movement and music create a larger context for our lives, a meaning beyond individual fate.'⁵⁵⁴

Come bearing gifts

Such aesthetic generosity also extended into particular acts of aesthetic kindness. As a group, we all certainly believed that moments of profound humanity can be achieved through art. Adult craftspersons in the Troupe brought their own gifts and offered them to the children. The potentiality in this is one of the reasons we call Oliver (or another in his role) an artist-therapist rather than an art therapist. It was crucial when Oliver was employed that he was able to demonstrate his own artistic practice, and how he could bring it to the Troupe. He certainly brought marvellous gifts with him.

One of Neil MacGregor's chosen objects in *The History of the World in 1000 Objects* is "swimming reindeer," a work carved from a mammoth tusk in C. 11,000 BC. He calls it 'a masterpiece of ice-age art':

In positioning them the sculptor has brilliantly exploited the tapering shape of the

⁵⁵³ Bessel A Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (UK; Penguin Books, 2015), p.335.

⁵⁵⁴ Van Der Kolk, p. 333.

mammoth tusk. The smaller female reindeer is in front with the very end of the tusk forming the tip of her nose and behind her in the fuller body of the tusk the male behind her.⁵⁵⁵

Rowan Williamson observes: 'someone making the reindeer was projecting themselves with huge imaginative generosity in the world around and saw and felt in their bones that rhythm.'⁵⁵⁶

I watched in awe, several times, when Oliver applied his craft; when he was able to look at a drawing that Iduna had done and replicate it exactly, but at a tenth of the size; when he took all the disparate ideas for environments that the children had suggested for the play, and incorporated them into a stunning backdrop for our Christmas show. These became a fairytale castle, nestling in mountains cloaked in snow, low winter clouds hanging, a minute princess peering out from the castle window. He took things that were half finished and finished them respectfully, to the exact instructions that came from the child, how it should be made. Ghost wanted a peacock in a particular shade of blue to descend from the rafters. Oliver made sure said peacock was ready for flight, and in the shade of blue that Ghost requested.

As the playwright, I did a similar thing. I found a way for characters to come alive through additional dialogue that I hope captured the quality of that character in whatever way this manifested. I inserted all the details that a child contributed. Ghost's input about her story had been limited. The place was called Zombieland, and it had pink non-flesh-eating zombies in it. I created a scene that she performed with Halima, which she could perform with the most cursory of rehearsals, echoing what the other actor did. This not only meant she had a role on stage, but she could fulfil the most important thing to her - to wear the shock pink zombie costume with a pair of pink high-heeled shoes. When it came to Ghost's interview, she listed performance as the favourite thing she had done in the project. There

⁵⁵⁵ MacGregor, p.19.

⁵⁵⁶ MacGregor, p.24.

was also a connection between the acting and the shoes and their symbolic value, Halima recognised:

One other aspect, when she got them, I was really worried and so I was following her even more carefully, but then I realised wherever she is in the building we can hear her. And she knows this. And that's 'being seen' as well.⁵⁵⁷

Another of MacGregor's objects is a Flood Tablet from Nineveh (modern day Iraq) (700-600 BC). This depicts, in Sumerian script, etched into a clay tablet, the story of the Flood from The Epic of Gilgamesh. Here MacGregor explains, stories are passed from an oral tradition, finding their way into text to be preserved for posterity, a rich reflection of the hopes and fears of a society. The tablet's content also, he argues, touches those thousands of years after its creation: characters' 'hopes and fears could now be shaped, refined, and fixed – the author could be sure that his particular vision of the narrative and personal understanding of the tale would be transmitted directly.'⁵⁵⁸ Its preservation, through its reflection of humanity, offers a universal. In his introduction to his translation of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Stephen Mitchell suggests 'Like any great work of literature, it has much to tell us about ourselves. In giving voice to grief and fear of death, perhaps more powerfully than any book written after it, in portraying love and vulnerability and the quest for wisdom, it has become a personal testimony for millions of readers in dozens of languages.'⁵⁵⁹ The Epic centres on Gilgamesh's fear of death after the death of his friend Enkidu.⁵⁶⁰ Ranging and wandering after the death of his beloved friend Enkidu, he rails:

Must I die too? Must I be lifeless
as Enkidu? How can I bear this sorrow
that gnaws at my belly, this fear of death
that restlessly drives me onwards?

Shiduri then tells Gilgamesh as he rails against the fact he will die:

⁵⁵⁷ Habil, In Conversation with author

⁵⁵⁸ MacGregor, p. 100.

⁵⁵⁹ Stephen Mitchell, *Gilgamesh: A New English Version*, 2014 (London: Profile Books, 2012), p.1-2.

⁵⁶⁰ *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. rev (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Until the end comes, enjoy your life
Spend it in happiness, not despair
Savour your food, make each of your days
a delight, bathe and anoint yourself,
wear bright clothes that are sparkling clean,
let music and dancing fill your house,
Love the child who holds you by the hand,
and give your wife pleasure in your embrace.⁵⁶¹

Martin's retelling of Fagilistic's story was a great gift for him. I asked him to take Fagilistic's story and reshape it as an oral narrative against which we could improvise DJ Tom's scene. Fagilistic's story was sparkling in its narrative imagination, but its language was more like a list than a story:

1. Epic journey through the island to save the princess.
2. Took days and nights
3. When they got to the middle of the island, they saw fruits and freshwater.
4. They raced to get them - enough in the bag for leftovers
5. Continued journey and saw grizzly bear, chased them
6. Anaconda – "Dad, look behind you!" They all run.⁵⁶²

Martin took this and gave it life.

They travelled for two days and two nights on a track that sloped down before them before reaching the floor of a valley where a shimmering river of pure running water wound its way before them. When they had slaked their thirst and filled their water bottles they realized that the trees in the valley were dripping with fruit. There were pears, plums, apples, grapes, mangoes and fat red strawberries. They all ate their fill and then filled their haversacks with fruit. An hour later, now climbing on the track that lead to the second peak, they all heard a low growling like a subwoofer, deep in the forest. Suddenly a huge black grizzly bear rushed out at them. 'Scatter' shouted Dad, 'In different directions like the spokes of a wheel.' The big bear didn't know which one to chase and loped back into the forest. Then Tom's sister suddenly pointed at her Dad and said 'Dad, don't move!' The others turned to look at him and saw an enormous snake, a fat, elongated anaconda just about to strike at Dad. 'Dad,' said Tom's sister, 'One, two, three RUN!' The anaconda, lunged at Dad, just missed him and slithered after them at speed. Just when the snake was gaining on

⁵⁶¹ Mitchell, p.10.

⁵⁶² Fagilistic, 'Cartoonish World', Workshop production, 3 July 2017. [date]

them, Minnie [Mouse] turned and kicked sand in the beast's face. The anacondas stopped, spluttered, turned and went back to his anaconda home.⁵⁶³

Without this story, Fagilistic's moment in the show would, of course, have been important, because it was his own. But it would not quite have made its mark on the world in the same way. It would not have enabled him to use his own gift as an actor to its fullest potential. The rich telling also meant that all of us in the instant improvisation telling of the story had much to inspire us and was also, no doubt, one of the reasons Melekodium was able to become such a convincing and larger than life bear.

