Performing Democracy:
Artistic Engagements of Identity/Difference

by

EMILY BEAUSOLEIL

M.A., The University of British Columbia, 2005
B.Hum. Hon., Carleton University, 2001

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Political Science)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

April 2012

ABSTRACT

With growing acknowledgment within critical democratic theory that formal inclusion is not enough to guarantee real participation in democratic practice, particularly in the context of deep cultural diversity, this dissertation examines the possibilities, challenges, and limitations of various modes of communication when they are used to engage marginalized difference. It takes as its starting point the institutional and individual demand within democracies to not only make space for diverse ways of life, or simply 'contain enough difference' – as if this were possible – but to remain attentive to the perpetual remainder and responsive to the changes implied by such differences. This, I argue, defines a democratic ethos: a *care for difference* and the *receptive generosity* such care requires.

With democratic engagement defined in these terms, I first analyze and critique the ways *declarative* modes of communication conventionally used in democratic engagement influence and limit both how identity/difference can be communicated, and the forms of civic engagement that emerge as a result. Second, I investigate alternatives to declarative language, specifically the *evocative* forms of communication used within the performing arts. Using three case studies from South Africa and Canada in which dance and theatre were used to represent marginalized positions regarding race, gender, homelessness, and mental health, my research isolates key aesthetic resources for fostering greater inclusion of marginalized identity/difference. In the process, this research reveals and analyzes effective and as-yet largely overlooked forms of democratic engagement, and brings new insights into how identity and difference can be communicated and coalitions may be formed beyond the static forms of identity politics

present in certain kinds of political thought and practice. Ultimately, this project is an interdisciplinary intervention in a disciplinary discourse regarding what counts as available to our political thinking, to develop the means to broaden political inclusion as well as the tools with which to better represent and engage social difference with the attentiveness a democratic ethos demands. In short, this dissertation asks the question, can the performative arts facilitate engagement across difference in ways that a democratic ethos demands?

PREFACE

All design of the research program, field research and manuscript writing has been conducted by Emily Beausoleil. My supervisor, Dr. Barbara Arneil, and committee members, Dr. Mark Warren and Dr. Renisa Mawani, have edited all chapters and provided guidance in terms of research materials, questions and theoretical framing.

A version of chapter two, "The Risks and Limits of Conventional Modes of Representing Difference: Objective Gaze, Authentic Voice, and Declarative Language," will be published in *The Aesthetic Turn*, ed. Nikolas Komprodis (New York: Continuum, 2012, forthcoming). A version of chapter four, "Political Actors: Performance as Democratic Protest in Anti-Apartheid Theatre," will be published in *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics*, ed. Nancy Love and Mark Mattern (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012, forthcoming). A version of chapter six, "'Only They Breathe': Gender, Agency, and the Dancing Body Politic," will be published in *Constellations Journal* (2012, forthcoming).

Field research for this project was granted permission by the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Research of the Headlines Theatre *after homelessness…* project was granted from 13 August 2009 to 13 August 2010 (Certificate number H09-01529). Research for Co. Erasga's *AdamEve/ManWoman* was granted for 2 December 2009 to 2 December 2010 (Certificate number H09-03290).

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Introduction

A formerly homeless theatre workshop participant searches out the right characters for his tableau; he scans the group, and points to me. He places me in the scene; he lifts my arm and shapes my hand into a dismissive wave; he adjusts my hips and torso; he sculpts my face with his fingers, gently, until I am scowling scornfully. He crouches low, cowering in front of where I stand, and we hold this image – I hold this stance, I become this character – I feel in my body how he sees people like me, I feel in my body that I am this character. My arm begins to ache; I try to look for cracks in the mold to overwrite this position of scorn, but I am frozen in character before the group. I am implicated.

Performing Democracy: Curiosities and Challenges

Pluralist democracies, as political systems that acknowledge that difference is the very stuff of politics, require that we not only make space for diverse ways of life, or 'contain enough difference' – as if this were possible – but remain attentive to the perpetual remainder and responsive to the changes implied by such differences. And yet, we seem hardwired to do the very opposite: we so often perceive difference in terms of obstacle or threat, and respond with efforts to shore up our own terms for identity and politics. As recent backlash against multiculturalism in Europe, growing anti-immigrant sentiment in Australia, and the polarization of politics in the United States attest, this democratic demand might be the greatest placed on us and the most difficult to achieve in diverse societies. Even when the desire is to truly understand others, patterns of representing and engaging with 'others' are still fraught with voyeurism, objectification, assimilation, appropriation, or vilification that prevent meaningful engagement.

This dissertation is provoked and shaped by a sense of the political significance of the briefest of moments within encounters where we can decide to either close or open ourselves to 'others'; that grainy point of friction where one's frame of reference rubs up against another, a razor's edge, a fraction of an embodied moment when one decides

either to turn to familiar strategies of self-preservation against the intrusion of the foreign, or to open up to the unknown, the unfamiliar, and risk unsettling one's very terms and ground for living and making sense of the world.

What happens in this moment? What structures and shapes our responses, which are so quick that often we miss the moment altogether and see only what we recognize, recognize only what validates, and cannot hear the persistent murmur and occasional shout of the difference that exceeds it? What defines and enables those rare moments that interrupt this pattern so that we come to perceive others and ourselves in ways that surpass and rework our very terms of understanding? And, far more challenging, what defines those moments where implication – even shame – in light of such encounters *opens* rather than closes us into defensiveness, deeper entrenchments and denials? It is this delicate, tenuous, elusive moment – that which is shared by and radically splits into responses of productive 'unsettling' or fundamentalist entrenchment – that seems absolutely crucial to theorize in democratic pluralist societies.

Democratic theory has long recognized the need to broaden political processes of deliberation and decision-making to include marginalized communities and positions. Moreover, it increasingly acknowledges that formal inclusion is no guarantee of real participation in practice, as the "discursive hierarchies" within civic engagement structure relative access for some people over others (Fraser 1992: 118; Warner 2002; Howe 2009: 248). And yet despite the centrality of this issue to democratic engagement[1]

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[1] As will be explained in chapter one, I have chosen this term to speak to communication across difference rather than that of 'deliberation'; although an important form of democratic practice and field of scholarly research, deliberation limits the way we think about democracy and communication to specific discursive forms and political projects. In its place, 'democratic engagement' provides space for a wider range of forms of political communication and interaction, from consultation, advocacy, and testimony to deliberation and decision-making processes.

in diverse societies, surprisingly little work has yet been done on the discursive and affective conditions of such engagement.

Moreover, with so much attention to the issue of 'voice' in democratic theory and recognition of the high threshold for participation this presents when it concerns argument, organization and advocacy, alternative modes of communication beyond literal and deliberative speech – the visual, the aural, the physical – have yet to be examined and theorized in this literature. This dissertation shifts the focus from *if* and *why* marginalized difference should find entry into politics, to *how* this is to be done. How does the 'noise' of marginalized difference – what is yet-salient, yet-emergent in dominant terms of meaning-making, what challenges prevailing terms for identity and politics from both within and without – become 'sound' on the terrain of public discourse? How do conventional modes of political communication perhaps inadvertently limit the representation of, accountability to, and transformation in light of such marginalized positions? And how might alternative modes of communication structure understanding and interaction differently; what resources might they offer to more effectively communicating marginalized difference?

Now a year later, I can still feel in my body, on my skin, the stance I was placed in during that brief moment in the Headlines theatre workshop. And yet, as much as it shook and loosened something deep within me, the mediated nature of playing a character – of being implicated through theatre – provided a distance from the everyday through which I could acknowledge this implication without defensiveness or denial, as uncomfortable as it still is to contemplate. Now, artistic performance is far removed from the typical democratic process, where reasoned argument, direct address, and literal truth-telling

tend to dominate. And yet here we have a form of public engagement that is as widely used as it is overlooked in democratic theory; and it seems, to me, to suggest enormous potential for communicating meaning, engaging identity and forging coalition that warrants careful reading. For while democratic politics requires we remain open to being challenged and potentially transformed if we are to truly engage others – if what may at first seem like so much 'white noise' can, in fact, be heard as sound – here are practices that are strategically designed to gain and hold our attention, to cultivate receptivity even as they communicate challenging, contrary, or contentious positions across difference. Here, the *concreteness* of performance's vivid account converged with the *indirectness* of its reasoned argument – its polyphony or multivalence and its mediation through fiction, through symbol, placed at a remove from the immediate everyday on the stage – to enable communication of what, in conventional political sites, can prove the most difficult to hear.

And while democratic politics demands forms of engagement that capture something of the complex, multiple and non-exhaustive nature of identity, artistic performance is a site that is designed to communicate multiple times and spaces, contradictory and interrelated aspects of the political world, rich yet explicitly partial portrayals of complex characters in all of their ambivalence and nuance. And however vivid and deeply resonant, in performance there seems to be a distinct *honesty* about the performativity of identity and knowledge-claims, and the interpretive nature of both communication and understanding entailed therein, that seems integral to fostering the ethos of attentiveness that democracy requires.

It is the relationship between artistic performance and these two dimensions democratic engagement that this dissertation seeks to examine. In contrast to the *declarative* nature of conventional democratic processes – the language of literal and direct account, of reasoned argument, privileged in conventional political processes – I will explore how the *evocative* nature of artistic performance might accomplish what democratic politics demands and yet finds most elusive: engagement of identity that realizes and fosters a *care for difference* – an attentiveness to difference and agonistic care for the tensions and disruptions this entails – and the *receptive generosity* such engagements require, what opens rather than closes us to difference in light of the challenges it presents to our terms of understanding and ways of life. In short, this dissertation asks the question, can the performative arts facilitate engagement across difference in ways that a democratic ethos demands?

Theoretical Framework and Approach

In light of developments in democratic and critical theory and politics over the last quarter of a century, it has become outmoded, indeed counterproductive and ethically suspect to employ a static form of identity politics when contending with social difference. In the place of notions of identity as clearly bounded, cohesive and essential, literature in the politics of difference across democratic, post-colonial and critical multicultural theory have argued that identity is far more complex – that we have multiple, intersecting identities; that they are concrete, porous and particular rather than clear stable categories; and that they are ever contingent and continually in formation in light of our experiences in the world (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Connolly 1991; Dallmayr 1996; Honig 1996; Hall 1996b; Haraway 2003; Mohanty and Martin 2003). Indeed,

within the politics of difference literature, identity is no longer considered something opposed to and undermined by difference, to be guarded and policed with vigilance, but rather indebted to difference in various ways. Difference – what exceeds the bounds of dominant narratives for identity and politics at both the individual and social level – is not an obstacle to be overcome, but a *resource* to politics, in two ways: first, it represents what is excluded from and yet might hold possibilities for thought, action and relation that are viable, legitimate, even preferable. In this way, social difference signals that prevailing accounts are ever-partial and political systems are never final, and provides a means to 'enlarge' our mentality regarding socio-political issues and realities, informing decisions and even enhancing social justice (Haraway 1992: 87; Young 2000). Secondly, it is exactly because identities do not have clear boundaries and cohesive form like so many atoms floating in political space, but are complex, intersectional, and multiple, that we can connect with others and live together-in-difference as democratic pluralism requires of us (Connolly 1991: 166; Young 1996: 127; Brah 2000: 272; Ang 2001: 194).

But what, then, does democracy do with difference? How does it make space for, and engage with, social difference in these new multiple, contingent and fluid terms? For despite recent developments in critical theory, many of our political practices and policies are rooted in a traditional – simpler – understanding of identity as static and bounded. As a result, efforts to include social difference – from funding and immigration policies to democratic processes – often rely on pre-given categories and the authority of dominant culture to name them, creating dynamics of toleration and management of difference by an unshaken dominant centre. If democracy requires that we engage social difference in other terms, we must ask ourselves what forms of communication are able to, first,

capture the complexity, contingency, and relationality of identity/difference so as to foster engagement in these terms; and second, cultivate openness and receptivity when these unsettling encounters with difference occur? For if we acknowledge that *how* we represent marginalized difference is as vital to inclusion and justice as *if* we do at all, these conditions and constraints require further attention.

The first of these challenges is *discursive.* Scholarship in the critical democratic theory literature has argued that conventional modes of deliberation, characterized by direct address, reasoned argument, and unaffected and disembodied speech, present a particular "speech culture" that privileges white, educated, middle-class men, excluding or devaluing modes of speech employed by other groups and the experiences, values, and claims they seek to represent (Young 2000: 38-40; Dahlberg 2005: 114; Fraser 1992: 118; Warner 2002; Howe 2009: 248). Post-colonial scholarship, historically attuned to the subtler dimensions of power working within discourse, has shown in various ways that the cultural specificity of this 'speech culture' is not the only source of exclusion: the particular ways difference is represented in conventional discourses also effects forms of "epistemic violence" that can essentialize, appropriate and conflate difference seeking entry into politics (Spivak 1987; Hall 1996a: 445). When communication takes place in conditions of inequality, speakers whose positions, experiences and values have been historically devalued or distorted by dominant culture must contend with both these broader socio-political discourses that turn difference into the Other – the exotic, the primitive, the native informant, the enemy – and the strictures conventional modes of speech entail. Those who, as Homi Bhabha states, have been "overlooked – in the double sense of social surveillance and psychic disavowal – and, at the same time,

overdetermined – psychically projected, made stereotypical and symptomatic" – must find ways to communicate that can contend with and do not lend themselves easily to these pressures (Bhabha 1994: 236). And so political communication must not only be broadened to include alternative speech cultures, but also identify and employ those modes of discourse that can represent identity/difference as complex, non-exhaustive, and relational.

The second of these challenges is *affective.* For the issue is not simply how to establish the terms for broader and more attentive forms of 'voice,' but also the conditions within which this may be heard. As 'voice' has been increasingly scrutinized in democratic theory, the dynamics and demands of listening have received greater attention. This has provoked a growing literature on *receptivity*, or an openness to the unfamiliar that such listening requires. Such a stance is deeply affective – one must remain open within uncomfortable moments and the uncertain ground they present, invite challenge and risk reflexive inquiry, to truly *listen well* (Coles 1997; Bennett 2001; Spivak 1996: 267-8; Bickford 1996; Ahmed 2000). For listening to difference as difference, in ways that do not simply fold it into present terms, requires that the very terms with which we understand ourselves, others, and the political world we share are held accountable to such difference, unsettled and potentially transformed. Failure to do so – assuming one need not know or knows 'them' already – perpetuates prevailing values, meanings and political relations, and engages difference with forms of "benevolent imperialism" that merely tolerate and manage difference, stabilizing, validating, and naturalizing such prevailing accounts in the very ways difference is engaged (Taylor 1985: 129; Spivak 1990: 59-60; Cornell and Murphy 2002: 422). How,

then, can we "learn to live awkwardly" with one another, when natural and dominant responses to what 'unsettles' us seem prone to defensiveness, denial, resentment, vilification – in a word, a failure to listen (McLennan 1995: 90; Ang 2001: 201)?

There is within these discursive and affective challenges to democracy an increasing need to carefully examine how conventional political modes of communication shape and condition engagement across difference, and look for alternative modes that address these challenges differently. It is no longer simply a matter of 'voice,' but a question of what *kind* of voice. What kinds of risks, possibilities and challenges do various forms of communication yield for engagement with identity/difference? What modes of communication are able to both represent and negotiate identity/difference with an attentiveness to contingency and complexity, and cultivate the affective conditions required to 'stand to hear' it (Salverson 1996: 187)? In other words, what forms of communication enable or foster what I shall theorize as a *care for difference* and *receptive generosity* that a democratic ethos demands?

Democratic theory has begun to broaden the terms for legitimate democratic engagement in order to include both aesthetic and affective dimensions of speech. This has entailed attention to the generative role affect and/or rhetoric play in deliberative modes of speech, as well as a broadening of the terms of what counts as political discourse to include rhetoric, narrative, and greeting (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Rorty 1997; Young 2000; Dryzek 2002, 2010; Means 2002; Hoggett and Thompson 2002; Chambers 2009; Garsten 2011: 163).

