CONTENTS

Banner image: Maya Freelon Asante, *Time Lapse*, 2010, tissue paper sculpture, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Morton Fine Art, Washington, DC. www.mayafreelon.com.

COSMOPOLITANISM AS CRITICAL AND CREATIVE PRACTICE:
AN INTRODUCTION

Eleanor Byrne and Berthold Schoene, Manchester Metropolitan University

Has cosmopolitanism become uncontroversial? As a concept it seems endlessly flexible and suits almost everybody while offending no one in particular. If we are all citizens of the world already, and nobody would seriously want to contest this, then is there still a need to plead for a cosmopolitan outlook, a cosmopolitan inflection to political decisions taken at national and international levels, or by international bodies? Clearly, for peoples yet to access even national recognition in an international arena, the injunctions of a cosmopolitan commitment in a globalised world are urgent and risky in equal measure. Numerous examples might demonstrate this point. For instance, on 29 November 2012, the United Nations General Assembly voted to upgrade the status of the Palestinians to that of a 'non-member observer state'. This followed a bid to join the international body as a full member state in 2011, which failed, due to a lack of support in the UN Security Council.[1] The long-term effects of this decision are as yet unknowable. Palestinians may now participate in General Assembly debates, and their chances of joining UN agencies and the International Criminal Court have improved. But conversely the Israeli response to the vote has been to withhold $120 million worth of funds from Palestine and initiate aggressive settlement projects in East Jerusalem. Importantly, cosmopolitanism advocates that we have conversations across borders, and that in these conversations the rights of both parties to speak are universally regarded as self-evident.

Cosmopolitanism is traditionally defined either with reference to its late eighteenth-century Kantian legacy as world citizenship facilitated by international trade legislation or, in its more contemporary manifestation, as 'a form of radicalism that has flourished since the fall of the Berlin Wall' (Fine, 2003, p.452) driven less by economic interests and bourgeois self-realisation than an egalitarian cosmopolitics informed by a strong ethical sense of world-communal commitment.

Especially since 9/11 cosmopolitanism has asserted itself as a counterdiscursive response to globalisation and a critical methodology aimed at counterbalancing the ongoing hegemony of what in *The Cosmopolitan Vision* Ulrich Beck has termed 'the national outlook'. Invoking a world threatened by global risks Beck calls on communities to reconceive their nationalist self-identification by opening up and contributing to global culture with '[their] own language and cultural symbols' (Beck, 2006, p.21). The new cosmopolitanism promotes a departure from nationally demarcated and compartmentalised views of the world. However, keen to avoid imposing a new universalism, it stresses the indispensability of local diversity and difference for the propagation of any sustainable world-communal future.

As the world finds itself increasingly disempowered by globalisation's seeming intractability, any meaningful political intervention becomes ever harder to initiate. Presumably this is where, as a means of potential resistance to globalisation, cosmopolitanism as an ethically informed geopolitical discourse could gain considerable momentum. Such an understanding of cosmopolitanism as dissent is not without its critics. Timothy Brennan, for example, identifies the new cosmopolitanism as 'a veiled Americanism' (Brennan, 2001, p.682). He refers to it dismissively as 'cosmo-theory' which, in his view, does little more than provide glib rhetorical copy for economic globalisation, and the cultural oppression and exploitation that accompany it. 'Globalization bears on cosmopolitanism as structure to idea', Brennan asserts. 'It is that purportedly new material reality to which the new ethos – cosmopolitanism – responds' (2001, p.662). What Brennan's critique exposes is cosmopolitanism's enmeshment in the operations of neoliberal capitalism and Americanisation, which pursue not smooth worldwide homogenisation, let alone democratic popular equivalence, but quite simply reinscribe the centuries-old exploitative core-periphery relations of Western imperialism. Whereas in the twenty-first century capital has indeed gone cosmopolitan, in political, social and cultural terms transnational exchange remains largely a one-way system, segregating the proverbial global village into enclaves of unprecedented security and affluence, on the one hand, and increasingly anomic ghettoes of terror, cultural dislocation and economic hardship, on the other.

Brennan's critique zooms in on one particular manifestation of cosmopolitanism, namely the American academy's embrace of the Clinton Administration's new market globalism, which was soon matched by Tony Blair's coinage of a political 'Third Way'. This new market globalism set out to marry neoliberalism's

---

1 'Palestinians win upgraded UN status by wide margin', BBC News Middle East, 30 November 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world middle east 20550864 (accessed 3 January 2013).

'free market' agenda to social responsibility and commitment, keen to design a roadmap for exiting the rampant monetarist turbo-capitalism to which, according to Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, there was no alternative. Under Clinton and Blair globalisation appeared to develop a social conscience, and Brennan is right to point out that many American intellectuals fell for the allure of this expertly-spun fantasy of bringing progress and prosperity to the new post-Cold War world. Unfortunately, not only did they fail to recognise the manifold ways in which this so-called Washington Consensus massively exacerbated the same old inequalities both at home and worldwide, they also took for granted the consolidation of global American hegemony that inevitably ensued. According to Brennan, the kind of cosmopolitanism endorsed in this work made a significant contribution to America's systematic 'transform[ation of] the *kosmos* into their [own] *polis*', as Sheldon Pollock memorably put it (Pollock, 2002, p.25). But should one really allow this errant variant of cosmopolitanism, specific to a particular group in a particular place and time, to disqualify for good any other possible manifestations of cosmopolitical engagement?

One major objective of our special issue is to explore the impact, and impact-generating potential, of cosmopolitanism within both critical and creative practice. Can cosmopolitanism be retrieved from being seen as a mere by-product of globalisation, a philosophy or – more appropriately – a lifestyle that has developed out of the increasing cosmopolitanisation of everyday life, especially in the developed world? If we did choose to see it as the latter, then cosmopolitanism would indeed be little more than a euphemism for Americanisation or, worse still, a mere marketing buzzword aimed at rendering globalisation more palatable to the West's educated, politically-engaged and culturally-active middle classes. Despite his acknowledgement that cosmopolitanism does set out to promote an ethical connection of the individual with the world as a whole, Craig Calhoun, for instance, expresses concern that 'equally often cosmopolitanism imagines a world that is simply an object of consumption, there for individuals' pleasure' (Calhoun, 2008, p.109). It is a view crisply exemplified by Kimberly Yuracko's interpretation in *Perfectionism and Contemporary Feminist Values* (2003) that 'the goal of cosmopolitanism is self-expression and self-realization', and that 'cosmopolitanism presents individuals with a wide range of options; they choose the one that will bring them the most pleasure and gratification' (quoted in Calhoun, 2002, p.109). Highlighting the primacy of individual choice over communal responsibility and

commitment, Yuracko falls prey to a common fallacy fairly widespread among US American academics, which is to conflate cosmopolitanism with neoliberalism. This overlooks and indeed disingenuously obfuscates the irresolvable tensions between Western consumerist individualism, on the one hand, and the pursuit of pan-global cosmopolitical equivalence, on the other.

Originally an economic doctrine championing the free market and wary of any form of state intervention, neoliberalism has come to equate political liberty with economic freedom, making the latter the primary foundation of a free and prosperous society. Opposed to the post-World War II welfare state, which was built on the premise that markets must be regulated, by taxes and labour rights, to ensure social justice and mobility, neoliberalism rose to worldwide hegemony in the 1980s under the political reign of Reagan and Thatcher. Neoliberalism's acutely self-centred view of the human is memorably expressed in Thatcher's declaration of 1987 that 'there is no such thing as society! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first' (Thatcher, 1987). Not without irony, neoliberalism's ascent appears to have been fuelled by the legacy of the countercultural 1960s, which had taught a whole generation to regard individual freedom and self-realisation as life's most pressing pursuits. According to Tony Judt, 'what united the '60s generation was not the interest of all, but the needs and rights of each', adding that 'individualism – the assertion of every person's claim to maximized private freedom and the unrestrained liberty to express autonomous desires and have them respected and institutionalized by society at large – became the left-wing watchword of the hour' (Judt, 2010, pp.87–8). Instead of making use of the state as an instrument for forging a fairer and more democratic future, people from across the political spectrum now saw the state as a bully and big brother that interfered with the citizenry's basic human right to self-fulfilment. The aspiration of the hour was to create a 'small state' that would enable individuals to live their lives unencumbered by society's norms and needs. Measures were taken to rein in the public sector which was believed to disempower and infantilise the citizenry, while a free-market economy was established – again, not without irony – by governmentally enforced deregulation. In our own day and age faith in the free market has not only become the world's chief political rationale, it has moreover infiltrated even the most intimate spheres of our lives, thus effectively elevating neoliberalism to the status of ideology of the now. According to Jodi Dean, free market exchange has

become 'a guide for all human action' (Dean, 2008, p.48), while David Harvey asserts that neoliberalism 'has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world' (Harvey, 2005, p.3).

As oppositionally imbricated as dystopia and utopia, and frequently confused in both popular discourse and right-wing opinion-making, neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism are probably best understood as the twin ideologies of contemporary globalisation: whereas the former champions free market forces and remains primarily motivated by the generation of profit, resulting in the creation of winners and losers, the latter advocates fair-trade agreements intended to benefit all humanity by establishing worldwide equality and justice. According to Pheng Cheah, what the rivalrous vying for predominance between these two ideological mindsets ultimately reveals is nothing less than a clash between two seemingly irreconcilable world pictures, centred on 'the world' and 'the globe' respectively:

> The world is a form of relating or being-with. The globe, on the other hand, the totality produced by processes of globalization, is a bounded object or entity in Mercatorian space. When we say "map of the world," we really mean "map of the globe." It is assumed that the spatial diffusion and extensiveness achieved through global media and markets give rise to a sense of belonging to a shared world, when one might argue that such developments lead instead to greater polarization and division of nations and regions. The globe is not the world. This is a necessary premise if the cosmopolitan vocation of world literature can be meaningful today.
> (2008, p.30)

Worth noting is also, of course, that cosmopolitan ideals are frequently hijacked by the neoliberal project, which excels at posing as a herald of freedom, independence, community, and global prosperity while in fact perpetrating barely concealed neo-imperialist 'mercatorial' designs.

Contemporary cosmopolitanism as critical and creative practice must attempt to extricate itself from the stranglehold of its neoliberal twin so it can evolve into an ethically responsible mode of resistance to globalisation. In our view, an important part of this effort is the willingness to imagine and conceive of global community as radical conviviality. Far from incorporating a neat fulfilment of utopian designs of multicultural concord and harmony, such radical conviviality manifests as the messy, unmanageable and motley sprawl of humanity across the globe.

For any politics, poetics or cultural practice to do justice to humanity as it presents itself, it must first accept that there cannot, of course, ever be one 'correct' cosmopolitanism; instead, it must embrace the existence of a plurality of cosmopolitanisms, the particular motivation and disposition of each depending on its local specificity, as every nation, and indeed every citizen of every nation, including the stateless, will make their own unique contribution to global culture.

Effectively, what cosmopolites should expect to encounter and have to engage with as they go abroad is other cosmopolitanisms. What Calhoun regards as 'a key problem in an otherwise attractive concept' is exactly this 'notion that cosmopolitanism (a version of ethical goodness) can be achieved without deeper change'. As far as Calhoun is concerned, 'cosmopolitanism should not be simply a free-floating cultural taste, personal attitude, or ethical choice; it must be a matter of institutions' (Calhoun, 2008, p.109), and how could one fail to agree with him? However, Calhoun's portrayal of cosmopolitanism as primarily an idealist personality trait to be cultivated by individuals of their own accord is misleading as it falls short of capturing the cosmopolitan impulse as always already immanent in literally myriad forms of communal intermingling and hospitable engagement that are congenital to the human condition. Obviously, cosmopolitanism would also spectacularly fail in its opposition to universalism if it tried to reach any kind of definite global institutionalisation before achieving popular ubiquity. More importantly, however, we simply cannot afford the luxury of waiting for a wholescale governmental restructuring of the world. In its current state our world resembles a babel that obstinately resists systematic corralling into fixed belief systems or uniform political schemes. Spheres of cultural difference no longer overlap and cross-fertilise politely, if ever they did, but clash in struggle and agitation, sparking sometimes signs of wonder, sometimes pure cataclysm. It is also crucial to understand that the agential and significatory power of cosmopolitanism exceeds momentary acts of charitable hospitality or humanitarian solicitude. Cosmopolitanism is best seen as everybody's challenge to respond ethically to the ceaseless, random happening of encounter and communication that constitutes everyday human living throughout the world.

We would like to propose three tentative principles for a counterdiscursive cosmopolitanism, that is, a cosmopolitanism which aims to resist and, by so doing, unsettle the apparent intractability of globalisation as neoliberalisation. The three principles we propose are glocality, relationality and inoperativity. Glocality

refers to the rootedness, originality and specificity of all cosmopolitan agency. Rather than perpetrating an erasure of local culture, globalisation initiates a commingling and interpermeation of the global with the local. Put differently, wherever it takes purchase, globalisation meets with resistance and is subjected to processes of locally-specific transformation. Consequently, cosmopolitanism is never first and foremost about acknowledging and interacting with other cultures, but about acknowledging and interacting with 'other' cosmopolitanisms – other, locally-specific and initially-alien responses to the world and its increasing globalisation. Each encounter with a stranger thus posits a challenge to one's own cosmopolitan disposition and agency – what Marsha Meskimmon has designated as everybody's 'response-ability' (Meskimmon, 2011, p.7) – and this challenge is all the more pronounced and urgent when the stranger is also a foreigner.

Cosmopolitan relationality is offered by us in opposition to postmodern relativity: that, and how the parts relate to each other individually and *in toto,* matters greatly in cosmopolitanism. In contrast to postmodernism, cosmopolitanism has a predilection for segmentation over fragmentation, conviviality over individual self-realisation, and processes of transformation over states or degrees of hybridity. This kind of cosmopolitan relationality can also be seen to feature prominently in Judith Butler's query concerning individual responsibility and communality in *Frames of War*:

> ❛ Is it only as an "I," that is, as an individual, that I am responsible? Could it be that when I assume responsibility what becomes clear is that who "I" am is bound up with others in necessary ways? Am I even thinkable without that world of others? In effect, could it be that through the process of assuming responsibility the "I" shows itself to be, at least partially, a "we"? ❜
>
> (Butler, 2009, p.35)

This process of self-reflection leads Butler to her concept of 'grievability' through which she aims to expose common sectarian and nationalist curtailments of human fellow feeling in an increasingly globalised world. 'Those we kill are not quite human, and not quite alive', Butler writes, 'which means that we do not feel the same outrage and horror over the loss of their lives as we do over the loss of those lives that bear national or religious similarity to our own' (p.42). A cosmopolitan world would suffer the loss of 50 people killed in a bomb blast in a Baghdad market square as acutely as the loss of 50 people killed in an attack on the London Underground. Butler urges us to demand to see more of the pictures and hear more of the stories behind anonymous statistics: who are the three Iraqi bystanders that were killed together with the British soldier whose face we are shown and whose name we are told? And who was the suicide bomber that killed all of them with so little discrimination? It is crucial we demand to be empowered to grieve all victims of violence irrespective of their citizenship or religious denomination.

The third principle of counterdiscursive cosmopolitanism is inoperativity, which is a term borrowed from the work of the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy. The act of imagining global community, Nancy insists, must remain inoperative; it must be impartial, ateleological and without any definite purpose other than perpetuating human conviviality. The act of imagining global community must refrain from conceiving of humanity in terms of a project or 'work' destined for completion. Such a strictly operative approach would subject humanity to a programme of self-fulfilment, or end-of-history 'salvation', as envisioned by virtually all types of fundamentalism, be they religious or political. Any attempt to establish global community by seeking to accomplish perfect consent, harmony and agreement can only prove injurious. What keeps community alive and well is disparity, dissent, struggle and agitation. Nancy envisages community as always in the process of 'coming' instead of having come already or, in fact, as ever being meant to come together for good. The principle of cosmopolitan inoperativity declines to identify itself as an ideological '-ism' that grasps global conviviality only to manage and contain it. By contrast, cosmopolitan inoperativity facilitates our imagining of global community as a relational, 'glocal', 'being-in-common' or, quite simply, as radical convivial living, for now, in the here and now.

It is through its cultivation of glocality, relationality and inoperativity that cosmopolitanism demonstrates and develops its counterdiscursive potential – as a critical and creative practice, as a politics and a poetics, and, at the same time, as both a particular chosen individual style and a congenital human inclination towards community. More importantly perhaps, it is also by dint of these attributes that it becomes seriously contentious and controversial, even offensive. Cosmopolitanism will, of course, alienate nationalists, fundamentalists and racists – and that it will do so should go without saying. It will also obstruct the kind of global management and entrepreneurialism that treats the world primarily as an enterprise, a market place and exploitable commodity. Its ethic

would insist on pausing to grieve the many lives lost in the devastating Japanese earthquake and tsunami of March 2011, and by so doing acknowledge – however momentarily – the precariousness of human existence, something that politicians, economists and their think-tanks almost immediately turned into a reckoning of the catastrophe's likely impact on the economy. Counterdiscursive cosmopolitanism will not agree with whoever values fiscal stability more highly than social justice; with whoever claims that there is no such thing as society; with whoever regards the state as inhibitive rather than crucially instrumental in the development of community; with whoever speaks about the public and private sectors as if they were opposed, even inimical, to each other. Nor will it agree with whoever implements multicultural policies in order to compartmentalise society and carve up the world, which is already perceived as far too unprofitably particularised and fragmented; with whoever absolves themselves of cosmopolitan responsibility by segregation or proscription, quite as if either method could ever transport alleged undesirables out of our world, or hide the fact that those we mishandle in such ways are not in fact aliens, but inalienable members of global community.

The seven contributors to this special issue explore what, in their view, cosmopolitanism does, or might be able to do, or ought to be doing, especially in terms of thinking about their own work as critics, artists and writers. What motivates our work on cosmopolitanism? What are we setting out to achieve? What the contributors share is a common interest in probing the potentialities and limitations of cosmopolitanism as counterdiscursive critical and creative practice. Cosmopolitanism is presented here as epistemology and critical/creative method instead of merely a lifestyle, an attitude, or a political position always already ideologically contaminated and hence devoid of deconstructive capability. Inspired by Ulrich Beck's *Cosmopolitan Vision* the contributors conceive of cosmopolitan practice as a response to globalisation, as an 'outlook' or 'method' that is purposeful and deliberate rather than complicit or merely ancillary. Instead of searching for signs of cosmopolitanism in art, literature and critical theory, the contributions to this volume are linked by a concern with artistic, literary and theoretical practice as by and of itself already cosmopolitan. In what ways can creativity and the imagination as they express themselves in literature, art and theory be identified as practices that not only help raise a cosmopolitan consciousness but, beyond that, instigate and initiate actual forms of emancipatory transnational understanding and agency?

Three of the seven contributions that make up this special issue (those by Connell, Garfield and Schoene) came out of the proceedings of a symposium on 'Cosmopolitanism as Critical and Creative Practice' hosted by the Institute of Humanities and Social Science Research at Manchester Metropolitan University in May 2011 as part of its annual research programme on globalisation. The remaining four papers were specially commissioned for this collection. Berthold Schoene's opening essay reads Geoff Ryman's interactive novel *253* as a text that conceives of global community through 'global narration' which produces a thick description of global contemporaneity. Marsha Meskimmon explores what she terms the precarious ecology of cosmopolitanism as always unfinished. Through readings of works by three artists (Joan Brasil, Catherine Bertola and Johanna Hällsten) she explores the role of 'wonder' as having the potential to align subjects in the world through a shared experience of affective states at once precarious and precious. Elaine Speight advocates 'place listening' as a radical form of embedded, relational and sustained engagement with, as well as within, specific places. Through a discussion of her own communal art project, *Palimpsest*, she explores the potential of different forms of urban walking to facilitate a nuanced cosmopolitan intervention into essentialised notions of space. Renate Dohmen takes a critical look at articulations of the cosmopolitan in critical receptions of the work of Thai-Argentinian artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose installations, she argues, are too easily read as paradigmatic of 'relational aesthetics'. Dohmen asks how Tiravanija's works reconceptualise home, and being at home in the world, through a cosmopolitan lens.

Rachel Garfield discusses examples of minimalist art practice, proposing that a concept of cosmopolitan maximalism might more fully illuminate the particular aesthetic dynamics at work in her examples. She describes this as a form of excessive overloading, or density, which explores multi-positionality by enabling the viewer to insert themselves into the narrative of the work. Liam Connell explains the usefulness of the concept of offshore cosmopolitanism. By examining the ways in which the 'offshore' involves a bifurcation of the nation state under global capitalism, he discusses the ways in which the idea of national belonging struggles to survive in representations of the offshore in a range of contemporary cosmopolitan novels. Finally, following Jacques Derrida's work on hospitality as an aporia, Eleanor Byrne discusses the limits and conditions of a cosmopolitan un/conditional hospitality, which she does through an analysis of the official UK Citizenship Test. In an additional text she then offers an encounter

with unconditional hospitality in the work of the Swedish-Finnish children's writer Tove Janssen. Artist John Timberlake offers a visual afterword with original artworks based on a virtual grand tour of the world facilitated by Google Earth.

Bibliography

1   Beck, U. ([2004] 2006) *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (trans C. Cronin), Cambridge, Polity.

2   Brennan, T. (2001) 'Cosmo-theory', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol.100, no.3, pp.659–91.

3   Butler, J. (2009) *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London and New York, Verso.

4   Calhoun, C. (2008) 'Cosmopolitanism in the modern social imaginary', *Daedalus*, vol.137, no.3, pp.105–14.

5   Cheah, P. (2008) 'What is a world? On world literature as world-making activity', *Daedalus*, vol.137, no.3, pp.26–38.

6   Dean, J. (2008) 'Enjoying neoliberalism', *Cultural Politics*, vol.4, no.1, pp.47–72.

7   Fine, R. (2003) 'Taking the "ism" out of cosmopolitanism: an essay in reconstruction', *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol.6, no.4, pp.451–70.

8   Harvey, D. (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

9   Judt, T. (2010) *Ill Fares the Land: A Treatise on Our Present Discontents*, London, Allen Lane.

10 Meskimmon, M. (2011) *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, London, Routledge.

11 Nancy, J.-L. ([1986] 1991) *The Inoperative Community* (trans. P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland and S. Sawhney), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

12 Pollock, S. (2002) 'Cosmopolitan and vernacular in history', in C.A. Breckenridge, S. Pollock, H.K. Bhabha and D. Chakrabarty (eds) *Cosmopolitanism*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, pp.15–53.

13 Thatcher, M. (1987) 'AIDS, education and the year 2000!' *Woman's Own*, 31 October, www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689.

THE WORLD ON A TRAIN: GLOBAL NARRATION IN GEOFF RYMAN'S *253*

Berthold Schoene

Abstract

The focus of this essay is an exploration of Geoff Ryman's interactive novel 253, *which was originally released online in 1996 as* 253, *or Tube Theatre: A Novel for the Internet on London Underground in Seven Cars and a Crash and two years later also published as a 'print remix'. Examining Ryman's text as an example of contemporary global narration, Schoene explores the cosmopolitan techniques and structural devices employed in* 253 *not merely to envisage the individual's immersion in global community but to facilitate an enduring interactive experience of it. Aligning the hypertextuality of* 253 *with Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy of community, Schoene argues that Ryman's use of hyperlinks does not destroy plot, but deconstructs it, reconceiving it as fluid and 'inoperative' instead of strictly telos-driven. With close reference to Ryman's 'The World on a Train', his BBC News tribute to the 52 victims of the 7/7 London terrorist attacks, the essay concludes by looking at the new cosmopolitical currency acquired by Ryman's novel – a currency it did not originally have in the mid-1990s.*

Recent developments in communication technology have made the world a smaller and more easily navigable place. The world is now more efficiently connected and as a result we seem to be living within much closer reach of each other. Yet, at times, it looks as though instead of evolving into new global neighbourhoods, buzzing with multicultural diversity and cosmopolitan fellow feeling, the globe has begun to shrink into a claustrophobic, inhospitable throng, tighter and more compact than before, but hardly any more intimate or empathic. Individuals lead ever more atomised and isolated lives while the population of the world as a whole finds itself corralled into fiercely inimical identities. Contemporary cosmopolitan fiction's effort at imagining global community is compounded not only by the sheer number of people in the world, but also by the unwieldy anonymity, mounting competitiveness and neoliberal fractiousness of these people, and as a result cosmopolitan community becomes increasingly difficult to represent within the confines of a single narrative.

Far-fetched segments: global narration and the individual

Contemporary global narration tends to retain the novel's traditional focus on the individual, but often the individual now appears multiply mirrored and replicated. As the novelist concatenates individual lives from different parts of the world, successive chapters tend to introduce new individuals, each starting the narrative more or less from scratch like a self-contained *petit récit*. These snapshots of individual lives become the constitutive building blocks of the writer's attempt at cosmopolitan world-creation. They function similarly to atom-like units that are expected somehow to react with each other, generating increasingly more elaborate molecular clusters, or 'communities'.

The scenario involving Rana Dasgupta's characters in *Tokyo Cancelled* (2005) seems symptomatic in this context. Stuck due to bad weather in a remote international airport besieged by civil war, and bereft of the company of 310 of their fellow travellers for whom emergency overnight accommodation has been found, the remaining thirteen passengers 'felt an inexplicable need to stay close, as if during the reconstitution of themselves around this new Situation a sort of kinship had emerged. They moved towards the chairs like atoms in a molecule, no closer but also no further away than their relationship dictated' (pp.5–6). For the duration of Dasgupta's novel contemporaneity's ceaseless flux comes to a standstill and settles into an opportunity for creating community out of a random assortment of strangers. This manifestation of community appears prompted by some kind of axiomatic necessity at once determined by and generative of – to use Raymond Williams's resonant term – a common 'structure of feeling' that binds these forlorn individuals at least fleetingly into one. According to Williams, each new generation 'responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting … yet feeling its whole life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling (Williams, 1961, p.65). Notably, in interview with Travis Elborough, Dasgupta has explained that '*Tokyo Cancelled* is about the feeling of globalization' ('About the Author' appendix, in Dasgupta, 2005, p.2). The stranded passengers' spontaneous communion results in the composition of a catalogue of stories which simply by being told at the same time in the same place transcend the apparent incommensurability of their various international settings and origins. It is the globalised context of their telling that transforms these far-fetched segments of the global imagination into a new, temporarily-composite, mosaic-like picture of the world.

Global narration aims to convey a sense of synchronicity while resisting homogeneity. Picturing the world from any one perspective is likely to lead to distortions of conviviality as, for example, manifest in the post-9/11 Western tendency to conceive of Islam, according to Judith Butler, 'as not of *this* time or *our* time, but of *another* time, one that has only anachronistically emerged in this time' (Butler, 2009, p.110). Global narration insists on a radical synchronisation of what we call 'modern' with what by contrast we choose to designate in terms of otherworldliness, anachronicity or retardation. However, such a synchronisation involves the world not only in its present and past configurations, but also in the ways it unfolds its futural, as yet unrealised, potentialities. Much contemporary global narration ventures into at least some kind of tentative, loose-end interrogation of what is to come. Globalisation has unsettled the narrative management of time insofar as it pairs its new spatial expansion with a temporal, if achronological deepening of perspective.

No matter how conventional or innovative global narration's chronological make-up, the many individual characters it portrays rarely appear in neat succession. Often they are out of sync, or run the same lag repeatedly, or abruptly drop the baton of narration altogether. Global narration excels at past-present-future time shifts, but due to its sustained multiplicity and abstention from definitive reconfiguration it never crystallises into straightforwardly utopian or dystopian narration. Cosmopolitan novels like David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* (1999) and *Cloud Atlas* (2004), as well as Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004) and *Gods Without Men* (2011), all avoid lapsing into an easily classifiable, generically specific type of world-creation. In their refusal to project a definite future, their conception of world community overlaps in interesting ways with that of contemporary philosophers such as Giorgio Agamben in *The Coming Community* (1990) or Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Inoperative Community* (1986). Like Agamben and Nancy, Mitchell and Kunzru – and somewhat more obliquely also Margaret Atwood in her dystopian-utopian hybrid *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and its sequel *The Year of the Flood* (2009) (see Schoene, 2013) – appear set on extricating humanity from any one already-worked-out global formation, be it real-political or imagined. Like Agamben and Nancy, these authors portray the world as always in the process of emergence, as 'coming'. Accordingly, global community never assumes entitative corporeality. Instead, it emerges as the wholly contingent unwieldiness of our shared existence in the immediate here and now, weaving us into one at the same time as setting us free,

disclosing both our predilection for affiliation and our capacity to propagate endless dispersion. Ateleological, deconstructive and cosmopolitan, the new global narration sees the world open up in communal, yet never homogeneous, synchronicity.

Another characteristic trait of contemporary global narration is that it decentres the individual: all individuality amounts to in the end is the production of countless variations on one and the same contemporary humanity. This dynamic stalls whenever global narrative shifts into the mode of postcolonial fiction and becomes waylaid by the psychological turmoil of cross-cultural encounter. Novels such as Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009), whose protagonist Hiroko Tanaka is presented to us as a survivor of Hiroshima, India's Partition and 9/11, or David Mitchell's fifth novel *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010), which brings to life an eighteenth-century encounter between Dutch and Japanese traders, introduce their characters as allegorical representatives of their nations. Rather than assuming shape and gaining momentum by reacting with one another like atoms in a process of world-communal molecularisation, the explicit tokenism of Mitchell's Jacob de Zoet and Shamsie's Hiroko Ashraf proves obstructive of free mutual exposure. Fully formed and *in*formed from the outset, the actions of Jacob and Hiroko serve to fulfill a preconceived authorial vision or plot.

To elucidate global narration's treatment of individuality further, a brief excursion into an earlier period of literary cosmopolitanism appears useful. Since the beginning of the twentieth century the individual has become the subject of increasing scrutiny. Symptomatically, in *Jacob's Room* (1922) by Virginia Woolf, possibly high modernism's most vociferous cosmopolite,[1] one finds manifestations of individuality reduced to a mere flicker. In *Jacob's Room* every passer-by in the city, every pedestrian, every commuter – no matter how fugitive their significance for the development of the novel – is called by their full name and title. As Edward Bishop has commented, 'the text is naming everybody in sight, and all it does is confuse us … We do not know who is important … It alienates the reader and reminds him or her of the alienation that takes place in mass culture; it establishes from the outset [the protagonist] Jacob's status as a cog in the machine' (Bishop, 1992, pp.161–2). The seeming

importance assigned to a person by taking the time to name them in full is undermined by their utter inconsequence:

> ❛ The motor omnibuses were locked. Mr. Spalding going to the city looked at Mr. Charles Budgeon bound for Shepherd's Bush. The proximity of the omnibuses gave the outside passengers an opportunity to stare into each other's faces. Yet few took advantage of it. Each had his own business to think of. Each had his past shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart; and his friends could only read the title, James Spalding, or Charles Budgeon, and the passengers going the opposite way could read nothing at all–save "a man with a red moustache," "a young man in grey smoking a pipe." The October sunlight rested upon all these men and women sitting immobile; and little Johnnie Sturgeon took the chance to swing down the staircase, carrying his large mysterious parcel, and so dodging a zigzag course between the wheels he reached the pavement, started to whistle a tune and was soon out of sight – for ever. ❜
> (Woolf, [1922] 1999, p.85)

Neither Mr Spalding, nor Mr Budgeon, nor little Johnnie Sturgeon plays a role of any significance in the novel. In *Jacob's Room* individual life belongs wholly with the mass that crowds the metropolis; the individual crystallises from the mass only to melt back into it. This mass circulation of human life is everything; it is what constitutes the city.

It is of course precisely this annihilation of individual import by the mass that matters when it comes to imagining community in contemporary global narration, where one would expect the dilemma to be more pronounced and compounded. Cosmopolitan fiction, in alignment with the contemporary philosophy of community, suggests that humanity's existence as mass – largely anonymous, amorphous, and asocial – harbours real opportunities for communal assemblage, for example by allowing random gestures of local, individual solicitude to initiate global conflagrations of neighbourly compassion. The mass is neither inert nor atomised beyond repair; it is essentially 'inoperative'. In other words, it is alive with the community-generating processes of mutual exposure within which, according to Jean-Luc Nancy, each individual represents 'a contact … a contagion: a touching, the transmission of a trembling at the edge of being, the communication of a passion that makes us fellows, or the communication of the passion to be fellows, to be *in* common' (Nancy, 1991, p.61). This touching or contagion is as inevitable

---

1   See also Jessica Berman (2001) and Rebecca Walkowitz (2006). Berman discusses Woolf's 'politics of connection' and the recurrence of 'splinter' and 'mosaic' as leitmotifs in her work while Walkowitz dedicates a chapter to Woolf's cosmopolitan poetics of 'evasion'.

as it is surprising and unanticipated, and as symptomatic as it is unprecedented. It manifests in the form of popular uprisings like those leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall or driving the ongoing revolutionary agitation in the Arab world, but also in instances like London's summoning of its 'blitz spirit' in response to the terrorist attacks of 7 July 2005, or the world – fundamentally torn – rallying in shock and sympathy, intellectual resignation or triumphant *schadenfreude*, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11.

Relations without a centre: *253* as hypertext

Globalisation has brought about significant shifts in the practice and imagination of global politics, culture and community – shifts that one would expect contemporary narration to reflect and record, not least by utilising the digital devices and virtual vistas opened up by the new communication technologies. As Jay Bolter speculated over ten years ago in *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* (2001), this new electronic type of writing might in the end prove far more adept than the conventional novel at capturing who we are, or aspire to be, both individually and as communities:

> ❛ If … electronic communication corresponds to a postmodern sense of self, it may also correspond to a postmodern definition of affiliation and community. We exploit the World Wide Web, e-mail, and chat rooms to facilitate a culture of temporary allegiances and changing cultural positions – to fashion our "network culture." The Internet and particularly the Web become for us a metaphor for the ways in which we function in our various communities by sending out dozens of links to sites of interest or contestation. We compile hot lists or bookmarks that indicate which groups we choose to belong to at any given moment, and we can erase these lists as easily as we create them. ❜
>
> (Bolter, 2001, p.203)

As global culture evolves into what Bolter describes as 'a vast hypertext', which with regard to its methods of self-authentication remains entirely self-reliant, digitalisation and virtuality enable spontaneous changes in individual self-fashioning, as well as communal affiliation and disaffiliation, the rapidity and scale of which exceed anything conventional textuality could ever dream to generate or sustain. The elasticity and endless mutability afforded by the new communication technologies create a fecund environment for exactly the kind of inoperative communal dynamics that, according to Nancy, constitute and propel the world.

How better ultimately to describe the World Wide Web, its processes and effects, than to cite Nancy's identikit of 'the world' in his treatise *Being Singular Plural*:

> ❛ The unity of a world is not one: it is made of a diversity, and even disparity and opposition … The unity of a world is nothing other than its diversity, and this, in turn, is a diversity of worlds. A world is a multiplicity of worlds; the world is a multiplicity of worlds, and its unity is the mutual sharing and exposition of all its world – within this world.
> The sharing of the world is the law of the world. The world has nothing other; it is not subject to any authority; it does not have a sovereign. ❜
>
> (Nancy, 2000, p.185)

This makes a pertinent portrayal of the world as simultaneously singular and plural, unified by its multiplicity while multiple in its all-encompassing oneness. Whereas the world ceaselessly proceeds to come together, it never sets into one. Its intrinsic nature is 'contagious' (to use Nancy's term) or 'viral' (to use a contemporary neologism). What Nancy's description highlights is the world's immense rallying power. However, what in the end keeps it going – or, rather, what keeps it 'coming' – is disruption, dispersal and ceaseless reconfiguration.