Joe Winston suggests that engaging in acts of beauty (as opposed to acts of creativity) serves a moral purpose which can be used to mount a resistance to oppression:

It is the moral force behind the experience of beauty, which explains why its thrill can both uplift us and sadden us one at the same time; what we recognise in it connects with our deepest longings that have become obscured and obfuscated by the pressures of day to day living, a painful fact that beauty can illuminate in our thinking by igniting our emotions.⁵⁶⁴

Winston suggests, 'the very ubiquity of beauty in our cultural lives, is sufficient for us to regard it as a necessary human value.'⁵⁶⁵ 'Hope...is a quality inherent to the experience of beauty: hope, pleasure and the promise of happiness it entails.'⁵⁶⁶ It appeared that in Theatre Troupe beauty and humanity, whilst often having to wait in the wings, were also poised to enter as a kind of attunement in their own right.

⁵⁶³ Martin Hunka, 'Cartoonish Land' [unpublished], 2017.

⁵⁶⁴ Joe Winston, p.15.

⁵⁶⁵ Winston, p.4

⁵⁶⁶ Winston, p.10.

4. The show must go on (or the festivaesque)

As in all things, there are, of course, times when preparing for performance and performing are inappropriate, and there are forms of applied theatre that depend on a lack of performance (such as dramatherapy). But I suggest to avoid it altogether is to miss out on rich and emancipatory possibilities, especially for those who may be most vulnerable, with whom it might be considered preparing for a performance would interfere with a therapeutic or social goal. I did come into this project with a love of theatre shows myself, all sorts, so I had this agenda from the beginning. But what happened in Treasure House Youth Troupe I believe, shows the mechanisms for why theatre - perhaps more than drama, almost certainly more than “arts” and definitely more than “creativity” – should be seriously considered as having a more important place in applied theatre work.

Firstly there is the passion for theatre, from theatre people. There is an interesting divide between those who refer young people to our project, and those who enter as members. For the former, it is important that it is a therapeutic space:

For me this was the perfect fit. I think more than anything that it was run with some therapists on board. That they would be able to see things through a therapeutic lens. More than anything...for me it was that kind of dual pronged: something creative, something therapeutic.⁵⁶⁷

But, the reason young people come to Theatre Troupe is to be members of a youth theatre. The children from THYT talked about ‘my drama club’. Although most of them were aware there were higher levels of support in the group than from an average youth theatre, and that they had been referred by a professional, any sense of social or emotional value was very much in the background for them. June describes how positive this was for Kizi:

⁵⁶⁷ Social Worker (anonymous) , Interview with Author, December 2017.

People wanted to associate with her in school. When, it got into a certain state that they were even jealous “ah I wish I could go there as well... Tell my mum, tell the school I want to go”, but they don’t understand that there’s a reason for Kizi to be going to this kind of a place.

When I asked children in feedback what they liked least about Theatre Troupe, all except Fagilistic said Creative Listening or Check-in or both. Ghost said check in ‘wastes our time.’ Afireem said that Creative Listening ‘could be more exciting.’ Melekodium said she found check in boring and Creative Listening ‘boring as well.’ Whilst I do think these have useful therapeutic value, and Fagilistic used them to connect to the group and indicate, even when he was struggling, that he was pleased to be among us, I am interested by these answers. We had added them in for space and time to reflect, to offer ways to express feelings. It was also as if they were saying to me: ‘we’re in a drama group, these things are not drama.’

Adults also came to THYT because of theatre’s lure. They wanted to learn about applied theatre, or give back to their community. But their incentive for working with us was, in all cases, a love of theatre. Joy came as a result of the recent death of her father, who had been an actor. She wanted to give something back to her local community and explore possibilities beyond her role as a youth worker, but she also wanted to honour his memory in a place he was most in his element. She is, herself, a keen member of a local amateur dramatics group. Others were avid theatre-goers. Zoe had memories back to her own golden time in youth theatre:

I mean, I had gone into applied theatre wanting to see the interaction between theatre and mental health that was always an interest of mine, because of my own history of mental health and the part theatre played for me... finding a theatre group that I was part of, finding that acceptance the family and a supportive community⁵⁶⁸

For Halima it was transformative:

⁵⁶⁸ Dowler, Interview with author

When I was in Israel, I was a little bit of an activist so I was a little bit angry, I [thought] the world is wrong. You're feeling like you're the only one, that is like you because people think you're crazy and then [in theatre] you find other people that think like you and that's amazing.⁵⁶⁹

I am positing that what we saw in the TTM pilot project was the powerful impact of what I am calling the *festivalesque*. This is after Bakhtin's Carnavalesque. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin argues that medieval carnival events - which included the intrinsic features of performance - embodied a 'second life of the people who, for a time, entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance.' During carnival, the all-encompassing hierarchical system in medieval society (predominantly controlled by the church) could be jettisoned, as a vision of collaboration and cooperation prevailed:

People, so to speak, were reborn for new, purely human relations. These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique in its kind.⁵⁷⁰

The notion of *Carnavalesque* is that freedom comes in the live moment, where order is suspended, where all the challenges, the oppressions of life are temporarily overthrown. If this is the case, then the troupe/Troupe is in an elevated position. In medieval life, everyone pitched in. But those with the artistic gifts - the ones that painted the pageant wagons, the ones that constructed the machines that made the special effects and the ones who were able to act an audience's very favourite characters - the devil and the buffoon in the twelfth century. For example, they trod the hallowed ground. 'Both audience and players were united in a common faith strong enough for the actors to rehearse months in advance, and for the spectators to stand around all day watching the plays.'⁵⁷¹ In the later medieval period, in London, theatre was condemned as being immoral. Actors were

⁵⁶⁹ Habil, Conversation with author

⁵⁷⁰ M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 1st Midland book ed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984),

⁵⁷¹ 'Western Theatre - Medieval Theatre | Britannica' <<https://www.britannica.com/art/Western-theatre/Medieval-theatre>> [accessed 21 December 2019].

threatened with imprisonment if they strayed into religious territory.⁵⁷² But, nevertheless, though they were outcast from church and state, their public would seek them out. Public performances would pop up in public places, wherever space could be found: large rooms in inns, courtyards, halls. Makeshift stages would be set up, with some audience members gathering beneath them and others hanging out of windows. Theatres, such as the Globe, are structured, at least in part, from these impromptu playhouses. In Elizabethan theatre, suggests the Encyclopedia Britannica, there would be fewer props and pieces of set, to allow for the makeshift tradition from which the theatre had emerged. Instead, actors engaged directly with their audience, drawing them in through the playwright's words, which were crafted with sophistication and delivered with expertise to take the place of spectacle.⁵⁷³

The Festivaesque is a process that belongs to the troupe/Troupe. It is the process of festival in which the powerful affective work takes place. The player, playwright, costume designer, and all the other troupe people have meaning in the fact they make the festival that other people in their community love, and wait for all month/year. Barbara Ehrenreich suggests that the importance of the preparative labour required to mount a festival was a crucial part of any performative celebration, whether amateur or professional: 'Great passion and energy went into the planning of festivities with special organisations ...dedicated entirely to preparing festivals all year round.'⁵⁷⁴ Ehrenreich writes that, in medieval theatre, '[h]uge amount of effort and expense went into a successful celebration: Costumes had to be sewed, dance steps and dramas rehearsed, sets built, special pastries and meats prepared.'⁵⁷⁵

The festivaesque in the Theatre Troupe Model gives everyone in the Troupe three valuable assets: To be *important*, to be *purposeful*, to be *proud*.