I believe we can go farther than this literature has taken us to date, in four ways. First, if particular forms of communication play a determining role in the inclusion of

marginalized voices, this demands that we examine the political effects of particular modes of communication at a level of detail currently absent in the literature. Second, this burgeoning scholarship on the beneficial role of aesthetic-affective modes of communication can be developed to include *artistic performance,* a site of public engagement that has been largely overlooked in democratic theory. Third, I believe that the particular dimensions at work in aesthetic modalities and the relationship between the aesthetic and affective require a fuller account, which an examination of performance as politics will help to provide. And fourth, I believe the reasons for this inclusion of performance as democratic engagement are different from those yet articulated: these alternative modes do not simply 'bring difference to the table' – as expressive but far from 'reasonable,' accountable, and rigorous means to examine and deliberate political issues – but are actually forms of democratic engagement in their own right. In fact, I posit that due to the particular means with which artistic performance communicates, it generates alternative modes of engagement that are not only effective in negotiating identity/difference and cultivating receptive generosity as democracy requires, but offer critical insight into how this may be achieved more broadly. I will argue that the performative arts demonstrate that identity/difference *can* be communicated and engaged in the terms that democracy demands, and that the most *unruly* of its communicative dimensions – what have led political theorists to handle the arts gingerly, if at all – are in fact what give them this capacity.

There are three phases of this project. First, I will develop the normative terms for democratic engagement that are not linked to a particular communicative mode, site, or process design, providing the means to analyze a wide range of communicative practices

for their democratic potential. Here, recent scholarship in the politics of difference, drawn from critical theorists across democratic, post-colonial, and critical multicultural theory, informs an account of democratic engagement as those practices that enact or foster a *care for difference* and *receptive generosity*, as well as the primary challenges and obstacles to such engagement. This is complemented by scholarship in poststructuralist and feminist theory, which examines in great depth the dimensions of power at work in everyday practices, including the formation of subjectivities, processes of meaning-making, and the body, which are often neglected in accounts of and yet, within a context of identity/difference politics, are central to democratic practices. The theory I develop through these literatures thus enables consideration of a wider range of practices and modes that might contribute to voice and inclusion, as well as a more nuanced lens through which the subtler dimensions of communication within such sites might be analyzed.

As the terms established for identity/difference politics concern a 'politics of listening' that requires both receptivity and a care for difference, scholarship on affect from both critical democratic and performance disciplines also shapes a great deal of this dissertation. I draw from, and ultimately contribute to, the recent 'affective turn' in democratic theory and other disciplines, which is taking seriously the affective dimensions of politics and how these might be understood and addressed in theory and practice. What is affect? The term 'affect' has been used variously to signify emotion, intensity, and sensation; I join a great number of affect scholars by moving away from 'emotion' in the definition I employ here, in order to delineate affect as the "nonlinear complexity out of which the narration of conscious states such as emotion are

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subtracted, but also...'a never-to-be-autonomic remainder'" (Massumi 2002: 30; Clough 2007: 2). 'Emotion', as Massumi notes, is this "intensity owned and recognized" (Massumi 1996: 221), 'made sense' of via one's interpretive frames. As such, affect connotes dimensions of experience beyond, between, and beneath conceptual frameworks; while never 'presocial' as it is shaped by as much as shapes conscious thought, it "paradoxically embodies multiple and normally exclusive potentials," distinct from though intimately connected with thought and emotion (Massumi 1996: 226; Clough 2007: 2). In this way, affect relates "equally to the body and the mind...our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it" (Hardt 2007: ix).

This distinction is significant, as we will see that it is affect's embodied, precognitive intensity that explains both why cognitive and verbal strategies are often insufficient to generate the conditions for democratic engagement across difference, and how performance is able to disrupt and dissemble the discursive "partitions of the sensible" (Rancière 2004: 12) that mark the bounds for possible thought, action and relation in politics. I bring affect and post-colonial scholarship into dialogue with critical democratic theory, to develop this account of both the discursive and affective conditions of democratic engagement.

Second, I interrogate the language of conventional democratic processes – what I will be calling *declarative language* – to examine how such discourse structures understanding and engagement across difference in conditions of inequality. Such language has been used widely and effectively to represent marginalized difference, but how might such discourse shape and condition such engagement? Here, I build upon and

contribute to recent scholarship in critical democratic theory regarding the exclusionary effects of dominant forms of deliberative speech. To do so, I examine how social difference is 'managed' through traditional forms of discourse, particularly as they present in Canadian multicultural policy and practices. I then link these tendencies to declarative language, and employ post-colonial and cultural studies critiques of declarative language as it presents in testimony and autobiography, as this has been where the risks and challenges of this mode of communication has been examined in greatest depth and with incredible rigour.

Third, I offer a theorization and critical analysis of alternatives to such discourse. While there is a case to be made for artistic practices more generally, this dissertation will focus on the particular political work of artistic performance. Richard Schechner, seminal performance theorist, famously defined performance as "twice-behaved behaviour" (Schechner 1985: 36-7), behaviour that iterates previous behaviours, whether consciously or not. Though all social activity is performance, and so 'twice-behaved' and citational, artistic performance is distinguished from 'performance' more generally as temporally and spatially demarcated practices and events that reflexively and publicly stage "theatrical, rehearsed, or conventional/event-appropriate behaviours" (Martin 1998a: 188; Taylor 2003: 3). I will be examining both the potential and limitations for communication through the performative arts.

There are two reasons for this focus on performance over other artistic practices (film, painting, sculpture, or literature for example) in the context of democratic engagement: first, while all art forms share in common a number of defining characteristics, and so can engender similar political effects, there is simply too much

difference between static and performative arts to enable a meaningful analysis. Indeed, within one broad genre of performance, be it theatre, music, dance, or performance art, there is incredible diversity, and given the creative experimentation that defines the field, new and distinctly functioning genres are continually emerging. Focusing on performance – a field that in itself is already incredibly broad – facilitates the isolation of the particular resources, dynamics and effects that connect and distinguish the field. Secondly, the proximity of performance to other democratic 'publics' – as communicative and interactive sites where identity and difference are negotiated and contested – is particularly intriguing, and the edgework of those interstices, the analysis of where the features of these forms of public converge and diverge and with what political effects, works to effectively reveal the respective advantages, challenges, and potential contributions and critiques each might offer.

As this field as a whole has yet to be theorized within the context of democratic engagement, I draw from affect, aesthetic and performance scholarship to identify and examine the particular dimensions and dynamics of artistic practices that distinguish them from other political sites. While these literatures are woven throughout the thesis, the crux of my argument regarding aesthetic practices relies upon these literatures to theorize how the specific dimensions of aesthetic practices currently undertheorized in democratic theory relate to democratic politics more broadly. I use this scholarship, as well as my case studies, to isolate and investigate these communicative dimensions as they present in performative practices that seek to represent and negotiate marginalized identity/difference, and the forms of communication and interaction they make possible or likely.

Interventions and Contributions

By initiating cross-pollination between democratic, affect, post-colonial, feminist, post-structural, and aesthetic theory, I hope to achieve several things. First and foremost, I hope to draw attention to sites and practices that are as prolific in practice as they are overlooked in political theory, that enact forms of engagement that democracy requires and often finds most challenging, as well as provide a theoretical account of the specific dimensions of such modalities that enable such engagement. By broadening the terms for what counts as democratic engagement to include such practices, I believe we develop the means to broaden political inclusion of presently marginalized communities, positions and values, as well as the tools with which to better represent and engage social difference with the attentiveness a democratic ethos demands.

Second, by taking this aesthetic and affective approach to democratic engagement, I hope to develop a theoretical and normative frame that is both spacious and nuanced enough to analyze the political risks, possibilities, and limits of both conventional and alternative political processes – through which a broader range of 'voices' may be understood and analyzed. This has many potential effects: on the one hand, we may come to understand in greater depth the role that particular aspects of discourse – grammar, sound, gesture – may play in structuring both perceptions of and relations between political actors, and thus a more rigorous account of how power works within meaning-making processes. On the other hand, we may develop a language with which to handle the most 'unruly' aspects of communication – affect, the body, imagery, symbol – as well as forms of engagement in which they are front and centre, to at once make better use of these aesthetic-affective forms and hold them

accountable to democratic norms. We may also find the terms with which to hold diverse practices accountable to democratic norms in ways that resist predetermining or policing the bounds of what counts as democratic engagement, ultimately enabling self-determination even within evaluative practices.

Finally, I hope to offer an account of the current challenges, limits and risks of artistic performance when it is used as a site of democratic engagement. For this project is clearly distinguished from those accounts that have either sought to bracket the aesthetic-affective as inherently suspect, or romanticize such practices as inherently salutary. In fact, a close and careful reading of the politics at work within performative practices highlights the dangers as much as the resources they present; I therefore develop an account of issues that emerge both within artistic practices themselves and how such practices are interpreted and integrated in society more broadly, and gesture to directions for their address in political theory and practice.

In short, this project contributes to democratic as well as affect, discourse, and aesthetic scholarship by investigating the interstices and overlaps of these fields. In so doing, I hope to not only offer a critique of currently unproblematized aspects of conventional political communication, but also enrich through an interdisciplinary analysis our understanding of currently undertheorized practices and communicative dimensions of democratic engagement.

Case Selection and Methodology

This account of artistic performance as democratic engagement is developed through this critical analysis and integration of complementary literatures across disciplines, and also tested against the empirical reality of three specific cases where

performance was used in this way, employing historical records, participant observation and interviews where appropriate.

The three cases (South African theatre of protest against apartheid, Vancouver-based Headlines Theatre's legislative theatre project regarding homelessness and mental health, and a Vancouver contemporary dance performance by Co. Erasga that investigates gender) were chosen to illuminate and enable interrogation of various aspects, issues and possibilities of performance as democratic engagement. All three cases offer instances where performance has been used as a mode of representation, communication and interaction, on behalf of what is excluded within dominant discourse and politics – differences that are yet 'noise' within prevailing terms. Whether addressing racial, gendered, or socio-economic discourses, these cases all seek to expose and 'unsettle' this established frame and its authority, and to change the terms of reference to not simply include what is left out, but transform existing discourse and practice – perceptions, actions, and relations – in light of such difference.

To examine different *genres* of artistic performance and the particular forms of representation and engagement they enable, these chapters address a range of conventional theatrical genres, the genre of legislative theatre, and contemporary dance respectively. As a result, they reveal a spectrum of ways specific aesthetic dimensions may be employed to communicate across difference, as well as the scope of possibilities and challenges that emerge as a result. By covering a wide range of theatrical practices and political projects within the case of South African protest theatre, I am able to map the shared aesthetic devices that were repeatedly used to challenge the apartheid system

in diverse ways. By closely resembling conventional democratic forums,[2] the Headlines theatre case sets explicit and highly conventional political goals that test the limits of performance-as-public-sphere, and its integration of both declarative and theatrical language enables a close examination of how each affected this political project differently. Moreover, it legislative component – the translation of the performative process into policy language – presents an extreme test of performance's political potential as it moves across sectors. In contrast to previous cases of theatre, the genre of contemporary dance removes virtually all semblance to conventional democratic processes by placing the body rather than speech at the centre of public engagement. Given the primacy of speech in theories of democratic engagement, even when theatre might appear to slip between the cracks and so find a place within models of legitimate public dialogue, the dancing body offers a significant challenge. This final case thus allows me to see whether indeed it is not art's proximity to conventional processes but rather where it diverges that enable radically democratic forms of engagement.

To speak to the historical, geographical, and contextual breadth of political performance, chapter four examines the nation-wide phenomenon of protest theatre from the 1960s to 1990s against the apartheid state in South Africa, while chapter five and six examine contemporary and Vancouver-based examples of dance and theatre that were used to represent, negotiate and experiment with subtler and more diffuse sources of political injustice, and indifference or blindness regarding them: homelessness and

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[2] Like other democratic publics, forum and legislative theatre seeks to articulate lived experience rather than mere fiction, incorporates sustained dialogue as well as conventional performance, and brings together a diverse self-selecting community to discuss political issues and deliberate possible solutions. It has such proximity to conventional democratic forums that it is listed in accounts of alternative democratic processes, and has received the most attention from democratic scholars (Smith 2005; peopleandparticipation.net; participedia.net).

mental health, in the case of theatre in chapter five, and gender identities and relations, in the case of dance in chapter six. The South African case therefore provides insight into how performative practices might serve as democratic sites within and in direct opposition to an anti-democratic political system, while later cases examine how performance might work within democratic contexts. And yet while local cases might, in this light, seem more viable and acceptable as democratic processes, they take place in a cultural context where the arts are far less integrated and valued, in contrast to the South African case where artistic practices have long been incorporated and interpreted as having a significant role to play in politics. As such, these cases shed light on how performance may be used, with more or less effectiveness, depending on both political and cultural context.

These cases also reveal the politics at work at various levels of analysis. South African protest theatre has the advantage of being a well-documented if undertheorized historical case. This historical lens enables analysis of the effects of such practices in both the short and long term, and as a broad social movement widely recognized as a political 'success,' it enables analysis as a whole as to the reasons for such success. More recent and local cases taken up in chapters five and six enable closer examination of these performance events at a micro level, where I was able to observe the political effects of the subtlest of strategies within each process from rehearsal to the stage.

The range of these cases also speaks to the various ways the relationship between art and politics might be configured. Each of these cases has distinct political objectives. The South African and Headlines cases differ in whether they sought to oppose or influence the state; however, with these objectives both interpret the relationship between

art and politics as 'art as tool for political ends.' Indeed, in the case of South Africa, in the post-apartheid years a broad-sweeping debate emerged regarding how art could be disentangled from this overt political role. In chapter six, this relationship between art and politics is less overt, as it presents a case of a professional dance performance, presented and received as such within conventional arts venues. Further, it was most concerned with cultivating critical thinking in civil society rather than effecting change at the level of formal institutions. As such, it is political in a very different sense.[3] Chapters four and five also involved projects that sought to expose, challenge and transform perceptions of and relations with marginalized communities or 'others.' By contrast, chapter six, with the focus on gender identities, addresses difference within the individual – those internalized limits to thought, action and relation that shape one's very sense of an authentic self.

A further range of diversity is presented within these cases regarding *who* performed or led the project, in relation to the marginalized positions or communities it sought to engage. In the South African case, with the exception of venues such as the Market Theatre and other white-led collaborations, most performances were created and performed by professional actors and playwrights who were members of marginalized communities, at times in collaboration with their allies. By contrast, in the Headlines case, members of a marginalized community without prior acting experience were gathered and led by a professional theatre company not directly affiliated with it, though the piece was sourced from and performed by this group. In the case of *AdamEve*,

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[3] However, as David Diamond, director of Headlines Theatre, and other community-based performance practitioners argue, it is a simplistic and counterproductive tendency to dichotomize art and politics such that overtly political work is somehow 'unprofessional.' This is a theme that will be discussed in chapter seven.

professional dancers were employed by the project's choreographer to explore, interrogate and experiment with dominant conceptions of gender identity in a conventional fine arts context.

Whether oppositional or integrative, whether verbal or primarily physical, whether open-ended or entailing decision-making, these three cases of artistic performance present a range of artistic genre, political agenda, and socio-political context that, while far from exhaustive, enables various aspects of performance as politics to emerge.

I have chosen to use distinct approaches in light of the particularities of each case and the questions they allow me to ask. My first case is that of South African protest theatre in the context of apartheid. Here, this well-documented historical case enables a broad view and macro-analysis of an instance where performance is widely recognized for effectively challenging the apartheid system and contributing to the political landscape required for transition to democracy. Consequently, I have employed vast documentation of performances, creative processes, and state responses provided by historians, playwrights, directors, actors, and critics to capture a sense of both the political work enacted through this broad cultural movement, and the role that particular aesthetic dimensions played therein.

The specific case of Headlines Theatre's *after homelessness…* legislative theatre project in Vancouver, BC provided an opportunity to investigate in depth the process of communicating knowledge and experience of a marginalized community to the broader public. As legislative theatre, this had two distinct phases: the translation of lived experience into the language of the theatre, through which audiences engaged on stage

and collectively deliberated possible solutions; and the translation of this artistic process

and its findings into a final document of policy recommendations distributed to various

governmental and non-profit organizations. Here, I had the privilege of participating in

the six-day workshop where 22 participants gathered from homeless and mental health

communities; this was truly an instance of participant observation, where I engaged in all

workshop activities except for the final two days where I observed groups generate and

perform their own extended skits. In order to protect the privacy of the rehearsal period, I

was not privy to this phase in the creative process, but attended the three-week

performance run in Vancouver and New Westminster. I interviewed cast members, the

director, and the on-site social worker regarding their experience of both the creative

process and performances. I also interviewed the project's Community Scribe, hired to

compile the final policy recommendation report in light of forum interventions, both

immediately following the performance run and prior to writing, and after completion of

the report, to capture the challenges and choices of translating the performance into

policy discourse. I also interviewed all official recipients of the report from local

government, federal and provincial Steering Committees and Commissions, and local

non-profit organizations to gauge perceptions of the process as well as reception and

potential impact of the final report.