Geoff Ryman's novel *253* was originally released online as *253, or tube theatre: a novel for the Internet on London Underground in Seven Cars and a Crash* and two years later, in 1998, as a 'print remix'. The action of the novel, which in print adds up to 366 pages, takes place on 11 January 1995, from 8.35 to 8.42 in the morning, amounting to a total time span of just seven and a half minutes. The setting is a London underground train on the Bakerloo line, which at full capacity accommodate 253 people including the driver. The action starts as the train leaves Embankment, then continues via Waterloo and Lambeth North to the Elephant and Castle, where it crashes after the driver falls asleep. In Ryman's novel each passenger's identity is rehearsed in three separate sections dedicated to 'outward appearance', 'inside information', and 'what he or she is thinking or doing', amounting to exactly 253 words irrespective of how eccentric or non-descript the passenger under scrutiny turns out to be. Emulating Woolf's method in *Jacob's Room* Ryman names all his characters, thus highlighting everybody's unique individuality as well as the transience and ultimate inconsequence of their existence. Showing its characters in transit, wholly immersed in mega-urban anonymity, the novel is at the same time rooted in a very specific locale through

its footnotes which reference various landmarks and sights. Local Londoners, who use this particular stretch of the tube for their daily commute, are joined on the train by tourists, immigrants and visitors from both other parts of the city as well as the provinces, creating an egalitarian atmosphere of multicultural diversity as black and white, Christian and Muslim, young and old, male and female, straight and gay are shown seated together: labourers next to professors, celebrities rubbing shoulders with unassuming nobodies, even the occasional dame and lord slumming it among the commoners. Ryman's assortment of passengers mirrors London's – and, by extension, the world's – exceptional demographic super-diversity (see Steven Vertovec, 2007).

As an example of global narration Ryman's novel imagines not just the daily circulation of *Massenmenschen* that is contemporary London, but moreover the mass commotion that animates and agitates the world as a whole. Interestingly, in his essay on literary representations of the London Underground, Tobias Döring makes use of images of Nancean inoperativity to evoke 'London's vast immensity' and, more specifically, the tube system that renders this immensity more easily negotiable. What Döring invokes by describing the tubed city as 'a network of relations without a centre, without clear limits' (Döring, 2002, p.55) as well as 'a vast arena for unforeseen, momentary and often singular encounters' (p.57), and the tube itself as 'a site to trade collective fantasies or to respond to the contemporary fragmentation of urban existence' (p.56), is Nancy's promise of inoperative community emerging from the contagion of the mass's entirely quotidian exposure to itself. 'Long seen as the greatest concentration of the urban crowds,' Döring notes, 'underground stations, carriages and passages are consistently described in a rhetoric of physicality, with strangers' bodies regularly touching, rubbing, sweating, pressing, pushing one another as closely as nowhere else' (p.58). What Döring finds in his selection of literary texts is not a vision of London as a place rendered uninhabitable by overpopulation and functionality, a place where proximity, connectivity and diversity have congealed into a density unalleviated by human fellowship. Rather, London is presented as a world, and the definition of 'a world' according to Nancy is 'precisely that in which there is room for everyone … a genuine place, one in which things can genuinely *take place*' (Nancy, 2007, p.42). Or, to express it in the words of Marc Augé, despite its size and compression, London continues to be 'a place for living … equivalent to those produced by an older, slower history: where individual itineraries can

intersect and mingle, where a few words are exchanged and solitudes momentarily forgotten, on the church steps, in front of the town hall, at the café counter or in the baker's doorway' (Augé, 1995, pp.66–5).

The tube comes alive as a cosmopolitan place in which community can unfold, and this capacity of the tube to generate community is at least in part to do with its 'glocalised' situation. The London tube is a place where the local and the global interpermeate, thus introducing the world to one of its specific locales as well as vice versa, while showing the individual never to be entirely isolated or atomised. As Döring observes, 'among the fictive crowd of 253 underground travellers not everyone is a stranger to the other and not everything occurs at random; characters interrelate and interact, some are violent, some are affectionate to one another' (p.58). By virtue of being contemporaries, the people portrayed by Ryman are always already in touch: they are relatives, rivals, neighbours, lovers, colleagues, service providers and customers, or, if they are indeed strangers, they are shown to be only ever one small step removed from making contact. Ryman shows them bumping into each other, responding to each other's facial expressions and involuntary gestures, being touched by one another's joy, hope, anger, stress and frustration, confronting strikingly similar dilemmas or sharing common interests, longing to converse, and rushing to each other's aid. In addition to these naturally occurring intersections and correspondences, Ryman presents us with at least two further situations that trigger variously inoperative displays of community. In carriage 3 we are treated to an impromptu production of the 'Mind the Gap' theatre group who specialise in performing improvised slapstick and situation comedy on the tube. Abruptly lowering the barrier between fiction and reality, as well as that between reader and text, the character in 'the lead idiot role' is Passenger 96, identified as Geoff Ryman, 'an amateur actor on holiday from his day job' (p.137). The other display of community is more complex and more precariously held together when in the tail end of the final carriage Passenger 253, an elderly woman named Anne Frank, begins to sing. The first to join her is Passenger 223, identified as African-American Professor Dionne Butler, now resident in Nigeria:

❛ Then the woman starts to sing: "is that all there is?" and Dionne understands.
Dionne first heard the song when she was seventeen, and it seemed then to sum up America; something sad and disaster-bound about it. Even then, it was the loneliest country in the world. One reason why she lives in Africa. Dionne stands up, and with her strong clear

voice, joins in. Her eyes fix all the frightened people in turn. "Everybody!" 〄

(p.307)

The light-hearted tube party that ensues is prompted by a shared memory of oppression and suffering, summoning the traumatic historical interconnectedness of Europe, America and Africa in a spontaneous apotheosis of contemporary celebration and solidarity. Emotion spills into song that touches and 'infects' by-standers, demonstrating just how close an anonymous mass of people is at any one moment to stepping into sync and pulling together.

Despite the fact that the train is hurtling towards destruction it seems at least initially very appealing to think of *253* as basically 'a novel without a plot' (Döring, 2002, p.58); its mechanisms of cohesion appear far more tentative, random and haphazard than those of a conventional novel. Still, even though Ryman's text is clearly straining towards achieving a more flexible dynamic, it remains confined by traditional emplotment. As Laura Colombino notes with some frustration, 'the tremendously extensive – at least for the space of a novel – human material at stake [in *253*] paradoxically amounts to an absolutely enclosed and predetermined structure' (Colombino, 2006, p.624). Ryman's story-telling remains chained to the schematic layout of the train, in which each passenger is assigned a seat and number, from the fixed position of which they are never shown very far to stray. This 'perfectly arranged grid of control' (p.624) is even more inhibitive of narrative flow in the 'print remix' of the novel, where each passenger is not only contained within a seat but also within a page. Our reading experience is considerably impeded by the ensuing repetitiveness and tedium. It is the original web version of the novel that, due to its hyperlinks, enables, and indeed pioneers, the kind of fluid dynamic that has become such a dominant formative principle in contemporary global narration.

However, as an example of hypertext fiction Ryman's *253* also immediately gives rise to certain reading difficulties. As Richard Saint-Gelais and René Audet explain, 'these difficulties not only arise from the computer environment as such, but also from [the reader's] perplexity in the face of fictional discourses which wipe out plot or make it undergo transformations beyond mere fragmentation or the multiplication of possible narrative frameworks' (Saint-Gelais and Audet, 2003, p.72). What is intriguing in this context is the question of exactly what impact hyperfiction may have had on the generic development of the contemporary print novel. Saint-Gelais and Audet point out how fundamentally inimical hypertextuality is to plot generation and ultimately

to narrative *per se*. In their view, *253* is reduced to 'a descriptive file whose narrative component, if not absent, seems very slight – the fiction does not offer piecemeal stories, but rather countless pieces of story' (p.74), explaining that '[s]light narrative developments can ... be observed by the reader who follows the links and reconstructs, piece by piece, the puzzle of a situation sliced up according to the different perspectives of the characters involved. But this puzzle is deceptive: it never leads to more than a few reconstructions without much plot potential' (p.75).

Only in conclusion do Saint-Gelais and Audet wonder if we might be able to conceive of new narrative forms that could operate without plot, instead 'putting fiction together according to different principles of organization' (p.85). Yet their categorical juxtaposition of narrative and fiction, which culminates in the proposition that '(hyper)fiction can escape narrative's grasp' (p.84), appears extremely dubious. It seems much more fruitful to discuss these issues with regard to narrative's evolution and the novel's capacity for generic renewal. The novel avails itself of the techniques and devices developed by hyperfiction, appropriating them to respond more effectively to the challenge of representing the world as it is now. The use of hyperlinks does not destroy plot, but deconstructs it, reconceiving it as fluid and inoperative rather than strictly *telos*-driven. In *Ghostwritten* and *Cloud Atlas*, but effectively across all his works, David Mitchell – to name contemporary Britain's arguably most cosmopolitan writer – not only exploits the use of hyperlinks to create communities out of loose clusters of isolated characters separated geographically as well as in time (see Schoene, 2009, pp.97–124). Mitchell also involves the reader in a way that significantly lowers the bars between fiction and reality. Showing characters as thinking of each other, or sensing the import of each other's lives across space and time, suffices to present them as interrelated and capable of mutual contagion in the Nancean sense. Significantly, this interrelation also aptly describes the way readers connect with and immerse themselves in the texts they read.

The world on a train: trauma and world community

A good illustration of Ryman's use of hyperlinks in *253* is the '*Big Issue* love chain' (p.355). Four women – Maggie Rolt (Passenger 57), Marge Matisse (Passenger 79), Anita Mazzoni (Passenger 140) and Beverly Tompset (Passenger 198) – are lusting after the same *Big Issue* seller, Sam Cruza, who is also on the train as Passenger 216. Sam is a womanising cosmopolite who

has variously introduced himself to the women as Swiss, Albanian, Italian and Cossack, when in fact he is American. The discovery of this pentagon of would-be lovers is much easier in the novel's web version than the 'print remix', which relies primarily on the reader's own perspicacity and only secondarily on the appended index, which makes an awkward substitute for the web version's abundance of signposted hyperlinks. Hyperlinks, which Saint-Gelais and Audet encourage us to regard as 'meeting places, crossing points' (Saint-Gelais and Audet, 2003, p.74), point to the existence of a definite, preconceived structure – in this particular case, that of the love pentagon. But the novel, despite its reliance on such fixtures for expanding its depth and multi-dimensionality, is ultimately more interested in exploiting their loosely multitudinising effect rather than implementing them as a mere plotting device. Referring back to Nancy's philosophy I want to suggest that what this example demonstrates is that *253* aspires to a more fluid dynamic of world-communal narration. Rather than comparing and categorising the four women in relation to each other, let alone the feckless male via whom they are linked, the novel accentuates their differences and similarities which define their contemporariness by means of mutual exposure. Without their knowledge or intention, the women's lives and identities are shown to be leaning towards each other as if engaged in intimate communication. Their exposure to each other both defines and augments their singularity while at the same time alleviating the pain of individuality. In the Nancean view, this is how people come to constitute a world. As Nancy explains, 'one cannot make a world with simple atoms. There has to be a *clinamen*. There has to be an inclination or an inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other' (Nancy, 1991, p.3). This implied dynamic of the *clinamen* is provided by the hyperlinks that leave individuality intact while also 'declining' it in communal exposure to other individuals. In characteristically inoperative and deconstructive fashion what is introduced here is at once something more and something less, a detraction that simultaneously serves as an enhancement.

Unfolding in just seven and a half minutes, a time span that reloops 253 times with the portrayal of each passenger, Ryman's novel insists on radical synchronicity. And yet the text is informed also by a diachronic deepening: not only does it provide glimpses of each character's individual life, it culminates in a chaotic atemporal apotheosis which appears at once as futural and burdened by past trauma, yet which – despite the crash – resists dystopian categorisation. Crucial in this context is Ryman's introduction of Passenger

253 as Miss Anne Frank, who is said to have 'wandered Europe for the last 50 years' and believes herself to be on the train to Auschwitz. Not only does Anne save a considerable number of passengers by ushering them off the train at its penultimate stop, but also, as one would perhaps expect of a ghost, she escapes herself unscathed. Anne's antagonist is Passenger 252, the aptly named Mr Harold Pottluk, a market researcher for London Underground, who is compiling a passenger survey. His interest in his fellow passengers is purely quantitative; his perspective is calculating and coldly analytical, perceiving people as random products of life's contingencies, 'sitting inside their fates like eggs in cartons, there through an inexorable logic of age, gender, genes, character, their time in history, luck. He sees their faces like insulation wrapped around boilers' (p.339). Harold's is a strictly foreboding presence, deathly in its statistical quantification, whereas, somewhat ironically perhaps, Anne emerges as the spirit of enduring, life-affirming conviviality. The polarity of bureaucratic Harold and cosmopolitan Anne is what life in our increasingly neoliberalised world has come to contend with: the former strictly disavowing community while the latter proliferates it against all the odds.

The Holocaust is not the only trauma that frames and informs the narrative of *253*, lending it historical depth and global significance while quite literally derailing its logical trajectory. The incorporation of Anne Frank suspends the novel between utopia and dystopia, history and the contemporary, the local and the global, the individual and community, as well as the particular and the universal. However, Ryman's novel is haunted also by a second trauma – that of the AIDS epidemic. As Ryman himself notes, there was no accident on the London Underground on 11 January 1995; he selected that particular date because it was 'the day I learned my best friend not only had AIDS, but would die within days' (p.354). In his comparison of *253* with the NAMES Project of the International AIDS Quilt, an enormous patchwork-in-progress commemorating the lives of those killed by the disease, Eric Sonstroem starts with the observation that the web version of Ryman's novel is 'similarly sprawling, and similarly composed of discrete, democratically equalized units that are stitched together' (Sonstroem, 2004, n.p.), both the panels of the quilt and the portraits of Ryman's individual characters functioning simultaneously as obituaries and open pages from the book of life. According to Sonstroem, both the NAMES Project and Ryman's novel prefer hypertextual devices to the techniques of 'conventional narrative' because of their superior aptitude for highlighting community in

a realist, 'natural' and curative manner. Hypertextuality is not simply better equipped to convey a sense of synchronicity and belonging across spatial and identitarian boundaries; equally, if not more, significant is its reliance on 'repetition and looping as a process of healthy renewal'. Hypertextuality insists on taking its time. Rather than giving in to emplotment's *telos*-driven imperative to get on with it, it moves at its own pace. As Sonstroem explains, 'in hypertext, iterations do not lead to death, silence, or stultifying weariness; they are what animates the text, offering a continual source of renewal to the reader' (n.p.). The tube seems like a perfect choice of location in this respect, as it shows people in transit enjoying a moment of respite from the city, finding time for quiet contemplation while immersed in metropolitan life, assuming shape as individuals without lapsing out of community.

Following the terrorist attacks on the London Underground of 7 July 2005 Ryman's novel has acquired a new resonance which it did not originally have in the mid-1990s. In the immediate aftermath of the 7/7 atrocities Ryman produced a moving tribute to the 52 victims of the attacks for BBC News, which was published as 'The world on a train'. 'The most important thing about these people is not how they died but how they lived,' Ryman writes in his obituary. 'All of them were hard-working, decent and loving. That seems to be what most of us are. Goodness is ordinary. Which is why it so often goes unreported' (Ryman, 2005, n.p.). It is the way in which Ryman's novel about 253 fictional lives segues almost seamlessly into a reflection on the lives of all of us that identifies the text so indisputably as a cosmopolitan novel. As Sonstroem remarks, 'like real passengers on any London train, [Ryman's characters] come from all walks of life, are of all different sizes, races, ages, nationalities, genders, and sexual orientations' (n.p.). Indeed, the opposite is also true as the names, identities and real life stories of the victims of the 7/7 attacks, and the brief synopses of their final movements, read like an extension of Ryman's fiction, and the widely published mosaic-like panel of their facial photographs evokes the commemorative design of the AIDS quilt. Posthumously this entirely random group of individuals has come together as a community, and due to both their ordinariness and their superdiverse cosmopolitanism they represent a perfect identikit of global community. The 52 victims of the 7/7 attacks not only included young and old, male and female, Christian and Muslim, black and white, gay and straight, but they also represented over twenty different nationalities, including Afghanistan, Ghana, Iran, Mauritius, Montserrat, Romania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. Two of them were from Poland.

In his portrayal of Anthea Dobbs (Passenger 217) Ryman zooms in on one particular envisioning of community, which appears surprisingly traditional in its technophobic indictment of the way in which anonymous mass transport like the tube inhibits the flourishing of genuine communal conviviality in the city. Anthea remembers the tube strike of 1989 as follows:

> ' Everyone walked to work. It was summer, and London was suddenly a festival of people … The streets, instead of being deserted, bustled. Even the evenings were better: the shadows long, the sun golden. People said what the hell, and went to the pub. They walked in chains with hands on each other's necks … You saw faces everywhere, and the message of those faces over time was this: we are for the most part hard-working, decent, pleasant people.
>
> She has read recently of an alarming fall in numbers of people volunteering for charities. It is not due to overwork, since it is busy people who have continued to volunteer. The reason, the article claimed, is habitual isolation. It breeds mistrust and cynicism.
>
> She almost thinks there should be a two-year moratorium on cars, tubes, TV. She suddenly yearns to be out on the streets and abruptly decides to walk to the Elephant from Waterloo. '

(p. 296)

Significantly, Anthea's description of the people of London echoes Ryman's tribute to the victims of terrorism almost verbatim, identifying them as 'for the most part hard-working, decent, pleasant people'. But should we therefore agree with Jan Van Looy who suggests that 'it is the divine hand of the author that seems to interfere here, saving Anthea by and with her utopian vision of the past' (Van Looy, 2003, p.116)? Anthea escapes the train crash, but that cannot conceal the anachronism of her vision of community, which is informed by a nostalgic utopianism that Ryman's cosmopolitan novel is so clearly determined to rebut. Identifying all his passengers as 'hyperlinked by common bonds' at all times, Ryman's novel pays elaborate homage to the ineradicable omnipresence of cosmopolitan community in our lives. As Sonstroem explains, 'if passengers know each other, they are linked. If they think about or do the same thing, they are linked. If they interact or even glance at each other, they are linked' (Sonstroem, 2004, n.p.)

Bibliography

1   Augé, M. ([1992] 1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (trans. J. Howe), London, Verso.

2   Berman, J. (2001) *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

3   Bishop, E. (1992) 'The subject in *Jacob's Room*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol.38, no.1, pp.147–75.

4   Bolter, J. (2001) *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum.

5   Butler, J. (2009) *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London and New York, Verso.

6   Colombino, L. (2006) 'Negotiations with the system: J.G. Ballard and Geoff Ryman writing London's architecture', *Textual Practice*, vol.20, no.4, pp.615–35.

7   Dasgupta, R. (2005) *Tokyo Cancelled*, London, Harper Perennial.

8   Döring, T. (2002) 'Of maps and moles: cultural negotiations with the London tube', *Anglia*, vol.120, no.1, pp.30–64.

9   Nancy, J.-L. ([1986] 1991) *The Inoperative Community* (trans. P. Connor, L. Garbus, M. Holland and S. Sawhney), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

10   Nancy, J.-L. ([1996] 2000) *Being Singular Plural* (trans. R.D. Richardson and A.E. O'Byrne), Stanford, Stanford University Press.

11   Nancy, J.-L. ([2002] 2007) *The Creation of the World or Globalization* (trans. F. Raffoul and D. Pettigrew), New York, SUNY Press.

12   Ryman, G. (1996) *253, or Tube Theatre: A Novel for the Internet on London Underground in Seven Cars and a Crash*, http://www.ryman-novel.com/home.htm (accessed 22 October 2012).

13   Ryman, G. (1998) *253: The Print Remix*, London, Flamingo.

14   Ryman, G. (2005) 'The world on a train', *BBC News*, 9 August, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4132482.stm (accessed 22 October 2012).

15   Saint-Gelais, R. and Audet, R. (2003) 'Underground lies: revisiting narrative in hyperfiction' in J. Van Looy and J. Baetens (eds) *Close Reading New Media: Analyzing Electronic Literature*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, pp.71–85.

16   Schoene, B. (2009) *The Cosmopolitan Novel*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

17   Schoene, B. (2013) 'Getting World Going in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*', *Senses & Society*, vol.8, iss.1, pp.96–105.

18   Sonstroem, E. (2004) 'Repetition and the work of hypertextual mourning: Ryman's *253* and the NAMES Project AIDS Quilt', *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, vol.8, http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_8/sonstroem.html (accessed 22 October 2012).

19   Van Looy, J. (2003) 'One must be calm and laugh: Geoff Ryman's web novel *253* as a hypertextual contemplation on modernity' in J. Van Looy and J. Baetens (eds), *Close Reading New Media: Analyzing Electronic Literature*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, pp.101–20.

20   Vertovec, S. (2007) 'Super-diversity and its implications', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.30, no.6, pp.1024–54.

21   Walkowitz, R. (2006) *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation*, New York, Columbia University Press.

22   Williams, R. (1961) *The Long Revolution*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

23   Woolf, V. ([1922] 1999) *Jacob's Room*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

THE PRECARIOUS ECOLOGIES OF COSMOPOLITANISM[1]

Marsha Meskimmon

Abstract

Meskimmon contends that cosmopolitanism might be described as a precarious ecology, a state of dynamic exchange between selves and others, and a corporeal interplay between subjects, objects and ideas in the world. In this sense, cosmopolitanism is not a finished product, but rather a delicate balance reached during the mutual making of subjects and worlds, when that making welcomes difference and encourages ethical encounters with others. Turning to specific works by the artists Joan Brassil, Catherine Bertola and Johanna Hällsten, Meskimmon suggests that one of the ways that contemporary art can play a role in the creation of the precarious ecologies of cosmopolitanism is through its ability to evoke in viewers

a state of wonder. Meskimmon explores wonder as a precarious, and precious, affective state that enmeshes us, imaginatively and sensually, with/in the world, and through each of these very different instances she demonstrates how artwork can participate in the production of a tenuous and attenuated moment of balance, a precarious ecology, that has the potential to align us through our shared wonder at the open generosity of the world.

Making worlds *After the fact*

Fleeting, fragile patterns, rendered in dust, gradually covered the floor of an abandoned Georgian farmhouse in Bicker, Lincolnshire, as the artist Catherine Bertola meticulously 'cleaned' the space from dawn to dusk each day for nearly a month in 2006.[2] Her cleaning[3] was a drawing in and out from dust, a slow, repetitive process of working with the material residue of the past in the space of the present so that the two worlds collided, *after the fact*. Their collision was quotidian rather than dramatic; the traces of one world were re-made in another using the humblest, yet most ubiquitous of materials: dust. The particles that materialised the elaborate, yet tenuous, interconnections between past and present worlds in *After the fact* (Figure 1) were themselves evocative of a double movement in time. Dust signals both the radical unmaking of the world, its movement toward entropy, and the agency of world-making, the material trace left

Figure 1: Catherine Bertola, *After the fact*, 2006. Found dust and sound. Courtesy of the artist, Workplace Gallery and Galerie M+R Fricke.

2   Bertola's site-specific installation *After the fact* was performed as part of the Beacon Art project of 2006, *no place, like home*, curated by John Plowman across a number of sites in Lincolnshire between 9 September and 10 October.

3   'Cleaning' is literally invoked here: the work was made of dust, soap and polish, using dusters and cleaning cloths as tools. The notion of cleaning as women's work was recognised by the artist and by a number of critics of the work. See for example: 'Uncovering the past with Catherine Bertola' (interviewed by Victoria Redshaw), *Scarlet Opus*, posted March 2009, http://trendsblog.co.uk/?p=358.

in the wake of human and non-human activities that seek to give shape and meaning to the world.

I want to suggest that there is a compelling connection between the dust that was so central to *After the fact* and a provocative statement made by American philosopher Nelson Goodman over thirty years ago in *Ways of Worldmaking* where he considered from what we might make worlds: 'Not from nothing, after all, *but from other worlds*. Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking' (Goodman, 1978, p.7). Goodman's formulation is a useful starting point for thinking through the complexities of worlds and world-making in art as it reminds us that there is no outside to art-making, no privileged beyond from which to represent a world, only the stuff of which the art and the world both consist. From dust to world, from world to dust, world-making in art is always *after the fact*, yet never out of time. There is no end to the enterprise of world-making, nor to the potential for material transformation in art-making. Nor does world-making in art conform to a unidirectional temporality, a teleological mission or final utopian destination. World-making in this sense is *ecological*; it describes ongoing, mutable processes and systems of relation that take place between living and non-living things. Arguably, where art-making becomes world-making, materiality becomes crucial to ecology.[4]

Bertola's recurrent labour in making *After the fact* was as integral to its meaning as the dust from which it was made. The large and complex patterned dust drawing threatened to decompose, to be *unmade*, without the continual attention, effort and care of the artist as she 'cleaned' the floor each day. When she departed, dust slowly reclaimed the space leaving only the photographic trace of the work as its legacy. The hours upon hours of Bertola's laborious cleaning never displaced the dust; her excessive work could neither hold back time, nor remove the residual traces of past worlds. The work's production was itself an instance of world-making as re-making; the ecology it sustained for the period of its installation was a perpetual material transformation in and of time. The resultant site-specific drawing did not simply replace the 'past' with the 'present', but brought them together within the same space, in and of the same material, transformed.

Significantly, *After the fact* did not illustrate the history of its site, nor did it present an image of a

4   In using the term ecology in the present text, I am drawing upon its etymology, but I am also indebted to the work of Martin L. Davies, specifically his essay 'Thinking practice: On the concept of an ecology of knowledge', in M.L. Davies and M. Meskimmon (eds) (2003) *Breaking the Disciplines: Reconceptions in Knowledge, Art and Culture*, London, I.B. Taurus, pp.9–34.

Georgian domestic interior. Rather, it produced a space in which it was possible to (re-)encounter, imaginatively, the curves and arabesques that once adorned the papered walls of the Georgian farmhouse, now gone to dust. Re-animated through patterns traced in that selfsame dust, their tenuous lines were drawn out across the wooden floor. The space was thus articulated as a locus for memory and imagination that collapsed time and folded worlds into one another through their re-making as art. In this re-making, facture and material were intimately intertwined and mutually constitutive. The repetitive activity of drawing *in* dust allowed the emergence of the dust *as* drawing. As Goodman wrote, 'the many stuffs – matter, energy, waves, phenomena – that worlds are made of are made along with the worlds' (p.7).

If we are able to describe the agency of Bertola's work as an ecology, as a dynamic and sustainable system of relations between subjects, objects and their environment, we must also acknowledge the fragile, ephemeral nature of this ecology. *After the fact* was a precarious ecology, a world re-made in art that risked its unmaking at every turn. Dust is unsettling sediment, the slightest touch disturbs it, yet its presence is pervasive. The dust drawing at the centre of the installation was precarious; despite its complexity and the repetitive activity of its making, it was fragile and ephemeral, subject to the vicissitudes of movement in its vicinity and to reclamation by the accumulation of new layers of dust over time. It required human maintenance, continual acts of remaking, to remain in situ. *After the fact* demonstrates viscerally, in the affective force of its materiality, the fact that even the most elaborate and carefully-composed world may be fleeting and fragile.

I want to suggest, however, that the precarious ecology configured by *After the fact* is more nuanced than these direct references to its ephemeral materials and tenuous facture convey. While the precarious does signal fragility, ephemerality, uncertainty and risk, its etymology further connects it with prayer or entreaty. That which is precarious is dependent upon the will or favour of another; it is obtainable through earnest request or negotiation. Arguably, *After the fact* could only be produced by working *with* the dust rather than *upon* or *against* it; the work was effected through an active negotiation with the parameters of the space and its material constraints. The repetitive cleansing traced the lines and patterns of the dust in concert with its own textures, forms and proclivities. The sound derived from the repeated actions of the artist in making the work was recorded and played back into the space, producing a sonic equivalent to its gestural notation. While not a space of prayer in any formal religious sense, the recurrent movements of the artist, accompanied by the rhythmic aurality of the recording in the space, eloquently evoked the meditative qualities of introspective reflection that commonly attend quiet engagement with repetitive manual tasks.

Perhaps not surprisingly, entreaty shares a common root (*trahere*) with trace; to entreat is to *draw down* favour. In drawing out the resonances between the particles and the floor, the times past and present that inhered to the interstitial fabric of the dust, yielded themselves to the making of the work through the communion between the body of the maker and the world that was being made. In *After the fact*, drawing became a form of entreaty, a precarious act of engaged world-making in which subjects and objects were mutually configured as they were drawn forth, in dust, gesture and breath.

The mercurial materiality and manufacture of *After the fact* articulated a precarious ecology in an abandoned farmhouse for a month in 2006 and then was gone. Our engagement with the work now, therefore, must always be 'after the fact', our invocation of its affective force summoned through careful and attentive description of what once was made in dust, and has now gone to dust. We cannot experience it again, nor can we inspire others to make the pilgrimage to the work to experience it themselves. However, dust drawings have a history within European modernism, a history of material transformation through photography, that complicates their precarious existence as worlds made in art. In 1920 Marcel Duchamp's *Large glass,* which had lain for some years in his studio, undisturbed, collecting dust, became the subject of his interest again, and that of his friend and fellow artist, Man Ray. In what is now acknowledged as a collaborative work, the piece was transformed through photography and re-named *Dust breeding (large glass with dust notes).*[5]

Like *Dust breeding, After the fact* is not simply a past work, documented in photographs, but a work that has a vital photographic component within its larger and more complex configuration, and that this component adds an important dimension to the dynamics of the piece. In *After the fact*, the photographic images of the

5   The 'collaborative' nature of *Dust breeding* is now commonly acknowledged and this contributes to discussions of the 'work' consisting of both the object (*Large glass* with the accumulated dust on its surface) and its photographic trace. See, for instance, the reference to the work: 'Man Ray: Dust Breeding (69.521)' in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/69.521 (October 2006).

dust drawing *in situ* reiterate the complex temporality of the work and render its extraordinary physical presence palpable through the visual focus of the lens. The photograph allows the viewer to grasp the space and the fragile drawing on its floor in one, immediate, look; its transformation of dust traced through light into an indexical image adds to the visceral experience of ephemerality in the work by capturing a single moment and holding it stilled.

The photographs of *After the fact* are haptic – that is, experienced as tactile through the visual – and they engage us bodily in a work that we may never see 'in the flesh'. In this sense, they participate in what Olivier Asselin, Johanne Lamoureux and Christine Ross have called 'precarious visuality', a bodily form of vision that locates the subject within the dynamic aesthetics of the work, rather than as its distanced or disinterested observer (Asselin et al, 2008). The multi-layered affective registers through which the work operates are thus not lost in the photograph, but redoubled. The precarious ecology of the work is able to be conveyed, after the fact, through the agency of the photograph.

I want also to suggest that one of the most significant qualities of the photographic trace of Bertola's site-specific dust drawing is its capacity to make visible the extraordinary within the ordinary. The photographs are nearly monochrome; the space they image is non-descript, yet from within this quotidian visual locus emerges an elaborate figure, both two- and three-dimensional, formed from light, shade, mass and volume, yet tenuous in its presence. It is hard to grasp; it compels us to look, to make it out. It might be called wondrous in its ability to make us regard again that which we would otherwise simply overlook (Datson and Park, 2008, p.18).

Indeed, our engagement with this work is premised upon many of the perceptual, cognitive and affective states that have, historically, been attributed to wonder: the rupture of the familiar by the appearance of the unfamiliar; a visceral, vertiginous and immediate response compelling an attitude of contemplative enquiry; a temporal suspension characterised by close attention to specific objects. Wonder is not the sublime, and *After the fact* does not over-awe or overwhelm us. Its extraordinary qualities of elaboration and intricacy are a delicate surprise in the space, an unusual encounter within the realm of the familiar that brings us up against the limits of our recognition but offers no threat. It compels our enquiry to become embodied and engaged: *what is this, how has it come to be here, what do I make of it?* Pausing, lingering and taking pleasure in our encounter with the unfamiliar, we participate in the wondrous, precarious ecologies offered by world-

making in art. In his exploration of the significance of wonder to creative and intellectual enquiry, Philip Fisher has argued that ' [i]n locating the extraordinary back within the ordinary, explanation breaks open the fabric of the ordinary itself and changes it forever, both for thought and for perception … The ordinary is not just the dictionary of things we are used to; it is also relations among them … including contiguity, scale and genres of experience.' (Fisher, 1998, p.100)

World-making is not of necessity dramatic, but it is, potentially, wondrous. We make worlds everywhere and always as we go our daily rounds. We inhabit worlds that were made before our time, and we make worlds that will exceed our own existence. The profundity of such domestic world-making is inscribed in the quotidian, and yet the extraordinary is easily overlooked or disregarded when it resides within the everyday. As Fisher suggests, however, experiencing wonder in the face of the rupture of the extraordinary *within* the ordinary changes our relationship to the world forever.

Arguably, it is not simply a fortuitous coincidence that links the precarious with the wondrous in this particular work, but rather a more complex interweaving between the affective force of wonder and the materialisation of precarious ecologies in contemporary art. Wonder marks the boundaries of the known and recognised, the limits of the ever-same. Moving beyond those limits is a precarious enterprise, risky and, as I will argue, dependent upon other subjects and objects in the world. Wonder is not the only affective play of the precarious that can be engendered by contemporary art, but it is an especially significant state in relation to the interpellation of subjects and agencies in world-making, where the work of world-making is premised upon our interconnections with others and our openness to difference, and where world-making changes our relationship to the ordinary forever. As I will draw out in what remains of this essay, it is in this sense that the precarious and wondrous ecologies of world-making in art can contribute to an exploration of the critical and creative practices of cosmopolitanism.

Tethering time

In 2001 the artist Joan Brassil (1919–2005) installed a large-scale sound sculpture in the grounds of the Campbelltown Arts Centre in the suburbs of Sydney. Entitled *A tether of time* (Figure 2), Brassil's installation enfolds the macro within the micro, taking an oblique view through one particular space of the many worlds that surround us, unobserved and unnoticed. Exploring the dynamics of this work enables further connections

Figure 2: Joan Brassil, *A tether of time*, 2000-2001. Stainless steel, steel, wire, concrete, jarrah. Campbelltown Arts Centre Collection, purchased with assistance from the Australia Council 2001. Reproduced with permission.

between the precarious and the wondrous to emerge in the world-making agency of art.

A tether of time consists of three main elements, roughly configured in the shape of a 'T'. The 'downstroke' is inscribed by a slim flow of water over terraced steps, running some five metres along the length of the ground. This flow is neither like a natural river stream nor a traditional fountain, but more like a miniature industrial canal or a contemporary interpretation of the channelled water in a medieval Moorish garden. The 'cross-stroke' is marked by the most striking feature of the installation: five stainless steel tuning forks, strung with steel wire to produce a wind-harp over eight metres high. Each 'fork' has two smooth, soft-wood panels attached to its base which stand in amidst stone slabs carved with poetic lines referring to the histories of the site: from Aboriginal origins to contact and the later development of a large suburb.

A tether of time is typical of Brassil's installation practice more generally, a practice characterised by

a poetic use of industrial and technological materials and a meticulous attention to the details of site and meaning. However, the scale of the work, its permanence and its material and structural affinities with the built environment, sets it apart from many of the more fragile and tenuous works that have marked Brassil's practice. Significantly, however, I want to argue in what follows that the work's substantial physical presence neither negates the precariousness of its world-making nor the wonder it is capable of engendering.

While the precarious is commonly associated with the fleeting and ephemeral, it can also suggest lingering on the very brink of change. In the terms of the present discussion, the precarious can describe the event of ecological balance, when mutable elements are poised in harmonic connection. *A tether of time* is not so much a free-standing sculpture, as one such 'event', a play conducted between the work's varied physical components as they delineate the space of the sculpture garden and direct spectators' viewpoints

and movements within it. Its various shifts of scale and material are seemingly incompatible: the work is solid and fluid, it is massive and delicate; it is an object, an image, a space and a temporal event at once.

The balance of opposing forces in the work sets up a precarious ecology and surprises us with the extraordinary, tethered to the banal, time and again. Driving past the gallery and sculpture garden on one of the suburb's ubiquitous small highways, littered with commercial premises, traffic signs, street lights, telephone and power poles strung with cables, we spot a glistening wind-harp by the side of the road.[6] And yet, this harp is not at all unlike the street lights and telephone poles themselves, a fact which strikes one all the more powerfully from within the garden where the concrete and steel forms resonate with the oft-overlooked 'view' of commercial suburbia beyond. The installation's contours, materials and setting actually connect the sculpture garden with the surrounding suburban landscape rather than maintaining its isolation as a 'refuge' from what is commonly conceived as an unappealing, disorganised sprawl. *A tether of time* intervenes in Campbelltown's sculpture garden rather than simply being set in it, and, in so doing, renders the everyday extraordinary. In addition, the work performs the space as a system of relations between subjects and objects within multiple worlds – the sculpture garden, the surrounding suburbs, the cosmos. It is an ecology. More strongly, I suggest that the work entreats us to take an active role in remaking the world in this otherwise ordinary space, and if we answer this entreaty and engage with the work, we can partake of its precarious wonders.