⁵⁷² Encyclopedia Britannica

⁵⁷³ Encyclopedia Britannica

⁵⁷⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica

⁵⁷⁵ Ehrenreich, p. 88.

Examining the journey of THYT, there is a definite shift in the summer term, in productivity, in behaviour, in participation. The attunement processes of pain and pleasure, the tenacious compassion that allowed both adult and child to be vulnerable, I believe, played a significant part. But there was another factor in the process that coincided with this period of peace and productivity, which is that we were preparing, in earnest, for putting on our show. Martin notes that there was a new momentum:

If you think of that extraordinary contrast of that...that the day that I'll never forget ...Fagilistic was just rampant, and running up and knocking over chairs, tables, playing at full tilt, just an absolute nightmare. And then I was thinking back to my am-dram days, it all seems not to be happening, and [it's] tedious and the director is shouting at you, then suddenly you're on stage and you're all still standing, and it's fantastic, and all of that..and then I thought all of that whole process of putting on a play and any is more or less the same, with [our] children."⁵⁷⁶

There was a gathering energy around the art table, as required props, costumes and backdrops were created or finished. Whilst co-design had tended to be a contract between two or three people, a symbiosis of attunement, it was now a different kind of relational experience we all enjoyed. We were engaged in the preparative labour of "getting things done." Oliver had created a large piece of paper on which were written all the craft things we needed to do, and everyone pitched in. The sense of camaraderie was strong: 'We're having a really nice time, it was a good atmosphere in Safe Space today chatting about films and stuff and that was really nice and moving forward just getting it done.'⁵⁷⁷ Where the twins had previously been goading each other, ignoring each other or joining together in nastiness against someone else, they became peaceful. As Charlie says, after a session in June, 'Melekodium and Fagilistic were just so happy weren't they?'⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Martin Hunka, Feedback, 16 June 2017.

⁵⁷⁷ Illman, Feedback 26 June 2017

⁵⁷⁸ Hurford, 5 June 2017

Rehearsing

When young people were asked in their interviews what their favourite parts of the project across the year were, without exception they all said “rehearsal” and “performance”. I anticipated that performance would be a popular part of being in the Troupe because, after all, the feeling of being in the live moment when I was a child was a catalyst for entering the theatre profession and for this project. But I did not necessarily expect them to enjoy rehearsals. It would have been understandable if the boredom of perfecting material, repeating over and over again, or learning lines made it a frustrating if necessary aspect. Yet the children relished it. Ghost said she liked the performance because ‘we get to work on scenes and then we have to rehearse the scenes and then it’s performance time.’ Kizi chose to take on a part with far more lines and complex words than the character I had originally written for her. She spent large amounts of time at home practicing her lines, which her mother comments on:

I can remember when she wanted to do her presentation during the theatre period she feels so happy about it. And she shows a kind of seriousness in her, it pushes out the seriousness in her. You see Kizi, doing her lines reacting [acting] in the house with her sister, it is unusual for her. Even when I tell her Kizi your food is ready, she says: mummy just wait...She would do that. I would be like – “wow that’s good”⁵⁷⁹

In preparing for performance, children and adults could be flexible in their roles, trying out more than one of the rehearsal staples. Children were encouraged to offer advice on their co-stars, how they might move on stage, how their characters might express emotion. In this process, volunteers cast children as directors, which gave powerful agency:

My positive was working with Afireem...she was just so, she was great this week. Last week she needed quite a bit of encouragement to get started, whereas this week she was really excited. As soon as we [started] she was like, ‘Ok we’re going to brainstorm.’ She was saying all these ideas, and then she apologised, and said ‘Oh I’m sorry I’m directing you’ and we were like ‘noo, do it, we wanna hear all your ideas, tell us what to do’. So I became her scribe and wrote up the new lines that she was adding in.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁹ June

⁵⁸⁰ Hurford, feedback session 26 June, 2017.

Afireem says she likes rehearsing 'because I like when people tell me when I can move on and I like acting as well. I like the fact I'm ready to go and perform. Rehearsal, said Afireem, 'makes me feel like myself.'⁵⁸¹

For all the pain of attunement, this was the reward, as we tasted joy and pleasure at being together with purpose. 'For me' said Blanka, 'a highlight was a realisation that everybody comes together and we commit like a hundred percent when it comes to performance ...learning our lines, getting together in the spirit.'⁵⁸² 'Moving forward I think just pulling everything together is an exciting moment,' said Halima.⁵⁸³ 'We're nearly there - it's all coming together, it's exciting,' said Lesley. Fagilistic, Melekodium and Kizi thrived in this atmosphere. Blanka said:

With Melekodium, I've been observing like, [and] I've seen her scene we knew she's really good in it, but I think she has, this week, made really really big progress, because she even started to improvise. A few months ago I wouldn't say that she would do that so that was amazing to see that.⁵⁸⁴

Even Ghost, who found it difficult standing still and committing to much, found focus in rehearsing. Halima enabled her to see that performance was in her capability. She also, when they spent time together, was able to take the role as stage manager, understanding that the correct props and the correct items of costume were in place, perhaps which was the most important thing for Ghost in the whole process. Hannah Arendt considers the "rehearsal" process 'the specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker, is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and

⁵⁸¹ Plocha, 26 June 2017

⁵⁸² Plocha, 26 June 2017

⁵⁸³ Habil, Feedback, 3 July 2017

⁵⁸⁴ Plocha, 26 June 2017

speaking that it can be represented and “reified” only through a kind of repetition, the imitation or mimesis.⁵⁸⁵

Performing

*The performance is a thrilling culmination of all the elements of theatre, which is why it can become addictive in the best sense.*⁵⁸⁶

In the later medieval period, in London, theatre was condemned as being immoral. Actors were threatened with imprisonment if they strayed into religious territory.⁵⁸⁷ But nevertheless, their craft was in high demand, with audiences that would hang upon their every word or gaze upon their lustrous designs for a pleasurable aesthetic experience. Members of the Troupe were not used to the experience of respect or praise. Generally, they were not celebrated. But the play and its important relationship between the expectant audience and the crowd-pleasing act of performance, means those who are otherwise powerless, can experience empowerment in lives that are. The function of performance in the Troupe, was to please its audience. When the young people shared work they had done at the end of each session, this was a crucial part of reinforcing their roles as performers, with responsive spectators. We told them we liked the way they used the stage, or that we were affected by an emotional moment in a scene, or - as was probably most often the case - a comic turn. Laughter in carnival, suggests Bakhtin, is an equaliser with ‘comic shows of the marketplace,’ ‘*comic verbal compositions*.’⁵⁸⁸ When we performed to each other, we laughed a lot.

Jill Dolan, in *Performing Utopia: Finding hope in the theatre*, focuses on affective experience between spectators and performers, on re-owning or ‘rescuing’ attunement for

⁵⁸⁵ Jacques Taminiaux and Michael Gendre, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p.98.