For the case of Co. Erasga's *AdamEve/ManWoman*, a Vancouver-based

contemporary dance performance that critically engaged gender identities, the focus of

inquiry shifts to how the body, and by extension artistic practices at the farthest remove

from speech-heavy political processes, might serve as a site of agency and democratic

engagement. Here, I observed both the rehearsals and one-week performance run, which

included an 'Artist's Talk Back' following one performance, where I was able to observe audience responses. I also interviewed the choreographer and dancers both during and following the performance run, to discern their experience of embodied critical inquiry during the creative process, experience on the stage of explicitly performing gender identities, and reflections and responses in light of the performance. As this case investigates in depth the role of the body in democratic practices, I employ scholarship from performance studies to theorize the politics and potential agency of the body, particularly in the context of dance practices. As this is also a project where, in contrast to earlier cases in which marginalized communities seek to challenge and transform dominant society, internalized and naturalized limits for personal identity are the target, I draw on poststructuralist scholarship regarding 'practices of freedom' and feminist/gender theory on embodied practices, which have examined most in depth the relations of subjectivity and power, and the practices that might enable greater agency with regards to the 'difference within' individual identities.

Chapter Descriptions

As political theory has yet to theorize democratic engagement in the context of artistic performance, this project begins by developing the theory within which such practices may become salient, and by which they may be evaluated. In chapter one, an examination of the relation of identity and difference reveals the normative justifications for democratic pluralism, as well as the core conditions of a *care for difference* and *receptive generosity* that characterize democratic engagement. Democratic engagement, defined by such conditions, is understood here as a certain form of *praxis* captured in the images of the 'speaking' and the 'horizon'; wherever difference is encountered as

difference and so 'unsettles' one's partitions of the sensible and opens us to being able to think, and practice, otherwise.

This chapter also examines how the very dynamics of identity/difference, under some conditions of identity formation and political relation, provoke cognitive and affective responses that mask both the inevitability of and indebtedness to difference that necessitate and ground such a democratic ethos. Moreover, I argue that defined in this way, the scope of sites and practices of democratic engagement include discourse, the imagination, and the body, providing the terms within which alternative sites such as performance might be considered potential democratic processes.

With this groundwork and evaluative frame in place, the question becomes *where* and *how* such a democratic ethos is enacted in forms of public engagement. Chapter two begins to answer this question by examining the discursive dimensions of the language commonly used in democratic engagement. Here, I argue that the *declarative language* of conventional political processes – literal modes of communication that are so common they remain largely invisible and unexamined – structure and inadvertently limit how identity and difference can be communicated, understood, and engaged. While such language has been used widely and effectively within democratic engagement to make space for marginalized difference, its grammatical structure tends to *erase its own absences*, encouraging forms of understanding that deny their own limits and so facilitate moves of *appropriation*, *essentialization,* and *conflation* of difference that make democratic engagement difficult. Rather than foreground the agency of the speaker, it privileges the listener as interpreter of the other as object of knowledge. Rather than gesture to and leave room for what remains unrepresented, multiple and in process, it can

lead to essentialist and reductive readings of individual and group identity. Rather than maintain a crucial distance between self and other that is essential to encountering difference as difference, it can overlook its own limitations through the illusion of direct access. As such, these accounts of marginal positions can work against an attentiveness to difference, reinscribing rather than disrupting dominant discourse and the asymmetrical relations they maintain.

In light of this, I argue that the burgeoning democratic scholarship that critiques conventional forms of deliberative discourse can go further, by examining the discursive constraints declarative language places on communicating identity/difference in contexts of structural and discursive inequality. While this is not to say that declarative discourse necessarily functions through or reinforces this form of nonreciprocal engagement, this makes clear that *how* we represent and engage difference is as crucial as *if* we do at all. It presents a challenge and an invitation, to investigate alternative modes that might work somewhat differently, and so offer generative modalities and models for democratic engagement.

Chapter three takes up this challenge, by examining the particular dynamics at work within performative modes of engagement. While critical democratic theory that seeks to legitimate aesthetic-affective modes often continues to construe them as supplementary and ever secondary to 'rational' or verbal modes of communication, this chapter will argue that these are legitimate and effective sites of democratic engagement also because certain things *happen within* such artistic practices, particular forms of engagement that these practices facilitate. As well as 'bringing difference to the table,' these modalities enable the coexistence of simultaneous, heterogeneous perspectives and points of contact

and coalition. While they may 'move one to judgment,' they can also work to dissemble totalizing judgment and foster receptive generosity and critical and creative inquiry. And while they assist in articulating positions before there are salient terms in dominant discourse, they also provide an alternative discourse that can negotiate identities *as* complex, non-exhaustive, and dynamic, without reifying or limiting such meanings. In short, aesthetic-affective modes perform a *particular kind of political work* – they can foster and enact particular forms of engagement characterized by a democratic ethos of *care for difference* and *receptive generosity*.

And it is art's most 'unruly' characteristics – its polyphony, affective intensity, kinaesthesia, imaginative inquiry, explicit interpretiveness, and liminality – qualities that have presented the biggest challenge to standard theories of democratic engagement, that prove central in doing so. By examining each of these aesthetic dimensions in turn, I will argue that it is through such aesthetic dimensions that the performative arts become 'dissembling compositions,' serving as democratic "speakings" (Mohanty and Martin 2003) that enact a care for difference and foster receptive generosity.

With this theoretical frame in place, chapters four through six explore specific cases where we see these aesthetic-affective dimensions in action, and the particular democratic effects they enable. Chapter four's examination of protest theatre during the apartheid years in South Africa shows that the *form* of communication and interaction was as, at times more, vital to enacting a democratic politics than the *content* of such practices. To introduce the core argument for performance as politics as we move from theory to practice, I focus here on two particular aesthetic dimensions, *polyphony* and *transience,* and show how the capacity to serve as an effective site of democratic engagement is

intimately linked to artists' deliberate and strategic use of these aesthetic resources. These dimensions represent identity/difference as multiple, contingent, and open to intervention, which in this context worked to undermine the authority of a hegemonic state and the discourses of identity that supported it. Likewise their evocative, embodied and musical forms created an intense 'dissembling' effect that resonated deeply and broadly. But even more vital in this extreme case of working within an anti-democratic context, we also see that this very 'unruliness' of the aesthetic made these acts of protest particularly hard for the state to control – in fact, such acts of democratic protest and the counter-publics for democratic engagement they created were able to *flourish* at a time when almost all other avenues were foreclosed.

In chapter five's close examination of Headlines Theatre's *after homelessness*… legislative theatre project, we see that it is not its *proximity* to more conventional democratic processes that gives forum theatre its particular capacity to function as such, but rather where it diverges: through the concrete, vivid and embodied enactment of narrative rather than reasoned argument or declaration of general facts; through the aesthetic mediation of experience through collective fiction and symbolism; through communication as creative act rather than testimonial forms of 'truth-telling.' In fact, we see that it is precisely where the project relies *less* on aesthetic mediation and creative agency that issues identified within declarative discourse reemerge in this case: 'overexposure' of those who speak from marginalized and traumatic experience; illusion of fully grasping another's experience or of 'speaking for' others; and defining individuals through their past experience, and so limiting self-determination, a sense of agency and non-exhaustive identity, and more reciprocal forms of engagement.

In chapter six, a theory of aesthetic-affective democratic engagement is tested differently, in the absence of language – indeed narrative – within contemporary dance. With the body at the centre of this mode of engagement, we explore how democratic engagement might occur within such non-verbal modalities. Given processes of naturalization discussed in chapter one, we will see in this case that often verbal and cognitive strategies are insufficient to expose and contest present limits for identity and politics, and embodied practices such as contemporary dance are effective in unsettling the 'partitions of the sensible' and opening possibilities for thought, action and relation. Dance in particular, by cultivating fluency in the navigation of embodied disciplines, foregrounding the performativity of identity, and encouraging rhizomatic and non-teleological inquiry, is found to be particularly suited to such democratic projects.

While the preceding chapters have largely made a case for artistic performance as a legitimate and effective site of democratic engagement, chapter seven examines the various risks, challenges and limits of such practices – for, though artistic practices may be used to such ends, they are by no means inherently democratic or politically effective. This chapter addresses ethical, theoretical and practices issues that emerge due to the distinct dynamics of aesthetic practices, as well as when such practices collide with dominant discourses and practices within the broader socio-political context. Within artistic practices themselves, I examine challenges of decision-making and representation beyond the event, issues of accountability within affective and evocative practices, issues of power, voice, and safety within artistic projects, and the effects of competing demands of aesthetic and political agendas.

Regarding how performance is taken up within the broader political context, I identify three powerful discourses that predominate in consumer culture, academia, policy, and politics, and argue that the persistence of a positivist identity politics within such discourses creates significant challenges for art's translation, legitimation and efficacy. In fact, as this chapter traces the movement of artistic practices back into more *declarative* discourses of conventional politics and culture, we see the reemergence of the same risks and pressures to assimilate, marginalize, objectify, and conflate that which performance is so effective in negotiating on its own terms. This chapter offers directions for both theoretical and practical address of these challenges.

As this examination will make clear in various ways, aesthetic modalities can generate sites of engagement that realize both a care for difference and receptive generosity that democracy demands of us, and offer rich insights into particular strategies through which this may be achieved more broadly. Perhaps most provocatively, this study reveals that the very dimensions of aesthetic practices that have led democratic theorists to handle them gingerly, if at all, are the very source of this potential: here, the affective, the multimodal, the embodied, the symbolic do not preclude but rather *enable* meaningful engagement and coalition across difference. In so doing, these practices effectively challenge existing terms for legitimate democratic engagement, and shed light on how identity may be communicated and coalitions may be formed beyond the static and bounded terms of identity politics that persist in democratic theory and practice.

Chapter One
Identity, Difference, and Democratic Engagement

Introduction

This project is centred on the question of democratic engagement: what

democracy demands of us as fellow citizens in diverse societies, and what practices

effectively enact or foster these conditions. And yet these terms require their own

account: what defines democratic engagement, or the identities that are so engaged?

What normative and practical dimensions are there to such encounters that help us to

discern where and how they might occur in diverse societies? Despite their use of

disparate vocabularies and frameworks, poststructuralist theory, postcolonial theory, and

democratic theorists of difference converge regarding the nature of identity and

difference, and the democratic ethos this demands. This chapter will explore these

common threads, and argue that democratic engagement is best understood as those

practices that enact and foster both a *care for difference* and *receptive generosity*.

Understood in these terms, democratic engagement potentially involves not only

conventional political processes, but all contexts where meaning is made,

identity/difference is engaged, and people gather; it can potentially occur anywhere

within the social body, wherever difference is encountered in its difference.

A Care for Difference

In light of postmodern, postcolonial, and poststructuralist theories, two

conclusions seem consistently clear that ground a democratic ethos of a *care for*

difference, despite – indeed, due to – the dissolution of ontological foundations that this

scholarship has effected. The first is the chastening concession that reality will always

exceed any attempt to conceptualize it, such that no concept, code, or system could ever be taken as final and exhaustive. The second, following from the first in many respects, is the multiple, relational, and contingent nature of identity, and hence its complex and intimate relationship with difference. This social ontology both justifies an ethos of democratic attentiveness to identity/difference, and explains how, under some circumstances of identity formation and political engagement, these relational avenues are foreclosed and obscured.

Within this recent scholarship, difference is construed not as something opposed to identity, but constitutive of as much as disruptive to it. In Adorno's terms, difference is the "self-transgression slumbering in every identity, the absence in every presence" (Dallmayr 1997: 38; Adorno 1973: 189). What Adorno calls "non-identity" and Nietzsche calls "life" – the sheer overabundance and fugitive impulses and energies beyond attempts to name, fix, or organize them – productively inform and persistently challenge these contingent interpretive frames (Adorno 1973: 4-5, 189; Connolly 1991: xx, 371). Consequently, the "alleged unity" of identity is, as David Couzens Hoy and others argue, an *achievement* rather than a given, ever incomplete and contingent due to that remaining difference which resists absorption or assimilation (Blondel 1991: 234; Ang 2001: 198; Hoy 2004: 20-1). It is not merely an issue of containing 'enough' difference for identity to finally succeed in its task; that which identity attempts to organize is itself composed of difference, and is further only conceivable through its relations to other differences (Levinas 1983: 110; Honig 1996: 259). Moreover, despite identity's inevitable inadequacy and hence "necessary injustice" in relation to the difference it is meant to represent (Connolly 1991: 160), it is through the meaning-

making processes of identity that form and articulation are given to difference, and hence thought, action, and society are made possible.

A tension, then, perpetually exists between competing demands for coherence and complexity. Put differently, in Chandra Mohanty and Biddy Martin's words, "there is an irreconcilable tension between the search for a secure place from which to speak, within which to act, and the awareness of the price at which secure places are bought, the awareness of the exclusions, the denials, the blindnesses on which they are predicated" (Mohanty and Martin 2003: 100). Identity and difference are thus both integral and inescapable aspects of lived experience, as is the productive tension between them – a tension that cannot, by definition, be transcended or resolved, as there is no 'correct' or exhaustive interpretation, final political system, or static equilibrium for this balancing act.

What becomes ethically significant, within this account, is the recognition that all representations, codes, and meanings are necessarily premised on exclusions, and hence are enacted through techniques of power. As David Goldberg states, "to name the condition [of meaning-making], to define it, to render it not merely meaningful but actually conceivable and comprehensible is at once to constitute power over it, to determine after all what it is (or is not), to define its limit" (1993: 9). Where and how these lines of determinacy are drawn, which interpretations are given primacy and legitimacy over others reveals that power is always-already present in the constitution of identity through difference. This proves all the more significant at the socio-political level where certain meanings and identities are privileged through the exclusion or devaluation of other viable alternatives.

It is not simply that the *inevitability* of the excess of difference demands an attentiveness of us; our *indebtedness* to difference also gives difference this normative value. The very differences that exceed presently salient interpellations of identity might themselves prove fertile ground for as-yet unrealized possibilities for thought, action and relation, making the disruptions difference causes as productive as the compositions they enable. As Iris Young has convincingly argued, inclusive forms of democratic engagement enable the "partial and parochial" perspectives of any one individual or collective to be "enlarged" through exposure to different positions and the experiences and logics that make them salient for others (Young 2000: 113). Particularly in contexts of asymmetrical power relations, the inclusion of multiple perspectives "provides experiential and critical resources for democratic communication that aims to promote justice"; this not only challenges individuals to account for their positions beyond self-regarding terms, but also contributes to the social knowledge of the collective in such a way that may expose the limits of present terms, values and standards, broaden perspectives, and lead to more informed decisions (2000: 115).

Moreover, difference *enables* connection. Within Edward Said's terms, "survival in fact is about connections between things" (1993: 407). It is identity's internal difference and permeable borders, the fact that as Donna Haraway states "the I and we...is/are never identical to itself, [that gives] hope of connection to others" and enables collective "living-in-difference" (Haraway 1992: 87; Brah 2000: 272; Ang 2001: 194). Difference is the ground of, rather than obstacle to, connection and coalition: as William Connolly argues, the recognition of both one's own unpursued possibilities as well as one's dependence on another's difference for a sense of self can foster an "ethic of care

for life" (Connolly 1991: 166). These "multiple, conflictual axes of identity/difference" provide the very ground of community, what Avtar Brah calls "non-identical kinship," gesturing to alternative modes of coalition and affiliation that work *through* rather than in spite of difference (Honig 1996: 259; Young 1996: 127; Felski 1997:12; Brah 2000: 273). In contrast to static forms of identity politics that construe difference as merely problematic or oppositional, identity, meaning, and connection thus owe a "debt to difference" (Biddle 2003: 163).

In light of this body of democratic, poststructural and postcolonial literature, difference must be understood as not only an ontological reality but a normative good. Once we recognize the impossibility of any exhaustive theoretical interpretation or political system and hence that "what exists is far from filling all possible spaces" (Foucault 1989: 208) – once we acknowledge our own contingency, internal multiplicity, social interdependence, and hence 'debt to difference' – these realities make clear that ultimately the only sure ethical dictum is to enable the coexistence of differences and emergence of new possibilities, and consequently the productive disruption and potential transformation of present terms, identities and norms.

This ethical dictum I shall call a *care for difference* – a care for what exceeds and challenges present terms of identity and the perpetual disruption and transformation this excess of difference creates. This is neither a stance of relativism among possible political systems or social differences, nor a project of sheer proliferation that romanticizes difference and groundlessness as a new form of "doxa" (Felski 1997). The ethical mandate of a care for difference by definition sets a limit to receptiveness at only those possibilities whose identities are not inherently bound up in the vilification and

repression of others (Connolly 1991: 15; Hoy 2004: 234). But this also means that 'care' here does not equate with mere nurturing, nor does it seek to overcome tensions and disruptions in the name of interdependence or harmony. Indeed, a care for difference, by attending to the complex and dynamic nature of identity/difference, is a care for the "torsion" difference generates, the strife as well as interdependence it entails, and the perpetual and generative disruption this creates (Connolly 1991: xxviii).