In this sense, it is significant that *A tether of time* is a sound sculpture as well as a visual and material intervention into the space. The wind-harps capture the movement of the air, making gentle calls, while the flowing water lightly babbles. However, the most fascinating and compelling sounds produced by the work are not able to be heard just by walking past it, or by standing in the garden. To hear the unheard, it is necessary to press your ear against the wood at the base of the tuning forks, 'hugging' the poles and feeling their smooth, soft texture on your face. Standing in this way, the sound is magnificent; the slightest tremor of air, the resonance of the earth and the vibrations caused by the buildings and cables in Campbelltown are transformed into beautiful, vibrant song. By physically connecting with the work, the inaudible sounds of

the world around you become audible, and the virtual breaks into the temporal flow of the everyday in an aesthetic remaking of both the space and the subject who hears and imagines anew. Just as the seamlessness of daily experience is disrupted by the sight of a wind-harp by the side of the road, these heterogeneous sounds interrupt our dulled continuity by bringing us to our senses and connecting us to change and opening us to difference.

In *A tether of time* the extraordinary breaks into the ordinary through a critical shift in the attention of participant-observers, and I use the term 'participant' at this point most deliberately. *A tether of time* is not a work 'in-itself', an object offering itself to the distanced gaze of an onlooker. Rather, to have any effect, it requires the multi-sensory participation of subjects engaging with the work as a process of making connections across difference. The subject is here interpellated through an affective register as a perceptual instrument, captivated in wondrous arrest at the experience of their momentary connection to the cosmos. This enhanced mode of attention reveals the hidden, the unseen and unheard worlds that surround us; we are enworlded and world-making at once. Connected bodily to the random resonances of the multiple worlds we inhabit simultaneously, we become aware of the precariousness of our enworldment and how much threatens to disappear, overlooked, or pass away, unheard.

Activating the precarious links between visual, spatial and aural forms of perception at the point of wonder, *A tether of time* facilitates our potential to inhabit spaces *differently*. Studies in the physiology of music are instructive here: it is impossible to 'hear' a continual monotone until it is disrupted by a variant sound, because 'hearing' is constituted at once by the physical perception of vibration and the cognitive processing of the phenomenon as 'sound' which occurs in differentiation (Roederer, 1995, pp.3–6). 'Hearing' is constituted through attending to, and acknowledging, difference, as much as in any physical activity in the ear. When we hear the unheard in contact with the tuning forks of Brassil's installation, we are not only having new tonal ranges made available to our bodies through technological instruments, we are becoming aware of the simultaneity of our sensory perception and cognitive processing through the strategic production of a shift in our attention. We are made aware of our embodiment, and through this, our situation within worlds and the knowledges, narratives and contexts these entail. Like *After the fact, A tether of time*'s world-making is remaking. There is no beyond or outside from which to construct another, different or new, world; the

---

6   When I visited the site in 2002, I noticed the wind-harp and Joan Brassil confirmed that she had hoped it would surprise drivers and shake them into an awareness of their surroundings.

new and the different emerge from past and present worlds, remade, reseen, reheard. World-making in art that acknowledges our embeddedness, our embodied 'worldliness', articulates difference through, rather than beyond, the everyday.

These thoughts have some purchase in thinking through the connections between contemporary art and world-making in a global economy, at least for those of us who are committed to exploring the possibilities of engendering cross-cultural dialogues in and through difference rather than conceding to a unified, cultural hegemony. What I have termed here 'the precarious ecologies of cosmopolitanism' are the sustainable, yet evolving, systems of relation that engender a generous intersubjectivity and an openness to difference. These ecologies are risky, subject to change, premised upon negotiation with others and, I would argue, absolutely critical to an ethical way of inhabiting a global world – to engendering a cosmopolitan imagination.[7] I am suggesting that world-making in art is one of the ways in which we might instantiate the wondrous and precarious ecologies that enable us to glimpse the potential of the cosmopolitan imagination to 'open the fabric of the ordinary and change it forever'.

The change in the fabric of the ordinary evoked through such precarious ecologies might better be understood as an *exchange,* or an encounter, between worlds and subjects, both of whom are remade in their meeting. Once we have encountered the drawing traced in dust, *After the fact*, we cannot simply overlook the Lincolnshire site as derelict and unworthy of our attention. Bertola's world-making remakes the space and the subjects who engage with it; worlds and subjects are mutually reconstituted in the agency of the artwork. Tethering the temporality of the cosmos to the quotidian, *A tether of time* leaves its trace on those who participate, bodily, in the event it unfolds. The macro opens within the micro and is materialised through the perceptual cognition of the subject; subjects, objects, space and time are mutually remade.

7   In *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (2010) I developed the idea of 'imagination' specifically, but I would also want to note the work of Nikos Papastergiadis in *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (2012), which develops the notion of a cosmopolitan 'imaginary'. I have used 'imagination' to link the idea more specifically to the work of philosophers Moira Gatens and Gen Lloyd, who in *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza Past and Present* (1999) have argued for the significance of imagining in the construction of a generous, responsible and intercorporeal subject. However, despite different emphases, Papastergiadis and I are very much aligned in our thinking about the importance of contemporary art, the cultural imaginary and imagination as an intersubjective activity, to a cosmopolitan project.

In a telling passage concerning the political dimensions of globalisation and transnational cultural exchange, Rob Wilson argues that '[a]t best, globalization is generating new forms of reflexivity, altered terms of citizenship, amplified melanges and ties to transnational culture, and thus provoking *an aesthetic of openness* toward otherness that is not just the chance for commodification, spectatorship, and colonization.' (Wilson, 1998, p.355)

Wilson's 'aesthetic of openness' is significant. The aesthetic dimension formed part of what he termed the 'new cosmopolitanism', a cosmopolitanism that could, potentially, meet some of the political, ethical and juridical challenges of globalisation. This is not simply a reconstitution of the nineteenth-century European ideal of cosmopolitanism, which tends to privilege an elite form of world-travel through the consumption of high culture mixed with an exciting dash of 'exotica' from the 'rest' of the world. Rather, the cosmopolitanism being explored and developed by Wilson and other scholars, such as Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006), Seyla Benhabib (2006) and Mica Nava (2007), is cognisant of the significant contribution of feminist and postcolonial debates to the framing of 'world citizenship' beyond a masculine-normative, Eurocentric project. Indeed, the work that has emerged in the past decade on cosmopolitanism in the social sciences and humanities is more commonly premised on making connections with others in the world across and through difference, whether those are cultural, sexual, national, ethnic and/or differences of class and economic status. These cosmopolitanisms are situated perspectives on the possibilities of dialogue and community-building which acknowledge the complexities of the intertwining of the local within the global, and, as I have argued at greater length elsewhere, these are cosmopolitanisms that have a significant relationship to the fields of aesthetics and art-making (Meskimmon, 2010, pp.3–10).

In exploring the specific idea of the precarious ecologies of cosmopolitanism articulated by contemporary art practices as world-making activities, and in connecting these with the affective state of wonder, I am here drawing upon the broad links between aesthetics, art and the embodied, enworlded cosmopolitanisms described very briefly above, while also extending these ideas in new ways. I want to suggest that particular ways of materialising our corporeal and affective exchanges with other subjects and objects in aesthetic world-(re)making activities have precise ramifications for the development of an ethical cosmopolitan subjectivity and the politics of imagination.

There are three dimensions to these connections that are of particular significance here: the intrinsic links between elite and non-elite experiences and conceptions of precarity,[8] the non-teleological and non-representational status of a precarious ecology in art, and the compelling generosity of wonder within imagination.[9] In recent years, some political theorists have suggested that the transnational labour markets of the global economy have shifted in such a way that we now no longer have a mass *proletariat*, but a mass *precariat*, a pool of low-paid, insecurely employed and highly mobile, global workers and transnational economic migrants (for example, see Standing, 2011). The precarious state in which this global non-elite labour force exist is widely condemned and, I would argue, rarely connected to the increasing insecurity and mobility of an elite global labour force in the form of, for example, international artists, architects, designers, academics, corporate executives, IT specialists and other high-level 'consultants'. These two groups of 'cosmopolitans' share their 'precarious' experience of globalisation, but clearly are divided by their economic status and the power differentials this brings. Finding ways to articulate both the high and low status experiences of the precarious nature of production within a global economy sets out the possibility of a fuller and richer cosmopolitan conversation that brings together elite and non-elite cultural exchange. I want to suggest that this is one of the possibilities of art-making as world-making, though I am not suggesting here that the international contemporary art world is universally accessible. What I am suggesting is that art as world-making permits a space to open that can enable new forms of public engagement to emerge, encourage dialogues and, moreover, suggest strategies of creative intervention within a range of different communities.[10]

8   Judith Butler makes a similar point concerning the political valence of the term 'precarity', which is more precisely demonstrative of economic, social and cultural disempowerment (non-elite status) than 'precariousness' (2009, pp.25–32). In addition, I would argue that it is not just a coincidence that wonder has also had 'elite' and 'non-elite' versions over its long history (Evans and Marr, 2006, pp.15–6).

9   The concept of generosity as it is developed here is indebted to the work of feminist philosophers rethinking embodiment and ethics, e. g. Rosalyn Diprose in *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas* (2002) and Gatens and Lloyd (1999).

10   I am very aware of art's embeddedness within the systems of global capital and I am not suggesting that art provides a utopian space accessible equally to all. But it would be mistaken to think that all works of contemporary practice reside wholly within, for example, the space of the gallery, when much work is now done in public, cooperative or community spaces, and there are many works that seek

Delineating the cosmopolitan project of art's world-making through the idea of 'precarious ecologies' is a deliberate strategy. As explored above through close attention to the material qualities of the works of Bertola and Brassil, a precarious ecology is not envisaged here as a fixed or bounded entity – it is not a thing, but a process or a state of relations between subjects, objects and their environment. This is significant both in terms of the concept of cosmopolitanism that it underpins and in its reiteration of the agency of art as a world-making practice rather than a mere mode of representation. The former undoes teleology: in envisaging cosmopolitanism as a process of world-making rather than an end-point, we open the term and the inter-related fields of politics, ethics and aesthetics to change and development over time. This way of thinking through a cosmopolitan project allows its becoming to remain one of its key features – we never simply arrive. These insights in turn mobilise what Edward Casey called the 'possibilising' (Casey, [1976] 2000, p.15) force of imagining, that is, imagination's potential to provide a locus for the emergence of new and different thought. As a precarious ecology, cosmopolitanism is neither predetermined in content, nor in form; instead, it is understood as a carefully-poised system of relationships that are open to difference, managed through intersubjective generosity and negotiation with others, and constantly changing as the material constraints of the environment evolve. They are risky but worth it.

Art-making as world-making in the stronger sense of materialising these precarious ecologies does not image the cosmopolitan, but enables imagination to play a critical part in its articulation. Art is thus not a mirror of the world (a representation of *the world*), but a constituent component in its perpetual remaking, a component whose materiality and affective agency are paramount. Hence, I am not seeking in my exploration of contemporary art to find specific works that are 'about' cosmopolitan ideas, or that paint a picture of a cosmopolitan world, but rather to ask how particular works (re)make worlds that open the possibility for the interpellation of cosmopolitan subject-positions and inter-relationships.

The third point in regard to the specificity of the argument being made here in relation to art as a world-making activity and the precarious ecologies of

out new and different audiences, precisely to effect forms of communication that move beyond the 'elite' realms of traditional 'high culture' (for example, see Grant H. Kester in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* [2004]).

cosmopolitanism takes us back to wonder. Thus far we have explored the experience of wonder as one of the affective states that can be engendered through works of art that make precarious worlds, and it has been suggested that these worlds and the subjects who engage with/in them are both changed by their encounter. I want to suggest that the connection with wonder becomes even more prescient when the possibilising force of imagination is introduced into this mix, as it is, so strongly, in the case of the aesthetic openness of cosmopolitanism. To take this idea further, and bring the varied strands developed through this essay together, it is useful to turn to a final work: *Speak rhymes with beak*, a sound installation piece from 2006 by Johanna Hällsten.

Speaking enchanting rhymes

Speak rhymes with beak (Figure 3) consists of a three-and-a-half-minute-long sound loop, exhibited in gallery spaces accompanied by a log and bird-seed. Approaching it, one is invited to light on the log and listen to the sounds of bird calls and human voices intermingled and played through a bell-speaker that focuses the sound to immerse the listener within its sonic space. The simplicity of the materials – the log and seed – and the soft surround of the audio

Figure 3: Johanna Hällsten, *Speak rhymes with beak*, 2006. Sound installation, sound on a loop 3.5 mins, log, bird seed. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

experience entreat us gently to remain with the work as the sound runs its course.

The sound itself consists of three recorded elements: a bird that woke the artist each morning when she stayed at Wuhan University, Professor Chen Wangheng of Wuhan University, speaking the words 'ni hao' (hello), 'saijian' (goodbye) and 'wo ai ni' (I love you) in her dialect, in that order, and ambient sound of birds and noises taken from a garden in Tokyo. These elements were developed into a sonic dialogue by Hällsten, who used digital sound editing to make the morning bird calls 'answer' the human salutations in the sonic setting of the Japanese garden. Slowly, through the subtle manipulation of the sound, the voices of the bird and the woman begin to resonate in tone, pitch, timbre and rhythm, until they are 'speaking' to one another.

Hällsten, a Swedish-born artist living in the UK, frequently works in Asia, and a number of her works have explored the problems and opportunities of translation, dialogue and cross-cultural (mis) communication. Derived from her own experiences of the linguistic challenges of working in China, *Speak rhymes with beak* further extends its translative explorations to human and non-human communication. The woman speaking in the sound piece seeks to 'teach' the bird to speak Chinese; the bird responds, but their interaction is not unidirectional. Instead, it is mutual, as each intones toward and with the other, and each learns to speak a new, shared language that emerges between a Chinese dialect and birdsong. In the end, they intone 'wo ai ni' (I love you) together in their hybrid incantation.

Speak rhymes with beak is more directly related to the question of transnational dialogue and exchange than either *After the fact* or *A tether of time*, and in that sense, the questions it raises for world-making in art as a cosmopolitan project might seem more obvious. Clearly, it suggests the possibility of a shared, mutual respect and engagement with difference and the possibility of finding spaces and means through which to communicate productively and generously with others with whom we share the world. The work recognises those shared dialogues as mutually-transformative and connective; this is not a model of cultural imposition, where the dominant speaker's language is 'learned' by the other so they can 'communicate'.

But it is not the direct reference to translation or cross-cultural dialogue that makes Hällsten's remade world so fascinating within a broader discussion of the potential of art to create precarious, cosmopolitan, ecologies. I want to suggest that the affective dimensions of the work reiterate and extend its reach

to incorporate the listener within its aural community of exchange. To hear the work requires the listener to settle on the log and be still, to enter into the space that is offered by the work quietly and attentively. The shift in tone in the sound piece is not audible unless we open ourselves to hearing it; it does not shout, but whispers. We are brought close to it; we are entangled with it. In these phenomena we find again the state of wonder, of the new and extraordinary emerging through the everyday, arresting our attention, opening us to the pleasures of difference and changing us forever. The work is an entreaty, a precarious ecology that invites us to negotiate a new language and be surprised and delighted by the resonant refrain. It enchants.

In her book *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings and Ethics* political theorist Jane Bennett argues eloquently for the power of wonder to compel generous ethical agency:

> ❝ Enchantment entails a state of wonder … A state of openness to the disturbing, captivating elements in everyday experience … More specifically, my contention is that enchantment can aid in the project of cultivating a stance of presumptive generosity (i.e., of rendering oneself more open to the surprise of other selves and bodies, and more willing and able to enter into productive assemblages with them). ❞
>
> (Bennett, 2001, p.131)

If the precarious ecologies of cosmopolitanism that are so wonderfully materialised by the world-making agency of contemporary art are to move beyond imagining the new toward ethical action in the world, it is perhaps by cultivating such a stance of generosity. It is not enough to call for an aesthetics of openness, or posit a predetermined and unchanging picture of a cosmopolitan future. To effect the precarious ecologies that enable us to recognise our interdependence with other human and non-human agents and to compel us to enter into connections with them as we share a world, we need to be able to find ways to explore and take pleasure in difference without being overwhelmed by it, or seeking to overwhelm others. Such generous intersubjectivity is precarious: risky, dependent upon the will of others and often fleeting.

After the fact, *A tether of time* and *Speak rhymes with beak* each enable us to imaginatively inhabit the world remade in and through wonder. In each case, as we experience the extraordinary breaking through the fabric of the ordinary, we are changed and our relations within the world are changed as well. The world is dust, and it is astounding. The cosmos is everywhere

singing, unheard, and it is possible to make strangers friends. We can inhabit the precarious ecologies of cosmopolitanism; however, it is a risky business.

Bibliography

1   Appiah, K.A. (2006) *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York and London, Norton.

2   Asselin, O., Lamoureux, J. and Ross, C. (eds) (2008) *Precarious Visualities: New Perspectives on Identification in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press.

3   Benhabib, S. with Waldron, J., Honig, B., Kymlicka, W. (2006) *Another Cosmopolitanism: Hospitality, Sovereignty, and Democratic Iterations*, ed. and introduced by R. Post, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

4   Bennett, J. (2001) *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings and Ethics,* Princeton, Princeton University Press.

5   Butler, J. (2009) *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* New York, Verso.

6   Casey, E. ([1976] 2000) *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (2nd edn), Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

7   Datson, L. and Park, K. (1998) *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150–1750*, New York, Zone Books.

8   Davies, M. L. and Meskimmon, M. (eds) (2003) *Breaking the Disciplines: Reconceptions in Knowledge, Art and Culture*, London, I.B. Tauris.

9   Evans, R.J.W. and Marr, A. (eds) (2006) *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Aldershot, Ashgate.

10   Fisher, P. (1998) *Wonder, the Rainbow and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences,* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

11   Gatens, M. and Lloyd, G. (1999) *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza Past and Present*, London and New York, Routledge.

12   Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*, Indianapolis, Hackett.

13   Kester, G. (2004) *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, Berkeley, University of California Press.

14   Meskimmon, M. (2010) *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, London and New York, Routledge.

15   Nava, M. (2007) *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference*, Oxford and New York, Berg.

16 Papastergiadis, N. (2012) *Cosmopolitanism and Culture*, Oxford, Polity.

17 Redshaw, V. (2009) 'Uncovering the past with Catherine Bertola', *Scarlet Opus,* http://trendsblog. co.uk/?p=358 (accessed 22 October 2012).

18 Roederer, J.G. (1995) *The Physics and Psychophysics of Music: An Introduction* (3rd edn), New York and Berlin, Springer.

19 Standing, G. (2011) *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, London, Bloomsbury, 2011.

20 Wilson, R. (1998) 'A new cosmopolitanism is in the air' in P. Cheah and B. Robbins (eds) *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, University of Minnesota Press, pp.351–61.

'HOW DARE YOU RUBBISH MY TOWN!': PLACE LISTENING AS AN APPROACH TO SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART WITHIN UK URBAN REGENERATION CONTEXTS

Elaine Speight

Abstract

In this essay Speight outlines 'place listening' as a cosmopolitan approach to socially engaged art practice within contexts of urban change. Informed by Doreen Massey's concept of a 'global sense of place', place listening stands in opposition to dominant models of public art as well as certain critical art practices, which are predicated upon essentialist readings of place. Speight argues that by failing to acknowledge the varied ways in which places are experienced, such practices negate the agency of people by suppressing more complex narratives. In response, place listening seeks to reveal more contradictory and empowered readings through embodied, relational and sustained engagement with and within specific places. The essay focuses on Palimpsest, an art project designed by Speight herself that took place in West Bromwich, a town that has been portrayed as an exhausted victim of mobile global capital, leading to accusations of misrepresentation and prompting one West Bromwich resident to exclaim, 'How dare you rubbish my town!' By examining the methods employed within Palimpsest, particularly urban walking,

Speight explores how place listening might enable the expression of more nuanced and cosmopolitan senses of place.

Within the popular imagination, the concept of globalisation tends to conjure up emotive images of exploitation and degradation: Indian children stitching T-shirts to be sold overseas for less than the price of a cup of coffee, devastated rainforests, and the enforced displacement of whole local communities to accommodate polluting factories or mass-industrial agriculture. However, as Doreen Massey (1994) attests in *Space, Place and Gender*, for the majority of people in the Western world the experience of globalisation is a much more nuanced and prosaic affair. Furthermore, rather than invariably eroding customary ways of life, globalisation frequently presents new opportunities for action and agency, for example through advances in communication technologies and the expansion of global networks. Yet, despite this, I would suggest that many artistic approaches to globalisation are predicated upon what Nigel Thrift describes as 'a narrative of beleaguered-ness, in which everyday life is gradually being crushed by forces outside its control' (Thrift, 2004, p.54). This is particularly true of certain types of art practice which have emerged over the last ten years in connection with the regeneration of British towns and cities. These practices can generally be categorised into two main approaches. In the first, as an officially appointed 'placemaker', the artist seeks to locate and re-insert the locally specific meanings and 'senses of place' whose survival are perceived to be jeopardised by the regeneration process. In the second, however, the artist adopts the role of a critical commentator, for whom the redevelopment of certain places provides a lens through which to tell wider stories about the effects of urban governance and globalisation.

In this essay, I claim that, while these approaches are positioned differently in relation to urban regeneration processes, they are both informed by an anxiety about globalisation as a homogenising and destructive force, resulting from a popular essentialist reading of place that emphasises notions of rootedness, boundaries and singular identities. My argument is that by failing to acknowledge the varied ways in which places are experienced, such practices negate the agency of individuals by casting places as the passive and powerless victims of global capital. In response I want to outline the alternative approach of 'place listening', which I have been working towards in my own practice as an artist and curator. By describing aspects of *Palimpsest*, a project that I developed in the Midlands town of West Bromwich, I will examine how embodied

and relational methods – specifically urban walking – can facilitate the expression of more complex senses of place.

'Place listening' is an approach that I have been developing within my practice over the last four years in response to experiences of working within contexts of urban change. Specifically, it has grown out of a frustration with what I perceive to be the superficial and cynical approach to the municipal commissioning of art within urban regeneration schemes. At the same time this approach also provides an alternative to the often equally one-dimensional critiques of place and urban change that have characterised some responses to regeneration from within mainstream critical art practice. Although I have coined the term 'place listening', it encompasses a number of features that can be identified within the work of many other artists and curators. In particular, it involves a sustained, embodied and relational approach, which reflects the way in which places are experienced or 'sensed'. Above all, place listening seeks to challenge the dominant model of place-making, and the assumptions about place that inform it. Associated with the redevelopment of urban places, place-making has had a profound influence upon the commissioning of public art since the early 2000s. Although rarely defined, the term has become shorthand for the practice of 'creating somewhere with a distinct identity' (Cowan, 2005, p.292) through an on-the-ground approach to urban design and planning. In particular, place-making advocates the involvement of communities and the application of local knowledge as ways to engender local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place within urban regeneration schemes.

Endorsed by the New Labour government since the late 1990s, the concept of place-making as a method for creating distinctive places continues to inform urban policy. In particular, the commissioning of participatory or socially engaged art practices, alongside more traditional object-based approaches to public art, has become regarded as a type of place-making tool. As well as injecting places with 'vitality' (Landry et al, 1996, p.21) these practices are seen as a low-cost way to create a distinctive and 'authentic' sense of place within otherwise generic developments (Holding, 2008, p.16). Within this context artists are employed to locate, represent and enhance the existing meanings of a place that is undergoing change. The resulting image of the artist as a 'placemaker' began to gain currency at the beginning of the new millennium as part of wider discourses surrounding the role of art within urban regeneration. When New Labour came to power in the late 1990s, many inner-city communities were suffering the effects of industrial decline including high unemployment, poor housing, and forms of deprivation and social disadvantage which were described as 'social exclusion'. By addressing the social problems associated with such areas, and using public funds to pump-prime private investment, the government hoped to successfully regenerate Britain's inner cities. Central to this endeavour was the task of encouraging middle-class communities, who had fled to the suburbs, to return to the city centre. To this end, the government set up a body called the Urban Task Force (UTF) to 'identify causes of urban decline in England and recommend practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns and urban neighbourhoods' (UTF, 1999, p.2).

In their 1999 report, UTF outlined the concept of an 'urban renaissance' as a way to describe the transformation of Britain's downtrodden inner cities into distinctive and exciting destinations, capable of attracting new, wealthier residents and other forms of investment. According to UTF, urban renaissance was not simply a matter of policy, but necessitated a new approach to urbanism, which was concerned with generating the 'vitality that makes urban living desirable' (p.3). Place-making became seen as an effective way to improve the external perceptions of blighted areas and to transform them into attractive places. The commissioning of art was regarded as an integral part of this process. In 2004 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a report entitled 'Culture at the Heart of Regeneration' which claimed that the involvement of artists within regeneration schemes could enhance the 'quality of life' in an area, by creating a 'strong sense of place' (DCMS, 2004, p.22).

In particular, place-making was believed to provide a defence against the threat of homogenisation, posed by standardised approaches to architecture and urban design, and the dominance of multinational companies. In 2005 the New Economics Foundation (NEF) published an influential report, which claimed that the increasing presence of chain stores was transforming Britain's high streets into 'bland identikit' locations. According to NEF, this was not merely an aesthetic concern, but a situation that entailed serious social, cultural and economic implications. 'The death of diversity undermines democracy', it was argued, and it 'attacks our sense of place and belonging and therefore well-being. It hands power to an unaccountable corporate elite; ultimately pulling apart the rich weave of natural systems upon which our livelihoods and the economy depend' (NEF, 2005, p.5). As a place-making tool art became regarded as a way to counteract such effects, by furnishing places with a unique identity which would distinguish them from other locations (Landry

et al., 1996, p.3). This approach was not new, but has informed the commissioning of public art since at least the mid-1900s. For example, Tom Finkelpearl describes how the first United States *Percent for art* law,[1] which was passed in 1959 under the title 'Aesthetic Ornamentation of City Structure', was developed to combat the perceived homogeneity of modernist architecture and to create new urban identities (Finkelpearl, 2001, pp.20–21). Similarly, Ronald Lee Fleming describes how, alongside urban design, art was used to reanimate the 'dead spaces that tell no tales', which resulted from the dominant *tabula rasa* model of urban planning during the 1970s (Fleming, 2007, p.19).

The homogenisation of urban places is widely perceived as one of the main effects of globalisation, and it remains a significant source of anxiety (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.155). In relation to place-making I would suggest that this anxiety stems from a particular reading of place, which is prevalent amongst artists, urban planners, public art commissioners and policymakers alike. This interpretation of place has its roots in the teaching of Martin Heidegger and the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which strives to discover the true 'essence' of experience. Phenomenology posits that knowledge is produced through direct encounters with the world, which are characterised by 'intentionality', that is, the subject's intention to make use of, or interact with, another object or person (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.xix). Intentionality generates meaning through the relationships it produces between individuals and the world around them, and is central to phenomenological readings of place. Unlike abstract space, place is perceived as a focal point of human existence – a hub of intentionality which makes sense of the world. Therefore, as Edward Relph declares, 'the essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence' (Relph, 2008, p.43). Consequently, the sites of greatest intentionality, such as those associated with childhood or other formative experiences, are thought to engender feelings of belonging.

Yi-Fu Tuan (1990) has described this affective attachment to place as 'topophilia' – literally, a love of place – which can occur in connection to any place that provides the location for an intense or vivid emotional encounter. According to Relph, however, the places to which we grow most attached are those towards

which we develop a deep familiarity and identification, a condition that he calls 'rootedness': 'To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular' (Relph, 2008, p.38). Such notions of rootedness are associated with the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein*. Roughly translated as 'dwelling', this is described as the essence of being: 'the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth' (Heidegger, 2001, p.145). Dwelling is not simply a matter of being located in a place, but implies an ongoing process of maintenance and care, involving practices of cultivation and construction, which Heidegger terms *bauen* or 'building' (pp.144–5). An essentialist reading of place, therefore, conceives it as a site of rootedness and belonging, which is enhanced through ongoing acts of preservation and building that constitute a process of dwelling.

It is not difficult to understand the appeal of this approach, particularly in relation to the redevelopment of places and the processes of globalisation. As Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose point out, an essentialist reading of place offers a sense of dependability, safety and 'anchorage' in the face of instability and change (Massey and Rose, 2003, p.3). Furthermore, the continued existence of meaningful places offers a form of resistance against the effects of homogenisation. By attending to notions of identity, place-making can therefore be seen as an attempt to create places that provide a stable point of reference within a constantly changing world.

Nevertheless, critics such as David Harvey have claimed that an understanding of place as something that is fixed, bounded and unchanging is fundamentally incompatible with a globalised world (Harvey, 1996, pp.291–326). Instead, the increasing mobility of people, money and information severs the expansion of roots in a place, eliminates boundaries and changes spatial relations. Therefore, deliberate attempts to create distinctive places can be seen to derive from a perverted form of what Manuel Castells calls 'resistance identity' which refers to the practice of enhancing aspects of identity that differ from the dominant forms as a way to resist social stigma or marginalisation (Castells, 2004, pp.8–9). However, the use of traditional symbols, histories or practices to create a particular sense of place could also be seen as a cynical attempt to suppress alternative identities. Likewise, concepts of rootedness and dwelling can easily become synonymous with the right to be in a place, and be used to discriminate against people who are deemed not to belong (Harvey, 1996, pp.314–5).

---

1   *Percent for art* is a programme through which city authorities ask developers for a contribution – typically around one percent of the capital construction costs of a new development – to fund the production and installation of public artworks.

According to Harvey, the desire to imbue places with meaning through the commissioning of art can hence be understood as a reactionary response to the perceived vulnerability of place within the contemporary capitalist world (p.297). As information technologies and global transport rapidly developed towards the end of the twentieth century, the structure of society was perceived to change from a 'space of places' to a 'space of flows' (Castells, 2010, pp.453–60). The nature of place was perceived to shift from individual sites of identity and meaning to porous locations that were no more than intersections within the transport and information infrastructures facilitating the flow of capital (Harvey, 1996, p.296). This provoked anxiety about the instability of place, leading critics to ask 'what is *place* in the new "in-between" world?' According to Thrift, 'the short answer is – compromised: permanently in a state of enunciation, between addresses, always deferred. Places are stages of intensity, traces of movement, speed and circulation... . There is, in other words, no stability in the stopping place' (Thrift, 1996, pp.289–90).

In this sense, then, rather than hubs of 'intentionality' or meaning places are nothing more than sites of 'fixed capital embedded in the land' (Harvey, 1996, p.295). Furthermore, as the systems of capital accumulation – including production, sales and distribution, marketing and finance – become progressively mobile and are able to attach themselves to a wide choice of locations, places are forced to differentiate themselves in increasingly competitive ways (pp.297–8). Within this context, rather than a socially motivated practice, place-making can be seen as a predominantly economic activity, designed to attract capital investment by enhancing and exploiting the unique characteristics of a place. This is not to suggest that the intentions of the artist, commissioner, urban planner, or indeed policymaker are purely, if at all, economic but rather that the essentialist readings of place, which underpin a place-making approach, facilitate such agendas. The approach can also entail a number of social and ethical problems in relation to particular places. Notably, the perceived presence of certain attributes in a place can instigate processes of gentrification which inflate land values attracting wealthier groups while displacing less affluent ones. Moreover, as Harvey attests, the drive to produce marks of distinction tends to suppress more complex narratives of place and, ironically, often ends up replicating the very homogeneity that place-making seeks to resist (Harvey, 1996, p.298).

In contrast, the notion of place listening offers a way to uncover and acknowledge some of the experiences of place that are overlooked or suppressed by place-making schemes. In doing so, it seeks to discover more nuanced and empowered responses to globalisation that can challenge and allay the fear of homogenisation. Rather than giving in to an essentialist reading, place listening is informed by a conception of place as an ongoing and contingent process. Specifically, it is influenced by Massey's concept of a 'global sense of place' (Massey, 1994, pp.146–56; 1993, pp.59–69). According to Massey, rather than relying on aspects of local distinctiveness, a sense of place is produced through the 'meeting and weaving together' (1994, p.154) of different social relations. Far from threatening its inherent specificities, then, the global relations that connect a place to other people, times and locations are what constitute its identity. 'The uniqueness of a place, or locality', Massey asserts, 'is constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings, in a situation of co-presence, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are actually constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself' (Massey, 1993, p.66).

This notion of place as a meeting point requires an alternative approach to art practice. According to Massey and Rose, the '*challenge* of place' (2003, p.4) within this context is not to engender a cohesive identity as place-making seeks to do, but to attend to the negotiations of difference through which places are produced. This necessitates what Nikos Papastergiadis describes as a 'cosmopolitan imaginary' (Papastergiadis, 2012, pp.101–4) where, rather than translating the meanings of a place, the artist is actively engaged in a process of 'world making' (p.91). As a form of 'social praxis' (p.181), a cosmopolitan art practice seeks to open up a discursive space within which different experiences and perspectives can be acknowledged and explored. As Papastergiadis explains, art 'does not possess a fixed knowledge of things, but rather develops a critical attitude towards the possibilities in and between things. Art begins in curiosity, the sensuous attraction towards difference and connection, and proceeds through a relational mode of thinking that serves simultaneously as an instrument for suspending the existing order of things and as a platform for imagining alternatives' (p.13).

This kind of cosmopolitan imaginary can be found in the practices of a number of artists who approach places as the sites of complex relations and future possibilities. Nils Norman's work, for instance, subverts the language of urban planners and property developers through the use of maps, models, diagrams and computer-generated imagery to present alternative

visions for the redevelopment of a place. In so doing, he creates a 'layered and complicated dialogue about a site, urban planning and the possible alternatives' (Norman, 2010, p.98). In another example, Christian Nold's *Bio Mapping* project uses a combined Global Positioning System (GPS) and biometric sensor device to map the embodied and emotional intimate experiences that shape people's encounters with a place (Nold, 2009). The 'Emotional Maps' produced through this process highlight the impact of urban planning upon embodied experiences of a place and suggest alternative approaches. Finally, through a more overtly activist practice, the artist group Platform have spent almost thirty years exposing the social and ecological effects of global power relations from their base in the Tidal Thames Valley of London. By forming networks of interest around local issues, the group intervene within processes of governance to produce tangible effects in their area (see Marriott, 2008).

Place listening utilises similar imaginary, embodied and durational approaches as ways of 'sensing' a place. In particular, it involves the construction of various social and relational spaces, within which individual and collective experiences of a place can be expressed, re-enacted and discussed. These diverse narratives present a challenge to the essentialist readings of place that inform the model of place-making. As such, place listening could be said to possess what Papastergiadis describes as an 'aesthetics of resistance' (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.97). Unlike the political art practices that emerged in the 1970s, which sought to expose the internal mechanisms and agendas of hegemonic power structures, place listening is concerned with 'producing' rather than 'simply reflecting' knowledge (p.101). 'A critical stance is defined not simply by claiming to be standing outside or against power', Papastergiadis writes, 'but also by finding ways to rework the meaning and form of power through collaborating with the public. The point of art is not the exposure of the truth but the creation of public situations for reimagining reality' (p.97).

In the following I will outline how a cosmopolitan approach to place can facilitate the expression of individual forms of agency, which tend to be negated by more oppositional types of art practice. By presenting aspects of *Palimpsest*, a project that I developed in the Midlands town of West Bromwich, I intend to demonstrate how relational, embodied and durational methods can both reveal and enable particular types of resistance in relation to urban change. In particular I will describe how the use of walking as a creative method allows people to present and produce their own forms of knowledge about a place, and to imagine its possible futures, as 'epistemic partners' within the creative process.

Palimpsest was a multifaceted project, developed over an eighteen-month period. It consisted of a series of activities and events, including the production of an audio tour of West Bromwich town centre. The project began in October 2010 when I was selected to take part in the Longhouse Action Research programme, a six-month annual scheme run by the West Bromwich arts organisation, Multistory. Multistory encourage early-career artists to discover alternative contexts for their practice and to trial new approaches without the pressure to deliver a final 'end product' or artwork. Although the scheme is specifically aimed at artists who work in 'the public realm', there is no expectation for the artists to base their projects within West Bromwich. However, the town provided the perfect context in which to develop my practice.