⁵⁸⁶ Volunteer, (anonymous), feedback questionnaire, 19 July 2017.

⁵⁸⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica

⁵⁸⁸ M M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 1st Midland book ed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.5.

theatre: ‘ I am most moved’ she writes, ‘by the words that our work in theory once cast into doubt, words like love, truth and beauty as well as the capacious holding place called “humanity”. I am moved by the potential that performance offers for polishing away the tarnish of cliché that clings to these words.’⁵⁸⁹ The effect of young people performing in front of family members was a new experience for both parties. If children are used to being the problem rather than the celebration, parents are familiar with engaging only with their child’s problems and consequently relationships with others, in the everyday, can be fraught. They are called into school because of a fight. They are under the constant supervision of social services, who judge them and their parenting. But in the performance, parents can celebrate their children and do so in the midst of a wider audience (including the teachers and the social workers) who are laughing at funny performances, or welling up at poignant ones. We honoured this moment after the show, with certificates of achievement handed out by Southwark’s mayor. She gave a speech about how impressed she was by the young people’s talent and bravery. In the first term, Iduna’s mother, who had been called neglectful by social services, rushed across Southwark from her parenting class to see Iduna work a cardboard puppet. It is why we started the show half an hour late so the aunt of the siblings, their new guardian, was able to see them all. For another young person, the relational benefit for parent and carer and child was important:

It was huge for him. To go from being at home and kicking off with his mum every day to going to Theatre Troupe and participating and then putting on a big performance at the end of it, and doing very well, was huge. His mum was pleased, I mean she was crying, and that was a massive thing.⁵⁹⁰

For Kristoff, of everything in his engagement with us, the most vulnerable he would be with us, was to let us know how important it was that his mother came to see him perform. Kristoff was also desperate for his teacher to be there. Teachers often have to manage children’s behaviour or discipline them, so seeing the show also reframes their relationship.

⁵⁸⁹ Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), p.163.

⁵⁹⁰ Social worker (anonymous) December 2018

In our first term, when the siblings' therapist and Ghost's social worker came, they were able to enter a contract in that moment, in which problems or difficulties - the usual reason they were with children - fell into the background. They were there for the children, but because theatre is always of two halves - spectator and actor rely on each other to make the live moment work, the children were there for them. Theatre Troupe is important, writes one volunteer, 'because it is profoundly accepting and encouraging both artistic and dramatic creativity, and participation allows the children to relish a level of achievement and praise where they may not experience it elsewhere.'⁵⁹¹ This also means, so importantly, that parents, vicariously, relish it too. Theatre, suggests Jill Dolan, is a powerful platform for those 'lost in the indices of mainstream culture, including the poor, and the disabled.'⁵⁹² Live performance is empowering for those in the audience who live with voicelessness and statelessness. It is a place where emotion, love, creativity and human attachment - so different from children's brutal everyday experiences - can be a reality, even if only for a few moments. Lily Tomlin, whose one woman show *Search for Signs* Dolan watches, comments on the ability of theatre to discover a humanism: 'If I have an agenda,' she says 'it's that all humans have been ridiculed; all of us as a species, we're so debased that there must be some kind of human embrace that makes us worthy of something.'⁵⁹³

But, foremost, the act of performance is for its fellowship, its players, who stand on stage together, and the other theatre people, in the wings, who are poised to enable peacocks to descend, or writers and directors, expectant in the live moment. It is where the work of the Troupe, the weeks of hard labour, the challenging confrontations, the waiting and watching for a child to emerge finds its soaring voice. They share the power of theatre moments in close attunement. 'Theatre provides a place where people come together, embodied and passionate, to share experiences of meaning-making and imagination that can describe or

⁵⁹¹ Volunteers (anonymous), feedback questionnaire, July 19 2017.

⁵⁹² Dolan, p.84.

⁵⁹³ Dolan, p.74.

capture fleeting intimations of a better world.⁵⁹⁴ And, maybe, even in the pathways of the brain. 'If a listener quietens his neo-cortical chatter and allows limbic sensing to range free, melodies begin to penetrate the static of anonymity...as the listener's resonance grows, he [and she] will catch sight of what the other sees inside that personal world, start to sense what it feels to live there.⁵⁹⁵

In a way, Fagilistic's response to the experience of Theatre Troupe, encapsulates what it offers in its totality. When he is questioned in interview by Oliver, he jumbles all the bits of Theatre Troupe he likes, so it is difficult to extract one from the other. It is a good working definition of the socio-aesthetic function of the Theatre Troupe Model. I quote several of his responses to Oliver's questions here, leaving out the semi-structured interview prompts:

I like studying drama, I like working on drama. Acting out the different bits and pieces

Rehearsing the scenes. I love rehearsing the scenes because I get to act like DJ Tom, and stuff like that.

And also what's good about rehearsing scenes is, I love different people's opinions. I like people helping me and stuff like that when I'm rehearsing my drama and it feels like, it just puts me in a good condition, when they come and talk to me,

And the adults in the troupe, they like associate in the group with us, playing games and stuff like that and then coming to the performance and watch us do our theatre performance, and just everyone having fun and checking their hair and make sure they're here on time.

And I like when I'm in the Comfort Zone and when we take time out and then when we're ready we come back in. I liked it when you guys cheered me up,

The best thing about the Troupe is: I love it when everybody's here. I love it when we associate. The thing I would keep about [Theatre Troupe] is to bring everyone back together again,

Theatre Troupe makes me feel more confident and good. And happy. This helps me

⁵⁹⁴ Dolan, p.2.

⁵⁹⁵ Lewis and others, p.84.

to improve my drama,

I want to say thank you for helping us and paying for our cabs as well and all of you. Helping me and Melekodium with the drama and the rehearsing so everything's alright. And stuff like that.⁵⁹⁶

To start where I began: As a firefly, strange as it sounds, I became worthy of something at a time no one outside my immediate family saw anything worthy in me. In the youth theatre, with the theatre people, I had something of great worth. It was indeed the capacious holding place of which Dolan writes. But this story is not about me. It is about Melekodium, Fagilistic, Kizi, Ghost, Kristoff and all the other young people who travelled an incredible journey, allowing us into their worlds, bravely stepping forward in all those live moments of theatre. Melekodium, when we met her, would not make eye-contact with us. It was, she told us, because she could not understand faces, because in them, she only saw threat. But it was performing that helped her to understand better. 'If I look at the audience, [I can] see that they're not scary. Before, when I looked at someone's face, I felt like they were kind of angry. But now I know they're not. They're concentrating on the scene.'⁵⁹⁷ It is likely that she understood this because of the many times she had performed in front of us at our end of session sharings, and gradually worked out that serious faces often led to positive feedback, to validation. Melekodium was poised and brave on the stage, a strong performance verging on the professional, in command of her lines and her actions and her facial expressions. She reached out in all these ways. Right at the end, she knew that there was not a sea of people waiting to threaten her, to bring her down, or to hurt her. They were there, because she was worthy of something. Because they were all worthy of something.