I use the term 'care' here to gesture simultaneously to two literatures: feminist scholarship in the ethic of care, which has articulated a 'different voice' of ethics in contrast to that of abstract rights and universal laws, one that is grounded in contextual and relational systems of and responses to identity, meaning and responsibility (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984); and the poststructuralist 'care of the self,' which Foucault likewise developed in contrast to universal or fixed normative codes, to capture the contingent, artful and ever-in-process cultivation of identity, meaning and relation. These aspects of 'care' for difference will be developed further below, but at base, a care for difference is simply the attentiveness to the interrelation of identity and difference understood in these terms.

The task becomes one of chastening dogmatic claims to complete understandings and final drafts, so as to remain attentive and responsive as much as is viable to the inevitable excess within and beyond these existing frames – to the possibilities of being otherwise. It is to find generative ways of engaging identity and difference "without seeking to conquer, convert, marginalize, despise, or love to the point of suffocation every identity that differs from it" (Connolly 1991: 165). As incomplete as the attempt will always be, the challenge instead is to "insert a stutter in one's faith" and "struggle

against the denials and simplifications" of identity's accounts of difference, against

disproportionately indulging the impulse inherent in identity towards coherence and, with

it, homogenization and reification (Connolly 1991: xxiii,160; Landes 1996: 297). Hence

the ethical goal becomes that of maintaining the delicate and ever-shifting balance

between "the desire for home, for synchrony, for sameness, and the realization of the

repressions and violence that make home, harmony, sameness imaginable, and that

enforce it" (Mohanty and Martin 2003: 102).

Identity/Difference Politics: Agonistic, Pluralist Democracy

Democracy, in fact, is a political system that at base asks this very thing of us.

"Heterology", as Davide Panagia notes, "is the ontological condition of democratic

politics" (2009: 3). With difference as a given in democratic politics, apart from its

specific manifestations democracy is, as Claude Le Fort states, "instituted and sustained

by the *dissolution of the markers of uncertainty*" (Le Fort 1988: 19, original emphasis).

Defined this way, democracy is designed to enable the coexistence and meaningful

engagement of difference, whether already salient or yet-emergent in prevailing terms –

not to simply 'contain enough difference,' as if this were possible, but because these

limits are necessarily open-ended (Honig 1996: 258; Mouffe 1996: 254).

And so, democracy is a political system that recognizes the inherently 'unsettling'

nature of politics, a system designed to remain open and responsive to the productive

disruption and potential transformation entailed in encounters with difference, rather than

a settled and stable 'home' or homogenous community. As much as we might desire a

final state in which to rest – for this, too, is all-too-human – home as "illusion of

coherence and safety based on…exclusion" ethically makes clear "the need for a new

sense of political community which gives up the desire for [this] kind of home" (Mohanty and Martin 2003: 99; Honig 1996: 258). This, I would argue, is the radically democratic moment: an openness to difference that demands, even as we critically examine and form judgments regarding the differences we encounter, that the very terms with which we make sense of and evaluate such difference – including the very terms that define us – are unsettled and potentially transformed in the process.

While the specific form of a democracy governed by such an ethos is, by definition, far from determined, it follows that it would be informed by the ideal of pluralism and a spirit of agonism that strive to be ever-attentive to our 'debt to difference.' Though this account of democracy already entails a valuing of and responsiveness to difference, I include the notion of 'pluralism' here to emphasize this dimension of democracy, which is sometimes lost or overshadowed in other narrations that focus on institutional markers rather than norms and practices. The notion of agonism warrants more attention, however, as the term is sometimes misrepresented. As the challenge is not so much overcoming the tension between identity and difference, a political system that is attentive to difference is necessarily agonistic, its configurations and moments of consensus and community understood as contingent and open to reworking, contextually justified processes rather than ontologies (Foucault 1980; Connolly 1991; Mouffe 1996; Coles 1997). But agonism is more than a political system defined by antagonistic tension, for difference here is not construed as merely that which opposes identity as otherness, but also that to which it is indebted.

Hence, *in principle,* agonistic pluralism demonstrates a *care for difference*, and a care for the tensions and transformations such differences produce, even as they

inevitably entail conflict and strife. Given the violences and exclusions entailed in any achieved harmony, we need, as certain critical multicultural theorists have framed it, to "learn how to live awkwardly" with one another (McLennan 1995: 90; Ang 2001: 201). An agonistic, pluralist model of democracy provides the closest approximation yet articulated of this ideal of reconceptualizing home as an ongoing project of "ruled open-endedness, or organized uncertainty" rather than the "stasis of being" (Przeworski 1991: 13; Ahmed 2000: 89).

Receptive Generosity: A Politics of Listening

Engagement with difference is risky; it is by nature 'unsettling.' Politics is, as Mark Warren has described it, definitively a state of "groundlessness," where the very terms and norms regarding those matters most closely tied to our sense of self and place are open to contestation (Warren 1996). A *care for difference* demands that, rather than 'tolerate' difference or engage it solely within our own terms of reference, we continually *risk ourselves* – our picture of the world and our attachments therein – that we strive to perceive the limits of the "picture [that holds] us captive" (Wittgenstein 1958: §115), in order to meaningfully encounter difference in ways that do not simply fold it into the same. Thus we are continually creating and recreating the ground upon which democracy might flourish in the midst of difference and diversity.

To enact forms of engagement that realize a *care for difference* thus requires an affective stance towards difference that remains open within uncomfortable moments and the uncertain ground they present, that invites challenge and risks reflexive inquiry, to truly *listen well.* As the definition of agonism suggests, facilitating the open-ended negotiation of difference is not merely antagonistic, as it "hinge[s] upon a certain

solidarity with the common project of radical democracy" that is capable of sustaining the "tensions of coalition politics" (Coles 1996: 378, 376).

While many theorists both of the politics of difference and democratic engagement have focused on the dimension of voice – the act of speaking, of articulating difference – far fewer have examined how such 'voice' is heard. And yet, as Gayatri Spivak, Sara Ahmed and Susan Bickford also argue, a "politics of listening" is equally integral to meaningful engagement of identity and difference (Spivak 1996: 267-8; Bickford 1996; Ahmed 2000). Without openness to "'being with' others as others," to the unfamiliar, the uncomfortable, the potentially undermining – what Romand Coles calls "receptive generosity" and Jane Bennett calls "presumptive generosity" – the "subaltern...cannot be heard or read" (Coles 1996; Spivak 1999: 308; Bennett 2001: 131). Given the move of identity towards coherence over complexity, such articulations can too easily become dismissed, absorbed into or overshadowed by one's preconceived understandings of the other, by assumptions either that one need not know or knows 'them' already, so "mummifying" others in reified categories that preclude self-identifications and potential self-transformation (Fanon 1967: 34; Cornell and Murphy 2002: 441).

Moreover, a 'politics of listening' must circumvent the temptation and dangers of erasing one's indebtedness to difference – such as in a notion of generosity as unidirectional gesture, in forgetting the historical 'taking' that makes generosity possible, has been shown to do (Coles 1997; Diprose 2002). Here, listening requires an openness to being affected and potentially transformed by what we encounter, if it is to avoid forms

of benevolent imperialism that reinforce asymmetries even as they 'tolerate' difference (Taylor 1985: 129; Spivak 1990: 59-60; Cornell and Murphy 2002: 422).

In light of such risks inherent to engagement with difference, William Connolly identifies two 'virtues' in the ethos of pluralisation, both of which I see as vital facets of such *receptive generosity*: the first, agonistic respect, serves to maintain an awareness of self-limitations and a pathos of distance that recognizes the interdependence of differences even as they are experienced as a source of strife; it is of particular significance where different identities in contention already inhabit the terrain of the 'perceptible' or what Jacques Rancière calls the "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière 2004: 12). The significance of the second, critical responsiveness, comes to the fore in enabling those differences that are yet 'noise' in present terms of discourse to become 'sound' (Serres 1982: 67; Rancière 2004: 13); it is defined by an openness to these emergent differences, while remaining discerning of "whether a movement promises to support or curtail the spirit of pluralism" even as the terms of discernment themselves are open to question (Connolly 1991: xxvi-ix). In both cases – whether differences are already recognized within the terrain of the 'sensible' or yet emerging from the 'noise' – receptivity and openness are integral to the encounter. Meaningful engagements with difference involve a "dispossession of oneself...being-given to others that undercuts any self-contained ego," risking the very ground on which one stands (Diprose 2002: 4).

Difficulties of and Obstacles to Democratic Engagement

And yet, while justified as ontological inevitability and normative good, this openness to and care for difference that democracy requires is perhaps among the greatest demands it could make of us. This is because we seem cognitively, affectively and

politically predisposed to privilege the coherence of identity over the complexity of difference, and in the process to lose sight of the interdependence and generative tension of identity/difference. Consequently, though the relationship of identity/difference and the normative value of difference may be clear in theory, the lived reality is rarely so, where "the negativity of theory" is often overwhelmed by "the positivity of politics" (de Lauretis 1984; Mohanty and Martin 2003: 103). It is this move towards self-certainty that ultimately masks the relational, contingent nature of identity, and in so doing forecloses the possibility of being able to "think otherwise" (Foucault 1992: 15-16; Dallmayr 1997: 38).

There are two ways in particular that this dynamic interrelation is occluded in everyday life, which are in distinct contrast to and must be contended with by a democratic ethos. The first is the tendency of identifications to become "sedimented" and naturalized (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 441). Identities and meanings, however artful, however a matter of "becoming as well as being" (Hall 1996b: 448), have a way of masking their own contingency – we "become victims of [our] own 'good performance'" (Nietzsche 1974: 302). In Pierre Bourdieu's terms, "every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness" and becomes unquestioned, even unperceived, "doxa" (Bourdieu 1993: 159-60). We experience situated knowledges as universal truths, historically and culturally specific behaviours learned over time as expressions of our authentic selves, acquired tastes as sincere desires. The repetition of such acts traces them into the physical dispositions of the body and perceptions of the world; the contours of where one's picture

ends and others begin become blurred, until they all but disappear (Bourdieu 1993: 162-3).

In so doing, we lose our critical capacity to examine our own limits, complexity and contingency, and in the process limit the range of possibility for our own lives. This process of naturalization lies at the heart of those fundamentalist doctrines and movements that seek to deny the legitimacy and suppress the expression of other ways of being, without which such "ontological narcissism" would not be possible (Connolly 1991: 30). Indeed, who has the power to determine which 'picture' of social reality comes to prevail as the neutral standard against which all else is experienced as either deviation or noise represents "a major dimension of political power" (Bourdieu 1993: 161; Rancière 2004: 13).

Beyond this process of naturalization, our "debt to difference" is also overwhelmed by certain affective responses to alterity. The lived experience of identity as difference is often one of profound estrangement, displacement, and uncertainty – in Homi Bhabha's terminology, the thwarting of any attempt to find final rest, certain ground, or assured belonging transforms any semblance of home into the "unhomely," as territory once thought safe, coherent, and reliable ground – the very ground we are most invested in ensuring, to which we are most attached – is shaken beneath one's feet (Bhabha 1997: 445). Whether difference is encountered internally or externally, this moment of the 'unhomely' can be a profoundly affective one: it "creeps up on you as stealthily as your own shadow, and suddenly you find yourself...taking measure of your dwelling in a state of 'incredulous terror'," "forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (Bhabha 1997: 445).

Such encounters can easily incite counterproductive responses: shame turned to immobilizing guilt or resentment; rationalizations to shore up the self through essentializing and vilifying that which is perceived as threat; or simple exhaustion which so easily breeds deeper entrenchment into familiar terrain. In order to ensure one's self-certainty, then – to, in other words, give primacy to identity's move to coherence over difference's call to complexity – the tendency is all too often to interpret difference as otherness and threat, and to strive even more urgently for final closure and harmonious resolution (Werbner 1997: 228; Ahmed 2000: 88).

In so doing, the dimension of interdependence among and contingency of differences is lost, and in fervently striving to secure, as Archimedes, a fixed point on which to stand, one experiences one's own and others' difference simply in terms of strife standing between oneself and a final 'home' that is forever a dream deferred (Connolly 1991: 172). This interpretation of identity crisis solely as a source of anxiety rather than, also, a productive site of potential self-transformation ultimately exacerbates the "inability of constituted subjects – or nations – to accept their own internal differences and divisions" (Honig 1996: 270). Certainly, experience of difference is not merely benign. To claim so, as in the case of many advocates of "diversity," would be another form of erasure, for such ideals of harmonious pluralism occlude both power and history and serve, as many critical multicultural theorists have pointed out, only to "mask and perpetuate the persistent problems of social inequality" (Mouffe 1996: 247; Chow 2002: 133; Mohanty 2003: 193). However, to conceive of the perpetual elusion of difference from identity's grasp merely in terms of lack is ultimately to vilify that which remains inescapable, spurring on yet further attempts destined to fail. Indeed, as Judith

Butler demonstrates with homophobia and gender, the repetitive nature of such efforts "reveal…the very fragile nature of their constitutions. Why else the necessity to repeat if not to combat instability?" (Butler 1993; 1997; Biddle 2003: 162).

This intensive project of unification results in exclusions, suppressions and misrepresentations of differences within others and oneself that these absolutist circumscriptions require. These attempts to establish and enforce the divide between self and other cause what Gayatri Spivak calls the "epistemic violence" of othering discourses: among them, those "of imperialism, the colonized, Orientalism, exotic, the primitive, the anthropological, and the folk-lore" (Said 1985; Spivak 1987; Hall 1996a: 445). Whether pre-emptive or reactive, claims to fixity, authority, finality; to dogmatic universals; to one's identity expressing the necessary nature of existence – while fleetingly forging a sense of self-certainty – stigmatize the productive interplay of identity and difference as something to be overcome and suppressed. In so doing, the complexity, relationality, contingency, and revisability of meanings – along with those differences that exceed the frame – reassuringly retreat from view. And while these processes of othering are premised on denial and forgery, as Gilles Deleuze states, "something real happens to it as a result of this fiction" (Deleuze 1983: 131): repressions of the range of possible thought, action, and interaction both between and within groups (Dallmayr 1996: 284); the devaluation and silencing of alternative modes of being and denial of human agencies entailed therein; and consequently, as Said frames it, the obliteration of people as human beings (1985: 27).

And so to enact a care for difference in democratic engagement, we are required to open ourselves to the very aspects of identity/difference we spend most of our lives

working tirelessly to deny. It is, as Warren notes, precisely in these moments of groundlessness, against which we are cognitively and affectively opposed, that democracies place "exceptional demands on the self (for maturity, autonomy, and discursive engagement)...when other kinds of responses (avoidance, acquiescence, wishful thinking, fundamentalist assertion, or militant struggle) will seem to offer more satisfaction" (1996: 243). It is these processes against which democratic engagement as defined here is distinguished, and against which such practices must labour.

Democratic Engagement: The Practice of a Care for Difference

What would such democratic engagement look like in practice? Two images from radical democratic theory help capture this: the 'horizon' and the 'speaking.' Laclau and Mouffe distinguish the 'horizon' from the 'foundation' in their model of radical democracy: whereas the foundation is "determining and delimiting" of what it founds, fixing and policing the definition and role of the founded, the horizon is an open-ended "empty locus" whose definition changes in relation to that with which it engages. Horizons of liberty and equality around which individuals might galvanize, for instance, are experienced "not as 'essences' but as developing 'social logics'" that might yet be configured differently in different lights, in relation to changing relations (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 81, 183; Coles 1996: 378). The image of the 'horizon' works against totalitarian tendencies by envisioning identity and the collective as contingently and contextually defined; it generates multiple, flexible, and provisional points of commensurability and convergence, while acknowledging both the limits to one's claims to understand others as well as the "irreducible character of this diversity and plurality," and thus perpetual incompletion of the democratic project (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:

191). Moreover, as identities are continually worked and reworked, as the terms with which we interpret salience, legitimacy, and significance are subject to change in light of such processes, the shape of this project cannot be determined in advance.