West Bromwich is a small town in the borough of Sandwell approximately five miles northwest of Birmingham, UK. In many ways it could be viewed as a rather ordinary, slightly downtrodden post-industrial town. Dating back to at least the ninth century, the town expanded in the 1800s as a centre for coal mining and the manufacturing of nails, guns and springs. However, its industries were damaged by the economic recessions of the 1970s and 1980s and as a result the town suffers from high levels of unemployment and other associated problems. Yet although the recent recession brought the regeneration of many similar places to a standstill, when I first visited West Bromwich in 2010 it was in the early stages of one of the largest redevelopment schemes in the country. The reason for this was that the regeneration was led not by the government, but by Tesco. Planned since the late 1990s, it involved the redevelopment of residential streets to the north of the existing town centre to accommodate what was rumoured to be the largest Tesco store in Europe. To secure planning permission for their 540,000 square foot leisure and retail complex, Tesco had funded a £200 million regeneration scheme, which included a new police station and college. The scheme was also designed to connect with an earlier stage of the town's redevelopment, which began in the early 2000s with the construction of the controversial arts centre, The Public. Designed by the renowned British architect, Will Alsop, The Public was devised as a new landmark for West Bromwich. However, it ended up as an over-budget, initially underused and widely derided project regarded by some West Bromwich residents as an unacceptable waste of money.

On my first visit to the town, I expected to encounter a heightened level of resistance towards the Tesco scheme. However, the general attitude of the people that I spoke to was one of hesitant optimism. While people in Inverness protested and Bristol residents rioted, the people of West Bromwich spoke of convenience, choice and much-needed employment. These attitudes were sharply contrasted by artistic accounts of the scheme developed through a programme of artworks and events entitled 'Black Country Creative Advantage'. This was a research project run jointly by the University of Wolverhampton and Multistory, and designed to ask questions about the regeneration process. Unsurprisingly, the Tesco scheme provided the main context for many of the artworks, which variously presented it as source of environmental pollution, an example of corporate harm, or a giant sinkhole within the centre of the town.

Yet as pointed out by the programme's curator, Monika Vykoukal, the image of West Bromwich as a victim of corporate exploitation was not necessarily recognised, nor welcomed, by the town's residents. Commenting on the conference that concluded the 'Creative Advantage' project, Vykoukal describes how the artistic portrayal of the town as an exhausted and exploited victim of global capital provoked an angry outburst from a member of the audience:

> ❛ Neil Gray's film focused on the Tesco development and its relation to the other main developments in West Bromwich, the housing schemes on The Lyng and The Public, as "uneven urban (under) developments", and thus "part of a wider process of neo-liberal urbanism". His suggestion that the regeneration process can be understood as a deliberate destruction having left the town a wasteland led to an impassioned debate with local writer and actor Suzan Spence, who challenged this reading from the perspective of the day to day experience of local residents, which is not entirely dominated by developments in this manner. Or, to put it more simply "How dare you rubbish my town?" ❜
>
> (Vykoukal, 2010, p.4)

Spence's protest against the depiction of West Bromwich as a passive victim of capitalist development, as well as the general popular acceptance of the scheme, could be described as examples of what Pierre Bourdieu (1990) terms 'misrecognition'. Associated with the Marxist concept of 'false consciousness', this is a form of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.121) where the powerful conceal their true agendas beneath a 'veil of symbolic relations' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.136)

that inspires conformity among subjugated groups. In particular, the optimistic talk of employment and opportunities could be seen to derive from Tesco's attempts to reframe the development as a socially motivated process, designed to generate 'a new sense of pride' and 'jobs for the community'.[2] The work of left-wing artists such as Gray could therefore be seen as an attempt to remove the scales from people's eyes and to present the realities of urban redevelopment that misrecognition conceals.

In contrast I would suggest that, rather than liberating people through a process of enlightenment, such approaches overlook local forms of agency. In his critique of left-wing interpretations of neoliberalism Clive Barnett (2005) suggests that narratives of misrecognition advance a 'simplistic' view of the world by setting up a binary division between hegemony and subversion. Furthermore, they fail to explain how such deception works, or to account for the ways in which it can be resisted. Therefore, rather than emerging as autonomous agents, members of the public tend to be depicted as passive subjects who, aside from visible forms of dissent, have no recourse against misrecognition. Similarly, although they undoubtedly provide an important political critique, artworks such as those produced through the Creative Advantage scheme present places like West Bromwich and their residents as the helpless victims of globalisation. In doing so, they inhibit more productive types of discourse surrounding the resilient and empowered ways in which people negotiate change.

As an experiment in place listening, *Palimpsest* was an attempt to locate and acknowledge some of the narratives of place that tend to be overlooked by place-making and related critical art practices. Specifically, it was designed to examine how people who lived or spent time in West Bromwich negotiated the town's redevelopment and expressed a sense of place against the backdrop of such profound change. To do this, I employed various methods of walking including 'talking whilst walking' (Anderson, 2004), an audio walk, and live guided tours around the town centre. By engaging people within an embodied and open-ended investigation, I sought to create a space in which various experiences and senses of place could be articulated and explored.

The use of walking as a creative practice is not unusual and can be located within a number of socially engaged practices which have developed since the early 2000s. According to Andrea Phillips (2005, p.511), its attraction lies in its status as a 'weak activity', which

---

2   These phrases appeared on banners that surrounded the Tesco construction site.

involves elements of uncertainty and chance, and allows artists 'to avoid stabilizing or reifying forms of representation' by adopting the position of the Other:

> ❜ Walking has enchanted us precisely because of its own unfinished nature, because it does not seem to acquire a regulatory air, because it is a proposal, not even a maquette or a map, that which Giorgio Agamben would call a "means without end". It offers no problematic resolution, and so ties in with a whole series of philosophical strategies of undoing, evading, revoking the legislative. It is enchanting because it offers a way of "writing" the landscape that does not seem to be colonial; that does not striate. ❟
>
> (p.509)

As an embodied and sensory activity, walking also allows the artist to develop his or her own sense of place. Paul Rodaway describes how the two interpretations of sense – *making sense'* through 'order and understanding', and the 'sensation or feeling' experienced through the human senses – are closely aligned and sometimes implied by each other (Rodaway, 1994, p.5). As such, walking engenders a certain insight into a place through a sensual engagement with it. Moreover, walking with other people can reveal the otherwise invisible emotional, temporal, geographical and social connections that constitute senses of place and exist outside the totalising narratives of exploitation and rebellion. As a creative method, therefore, walking could be said to facilitate a 'cosmopolitan imagination' where the existence of other possibilities and meanings become apparent through an understanding of oneself as 'wholly embedded within the world' (Meskimmon, 2011, p.8).

During the early stages of *Palimpsest* I took walks with twelve individuals with different relationships to West Bromwich. These included an amateur historian, an urban planner, a poet, a retired person who had spent all her life in the town, an archaeologist, two receptionists, a teacher, and other people who lived or worked there. Although the posters, which these people had responded to, invited them to 'take a walk with me', the onus was on them to direct a walk around the centre of the town. As a result, the walks varied in length from fifteen minutes to over two hours. They also included a range of different routes and various types of walks, such as a trip to the bank, a visit to a hospital garden, a historic tour of the town, a trip to an archaeological dig and a stroll around The Public. For some people, the selection of a route appeared to be straightforward; for others, the decision about where to walk required a great

deal of thought and in some cases was a source of anxiety. According to Sarah Pink, such self-conscious forms of walking can be understood as attempts at 'making place' through the representation of particular 'routes of movement' (Pink, 2008, pp.1–4). As the walks progressed, it became clear that many of my guides were keen to present me with a wholly positive image of the town by shaping my experiences of it. Furthermore, the presence of a microphone, which I used to record conversations during the walks, seemed to encourage people to assume a performative role, as a type of West Bromwich 'representative'. For example, they would often adopt a formal tone and provide detailed descriptions of what they felt were the town's attributes, such as its historic architecture, whilst ignoring its less appealing aspects.

Yet while the majority of walks were pre-planned and performed, they also encouraged the spontaneous expression of more candid narratives of place. Jon Anderson describes how 'talking whilst walking' can reveal the temporal nature of people's relationship with a place, by accessing 'the non-mechanistic framework of the mind ... to recall episodes and meanings buried in the archaeology of knowledge' (Anderson, 2004, p.260). The act of walking along certain streets, or past particular landmarks, often prompted people to recount personal histories or specific memories connected to the place, which they sometimes claimed to have forgotten. Moreover, where a person had not visited the town centre for some time, the juxtaposition between the place as they remembered it and its present condition often elicited an emotional response, which usually then led to a discussion about the wider changes taking place in West Bromwich town centre as a result of the Tesco scheme.

Through this process of talking whilst walking I began to gain a sense of some of the complex, and sometimes contradictory, feelings that people had towards the redevelopment of their town. On the one hand, many of the individuals with whom I walked expressed sadness about the demolition of historic or significant buildings to make way for the Tesco development. However, at the same time, some people also conveyed what John Urry describes as a 'drudgery of place' (Urry, 2007, p.260), a sense of being trapped somewhere that is outdated and unchanging. As Anita, a hotel receptionist who lives in the town, explained, 'it's dead, it's dry … It's like it's lost in time. There's no reason you'd want to come here. Because even people who used to live here, they'll come here and they'll say, "Bloody hell, it hasn't changed, has it? We haven't been here for how many years, and nothing's changed." … It does feel like we're back in the eighties or something.'

Within this context, rather than appearing as a destructive or homogenising force, the Tesco scheme was often viewed as a possible solution to West Bromwich's economic misfortunes and the drudgery it entailed. Chris, a young information assistant at The Public, summed up this attitude best: 'I don't know whether it'll change West Brom for the better ... But it's going to be one of the biggest Tescos in Europe, so that surely by its very definition should make a lot of people come from far and wide, and I'm sure people wouldn't complain about coming to West Brom, rather than at the moment when, apart from here, there's little else to see.'

Anita's and Chris's attitudes could be read as expressions of resignation towards the town's exploitation by a multi-national corporation, informed by a lack of alternatives. Yet despite their frustration with the neglected state of the town and their pragmatism towards its redevelopment, the people that I walked with portrayed West Bromwich as a significant site of meaning and a continual source of pride. For example, many people described their pride in the Oak House and the Manor House, two Tudor buildings, which, although not deemed of national significance, were regarded as landmarks in the town. Furthermore, places that had played important roles within people's

lives continued to hold significance even when they no longer existed. For instance, one of the participants led me to a car park where the town's swimming baths had once stood and recounted some of the happy childhood memories that she still associated with the site.

Following the walks, I worked with one of the participants, Sarah Duncombe, to script and record an audio tour of West Bromwich town centre, based on the routes and stories that people had shared with me. Also entitled *Palimpsest*, the tour consists of eleven audio points along a circular route (Figure 1). At each point, a female narrator, who appears to have been in the town since it first emerged from its surrounding heathlands, recounts stories about the making and remaking of the town centre. The narrator's implied immortality is a reference to what I came to regard as people's resilience in the face of profound urban change. Articulated through a continued sense of pride, such resilience can be understood as the resident population's ongoing capacity to establish and articulate meanings in a place which might otherwise appear to have been annihilated by a global corporation.

Michel de Certeau describes such everyday forms of resilience as 'tactics' (de Certeau, 1988, pp.34–9). Unlike the 'strategies' of power, which delineate places
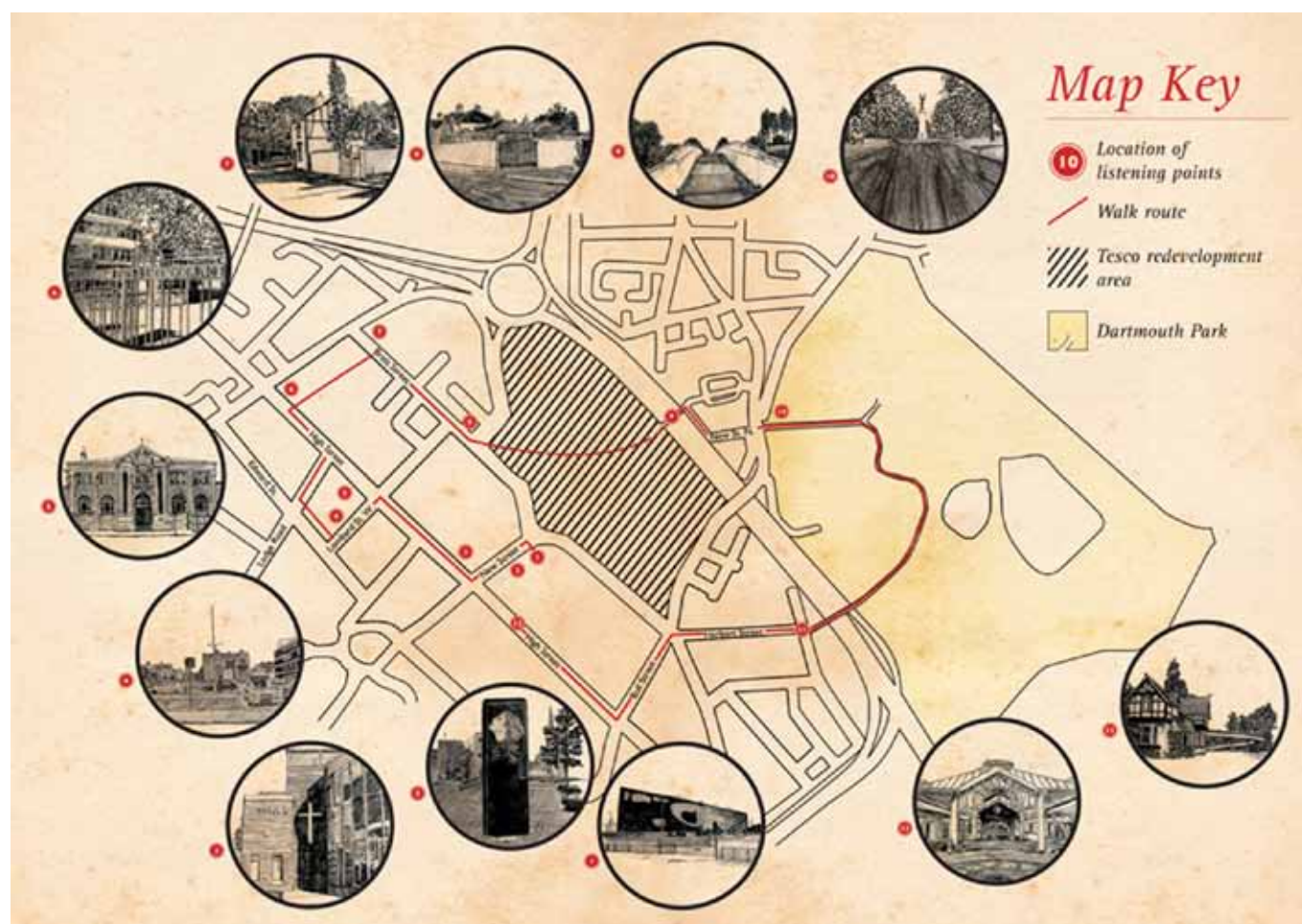

Figure 1: Map of *Palimpsest* audio tour. Image by the author.

Figure 2: Sarah leading the *Palimpsest* tour, May 2012. Image by the author.

as private spaces for the administration of external relations, tactics are 'an art of the weak', which allow those without power to appropriate and 'poach' from the territory of others. Whereas strategising involves gaining an overview and detachment from a place, tactics develop out of a close and sustained relationship with the territory that has been imposed upon the tactician. It therefore presents a way to negotiate the 'planned and readable' (p.93) spaces installed through strategies of power. Alongside other everyday practices such as reading, shopping and cooking, de Certeau marks out urban walking as a particularly tactical activity. In contrast with the strategic overview of the urban planner or developer, walking produces intimate, subliminal and embodied knowledge of a place. It therefore allows its practitioners to evade representation and to produce their own ongoing forms of meaning, which constitute senses of place. As de Certeau puts it, 'the networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other' (p.93).

Within *Palimpsest*, walking not only enabled tactical responses in relation to the place, but also towards the artwork. For example, following the development of the audio tour, I organised a series of 'live performances' where Sarah and I led people along the *Palimpsest* route while she narrated the script (Figure 2). During the walks members of the 'audience', who were predominantly West Bromwich residents, would often demonstrate their attachment to the place by intervening in the tour. Following Sarah's narration in a

churchyard, for instance, one person reached inside a tomb and produced a miniature coffin, which transpired to be part of a geocaching game that he had been involved in[3]. Likewise, a member of the Freemason society led us on an impromptu tour of the town's Masonic Lodge, which we happened to be passing. In this way, the participants tactically exploited the framework of the tour; in order to produce their own forms of meaning, express their intimate knowledge and present specific versions of the town.

Inspired by the work of George Marcus and his model of para-ethnography these participants might be better described as 'epistemic partners' (Marcus, 2007, p.7) who produced their own forms of knowledge within the project. Unlike traditional ethnographic approaches, which seek to develop a 'rapport' with 'informants' (p.5), para-ethnography is predicated upon a partnership, or 'affinity', between the researcher and his or her subjects (p.7) constituting a process of collective imagination and 'problem-solving' (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.173), which can engender new understandings and ways of being in the world. As Marcus explains, 'what is at stake in the conceptualization of the paraethnographic are formations of culture that are not fully contingent on convention, tradition, and "the past," but rather constitute future-orientated cognitive practices that can generate novel configurations of meaning and action' (Marcus, 2007, p.8).

---

3   Geocaching is a type of treasure hunt, in which players use a Global Positioning System (GPS) device to locate 'geocache' containers, which usually contain a logbook and some small trinkets that can be exchanged for other objects.

As opposed to place-making, which encourages 'community engagement' as a way to access local knowledge and traditions, place listening seeks to develop new understandings through the distribution of agency and the production of alternative meanings (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.159). At the end of each *Palimpsest* performance, for example, the groups took part in an informal 'debrief' during which they shared their thoughts about the town and the artwork. These included ideas about alternative ways to regenerate the town centre, such as the re-use of industrial buildings by community organisations, and suggestions of how the audio tour could be improved. Furthermore, the artwork itself became a context for possible future actions. Specifically, a number of people expressed an interest in expanding the project as an ongoing series of audio tours and performances in order to present aspects of West Bromwich that they felt had been forgotten or ignored. The next stage of the project, therefore, may be to collectively develop such activities in the centre of the town.

As a work-in-progress, place listening is an ongoing attempt to acknowledge and facilitate the resilience of people in places that are undergoing change. In this sense, it can be understood as a dialogical process, which seeks to produce spaces of resistance within the dominant narratives of a place. As Steve Pile contends, resistance is not necessarily a subversive or oppositional practice, but can also constitute ways of living through, or getting round, the 'symptoms of different power relations' (Pile, 1997, p.3). By employing embodied, sustained and relational methods, which reveal the prosaic, extraordinary and contradictory relationships that constitute senses of place, place listening challenges essentialist and disempowering representations of places, such as West Bromwich, as the victims of globalisation. At the same time, it also strives to harness the resilience of people, by envisaging alternative possibilities. The challenge of place listening, then, is to locate and open up the gaps in the institutional and political frameworks of public art commissioning, in which collective and cosmopolitan imaginations of a place might be articulated and made real.

Bibliography

1   Anderson, J. (2004) 'Talking whilst walking: a geographical archaeology of knowledge', *Area*, vol.36, no1.3, pp.254–61.

2   Barnett, C. (2005) 'The consolations of 'neoliberalism', *Geoforum*, vol.36, no.1, pp.7–12.

3   Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

4   Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

5   Castells, M. (2004) *The Power of Identity* (2nd edn), Oxford, Blackwell.

6   Castells, M. (2010) *The Rise of the Network Society* (2nd edn), Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.

7   Certeau, M. de (1988) *The Practice of Everyday Life* (trans. S. Rendall), Berkeley, University of California Press.

8   Cowan, R. (2005) *The Dictionary of Urbanism*, Tisbury, Streetwise Press.

9   Cresswell, T. (2004) *Place: A Short Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell.

10   DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) (2004) *Culture at the Heart of Regeneration*, London, Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

11   Finkelpearl, T. (2001) *Dialogues in Public Art,* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.

12   Fleming, R.L. (2007) *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community Through Public Art and Urban Design*, London, Merrell.

13   Game, A. (1991) *Undoing the Social: Towards a Deconstructive Sociology*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

14   Gray, N. (2010) *Palimpsest* [film] [online], available at: http://vimeo.com/m/17402900 (accessed January 2012).

15   Harvey, D. (1996) *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Oxford, Blackwell.

16   Heidegger, M. (2001) *Poetry, Language, Thought* (trans. A. Hofstadter), New York, HarperCollins.

17   Holding, E. (ed.) (2008) *Artists and Places: Engaging Creative Minds in Regeneration*, London, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and Arts & Business.

18   Landry, C., Greene, L., Matarasso, F. and Bianchini, F. (1996) *The Art of Regeneration: Urban Renewal Through Cultural Activity*, Stroud, Comedia.

19   Marcus, G. (2007) 'Collaborative imaginaries', *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology*, vol.5, no.1, pp.1–17.

20   Marriott, J. (2008) 'In the storms of the world: building communities to assist social and ecological justice' in C. Cartiere and S. Willis (eds) *The Practice of Public Art,* London, Routledge.

21   Massey, D. (1993) 'Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place' in Bird, J., Curtis, B., Putnam,

T. (eds) *Mapping the Futures: Local Culture, Global Change,* London, Routledge, pp.59–69.

22 Massey, D. (1994) *Space, Place and Gender,* Cambridge, Polity Press.

23 Massey, D. and Rose, G. (2003) *Personal Views: Public Art Research Project,* report commissioned by Artpoint from the Social Sciences Faculty, Open University, on behalf of Milton Keynes Council, Milton Keynes, Artpoint Trust.

24 Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002) *Phenomenology of Perception,* London, Routledge.

25 Meskimmon, M. (2011) *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, London, Routledge.

26 NEF (New Economics Foundation) (2005) *Clone Town Britain*, London, New Economics Foundation.

27 Nold, C. (ed.) (2009) *Emotional Cartography – Technologies of the Self* [online], available at: http://www.emotionalcartography.net/(accessed January 2011).

28 Norman, N. (2010) 'Interview with Nils Norman' [interview by J. Berry Slater and A. Iles] in J. Berry Slater and A. Iles, *No Room to Move: Radical Art in the Regenerate City,* London, Mute, pp.92–101.

29 Papastergiadis, N. (2012) *Cosmopolitanism and Culture*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

30 Phillips, A. (2005) 'Cultural geographies in practice: walking and looking', *Cultural Geographies*, vol.12, pp.507–13.

31 Pile, S. (1997) 'Introduction' in S. Pile and M. Keith (eds) *Geographies of Resistance*, London, Routledge.

32 Pink, S. (2008) Mobilising visual ethnography: making routes, making places and making images, *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* vol.9, no.3, Art. 36, available at: http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0803362.

33 Relph, E. (2008) *Place and Placelessness*, London, Pion.

34 Rodaway, P. (1994) *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place*, London, Routledge.

35 Thrift, N. (1996) *Spatial Formations,* London, Sage.

36 Thrift, N. (2004) 'Driving in the city', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol.21, no.4–5, pp.41–59.

37 Tuan, Y. (1990) *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, New York, Columbia University Press.

38 Urry, J. (2007) *Mobilities,* Cambridge, Polity Press.

39 UTF (Urban Task Force) (1999) *Towards an Urban Renaissance: The Report of the Urban Task Force, Executive Summary*, Wetherby, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

40 Vykoukal, M. (2010) *Creative Report #5* [online], available at: http://www.scribd.com/doc/46963774/Creative-Report-5 (accessed March 2012).

TOWARDS A COSMOPOLITAN CRITICALITY? RELATIONAL AESTHETICS, RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA AND TRANSNATIONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH *PAD THAI*

Renate Dohmen

Abstract

Marsha Meskimmon and Nikos Papastergiadis have responded to contemporary art's concern with transculturalism, audience participation and intersubjectivity by re-articulating the cosmopolitan in relation to both aesthetics and globalisation. Dohmen investigates how their cosmopolitanism translates into a mode of critical address and probes this question with regard to the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, a key proponent of relational aesthetics, an art movement of the 1990s championing audience participation and the intersubjective. Even though Tiravanija expressly draws attention to his Thai background by cooking pad thai *in the gallery, Dohmen detects a striking disavowal of cultural alterity at the heart of relational aesthetics, which she regards as untenable within the context of the art world's increasing internationalisation. Dohmen demonstrates how relational aesthetics appropriated key aspects of Tiravanija's Thai-derived outlook while asking how a cosmopolitan outlook might redress and repair this marked critical Eurocentricity.*

My essay probes the scenarios set up by the Thai-Argentinian artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, often referred to as the 'poster boy of relational aesthetics' (Perreault, 2011, n.p.) (Figure 1), in relation to questions of alterity and transnational encounter foregrounded in recent re-articulations of the cosmopolitan by Nikos Papastergiadis and Marsha Meskimmon. The proposition is that while relational aesthetics and contemporary articulations of the cosmopolitan share an interest in

Figure 1: Rirkrit Tiravanija poses for a photo for his 2010 retrospective at the Bielefelder Kunsthalle. Photo: Andreas Zobe. With permission.

intersubjectivity and transformative, participatory art events, the latter demonstrates a greater awareness of cultural difference generated by the pressures of globalisation and the increasing number of artists of non-Western origin that now participate in the international art market. My discussion homes in on the question of cultural alterity as a specific and central aspect of the kind of cosmopolitan imagination articulated by Meskimmon and Papastergiadis. It probes what a cosmopolitan critique might look like and what it could add to current debates on Tiravanija's work and the dominant framework of relational aesthetics his work has been associated with.

I will focus particularly but not exclusively on his landmark piece 'Untitled (free)' which was first created in 1992 in the 303 Gallery in Soho, New York, and recreated in 1995 at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, and in 2007 at David Zwirner's in New York (Figure 2). In 2011, the piece, by that time acquired by MoMA, was re-created yet again and went on display in the contemporary gallery where a free vegetarian curry lunch was served every day.[1] Not surprisingly 'Untitled (free)' has been referred to as a 'time machine' (Saltz,

2007, n.p.) and it certainly transports the 1990s into the twenty-first century. The question is whether the framework of relational aesthetics generated by the French curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s can capture the actuality of Tiravanija's art in our own time, or whether a cosmopolitan perspective would be more suitable for exploring its cultural alterity, glossed over by relational aesthetics. I am also interested in the scope of the emerging cosmopolitan criticality articulated by Meskimmon and Papastergiadis in response to the propositions made by contemporary works of art that engage imaginatively with their state of globalised contemporaneity. My essay will offer a brief synopsis of relational aesthetics, as well as prevalent critical perspectives on Tiravanija's work and the relational in art more generally speaking, followed by a discussion of cosmopolitanism as critical and creative practice as formulated by Meskimmon and Papastergiadis.

Bourriaud formulated relational aesthetics in an attempt to create a conceptual framework that would explain the new kind of art that he saw emerging in the late 1990s and that remained, according to him, largely

---

1   The piece was on display until February 2012.

Figure 2: Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (free)*, 1992/2007. Courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise.

unintelligible within the existing critical paradigms.[2] He invoked interactive technologies as ideological frameworks for the new spaces of relationality he saw emerging in the gallery, and proposed his articulation of relational aesthetics as a project of rewriting of art history along the lines of the radical and free relationality envisaged by the French psychoanalyst and philosopher Félix Guattari.[3] The new type of art Bourriaud was witnessing was interested in creating a social environment in which people came together to participate in a shared activity. He referred to this trend as the 'birth of the viewer' since the work foregrounded artist-audience collaborations where artists set up scenarios for the audience to 'use', conceptualising this participation as the completion of the work. Accordingly, in Tiravanija's 'Untitled (free)' it is the convivial consumption of the *pad thai* he cooked in the gallery and offered to his visitors that constitutes the artwork.

Bourriaud contrasts this new role of art – its emphasis on 'ways of living and models of action within the existing real' – with old avant-garde utopianism (Bourriaud, 2002, p.13). Citing from Guattari's 'Chaosmosis' he claims a transformative potential for relational art, declaring that the utopian radicalism and revolutionary hopes of old have now given way to everyday micro-utopias of the 'community or neighbourhood committee type' that allow for 'alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of constructed conviviality' to be developed (Bourriaud, 2002, p.44). Bourriaud thus invokes Guattari's emphasis on the transformation of subjectivity for societal change, a cornerstone of the latter's ecosophy, in order to commend the conviviality produced by what he termed relational art and its transformative effect on capitalist society. Bourriaud's framework has been of profound influence. In Jerry Saltz's view, relational art's 'public-oriented mix of performance, social sculpture, architecture, design, theory, theatre, and fun and games is the most influential stylistic strain to emerge in art since the early seventies.' Saltz also asserts that relational aesthetics 'reengineered art over the past fifteen years or so' (Saltz, 2008, n.p.). His assessment is underscored by the fact that artists associated with relational art have all launched glittering careers and continue to be in high demand around the globe.

Tiravanija's work, championed as a prime example of relational art, transforms the gallery into a site for

2   Bourriaud originally formulated relational aesthetics in response to the work of the artists presented in the show 'Traffic', which he curated at the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux in 1996, where Tiravanija also featured prominently.
3   In Eric Alliez's view Bourriaud's use of Deleuze and Guattari is bowdlerised beyond recognition (see Alliez, 2010).

critical re-inventions of sociality. In his piece for the Kölnischer Kunstverein in 1996, for example, Tiravanija reproduced his New York apartment and made it available to the public around the clock. People could make food in the kitchen, use the bathroom, sleep in the bedroom and chat in the living room. In his work 'Untitled 2002 (he promised)', staged at the Vienna Secession in 2002 and at the Guggenheim in New York in 2004, he created a chrome-and-stainless-steel structure intended as an arena for a series of artistic, public and private activities. Blurring the boundaries between art and life, he staged a barbecue on the opening night and turned the gallery into a space for cultural exploration. Participants could avail themselves of Thai massages and film screenings, panel discussions were held and DJ sessions organised on site. For Tiravanija these events constitute the actual artwork which cannot be fully realised without the active participation of the viewer. But while he sees himself as the catalyst for the work, he contests that he determines the outcome (Hermann, 2003, p.25).

The cosmopolitan imagination Papasterigiadis and Meskimmon see at play in contemporary art shares relational aesthetics' concern with a wider social sphere. It is interested in a mode of art making beyond the logic of representation that revolves around participation, collaboration and the transformation of the conceptual and perceptual givens through which the world is negotiated (Meskimmon, 2011, p.6; Papastergiadis, 2012, pp.155ff.). The context of globalisation and its transnational and transcultural flows, which thrust individuals of diverse backgrounds into a shared global arena, are generally acknowledged to underpin this shift in aesthetic engagement. For Meskimmon it is therefore not surprising that there has been a 'domestic turn' in contemporary art that seeks to explore the conditions of 'being at home' in a world that is 'simultaneously marked by movement, change and multiplicity' (p.5). Furthermore, as Meskimmon observes, this cosmopolitan perspective has shifted the conceptualisation of subjectivity away from 'monolithic individualism' to critical explorations of subjectivity as 'inter-subjective, intercorporeal practice, embedded within multilayered networks of exchange' (p.6). In other words the subject is no longer seen as entitative and complete but is conceived as 'in process', and as an 'embodied, embedded, generous and affective form of subjectivity in conversation with others in and through difference' (p.6). Meskimmon's notion of a cosmopolitan imagination also underscores an 'aesthetics of openness' (p.7) premised on a global ethical and political sensibility and responsibility at the level of the subject. Her articulation of

cosmopolitanism hence presents a marked departure from the historic conception of cosmopolitanism based on a firmly self-contained individual who travels 'keen to experience the frisson of "the other" through a veil of pleasurable, commodified distance' (p.27).

Papastergiadis likewise frames his articulation of the cosmopolitan in contradistinction to its eighteenth and nineteenth-century incarnations premised on Enlightenment values and the cultured attitude of European elites 'that culminated in the Grand Tour of the ruins and palaces of Western civilization' (Papastergiadis, 2007, p.141). Yet he also cautions that his framing of an aesthetic cosmopolitanism is not offered as a radical alternative to the established Kantian concept based on reason and morality. He concedes that cosmopolitanism always entails both sides of the equation, and holds that it emerges at moments of 'critical intervention through a complex interplay of reasoned and aesthetic modes of thinking' (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.89). His project thus constitutes an act of rebalancing, an unearthing of the elements of aesthetic cosmopolitanism so far obscured by the overemphasis of 'patrician cosmopolitanism' (2007, p.142) on ethical duties and morality. Papastergiadis's notion of an aesthetic cosmopolitanism is inspired by Cornelius Castoriadis's foregrounding of imagination as a primary factor in the creation of all social ideals and key to creating veritable alternatives in the spheres of art and culture. Echoing Meskimmon, Papastergiadis links cosmopolitan tendencies in contemporary art to a shift in attitude towards the other premised on a conception of self no longer defined by a bounded identity but by an openness to being transformed by intersubjective encounters. This constitutes an in-between space linking politics and art through 'the act of relating to the other' (Papastergiadis, 2007, p.146). He also points out that this new conviviality engages local groundedness as well as an emerging global public sphere in a transformative encounter, thus foregrounding cultural translation as one of the key themes of his articulation of an aesthetic cosmopolitanism. For Papastergiadis this imaginative departure, however, also requires a shift in critical thinking. Similar to Bourriaud in the 1990s he points out that our conceptual and critical apparatuses need to adjust and follow these shifts by abandoning the persistence of 'a methodology that privileges the preciousness of the object and the uniqueness of the artist' (Papastergiadis, 2007, p.148).

The reception of Tiravanija's work is a case in point. Despite its participatory agenda most of the critical reviews of Tiravanija's work entirely ignore the experience of the participating audience, focusing

instead on the artist and the work in its concrete manifestation. Audiences seem to feature only when they comprise people of repute. The invitation to come to dinner in connection with 'Untitled (free)' is noted to be aimed at art-world grandees; at least that is the impression given by the reviews who do not mention anonymous gallery visitors. Saltz, for example, comments on the installation as an ideal place to catch up on art-world gossip and reports how he ate 'at Tiravanija's' with the prominent New York gallerists Paula Cooper, Lisa Spellmann and David Zwirner among other celebrities (Saltz, 1996, p.107, and 2007, n.p.). Similarly, with regard to Tiravanija's replication of his East Village apartment inside Gavin Brown's gallery in New York the art historian, curator and critic Katy Siegel comments on how it tended to be mostly famous artists and critics who left 'their nice, air conditioned lofts to hang out in the dirty plywood playpen' (1999, p.146).

Bruce Hainley offers a somewhat different if related perspective. He points out that things tend to 'go well' in these zones of encounter in gallery spaces despite the potential interruptions and complications that the uncontrollable ingredient of 'lots of people' on the whole entails (Hainley, 1996, pp.54–9, 98). 'Something could go wrong' – for example, 'allergic reaction, food poisoning' – or the crowd could 'turn mob' (Hainley, 1996, p.59). Indeed, what would happen to the work if the audience did not like Thai curry? What if they wanted to eat something else, or declined to eat at all? Such questions have led Joe Scanlan to argue that the relational bonhomie in the gallery smacks of repressive peer pressure operating through a latent menace of public humiliation and an in-built control mechanism that he sees as closer to collective anaesthesia than the claimed (micro) utopia (Scanlan, 2005, p.123). Claire Bishop raises yet different concerns by questioning whether the interactions between the artist and the audience are indeed based on a democratic, egalitarian model, as Bourriaud claims. Drawing attention to the convivial nature and quality of the relations that are created by the scenarios of relational aesthetics, she remarks that democratic engagements are based on often conflictual relations as 'a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are *sustained* not erased' (emphasis in original: Bishop, 2004, p.66).

Bishop also challenges the 'self-other' conceptualisation she sees articulated in Tiravanija's works and suggests that 'they rest too comfortably within an idea of subjectivity as whole and of community as immanent togetherness' (p.67). She sees the works as 'cozy' and self-congratulatory entertainment characterised by a feel-good factor, based on the uncritical assumption of a unified self rather than 'the divided and incomplete subject of today' (p.79). This is a serious charge, as relational aesthetics is underpinned by Guattari's ethico-aesthetics which champions the generation of polyphonic, partial subjectivities that decentre the subject (Guattari, 1995, pp.21–2). If the notion of a unified self could be shown to inhere in the work, its relational credentials would be seriously compromised. Bourriaud is aware of this accusation. Arguing for the democratic claims of relational art on the grounds of its concern to 'give everyone their chance', for him relational art operates through forms which 'are not resolved beforehand' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.58). It is this indeterminacy which, for Bourriaud, allows for the emancipatory effect of relational art. Bishop, however, detects a lack of reflexivity in the claim that viewers are totally 'free' to interact in any way they like with the scenarios created. As she sees it, it 'is no longer enough to say that activating the viewer *tout court* is a democratic art, for every work of art – even the most "open-ended" – determines in advance the depth of participation that viewers may have within it' (Bishop, 2004, p.78).