⁵⁹⁶ Fagilistic

⁵⁹⁷ Melekodium

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have sought to answer the question: what is the role of attunement and theatre in reducing child and adolescent mental distress? I have gone about this by conducting a pilot study of a Theatre Troupe Model (TTM) which I have designed and implemented myself as part of, and influenced by, practice in Theatre Troupe, the organisation which I co-founded and co-direct. The TTM is a specialist model for, specifically working with young people who have experienced trauma and have complex mental distress and “challenging” behaviour as a result.

I have introduced a critical framework that I offer as a methodology for the model: its political grounding in a position against neoliberal Arts and Health/Wellbeing; a psychologically informed grounding in theories of attachment and attunement, and an artistic grounding in theories of the Troupe-as-Community. I have established the model as a testing ground. But the establishment of the model has also contained important findings as part of my practice-based research process. Everything I have done as part of a process of being an artist, facilitator, manager, fundraiser, ethnographer and so on, has informed the building and functioning of what the TTM pilot project became.

A key intention at the beginning of this inquiry was to assess the impact of the pilot project, to definitively evidence “change”. This came from a frustration I brought with me from my professional perspective, faced as I was with endless reporting on endless outcomes. I hoped that a more scientifically rigorous, quantitative framework would lead to larger grants from health commissioners, and, through this, could also result in the TTM reaching more young people who would benefit from this approach, ideally through other organisations or individuals practising the work. As I discussed in Chapter Four, this process broke down. However, critical learning from this deterioration process has led to, I assert, a radically different way to show impact and change. In this regard, the imperatives of my research have altered in its course. I began by assuming I could reduce and distil, producing

ways to define the work's benefits for those who "knew" better than hapless artists that were unable to articulate important meaning about health benefits. Instead, I have shifted to a position in which I conclude, after Lewis et al, it is the unknowable, unquantifiable manner of the mind that shares some ground with poetry. This also coheres with my argument about political imperatives. This approach however, which I also acknowledge, has limitations.

In Chapter one, I have given the moral context and imperative for my work. I suggest that the Arts and Health movement, and the work which happens under its guise ties into neoliberal agendas in which all is at the disposal of profit, and people are seen as individual units of capital. The Arts and Health movement extrapolates its ideas and practice from the wider Wellbeing, Positive Psychology and Happiness Economics. Emblems of this movement, including *Five Ways to Wellbeing*, can be found in the pages of the APPG report on Arts and Mental Health and in *Be Creative Be Well*. To critique Wellbeing, I draw, in particular on William Davies's theories of Wellbeing, which he links to divisive neoliberal agendas of Big Business and Government. I further argue that these agendas are not generally recognised as divisive because of a process of Symbolic Violence, a theory expounded by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Paul Passeron. In my work, exposing some of the agendas of the Wellbeing movement, I suggest, shows it is divisive on a broad scale; it is particularly destructive for those who have experienced trauma and live with its effects. This is not only because the psychological and neurobiological damage caused by abuse or neglect means they are less likely to be able to alter their behaviour to be resilient as requested by neoliberalism, but because they carry considerable shame with them as a result of deep poverty and other complex marginalisation factors. Recognising this is crucial, I suggest, because if these agendas are not seen for what they are, applied theatre practitioners working in the field may, as I was, be seduced.

Chapter Two discusses attunement as a fundamental necessity for life. I suggest that, unlike the New Wave Positive Psychology, Attachment Theory has a longer and more evidenced

history, and is a useful way to understand the needs of young people who have experienced trauma. I posit that a robust resistance to Wellbeing as a way to improve mental health is needed, arguing we must rely on evidence that contradicts the suggestion we need to be independent - neurobiological theories of attunement that suggest we must be interdependent to survive and thrive. I have particularly focused on Patricia Crittenden's the Dynamic Maturational Model (DMM) of Attachment, which has been distilled for usability by Clark Baim and Tony Morrison, because it is an excellent way to understand the destructive behaviours of the young people we work with at Theatre Troupe, beginning from a place of respect. The DMM's theory of adaptation strategies especially brings a compassionate approach to working with those who are mentally distressed because of trauma.

Chapter three gives my Theory of Change. I have suggested that understanding concepts of vulnerability and working with them is a constructive way to build a practice that has the power to change lives. I suggest that opportunities presented by this are manifold. Firstly, we must understand that young people have been neurobiologically wounded and that this is how we first encounter them. Secondly, a recognition that the neuroplastic window in childhood and adolescence allows important opportunities for healing, as the brain reforms for adulthood, allowing us to tend to that wound and have a real chance for repair. Thirdly, I lay out how I think the Troupe may have some of the qualities of a therapeutic community, without formally declaring itself as such: that it provides a home, that it is protective of its members who are used to being outcasts in their societies because it brings joy in dark times, and that the labour of the troupe and a theatrical listening are important strengths of group theatre. The Troupe is a place of collective healing, which fulfils the human necessity to be with others.

Chapter four presents a forensic examination of my processes of finding appropriate evaluation methodologies and methods for the TTM. This is presented in the form of personal discovery. I give an account of my ambitions for a rigorous quantitative

methodology that could appeal to those in, for example, health commissioning contexts. Because it was a critical moment in this journey, I focus on the use of the Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and how it was applied when I worked as a Researcher-in-Residence for Clean Break Theatre, struggling with its ability to show meaningful change. I came to understand that the scale is also part of a neoliberal Wellbeing agenda which seeks to render firmly qualitative readings of the emotional, quantitative. This chapter then charts the final part of my methods journey, in which I opt for the practice-as-research method of creative writing to present the findings of the TTM. This, I argue, is the best way to do those I work with justice, because it allows a reader into their world through a poetic turn, which I believe is helpful and elucidating for readerships from both health and arts disciplines.

Chapter five is a record of the findings of the Theatre Troupe Model. As the longest part of my research, I have presented this as a type of short work of literature. Through this arts-as-research approach, I invite my readers to enter the world of Treasure House Youth Troupe and discern all its vicissitudes from my personal point of view. I hope Chapter five will also be accessible to those who might not want to read the entirety of my research, but may be interested to have a window into what this applied practice did. I present this to resist the alternatives such as “subjects” being reduced to figures and graphs as in scales such as WEMWBS. This is also why I have written it poetically.

Chapter six, my final chapter, discusses tropes of the TTM pilot project. It makes some conclusions about the TTM’S mechanisms, according to my theory of change on the one hand, and new/unexpected findings on the other. I present this as an (anti) tool kit, to acknowledge that there are elements of the model that are ‘replicable’, but also that in it are more unwieldy human processes that demonstrate the most valuable work of the Troupe and what others need to know. I suggest that there was a distinct way the TTM operated in the pilot: as a new, living community, which struggled through attunement processes in the passionate pursuit of better things for the children they encounter. I

suggest the effectiveness of this was in preparation for and performing of a theatre production. This examination of the core tenet of TTM practice is replicable in one sense, but utterly irreducible in another.

Contributions to research

I believe I have offered an alternative way of practice in the template of the Theatre Troupe Model, as discerned through the pilot project, and that this is tangible and usable for applied theatre practitioners. The Theatre Troupe Model has clear tenets that can be adopted by individuals or organisations interested in working with those for whom trauma has been wounding. These are: having an understanding of the psychological and biological impact of being with others and how interpersonal engagement may have an impact; a way to approach working with particularly challenging behaviour by applying a Dynamic Maturational Model (DMM) “lens” of compassion; building a practice that does not model, but *is* a community and how this might be informing for practitioners; using the core qualities of the theatrical - the *festivalesque* - to make an impact in the healing process. I also suggest the usefulness of some practical elements of the Troupe: its staff and volunteers, the provision of food, and the provision of transport for example.