The image of 'speakings' described by Chandra Mohanty and Biddy Martin also provides a particularly illustrative account of radical democracy within these terms of identity/difference. The 'speaking' is exemplified in the experience of multiple encounters while traversing the street: rather than a predetermined locale of defined parameters wherein unified, stable, and pregiven identities meet, 'speakings' work as "ever shifting centers," points of contact emerging in motion and interrelation that engage different aspects of multiple selves in response to varying encounters. The world is experienced as "overlapping circles," and belonging as a continual project of renewal in every encounter that cannot, by definition, depend on stable and coherent understandings of self or home. Here, in the 'speaking,' community "is the product of work, of struggle; it is inherently unstable, contextual; it has to be constantly re-evaluated in relation to critical political priorities; and it is the product of interpretation, interpretation based on an attention to history, to the concrete, to what Foucault has called 'subjugated knowledges'" (Mohanty and Martin 2003: 93-104). This last point is crucial: the "speakings" of democratic engagement take seriously the role of power within these relations, and attend to the possibility of exclusions, conflations, and reifications within such dynamics. It is to remain open to the possibility that one might have something to learn; that one might yet be surprised or transformed in light of engagement with difference.

This model of democratic pluralism, in contrast to publics that emerge through identification and assimilation or traditional models of pluralism that maintain a stable 'centre' that benevolently tolerates and carefully manages its 'differences,' enables the formation of what Sara Ahmed calls "a 'we' [that] does not abolish cultural difference, but emerges through it" (Ahmed 2000: 101). Within this model, the irreducibility of difference is not bracketed even in these moments of convergence, and the heterogeneity of interests and identities does not preclude common struggle and meaningful engagement. In fact, these moments of coalition or consensus emerge through rather than in spite of difference – as Chandra Mohanty and many feminist and postcolonial scholars have framed it, as "solidarity rather than sisterhood" or a "reflective solidarity as that openness to difference which lets our disagreements provide the basis for connection" (Dean 1996: 17; Mohanty 2003a: 193).

Moreover, this is a mode of meeting wherein, unlike traditional multicultural models that maintain centre and periphery or those models of public that seek or presume the need for common ground or goal, all parties are potentially transformed (Young 1996: 127). And in this model, engagement, coalition, community – and within them, moments of consensus, as Mouffe has argued – are based upon structural and situated conditions, interests and struggles, the result of careful effort and likewise "permanently open to contestation [and] a rearrangement of the terms, perhaps the very idiom, of consensus" (Mouffe 1996: 750; Young 2000: 7; Scott 2000: 298).

And finally, this model – which sees the agonism inherent to it due not only to the irreconcilability of constituted identities but also the perpetual remainder of what Jean-François Lyotard calls the "differend" that exceeds the bounds of any attempt to name,

categorize, or fix (1988: 9) – by necessity must leave room for what is not yet known, not yet salient, yet-emergent; it must find ways to institutionalize the fact that no present formation has all available information, or represents all possible interests and experiences, or is inevitably suitable to negotiate those that have yet to arrive on the terrain of the perceptible. Likewise, the forms of democratic engagement within it must also strive to maintain this reflexivity as to the contingency, partiality, and interpretive nature of individual perspectives as they encounter difference.

In general, then, this account of identity/difference provides key insights into what may be deemed democratic engagement: does it enact or cultivate an attentiveness to the 'noise' of difference and our indebtedness to it? Does it demonstrate or foster a sense of reflexivity, contingency, co-implication, and the affective stance of receptive generosity that makes this possible? Does it expose and challenge those systems and discourses that fail to do so? Ultimately, does it address aspects of exclusion, devaluation or conflation within current society so as to enable a healthy democratic pluralism that negotiates through difference and is structured to permit new possibilities? In short, this theory helps delineate the defining features of democratic engagement as that which *enacts a care for difference* and *receptive generosity* therein. This is significantly different from saying that all democratic practices understand their own projects in these terms – in fact, many might be seen to do quite the opposite, as in the case of many overtly negating, strategic essentialist or adversarial practices. However, whether these practices aim to foster a care for specific differences or difference in general, their justification as democratic practices depends instead upon whether the differences they manifest inherently broaden, redress or impose restrictions to the perceived range of

viable possibilities, whether they result in the necessary repression of difference or a

greater pluralisation of society.[4]

While these images of the 'horizon' and the 'speaking' reveal essential

dimensions of an agonist democratic pluralism in practice, they also illustrate that as the

term will be employed throughout this dissertation, democratic engagement is not defined

so much by a particular institutional design or location in conventional political sites.

Rather – as it seeks to remain attentive and responsive to difference and thus its very

form is open to disruption and transformation – it is understood here as a form of *praxis*,

defined by distinct qualities of communication and interaction.

But in the same vein, the dynamic and continual disruption of identity/difference

problematizes any predetermined taxonomy of democratic versus anti-democratic

practices. We have seen how democracy is enacted in particular moments, in 'speakings'

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[4] This distinction that demarcates the boundaries of democratic forms of engagement is subtle but crucial. While this limit is thus derived from an ethos of a care for difference that acknowledges the contingency and relationality of identity, this is not to exclude certain forms of radical engagement that might, first, experience themselves as naturalized essence and, second, do not themselves seek an agonistic pluralism that a care for difference demands. Indeed, many marginalized identities resisting prevailing power relations derive their solidarity, mobilization and strength through the essentialization of self-identifications, strategic or otherwise (Spivak 1987: 205). The crucial source of distinction, in these cases, is the fact that while all identities are constructed, they are positioned very differently within relations of power. Consequently, while they do not self-identify in terms of their contingency or 'artfulness,' they are distinguished from repressive or anti-democratic 'microfascisms' (Connolly 1995: xxvi) insofar as the essential differences for which they advocate redress current asymmetries and exclusions rather than depend upon the exclusion or repression of others. Likewise, marginalized identities that remain non-integrationist even as they demand recognition do not inherently require the repression of alternative possibilities so much as the intellectual and social space to exist. Militancy, essentialism, and non-integration – for example, in the case of Taiaiake Alfred's indigenous politics – are salient aspects of democratic practices insofar as these characteristics are premised not on an inherent misrecognition and suppression of viable difference, but as a response to situated realities governed by such misrecognition. Where these tactics result from an identity's inherent rather than strategic need to constrain alternative ways of being, as in the case of white supremacy, they are rendered unjustified. Indeed, this distinction necessitates a complementary project to chasten the assumed bounds of as-yet dominant positions as they learn to share terrain with subjugated identities in the process of being legitimated. It should be clear that these distinctions are far from claiming that there is a double standard between dominant and marginalized identities such that the latter are permitted to exercise repressive practices without being subject to accountability or critical evaluation. Rather, the very Foucauldian point to this distinction is the fact that within asymmetrical power relations the same tactic from different positions might have repressive or democratic effects.

that emerge and dissolve through encounter rather than fixed space. This means, of course, that the democratic nature of particular practices cannot be determined apart from their specific context – indeed, the same practice might be democratic or anti-democratic in relation to how and where it is enacted, by whom, for what purposes, and with what effects. This is intimately connected to the fact that, as this account makes clear, repressive relations and their democratic contestation do not function in easy predetermined or stable dichotomies, as many neo-Marxist or modernist models of resistance would imply. Discipline, normalization, reification and the truncation of self-critique emerge within ostensibly democratic practices, and while aspects of these functions of domination make articulation, organization and action possible, they also threaten to neutralize democratic energies from the 'inside.'

An analysis of democratic engagement must tease out the particular democratic practices and energies from projects that may be broadly defined as 'democratic,' and be sensitive to the ubiquitous and ever-changing faces of anti-democratic energies and the efforts to contest them. Indeed, while the ethos of democratic engagement within this model may be clear and patterns may emerge among the practices that embody it, the identification of democratic practices requires careful attention to particular context as well as the terms and dynamics of engagement. Even as conventional notions of democratic engagement are problematized by these distinctions, the markers of such practices become increasingly more precise.

Democratic Engagement: Potential Sites

It also follows from this account that such engagement of identity/difference, contra major republican or liberal models of public engagement, is not limited to

conventional 'public spheres,' and may occur throughout the social body, in the "micro-practices" of the everyday as much as in formal institutions and conventional political processes.

Two dimensions of everyday practice often overlooked in accounts of democratic engagement have particular significance in these negotiations of power, identity and difference: processes of meaning-making and the physical body. In the first instance, this account reveals the political significance of thought, imagination and discourse. While some traditions in political theory locate politics within only those acts that can be said to have institutional, formal impact, the account of politics developed here reveals the diffuse, interactive, and indirect effects of power. Indeed, decisive, dramatic changes to formal institutions and laws are understood not to result from singular action within a vacuum, but through the often untraceable, long-term and complex interaction of systemic processes. In light of this understanding of political change as diffuse, subtle and complex, the nature and effects of democratic engagement, though now much more difficult to definitively identify, are seen to include impact upon individual and collective perceptions, discourses, relations, norms, and actions, through everyday practices. What counts as sensible or invisible, reasonable or irrational, sound or noise; what is excluded, misconceived, or devalued in the name of what is natural, necessary or common sense; what can be signified in salient terms and so enter the domain of public engagement are revealed as highly political (Rancière 2004: 13; Panagia 2009: 7). Consequently, "resignification" of identities (Butler 2006: 176) and the denaturalization of prevailing mythologies that limit the range for thought and action become forms of democratic

engagement as potent as legal or structural address – indeed, the latter are effects (as well as, in turn, sources) of the former.

Certain theorists, in light of these insights, have concluded that power is largely, if not wholly, "noumenal" or "psychic," as it generates subjectivities and shapes the "space of reasons" or motivations for action (Forst 2010; Butler 1997). Certainly, whether or not one agrees that power can be explained wholly in these terms, it has become increasingly clear that the realm of perception, thought and imagination are deeply political. In light of this, prevailing discourses, which can coalesce in unstable but pervasive ways to continuously regulate and restrict action, neutralize potential agency and perception thereof, and have very real material effects (Foucault 1977; 1978: 100-1), become pivotal sites of political – hence potentially democratic – negotiation.

Secondly, as well as "thinking ourselves differently," democratic engagement with difference is "even more so...practicing ourselves into something new" (Heyes 2007: 9). Democratic engagement involves everyday practices of actual bodies. Identities are not givens, but rather ongoing processes of crafting through the repetition of concrete bodily practices (Butler 1990; 2004; Probyn 1993: 2). When we understand the extent to which 'regimes of perception' and the power relations they maintain are constituted and reinforced at the level of gesture, habit, and movement, the body limited by self-understandings and self-understandings limited by the body, the practices of physical bodies in space comes into sharp focus as a central site of political praxis (Bourdieu 1990; 1992). Richard Shusterman's example of looking over one's shoulder is particularly emblematic in this regard: while the automatic habit of lowering one's shoulder seems logical, its impact on the spine actually restricts one's range of

movement; quite literally, one sees less due to physical habituation, and, by critically

engaging the body as well as using the body to engage critically, "we can learn to see

better and see more" (Shusterman 2008: 70).

And while it is daunting to contemplate an impact on discourses and power

relations in general, it is at the local level of the everyday practice that gaps,

contradictions, and limits are most evident and hence most vulnerable to intervention;

indeed, all broader movements are based, without exception, in quotidian "little deviant

acts" (Connolly 1991: 373; Martin 1998b: 7; Heyes 2007: 117). Democratic practices

cannot be limited to pronouncing "a few words; no, the essence of being radical is

physical" (Foucault 1989: 191).

I am joined in this claim by the recent material turn across disciplines: from

anthropology, archaeology, cultural geography, political theory, and science and

technology, scholars have argued for the agency of things as 'actants' in themselves

(Latour 1983), and have turned to long-overlooked bodies of non-human animals,

ecologies, technologies, and infrastructure in such terms (Jackson 2000; Bennett 2001;

Lees 2002; Whatmore 2006; Thrift 2007; Anderson and Wylie 2009). These scholars

have sought to unsettle Cartesian binaries of animate/inanimate, object/subject,

matter/agency, and have argued for the 'rematerialization' of theory and practice.

Perhaps the literature that has contributed most to political theory's understanding

of the body in politics is that of feminist/gender studies. This is no accident: given that

the body has been gendered and women-as-body have been historically excluded from

domains of freedom, thought, and selfhood, feminism/gender studies has been a key

source of critical theorizations of the politics of actual bodies and their role as agents

therein (Butler 1987: 133; Albright 1997: 6). These scholars have illustrated in various ways that "the body is a situation," which comes to embody gender relations in "a set of corporeal styles" that maintain those relations and their effects of subordination even within those so dominated (de Beauvoir 1989: 34; Grosz 1994; McNay 2000: 25; Butler 2004: 275). While experienced largely as natural, gender – and identity more broadly – has been shown to depend upon this repetition or performance of its various symbols and mechanisms, and the expectation or presumption of a gendered "essence" (Probyn 1993; Butler 2004: 277; 2006: xv, 185). Here, the specific practices of actual bodies are found to both limit and be limited by the perceived range of possibilities for gendered identity.[5]

Just as the body is identified as a central means through which identity and politics are limited, these theorists note that it is through the concrete body that such limits may be effectively challenged (Butler 2006: 201). While Butler herself does not delve so much into the work of actual specific bodies, she does begin to explore the specific tactics that might play a role in such interventions, including "splitting, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmagoric status" (Butler 2006: 200). Such ways of 'practicing ourselves differently' are linked to the broader field of what Richard Shusterman calls *somaesthetics,* concerned with the development of greater sensory and

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[5] Though they are both key contributors to the literature on gender and performativity, Judith Butler and Eva-Marie Sedgewick have been criticized for lapsing into textual or linguistic frameworks (Foster 1998: 14; Desmond 2001: 12); however, others such as Susan Bordo, Sandra Bartky, Iris Marion Young, and Cressida Heyes have examined the concrete practices of gender normalization in more detail. Bordo, Bartky and Heyes have all made revealing studies of dieting, eating disorders, exercise regimens, cosmetic surgery, fashion, and other beauty practices deeply implicated in gendered technologies of discipline and normalization, as well as the complex relationship between such practices and experiences of subjectivity as feminine, sexy, and beautiful (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1993; Sawicki 1994; Heyes 2007). Likewise, Young has explored the causal link between women's self-limiting physical tendencies – from crossing one's legs to "throwing like a girl" – to the common experience for women in patriarchal cultures of one's body as object as well as agent (Young 1980).

kinetic understanding and capacity, in response to the same dilemma of imperfect sensory perception and physical restriction that led to the denial of the body in traditional Western philosophy (Shusterman 2008: 8, 19-20). By improving one's knowledge of the effects on perception and behaviour of breath and posture, unconscious tension, or pain or discomfort, as well as of the unconscious embodiment of prejudice, hostility, insecurity, or fear, such practices engage the embodied mechanisms, patterns and effects of power that elide logical or discursive analysis (Shusterman 2008: 26, 41). In these ways, in contrast to Moira Gatens's emphasis on the *civil* body, it is in fact this critical engagement by and transformation of concrete, particular bodies that ultimately transforms the "social imaginary" (McWhorter 1999; Diprose 2002).

We will see in chapter six that even those theorists who take this corporeal dimension of politics into account often fail to examine the actual practices of specific bodies. However, any analysis that recognizes the body's role in negotiations of power and identity must move beyond "speech about speech" (Martin 1998b: 218) to include the practices of living, breathing bodies. Thus, political – and hence potentially democratic – engagement is found to take place within the everyday practices of actual bodies; in fact, all practices that engage the imagination and meaning-making processes, that shape the "partitions of the sensible" for possible thought, action, and relation (Rancière 2004: 12). If the relations of identity/difference and their socio-political effects are taken seriously, democratic engagement that seeks to remain attentive to the excess of difference yet 'noise' within present terms and to redress those power relations and discursive constellations that conflate, vilify, or exclude viable differences for thought and action takes place not only in conventional publics, but in all contexts where meaning is made,

disseminated, and reinforced; at the level of bodies and gestures; in the realm of thought and imagination. Democratic engagement can potentially occur anywhere within the social body, wherever difference is encountered in its difference.

Conclusion

We have found that, in accordance with the nature of identity/difference, democratic engagement with difference is defined in terms of whether it (i) enacts a *care for difference* that does not conflate, exclude, assimilate or reify the differences it so encounters, thus contributing to the meaningful coexistence of as broad a range of social differences as possible; (ii) cultivates the affective conditions required for such engagement, such as *receptive generosity* that opens us to the 'unsettling' and potential transformation such care for difference entails; or (iii) redresses aspects of current society that work against such a ethos of agonistic pluralism, by rectifying asymmetries of power and broadening the range of perceived possibilities for thought and action. Though there are many forms such practices might take, we have seen how difficult these dimensions of democratic engagement with difference tend to be, given the tendency to obscure such relationality and indebtedness to difference in efforts to secure a sense of self, place, and relation. Formulated this way, this dilemma becomes an invitation: to identify those sites and practices that effectively engage identity/difference in these terms, examine the dimensions at work that contribute to as well as limit such capacity, and explore their possible implications for political theory and practice.