As far as Bourriaud is concerned, artists can only be held responsible for the conditions they set up, not for the effects these have on an audience free to choose how to respond to them. What matters about the work is the moment of togetherness that is generated, which he sees as 'the product of this conviviality' that 'combines a formal structure, objects made available to visitors, and the fleeting image issuing from collective behaviour' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.83). Bourriaud does not problematise whether the audience's responses are reactive or creative or too consensual. He is interested in a politics of the present rather than the deferred happiness of tomorrow. For Bourriaud the relational shift to a politics of micro-utopias takes issue with a conflictual approach to societal change, which he declares a thing of the past as 'the imaginary of our day and age is concerned with negotiations, bonds and co-existences' (p.45). He calls the separation of political and aesthetics 'absurd' (p.82) and warns that passing judgement on relational art in view of its political effectiveness alone is equivalent to discarding its aesthetic dimensions, thereby distorting relational art and its differenced politics which operates via the aesthetic. In this respect, Bourriaud's position comes close to Papastergiadis's, who champions contemporary art's mediation of new forms of cosmopolitan knowledge as a worthy political project, promoting an aesthetic and hence different but no less potent criticality (Papastergiadis, 2012,

pp.162–3, 175). Papastergiadis likewise argues against an over-polarised thinking, rooting instead for a Deleuze-Guattarian 'flow from the middle' that sidesteps the impasse of either/or thinking 'because the topology of "in-betweenness" resonates with the mode of aesthetic criticality' (pp.89–91). For Papastergiadis it is thus not a choice between either the market and commodification or a pure, uncontaminated form of art, politics or ineffectual aesthetic gestures, a world homogenised or heterogenised by globalisation, but a passage through the middle which in his view only an aesthetic framework is able to facilitate. Consequently he does not consider it a sign of failure if artists, despite their professed concern with the convivial, fail to escape the capitalist art market altogether, or fall in with the ideological objectives of art institutions.

Discussions regarding conviviality in exhibition spaces however also need to consider the frequent collaborative exchanges between artists associated with relational aesthetics who advocate such interactions as models of positively re-envisaged social relations, that is, 'the kind of complex interaction that is possible between friends' (Hoeller, 1996, p.6). In such collaborations the boundaries between artistic personalities are deliberately blurred. A good example of this is the film *Vicinato* ('Neighbourhood') (1995), co-produced by Carsten Hoeller, Philippe Parreno and Rirkrit Tiravanija. In the introduction to the script we are advised that 'separate identities merge into one and divide again' while there 'is no clear correlation between an author and character' (Hoeller, 1996, p.6). This kind of artistic collaboration takes the concept of relational aesthetics a significant stage further: whereas the audience-participants in the gallery can choose to respond in a number of ways to the situations they encounter, artistic collaborations operate on a much more fundamental level as they shape the very articulation of these scenarios. This raises the question whether we are dealing with a two-tier creative system that, on the one hand, celebrates artistic collaborations as creative utopias at the peak of the relational experience while, on the other, regarding 'regular' audience participation by gallery goers as secondary, if not second-rate, interventions in pre-determined situations that only offer choices within the frameworks set by the artist(s).

Such questions draw attention to the power relationship between the scenario-setting artists and audience-participants, and are reminiscent of ongoing debates within various academic disciplines about the need to negotiate the problem of 'speaking for'. They probe whether relational aesthetics' assumption that viewers cannot overcome their alienation and create meaningful inter-human relations without the intervention of the artist is comparable to the anthropologist's speaking on behalf of a silenced 'primitive' other. Are Tiravanija's pieces, however indeterminate, thus ultimately one-way directives, as the participant, put in the position of an inarticulate 'other', fulfils an expectation, a role within a certain preconceived artistic scenario? And what if the other talked back and probed the artist in turn, took over the kitchen and taught the artist to cook a different dish? In other words, what if the participants brought their own realities to the site of encounter, and began to relate back on their own terms? How would a contemporary cosmopolitan perspective respond to such concerns?

While neither Meskimmon nor Papastergiadis intends to be prescriptive, they each have a clear idea as to what a cosmopolitan approach might involve. For Meskimmon it includes a commitment to address cultural diversity in an embodied and situated dialogue that is open to change, resulting in a re-conceptualisation of 'home' or of 'being at home' not as fixed but as 'processes of material and conceptual engagement with other people and places' (Meskimmon, 2011, p.8). It would also emphasise art's affectivity by drawing out 'dialogic potential in processes of thinking' rather than continuing to think in terms of 'objects of knowledge' (p.9). Papastergiadis's cosmopolitan criticality raises similar concerns. He refers to gestures of hospitality that are 'open', in which both parties find recognition and which represent a positive engagement with the 'plurality of differences' that goes beyond the multiculturalist strategy of representing cultural difference (Papastergiadis, 2007, pp.146–52). He also pleads for a re-imagining of the workings of cultural translation, where ideas and values are no longer delineated in relation to fixed locations and specific social and historical contexts, but are recognized in their capacity to travel across boundaries (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.136). In other words, he is interested in the 'transformative dynamic forged by the interaction of different cultures' which brings the 'forces of mobility' into the frame (pp.136–7), proposing that new techniques of 'spatial observation and critical concepts for evaluating the subjective states of empathy, trust and reciprocity' are key to a cosmopolitan critical perspective (p.191).

Papastergiadis also acknowledges the difficulty of critiquing the collaborative and participatory aspect of contemporary art, wondering how one ought to deal with these fleeting moments that constitute the lived experience of interaction. His response to the challenge posed by the ephemeral participatory aspect of contemporary art is to declare his affinity

with the position of Brian Holmes and Gerald Raunig who state that they only write about events they have participated in (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.191). Papastergiadis himself makes a move in this direction by including (some) diary passages in his otherwise more theoretically inflected book, thus gesturing towards participant observation as a critical strategy. He also dismisses prevalent notions of cultural translation as too simplistic, adopting instead a model pioneered by the cultural theorist George E. Marcus in relation to contemporary anthropological research (Papastergiadis, 2012, pp.168–71). Marcus argues that the notion of the superior outsider who can purview and understand a culture from a heightened and neutral perspective needs to be replaced with the recognition that both parties in the intercultural encounter are partners of equal value engaged collaboratively in producing knowledge (Marcus, 2007, pp.5–9). Papastergiadis emphasises mediation which transcends the 'mere inventory and display of differences'. New generative strategies of cultural understanding are needed that will allow each partner to 'go beyond their own certitudes' and participate in a collaborative knowledge-making that exceeds the sum of their previous experiences (Papastergiadis, 2012, p.174). Moreover, echoing Bourriaud, he argues that measuring art's value on the basis of its achieved or achievable potential for social transformation misses the point and declares that this approach reduces the imaginative and aesthetic dimension of art to the 'real'.

But how can the new cosmopolitan criticality envisaged by Meskimmon and Papastergiadis be productively implemented in a reading of the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, crystallising cultural specificity in a manner that is responsive to the transformative potential of cultural encounters? I suggest, to start with, by way of Tiravanija's cultural alterity. This, has so far only been marginally registered, even though the artist's cultural background quite manifestly informs his work, as evidenced by his serving of Thai food as gallery staple and his declared Thai-Buddhist inheritance. In an interview with Gavin Brown, for example, Tiravanija describes himself as 'a Buddhist alongside a so-called progressive/modern world that seems to recognize only a particular, Western kind of future' (Brown, 1994, p.104). This statement offers a conceptual re-orientation by positing a world 'alongside' Western normativity. However, the implications of such articulations of alterity are rarely discussed in the critical literature. This appears indicative of the lingering Eurocentricity in the world of art and art criticism, even within a radical framework such as relational aesthetics, which Tiravanija himself helped shape and

which declares the intersubjective encounter – and, by implication, cultural alterity – as its chosen terrain.

Furthermore, Tiravanija explains that his emphasis on the everyday, another core indicator of relational aesthetics, is derived from the Buddhist influences of his childhood, insisting that his preoccupation with human relations is a 'Thai thing'. 'Thai society', he explains, 'is very communal. Everybody is brother and sister, everybody is mother and father, everyone is family. Your attitude toward life is that you exist in a kind of family. The lady who sells you groceries is like your aunt, the man who sweeps the floor is your uncle, the attitude is one of respect as the other is always somebody who's in your world' (quoted in Hermann, 2003, p.28). It would seem, then, that relational aesthetics is more deeply enmeshed with cultural alterity – and, more specifically, with what Tiravanija proposes as Thai cultural values – than previously acknowledged, especially since Tiravanija's work has been 'crucial to … the emergence of relational aesthetics as a theory' (Bishop, 2004, p.58). Might Tiravanija's prominence in the movement thus be read as evidence that a degree of cultural transfer from East to West has occurred, that art has gone 'other' on the quiet? Or is this the kind of 'borrowing' that has long been the prerogative of the West? Except that in this case the artist that has shot to fame due to an appropriation of the East has an international background beyond Euro-America, even if cast in the latter's image, with some off-centric alterity thrown in for exotic appeal. Finally, while this kind of self-fashioning undoubtedly was a successful strategy in the 1990s, the question is whether the world of contemporary art has moved on sufficiently to allow for a cosmopolitan recasting of Tiravanija's image, and what precisely such a recasting might entail.

Tiravanija certainly embraces his role in the art world's culture of itinerancy as 'art nomad', the figure of the artist identified by James Meyer as a breed of 'artist-travellers' or 'archetypal travellers of cultural memory' (Meyer, 2000, p.12). However, Tiravanija presents this itinerancy along Buddhist lines of non-determination, asserting that he is not interested in destinations, but is happy to 'just land wherever' (quoted in Flood, 1995, p.119). But as Meyer points out, contemporary art's concern with travelling 'wherever' remains securely tethered within the fold of the art world. Tiravanija's destinations are not 'anywhere'; the 'nomad artist does not "land wherever"'. Moving from one commission to the next, he has a specific destination – a commercial or non-profit space, a Kunsthalle or a contemporary museum' (Meyer, 2000, p.17). Tiravanija, by contrast, maintains that his peripatetic existence reflects a stance of

'being outside'. For him 'there is always another place, another condition, another situation', and he sees it as the task of art to articulate this perpetual 'otherness' (quoted in Flood, 1995, p.119). In Meyer's view, however, Tiravanija's dispensing of food in art spaces around the world does not reference a condition of alterity, but rather encapsulates the 'mechanisms of exchange of the global art market in which the artist operates' (Meyer, 2000, p.15). In other words, although Tiravanija's itinerary is performative of the conditions of the global market without much critical address, in his view this is a Eurocentric perspective: direct and conflictual engagements counter his Buddhist credo. 'There is no conflict between capitalism and Buddhism', Tiravanija asserts. 'Being a Buddhist you just let go, you can see destruction in front of you and just accept it' (quoted in Brown, 1994, p.104). In contradistinction to Western models he argues that Thai activism 'takes a largely passive role' and is premised on the monk whose word 'carries a lot of weight' and is 'one of the best ways of being an activist in Thailand' (p.104).

Tiravanija, who now largely limits articulations of his cultural alterity and politics to the cooking of *pad thai* and allusions to his Buddhist inheritance, has in the past been prone to more straightforwardly political gestures. At the Venice Biennale of 1993, for example, he installed 'Untitled: 1271', which saw him serving Thai noodles from a boat. The piece evoked the trajectory of Marco Polo's travel route and, as Pandit Chanrochanakit explains, since 'Bangkok is already well known as the Venice of the Orient his installation symbolized an inter-connection between East and the West vis-à-vis Bangkok and Venice' (Chanrochanakit, 2005, p.13). Similarly, in 1999, while showing at the 48th Venice Biennale as part of the exhibition 'dAPERTutto', he planted a small teak tree near the American pavilion 'just round the corner from the three "great" powers of England, Germany and France' to draw attention to the fact that Thailand was not represented. Tiravanija built a wooden platform around the sapling and christened it the 'First Royal Thai Pavillion' (Saltz, 1999, n.p.). Yet while, in these instances, he took up the Thai cause, the art world never categorised Tiravanija as a Thai artist and continues to see him as a global art nomad. Articles about his work foreground his itinerary and international schooling, referencing his Thai-ness only in passing.[4] As 'insider-outsider' he thus escapes the limitations of a specific ethnic label, but retains his exotic appeal (Saltz, 1996, p.84).

Even if few and far between some critics explicitly reference Tiravanija's alterity rather than subsuming his work and cultural background under the generic umbrella of art world nomadism. Citing Hermann Hesse's Eastern cult novel *Siddhartha* (1922), for example, curators Richard Flood and Rochelle Steiner note that the experience of staging a show with Tiravanija is like being taught a lesson in spiritual understanding. 'Hermann Hesse could have saved himself an enormous amount of soul searching', they suggest, 'if he had simply had the opportunity of working on an exhibition with Rirkrit Tiravanija. The struggles endured by Hesse's protagonist to achieve an understanding that "life is a river" could have, under Rirkrit's tutelage, resulted in a gentle, occasionally soulful comedy of manners' (Flood, 1995, p.115). Should we understand this as an embarrassing Orientalist lapse, picturing Tiravanija as the exotic representative of a mysterious East, as dispensing spiritual wisdom along with portions of *pad thai*? Carol Lutfy certainly thinks so: 'In an age of multicultural star searching he combines a Western education and the exotic ambiguity of the East' (Lutfy, 1997, p.153). In a similar vein, Saltz has stressed Tiravanija's hybrid status. But rather than invoking Eastern mystique, Saltz surprisingly references the Native American ceremonial feast of potlatch, which is characterised by the exchange of gifts, describing Tiravanija as the 'Potlatch-Conceptualist' of the 'art-world tribe' (Saltz, 1996, p.84). What Saltz fails to mention is that potlatch exchanges traditionally serve to reinforce hierarchical societal relations, thus following the trend of Tiravanija criticism that overlooks the power relations entailed in intersubjective encounters as well as the plethora of writing on the gift (see Kwon 2003; Morgan 2003; and Kraynak 2010). In addition, Saltz suggests there is 'a shamanistic side to Tiravanija' that ties him to Joseph Beuys (1921–86) whom he resembles in that he also 'gives of himself' and 'is a kind of one-man travelling circus, a magician who carries his tools with him' (p.85). Saltz also portrays him as a 'medicine man who literalized art's primitive functions: sustenance, healing, and communion' (2007, n.p.).

Tiravanija clearly invites an array of 'other-cultural' associations, ranging from the East to the North-American indigenous West, none of which, however, are pursued in any depth. Nor is the specificity of his Thainess ever examined in detail, or put in relation to the Thai contemporary art scene by Western curators and critics. His at least partially Thai-derived outlook on art making, which underpins relational aesthetics, is not discussed with any reference to his cultural background or Buddhist perspective, but is subsumed under

---

4   Tiravanija grew up between Thailand, Ethiopia and Canada. He was educated in Chicago and New York and now lives in Berlin, New York and Thailand.

Bourriaud's mostly Guattarian reorientation of Western aesthetics. Is this, then, yet another example of the Eurocentricity of the international art world at play?

Beatrix Ruf, the director of the Kunsthalle in Zürich, disagrees. In her view, Tiravanija offers an important critique of 'traditional' political art as well as Western modes of negotiating the 'cultural other'. Ruf explains that even exhibitions that include the 'other' in a politically correct way 'still always think in terms of "us" and "them"' (Ruf, 2003, p.10). As far as she is concerned, the convivial situations created by Tiravanija reach far above and beyond multiculturalism's limited binarisms: 'There's a more politically relevant cultural transfer – or cultural integration that doesn't create hierarchies – taking place here than in most "politically correct" attempts to integrate supposedly marginalized artists from supposedly marginalized cultural circles' (p.10). Ruf criticises multiculturalism for framing cultural others as stable and essentialised identities fixed in the image of a differenced authenticity. Multiculturalism positions 'other cultures' in a negative, inferiorised relation to the West outside contemporary interactive relations of art and culture, thus perpetuating existing power relations where the 'West' borrows from the 'Rest' while Western influences taken up by the 'Rest' are seen as derivative.[5] For Ruf, therefore, in 2003 at least, 'cultural integration' seemed the better option, even if it meant disavowing the explicitly Thai contributions to relational aesthetics.

Yet since then the world of art has moved on. Whatever one's position may be on globalisation and its political and artistic world-creative effects, the conceptual terrain of art has been pluralised. A new sensibility towards cultural configurations that are in flux, contradictory and multiply inflected is now in evidence. While this does not mean that power differentials between the local and the global, the West and the Rest, have disappeared, sites of culture have complexified and become more transcultural, loosening the legitimating grip of Western art and art theory on the world (see Fisher and Mosquera, 2004). Reflecting these shifts I will now proceed to apply a critical-cosmopolitan perspective to Tiravanija's work. Notably, despite the global art world's disavowal of Tiravanija's 'Thai-ness' and his own muted references

5   The artist Rasheed Araeen is a prominent critic of these art world structures and multiculturalist conceptions which he challenged in his 1989 touring exhibition 'The Other Story'. The exhibition showcased the work of artists of non-Western backgrounds like himself who were sidelined by the art establishment because they embraced Western art languages rather than 'ethnic' styles perceived as more fitting visual idioms. He is, however, also adamantly opposed to the assimilation of the exotic other into the new world art.

to his Thai background, he is very much claimed as Thai from within Thailand itself. In fact, as Pandit Chanrochanakit remarks, he has become a role model for young Thai artists who seek independence from the constraints of Thai art tied to a national imaginary via the triad 'nation-religion-monarch'. In Thailand the concept of 'art' in the Western sense developed only in the early twentieth century, initiated by the Italian sculptor Corrado Feroci (1892–1962) who taught art in Bangkok and encouraged his students to combine Thai with Western styles. More recently, however, contemporary Thai artists have started to challenge neo-traditionalist, politically sanctioned representations of Thai culture, with Tiravanija contributing to this challenge from 'outside' (Chanrochanakit, 2005, pp.9–12). For these artists the 'outsider-insider' status of Tiravanija offers a genuine alternative as Tiravanija is seen to successfully negotiate both the Western and the Thai gaze.

Chanrochanakit reports how Thai critics are baffled by Tiravanija's indifference to the authenticity of the taste of *pad thai*, as the artist adapts to the local market and substitutes whatever he can buy for certain core ingredients that prove unavailable. Furthermore, according to Carol Lutfy and Lynn Gumpert, Tiravanija surprisingly does not excel at cooking, which 'puts an unexpected spin on why he has chosen cooking as the hallmark of his work – and why the art world has eaten it up' (Lutfy and Gumpert, 1997, p.152). Tiravanija frequently hands over the cooking to 'docents and volunteers', resulting in the production of 'a curious American-Thai hybrid' (p.153). For Chanrochanakit, however, this apparent lack of authenticity potently conveys the 'fluidity of Thai-ness rather than the fixity of official Thai-ness' (Chanrochanakit, 2005, p.5). The seemingly innocuous act of cooking *pad thai* thus assumes a critical dimension in the contexts of Thai culture. But whereas this particular perspective on the hallmark ingredient of Tiravanija's art dominates in Thai discussion forums, on the international scene it is largely ignored. Issues of cultural alterity are subsumed in the overall 'goodness' of relational art's convivial moment, a circumstance that a cosmopolitan framing of conviviality would seek to address.

This short exploration of Tiravanija's insider-outsider Thai-ness, which mobilised different geographic vantage points, underscores the necessity for a cosmopolitan criticality to adopt multi-centric perspectives sensitised to how cultural contexts of articulation and display impact on the meaning of works of art. It highlights that the cooking and sharing of *pad thai* reads differently depending on whether it is staged in New York or Korea, Venice or Sydney, Havana or Johannesburg,

Figure 3: Still of Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's 'Manet's Luncheon on the Grass and the Thai Farmers' 2008 (video). Reproduced by kind permission of Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook.

and cautions that the temporality of its staging will also affect its meaning. A re-articulated cosmopolitan framework of criticality requires critics and their methodologies to respond to the cultural, temporal and geographic situations that inform art works. They need to show an awareness of the shifts in perception, and the encounters with multifarious forms of embeddedness, that the new condition of critical inter-globality entails. But how can a piece that is intended to be participatory adapt sensitively and in an informed manner to local conditions? Can a work of art ever truly be so generic that few cultural adjustments are needed to facilitate its effective display across the globe? The very assumption of such translatability always already predicated on Eurocentric conceptions, resurrects the image of the cosmopolitan as someone who explores the world as an imperialist tourist unilaterally in charge of knowledge production.

As Gerardo Mosquera attests, 'our eyes, ears, minds have been programmed by specific canons and positions' (Mosquera, 2011, p.3). Implementing a re-envisaged cosmopolitan perspective, which does not blindly export Eurocentric views but grapples with the question of how to generate an openness for multi-directional transformative cultural encounters, poses a phenomenal challenge to critics and curators alike. It

is a project that is compounded further by questions of access as art shows are increasingly spread around the globe, yet only the glitterati among curators and critics have the requisite travel budgets at their disposal to keep up with overall developments. Powerful new hurdles and exclusivities with regard to the critical mediation and appreciation of contemporary art have thus emerged.[6] As the 'real' work is now seen to reside in the fugitive moments generated between members of the audience, this also raises new questions about the role of the audience-collaborators. As most pieces' participatory agenda requires the physical presence of an actual audience, such art privileges those who can bodily attend over viewers who, for example, access the show on the internet. What this highlights is a new level of exclusivity exacerbated by the fact that no documentary trace can recreate, democratise and disseminate the intended effect.

This new exclusivity aside, if one chose to take critical cosmopolitanism to its full conclusion, would

---

6   Chin-Tao Wu (2009) comments on the new curatorial 'class system' that emerges due to travel-budget differentials. He is highly critical of the celebration of the new global art world, arguing that despite a greater geographical spread nothing much has changed in the art world. For him the 'global' is just a new buzzword to replace 'Western'.

all works of art need cultural translation and cultural mediators for each and every showing? Would this constitute a pertinent articulation of the new cosmopolitan outlook? Such considerations also raise the question of who will be adapting to whom, and how many cultural languages artists, curators and critics will in future need to speak. Or will a global Esperanto emerge – according to Mosquera, inevitably premised on familiar European tropes and conceptions – to create an artistic *lingua franca* for meaningful transcultural communication (Fisher and Mosquera, 2011, p. 5)? Who will be in a position to negotiate this increasingly complex art world and its overlapping artistic and cultural terrains? In short, will this be an art world for a privileged global elite only? All these questions are compellingly enacted by the Thai artist Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook in her 2008 video '*Manet's Luncheon On The Grass & Thai Villagers*', which shows a group of Thai villagers in front of a print reproduction of Manet's painting (see Figure 3). The villagers are struggling to make sense of the image, are giggling because of the nude woman, and comment on what they see from their own point of view, demonstrating their utter lack of exposure to European art and culture. Rasdjarmrearnsook's work interrogates the alleged cosmopolitanisation of the art world, dismissing facile, over-optimistic assessments that the North-South axis is shifting, or that First and Third World differentials in the cultural sphere have begun to blur and diminish beyond the cultural elites.

Given the complexity of the transnational phenomena that need to be negotiated, critical cosmopolitanism must be premised on an attentive and careful encounter, avoiding the headiness of globalist euphoria while engaging patiently with locally specific forms of embeddedness and experimenting with various modes of critical address, as both Meskimmon and Papastergiadis have attempted to do. In its exploration and mediation of cultural imaginaries as spaces of cultural emergence, critical cosmopolitanism cultivates a multi-sited cultural awareness that invites collaboration and connection while acknowledging displacements, disorientation and continuing power differentials.

Bibliography

1   Alliez, E. (2010) 'Capitalism and schizophrenia and consensus: of relational aesthetics' in S. O'Sullivan and S. Zepke (eds) *Deleuze and Contemporary Art,* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, pp.85–99.

2   Bishop, C. (2004) 'Antagonism and relational aesthetics', *October*, vol.110, pp.51–79.

3   Bourriaud, N. (1998) *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon, Les Presses du Réel.

4   Brown, G. (1994) 'Rirkrit Tiravanija: other things, elsewhere', *Flash Art,* vol.27, no.177, pp.103–4.

5   Chanrochanakit, P. (2005) *Feeling Contemporary: The Politics of Aesthetics in Rirkrit Tiravanija's Art*, Manoa: Department of Political Science, University of Hawai'i, www2.hawaii.edu/~pandit/feel2.pdf (accessed 16 July 2006).

6   Fisher, J. and Mosquera, G. (2004) *Over Here: International Perspectives on Art and Culture*, New York and Cambridge, MA, New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press.

7   Flood, R. and Steiner, R. (1995) 'En route', *Parkett*, vol.44, pp.124–9.

8   Guattari, F. (1995) *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

9   Hainley, B. (1996) 'Where are we going? And what are we doing? Rirkrit Tiravanija's art of living', *Artforum,* vol.34, no.6, pp. 54–9, 98.

10   Herrmann, M. (2003) 'Interview' in P. Parreno, M. Spiegl and M. Herrmann (eds) *Rirkrit Tiravanija: Secession*, Cologne, Walter Koenig.

11   Hoeller, C., Parreno, P. and Tiravanija, R., (1996) *Vicinato. The Transcription of a Film by Carsten Hoeller, Philipe Parreno. Rirkrit Tiravanija*, London, G-W Press.

12   Kraynak, J. (2010) 'Rirkrit Tiravanija's liability' in A. Dezeuze (ed.) *The 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.

13   Kwon, M. (2003) 'Exchange rate: on obligation and reciprocity in some art of the 1960s and after' in H. Molesworth (ed.) *Work Ethic*, Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art.

14   Lutfy, C. and L. Gumpert (1997) 'A lot to digest', *Art News*, May, pp.151–3.

15   Marcus, G.E. (2007) 'Collaborative Imaginaries.' *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology*, vol.5, no.1, pp.1–17.

16   Meskimmon, M. (2011) *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, London and New York, Routledge.

17   Meyer, J. (2000) 'Nomads: figures of travel in contemporary art' in A. Coles (ed.) *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn*, London, Black Dog.

18   Morgan, J. (2003) *Common Wealth*, London, Tate.

19   Mosquera, G. (2011) 'Beyond anthropophagy: art, internationalization and cultural dynamics', *Global Art*

Symposium, www.summeracademy.at/media/pdf/pdf776.
pdf (accessed 17 July 2012).

20   Papastergiadis, N. (2007) 'Glimpses of
cosmopolitanism in the hospitality of art', *European
Journal of Social Theory,* vol.10, no.1, pp.139–52.

21   Papastergiadis, N. (2012) *Cosmopolitanism and
Culture*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

22   Perreault, J. (2011) 'Rirkrit Tiravanija: fear eats
the soul', *Artopia: John Perreault's Art Diary*, 4 April,
http://www.artsjournal.com/artopia/2011/04/rirkrit_
tiravanija_fear_eats_t_1.html (accessed 21 December
2011).

23   Ruf, B. (2003) 'Ruf, Beatrix', *Cream 3: 100 Artists, 10
Curators, 10 Source Artists*, London, Phaidon.

24   Saltz, J. (1996) 'A short history of Rirkrit Tiravanija',
Art in America, pp.83–5, 107.

25   Saltz, J. (1999) 'Resident alien', *Village Voice*, http://
www.villagevoice.com/1999-07-06/art/resident-alien
(accessed 16 July 2006).

26   Saltz, J. (2007) 'Conspicuous consumption', *New
York Magazine*, 14 May, http://nymag.com/arts/art/
reviews/31511/ (accessed 15 December 2011).

27   Saltz, J. (2008) 'Night at the museum', *New York
Magazine*, 9 November, http://nymag.com/arts/art/
features/51998/ (accessed 22 December 2011).

28   Scanlan, J. (2005) 'Traffic control. Joe Scanlan on
social space and relational aesthetics', *Artforum*, vol.43,
no.10, p.123.

29   Siegel, K. (1999) 'Rirkrit Tiravanija. Gavin Brown
Enterprise', *Artforum*, vol.38, no.2, p.146.

30   Wu, C.-T. (2009) 'Biennials without borders',
Tate Papers, vol.12, http://www.tate.org.uk/research/
tateresearch/tatepapers/09autumn/chin.shtm (accessed
19 October 2011).

PARALLEL EDITING, MULTI-POSITIONALITY AND MAXIMALISM: COSMOPOLITAN EFFECTS AS EXPLORED IN SOME ART WORKS BY MELANIE JACKSON AND VIVIENNE DICK

Rachel Garfield

Abstract

*Garfield produces a critique of neo-minimalist art practice
by demonstrating how the artist Melanie Jackson's* Some
things you are not allowed to send around the world
*(2003 and 2006) and the experimental film-maker Vivienne
Dick's* Liberty's booty *(1980) – neither of which can be
said to be about feeling 'at home' in the world, be it as a
resident or as a nomad – examine global humanity through
multi-positionality, excess and contingency. Jackson and Dick
thereby begin to articulate a new cosmopolitan relationship
with the local – or, rather, with many different localities
– in one and the same maximalist sweep of the work.
'Maximalism' in Garfield's coinage signifies an excessive
overloading (through editing, collage, and the sheer density
of the range of the material) that enables the viewer to
insert themselves into the narrative of the work. Garfield
detects in the art of both Jackson and Dick a refusal to
know or to judge the world. Instead, there is an attempt
to incorporate the complexities of its full range into the
singular vision of the work, challenging the viewer to identify
what is at stake.*

In this essay I will be looking at the artworks *Some
things you are not allowed to send around the world*
(2003 and 2006) by Melanie Jackson and *Liberty's booty*
(1980) by Vivienne Dick. I aim to think through the
relationship between the formation of subjectivity, art,
and the cosmopolitan. In drawing together these two
artists in a responsive way, I am identifying a visuality
that I would suggest posits a kind of parallel editing as
multi-positionality.[1] This argument has less to do with
situating these artists within a singular art historical
framework (as they inhabit very different milieux) than
thinking about what is at stake for an artist in making
choices in the production of art. In this case,
as in general, my motivation as an artist and writer

---

1   I take liberties with the terms here as much as I do with
the trajectories of the artists – as I explain through the text.

is to problematise notions of origin, hierarchies of victimhood and assumptions of belonging in art. In this text I am particularly focusing on ways in which art opens up possibilities for imagining the cosmopolitan as it is discussed below.

In the first instance, the cosmopolitan is a useful term to think one's way out of a limiting nation-state-ism, or as a way of thinking about polity in the post-colonial metropolitan centres. It is a term that has undergone a process of recuperation from the nineteenth-century attack on the Jew, the 'rootless cosmopolitanism',[2] to the reconfiguration of the 'nomad' by Chantal Mouffe (1994, pp.105–13) and Iain Chambers (2003, pp.169–78), for example. As Maren Tova Linett has explained:

> ❢ In the first half of the twentieth Century, Jews were often viewed as moderns *par excellence*. Like modernity itself, they were seen as cosmopolitan, rootless and urban. ❢
>
> (Linett, 2007, p.80)

The term cosmopolitan has gone from the slur of the rootless cosmopolitan as directed at the Jewish communities, during a period where the nation state was the aspiration and the norm to a contemporary metaphorical figure that represents our epoch of global travel and aspirational internationalism. In art it has recently been reapplied in Marsha Meskimmon's *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (2010) as, among other things, the quintessential contemporary figure for finding oneself 'at home' anywhere in the world. In this way she posits the nomad as central to her framing of the cosmopolitan within the art world.[3] More pertinent to Meskimmon's cosmopolitanism is the notion of the artist whose art represents a symbolic home that is carried with them everywhere through the poetic symbolism of their artistic practice.

My intention here is not to argue for a redefinition of cosmopolitanism. My interest in the concept arises out of the difficulties of finding a way to talk about the Subject from within current debates on cultural diversity. Often art focuses on personal narrative

and the self as a conduit for portentous experiential perspectives on the world, fuelling a tendency towards what Werner Sollors has termed ethnic insiderism. As Sollors suggests, '"You will never understand me, don't you understand?" – is the gesture with which cultural interaction seems to function; and even the smallest symbols of ethnic differentiation ("she called herself Kay Adams") are exaggerated out of proportion to represent major cultural differences' (Sollors, 1986, p.13) – as well as hierarchies of victimhood where communities vie for 'special case' position. Neither of which questions subject positions, but only serves to assert them. Through the examples introduced in the following I explore how art can reconstitute the relationship between the subject and reality, between the subject and her relationship to place and belonging, against the dominant trend in work that arises out of minimalism and the 'long look' in film.

My own recuperation of the term 'cosmopolitanism' aims not to make the contentious issue of belonging 'all right' through referencing the nomadic, as does Chambers, nor to elevate the home as a site of safety (for it may well be a site of ambivalence, claustrophobia or threat, especially for women), but to hold on to the discomfort of *not* belonging as a radical possibility for subjectivity. I agree with Sara Ahmed (2000, p.80) that the nomad as paradigm is a figure of privilege that excises the politics of lived relations, which endows it with both specificity and urgency. In art, it does this by means of readings that through symbolic or poetic gestures elevate metaphor and gloss over an often-brutal reality.[4] Furthermore, the artist as globetrotter engaged in the business of biennale exhibiting (i.e. as someone with the financial means to fly around the world) is a good example of how class is conveniently put aside in assumptions about the conditions of identity and victimhood where the global marginality or skin colour of the artist elides their privileged class conditions. In any event, the artist who gets to travel the world belongs to a privileged class of artist: most artists work under precarious local conditions to support themselves and their practice. Sara Ahmed criticizes Iain Chambers and Rosi Braidotti for using the metaphor of the nomad rather than actual nomadic people and in so doing eliding the cultural specificity of different nomadic peoples (as well as the difference between nomadic peoples and Western conscious nomads), 'such that nomads come to represent something other than themselves' (Ahmed, 2000, p.82). By setting the artist who travels around the world

---

2   Michael L. Miller, Scott Ury (2012) 'Dangerous Liaisons: Jews and Cosmopolitanism in Modern Times', in Gerard Delanty (ed.) *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies*, pp.550–62, also cites Jews as 'the quintessential cosmopolitans', p.558. In the same volume Pnina Werbner in 'Anthropology and the new ethical cosmopolitanism', argues 'against the slur that cosmopolitans are rootless' p.153.
3   This builds on Chantal Mouffe (1994) 'Politics for a Nomadic Identity' in the influential volume, *Travellers Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, ed. by George Robertson et al, pp.102–10.

---

4   The same argument was used in Laura Marks and Bryan Cheyette (1998) with regard to the Jew as the paradigmatic other in modernity. The Jew as paradigm elides real Jews.

taking their home with them as the cosmopolitan paradigm, Meskimmon is using the same manoeuvre as Chambers and Braidotti: one must be careful of the slippage between real people and a trope.

The dominant model of art that addresses issues to do with race, gender and belonging across the global art world exemplified by the world's biennales could be described as neo-minimalist. A contested category and the subject of many critical investigations, minimalism was defined largely in the US by a group of artists during the late 1960s, notably Karl Andre, Dan Flavin, Robert Morris and Sol Le Witt. Central to my own critique is not so much minimalism itself as its legacies that persist in contemporary art practice, which may best be described as neo-minimalism. As David Batchelor has argued, minimalism has become a catch-all term: 'Almost any approximately geometric, vaguely austere, more-or-less monochromatic, and generally abstract work has been or is likely to get labelled Minimal at one time or another' (Batchelor, 1997, p.7). Batchelor identifies the legacies of minimalism in contemporary art practice as what I, too, see as the dominant aesthetics currently aspiring to the cosmopolitan, which is an aesthetics that identifies itself strictly against excess. Minimalism, Batchelor asserts, 'is historically important ... because it substantially changed what art could look like, how it could be made and what it could be made from. And … over three decades later, a great deal of contemporary art is built out of the same materials and by similar means, whether or not it is made to serve the same or similar ends' (p.7).