For applied theatre practitioners, but also within the wider research canon, I hope I have cast important critical light on the Arts and Health movement and its agendas. I am, of course, not the first to raise such concerns or even to frame work in defiance of them, as is stated in *Applied Theatre: Performing Health and Wellbeing*.⁵⁹⁸ However, my excavation of the movement, I suggest, exposes its neoliberal foundations for what they are. I hope my undertaking of this will help others be forensic about identifying Symbolic Violence processes. I hope this will provide a framework for reflection when there are temptations for doing arts project which have or invite Resilience and Wellbeing as their outcomes. This is as critical in 2019 when I finish my thesis, as it was in 2008, when *Five Ways to Wellbeing*:

⁵⁹⁸ *Applied Theatre: Performing Health and Wellbeing*, ed. by Veronica Baxter and Katharine E. Low (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017).

the Evidence was published along with its attractive postcards. There is currently a ‘conversation’ in Southwark, where all Theatre Troupe’s work is based. *Five Ways to Wellbeing* is mentioned right at the top of the web page introducing this. In its inaugural event, which I attended with sixty other individuals involved in arts and health work, two of the speakers in this short hour and a half event made reference to the Five Ways: Richard Ings, who also wrote the *Be Creative Be Well* evaluation report, and Dulwich Picture Gallery, who had just run a project for young people based directly on the *Five Ways to Wellbeing*. We were all also handed copies of the All Party Parliamentary Report *Creative Health*.⁵⁹⁹

The benefit of being critical, I suggest, is because it clears the way for a type of practice that is boldly in defiance of arts and capitalism of Arts and Wellbeing and this is the interpersonal, irreducible, indispensable processes of attunement. I hope, through this research, I contribute this knowledge to the research canon. It is a perspective given by several of those who work in the realm of neurobiological trauma. This is a vital new way for us to conceive and do applied theatre. More and more research is emerging that shows plasticity of the brain makes rewriting trauma narratives possible, especially in childhood and adolescence. It is love/care/nurture that has the potential to intervene in the plastic window.

Further to this, I aim that my research can bring new knowledge to the theoretical frameworks in the field. I suggest there has been an absence of theory that robustly challenges models that are currently used in the applied theatre field, a theoretical perspective holds contempt for anything that might be considered “the show,” with all the trappings of costumes and lights and elaborate set. Boal’s dominance in the field, and the lingering influence of Brecht, keeps this strand of theory and practice alive when our current times of neoliberal austerity demand something less bare, less severe. In an oft

⁵⁹⁹ ‘Culture, Health and Wellbeing Conversation’, *Southwark Council* <<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/events-culture-and-heritage/projects-and-programmes/culture-health-and-wellbeing-conversation>> [accessed 19 December 2019].

quoted statement Boal states: 'theatre is a weapon, a very effective weapon.'⁶⁰⁰ Brutality is also a metaphor in *Rainbow of Desire*, when he expounds the theory of Cops in the Head.⁶⁰¹ Even allegorically this is not a helpful way to begin theatre with those who are wounded. In Boal, theatre is a rehearsal for the revolution.⁶⁰² The revolution we need today, I suggest, is not one that places itself on the battlefield, but back in the playhouse in which the "magic" of theatre can take place. In order not to be tempted into arguments about the validity of the trappings of performance in commercial theatre, I have primarily used medieval troupe and theatre practice to define the work, referring to other historical theatre practices where necessary. I have cast back in time and identified a place in which theatre was there for its community and that the pleasure and joy of theatre had a vital, socio-aesthetic function, in which it permeated the everyday life for the men and women who lived it. Furthermore, the historic troupe tends always to find itself forced to the margins of society, through poverty and persecution from the hegemony, whilst still loved by their public. The players/artists in the Troupe are oppressed but they are also loved, and are protected because of this.

Methods, Methodologies and storytelling

The least I can hope to do through this research, I think, is trouble the waters of discussions of methods, in both arts and health contexts. My foray into this field has been more one of personal discovery through a complicated and in-depth study, and a series of missteps and perplexities. Although I am content with the way in which I have eventually presented the findings of my research, my research is limited in this regard. In a straightforward way, I have not been able to find a way out of the outcomes and evaluation methods required by multiple funders to fund applied theatre's work. If anything, I have moved to the other extreme. Whilst there may be occasion for an odd quote in a report to funders, the written account of *The Way to Optimistic Land*, is, in this regard, is reasonably redundant. By this

⁶⁰⁰ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Get Political, 6, New edition (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p.1.

⁶⁰¹ Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁶⁰² Boal, 'Theatre of the Oppressed', p.1.

token, my research is not so useful for others discerning a way to show the impact of change.

On the other hand, where I finally found my feet in the minefield of evaluation methods and methodologies is an encapsulation of the idea of the whole thesis. In writing an account of a group of people I spent time with, once a week, over the course of the year, I have been forced to attune to them in a way that is more honest than hard “data” and in doing so express, as poets before me, the quality of pain and love. I do not claim that this is startlingly insightful, but it is my attempt to try what love can do if I tune into the labour of Treasure House Youth Troupe. The young people and the adults that I worked for in Treasure House Youth Troupe deserve my close and loving attention, which I express through my words. It is infinitely harder than collecting instrumental data. But perhaps this is the point. If I do not make the effort to present the results in a powerful and affective way, then maybe I am not really evaluating at all. That said, however, the debate about the best way to evidence the impact of arts work on health outcomes still eludes me. I must also acknowledge that the ad hoc way in which I collected data hindered the robustness of any approach I did take.

The Future

Theatre Troupe is about to start its fourth project since the end of the TTM pilot, and the learning from this research has been invaluable. We now have a one to one mentor system for all young people. Our next after school project, Livesey Youth Troupe, took place between February 2018 and March 2019 with twenty four young people. We had a menu system and two dedicated passenger assistants on two minibuses. We also had an excellent project manager and support worker, who ensured attendance and retention but, most importantly, maintained very close contact with parents and carers, always letting them know how their child was doing, celebrating the moments in which they had thrived, and when there was a problem to work together. We also experienced no end of tensions: still looping the loop at Treasure House, still, every now and then, adults breaking down in

tears, including me. The undercurrent of bullying still took us by surprise, and although we got a handle on it more quickly, its presence in our midst was troubling. And with two minibuses, two drivers and two passenger assistants we continued to have transport problems, with schools, with traffic and with the baying hordes of children as they left the workshop.

We are now working in partnership with two alternative education providers for excluded children, delivering the TTM methodology across the year. In one of these schools, we are part of a specific therapeutic offer to girls who have severe attachment disorders embedded in their specialist provision. In the other school, we will be working with mothers alongside their children. This is really exciting, as it opens up an opportunity to test whether a similar methodology might work with adults who have experienced trauma. So things are certainly developing. I hope that this in particular will be a catalyst to provide training for other people to do the TTM in their own original way.