Chapter Two
The Limits of Conventional Modes of Communicating Difference: Objective Gaze,
Authentic Voice and Declarative Language

"We welcome you, but first we must fingerprint you, interrogate you, probe you…We
exempt you, we absolve you, we exonerate you, but only if you qualify for our
benevolence…We forgive you, but first we must certify you, standardize you, normalize
you, merge you, melt you, validate you, authenticate you, assimilate you…"
(Fusco 1989: 602)

Introduction

We have seen in chapter one that democracy demands forms of engagement

wherein the 'noise' of marginalized difference can become 'sound.' In an inevitably

diverse polity, "we are always looking across borders…[t]he issue is not *if,* but *how*, we

look" (Taylor 1998: 180), and democracy demands of us that we be open to being

implicated, challenged, and potentially transformed by difference, if we are to see, or

hear, well. And yet, though essential to democratic engagement, this openness to that

which unsettles the terms of identity and politics remains one of the greatest demands

placed on us as citizens. In fact, when we *do* bring ourselves into encounters with

difference – when, in Sara Ahmed's terms, we 'turn towards' rather than away from

alterity (Ahmed 2004: 4) – too often our very modes of representation and interaction,

how we see, speak and hear can replicate power relations that preclude the *care for*

difference and *receptive generosity* of democratic engagement.

Thus this chapter will show how traditional and still-common forms of seeing,

speaking, and hearing difference, emblematized in the tropes of the 'objective gaze' and

'authentic voice,' fall short of this ideal of a care for difference – where knowledge acts

as a form of mastery that 'manages' difference rather than mutual and unsettling

encounter, and difference is *appropriated*, *essentialized*, and *conflated* even as it is

engaged. I will show that this is apparent even in multicultural discourses, policies and practices that are expressly designed to engage marginalized difference. In particular, I will examine how the prevalent mode of representing difference in conventional political processes, what I will call *declarative language*, can unwittingly structure and limit engagement across difference in these ways, preventing encounters defined by the 'speaking' or 'horizon' as a democratic ethos demands. Ultimately, I will argue that these effects of conventional modes of communication call unproblematic notions of 'voice' and 'gaze' into question. This demands not only that we become more attuned to *how* as well as *if* we engage difference in democratic politics, but that we explore alternative modes of representing identity/difference that might offer resources precisely where such conventional modes encounter the greatest challenges.

The Objective Gaze and Authentic Voice: Critiques and Revisions

Chapter one discussed the tendency at an individual and social level to deny identity's multiplicity, relationality, and performativity; how the naturalization of our terms of reference becomes "a picture [that holds] us captive" (Wittgenstein 1958: §115) that either interprets difference as threat to our own self-certainty and stability, or cannot perceive it at all; how this misreading of difference leads to further epistemic violences that work to devalue, silence, assimilate, or exclude difference rather than turning us towards the unfamiliar in productive, if unsettling, ways.

This is captured, and in turn perpetuated, in one of the most influential discourses in the west, a particular mode of knowledge emblematized in the image of the 'objective gaze' so central to traditional inquiry within science, history, and anthropology. This mode of knowing which continues to have considerable support in each of these

disciplines has three core and historically significant aspects that do violence to representations of the other, and preclude reciprocal, unsettling, and potentially transformative encounters with difference. First, it is an *appropriating* gaze: by nature asymmetrical and unidirectional, the unmarked or 'unseen seer' hails the other into being through interpellation, at once denying the agency of the observed and the position of the observer as it claims the other for its own ("*I* know the other"). Second, it is an *essentializing* gaze: the other is construed as an object of knowledge, 'an other' that is stable, bounded, and coherent, a thing to be known ("I know *the other*"). And third, it is a *conflating* gaze: it assumes we *can* know the other in their entirety, that they are grasped, captured, apprehended; through a myth of neutrality and transparency it erases the distance between one's experience and another's understanding of it ("I *know* the other").

Within this gaze, knowledge of the other is a *form of mastery* rather than a form of mutual accountability or meeting – the knower cannot be affected by nor accountable to the other – and it thus lacks the *receptive generosity* that a democratic ethos requires. This is a nonreciprocal and voyeuristic gaze of "peeping and watching," which Diana Taylor says "leav[es] the viewer safely out of the picture…[while] it invisibly posits the watching 'us' as the stable center." As such, it has played a vital role in the "colonialist and militarist gesture of appropriation and internalization of the 'other' to reinforce the defining 'self'" (Taylor 1998: 182; Tamas 2009). Likewise, this gaze cannot acknowledge the limits of its own purview and consequently encounter the other in their difference – what I have been calling a *care for difference*. Rather, where it 'grasps' its object, this mode of knowledge or discourse of the other facilitates a crude form of

empathy that erases difference, wherein the other is only known through folding it into present terms. Thus, it leads to *percepticide*, to borrow Diana Taylor's term (1998), of both what is within and beyond this grasp, wherein the remainder of difference that does not fit these terms can only be felt as so much noise.

This notion of the 'objective gaze' and the politics it puts in motion have been subject to extensive critique in recent years, leading to growing reflexivity within the fields most implicated by it. Anthropology, a field with a long-standing mythology of the neutral and authoritative observer of bounded and knowable 'others,' has also been one of the first and foremost to rigorously unpack this myth when the Empire began to reverse the gaze (Favret-Saada 1977/80; Clifford 1983; Geertz 1990). Within the field of history in western countries, World War One and the interwar years challenged then-prevailing notions of 'true knowledge,' 'disinterested objectivity' and accurate knowledge of intentionality, and though there was a return to objectivity in response to struggles against totalitarianism, many critical historians acknowledge the interpretive, mediated dimension of their research as a rule (Novick 1988; Munslow 2002). And with such discoveries as relativity, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, and the 'observer effect,' science, too, has had to shake its own faith in 'realism' and our capacity for unmediated knowledge. These critiques of the neutral and objective "gaze from nowhere" span to other fields where this gaze has left its mark, political science, ethics and law among them, as well as democratic, postcolonial and feminist scholarship discussed in chapter one (Rorty 1979, 1989; Foucault 1980; Said 1985; Fish 1990; Bhabha 1994; Haraway 2003).

What these critiques all share is what chapter one has argued for: a growing

attention to the complex, dynamic and historical nature of 'others,' the power relations and discursive limitations through which they are hailed, and hence both the situated nature of any knowledge-claims and the observer's accountability to the observed who looks back. While there have been pulses of relativism as a part of this scholarship, in general this critique has been quite the opposite; in fact, relativism in this context is the "mirror twin" or such totalizing vision, as it equally denies its position and partiality, "mak[ing] it impossible to see well" (Haraway 2003: 395). Within this critical scholarship, acknowledgment of the partiality and politics of perspective is considered essential to the ability, as Clifford Geertz argues, to "form complex concrete images of one another, as well as the relationships of knowledge and power that connect them" (Clifford 1983: 119). These scholars have made clear that a model for knowledge other than the 'gaze from nowhere' is required if we are to avoid forms of benevolent imperialism that appropriate, essentialize, and conflate that which it apprehends (Spivak 1990: 59-60).

At the same time as this particular *gaze* has been problematized within even the most scientific of fields, the parallel notion of *voice* as authentic 'truth' has come under similar critical scrutiny. The incongruence of these two embodied metaphors – from sight to sound – is no accident as it moves from perception to expression; whereas the eye roves, invisible to itself, over the external purview according to the will of the viewer, the influx of sound remains largely uncontrollable, pressing itself against the open and, when so pressed, keenly felt ear. Hence sight can afford itself the illusion of objectivity, what Joan Scott calls the "metaphor of visibility as literal transparency" (1992: 23), while sound impresses itself upon us in ways that undermine the notion of

autonomy in the perceiving subject. And yet, as we move from perception to expression, sound that emanates *from* us comes from 'deep within,' forged through the unique contours and hollows of our internal landscape. And so, the 'authentic voice' meets the 'objective gaze' in this myth as its appropriate counterpart; indeed, perhaps this very mixing of metaphors belies some of the contradictions and incommensurabilities inherent to this model of knowledge.

Despite the shift in metaphor, recent critiques of the 'authentic voice' follow a similar line. Firstly, the authenticity of voice has been challenged by the fact that we are not even transparent to ourselves, let alone to others. Just as the eye cannot see itself, Terry Eagleton and others argue that "full disclosure is never as full as it appears…the absence deriving from the impossibility of grasping ourselves, even as we seem to desire full frankness" (Eagleton 2003: 214; Huddart 2008: 11). This critique pertains to collective as well as individual voice: the notion that such a voice can represent the 'truth' of the groups with which that individual identifies – that one can 'speak for' others as well as oneself – has been called into question, along with the tradition of the native informant and tokenist policies that seek to represent complex and diverse groups through a select few.

And despite a long-standing therapy-driven "culture of confession" that conflates expression with liberation – that demands of us, "'Confess yourself!' 'Perform yourself!'" (Atlas 1996; Chow 2002: 152) – the history of dominant reception of marginalized accounts demonstrates that voice guarantees neither authenticity nor freedom (Brown 2005). Indeed, what Julie Salverson calls an "idealization of authenticity" might actually lead to the policing of presumed boundaries of, and setting

asymmetrical value for, the authenticity of various voices ('who is authentic?', 'are *you* authentic?'). Moreover, these prescriptive notions of 'the authentic' truncate the complexity and multiple points of entry that diversity of experience demands (Salverson 1996: 184). Though it is crucial for democracy to find ways for subjugated knowledges to find articulation or 'voice' on the terrain of the perceptible, as Haraway states, this is not because they are more 'authentic,' 'objective' or 'innocent,' but rather because they are likely to offer perspectives that are not blinded by the "god trick" of the traditional dominant gaze that denies its own partiality (2003: 395).

And so, just as the 'objective' gaze is critiqued for conflating the inevitable distance between reality and our knowledge of it, 'authentic' voice can never be transparent to itself; just as the objective gaze essentializes that which defies fixed and bounded categories, so too voice cannot 'speak for' essentialized groups; and just as the unidirectional gaze is seen to erase the agency of the other, so too voice is far from synonymous with liberation. Modes of knowing that have defined and shaped western forms of engagement with difference, modes that assume an essential other that can be fully known by the appropriating gaze or unproblematically expressed by the authentic voice, are not only ineffective in enabling engagement across difference, but potentially dangerous by the ways they structure and limit what can be perceived.

Models of Multiculturalism: Identity Managing Difference

This form of understanding 'others' structures engagement across difference that is in sharp contrast to the democratic ethos of a care for difference and receptive generosity, in which difference is encountered such that it unsettles and potentially transforms personal and prevailing terms for identity and politics. And, inevitably, it has

had very real political effects. Where it has appeared in multicultural discourses and policies – designed with the express intent of acknowledging and including social difference – this has often led to the address of ethno-national differences in ways that entail their own forms of regulation, restriction, and exclusion, what Richard Day has called soft assimilation in relation to indigenous peoples (2000, 2001).

This is no more true than in Canada, where multiculturalism is often seen as a hallmark of the Canadian polity both in theory and practice. Certainly the most influential political thinkers in Canada, Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, are associated with building the theoretical foundations for liberal multiculturalism, rooted in a recognition and rights model respectively. Canada was also the first country to introduce national legislation that sought to protect and preserve its multicultural heritage as early as 1988, and while support for multicultural policies in Europe and Australia has been increasingly eroded, such policies, while challenged by the current Conservative government, continue to be seen as integral to Canadian identity and culture and one of its most significant exports on the world stage (Kymlicka 2005, 2007). There are some important positive dimensions to this theory and policy within Canada, including, as artist and scholar Richard Fung notes, their successes as a "lever and context for raising the question of systemic racism," discrimination and exclusion (Fung, in Gagnon and Fung 2002: 66), and for providing an alternative to forcible assimilation into Anglo Canadian culture for Quebec Francophones and ethno-cultural minorities. At a time when many European leaders are calling for the end of multiculturalism, Canadian political theorists and practitioners remain committed to some form of multicultural policy that is designed in some sense to care for certain kinds of difference.

Notwithstanding these positive dimensions of multicultural theory and policy in Canada, there are aspects of liberal multiculturalism as theorized by Taylor and Kymlicka and practiced in Canada that reveal assumptions of 'authentic voice' and 'objective gaze' as described above. While claiming to reinscribe difference within and thus transform "an evolving [national] identity" (Canada 2005: 3), these policies often continue to distinguish "diverse cultures" from national culture, the former 'tolerated' by an unshaken dominant culture and demonstrating what Richard Dyer calls "the power of whiteness [to] colonize the normal rather than to be superior" (Dyer 1988: 44-45; Gunew 1994a: 5; Tator et al. 1998: 261). Moreover, such 'diverse' cultures are often not construed as legitimate in themselves, but rather validated in light of their perceived contribution to this national culture, as "fragments of culture…the [latter] simply exists, whereas minority cultures '*exist for*'," justified as a "resource" through a discourse of enrichment (Canada 1988; Hage 1994: 31-32; Mackey 2002: 67).

Similarly, traditional multicultural discourse and policy often reveal a presupposition of cultural and ethnic groups as pre-given, essentialized categories, connected to distinct history and territory, as well as cultural property that is seen to signal this identity (Segal and Handler 1995; Dávila 1999: 183). Thus official multicultural policy's mandate to "preserve" cultural "heritage" (Canada 1988) not only reifies or, to use Fanon's term, 'mummifies' cultural identity rather than enable self-determination and a pluralisation of self-identifications that reflect the multiplicity that is always already present (Fanon 1967: 34; Cornell and Murphy 2002: 422). It also represents the potential for state authorization of 'authentic' culture for the purposes of official recognition, based on representative signs for various groups (Handler 1988;

Dávila 1999: 183). To name cultural groups in this way, though motivated by the desire

to address historical exclusion, nonetheless assumes the authority and control over stable

cultural definitions (Meera 2002: 85).

For these reasons, such models of multiculturalism have been heavily critiqued as

a means of managing or containing difference (Hall 1991; Dominguez 1992; Gunew

1994a: 6; Tator et al. 1998: 4; Dávila 1999: 193; Dhamoon 2009). In the Canadian

context,

> the state did not seek to erase difference, but rather attempted to institutionalize,
> constitute, shape, manage, and control difference…the key issue here is that
> despite the proliferation of cultural difference, the power to define, limit, and
> tolerate differences still lies in the hands of the dominant group. Further, the
> degree and forms of tolerable differences are defined by the ever-changing needs
> of the project of nation-building. (Mackey 2002: 70)

What emerges as the primary issue is that liberal multiculturalism, despite its

potential for addressing exclusion and discrimination, has in both theory and practice

tended to replicate a discourse of 'managing differences' and reinforce asymmetrical

relations between dominant and marginal identities. Like the discourse of the 'objective'

gaze and 'authentic' voice, this dynamic of engagement both presumes a static identity

politics and is premised on the dominant culture's authority to name and thus isolate

difference, "diluting," as artist and scholar Darrell Moore writes, "the thrust of self-

determination and control [over] our voices and our stories" (Moore 1998: 53). And as a

result, encounters with difference are not generally defined by a care for difference as

difference or the receptive generosity that the 'unsettling' and potential transformation of

democratic politics require. This is a model of engagement that shores up a national

identity even as it engages difference, the former in fact stabilized, validated and

naturalized through how the latter is engaged – a sedative rather than transformative pluralist politics.

Speaking Truth to Power? The Risks of Declarative Language

As the case of liberal multiculturalism makes clear, the influence of this particular mode of engagement emblematized in the 'objective gaze' and the 'authentic voice' persists in the language and logic we commonly use to engage identity/difference in theory and practice. Recognizing the role that such politics of representation play in structuring understanding and engagement across difference, as well as how this perpetuates asymmetries and exclusionary practices, critical democratic theorists have begun to interrogate particular modes of representation used to include difference in politics. Bryan Garsten (2011) observes a recent "rhetoric revival" in political theory that is doing precisely this: a growing number of scholars who are taking seriously the politics of representation within democratic theory and practice. These scholars offer crucial insights regarding those aspects of conventional discourse that stand in the way of productively unsettling encounters with difference.

At the heart of these critiques is a concern with what I shall call *declarative* language, a particular if prevailing mode of representation that carries with it – and thus perpetuates – implicit claims of objective, transparent, and exhaustive account, and therefore particular forms of engagement that can perpetuate an appropriating, essentializing and conflating gaze that falls far from the democratic ideal of the 'speaking' or 'horizon.' While these scholars have tended to focus their critiques on common modes of deliberation, a productive overlap exists between my own analysis and theirs with respect to the discursive conditions and constraints of conventional styles

of deliberation, which lays the groundwork for a critique of declarative language more generally.