Miwon Kwon equally identifies an ongoing link between minimalism and contemporary art in her influential study *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004) in which she delineates the journey in site-specific sculpture from Richard Serra through to Gabriel Orozco. Her study is particularly pertinent to ideas of cosmopolitanism as it outlines the historic links between site specificity, the embodied subject and biennale culture. Kwon describes the shift from the assumptions of a universal viewing subject of a white European disposition to a more globalised subjectivity:

❛ Informed by the contextual thinking of Minimalism, various forms of institutional critique and Conceptual art developed a different model of site specificity that implicitly challenged the 'innocence' of space and the accompanying presumption of a universal viewing subject (albeit one in possession of a corporeal body) as espoused in the phenomenological model … If Minimalism returned to the viewing subject a physical corporeal body, institutional critique insisted on the social matrix of class, race, gender, and sexuality of the viewing subject. ❜

(Kwon, 1997, p.87)

Another feature of artistic practice that is allied to minimalism and which has assumed almost hegemonic status within international art circles over the last few decades is the 'long look' of the documentary turn whose singular visuality is confluent with a neo-minimalist aesthetics.[5] There has been a predominance of the 'long look' in photography within lens-based gallery artwork in the UK and the US and in biennale culture, mirrored by the 'long shot' in cinema. Although photography and film are significantly different art forms and would usually deserve to be considered each on its own terms, many artists who use these tropes work flexibly between the two media, such as Zarina Bhimji or Zineb Sedira. These two in particular represent a trend among artists who were trained within photography departments, but produce video as their signature pieces. They also exemplify a dominant trend in art that claims to speak to the globalising forces in contemporary culture where lens based media is the norm of global critique.[6]

What I mean by the 'long look' in photography is a technique that can be found in work that is made using a large-format camera to take an image of great detail through an increased depth of field. This shows a clear affinity with the long, unedited shot in cinema. Some of the original aims of the 'long look' or 'long shot' were to encourage scrutiny of the quotidian and to foreground the authenticity of the image in opposition to the artifice of the edit. Andre Bazin, in *What is Cinema?*, set a framework that was to have a lasting legacy on film and video work, particularly in the UK. In opposition to montage he set out the case for what was to be called the long shot, and heralded a return to the contemplation of reality through a deliberate lack of editing and a 'depth of focus' on the single image, using examples such as *Citizen Kane*, in which a single shot is used to film a whole sequence (Bazin, 1967, pp.35–7).

In photography the long shot represented a turn away from the humanist documentary photography of

5   The 'documentary turn' is the expansion of documentary film practice into the sphere of fine art. It developed in the late 1990s out of the 'ethnographic turn' problematised by Hal Foster (1996, pp.171–204).

6   See, for example, the predominance of video and photography in *Documenta 11* (2003), curated by Okwui Enwezor.

Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive moment',[7] its relationship to the cinematic, and particularly the problems associated with the relationship between the camera and the subject. One possible response to the debates on the power relationship between the artist and her subject, which were ubiquitous in the 1970s and 1980s, was for the artist to turn the camera onto the self as an act of humility, as in the photography of Jo Spence, whose work on interrogating herself, society, and her own subject position as a working-class woman was to define the work of a whole generation in the UK. In the US, the pioneering work of Eleanor Antin, as exemplified by her earlier photographic piece 'Carving: A traditional sculpture' (1972), questioned the role in art of the nude and the male gaze.

Another response of artists and documentary photographers was to interrogate momentous events of human experience through photographing depopulated *landscapes* as in the work of Richard Misrach who photographed the Arizona desert in the aftermath of the American nuclear bomb tests.[8] Forty years on, despite its initial radicality and historical importance, more recent uses of this 'long shot' gaze have become mannered and often visually indulgent, now representing the tourist gaze as outlined by John Urry,[9] which enacts a post-Said notion of the power relations of the viewing subject: the self as a special case of victim, or the trace of the traumatic event (such as the *Shoah*; Hiroshima; or whatever historic site of trauma) as a nostalgic lament, which characterises much contemporary artwork reflecting on the *Shoah*, for example.[10] A convergence has taken place between the long look and neo-minimalism that places the discourses of otherness in an authentic site elevated in

its symbolism through the lingering look of the camera, such as in the work *Out of Blue* (2002) by Zarina Bhimji or *The Sovereign Forest* (2012) by Amar Kanwar.

In contrast I would contend that 'long look' work has the opposite effect. It foregrounds the primacy and uniqueness of what it lingers on and elevates it to the exclusion of all else. In this way it re-inscribes a hierarchy of victimhood and the special case politics of ethnic insiderism as well as the tourist gaze. While this kind of work relies on the viewer's imagination to fill in the gaps through their own experience, it does not require the viewer to question their own subjectivity or subject position. It also often claims to appeal to the notion of the universal, as when, for example, the evidence of the atrocity cited in the image (any given image of this type) stands in for all other atrocities, so that the Holocaust could equally become any other genocide. This became particularly vivid for me when Susan Hiller made the claim in a talk at the Cornerhouse Gallery in Manchester in 2006 that her artwork, *The J Street Project* was about all genocides, not just the Holocaust. When questioned, she insisted on it, stating that Jorg Heiser in the catalogue also made this claim (Heiser, 2005). Zarina Bhimji makes similar claims in *Out of Blue* (2002), the film that relates a vision of the devastation of the Idi Amin expulsion from Uganda of the population of Asian origin. She quotes of this film in her website that it 'attempts to link to similar disturbances that have taken place in Kosovo and Rwanda.'[11]

I want to suggest an alternative to this hegemony of neo-minimalist 'long look' work by envisioning cosmopolitanism in a forward-thinking way rather than from the relatively safe vantage point (for the artist and the viewing public) of critiquing past atrocities such as the Holocaust, which is often re-visited by contemporary artists.[12] Furthermore, I would like to argue that although the position put forward by Bazin is now the norm in much art practice, the critique of montage he put forward does not apply for the kind of contemporary work I will be talking about here. His argument was premised upon linear narrative film (such as *Citizen Kane*), and not the experimental models that eschew any notion of a forward driving narrative, such as Vivienne Dick. This work also eschews an aggregation of meaning through the edit. Bazin champions neo-realism arguing that montage as set out by Sergei Eisenstein is instrumentalised through Eisenstein's

---

7   This is the moment when everything converges including the awareness of the photographer that that is the precise moment for a photograph to be taken. It is a moment of decision by the photographer. See Steve Edwards (2006, p.56), for a succinct explanation.

8   See Richard Misrach and Myriam Weisang Misrach (1990), *Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

9   This term is taken, in part from Urry (1990) where he posits a particular relationship between the traveller and difference. I am not here implying that artists are literally tourists but that, following Foster, who in 'The Artist as Ethnographer' (in *The Return of the Real*, 1996, pp.171–204), mapped a critique onto an ethnographic methodology for artists, a similar mapping of power relations from tourism of the 'nomad' artist would seem a transparent manoeuvre.

10   I refer to Edward Said's (1972) notion of the way the West constructs the middle and far East in representation (notions of East and West that have themselves subsequently been critiqued as problematic).

---

11   http://www.zarinabhimji.com/dspseries/12/1FW.htm accessed 31 May 2013.

12   such as the *J Street Project* (2002–2005) by Susan Hiller; Judy Chicago's *Holocaust Project*, (1992); Shimon Attie, *The Writing on The Wall* series(1992–3).

notion of the dialectic. 'While analytical montage only calls for him to follow his guide, to let his attention follow along smoothly with that of the director who will choose what he should see, here [in depth of focus] he is called upon to exercise at least a minimum of personal choice' (Bazin, 1967, p.36). His claim for the long look is that 'Neorealism by definition rejects analysis, whether political, moral, psychological, logical, or social, of the characters and their actions. It looks on reality as a whole, not incomprehensible, certainly, but inseparably one' (p.97).

Figure 1: Vivienne Dick, Film Still of Greer with Doll in *Liberty's booty*, 1980. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

In contrast, the work that I will discuss here offers possibilities for thinking about living in a world of difference through what I call a maximalist aesthetics that would reject Bazin's claims. Through the collage and the edit, the maximalist aesthetics offers multi-positionality, excess and contingency in contrast to the singular or sequential camera work of the long look of Bazin and that has become the dominant trope.

Liberty's booty by Vivienne Dick (1980) and *Some things you are not allowed to send around the world* (2003 and 2006) by Melanie Jackson rejects the neo-minimalist trajectory and in so doing posit a polyvalent nuanced subject that reconstitutes the image of the cosmopolitan. Both works problematise labour conditions within different geographical locations. However, the key point here is that the different locations are presented concurrently, and this parallel positioning of the subject-in-the-world, as I will explain further below, is the beginning of a process of imagining a condition of the reconstitution of the subject. Dick's and Jackson's works overload the senses and the mind through collage and assemblage, defying totalising frameworks. This is what I define as their maximalist aesthetics. Their works exude a generosity to their subjects, an enjoyment even in their discomfort and criticality. Dick and Jackson are from different generations and their works clearly come out of different artistic movements. Dick's 'no wave' work was made in the late 1970s whereas the work

by Jackson belongs to the 1990s. The paradigm shifts marking each generation do not fully explain their different methodologies of making, however, as Dick's practice is embedded in experimental film and Jackson is identified with Fine Art, although there are significant crossovers in these histories and increasingly so. For example, experimental film makers like John Smith[13] or Jonas Mekas[14] exhibit in museums and galleries (as well as film festivals) and artists like Omer Fast screen their work at film festivals (as well as museums and galleries). Vivenne Dick herself has shown in both contexts such as Oberhausen 2010 and the Crawford Art Centre (2010).

In sum, it is the bringing together of subjects held in geographical distance as simultaneous encounter that accentuates the two artists' importance for debates about cosmopolitanism as critical and creative practice.

Vivienne Dick has been making films since the late 1970s. She first came to critical attention in New York as a member of what is now identified as the 'no wave' group of film makers, who shared a home-made aesthetics tracing its heritage through Punk back to Dada. As I have argued elsewhere, the themes in her work have been prescient in their figuring of globalisation. Saskia Sassen describes a space, created through discontinuity and simultaneity where 'two systems of representation intersect' (Sassen, 2002,

13   See http://www.johnsmithfilms.com/texts/biography.html.
14   See http://jonasmekasfilms.com/diary/.

p.110), which she calls an 'analytic borderland'.[15] The 'borderland' described here may also have a metaphorical articulation in art, through form in ways that I will discuss below but for the moment I would claim that both artists that I look at here, Dick and Jackson, think about the condition of marginal people in their work. Sassen is concerned with 'the multiple presences and articulations of race and gender in the city'.[16] She is particularly interested in marginalized people who work outside of the mainstream economies and are, she argues, crucial to the creation of global cities as well as the constitution of the marginal subjectivities, as I have argued elsewhere in an essay on Dick's work:

❛ The global city, as Sassen would posit, is a place of simultaneity, that is, of recognition for the politics that is mobilized through a transnational awareness: what is happening here, is happening there but in a way that 'partially by-passes nation states'. This is constituted through the aggregation of formerly subaltern voices. These voices come together in newly configured social formations that cross, not just geographical boundaries but also the domestic space with the work place, the street with the home and so forth. ❜

(Garfield, 2009, p.39)

In the following I want to talk about the formal aspects of this discontinuity in relation to the disruption of the indexical trace in photography and what it at stake in photo montage, as theorised by Rosalind Krauss (1985, p.24). My second focus of concern is parallel editing in film.[17] I will then bring these two discussions into dialogue with one another through a reading of Dick's *Liberty's booty*.

According to Mary Ann Doane, there are three types of editing in early cinema, each of which creates its own drama. The first is shot followed by reverse shot, using repetition to create narrative coherence. The second is the chase, popularised through comedy and thrillers, which serves to re-inscribe linear time. The third is parallel editing (Doane, 2002, pp.187–94), which creates a jump in space and time, implying that two events occur simultaneously. This is what Dick does in all of her works. While the chase edit 'aggregates regularity' (Doane, 2002, p.193) and so constitutes a

kind of normality for the viewer, parallel editing creates suspense through desire and fear, which, according to Janet Harbord, 'displaces the temporal logic of film, creating a simultaneity that requires the spectator to insert herself into the relationship between images, to forge connections' (Harbord, 2007, p.72). Parallel editing is essentially a kind of montage that can offer an effect of collage through contingency like no other cinematic form, which is itself an effect (contingency, that is) of the simultaneity as described by Harbord. In ways that I will explore below Dick's *Liberty's booty* is an example of how through such a reworking of time and space a new conceptualisation of subjectivity can emerge and take shape for the viewer through the connections made in the film.

Unlike the long look that denotes seeing more – more depth, more detail – the collage (or montage) focuses on the radicality of contingency through simultaneity: that is the lack of linearity as the focus. This opposition in some ways reflects the divergences between the film director Sergei Eisenstein's theories of montage as a dialectic at the heart of the importance of film,[18] on the one hand, and André Bazin's assumed authenticity of the 'long look' and antagonism with what he saw to be didactic expressionism of montage, 'The means used by Rossellini and de Sica are less spectacular, but they are no less determined to do away with montage and to transfer to the screen the *continuum* of reality' (Bazin, 1967, p.37).

Interestingly Kobena Mercer, drawing on the African-American writer Ralph Ellison, has argued for collage to be identified as a diasporic concern registering inequality through 'sharp breaks, leaps in consciousness, distortions, paradoxes, reversals, telescoping of time, and surreal blending of styles, values, hopes and dreams' (Mercer, 2005, p.125). Ellison notably developed this technique from Romare Bearden's projected photomontages. Mercer suggests that the disjunctions in the imagery across the collages and photomontages cut (as they are themselves cut) through the meanings of Blackness (and the power of those meanings) as it traverses the twentieth century through different assignations from 'Negro' to 'coloured' to 'Black'. The cut then stands as witness to 'the dialectical flux of historical becoming' (Mercer, 2005, p.126). In this way, photomontage and collage could be seen to be of particular interest to artists working in the diaspora.

15 Analytic borderlands are discussed in a more focused way by Sassen in 'Analytic Borderlands: Race, Gender and Representation in the New City' in Anthony D. King (ed.) *Re-presenting the City* (1996), New York, New York University Press, pp.183–203.
16 Sassen (1996), p.183.
17 As analysed by Mary Ann Doane (2002, pp.187–94).

18 In his chapter 'A Dialectic Approach to Film Form', Sergei Eisenstein outlines his thinking on montage such as '[t]his same principle – giving birth to concepts, to emotions, by juxtaposing two disparate events – led to: IV. Liberation of the whole action from the definition of time and space', http://interactive2.usc.edu/blog-old/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/film_form.pdf.

Figure 2: Vivienne Dick, Film Still of New York Playground, *Liberty's booty*, 1980. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

which it shows, but also the social tendency expressed by the fact' (quoted in Krauss et al, 1985, p.24). It is the concern with this social tendency and its effects that brings both Dick and Jackson to maximalist collage (as distinct from, say, the collages of John Stezaker, such as *The Marriage* series).

Dick's film *Liberty's booty* was made in 1980 in New York. The stylistic sources of her oeuvre are the underground New York film-makers of the previous generation, such as Jack Smith (1932–89), whom she worked for, and Kenneth Anger. Her work has an impressionistic and rough-hewn feel although on scrutiny, of course, it reveals nuanced and careful structuring and artistry. *Liberty's booty* makes use of parallel editing to great effect, offering a considered awareness of several locations in a single sweep of film. The main foci of the film are labour and prostitution, showing how they overlap and correlate. There is nothing 'cool' nor minimal about this vision.[20] It takes place in pre-corporate, bankrupt New York, specifically the Lower East Side (which incorporates what is now called the East Village), stripped of its glamour. At the time living in the city was either a sign of poverty or resistance,[21] and while Dick's milieu does acknowledge glamour in the disarray, it is a different kind of glamour to the cool minimal glamour as cited above, using irony that shows an awareness of living in a late capitalist environment. True to the spirit of Punk, Dick envisions a world of mess that people create through form as much as content. For example, the film starts off with a surreal passage of hand-held footage of a woman (who had previously been a man) unpacking a parcel that contains a smaller than life-size cloth doll. The woman proceeds to pull a string of cloth 'babies' out of the hole between the doll's legs after which she hugs the doll (which also has a penis). With a sudden jump cut the opening credits begin accompanied by the image

Another way of reflecting on the relationship between montage, maximalism and the cosmopolitan is through thinking about Krauss's claims in her work on surrealist photography. Collage and photomontage are not interchangeable terms, and Krauss makes the distinction important in her analysis, where she argues that collage was 'a too willing surrender on photography's hold on the real' (Krauss et al, 1985, p.28). In order to reflect on my concern with the multivalent image I will put aside some of these important differences.[19] Krauss argues that photography normally aims to offer a seamless version of reality which photomontage then disrupts as a critique of the indexical. Through the disruptions of the blank spaces or gaps between one 'shard of reality and another', meanings are created through a language effect of self-contained structures which allows one to 'infiltrate reality with interpretations' and particularly through photo montage due to its seamless surface but disjointed imagery (Krauss et al, 1985, p.24). Drawing Krauss and Mercer together, one may infer that it is the disjunction between images that re-interprets the world *in effect*. Krauss cites John Heartfeld who states that photo-montage 'expresses not simply the fact

19   Krauss makes a distinction between photomontage and collage (Krauss et al, 1985) p.28: photomontage creates a seamless surface with a fragmented imagery whereas collage *is* what it appears as, namely cut up. There is no conflict between the form and the image. However, at times Krauss herself brings the two together in her question 'In what sense, we might ask, could the very act of collage/montage be thought of as textual?' (1985) p.25.

20   Batchelor in *Chromophobia*, Chapter 1: 'Whitescapes', equates the 'cool' of whiteness with stripped down décor in a home, positing it throughout against the excess and uncontainable nature of colour. This is what I mean about 'cool' here.

21   The city here refers to the working class areas of the city, particularly in this case downtown (The Lower East Side).

of some bikers roaring down an East Village street. The next sequence is of a woman being interviewed, speaking directly to the camera, which roams across fragments of her body as well as fragments of objects in the room. Throughout the film, genres are interlaced: the viewer never knows who is an actor and who is the subject of a documentary camera; who is the performer reciting an elliptical monologue to camera; or why, in the finale, the characters are dancing in a makeshift night club. The film is populated by figures edited in, seemingly without reason and certainly without explanation, interrupting the flow of the film into opaque meanings that ensure an absence

Figure 3: Vivienne Dick , Film Still of Nan and Bobby, *Liberty's booty*, 1980. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

of totalising narrative. Furthermore, the sustained use of jump cuts alongside the dramatic shifts of location, tempo and imagery builds a literal disruption of seamlessness that is everywhere apparent, echoed by the use of sound suddenly starting or stopping with each cut. Thus the method, subject and form follow each other emphasising the contingency of film and the contingency of the subject in the world.

The film depicts a group of young women, who are making a living from prostitution. A multiplicity of methodologies are used in the construction of the film. The dominant strategy is fly-on-the-wall documentary to describe their day-to-day lives in New York's Lower East Side. The apartments filmed are all furnished with second-hand vintage furniture and the actors are wearing a self-consciously second-hand style of clothing.[22] The narrative, such as it is, is constantly disrupted by a shifting visual pace as well as the deliberate breaking up of the desultory or experimental documentary genre into poetic performance. At the centre of the film is a series of passages that crystallises the subjectivity that is being constituted through the film. This sequence makes the link between the timelessness of casual labour (because prostitution has been part of every known society) and the pivotal moment of the expansion of the McDonald's brand

22   As Dick recently explained, 'some of the clothes and interiors are genuine 70s style of the day, some outfits are what we were wearing – yes – either 'vintage' especially an early 60s look – clothes found or even remade' (email to the author, 9 October 2012).

and its toll on workers' rights in an increasingly neo-liberalised world. *Liberty's booty* speaks of the processes that bind these different instances together. First we see the women in a McDonald's outlet in New York, chatting. Up until that moment the viewer has been following a marginal New York narrative. Then a barely noticeable shift takes place as an Irish male voice cuts in to tell us of the strikes in McDonald's outlets in Ireland. The film then goes via a few shots from a plane to Ireland to the Phoenix Park fair in Dublin (where preparations for the Papal visit were ongoing) to images of the Papal visit on TV and, finally, to children standing in the doorways of their homes. Suddenly the viewer sees the same women we saw in New York, but now walking up a mountain in Donegal, immersed in an apparently idyllic scene. Yet the footage is undermined by sound that offers resistance to it by the sudden method of its insertion. We can hear the song 'She's Not There' by the Zombies and at the same time a woman's voice from New York details the conditions of working as a prostitute in all its abjectness, jolting us back to America.

Both of these filmic shifts use sound and image in combination as well as sequencing to make the point of the impossibility of considering one condition without the other. The comparisons do not stop there: next we are addressed by an Hispanic woman of African descent talking about McDonald's in Spanish, without translation, leaving an Anglophone audience uncomprehending, forcing them/us to experience our own marginality and exclusion. (The rest of the film is

Figure 4: Vivenne Dick, Party Detail (Margaret), *Liberty's booty*, 1980. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

in English, thus assuming an Anglophone audience). The fast cutting, the lack of denouement and the dearth of conventionally coherent film language keep the viewer in the present at all times. In other words the filming reinforces the experiential while the fragmented simultaneity offers a different subjectivity that has to let go of a safe orientation while, at the same time, paradoxically creating that critical distance that makes sure one stays aware of being an active spectator. Key to this sequence is both the positing of home as a disparate simultaneity of features, and the idea of home itself as a place of ambivalence. Both places are sites from where freedom is fought. In Ireland this is clear from the imagery of the Pope, superstition and inequality. A belief in the US as the 'land of the free' is disturbed, inequality is shown to be ubiquitous, through the poverty seen in the areas of New York filmed here and as exemplified through the portrayal of prostitution that exists here, as everywhere.[23] By juxtaposing these two scenarios of the social inequalities in both countries, the experience of simultaneity is coupled with a destabilisation of home as a cipher of safety. Neither the US nor Ireland is portrayed as a safe place but as one of corruption and struggle. These are places of negotiation rather than home: where one makes one's life while aware of other places and the world in

all its contingencies and struggles.

The work of Melanie Jackson addresses the cosmopolitan through a range of materials that grapple with the global through sculptural space. Although her work emerges out of a different context to Dick's, I would suggest that her work exists as a kind of parallel editing in space: through a range of materials and registers Jackson brings different images into dialogue with each other, leaving the viewer to make sense of them. *Some things you are not allowed to send around the world* (Jackson, 2003 and 2006) is part of a body of work that invokes cosmopolitanism through a range of modes of address across diverse materials and formal strategies. Jackson went to art school in London and, younger than Dick, rose to prominence in the 1990s. Like *Liberty's booty*, her installation also defies genre, ranging from fly-on-the-wall documentary and animation to a sculptural installation made of 300 different newspapers from around the world, which Jackson sourced in her local neighbourhood. Her work uses similar strategies whatever its specific theme, showing a preference for focal multiplicity as well as a confluence of sculpture and video installation. She often adds drawing or printed matter into the mix. The work is placed in such a way that the viewer has to negotiate the physical space through multiple viewpoints. The effectiveness of her work relies on the contingency of different narratives, sutured together in space in order to draw links between the material and the imaginary as a point of resistance to the mainstream mediation of news. The aim is to activate the viewer's perception and physical participation in the critique that the work proposes. For example, in line with her overall oeuvre, *Some things you are not allowed to send around the world* is a multifaceted installation, consisting of video, animation, sculpture and posters. The multiple modes offer a different kind of disjunction than the work of Dick, which is broadly cinematic. The viewer has to literally insert herself into the gaps between the sculptural elements in the room as well as the different registers of a range of media which Jackson uses to connect the multi-localism of the macro with the geographical specificity of the micro.

---

23 While prostitution is universal, in the film described here, the overlay of sexual politics, lack of unionized labour of McDonalds and the Hispanic labour activist, brought together in this sequence specifically make the point of the lack of equality in the US.

Figures 5 and 6:
Melanie Jackon, *Some Things You Cannot Send Around The World*, Installation (detail), 2003. Courtesy Matt's Gallery.

Jackson's conceptual starting point in this particular artwork was to explore the affect of news stories from locations she had never experienced in any other form. How much of the world could be encountered on a daily basis through the material cultures of storytelling circulating within her own fixed location? The quotidian is juxtaposed with the transitory: in the juxtaposition between the newspapers and the film footage, for example. However, the everyday encounters are not like those experienced by the *flâneur*, looking in. On the contrary, the viewer's encounter with the work is multi-dimensional and requires the negotiation of different scales and genres in their journey through it. The work comprises documentary film footage, combined with posters and models made out of newspaper, in different scales and various positions around the gallery. Affect is an important part of the understanding of the presentation as these multiple

Figures 7 and 8:
Melanie Jackon, *Some Things You Cannot Send Around The World*, Installation (detail), 2003. Courtesy Matt's Gallery.

shifts in modality and focus have a discombobulating impact. The models turn the viewer into a giant in scale. The TV sets with the documentary footage are placed on the floor while the animation is at head-height. The models are spot-lit and a cacophony of sound issues from several videos simultaneously.

The models are all temporary architectural or engineered structures quite literally made up of the newspaper stories, their language and design. In collation the structures are not entirely transparent in their individual meaning, purveying a sense of random origination, but arranged in huddles: what looks to me like islands of togetherness. By contrast, the lens-based work is more explicit, even literal, commenting directly on the precarious nature of so many lives across the globe. One part of the installation is an animation derived from a news story describing the situation of a domestic worker who has been instructed to

empty a cupboard of plates every night in order
to create a place to sleep, as she has no bedroom
attached to her 'live-in' employment. She refills it every
morning in a tragic-comic cartoon loop. Another part
of the installation is a multi-screened documentary
of domestic workers hailing from the Philippines. It
references the animation loop since it depicts the
women, who have to sleep in cupboards where they
work, holding tea ceremonies in the space beneath

the expansive HSBC building in Hong Kong.[24] Jackson
insists on the importance of the HSBC building as the
most expensive item of real estate in the world in stark
contrast to the plight of the women as well as their
resourcefulness and enterprise in recreating some
semblance of community in this concrete environment.

24 Designed by the acclaimed architect Norman Foster,
the HSBC building in Hong Kong is a flagship edifice built on
stilts to acknowledge the local architectural vernacular.

On their only day off they occupy and take over this vast site and the surrounding arteries of the business district where they drink tea, entertain, and groom themselves and each other. In the absence of any other place they can inhabit as home they create one here every Sunday. In their thousands, they are tolerated by the authorities because of their sheer number.[25]

This concrete HSBC home is both temporary and precarious, but a respite nonetheless. The footage is filmed as a 8mm-screen documentary and shows the actual women camped around the pillars: in the gallery, the TV sets are situated around the structures of the built installation and the pillars of the gallery. The footage was shot by a film student from the University of Hong Kong after an open invitation by email from the artist following a route she had pieced together from news stories – a kind of remote viewing and verification of what was reported.

A third part of the artwork, filmed by the artist on holiday in Almeria, Spain, comments on the country's hidden immigrant workers in the 40,000 hectares of plastic greenhouses that grow 90% of the fruit and vegetables destined for export to Britain.[26] These are all stories of hardship, but also stories of maverick and defiant occupations of architecturally significant spaces by migrant workers. The *plasticos,* as the greenhouses are called in Spain, originated in a kind of gold rush with farmers squatting on abandoned land and setting up temporary greenhouses that have now become a feature of the landscape. The piece that gives the installation its title is a hand-collated poster, which lists, according to the artist, every object that national governments have forbidden citizens to send to other nation states through international mail. The lists had been re-issued over many years without being revised and updated, revealing anachronistic prohibitions and the residue of former belief and trading systems, seemingly bizarre in a contemporary globalised context. Restrictions on the movements of people are prone to similar caveats and prohibitions linked to residual belief systems, trade agreements and the flow of capital. Among all of Jackson's artistic strategies contingency predominates.

Similar to the juxtaposition in Dick's work, where performance artists narrate oblique poetry alongside the documentary footage, Jackson's installation inserts fault lines between genres: the metaphoric

referent of the newspaper objects alongside the literal presentation of the unstructured documentary. It also creates a collage in space, which operates as the kind of language effect that Krauss associates with photomontage. Like many of Jackson's works, this installation tends towards overload, but it is this very overload that 'requires the spectator to insert herself into the relationship between images, to forge connections' (Harbord, 2007, p.72). It unsettles the differences between subjects, while preserving the specificity and lived relationship of each situation. Through the inclusion of objects made out of paper, literally made by her hand, Jackson posits the hand-made as resistance to the speed and slickness of professional exchange, singular experience and hierarchy (although it has to be pointed out that video is also handmade – since it is filmed and edited by someone's hand).

Jackson's use of different formats, height and scale serves to tease out differences as much as her use of newspapers often serves to conflate them. Her work therefore is not about establishing equivalences so much as forcing us to see the particularity in difference. Even more than Dick, Jackson is working the analytical borderland identified by Sassen as the complex zone of silence where 'two systems of representation intersect' (Sassen, 2007, p.191). This is a productive and potentially transformative mode of development in global culture which Sassen sees as dependent on this analytical borderland. Jackson is interested in the role of the imagination in envisioning the global while querying the kind of supplement required to what is easily seen. In other words she asks: what work does the viewer need to do in order to really see the global, to be affected by it, and to understand what is at stake?

It is a question that both Dick and Jackson pose in their work. They choose to do so through a maximalist approach that takes into account the importance of contingency in viewing artwork and deciphering its meanings.

Seen in this way, the practices that I have described here would not conform to the didacticism that Bazin finds in works of montage. Meanings in this work are much more diffuse and unassimilable than Bazin would recognise in his reading of Eisenstein's films. They are more clearly aligned with the shock that Benjamin talked about in relation to film where its very instability 'is potentially traumatic for the spectator and allows the cinema to embody something of the restructuration of modern perception' (Doane, 2002, p.15). I would argue that Bazin's observations on the didacticism of montage do not take into account the importance of narrative film structures in his

---

25   See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filipinos_in_Hong_Kong.
26   See http://geographyfieldwork.com/CostadelPolythene.htm and http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/feb/07/spain-salad-growers-slaves-charities. The artist also conducted field trips interviewing 'growers, farmers, businessmen and "illegals" who do all the farm work' (artist's email to the author, 6 May 2013).

understanding of the limits and failings of montage as opposed to the long shot. Contemporary experimental work by Vivienne Dick eschews narrative structures of film language, thereby emphasising the shock effect of montage; it undercuts the aggregation of understanding that narrative film relies on and relies instead on an aggregation of experiences through the contingency of the edit. The result produces unstable meanings which are inassimilable to a single forward-driving movement of narrative intentionality. In view of these two points I would suggest that contemporary art uses montage to produce excess.

Finally, in considering what is *not* given to the viewer in a single, neat package, it may be said that both artworks unsettle geographical boundaries and the division of labour. They do so in order to posit a way of living in the world that is not easy, not comfortably placed, but with fault lines and disjunctions that signal a radical discontinuity. I propose that this contrasts importantly to a definition of cosmopolitanism as the condition of being at home everywhere.[27] By contrast, a radical cosmopolitanism comes from accepting that comfort and ease with, and within, the world is a fraught and always inevitably transient state. Holding yourself to account within the world, and through it, is what makes the cosmopolitan imagination such a productive force.

Bibliography

1 Ahmed, S. (2000) *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, London, Routledge.

2 Batchelor, D. (1997) *Movements in Modern Art: Minimalism*, London, Tate.

3 Batchelor, D. (2000) *Chromophobia*, London, Reaktion.

4 Bazin, A. (1967) *What is Cinema?* Berkeley, University of California Press.

5 Chambers, I. (2002) 'Unrealized democracy and a posthumanist art' in O. Enwezor et al (eds) *Democracy Unrealized: Documenta 11, Platform 1*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz, pp.169–78.

6 Doane, M.A. (2002) *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, pp.187–94.

7 Edwards, S. (2006) *Photography: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

8 Foster, H. (1996) *The Return of the Real: The Avant Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.

9 Garfield, R. (2009) 'A particular incoherence' in T. O'Brian (ed.) *Between Truth and Fiction: The Films of Vivienne Dick*, London, Crawford Art Centre/Lux, pp.36–53.

10 Harbord, J. (2007) *The Evolution of Film: Rethinking Film Studies*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

11 Hiller, S. (2005) *The J Street Project*, with an afterword by *Jörg Heiser*, Compton Verney and Berlin Artists-in-Residence Programme/DAAD.

12 Krauss, R., Ades, D. and Livingstone, J. (eds) (1985) *L'amour fou: photography and surrealism*, New York, Abbeville Press.

13 Kwon, M. (1997) 'One place after another: Notes on site specificity' *October*, vol.80, pp.85–110.

14 Kwon, M. (2004) *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.

15 Linett, Maren Tova (2007) *Modernism, Feminism, and Jewishness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

16 Marks, L. and Cheyette, B. (eds) (1998) *Culture, Modernity and the Jew*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

17 Mercer, K. (2005) *Cosmopolitan Modernisms,* London, Iniva and MIT Press.

18 Meskimmon, M. (2010) *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination,* London, Routledge.

19 Miller, M.L. and Ury, S. (2012) 'Dangerous Liaisons: Jews and Cosmopolitanism in Modern Times', in G. Delanty (ed.) *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies*, London, Routledge, pp.550–62.

20 Misrach, R. with Weisang Misrach, M. (1990) *Bravo 20: The Bombing of the American West*, Johns Hopkins University Press.

21 Mouffe, C. (1994) 'For a politics of nomadic identity' in G. Robertson, M. Mash, L. Tickner, J. Bird, B. Curtis and T. Putnam (eds), *Travellers Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, Oxford, Routledge, pp.102–10.

22 Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, London, Routledge.

23 Sassen, S. (2007) *A Sociology of Globalisation*, New York, Columbia University Press.

24 Sollors, W. (1986) *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

25 Urry, J. (1990) *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London, Sage.

26 Werbner, P. (2012) 'Anthropology and the new ethical cosmopolitanism', in G. Delanty (ed.) *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies*, Oxford, Routledge, pp.153–65.

---

27 See, for instance, Meskimmon (2010, p.18): 'Moreover, by making herself "at home" everywhere, [the artist in question] … articulated global citizenship – cosmopolitanism – as a plurilocal subjectivity'. Sara Ahmed has noted in her book *Strange Encounters: Embodying Others in Post Coloniality* that Iain Chambers and Rose Braidotti have also pronounced on the virtues of the nomad (p.82).

OFFSHORE COSMOPOLITANISM: READING THE NATION IN RANA DASGUPTA'S *TOKYO CANCELLED,* LAWRENCE CHUA'S *GOLD BY THE INCH* AND ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER*[1]

Liam Connell

Abstract

Following Ronen Palan's The Offshore World *(2003) Connell understands the central feature of the offshore as the 'bifurcation of the nation state': the state splits itself in two by continuing to govern those areas that remain easy to legislate while surrendering to the international realm those which do not. Connell considers how the offshore can be understood as a form of cosmopolitanism, with a particular emphasis on the way that the obligations of the state are stretched to accommodate foreign businesses, foreign capital and even foreign citizens. Yet, as Connell demonstrates, the cosmopolitan promise of the offshore conceals the double nature of the nation-state which functions both as a node for discursive community formation and, simultaneously, as cover for the evasion of any communal responsibilities that this might imply. Reading Lawrence Chua's* Gold by the Inch *(1998), Rana Dasgupta's* Tokyo Cancelled *(2006) and Aravind Adiga's* The White Tiger *(2008) Connell examines how the idea of national belonging struggles to survive in representations of the offshore. In particular Connell's analysis shows that the difficulty that arises from trying to represent the offshore leads these texts to open up new perspectives on global capitalism by focussing upon its differential relationships to the state.*

This essay has three interconnecting aims. The first is to explain the nature of the offshore as a form of contemporary globalisation with crucial implications for our understanding of the nation-state as the dominant form of contemporary governance. In particular, I suggest that far from being a form of government that is progressively marginalised by globalisation and the development of transnational institutions and forces,

---

1   This essay is the result of an ongoing collaboration on questions related to the offshore with Stephanie Jones and Nicky Marsh at Southampton University.

the nation-state is able to use the offshore as a way of negotiating the tensions between national sovereignty and international interconnectivity. The offshore allows national governments to cede portions of their claim to governance in order to remain at the centre of international political economy. I then explore the implications this has for the concept of cosmopolitanism. I take as my starting proposition the notion that cosmopolitanism is usually understood as the antithesis of the nation because it seeks to embody a form of world citizenship as an alternative to national belonging. The antagonism between cosmopolitanism and the state can be found in the Stoic tradition, which placed moral obligations before political ones (Nussbaum, 2010, p.157), and it continues through Immanuel Kant's Enlightenment formulation of cosmopolitanism which sees national laws as a threat to peace and proposes 'a united power' as 'a cosmopolitan system of general political security' (Kant, 2010, p.23). In this tradition cosmopolitanism represents a demand for hospitality which challenges the nation-state to extend the rights and privileges of citizenship to all humans as cosmopolites.