For whilst there may be a methodology behind the Troupe, the only bit of the methodology that is really important, is that we try what love can do. I know this because after the extraordinary group of volunteers that took part in Treasure House Youth Troupe, our projects since have been crammed with more extraordinary people, who have been passionate and tenacious in not just testing the waters of compassion but wading right in. They give up their time, for free, facing children who run around, and swear or don't speak or any other number of things that are painful and confusing, and they just don't give up. They try and try and try and try what love can do. I'll leave you at the end with a quote from one of our volunteers about what the theatre Troupe offers, one that I hope that all we theatre people can take forward:

These children struggle in their lives. Theatre Troupe, rooted in acceptance and imagination offers a glimpse of a richer, more accepting and loving possibility.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰³ Volunteer (anonymous) questionnaire, 19 July 2017.

Appendices

PART 1: EVALUATION MEASURES

Appendix A: Transcripts and records used for research and pilot project

Interview with Nikki Watson	Semi-structured, conducted by author	14.5.15
Referral forms	Data extracted from information about young people, as written by referring professionals and/or parents/carers (see appendix B)	October 2016-July 2017
Feedback Sessions transcripts	Semi-structured, conducted by author	October 2016-July 2017
Evaluation sessions	Conducted once a term. The same focus-group format to feedback sessions.	January, May and July 2017
Interview with Michael Dolan	Semi-structured, conducted by author	
Post-project interviews with Melekodium, Fagilistic, Afireem and Ghost	Semi-structured; conducted by author and Oliver Campbell	17.7.17
Post-project anonymous volunteer questionnaire		17.7.17
Conversation with Halima Habil	Semi-structured discussion	1.8.17
Interview with teacher	Semi-structured, interviewed by author	21.10.17
Interview with June and Kizi	Semi-structured , interviewed by author	18.12.18
Interview with social worker	Semi-structured, interviewed by author	21.12.18
Interview with Naomi Long-Srikotriam	Semi-structured, interviewed by author	7.11.19
Interview with Oliver Campbell	Interviewed by author	5.2.19
Interview with Zoe Dowling	Semi-structured, interviewed by author	7.2.19
Conversation with Clark Baim	Semi -structured discussion	8.11.19
Interview with Martin Hunka	Semi-structured, interviewed by author	26.11.19
Email questions with Anna Herrman		9.12.19

Appendix B: Referral Form

PARTICIPANT REFERRAL FORM

** Fields required*

Your name*	<i>[Professional]</i>
Your job title/role*	
Email*	
Phone number*	
Organisation Name*	
Borough/s of operation*	
Date of referral*	

THE PARTICIPANT

Young Person's Name*	
Age*	
Date of birth*	
Address*	
Postcode*	
Young Person's mobile number	
Young Person's email address	
Name of parent/carer*	
Relationship to child*	
Best parent/carer contact number*	
Additional contact number	
Email address	

YOUNG PERSON'S SUPPORT NETWORKS (TAC; SUPPORT WORKERS etc.)

Please fill out as many of these details as possible. This helps us ensure that the young person makes the most of the Theatre Troupe intervention programme as part of their care and support systems

Young person's school*	
Name & role of best contact at school where known (SENCO/ Head of Year/ Inclusion worker etc.)*	
School contacts email and phone number*	
Name of social worker (where known)*	
Email and phone number of social worker (if applicable)*	
Name of other support worker (where applicable)	
Email and phone number of other support worker	

Any other useful information about the agencies this young person or his/her family are engaged with

Please continue to next page

Please give us as much information about the child and his/her circumstances as possible to ensure s/he is as safe and comfortable as possible, and so we can tailor activities as appropriate. We will only share it with authorised members of staff, and volunteers.

DETAILS ABOUT YOUNG PERSON (HEALTH, SAFEGUARDING, BEHAVIOUR AND CIRCUMSTANCES)
SPECIFIC REASONS FOR REFERRING THIS YOUNG PERSON

Engagement with Services (please tick/highlight):

CAMHS

Social Services

Child Protection- safeguarding and family support

PERMISSIONS

Permission given by client/parent for Theatre Troupe to share this information, including anonymously in research

Please email this form to info@theatretroupe.org or post to: Theatre Troupe, 66B Tressillian Road, London, SE4 1YD.

Appendix C: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

Date of Birth.....

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
Considerate of other people's feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rather solitary, tends to play alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many worries, often seems worried	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Constantly fidgeting or squirming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has at least one good friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often fights with other children or bullies them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally liked by other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easily distracted, concentration wanders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kind to younger children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often lies or cheats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Picked on or bullied by other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thinks things out before acting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steals from home, school or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gets on better with adults than with other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Many fears, easily scared	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature

Date

Parent/Teacher/Other (please specify:)

Thank you very much for your help

© Robert Goodman, 2005

Appendix D: Warwick Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) (14 item)

This table is a copied representation of items on the WEMWBS. The original copyrighted by Warwick University's research department. A real version can be seen in its original form on, amongst others, the Child Outcomes Research Consortium web pages.⁶⁰⁴

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future					
I've been feeling useful					
I've been feeling relaxed					
I've been feeling interested in other people					
I've had energy to spare					
I've been dealing with problems well					
I've been thinking clearly					
I've been feeling good about myself					
I've been feeling close to other people					
I've been feeling confident					
I've been able to make up my own mind about things					
I've been feeling loved					
I've been interested in new things					
I've been feeling cheerful					

⁶⁰⁴ <https://www.corc.uk.net/media/1537/wemwbs.pdf>

Appendix E: Embodied Attunement Scale (Participant observer)

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANT

NAME OF PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM:

WEEK:

DATE:

STATEMENT	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1. The participant uses the space appropriately <i>(Where were they mostly in the room? Were they scanning, distracted, moving constantly, hugging the edges?)</i>					
Comments on Question 1					
2. The Participant in physically relaxed <i>(Body tension? Curled in on themselves? Scanning? Busts of anger? Irritability)</i>					
Comments of Question 2					
3. The Participant engages well with peers <i>Proximity to others (either intrusive or avoidant), startling or flinching? Comfortable speech?</i>					
Comments on Question 3					
4. The participant engages well with adults <i>As with peers</i>					
Comments on Question 4					
5. The Participant is comfortable with eye contact <i>With adults, with young people, in groups?</i>					
Comments on Question 5					
6. The participant engages well with activities					
Comments on Question 6					

PART 2: ETHICS AND CONSENT

Appendix F: Information sheet & Consent for children aged 14 and over



Information sheet & Consent Form for children aged 14 or over

Research study The Role of theatre & attunement in reducing child and adolescent mental distress

Emily Hunka (researcher) is taking part in research at Queen Mary University London to find out how Theatre Troupe's activities help young people like you. Emily would like to invite you to be part of this research project, if you would like to. This information sheet tells you what to do to tell us if you would like to be involved.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

"Consent" means that you give permission for something to happen, and agree that you are happy to do it.

Because you are under 18, we are also going to ask for your parent/carer's consent for you to take part. But it's also very important to get your consent (permission) for Emily to interview you, and for her to use some of the things said in the interview in published research.