It has been noted that democratic theory in the twentieth century is characterized by a 'linguistic turn,' wherein language has become the key organizing concept for accounts of how meaning is constituted and knowledge is grounded (Rorty 1992; Fultner 2001). Traditional styles of 'rational deliberation' – which, since Plato, have been (rhetorically) distinguished from sophistry – are seen to posit an unrealistic degree of transparency to language and direct transference of stable and bounded meaning. For when language is understood as far from neutral and always embodied or situated, communication and understanding become highly interpretive and partial processes. Indeed, since Habermas it has become commonplace in democratic theory to consider knowledge a discursive activity, requiring validation through language rather than appeal to objective or transcendent fact (Habermas 1984). As Hans-Georg Gadamer, hermeneutic theorist par excellence, has noted, "the way we experience one another...constitute[s] a truly hermeneutic universe" (Taylor 1994; Haraway 2003; Gadamer 2004: xxiii).

This 'linguistic turn' has been developed in recent years in two notable ways. The first is a greater attunement to the political effects of specific forms of speech. As critics have argued, styles of 'rational deliberation' that have come to predominate democratic engagement often take as neutral or universal very culturally specific modes of engagement – specifically, the 'disembodied,' 'disinterested,' and deliberative communicative modes of white, Western, middle-class, able-bodied, and educated men. These communicative standards tend to privilege this demographic and discount those

whose different "speech cultures" value alternative forms, often including articulations

of 'difference' only insofar as they can be conveyed within these culturally specific

terms (Young 2000: 38-40; Dahlberg 2005: 114). Consequently, some democratic

theorists acknowledge that formal inclusion within public engagement does not equate

with inclusion per se, as the "discursive hierarchies" within them structure relative access

for some people over others (Fraser 1992: 118; Warner 2002; Howe 2009: 248). These

theorists seek to extend the Habermasian project of equalizing power relations and

increasing inclusivity within democratic engagement, by examining these undertheorized

dimensions of power and exclusion within deliberative modes of speech.

The second project within the recent 'rhetorical revival' has been to revisit and

reclaim the role of affect and rhetoric in political communication. In privileging

'rational' and 'disinterested' speech, critics observe that conventional deliberative

models often maintain a long-standing distinction between reason and emotion, the

former defined by Habermas in part by its lack of affect and 'autonomy' from the latter's

'coercive' force (Habermas 1975; Abizadeh 2001, 2007). In contrast, those who have

contributed to the 'rhetoric revival' argue that the aesthetic-affective does not work at

cross-purposes to substantive meaning, and in fact is integral to it. Tone, volume and

pace of voice, facial expression, gesture, affective expression, and rhetorical devices play

key roles in conveying and interpreting meaning, such that, as Richard Rorty concludes,

the line between rhetorical persuasion and the 'force of argument' "begins to fade away"

(Young 1987: 73; Lash 1994; Rorty 1997: 18; Hoggett and Thompson 2002; Massumi

2002: 3; Walzer 2002; Dahlberg 2005: 114-116). Indeed, in this light the dispassionate,

clear, and direct "speech culture" that is often taken as a sign of objectivity in

deliberation is revealed to be its own form of rhetoric. The beneficial role of speech's rhetorical dimensions is also acknowledged even by theorists who still posit a clear line between substance and form, as rhetoric is seen to "open people to deliberation, draw them together into a functioning deliberative community, and help transform their opinion into policy" (Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Dryzek 2002, 2010; Chambers 2009; Garsten 2011: 163). Here, again, *how* one speaks is as crucial to understanding as *if* one speaks at all, and these theorists show in various ways that far more is involved in – and essential to – democratic engagement than the mere 'force of argument.'

These theorists are a part of a movement within democratic theory that takes seriously the extent to which discursive conditions structure and limit democratic participation. They signal a move away from unproblematized notions of 'objectivity' and 'rationality,' towards both a careful critique of the subtler forms of power that circulate in political discourse, and a broadening of the commonly held terms for what counts as such. Moreover, these scholars see this move as essential to increasing inclusivity in democratic engagement. While this project is already underway in democratic theory, I will argue that we can go further, by examining a broader discourse or 'voice' for representing and engaging difference, of which deliberative styles of communication are only one example.

These critiques begin to gesture to the implicit assumptions and discursive limitations of what I shall call *declarative language*. This is a discourse characterized by the literal and factual, where adverb follows verb follows noun, each taken to signify an external reality that is stable, coherent and relatively transparent. It might be difficult to see, because it is everywhere: this is the standard discourse in the west – from

journalism, academics and politics to the colloquial conversation – and privileged by almost all models of 'legitimate' democratic engagement. Like the deliberative speech culture Young and others critique, declarative language is often assumed to be universal or neutral, but in reality it belies a cultural specificity wherein, as Henri Giroux observes, "clarity becomes a code word for an approach…that is profoundly Eurocentric in both context and content" (Giroux 1993: 166). But while this cultural specificity is itself a source of exclusion of alternative "speech cultures" as Iris Young suggests, I further argue that the particular structure and implicit claims of this language also entail distinct challenges to representing identity/difference in the terms it requires.

Most importantly, declarative language by nature *erases its own absences* – by implicitly claiming direct, bounded and stable referents, by asserting itself as faithful account of the factual, by its presumed opposition to and ostensible absence of rhetorical or aesthetic modalities, the language that predominates in the everyday masks its own performativity. And so, though deliberation in theory and practice takes as given that meaning is far from objective, exhaustive or directly perceived, the grammatical structure of declarative language used in deliberation implicitly asserts such claims. In fact, though it has been used by critical theorists such as those discussed in chapter one to effectively argue for and even draw reflexive attention to the situatedness of knowledge-claims – as this sentence is doing now – we have to work very hard to signal such performativity within this mode, as this erased absence is built into its very grammatical structure. This is the language that Plato famously contrasts with the unruly emotion of poetics or the imperfect mimesis of aesthetics, a language that claims to capture reality and truth in its utterances. Indeed, even when one uses such language to

argue the opposite ("Identity is complex, non-exhaustive, and in process"), the grammatical structure of declarative language necessarily makes these statements into truth claims that deny their own remainder.

As such, it not only fails to represent the totality of its referents but in the same gesture its structure implicitly claims to *do* precisely this, a tendency that reflexive speakers must toil against with careful caveats and qualifications. As Della Pollock argues, literal speech "displaces, even effaces 'others' and 'other-worlds' with its partial, opaque representations of them, not only not revealing truths, meanings, events, 'objects', but often obscuring them in the very act of [representation]" (Pollock 1998: 83). This tendency in declarative language to obscure its own absences shares in common certain tendencies described in chapter one of erasing one's own frame of reference and claiming what is contingent, relational, multiple, and partial to be universal, essential, autonomous, cohesive, and exhaustive. As such, declarative language lends itself to representation and interpretation in these terms – what Julie Salverson calls the "lie of the literal" (1996). Consequently, it too easily perpetuates certain forms of epistemic violence when positions that do not fit prevailing terms seek audience.

Whereas these critical democratic theorists have begun to examine the political effects of such discursive practices, this area of study in democratic political theory is recent and fairly limited, compared to disciplines historically more attuned to discursive considerations such as postcolonial theory, cultural studies and critical anthropology. And while democratic theorists keep their focus primarily on styles of deliberation – what is really a subset of declarative discourse – postcolonial theory, trauma theory, and

cultural studies have examined the effects of declarative language conceived more broadly. The most notable and extensive critique of this kind is to be found in the literature around testimony and autobiography. Tellingly, the risks and dangers identified in both of these genres are directly linked to their *declarative* dimensions when used to represent marginalized difference. While testimony and autobiography are not explicitly or uniformly identical to the conventional discourse analyzed in democratic theory, this literature can contribute to our understanding of democratic engagement nonetheless, by providing profound insights into the political effects of specific communicative modes and thus, ultimately, how the 'noise' of marginalized difference can become 'sound.' And so, to develop a full account of the political effects of declarative language, this chapter moves from critical democratic theory to testimony and autobiography in order to better understand the nature of such language in more depth.

Testimony and Autobiography: How the Medium Affects the Message

The risks of declarative language in engagement with marginalized difference are most directly and thoroughly analyzed in the literature on testimony and autobiography. This analysis is particularly relevant to this context, as not only are both genres structured according to the declarative mode of truth-telling, but both are used commonly to represent marginalized difference to audiences of what Spivak calls "a less oppressed other," for the purposes of representing absent others and rectify historical wrongs (Yúdice 1996; Spivak 1998: 7; Hatley 2000: 20). Sidonie Smith notes of autobiography that it has often been, using Homi Bhabha's turn of phrase, "taken up by those who…have been 'overlooked' – in the double sense of social surveillance and psychic disavowal – and, at the same time, overdetermined – psychically projected, made

stereotypical and symptomatic" (Bhabha 1994: 236; Smith 1998: 38). Likewise, testimony represents 'truths' of experience that, as Shoshana Felman observes, "have not settled into understanding or remembrance…events in excess of our frames of reference" (Felman 1995: 16). As such, they are both common modes of representation for what Deborah Britzman calls "difficult knowledge" that can be challenging or painful to hear, such that "many people would prefer not to see it" (Britzman 1998; Park-Fuller 2000: 36). As Young and Means argue regarding narrative more generally, these are modes of representation that enable the articulation of experiences, needs and values that are yet "pre-discursive" in dominant terms, and so help 'bring difference to the table' (Young 2000; Means 2002). Indeed, the recent popularity and academic interest in testimony emerged out of a growing concern over "the recuperation of voices and traumatic experience deemed lost through state, academic, cultural or literary discourses" (Cubilié and Good 2004: 4).

Further, testimony and autobiography require the *receptive generosity* that characterizes democratic engagement, a receptive audience as witness much as a gift requires a recipient. As Heather Lash notes, they are addressed "specifically to *me*, it implicates *me*" (Madison 1998: 278; Lash 2006: 222). Such personal narratives are thus more than individual confession; they are, rather, social and political acts that concern the interface of the individual with what Ori Avni calls "the narratives and values by which this community defines and represents itself" (Avni 1995: 216).

Moreover, though such reciprocity demands something of both speaker and listener, when used to represent marginalized difference to a broader community these speech acts occur on uneven ground, such that, as Salverson notes, "people do not take

risks equally" (Salverson 1999). To hear such a speaker, akin to the dynamics of receptive generosity developed in chapter one, the listener must "radically uproot who they understand themselves to be, and, with the question of how they will respond, introduces a fundamental challenge to what they intend to become" (Salverson 1996: 182). At the same time, the speaker runs their own emotional and political risks, as they labour to represent experiences that defy the terms of dominant discourse, and in the process expose themselves to possible indifference, unsympathetic scrutiny or reactive defense, as well as the emotional impact of recalling trauma (Salverson 1999; Gilmore 2001: 4; Park-Fuller 2000: 24). Both "to speak the unspeakable" and to listen in this way, as Diana Taylor and Linda Park-Fuller write, therefore "entai[l] a responsibility, a risk, and a danger" (Taylor 1998: 184; Park-Fuller 2000: 24).

The demands of the declarative are also clear in both of these discourses: though testimony and autobiography always entail a certain dramaturgical element, these modes of public address tend to mask their own performative dimensions. They are designed to – and demands that speakers – "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," a discursive demand in which truth is often equated with and restricted to the 'facts,' facts that are understood as objective, bounded, stable, and independent from both speaker and audience (Park-Fuller 2000: 26). Testimony and autobiography are thus often constrained by what Leigh Gilmore calls an "almost legalistic definition of truth telling…[a] preference for the literal and verifiable, even in the presence of some ambivalence about those criteria" (Gilmore 2001: 3). Consequently, the aesthetic dimensions of such acts are not only downplayed but are often interpreted as working at cross-purposes to and indeed, if too pronounced – much like emotional or rhetorical

displays in deliberation – undermining the validity of their truth-claims (Tierney-Tello 1999: 79-80; Waterson 2010: 513).

And here certainly, where one's 'authentic narrative' is taken as evidence of absent truths, a culture of confession has often equated such declarative modes of 'truth-telling' with liberation, seen to 'break the silence' and 'speak truth to power' (Felman and Laub 1992; Felman 1995: 16; Yúdice 1996: 44; Park-Fuller 2000; Cubilié and Good 2004: 4). The use of both autobiography and testimony – particularly in the form of truth commissions worldwide – has risen dramatically in recent years (Gilmore 2001; Cubilié and Good 2004); in fact, in almost every state that has transitioned from authoritarian rule or civil war, and even in those still fraught with violence and oppression but hopeful of transition, "there has been interest in creating a truth commission" (Hayner 1994: 23). This is because these declarative modes of giving account are seen to

> 1) enable a re-appropriation of voice and reconstitution of self;
> 2) reveal experience of marginalized peoples and promote civic
> change; and
> 3) constitute a liberatory epistemology.   (Park-Fuller 2000: 21)

Certainly, particularly within testimony, this form of truth-telling has played an essential role in correcting the historical record of colonialism, racism and other forms of violence and exclusion whose dominance often comes with – and is legitimized through – erasure and denial. The facts matter: such evidence has enabled the development of collective counter-narratives that cannot be denied, and so has provided marginalized communities both catharsis and leverage for political and structural redress. Thus testimony and autobiography are often defended as means by which those who are 'voiceless' may not only represent themselves but also engage in politics – in other words, sites where 'noise' may potentially become 'sound.'

And yet, just as multicultural policy has structured *how* marginalized difference gains entry in politics even as it opens up previously foreclosed space to do so, unproblematic notions of truth-telling within autobiography and testimony as inherently liberatory or conciliatory overlook how these genres structure understanding and engagement across difference. Those who have analyzed these forms of marginalized representation find some limitations, strikingly similar to those described earlier with respect to declarative language: it can replicate an 'objective gaze' and sense of 'authentic voice,' which structure and limit what can be represented and how this is engaged. In short, it encourages a sense of an appropriating *I* who fully *knows* an essentialized *other*. Thus, critical literature on testimony and autobiography provides specific insight into the role that declarative language plays across difference and power. While the representation of such marginalized experiences or positions is essential to the democratic project, the terms and structures of declarative language, alive in both of these modes, can often replicate asymmetries and perpetuate misrepresentations and harms even when the intention is to challenge and redress these selfsame processes. Testimony and autobiography, though often assumed to be and used for purposes that are progressive or interventionist, are not inherently so, and many of the ethical dangers that occur have been linked to declarative language's particular form of truth-telling (Cubilié and Good 2004: 6; Spivak 1998: 9).

The question becomes, then, as Sidonie Smith asks, "If to take up the autobiographical mode is to take up certain discourses of selfhood and truth-telling, what are the performative liabilities and possibilities?" (Smith 1998: 38) Or to put it another way, do the demands of a particularly declarative language – even within avenues that at

first glance appear to be more amenable to voicing and listening to the experiences of marginalized experience such as autobiography and testimony – create barriers to communication and therefore democratic engagement? And, if so, are there other modes beyond those that use the declarative, that could allow a fuller expression of voice and a receptive listening in the terms identity/difference politics requires?

The Appropriating Gaze: "***I*** know the other"

As many scholars have noted, there is a power asymmetry inherent within the testimonial mode as much as within many forms of democratic engagement across difference. While testimony seems to entail a certain reciprocity and responsibility on the part of the listener that is meant to guard against the voyeurism of spectacle, this responsibility is a demand rather than inevitability, and may or may not be taken up by the culturally dominant audience. Even if one has a receptive and responsible audience, testimony is by definition articulated on uneven ground wherein one seeks to make marginalized experience comprehensible to a dominant listener. Thus autobiography and testimony can, as Julie Salverson and others observe, "reproduce a form of cultural colonialism that is at the very least voyeuristic" (Salverson 1996: 181).