As I indicate, however, this view of cosmopolitanism assumes that nations are genuinely closed systems which extend their privileges to all citizens evenly. What the offshore demonstrates is that nations already, and inherently, afford rights differentially so that the notion of citizenship masks a complex matrix of engagements with the state which are not capable of being reduced to a singular relationship. This inevitably has implications for the claims to hospitality that the cosmopolite might make, most especially because the offshore so frequently involves extending and demanding hospitality towards foreign capital, if not to foreign people. In this sense the offshore could be regarded as the acme of cosmopolitanism while, at the same time, serving as a mechanism which closes down a notion of reciprocal rights both intra- and internationally. My final aim is to consider how literary representations of the offshore are capable of interrogating its role. Through readings of Lawrence Chua's *Gold by the Inch* (1998), Rana Dasgupta's *Tokyo Cancelled* (2006) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) I suggest ways in which the representation of the offshore can be employed to mount a sustained critique of the nation-state and its rhetorical claims of inclusion by making visible the extent to which these serve and constitute global economic divisions.

Though the nature and function of the offshore is neither widely known nor well understood, the offshore is central to the contemporary neoliberal economy. Indeed, Angus Cameron and Ronan Palan

have argued that the cheerleaders for economic globalisation often confuse the offshore with globalisation in general (Cameron and Palan, 2004, p.17). The offshore is construed as broadly a question of 'the market' and globalisation is defined as the exercising of rational choice in pursuit of favourable market-conditions. However, in *The Offshore World*, his extended study of the concept, Palan has argued that the offshore should not be understood simply in terms of spatial economics but rather as a political mechanism that permits the 'bifurcation of the nation state' (Palan, 2006, p.3). For Palan, the offshore is the function of government which allows the state to cede sovereignty over portions of the nation in order to maintain the general fiction of national sovereignty. While this depends upon the spatial differentiation of market conditions, it requires. more crucially, the state to split itself in two in order to liberate 'capital from social responsibility and a good portion of the taxation it would otherwise owe' while simultaneously 'discharging their traditional duties in the territories remaining under their jurisdiction as if nothing had happened' (p.3). What this reveals is that the offshore is central to the ability of the nation to continue to represent itself as the sovereign realm alongside the establishment of international orders of exchange. Palan goes further to suggest that historically the development of the offshore occurred simultaneously with the rise of national sovereignty (in Europe from the seventeenth century, and globally from the eighteenth century) as an international system of equivalent and competing sovereign realms. The implication of this simultaneity is that, while the offshore appears to threaten the concept of national sovereignty, it is in actuality a necessary component of the nation-state system that inscribes and sanctions the nation's legitimacy in the international realm.

If the parlance of the nation-state suggests that nations represent the conjoining of territoriality and jurisdiction, Palan notes that the offshore 'demonstrates to us that ... the juridical domain of the state corresponds only very roughly to its geographical territory' (p.26). States routinely hive off portions of their territory to legal spaces outside the jurisdiction of the state in the form of free trade zones (FTZ), tax exemptions, flags of convenience and Guantanamo-style prison camps. In doing so they sever the bond between territory and authority upon which the nation is presumed to depend. The roots of this situation are, for Palan, found in the history of the nation whereby the contemporary conception of the nation-state emerged only by stages. In the first stage, Absolutist

regimes set about 'the slow process of homogenization and centralization of power,' that gradually allowed the state to 'inscribe the nation ... as coextensive with a particular territory' (pp.150–2). These changes made possible a second stage that saw the sudden emergence of a philosophical 'ideology of nationalism' which valorised the nation by idealising the equation of people and territory which had been achieved in the previous stage. However, they also confirmed the necessity of the *state* as the 'mechanism' which allows the nation to actualise itself (p.153). The assumption of the nation's singularity, led to a third stage, one of democratisation, whereby 'a community of citizens' justified 'the concept of state closure' culminating in the United Nations system as 'the "territorialization" of the nation' (pp.154–7).

This history resembles established modernist accounts of the nation, such as Ernest Gellner's (1983) or Eric Hobsbawm's (1992), and indicates how very recently territory and popular autonomy have come to be aligned. Palan's aim in rehearsing this history, however, is to draw attention to the fact that the gradual emergence of national sovereignty coincided with the codification of the offshore in international law. The offshore depends upon three important aspects of this process for its formation: first, the ability of nations to assert territorial jurisdiction; second, a range of differentiated jurisdictions that tie competitive advantage to location; and, finally, a system of international agreement that legally assigns the *citizenship* of capital as it is invested internationally. For Palan, this reveals that, far from competing with the idea of national sovereignty, the offshore is a function of national sovereignty and, like the nation itself, is made possible only by the innately *international* character of nations. He argues that the crucial turn occurred when international law established the principle that 'the location of intangible assets is determined by the place where transactions physically take place' (Palan, 2006, p.105). The 'principle of sovereign equality' which was enshrined in Article 2 of the UN Charter in 1945 (United Nations, 1945), was effectively the principle which the Swiss exploited when they 'denied any sovereign claims over foreign accounts by the holder's real countries of residence' in 1934 (Palan, p.106). This, in turn, followed the nineteenth-century examples of US states which wrested control of the rules governing incorporation from the federal government (p.101) and of British law which sought to tax foreign investors in British companies (p.102). Contract law was able to exploit states' protection of each other's sovereignty since this was the basis for an international system of

mutual jurisdictional autonomy upon which their own sovereignty depended.[2]

The implication of Palan's history of the offshore is that nations were never the hermetic sovereign realms that they purported to be. Instead, international contractual systems were producing variegated state-sovereignty even at the very moment that nations were being constituted as the sacred union of a people, actualised within a given territory by a democratically elected state. This has significant implications for thinking about cosmopolitanism especially as it pertains to a question of the rights of citizenship. My working understanding of the term 'cosmopolitanism' here is a demand for rights; it manifests itself as the request to be treated as, or in the same way as, a citizen. The notion of citizenship is central to the etymology of cosmopolitanism and even as it is generalised into an ethical concept it retains a reference to the citizen as the enfranchised subject. This necessarily implicates nations which retain the ability to define the limits of citizenship and so, in practical terms, remain the guarantor of rights, even within the frame of universal rights. As it pertains to citizenship the offshore raises certain problems for a traditional view of the nation as an historical community of juridically equivalent citizens. This is most obvious where the offshore transforms citizenship, in the form of national membership, into a saleable commodity that states are prepared to sell to wealthy individuals in the form of tax services. Palan's totemic instance of this is the sale of Swiss nationality to the British actress Elizabeth Taylor (pp.61, 159) but, more recently, reports have emerged of an offer to Icelandic authorities by 'investors from the US and Canada' of 'up to $15bn' in return for 'Icelandic citizenship' (Sigmundsdóttir, 2011). If the language of social-contract theory is a slightly old-fashioned way to talk about the nation-state, instances such as these make it clear that citizenship (or national membership) is literally reducible to the form of a contract.

The contractual nature of citizenship raises necessary questions about the concept of cosmopolitanism as hospitality. If the cosmopolitan ethos depends upon a presumption that belonging and the rights that follow from it are universally extendable, the fact that it is possible to buy citizenship draws cosmopolitanism into the realm of neoliberal globalisation, lending weight to the familiar accusation that cosmopolitanism is a form of elite privilege

2   It is also obvious that this principle is continually breached yet, because it is enshrined in international law, such breaches require political negotiation and public justification. The most evident example of this is recent years has been the protracted negotiations used to legitimise the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

(Brennan, 2001). However, this raises the obvious objection that cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism are not synonyms and that it should remain possible to define the cosmopolitan without reference to conceptions of mobility and freedom that neoliberalism seeks to claim as its own. And while this is true, it nevertheless seems necessary to interrogate the notion of citizenship which lies at the core of cosmopolitanism. As an inclusive ideal cosmopolitanism demands the extension of rights and its endpoint is universalism. However, its emphasis on worldliness means that it tends to express this inclusion in international terms and to imagine citizenship as intra-nationally coherent. Contrary to this view, the evidence suggests that, despite the claim to rules-based criteria of membership, nations tend to extend membership and the rights that this confers in a piecemeal and haphazard way. For instance, in the UK, the Commonwealth Immigrants Acts of 1962 and 1968 effectively revoked the rights to British citizenship which had been conferred upon citizens of the British Empire under the British Nationality Act of 1948; in some cases leaving people effectively stateless (Doty, 1996, pp.243–6). While this example could be construed as exceptional, the fluid nature of state borders means that such inclusions and exclusions are relatively commonplace: recent historical events such as the formation of an independent Bangladesh in 1971, the division of Czechoslovakia into Slovakia and the Czech Republic in 1992, or the secession of South Sudan in 2011, all illustrate the contingency of national unity. The border regions in all these cases remain vexed as illustrated by the Indian government's decision to construct a fence along its entire land border with Bangladesh (Buerk, 2006) or continuing violence in the border regions of Sudan and South Sudan (Abdelaziz and Laessing, 2013).

The concept of the offshore reframes these disparities and exclusions by suggesting that the extension of rights follows capital and that it is capital's claim to territorial belonging and the protections that this entails which stretches the rights of citizenship in ways that might be recognised as cosmopolitan. This is most obvious when nationality is understood to be a contractual arrangement because, once nationality is understood in these terms, it becomes more amenable to the complexities thrown up by multiple contracts and, accordingly, states have incrementally relaxed prohibitions against dual or multiple nationalities. The Indian state's recent introduction of the Person of Indian Origin and Overseas Indian Citizen schemes, for instance, which extended some of the rights of Indian citizenship to non-residents, typifies this trend as the extension of rights was intended to facilitate inward

investment into the Indian economy (Dickinson and Bailey, 2007). These schemes employ the offshore as a solution to the competing imperatives of sovereignty and capital by utilising the romantic conception of citizenship to attract mobile capital. A compelling reason to study the offshore, then, is that it makes visible the extent to which cosmopolitanism is implicated in capital's ability to supersede the demands of citizenship. The offshore uses the state's loudly-proclaimed right to legislate as a means of protecting capital from the claims of the state. Without the rhetorical 'fiction' of sovereignty the offshore would not be possible because nations need to preserve the autonomy required to exempt capital from its social responsibility. As such the offshore facilitates capital's demand for the cosmopolitan extension of rights while simultaneously denying this possibility to the majority of the nation's population who remain subject to its jealously-guarded sovereign power.

These observations are not incidental to the study of the novel which, as a literary form, has long been associated with the nation. The connection between the nation and the novel springs from the assumption, most ably proposed by Benedict Anderson (1991) that nations needed to reconcile their claims to legitimacy, which were based upon cultural longevity, with their historical newness as a form of politics. In line with this, theorists such as Homi Bhabha have read nationalism as a form of 'narration' (1990) that is able to achieve this purpose and to see the novel as one of the forms capable of mapping the imaginary world onto the political map of the nation-state (Anderson, 1991). As Timothy Brennan has put it:

> ❛ Socially, the novel joined the newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility. But it did much more than that. Its manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation. ❜
>
> (Brennan, 1990, p.49)

In these terms, the novel fulfilled the twin roles of creating a common culture and simultaneously of drawing the boundaries of the imaginative community who could occupy the national culture that it was partly responsible for creating. The narrative enclosures that the novel was able to effect have been seen as crucial to the growth of the genre, not least because the rise of the novel appeared in tandem with the spread of nationalism as the political model of international organisation.

However, if the novel can be understood as a literary form that emerged as a way of narrating the national connection between collective experience and place, the subsequent histories of both the nation and the novel suggest that this analysis must come under review. Notably, under the conditions of what has come to be called globalisation, the potential for a collective, nation-bound experience has observably declined as situated individuals inhabit overlapping and discontinuous 'imagined worlds' (Appadurai, 1996, p.32). It is worth also considering the enduringly permeable nature of the nation. For instance, Anderson persuasively argues that the revolutions in America and France made the nation a modular structure which could be adopted globally and laid across particular local conditions (Anderson, 1991). In this sense, the nation typifies the contradictory expression of universalism as particularism. Moreover, despite the accompanying rhetorical assertion of the uniqueness of the national culture, the interplay and commerce between nations inevitably led to cultural exchanges which complicated and altered localised nation-cultures. As Franco Moretti has argued, the novel clearly represents an example of this kind of exchange, and therefore, its role in producing a national culture needs to be reassessed. In 'Conjectures on World Literature' he seeks to disrupt a nationalist historiography of the novel by arguing that most *national* traditions of the novel follow a common pattern by which 'the modern novel first arises ... as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials' rather than 'as an autonomous development' (Moretti, 2000, p.58).

The force of Moretti's analysis springs from his attempt to use, as an analogy, Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory (p.55). This undoubtedly has its limitations, especially as he does not adequately explain how the inequalities of the economic world-system are mappable onto their literary counterparts. Wallerstein's use of the core-periphery dyad concentrates on the global division of labour into core and peripheral production processes and, while he concedes that it is possible to talk of core and peripheral zones as a kind of 'shorthand', he insists that it is to production processes and not states that these terms refer (Wallerstein, 2004, p.28). In translating this into literary terms Moretti appears to ignore this distinction, something that he implicitly acknowledges when he later states that the 'world-system model may be useful at other levels, but has no explanatory power at the level of form' (Moretti, 2003, p.79). To define a work of fiction as core or peripheral approaches Wallerstein's terminology from the opposite direction to Wallerstein himself: it construes the originating region as the

determining factor and runs the risk of handing power back to the institutional canonisers at the very moment that power is purportedly wrested from them.

Nevertheless, when Moretti sets out his vision of a world 'literary system' as 'one and unequal' he approaches world literature in a way that is reminiscent of the offshore. The offshore is the mark of a world(-system) of sovereign regimes whose independence is precisely a corollary of their mutually agreed autonomous singularity. Underwritten by the assumption that the state is autonomous and sovereign, individual states are able to exploit the inequalities of value *and* jurisdiction to compete for mobile capital. Where it exploits the offshore, capital's mobility is not purely neoliberal but also cosmopolitan because it depends upon the extension of rights, of belonging and citizenship, which are at the core of the cosmopolitan appeal to worldliness. In doing so it lays bare the truism that all states are not equal and, furthermore, neither are all citizens. Crudely, what the offshore reveals is the priority of class interests over national interests. Exploiting the global offshore, a class of rentier capitalists exists outside and between states while maintaining the illusion of national sodality in order to create the economic relations that permit them to do so. If the novel has traditionally been understood as an important component in maintaining this illusion, the transnational focus of the contemporary novel should be seen as something which diminishes its capacity to play this role. The benefit of thinking about the novel through the concept of the offshore is that it bolsters this shift by highlighting the manner in which a nationalist historiography draws attention away from the world relations that sustain it.

This is not only evident in the metacriticism of literary history, however, and a reading of individual novels with a transnational focus reveals both that the fictional depiction of the offshore is an important component in their ability to transcend the nation state as the fictional locale, and also that this depiction constitutes a space for critique of the offshore as a system of value exchange. Precisely this tendency is evident in the novel *Toyko Cancelled* by Rana Dasgupta which comprises thirteen stories told over a single night in an unnamed airport by a collection of stranded international travellers. The settings for these stories are diverse including, among other places, Argentina, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Nigeria, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States. The nationalities of the story-tellers are oblique but, it is implied, equally varied. The text can therefore be seen to typify a prevalent trend in contemporary fiction which increasingly tries to represent its

characters' ability to move between locations and demonstrates a diminishing concern for unity of place.[3] While *Tokyo Cancelled* can be understood as a novel that encapsulates the transnational character of contemporary living, it is important to note, too, that the individual stories frequently realise this through a representation of the offshore. Dasgupta offers stories that involve international call centres and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), international shipping and flags of convenience, and international free-trade or export processing zones. All of these involve the transfer of capital between jurisdictions in order to evade regulation and excise.

Although the depiction of such features of contemporary capitalism often appear incidental to the narrative, upon scrutiny they are central to the narrative structure of the stories in which they appear. For instance in the story 'The billionaire's sleep' the eponymous billionaire is cursed with chronic insomnia that renders him infertile. Attempting to circumvent his affliction he illegally procures a cloned child which triggers a series of fantastical events that culminate in a cataclysmic conclusion. Characteristic of the novel's mingling of fairytale and contemporary neoliberalism the story is made possible through the use of offshore activity. For instance, the cloning process is offshored to evade regulation and the source of the billionaire's wealth is an Indian call-centre that services American customers. While dressing up his offshore BPO in the rhetoric of national solidarity, the billionaire's 'factory' actually removes his workers from the Indian diurnal cycle and virtually transports them into the North American day (Dasgupta, 2006, p.56). The billionaire's insomnia becomes a metaphor for his workers' social displacement, leading the offshore to take the form of a malady. Similarly, in 'A Rendezvous in Istanbul' a Ukrainian woman must journey to rescue her lover who is magically confined to an impounded container ship in Marseille. However, alongside this there is another kind of magic, whereby the owners of the ship,

---

3   It is clearly not possible to give a thorough account of this tendency here. However, in addition to the substantial success of diasporic writers, whose fiction records a complex history of border-crossings, it is possible to detect a tendency for fiction to displace the nation as the centre for action. Recent examples might include, David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* (1999) or *Cloud Atlas* (2004), which interweave storylines from locations as disparate as East Asia, the Southern Pacific and Europe, Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (2009), which sprawls Europe and the Americas, suggesting necessary, but not determining, interconnections between place, or Aleksander Hemon's *The Lazarus Project* (2008), which draws parallels between East European exiles to the USA in 1908 and 2008 to narrate a journey across Eastern Europe that disrupts the unities of both time and place.

ostensibly based in the UAE, mysteriously disappear leaving only their bill for unpaid taxes. As with 'The billionaire's sleep' the substance of Dasgupta's modern fairytale is catalysed by the economic conditions of the offshore through which the fixed moorings of the nation-state are loosened by the ability of financial capital to evade its social responsibilities. The sailors in 'A rendezvous in Istanbul' must bear the cost of this evasion since they are held by the authorities in lieu of lost tax-revenue.

Potentially the most interesting exploration of the offshore occurs in the story 'The lucky ear cleaner'. Here, a young barber, Xiaosong, from Hunan Province in southern China, is persuaded by his mother to travel to Shenzhen in pursuit of modernity's proverbial lure of 'streets ... paved with gold' (p.338). Once in Shenzhen he is spotted by a business-owner and employed with increasingly more responsibility and sums of money far beyond his expectations. Suddenly inducted into the way that 'the laws of money' shape 'places, people, and things', Xiaosong finds himself able to 'make sense' of the city: 'its expanse of rocketing towers ... easily legible, like a simple bar graph whose unwritten axes and labels were each day more obvious and intuitive' (p.344). The description of the very townscape of Shenzhen as money at its most abstract suggests that Xiaosong's induction into global capitalism has allowed him to translate place into value. Yet what is most interesting about this sparse short story is the way that it illustrates how the offshore transforms the surface of the nation. This is most evident in the representation of Xiaosong's migration from rural to urban China which is rendered in terms more usually associated with international migration. When travelling between Hunan and Shenzhen he is smuggled as freight in ways that clearly resemble the conditions of international migration under contemporary neoliberalism. Even more suggestively, however, his employer castigates Xiaosong for casually 'walking around in the streets' without papers and secures him a 'temporary residence permit' to ensure he does not 'end up in some Custody and Repatriation Centre' (pp.342–3). It is clear that the scale of the nation is reconfigured here to resemble the supposedly *external* migrations between nations. To make sense of this it is necessary to return to the idea of the offshore as the bifurcation of the state, and to recognise its implications for Shenzhen as a Special Economic Zone. Originating in Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms of the 1980s, Shenzhen forms part of China's attempt to embrace neoliberal capitalism while still maintaining the central authority of the Communist Party. The jurisdiction of the People's Republic is fractured in the classic compromise between capital and sovereignty. Consequently, parts of China operate in the nature of foreign territories even while they are notionally still part of the contiguous nation-state. Xiaosong's movement between Hunan and Shenzen is conceptually a movement in and out of the nation: on- and offshore.

China's implementation of its 'one country, two systems' policy (Xiaoping, 1987) starkly illustrates the operation of the offshore. However, in more quotidian ways this model has become ubiquitous. A common form is the use of foreign-trade zone, or FTZs, in which companies are treated as positioned outside the nation for tax purposes while continuing to reside within the geographical borders of the nation and exploiting its local resources and labour to export capital abroad. In Lawrence Chua's novel *Gold by the Inch* this kind of offshore is given a prominent place as a means of underscoring the fractured nature of the nation and of questioning its claims to autonomy. In a highly theoretically-informed novel that includes, among other things, quotations from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967) on the dependency of post-colonial economies, the FTZ is given considerable symbolic status which resonates with the treatment of the nation in the novel as a whole.

The novel's narrator is emblematic of Chua's general critique. A naturalised American citizen of Malaysian descent who holds Thai nationality, and who has returned to Penang to visit his father's family, his national designation is complex. Much of the novel attempts to understand his precise position within particular national contexts while drawing the reader's attention to the manifold contradictions he embodies. For instance, the nations of Thailand and Malaysia are presented as composed of a patchwork of ethnic Chinese communities, the result of a series of historical migrations, while simultaneously being the source of globally dispersed ethnic identities which nurture ambivalent nostalgic feelings of belonging. When crossing the border from Malaysia to Thailand, the narrator is required to demonstrate his Thainess through the cultural shibboleths of Thai food: the evidence of nationality is his ability to eat sticky rice and *nam prik num*. Yet this picture of national cultural unity is undermined throughout by the narrator's ambivalent relation to Thailand's sex-tourism industry. On the one hand, his relationship with Jim, his American lover, is narrated in the language of colonial and neoliberal investment and debt (pp.54–8), and he is also able to impersonate and pass for a local prostitute (pp.114–20). On the other hand, he himself pursues Thong, a Thai boy who works in one of Bangkok's bars, while trying to believe that he is actually his lover.

Tellingly, even at the end of the novel, which coincides with the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the narrator's escape, which sees him return to the allegedly safe enclave of the US dollar-economy (p.205), appears contradictory because, as Nicky Marsh notes, it also marks the narrator's return to Jim, his abusive and exploitative lover (Marsh, 2011, p.310). In other words, even in his metaphorical imitation of mobile capital, the narrator ultimately reaffirms inequalities that arise from class privilege rather than national belonging.

National borders are treated as a highly malleable and permeable fabrication. Anticipating Palan's language, Chua describes the border as 'an apparition … a strategic fiction to break the world down into concepts, spaces, limitations' (Chua, 1998, p.96). This observation is not simply a product of the narrator's elite mobility since the novel also depicts a steady flow of Thai piece-workers travelling to work in the Malaysian timber industry. Significantly, these migrants are likened to 'packages [of] DNA or Pringles. Waiting to be brought across the Thai-Malaysian border' (p.145). This alignment of the workers' genetic code with a saleable product of mass consumption is in turn linked to the detritus that litters the train line between the two countries which comprises discarded food packaging as well as 'memory chips cast off from factories in the Free Trade Zone; produce of the fertile land' (p.146). In the same way that, in a mockery of agricultural tradition, computer parts produced in the FTZ are likened to the country's traditional crop of rubber, the factory itself implicates the Malaysian landscape in a contest for power. The notion that the border is a 'fiction' prompts the narrator to look up the road where the mosque, one of 'the monuments to Malaysia's official culture', sits opposite the FTZ factory that employs his cousin Martina (p.96). The narrator uses this pairing to suggest that the factory has superseded national time by replacing it with the rationalised 'schedule' of the working day: trapped within the 'territory' of this schedule, the workers' time is reduced to 'a splinter in the machinery of the nation' (p.96).

In their reading of *Gold by the Inch* alongside IMF discourses of neoliberal development, Joseph Medley and Lorrayne Carrol argue that international development exploits the compliance and passivity of rural Asian women to reconstitute them as the ideal workers of advanced capitalism. While the factory utilises their submissiveness to produce obedient workers it also inculcates in these women a sense of independence born of a liberal rhetoric of personal freedom and responsibility. The result of this is to irreparably detach these women from the very culture of village life which has produced their particular relations to work (Medley and Carrol, 2010, pp.293–4). Chua certainly addresses these questions, particularly through Martina's complaint about co-workers' attempts to '*copy men*' (Chua, 1998, pp.92–3; italics original). However, the real force of this in the novel is arguably the way that the neoliberal moulding of the population mirrors the moulding of the political landscape through the extra-territoriality of the offshore. What this suggests is that the offshore's role in enabling the mobility of capital also leads to the removal of resources, value, and even the indigenous population beyond the reach of the nation.

The connection between the disruption of the national space and inequalities within the nation is also central to Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger,* my final text for discussion. This novel can be seen to challenge the triumphalist vision of India as a front-runner in twenty-first-century global trade through its portrayal of India as divided between those who benefit from development and those who do not. This is partly achieved through a depiction of Indian rural communities that highlights the continuing privilege of a traditional land-owning elite. Significantly, in its exploration of India's new economy, the novel also frequently alludes, if somewhat fleetingly, to the role played by the offshore in sustaining the inequalities between different classes, or castes, of Indians. For instance, the narrator Balram Halwai draws a direct link between the political corruption of regional politics and the international economics of offshore finance. The local politician known as the Great Socialist is claimed 'to have embezzled one billion rupees from the Darkness, and transferred that money into a bank account in a small, beautiful country in Europe full of white people and black money' (Adiga, 2008, p.98). Balram's fracture of the offshore into the language of black and white evokes a theme of racial division which runs through the novel, where by whiteness is associated with wealth and privilege. Balram is obsessed with the skin disease vitiligo that can lead 'one of ours' to appear as *'An American!'* (p.123) and he urgently desires sexual congress with 'golden-haired women' in imitation of his master's privilege (p.232). However he also anticipates a 'century … of the *yellow* and the *brown* man' (p.7), whereby India and China supplant Europe and America as the dominant powers in world trade. Set against this, the racial division of the offshore neatly encapsulates its capacity to move value between nations as a way of insulating it from the poor. In particular, it conforms to Nicholas Shaxson's claim that

'capital flight' from Africa reveals that 'colonialism left through the front door, and came back through a side window' (Shaxson, 2011, p.1).

Such a reading helps us to interpret the most striking image of the offshore in the text, which takes the form of Balram's definition of outsourcing towards the end of the novel. Outsourcing, he explains, means 'doing things in India for Americans over the phone. Everything flowed from it – real estate, wealth, power, sex' (p.298). This definition is interesting for several reasons. First, the presentation of India as primarily a service economy runs contrary to Balram's desire to shed his status as a servant and become an independent entrepreneur. In this respect the idea that everything flows *from* outsourcing may imply the kinds of capital transfers so characteristic of the offshore. At the same time, the word *flow* conjures up an image of the more traditional source of Indian prosperity, namely the Ganges. The Ganges is subject to a sustained assault in the novel as part of the narrator's attempt to discredit the traditional symbols of Indian culture. Rather than the giver of life, the Ganges becomes 'the black river', a 'river of Death, whose banks are full of rich, dark, sticky mud whose grip traps everything that is planted in it, suffocating and choking and stunting it' (pp.14–5). While the river is here associated with the stranglehold of high-caste rural landowners on lower-caste initiative and mobility, outsourcing seems to Balram to offer an alternative economic model that promises to free Indians from the fixed sociogeography of both the river and of caste. However, it is debatable whether this really affords Balram the kinds of privilege he is hoping for. For instance, while a major motif of the narrative is Balram's attempt to escape from the Darkness (poor India) into the Light (wealthy India), his work in Bangalore takes place entirely at night. Recalling 'The billionaire's sleep' in Dasgupta's novel, this may suggest that Balram's apparent escape from India's traditional sociogeography merely sees him transported to another 'darkness', as the superimposed temporality of the American time-zone comes to govern the life of the Indian worker as a new symbol of inhospitable geography. In these terms, the novel's main themes of light and darkness, of caste, and of the Ganges become implicated in Balram's ambiguously naïve depiction of the offshore.

Read together, these three novels suggest the value of a critical application of the offshore. *Pace* Moretti's revision of Wallerstien's centre-periphery model, the offshore *can* serve as an explanatory structure for questions of form. To the degree that the offshore represents a concealed rupture in the surface of the nation-state, this can be read directly onto the formal attempts to represent the nation in contemporary fiction. In each of the novels the portrait of the nation that they provide is of a state that is internally divided. None of these texts seeks to remedy this condition in that they do not embody a 'compromise' that attempts to reconcile foreign and local material. Instead, they accentuate intra-national differences and inequalities by indicating their connection to capital's mobility. Since the idea of the nation cloaks the bifurcation of the state, critical readings that attend to the offshore highlight the willingness of the contemporary novel to forgo the nation as narrative limit. Like the nation, cosmopolitanism masks the internal inequalities of class because it presupposes an intra-national equivalence of citizenship. Offshore cosmopolitanism undermines cosmopolitanism's ethical claim by revealing how the cosmopolitan mobility of capital produces variable forms of citizenship that reinforce real divisions within the nation-state.

Bibliography

1   Abdelaziz, K. and Laessing, U. (2013) 'Tribal leader killed in Sudan's flashpoint abyei region', *Reuters*, 4 May, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/04/us-sudan-fighting-abyei-idUSBRE9430DF20130504?irpc=932 (accessed 31 May 2013).

2   Adiga, A. (2008) *The White Tiger*, London, Atlantic Books.

3   Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nations*, London, Verso.

4   Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

5   Buerk, R. (2006) 'Villagers left in limbo by border fence', *BBC News*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4653810.stm (accessed 26 January 2006).

6   Bhabha, H.K. (1990) 'Introduction: narrating the nation', in H.K. Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*, London, Routledge, pp.1–7.

7   Bolaño, R. (2009) *2666*, (trans. N. Wimmer), London, Picador.

8   Brennan, T. (1990) 'The national longing for form', in H.K. Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration*. London, Routledge, pp.44–70.

9   Brennan, T. (2001) 'Cosmo-theory', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol.100, no.3, pp.659–91.

10   Cameron, A. and Palan, R. (2004) *The Imagined Economies of Globalization*, London, Sage.

11 Chua, L. (1998) *Gold by the Inch*, New York, Grove Press.

12 Dasgupta, R. (2006) *Tokyo Cancelled*, London, Harper Perennial.

13 Desai, K. (2006) *The Inheritance of Loss*, London, Hamish Hamilton.

14 Dickinson, J. and Bailey, A.J. (2007) '(Re)membering diaspora: uneven geographies of Indian dual citizenship', *Political Geography*, vol.26, no.7, pp.757–74.

15 Doty, R.L. (1996) 'Immigration and national identity: constructing the nation', *Review of International Studies,* vol.22, no.3, pp.235–55.

16 Fanon, F. (1967) *The Wretched of the Earth*, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

17 Gellner, E. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

18 Hemon, A. (2008) *The Lazarus Project*, London, Picador.

19 Hobsbawm, E. (1992) *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

20 Kant, I. (2010) 'Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan purpose', in G.W. Brown and D. Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, Cambridge, Polity, pp.15–26.

21 Marsh, N. (2011) 'Desire and disease in the speculative economy: a critique of the language of crisis', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, vol.4, no.3, pp.301–14.

22 Medley, J. and Carrol, L.A. (2010) 'The hungry ghost: policy, capitalist transformation and laboring bodies in Southeast Asia', in L. Connell and N. Marsh (eds) *Literature and Globalization: A Reader.* London, Routledge, pp.282–97.

23 Mitchell, D. (1999) *Ghostwritten: A Novel in Nine Parts*, London, Sceptre.

24 Mitchell, D. (2004) *Cloud Atlas*, London, Sceptre.

25 Moretti, F. (2000) 'Conjectures on world literature', *New Left Review*, vol.1, pp.54–68.

26 Moretti, F. (2003) 'More conjectures', *New Left Review*, vol. 20, pp.73–81.

27 Nussbaum, M.C. (2010) 'Patriotism and cosmopolitanism', in G.W. Brown and D. Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, Cambridge, Polity, pp.155–62.

28 Palan, R. (2006) *The Offshore World: Sovereign Markets, Virtual Places and Nomad Millionaires*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

29 Shaxson, N. (2011) *Treasure Islands: Tax Havens and the Men Who Stole the World*, London, Bodley Head.

30 Sigmundsdóttir, A. (2011) 'Is Icelandic citizenship for sale?' *The Guardian*, 7 April, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/apr/07/icelandic-citizenship-golden-geese (accessed 8 April 2011).

31 United Nations (1945) *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, together with Interim Arrangements concluded by the Governments represented at the United Nations Conference on International Organization*, Berkeley, California University Press.

32 Wallerstein, I. (2004) *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.

33 Xiaoping, D. (1987) 'More on "one country, two systems"', *Beijing Review*, vol.30, no.14, pp.21–2.

TRICK QUESTIONS: COSMOPOLITAN HOSPITALITY

Eleanor Byrne

Abstract
This paper consists of two texts. The first explores the limits of cosmopolitanism in practice, taking as its subject the Life in the UK Citizenship Test*, inaugurated under the Labour Government in 2005. It argues that the test exemplifies the predicament of all attempts at cosmopolitan hospitality as unconditional welcoming, through a discussion of the relation between questioning and welcoming the stranger. Establishing the relationship between cosmopolitanism and hospitality as envisaged in Derrida's reading of Kant it asks what kind of cosmopolitan hospitality is either possible or desirable by exploring what Derrida calls the 'perversions' inherent in the structures of hospitality. It focuses on the concept of the 'trick questions' that the state asks the foreigner observed by Derrida in his reading of* The Apology of Socrates; *questions that seem to invite answers but foreclose the possibilities of a free response. The second text asks how this logic that Derrida identifies can be pushed or coaxed into new ways of addressing the perceived threats of 'unconditional' hospitality through a reading of 'unconditional hospitality' as queer in the work of Tove Jansson.*

TEXT 1

Unconditional Hospitality and Cosmopolitanism

❛ The intercourse, more or less close, which has been everywhere steadily increasing between the nations of the earth, has now extended so enormously that a violation of right on one part of the world is felt all over it. Hence the idea of a cosmopolitan right is no fantastical, high-flown notion of right, but a complement of the unwritten code of law – constitutional as well as international law – necessary for the public rights of mankind in general and thus for the realisation of perpetual peace. ❜

(Kant, [1795] 1972, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, p.142).

Q. 20. Is the statement below TRUE or FALSE? 'The UN aims to prevent war and to promote international peace and security'.

Life In The UK Citizenship Test, PRACTICE TEST 12. *Passing the Life in the UK Test, Official Practice Questions and Answers*, (2009).

In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant's seminal account of the principle of a cosmopolitanism that can achieve world peace, he defines the Third Definitive Article of Perpetual Peace: 'the rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality' (Kant, p.137). This is not philanthropy, bestowed by a generous or loving host, but a right, 'a right of visitation', insisted upon because of man's 'common right of possession on the surface of the earth on which, as it is a globe we cannot be infinitely scattered, and must in the end reconcile ourselves to existence side by side' (pp.137–8).

It is this 'right' of visitation that ensures the cosmopolitan project of perpetual peace, 'In this way far distant territories may enter into peaceful relations with one another. These relations may at last come under the public control of law and thus the human race may be brought nearer the realisation of a *cosmopolitan* constitution' (p.139, my emphasis). Hence, the right of visitation, the law of hospitality, leads to, or is a condition of, cosmopolitan interactions. Kant is clear about this specific form of 'right' as distinct from invasion or a takeover, citing the many contemporary colonial and imperial 'visitations' at theend of the eighteenth century that do not fall into

the above definition.[1] However, as Derrida notes in *On Cosmopolitanism* (his address to the International Parliament of Writers in Strasbourg in 1999), Kant's model of cosmopolitanism does not embrace unconditional hospitality – rather, he places two limits on it.[2] First, hospitality is not a right of residence, but a right of visitation; Kant limits the right of residence to that which is to be made dependent on treaties between states. Second, even though hospitality is a 'law', it depends on state sovereignty and as such it is controlled by the laws of the state and the state police (Derrida, 2001, p.22). For Derrida, Kant's project fails at this point because the principle of unconditional hospitality has already been discounted, and thinking unconditional hospitality, even if it cannot be enacted, must be part of any project for international peace.

Derrida's extensive discussions of hospitality as 'a contradictory conception, a thwarted conception or a contraception of waiting' (Derrida, 2000, p.00), have contributed to an important interrogation of the two contradictory impulses at work in the concept/ conception of hospitality. In 'Hostipitality' (2000) he notes that hospitality is an aporia. To offer hospitality is to 'extend an invitation', but 'radical hospitality consists in receiving without invitation' – thus even the existence of an invitation enables some limit to be placed on hospitality. Hospitality has to protect itself from itself, auto-immunize itself in some way. Hence, in Derrida's model, unconditional or pure hospitality is always impossible.