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- You should only consent if you want to take part. It is COMPLETELY up to you. If you don't want to take part there is no disadvantage to you, and the way you take part in Theatre Troupe activities won't change. If you say no, we won't mention it again.
- If you consent to take part but change your mind at any point, either before, during or after the interviews, this is fine. You have the right to withdraw consent at any time.
- If you do agree, everything used from the interview will be ANONYMOUS. We will ask you to choose a pseudonym (made up name) and will not say anything that identifies you, so the people reading the research will never know who you are. Also, we will not identify any of your friends or family members.

Please read the following information carefully before you decide to take part; this will tell you why the research is being done and what you will be asked to do if you take part. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign the attached form to say that you agree. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

This piece of research asks the question: Can theatre reduce child & adolescent mental distress?

I'm interested to know:

- Does working as part of a theatre company help you to feel better?
- Do any of the activities in Theatre Troupe make you feel better, and if they do what are they? If they don't, why not?
- About your experience taking part in Theatre Troupe workshops, including what you have liked and what you haven't liked?
- What you would like to do differently and what other things would you like to see in Theatre Troupe's workshops in the future.

You can take time to decide. You can ask a parent or teacher, or your mentor to go through it with you and explain anything you don't understand. When you have read and are happy that you have understood the information, you can now decide whether you want to take part in the research or not. Remember, it is COMPLETELY up to you whether or not you want to take part. If you do not want to take part, that's absolutely fine. We won't mention it again.

If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign the consent form at the bottom of this document. You can ask a parent or teacher to go through the consent form with you, so you understand its wording and meaning.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

If you have any questions or concerns about the manner in which the study was conducted please, in the first instance, contact the researcher responsible for the study. If this is unsuccessful, or not appropriate, please contact the Secretary at the Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee, Room W104, Queen's Building, Mile End Campus, Mile End Road, London or research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk)

Cut here -----

Consenting (giving permission) to taking part in research

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet, listened to an explanation about the research, and understood the consent form.

Title of Study: **Can theatre reduce child and adolescent distress?**

Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee Ref: QMERC2017/06

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Participant's Statement:

I _____ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed: Date:

Investigator's Statement:

I _____ confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the volunteers.

Appendix G: Information sheet and assent for under 14s



Information sheet

Research study Can theatre reduce child & adolescent mental distress

Information for participants (children aged 13 or under)

Emily is taking part in research at Queen Mary University London to find out how Theatre Troupe's activities help young people like you. I would like to invite you to be part of this research project, if you would like to. This information sheet tells you what to do to tell us if you would like to be involved.

I'm interested to know:

- Does working as part of a theatre company help you to feel better?
- Do any of the activities in Theatre Troupe make you feel better, and if they do what are they? If they don't, why not?
- About your experience taking part in Theatre Troupe workshops, including what you have liked and what you haven't liked?
- What you would like to do differently and what other things would you like to see in Theatre Troupe's workshops in the future.

WHAT IS ASSENT?

"Assent" means that you give your approval to something, and agree that you are happy to do it.

Because you are under 18, we are also going to ask for your parent/carer's permission (this is called "consent"). But it's also very important to get your

"assent" (agreement) that you are happy to take part in an interview with Emily, and for her to use some of the things said in interview in published research.

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER :

- You should only say "yes" if you want to take part. It is up to you. If you don't want to take part there is no disadvantage to you, and the way you take part in Theatre Troupe activities won't change. If you say no, we won't mention it again.
- If you do agree, everything used from the interview will be ANONYMOUS. We will ask you to choose a pseudonym (made up name) and will not say anything that identifies you, so the people reading the research will never know who you are. Also, we will never identify any of your friends or family members.

YOUR NAME:

I'm happy to take part in Emily's research.

Appendix H: Information sheet for adults participating in the research project & guardian permission their children to take part



Information sheet (for participants: staff, volunteers & other adult interviewees)

Research study: Can theatre reduce adolescent mental distress?

information for participants [parents]

I would like to invite you [your child] to be part of this research project, if you would like to. You should only agree to take part if you want to, it is entirely up to you. If you choose not to take part there won't be any disadvantages for you and you will hear no more about it. Choosing not to take part will not affect your current or future role in Theatre Troupe activities in any way. Please read the following information carefully before you decide to take part [whether your child will take part]; this will tell you why the research is being done and what you will be asked to do if you [your child] take part. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

If you decide to take part [are happy for your child to take part] you will be asked to sign the attached form to say that you agree. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

I am interested in understanding the impact of Theatre Troupe on children, parents, social workers, teachers, staff and volunteers. I am also interested in the role, history and practice of applied theatre in mental health and wellbeing.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you have any questions or concerns about the manner in which the study was conducted please, in the first instance, contact the researcher responsible for the study. If this is unsuccessful, or not appropriate, please contact the Secretary at the Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee, Room W104, Queen's Building, Mile End Campus, Mile End Road, London or research-ethics@qmul.ac.uk.

Details of Study

Participants in this study are the children and young taking part in the Theatre Troupe's programme, you have been contributing to as a volunteer. This research draws on theories of attachment, including neurological attachment. It seeks to explore the ways in which rehearsal and performance in a specially constructed theatre company can reduce mental distress in children and young people aged 10-19. The participants on this study are members of the Theatre Troupe drama project and have all experienced abuse, neglect or relational loss by parents, carers, family neighbours and friends or peers in the form of bullying.

As a result, they struggle with normal social interaction, which affects their ability to thrive. Theatre uses a combination of the principles of neurological attachment and the distinct qualities of a theatre troupe in a prototype of practical work.

- Human relationships are the building blocks of life with the brain primed for interaction; damaged relationships are fundamental to pervasive and chronic distress
- Theatre is an embodied multi-modal discipline drawing on aural, kinaesthetic, verbal and visual aspects of the human body and mind playing a part in healing neural paths

- A significant body of evidence suggests that artists have qualities of deep empathy and a way to disseminate understandings of human emotional and social experience to interpret feelings through acting.
- The theatre “troupe” uses the special qualities of a theatre troupe to tackle the attachment difficulties they face. People with attachment problems can’t trust anyone, can’t regulate feelings in their body, don’t know how to react to others. Manifestations of this are seen in the present and the future as behaviour. In the confines of this study, I will be looking at attachment improvement in the present and an evaluation of progress.

My research questions are:

- **Can theatre reduce adolescent mental distress?**

This is underpinned by two sub-questions:

- **How can a community of interdependent theatre artists (a “troupe”), working together to produce performance, provide opportunities for navigating the social experience and improving relationships?**
- **How is the theatre “troupe” an agent for social and emotional change?**

The aim of the study is to ascertain whether the work of Theatre Troupe makes a difference to social relationships in the family, and those in school and community life. This research is framed as Quality Improvement/Logic Model research: rather than being concerned with collecting data to evidence practice, it is exploring the process of the work including how methodological tools may or may not be effective.

Consent form for participants (staff, volunteers & other adult participants).

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Study: **The Role of the Theatre Troupe in Reducing Child & Adolescent Mental Distress**

Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee Ref:QMERC2017/06

Thank you for considering [allowing your child] taking part in this research . The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I [my child] no longer wish [es] to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Participant’s Statement:

I _____ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed: Date:

Investigator’s Statement:

I _____ confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the volunteers.

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