❛ Hospitality gives and takes more than once in its own home. It gives, it offers, it holds out, but what it gives, offers, holds out, is the greeting which comprehends and makes or lets come into one's home, folding the foreign other into the internal law of the host which tends to begin by dictating the law of its language and its own

1   'But to this perfection compare the inhospitable actions of the civilized and especially of the commercial states of our part of the world. The injustice which they show to lands and peoples they visit (which is equivalent to conquering them) is carried by them to terrifying lengths. America, the lands inhabited by the Negro, the Spice Islands, the Cape, etc., were at the time of their discovery considered by these civilized intruders as lands without owners, for they counted the inhabitants as nothing. In East India (Hindustan), under the pretense of establishing economic undertakings, they brought in foreign soldiers and used them to oppress the natives, excited widespread wars among the various states, spread famine, rebellion, perfidy, and the whole litany of evils which afflict mankind', Kant ([1795] 1972) p.139.
2   Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London, 2001) is the text of the lecture he gave following an invitation to talk about their call for 'open cities' or 'cities of refuge' for asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants.

acceptation of the sense of words, which is to say, its own concepts as well. 〞

(Derrida, 2000, p.7)

So although hospitality is owed to the other if they are understood as a stranger, the category of stranger produces the notions of family, nation, state, and citizenship by which the other/stranger is measured and interpellated and made strange. This 'knowing nothing of' the stranger is accommodated by conditional hospitality through the necessity of questioning.

The Foreigner Question: Taking the Citizenship Test

❛ The foreigner is, first of all, foreign to the legal language in which the duty of hospitality is formulated, the right to asylum, its limits, norms, policing, etc. He has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own. This personage imposes on him translating into their own language and that's the first act of violence. 〞

(Derrida, 'Foreigner Question: Coming from Abroad/From the Foreigner' (*Question d'etranger: venue de L'etranger*), in Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.15).

❛ Many foreign people wish to enjoy the freedoms that being a British citizen brings. They want to eat every day at a different Hungry Horse Inn and apply for their own Boots Advantage Card. But you cannot become a British Citizen unless you have extensive knowledge of our traditions. Therefore I have put together this quiz to see if you are ready yet. This is my improved version of the citizenship test, which I found to have many mistakes in it, such as incorrectly stating that Wales is part of the UK.

This test is multiple choice. Please mark your answers on your computer screen using an HB pencil. You have a certain amount of time of my choosing to take this test. If you make a mistake during the test *or wish to ask any sort of question at all* it will be held against you. 〞

(emphasis added, 'Spoof Citizenship Quiz', *Come Fly With Me*, BBC Comedy Series)

In 'Foreigner Question', the first essay in *Of Hospitality*, Derrida recognizes that central to the notion of the foreigner is a kind of questioning, such that the foreigner 'is' a question.

❛ Before being a question to be dealt with, before designating a concept, a theme, a problem, a program, the question of the foreigner is a question of the foreigner, addressed *to* the foreigner […] as though the foreigner were being-in-question, the very question of being-in-question, the question-being or being-in-question of the question. 〞

(Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.3)

If the foreigner 'is' a question, or produces questions, and puts the laws of the state into question, this is because he is what Derrida refers to as a 'foreigner-son', one who challenges the law of the father, the host and the family from within, as a family member. Such an identity is intolerable, dangerous even, for the invited guest to whom hospitality is offered.

❛ The Foreigner fears that he will be treated as mad (manikos). He is afraid of being taken for a son-foreigner-madman. "I am therefore fearful that what I have said may give you the opportunity of looking on me as someone deranged who is upside down all over, a crazy person who reverses everything from head to toe, from top to bottom, who puts all his feet on his head, inside out, who walks on his head." 〞

(Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.9)

The risks of being treated as mad, being seen as someone 'turned upside down' who will disrupt and threaten the laws of the state as they stand, threaten the guest even as hospitality is offered. The foreigner must be received, and as such must be questioned; once they have responded, they become subject to the law, having presented themself as subjects of the law. Hospitality consists then, not in welcoming, but in interrogating the new arrival. 'What is your name? Tell me your name, what should I call you, I who am calling on you, I who want to call you by your name? What am I going to call you? It is also what we sometimes tenderly ask children and those we love' (Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.31).

The *Life in the UK* test is a computer-based test that constitutes one of the requirements for anyone seeking Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK or naturalization as a British Citizen. It consists of 24 multiple-choice questions, lasts for 45 minutes, costs £50 to take, and is based on an official publication, *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*. There are no limits to the amount of times one may take it. If one passes it, with a pass mark of 18 or above correct answers one has fulfilled one aspect of the legal requirements for anyone seeking Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK, or naturalization as a British Citizen. The *Life in the UK* test was first introduced by the Labour Government,

under the steerage of then Home Secretary, David Blunkett. It became a requirement under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. A pass in the test fulfills the requirements for 'sufficient knowledge of life in the United Kingdom', requirements that were introduced for naturalization in November 2005, and for settlement in April 2007.[3]

All questions involve ticking a box, and there are four types of question: multiple choice where four answers are offered and the correct one is to be ticked; a single statement which the candidate has to state is either true or false; two very similar statements which the candidate has to choose between and identify the correct one; and a second set of multiple choice questions where two of the four options need to be chosen as correct answers to the initial question.[4]

Its scope and mode of questioning, notwithstanding a will to hospitality on the part of the Labour government under which it was instituted, suggests a level of compliance with what Slavoj Zizek would identify as the systemic violence being produced in the act of questioning by the state.[5] The 'foreigner' is constructed as such, not only because of being required to answer a set of questions, by ticking a box, not actually speaking in the other's language or writing in it, but demonstrating competence in reading the questions and interpreting the textbook in which the correct answers can be found. The textbook itself is the source of information for correctly selecting answers, rather than the knowledge one might have gained from a period of life that was lived in the UK. What are these questions if not the 'trick questions' that Derrida identifies as the prosopopeia of the law as it speaks to the 'foreigner'?

❛ Far from himself interrogating or appealing to the law and rights of the city, he is himself questioned, apostrophized by the laws. They address themselves to him to ask him questions, but false questions, simulated questions, rhetorical questions. *Trick questions*. All he can reply is what the Laws, in their prosopopeia wish and expect him to reply. It is the famous

prosopopeia of the Laws in the *Crito*, which you should read closely for yourselves. ❜

(emphasis added; Derrida and Dufourmantelle, 2000, p.31)

Trick Questions:

Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE?

"The UK football team is very important to British People"

(Practice Test 10, *Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers,* 2009).

Q 16. Is the statement below TRUE or FALSE?

"It is legal to carry a small amount of cannabis"

(Practice Test 11, *Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers*, 2009).

Q. 22 Is the statement below TRUE or FALSE?

"It is common for employers to ask women to leave their jobs when they marry"

(Practice Test 5, *Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers,* 2009).

Where does Father Christmas come from?
Lapland
Iceland
The North Pole
('Mock Citizenship Test', based on the content of *Life in the UK*, BBC News, 16 June 2005)

Q17. Which of these statements is correct?
A: The women who campaigned for more rights for women were called Suffragettes.
B: The women who campaigned for more rights for women were called Huguenots.

(Practice Test 12, *Life in the United Kingdom: Official Practice Questions and Answers*, 2009).

The Public House is an important part of British life. What temperature does it have to be before it is acceptable for a man to take his top off while having a pint outside a pub?

(*Come Fly With Me*, BBC Comedy Series, Spoof Citizenship Quiz)

Q10. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE?

'The Government can control what is written in newspapers in the UK'

(Practice Test 13, *Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers*, 2009, p.105)

---

3   See Mark Oliver (2002) 'Citizenship Tests for Immigrants', *The Guardian*, 7 February, http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2002/feb/07/immigration. immigrationandpublicservices.
Details of the current test can be found online at http://www.ukcitizenshiptest.co.uk/.
4   *Passing the Life in the UK Test, Official Practice Questions and Answers* (2009).
5   'There is what I call 'systemic' violence, or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems', Slavoj Zizek (2008) p.1.

Result:

You have learnt a small amount about our country and it is possible that other foreign people will be fooled but not us. Your foreignness looms to us larger than Big Ben through the morning mist. I suggest you return to your country and call yourself 'Lord Chimneysweep' as this is the nearest to being British you will ever get.

('Spoof Citizenship Quiz', *Come Fly With Me*, BBC Comedy Series)

The *Life in the UK* Test might initially appear to be the last place that one may look for an example of either cosmopolitanism or hospitality. Indeed, beyond the absurdities of juxtapositions of real and satirical test questions lie other concerns about the content of the official *Life in the UK* book beyond the scope of this discussion, but which have been addressed elsewhere.[6] Certainly, as an intervention into immigration debates and cynical, media-fanned hysteria about 'foreignness' in Britain, the test appears to be conceived to 'answer' a rightwing political agenda focusing on the perceived 'assault' on supposed traditions and customs that have dominated public representations of migrants in the second half of the twentieth century. The test accommodates this narrative by acceding to the idea that one must 'know' something in order to be British, but it also uses a dissident cosmopolitan sleight of hand to insist that the knowledge required is not of a subjective account of essentialist national identity, but that of one's own rights under British law.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the makeup of the test is in the content and scope of the questions asked, which focus substantially on the law, such as the rules surrounding the use of a television license in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), the legal age for child labour, how to register a birth and open a bank account, how to apply for work, obtain a National Insurance number, or claim Job Seeker's Allowance. *Life*

---

6   As Mehdi Hassan notes (*New Statesman*, 4 July 2012), the textbook itself performs an act of rewriting history: 'It is also worth bearing in mind that the questions posed in the current citizenship test are based on the Home Office pamphlet *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*. This is a deeply disturbing document that rewrites British colonial history and presents a skewed and reactionary view of the past. Consider the following passage: "For many indigenous peoples in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere, the British Empire often brought more regular, acceptable and impartial systems of law and order than many had experienced under their own rulers, or under alien rulers other than Europeans ... Public health, peace and access to education can mean more to ordinary people than precisely who are their rulers"'.

in the UK includes a 25-page 11,000 word introduction to British history written by Professor of Political Theory, Sir Bernard Crick. Crick, a socialist, had previously been adviser to Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock in the 1980s and was invited to chair the citizenship committee by his former student David Blunkett.[7] Crick was also the author of the 1998 report on teaching citizenship in schools that resulted in the introduction of Citizenship as a part of the English National Curriculum in 2002.

Life in the UK appears to have been written as a guide to one's rights in the UK, one that figures the law as something that will protect prospective citizens from exploitation, or clarify areas of the law that prevent infringements of human rights. As such it is a sheep in wolf's clothing, a text working hard to avoid prescriptions about Britishness, and to offer practical information for those settling in the UK. A BBC news report on Crick's appointment offers the following appraisal of the rationale for the test.

Professor Crick has played down suggestions that the test was a hurdle designed to weed out applicants for citizenship. He said it would focus more on practical issues about living in the UK. "At the moment when immigrants come in they don't receive ... any information on life in Britain. For example, simple things like hospitals are free, the police don't beat you up if you go to them for help, you don't go to hospital without going to your GP first". Such things could "cause a great deal of confusion, problems for the immigrant and, of course, for some people in the host communities," he added. He said the "main thrust" of his committee's work would be to create a syllabus for English language teachers that weaves in "some of this content".[8]

This aim is reflected in the type of questions below:

Q 13. If you are homeless or have problems with your landlord, you can get help at which TWO of the following places?

Shelter
The Citizen's Advice Bureau
The Government
The Police

(*Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers*, Practice Test 12)

---

7   See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2248319.stm (10 September 2002).
8   See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2248319.stm (10 September 2002).

Q 6. Is the statement below TRUE or FALSE?

'Your employer can dismiss you for being a Trade Union member'.

(Passing the Life in the UK Test: Official Practice Questions and Answers, Practice Test 9)

At the time of the launching of this test various media paid critical attention to it. The BBC News website producing a mock test based on the information contained in the official government publication. Channel 4 subsequently used the official test to open their version of a multicultural documentary, under the provocatively titled series, *Make Bradford British*, that brought a multicultural range of British citizens into a *Big Brother*-style house to discuss their views about identity and nation. Channel 4 provides a version of the test on the web pages associated with this programme.[9] A spoof test is also available on the website of the comedy series *Come Fly With Me*.[10] The test's attractiveness to the satirist not only reflects the dynamic and conflicted ways in which Britishness might be understood to exist or not, both in its relation to other internal national differences, and in relation to the multiplicities of behaviours that might be seen to represent this elusive identity. There is always already something ridiculous about the test: as the Bradford programme makes clear, it is perfectly possible to fail the test and already *be* British. Knowledge of, say, the percentage of the British population that live in Scotland has never been a defining criteria for qualifying to be British, even for the population of Scotland. The test cannot test the thing it claims to.

The striking difference between most of the mock versions of the test and the official test is that the official test almost meticulously avoids the question of culture as far as it is able, with some minor references to customs and Royalty, and finds itself turning to questions of law, rights, responsibilities, with a very light sprinkling of history, which largely focuses on the history of migrancy to the UK and the gaining of voting rights. One might expect this from a document authored by a Left leaning government, and indeed it might arguably be well paired with Danny Boyle's Opening Ceremony for the Olympics in London 2012. Like Boyle's ceremony, which celebrated Britishness whilst invoking a radical political tradition, Crick's text offers a radical history of Britain from below, a text which privileges subaltern perspectives and insists on

the good citizen being one who is well informed of their rights and protected from exploitation.

Notwithstanding the laudable aims of the text and test, to embed crucial information that would offer support to a migrant in Britain, the test remains bound up by its function of questioning the foreigner. In doing so it cannot avoid the paradoxical logic of hospitality. The first edition also included an introduction by Bernard Crick welcoming immigrants to the UK, expressing the hope that they apply for citizenship, and stating the country's need for both skilled and unskilled migrants. In the second edition, this introduction was removed. Nor are candidates tested on the first chapter, which covers British history. It is this lack that has more recently been attacked by Conservative Home Secretary Theresa May, who announced plans to redraft the Labour Party authored test in favour of an emphasis on 'knowledge of traditional British culture and history', what she terms a 'patriotic guide'[11]. May's revisions of the test finally undo what I would argue is its cosmopolitan gesture of offering citizenship through an emphasis on rights, rather than knowing an always politically directed 'British' syllabus.

TEXT 11

Pure Hospitality: A Queer Moment?

There is no hospitable house. There is no house without doors and windows. But as soon as there are doors and windows it means someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality. There must be a threshold.

(Derrida, 2000, 'Hostipitality', pp.70–71)

A curious system of thought, or of language, or of social organization (in fact all of them at once) is implicit in the word parasite. There is no parasite without a host. The host and the somewhat sinister or subversive parasite are fellow guests beside the food, sharing it. On the other hand, the host is himself the food, his substance consumed without recompense, as when one says, 'He is eating me out of house and home'.

(Miller, 1977, p.439)

9   See, *Make Bradford British* (first aired 1 March 2012), http://www.channel4.com/programmes/make-bradford-british/articles/whos-who.

10   See http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/comeflywithme/citizenship/quiz.shtml.

11   For a full discussion of this issue, see Thom Brooks (2013) *The 'Life in the United Kingdom' Citizenship Test: Is It Unfit for Purpose?* Durham, Durham University, http://thombrooks.info/Brooks_citizenship_test_report.pdf.
For a report on Theresa May's introduction of the revised test see also http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jul/01/uk-migrants-patriotic-citizenship-test (1 July 2012).

(But what of the house with the key under the mat, with the door on the latch?)

My beloved parasites, those two lives that ate me out of house and home, ate my food both at the same time and before me, at my invitation without being invited, demand the story again. *'Read the one where Stinky eats Moomin's house'.*

In Tove Jansson's Moomin comic strip, one story, *Moomin and the Brigands*, stands out in relation to the problematics of unconditional hospitality. It opens with the child/animal hero Moomintroll in the middle of a crisis where he is trying to maintain his position as host to an extensive range of guests who have already (always?) taken over his home. *Moomin and the Brigands* opens with Moomin's house overrun by 'friends and relations', conversing with his friend Sniff and struggling to tell his houseguests that he wants them to leave.

Moomin: Oh, Sniff! I have 15 guests and relations in my house! It has given me an awful headache!

Moomin: It's so difficult to tell your guests that you like to be in your own bed sometimes …

Sniff: Turn them out you idiot!

Moomin: But that would be ill-mannered! It's so much easier and nicer to say yes!

Sniff: Be a Man, Moomin! Go and tell them to leave at once.

Moomin's ambiguous situation as a child/creature who lives alone in his large house militates against the possibility of his being a 'man' and asserting the rights of the host. One might suggest that he illustrates the predicament of the unconditional host, who attempts to meet every request from his guests, but asks nothing in return, and who cannot control who enters his home. Moomin arrives home from his visit to complain to Sniff only to find a mass of 'poor relations' at the door. He tells them he already has house-guests and they will have to sleep in the drawers. Nonetheless, the 'poor relations' stream in through the open front door.

'Poor Relations: No Cocktails?

Moomin: Excuse me I'll sell the mat and buy some …'.

The poor relations refuse to sleep in the drawers and Moomin builds them all beds. Moomin then goes outside to sleep in a hammock strung up in a tree. The next day Sniff persuades Moomin to put a hosepipe down the chimney to flood them out, but the guests float around playing on their beds having fun. Sniff then enters the house as a 'guest' wearing a large sign saying 'Danger Mumps!' But all the guests claim they have already had mumps. Sniff then persuades Moomin to go down into the cellar and make noises to scare the guests. They come bursting into the cellar brandishing weapons, attacking Moomin, until he has to shout 'DON'T! I'm Moomin. Don't murder your poor host'.

Figure 1. Don't murder your poor host!
Reproduced by kind permission of Bull's Press, Stockholm.

In despair Moomin and Sniff go to search out Stinky, a creature that no one can stand, who they invite to come and stay to 'stink out' the guests. This has the desired effect and all the guests leave in a hurry. Moomin climbs into his own bed with Stinky lodged upstairs but Moomin is awoken by noises and parts of the ceiling falling in. Stinky has started eating the house. Stinky requests salt to accompany the chairs he is eating and Moomin complies. Moomin offers cheese, pancakes and ice-cream as a substitute, but Stinky insists the only thing that tastes good is the house itself.

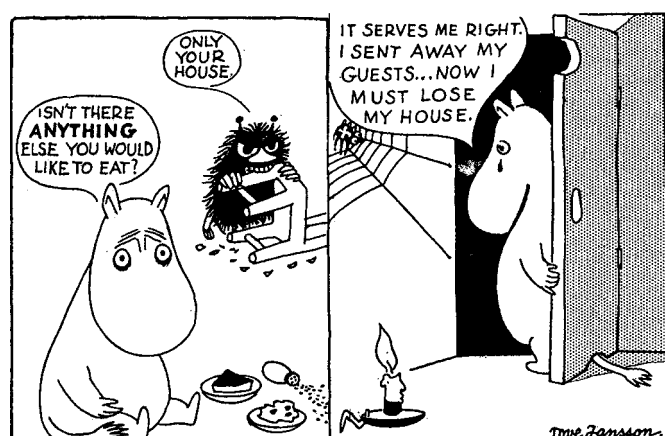Moomin: Isn't there ANYTHING else you would like to eat?

Figure 2. Stinky starts eating the house.
Reproduced by kind permission of Bull's Press, Stockholm.

Stinky: Only your house

Moomin: It serves me right. I sent away my guests… now I must lose my house.

Moomin understands his fate to be a suitable punishment for his failure to provide 'pure' hospitality. Unhomed and shamed, Moomin then has to begin his adventures as his house has been entirely eaten: he is, in a phrase emphasized by J.H. Miller, eaten 'out of house and home' (Miller, 1977, p.439).

Figure 3. Moomin has to leave home as Stinky eats the house. Reproduced by kind permission of Bull's Press, Stockholm.

Up to this point Jansson's story could be said to adhere to Derrida's model of the aporia of unconditional hospitality, where imposing no limits on the hospitality you offer, not policing the borders or the threshold of your house and not imposing any conditions on the behaviour of the guests opens up the danger of being overrun, or murdered.

> If I am unconditionally hospitable … I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of ANY other. Is this possible? I don't know. If however, there is pure hospitality … it should consist in this opening without horizon, without horizon of expectations, an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be. It may be terrible because the newcomer may be a good person or may be the devil; but if you exclude the possibility that the newcomer is coming to destroy your house … there is no hospitality … For unconditional hospitality to take place you have to accept the risk of the other coming and destroying the place, initiating a revolution, stealing everything or killing everyone.
>
> (Derrida, 2000, p.31)

In Derrida's examples, the unconditional form of hospitality risks certain things, 'revolution, stealing, and killing' (p.31). This implies a model of 'safe' conditional

hospitality that is opposed to the risky unconditional one; unconditional hospitality can only be considered dangerous if conditional hospitality is somehow safe. Derrida's deconstructive gesture is to identify a binary opposition and reverse it in order to reveal the violent hierarchy it contains. The deconstructive moment demonstrates the ways the opposition contradicts itself, or the way an assertion undermines itself.

Yet while Jansson's story demonstrates the humour of Moomintroll's 'pure' hospitality being impossibly foolish and self-defeating, self-annihilating even, it is also this 'queer' act on Moomin's part that produces all his subsequent narratives, adventures and his arrival at an identity based on reciprocity and love in the closing section of the story. Moomin's wide eyes, ungendered body, hippopotamus-like face and distended stomach suggest he is pregnant with the possibility of becoming himself. His enacting the unconditionality of hospitality, one that asks no questions of the 'poor relations', is arguably close to Derrida's description of unconditional hospitality as endangering everything, as the house itself is destroyed. But for Moomin it could be viewed as a 'necessary disaster' that inaugurates his narrative. Furthermore, if Moomin might be fruitfully read as an emerging queer subject, then the 'disaster' of his own beginning, from a hetero-normative point of view, would be the more productive disaster of being himself as a queer subject.[12]

As Peggy Kamuf notes, the value of understanding the impossibility of pure hospitality at a conceptual level is the ways in which this enables thinking about the kinds of hosting which take place every day, i.e. welcoming a guest into your house. It enables interrogation of the political limits placed on hospitality as it is practised by states, organisations or institutions. 'To think the unconditionality of such concepts is not at all to remove thought from the practical experiences we wish to call hospitality, gift, foreignness or justice' (Kamuf, 2006, p.207). The fact that unconditional hospitality is 'impossible' in practice does not prevent us from entertaining our guests in the name of hospitality, but for Derrida a pure hospitality has never 'happened'.

The paradox of hospitality is that it is only offerable by asserting your own rights to hospitality, as head of the house and with control over the laws and limits to the ways in which the guest must behave. However, a queer reading of Jansson's story might suggest an intervention could be made in this deconstructive

---

12   For a critical account of the relationship between failure and queer subjectivity see Judith Halberstam (2011), which theorises alternatives to conventional understandings of success in a heteronormative capitalist society.

model. Moomin is not able to claim the status of the host, as there is no head of the house, so hospitality becomes unconditional, even though Moomin lives in the house. Only when threatened physically by his guests does he claim to control the goings on in the house: 'Don't kill me! I'm your "host"'. To an extent Moomin's model of 'hosting', as a failed host who cannot contain his guests in any way, appears to conform to Derrida's warnings. No-one intervenes to clear his house: there is no master of the house, there is no family, no circle of friends yet, except his confidante, Sniff. There is no authority figure, and although Sniff tells Moomin to 'be a man', Moomin is not one and is without his parents or any kind of paternal authorisation. He offers unconditional hospitality, a queer unauthorized hospitality, which is what Derrida would call the 'Law' of hospitality rather than the one based on any laws that might govern how hospitality is actually offered that depend upon state and city laws.

As Moomin is not a 'man', but I would argue a queer child/animal, he simply will not be able to host. In his critical accounts of conditional hospitality Derrida clearly demonstrates that hospitality is both given and received, authorized and authored, exclusively by men. He suggests that 'It's the familial despot, the father, the spouse, and the boss, the master of the house who lays down the laws of hospitality.' (Derrida, 2000, p.149), leading Penelope Deutscher to explore Derrida's interest in women's traditional role as facilitating relations between men (2005).

Indeed, it is most specifically in his writing on hospitality that Derrida considers the historical role of women in traditional exchanges, transactions and social bonds between men, when: 'in the name of hospitality all the men are *sent* a woman' (Derrida, 2000, p.155). The contexts discussed in *Of Hospitality,* in which women are the means through which hospitality is exchanged between men, include biblical stories in which the woman is figured as the wife who brings food, or the daughter or concubine provided sexually to save the guest – as in the tale of Lot's daughters, and again in the tale of the pilgrim on Mount Ephraim in Judges (pp.151, 153).

In the name of hospitality the host must protect his guest at all costs when that guest is threatened from outside the house, even at the expense of protecting his own family members. In the case of the tale of Lot's daughters, the meaning of this hospitality is closely aligned to the affirmation that hospitality between men is homosocial, not homosexual – that is to say, the men who demand access to the guest in the text Derrida discusses are the Sodomites, seeking to 'penetrate' or 'outrage' the man inside the house who is a guest. Lot, the male host, refuses this request at the expense of the women inside the home, by offering his daughters to the men. They are then 'used' by the male crowd outside as a substitute for their original request for the male guest. A dominant reading of this tale is that it attempts to illustrate the aporia of hospitality, the host who goes to any lengths to look after his guest finds he has sacrificed his daughters; the host has become hostage. But he does not offer *himself*, so although he might be figured as 'hostage', he manages to retain some purchase on hosting through the sacrifice of female guests or family members. The particularity of the threat to the guest from sodomy, might shift our reading from perceiving this as a 'cautionary tale' about the limits of hospitality that relate to not being able to protect one's daughters, to one in which the daughters are expended in order to preserve the homosocial relations that underpin hospitality.

This scenario rehearses the threat to the authority of the host that is caused by the host's own desire for the guest. It threatens the host's reputation, as one who allows the guest to stay, who invites and beseeches the guest to stay. The host protects this reputation in the tales that Derrida cites, by showing that the relation between himself and his host is not homosexual and that such a possibility is excluded, since a condition of 'conditional' hospitality is that it must preserve heterosexual relations. Nothing is clearer in the two accounts that Derrida offers. Hospitality must stand against homosexual desire. It must be understood to preserve that limit at all costs, such as through the rape and violation of women in preference to a sexual encounter between men. The man who takes another into his house as a guest must demonstrate he is not seeking or open to a sexual relation with him, nor will he expose him to a relation with other men. As Mark Westmoreland argues 'It would be assumed that the host secures the house in order to "keep the outside out"' (Westmoreland, 2008, p.6). In the two stories offered by Derrida, the men are outside the house demanding the guest be brought out to them, but one might read this as a kind of figural externalizing of the potential for sexual relations to take place inside the house.

In Jansson's text this tension between hospitality as underpinning heterosexual relations or introducing the perverse/queer is perhaps held in the fabric of the house itself. As the house is dismantled by Stinky, the roof and walls, the doorway and threshold disappear, the house it 'turned inside out', as bit by bit the guest eats it, so that he 'hosts' it inside himself. One of the things that unconditional hospitality seems to do is to

threaten to undo the law, in this case (and all cases) the law of the father. The appeal of unconditional hospitality to the emerging queer subject is the route it offers that subjectivity away from the very real physical dangers of guaranteeing homosocial hosting.

As a queer account of subject formation, does Janssen's story tell us what Derrida gestures towards, that hospitality in its conditional form is only available to men in a hetero-normative framework – that the roles of host and guest both, have gendered positions that are barely visible, but ones that are critically important to this model? For Jansson, Stinky's appetite and Moomin's facilitation of it inaugurates her storytelling. It is Moomintroll's first adventure. His house is eaten by his guest, and it is this staging of the ingesting that produces the queer aesthetic of the Moomins.

Bibliography

1   *Come Fly With Me*, BBC Comedy Series, http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/comeflywithme/citizenship/quiz.shtml.

2   Derrida, J. (2001) *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, London and New York, Routledge.

3   Derrida, J. (2000) 'Hostipitality', *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, vol.5, iss.3, pp.3–18.

4   Derrida, J. with Dufourmantelle, A. (2000) *Of Hospitality*, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

5   Deutscher, P. (2005) 'Derrida's impossible genealogies', *Theory and Event*, vol.8, no.1, n.p.

6   Halberstam, J. (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.

7   Jansson, T. (2006) 'Moomin and the brigands', in *Moomin: The Complete Tove Jansson Comic Strip Volume 1*, Montreal, Drawn and Quarterly.

8   Kamuf, P. (2006) 'From now on', *Epoche*, vol.10, no.2, pp.203–20.

9   Kant, I. ([1795] 1972) *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (trans. M. Campbell Smith), New York and London, Garland.

10 *Life in the United Kingdom, Official Practice Questions and Answers* (2009), London, TSO.

11 Miller, H.J. (1977) 'The critic as host', *Critical Inquiry*, vol.3, no.3, pp.439–47.

12 'Mock Citizenship Test', *BBC News, 16 June 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4099770.stm*.

13 Westmoreland, M.W. (2008) 'Interruptions: Derrida and hospitality', *Kritike*, vol.2, no.1, pp.1–10.

14 Zizek, S. (2008) 'Introduction: The tyrant's bloody robe', in *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, London, Profile Books, pp.1–7.

GOOGLE PAINTINGS

John Timberlake

The Google Paintings are sketches in oil paints on prepared paper, mounted under glass. Over a period of two years, I conducted a 'Grand Tour' via Google Earth, visiting locations across the globe of topical and newsworthy interest, and making paintings of what I saw. Given the absence of skies in Google Earth, I composed cloudscapes appropriate to the mood and occasion.

These paintings were made between 2007 and 2009, and were first exhibited in the group exhibition *Beyond the Picturesque*, curated by Frank Maes and Steven Jacobs, at the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium (April – August 2009).

All images courtesy Galerie des Petits Carreaux, Paris.

Pointer 42° 45' 28.72" N   0° 32' 58.25" W   elev 2133m   Eye alt 2.69km
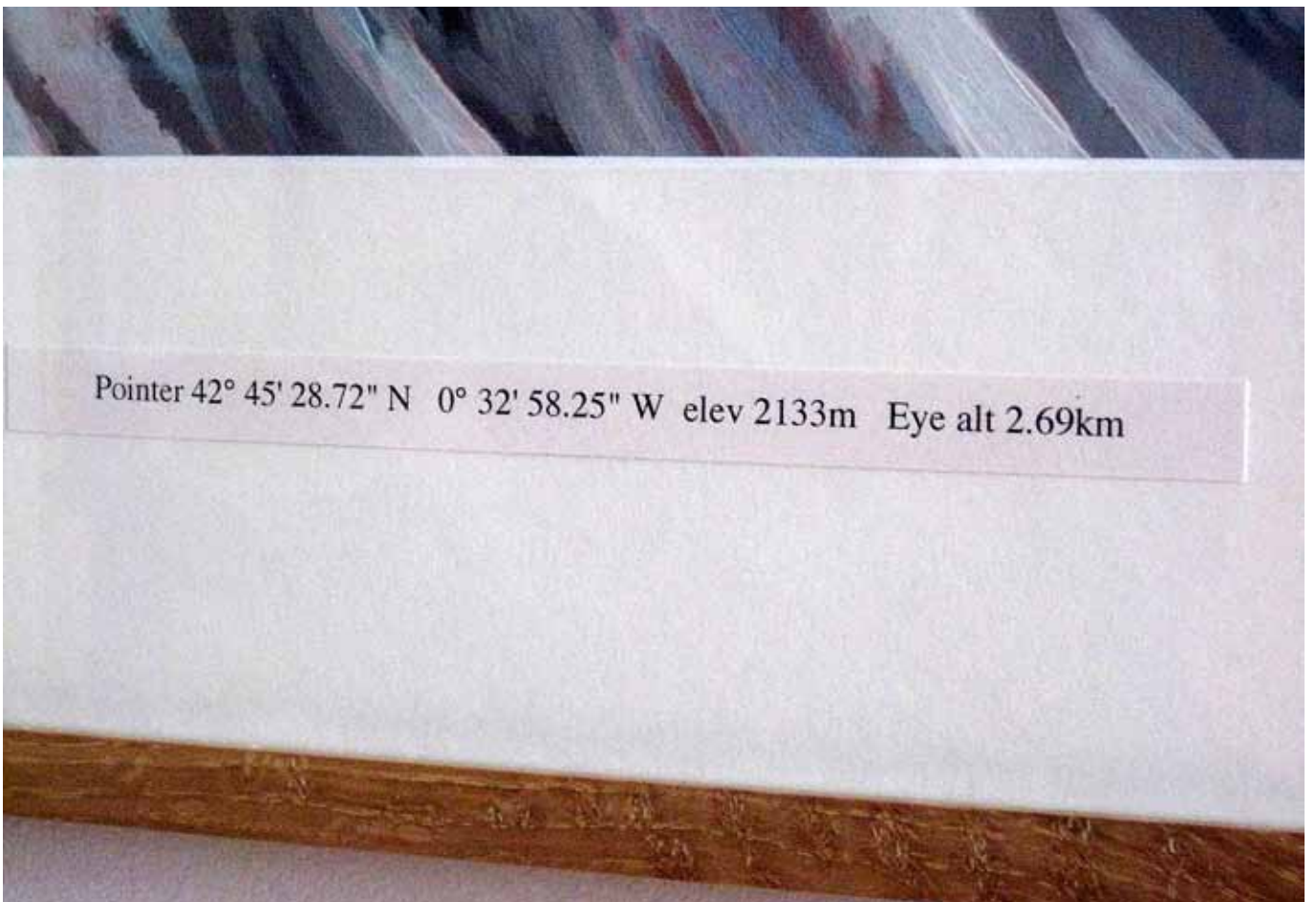
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Eleanor Byrne, Manchester Metropolitan University
Ellie Byrne is Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Literature at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Her research and teaching covers twentieth century British and Postcolonial literature and theory. She has written on Salman Rushdie, intersections between postmodernism and postcolonial theory and postcolonial archives. Recent publications include a monograph, Homi K. Bhabha, (Palgrave, 2009), 'Texting Obama' Comparative American Studies, vol.10, Double issue 2–3 (Co-Editor), 2012. She is currently researching a monograph on the representation of Hawaii in contemporary literature and culture

Liam Connell, University of Winchester
Liam Connell lectures in English at the University of Winchester. His research interests include contemporary literature and globalisation, and cultural representations of illegal migration. He is currently collaborating on a larger research project on the offshore in relation to finance, labour and the law.

Renate Dohmen, University of Louisiana
Renate Dohmen teaches art history at the University of Louisiana. She has written on the global turn, the figure of the amateur artist, nineteenth-century album culture and the exhibition culture of British India. Her book *Encounters Beyond the Gallery: Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference* is forthcoming from I.B. Tauris.

Rachel Garfield, University of Reading
Rachel Garfield is an artist whose work is engaged in portraiture in film and video, the role of lived relations in the formation of subjectivity and Jewish Identity. She lectures in Fine Art and the History of Art at the University of Reading.

Marsha Meskimmon, University of Loughborough
Marsha Meskimmon is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History at Loughborough University. Her research focuses on contemporary art, feminist theories of subjectivity and the affective dimensions of ethics. She is the author of *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics* (2003) and *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (2010).

Berthold Schoene, Manchester Metropolitan University
Berthold Schoene is Professor of English and Director of the Institute of Humanities and Social Science Research at Manchester Metropolitan University. His publications include *Writing Men* (2000), *Posting the Male* (2003), *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (2007) and *The Edinburgh Companion to Irvine Welsh* (2010).

Elaine Speight
Elaine Speight is an artist, curator and researcher whose practice explores the politics of place through a range of creative activities. Since 2005 she has co-curated the 'In Certain Places' public art programme in Preston, Lancashire.

John Timberlake
John Timberlake (b. 1967, Lancashire) is a London based artist. His recent exhibitions include: 'Ron Haselden/ John Timberlake' (Galerie des Petits Carreaux, Paris 2012); 'Dark Sky' (Te Pataka Toi Adam Gallery, Victoria University, Wellington, NZ, 2012); 'The Ends of Art' (Beton 7, Athens 2013); 'Art in a Media Age', Imperial War Museum of the North, (Manchester 2013).
His work is held in a number of public and private collections in the UK, Europe and the US. Timberlake teaches Fine Art at Middlesex University.