As such, given the tendency of declarative language to signal a transparent account of experience, knowledge production within this dynamic can privilege the listener as interpreter:

> The situation is not unlike the old anthropological one…The production
> of testimony is also not unlike the classic psychoanalytic situation. The
> analysand is persuaded…to give witness to his or her own truth, to which
> the analyst has access by virtue of tracking the graph of the
> metapsychological machinery… (Spivak 1998: 7)

For this reason, Spivak goes so far as to say that "[t]he subaltern's inability to

testify is predicated upon…a failure of responsibility in the addressee," wherein the agency of the speaker is usurped by the notion of the passive victim interpellated by the listener (Spivak 1998: 9). Knowledge produced in this way, even if it is knowledge of marginalized experience, can have the adverse effect of allowing listeners to, as Doris Sommer argues, "presume mastery and maintain a sense of superiority" (Sommer 1993: 141-3). If truth is conceived as an object of knowledge represented directly through declarative speech, within such asymmetrical relations these truths can too easily become objects for the listener to actively 'grasp' through their knowing rather than subjects that look and speak back to its audience, which would challenge the very premises of the status of the listener upon which the power to grasp depends. Thus, as defined above, the observer becomes the 'I,' the *appropriating* gaze which is asymmetrical and unidirectional, the unmarked or 'unseen seer' hailing the other into being through interpellation, at once denying or limiting the agency of the speaker as it claims the other for its own.

The Essentializing Gaze: "I know **the other**"

As Spivak's now-famous work on whether the subaltern can speak argues, even with a highly receptive and respectful audience who admire, celebrate and seek to understand the other, the gesture of listening to others often presumes this 'other' to be a stable, bounded, and essential identity that 'we' can come to know. When this is the case, our efforts to 'give voice' to or understand 'the other' actually reduce the multiplicity, dynamism and open-endedness of identity to narrow, simplistic and prescriptive categories (Spivak 1999).

There are three ways that testimony and autobiography can feed into such

essentialisms, which speak to the broader concerns I raised above with respect to democratic engagement generally: first, by such declarations being taken as 'authentic' – as expressions of stable, coherent, pregiven identities transparent to both speaker and listener; second, by such declarations being taken as representative – 'speaking for' a broader identity category; and third, by the identities so declared being defined by their victim status, by the experiences they represent rather than the complexity, agency, and open-ended 'becoming' of identity.

In the first instance, we have seen how declarative language claims to represent certain truths about the speaker. Testimony and autobiography, in employing this same kind of discourse, tend to erase their own absences and mask the performative nature of their narrative, facilitating a misreading of what Spivak calls "the text's desire as its fulfillment in the text," creating the illusion of an authentic and unmediated account of concrete experience (Spivak 1998: 21). Moreover, declarative discourse's emphasis on the literal and verifiable for truth-telling can create within these genres what Sophie Tamas calls "portals [that] are too narrow and…demands [that are] too restrictive"; testimony and autobiography that tend to positivist renderings can essentialize and simplify the complexity of experience and meaning, "the othered aspects of ourselves" that defy a single bounded identity and at times don't "make sense" at all (Tamas 2009). Particularly when giving an account of experiences of trauma or marginality that have yet to prove salient within dominant discourse, testimony and autobiography can entail "telling our messy, unreasonable stories in a tidy, reasonable voice" that, as Tamas and Gilmore argue, can be "an exercise in alienation" (Tamas 2009; Gilmore 2001: 3). And in their reception, the notion of the 'authentic' can invite judgments that are a source of

further harm: as Gilmore notes regarding autobiography, "when the contest is over who can tell the truth, the risk of being accused of lying (or malingering, or inflating, or whining) threatens the writer into continued silence" (Gilmore 2001: 3).

The risks of 'truth-telling' in this way are further increased by their cultural specificity: akin to Iris Young's critique of the exclusionary effects of discursive norms within democratic engagement, Sidonie Smith notes that autobiography – and one could similarly argue, testimony – conform to western, modernist notions of the autonomous individual. As a result, using these modes to represent oneself "is to reiterate a culturally normative subject position and to become intelligible within the terms of the dominant culture" – a use of "the master's tools" which, as Audre Lorde famously stated, "will never dismantle the master's house" (Smith 1998: 39; Lorde 1979/1984: 112). Though a particularly strong stance that overlooks the significant political work testimony and autobiography have historically effected, these critiques demonstrate that an emphasis on the literal and verifiable within personal narrative introduces certain risks associated with assumptions and policing of authenticity.

Moreover, when truth is declared and interpreted as 'authentic' in this way, these declarations can be taken as representative, and are readily transformed into what Wendy Brown, in her compelling analysis of silence, calls "a regulatory truth about the identity group: confessed truths are assembled, deployed as 'knowledge' about the group" (Brown 2005: 91-2). Hence the personal narrative of autobiography and testimony is often taken to 'speak for' absent others as a kind of native informant; though such individual narratives are, in a sense, representational, when the specificity and partiality of such accounts is lost from view these representations work to exclude the

heterogeneity of group identity and silence those whom it seeks to represent (Spivak 1998: 9; Sommer 1994: 535-6; Park-Fuller 2000: 32; Hantzis 1998).

Lastly, the tendency to essentialism in testimony and autobiography has often privileged the category of 'victim,' reducing the speaker to the sum of their marginal experience; to use Wendy Brown's poetic phrase, "temporally ensnaring" them by defining them through their past, and reinforcing asymmetries between speaker and listener (Benton 1995; Brown 2005: 92). Spivak's example of Halima Begun demonstrates this keenly, whose articulate account of the violence of western industry and her own acts of resistance were reduced to

> a byte of sensationalist human interest; a faint victim's voice providing proof, yet again, that the South needed precisely the kind of aid that this woman was resisting. It is in the context of hundreds of such examples that it may be said: the subaltern often cannot accede to testimony. (Spivak 1998: 9)

When representations of experience can be read as direct and transparent, the agency of the speaker and complexity of experience too easily disappear from view. Whether taken as the unproblematic sum of individual experience, representation of an essential collective experience, or signal of victimhood rather than subjectivity and struggle, these declarative modes and the positivist 'truth' they are taken to represent introduce significant challenges to the articulation of marginal positions and the challenge to dominant discourse they often seek to incite. Thus in these various ways, the literature on autobiography and testimony provides deeper and more detailed insights into how an *essentializing* gaze is created through declarative language, where the other is construed as an object of knowledge which is stable, bounded, and coherent ("I know *the other*").

The Conflating Gaze: "I ***know*** the other"

Critics of testimony and autobiography have also repeatedly argued that these declarative modes facilitate what Doris Sommer calls "an unproblematized appropriation which closes off the distance" between speaker and listener. By using language that declares 'this is the truth,' even the truth of personal experience rather than general claim, the listener is granted the illusion of direct access (Sommer 1993: 141-3; Tierney-Tello 1999: 83). This presumption of one's ability to truly grasp another's experience essentially closes the gap between self and other, another's experience and our understanding of it, that is essential to encountering difference as difference.

This has two effects on the ability to listen well. The first is a crude form of empathy that is an overidentification with the other. Sophie Tamas makes the significant point that the scientific discursive norms of "the scholarly authorial voice" – the voice that privileges clarity, reason, the literal – can cause a clinical distancing from the affective dimensions of experience, hence preventing an empathic response that motivates us to act (Tamas 2009). But personal accounts that use declarative language can, where affect is engaged, also foster a simplistic form of empathy that substitutes, in Diana Taylor's words, "the 'you' with the 'as-if-it-were-me'," losing the specificity of the other, the need to appreciate their alterity, and a sense of one's own limits in understanding them (Sommer 1995: 925; Taylor 1998: 10). Doris Sommer, who has at length questioned presumptions of easy access in conditions of asymmetry, notes that this is a form of "intimately possessive knowledge" and dismissal "that passes for love," and as such, rather than incite a sense of co-implication and responsibility, this "rush of short-lived sentimental identification that over-steps the bounds of positional

propriety…lasts hardly longer than the [telling]" (Sommer 1994: 535, 529). John Beverley notes, with others, that it is precisely "[t]he erasure of authorial presence in the *testimonio*, together with its nonfictional character" – in other words, its declarative dimensions, which allow onlookers the presumption of "rationality, identification, and comprehension" – that makes this conflating form of empathy possible (Beverley 1992: 97; Tierney-Tello 1999: 84).

Intimately linked to this form of 'empathy,' the second effect is what Diana Taylor (1998) calls 'percepticide' or self-blinding regarding anything that exceeds the terms of reference with which the other is conflated – here, what demands attention in a democratic moment can only remain white noise. In both cases, the listener's ability to listen well – to attend to the excess of difference that defies one's present terms, and thus unsettles the naturalized authority of these terms – is truncated, as the other is conflated with the self and the limits of understanding disappear from view. Thus, we come to see how declarative language also creates a *conflating* gaze that assumes we *can* know the other in their entirety, through a myth of neutrality and transparency that erases the distance between one's experience and another's understanding of it ("I *know* the other").

Conclusion

Declarative language, then – epitomized in the seemingly open and facilitative genres of testimony and autobiography, but used conventionally in political discourse and civic engagement – carries with it certain notions and conventions of 'truth-telling' that can, in fact, create obstacles to the receptive generosity and care for difference required for democratic encounters with difference. It erases its own absences, and so,

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though identity's closures are, as Stuart Hall argues, a "fictional necessity" as they make "both politics and identity possible," the discursive norms of declarative language facilitate a forgetting of this performativity and with it the "exclusions, the denials, the blindnesses on which they are predicated" (Hall 1987: 45; Caruana 1996: 96; Mohanty and Martin 2003: 100). Rather than foreground the agency of the speaker, it privileges the listener as interpreter of the other as object of knowledge; rather than gesture to and leave room for what remains unrepresented, multiple and in process, it can erase its own absences, leading to essentialist and reductive readings of individual and group identity; rather than maintain a crucial distance between self and other that is essential to encountering difference as difference, it can overlook its own limitations.

As such, rather than generating the conditions for productively 'unsettling' encounters with difference that democracy demands of us, these accounts of marginal positions can reinscribe rather than disrupt dominant discourse and the asymmetrical relations they maintain (Alcoff and Gray 1993; Park-Fuller 2000). When this is the case, the very truths seeking resonance on the discursive terrain remain so much noise – ironically or perhaps poetically, in part due to this very emphasis on a literal mode of truth-telling.

While this is not to say that declarative discourse necessarily functions through or reinforces this form of nonreciprocal seeing, it is clear that *how* we represent and engage difference is as crucial as *if* we do at all. It cautions us that unproblematic notions of representation and reception, of voice and gaze, overlook the role that discursive conditions play in engagement with difference. And it is an invitation – perhaps a demand – to investigate alternative modes that might work somewhat differently, and so

offer generative modalities for democratic engagement, as well as implications for how such engagement might be configured within more conventional sites. The next chapter takes up this invitation by examining the particular dynamics at work within artistic performative modes of engagement, long and still largely overlooked within political theory. Here we find that the very aspects of artistic performance that have led political theorists to handle them gingerly, if at all, are the source of a radically different way of engaging identity/difference, one whose strengths lie precisely where declarative discourse encounters the greatest challenges.

Chapter Three
Artistic Performance as Democratic Engagement

Introduction

Chapter one identified the characteristics of democratic engagement that constitute a care for difference and receptive generosity. Chapter two analyzed how declarative language, conventionally used for democratic communication, can inadvertently reinforce dynamics of an 'objective' gaze and 'authentic' voice that create obstacles to democratic engagement with alterity. The question still remains, however, as to what kinds of practices either demonstrably enact this ethic of care for the complex, relational, and contingent relations of identity/difference, or cultivate the receptive generosity towards difference that such a politics requires.

In this chapter, I will argue that in contrast to declarative language, the *evocative* nature of artistic performance, due to its particular modes of representation, inquiry and interaction, possesses a distinct capacity to engage identity/difference with a care for difference and cultivate the receptive generosity required to do so. What is most fascinating, perhaps, is that it is the very qualities of artistic practices that might be deemed 'unruly' and unmanageable within conventional theories of democratic engagement that give them this capacity to engage identity and difference in radically democratic ways. This chapter will begin by examining current developments within critical accounts of democratic engagement that open the possibility for artistic modes to be seen as legitimate sites of such engagement. While the reason for incorporating such aesthetic-affective modes of engagement is usually framed in terms of the greater inclusion of diverse voices it enables, this chapter will argue that it is also due to the fact that there are particular things that *happen within* such artistic practices, particular forms

of engagement that these practices facilitate. In light of performance's *polyphony*, *affect*, *embodiment, explicit artfulness*, *imaginative inquiry, liminality*, and *creative agency*, these artistic encounters with difference generate – while by no means inherently or exclusively – the possibility for negotiations of identity/difference that may enact a democratic ethos of both care for difference and receptive generosity.

Aesthetic-Affective Engagement with Identity/Difference: Insights and Trajectories From Democratic Theory

As discussed in chapter two, critical democratic theorists have increasingly recognized that power and exclusionary practices function through the very discourses, behaviours, and norms that shape political engagement. The speech culture that characterizes many deliberative models is found to exclude not only those positions articulated in different terms, but the vast resource of communicative modes available to – indeed, already functioning within – practices of engagement (Dahlgren 1995; Young 2000; Rabinovitch 2001; Hoggett and Thompson 2002).

Critical democratic theorists have sought to increase inclusivity in democratic engagement by broadening the terms of legitimate communication to include more expressive, affective forms (Barber 1984: 177; Benhabib 1986: 334-39; Wellmer 1991; Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 134-7). The task here becomes one of not bracketing or governing aesthetic-affective communicative modes – as if we could – but of "mobiliz[ing them] towards the promotion of democratic designs" (Mouffe 1996: 756; 2002; Bennett 2001: 132). As a consequence, these critics have increasingly enabled the 'noise' of aesthetic-affective modes of communication to be heard as 'sound' within democratic theory.

The democratic theorist who has arguably examined the political role of aesthetic-affective modes of communication most comprehensively is Iris Young, in her expansion of the terms of political communication to include greeting, narrative, and rhetoric. In all three cases, Young argues that incorporating these modes of communication allows a broader range of positions and experiences to 'get to the table' of democratic engagement. Greeting, for instance, fosters trust, receptivity and discursive equality. Rhetoric – emotional tone, figures of speech, non-verbal modes of communication, and all affective, aesthetic and stylistic dimensions of communication – is seen to "help to get an issue on the agenda," reach a particular audience, and "motivate the move from reason to judgment" and from judgment to committed action. Likewise, narrative assists in articulating emergent or marginalized identities and positions that yet have no "language for expression" (Young 2000: 57-77). Acknowledging the extant contributions of such communicative modes thus challenges the ostensible neutrality of dominant styles of political communication, and makes possible a more inclusive and critical engagement of diverse positions, logics, and experiences.

While a strong argument for the legitimization of aesthetic-affective modes as political discourse, this account ultimately maintains the distinction – and an implicit asymmetry – between these and 'rational' aspects of engagement. As Bryan Garsten similarly argues in his critique of both John Dryzek and Gutmann and Thompson's accounts of rhetoric or "nondeliberative means" (Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 135; Dryzek 2010; Garsten 2011: 163), a defense of rhetorical dimensions of speech construed as a means to 'bring difference to the table' ultimately depicts these aesthetic-affective

aspects of communication as somehow separate from, if complementary to, the 'meat' of content, reason and reflection in democratic engagement.

I would argue, however, that including diverse modes of communication not only 'brings difference to the table,' but the particular dynamics, logics, and modes of representation within such aesthetic-affective practices actually *facilitate* distinct forms of encounter; they do a particular kind of democratic work that other forms of communication cannot do. Angelia Means, in her work on indigenous narrative as legal testimony, begins to gesture in this direction: it is not simply, as Young states, the role of narrative to give shape to what defies present terms of salient political discourse. Narratives have their own logic, their own 'reasoning.' Certainly, narrative and rhetoric work as Young describes, to move individuals to hear and be affected by marginalized positions. But, as Means argues, "narrative arguments that displace ignorance and counter emotional refusal do so by offering us *reasons* in what may turn out to be a more reasonable (if 'different') discourse of reason-giving" (2002: 225).

To make this argument, Means shies away from the affective role in such representations, perhaps to more effectively legitimize their 'reasonableness' and their work of "mutual justification ('giving account') in a rigorous sense" (2002: 225) – certainly to downplay the association of narrative with a romantic conception of empathy as 'feeling with' others that works to collapse distance and erase "significant strangeness" (2002: 225-6). We will see, however, that while there is certainly the risk of lapsing into this crude form of empathy, affect proves integral to generating ethical and transformative encounters with difference. Means's account of narrative also reveals a dangerous optimism concerning the ability of intercultural communication to provide "insight into

the *authentic* experiences of a cultural tradition," and so "defeat the differend" and allow "*all* wrongs to be articulated" (2002: 230, 237, emphasis added). This is dangerous, as I have argued in previous chapters, because it presumes a predetermined gap between pre-formed identities that might be entirely closed, even in a specific moment of encounter. However, we have seen that identity is a thing in process, ever multiple, ever partial, and ever mediated through particular systems of meaning-making. Consequently, the claim of and search for 'authenticity' not only reifies and simplifies but can also work to police the boundaries of identities and groups.

In contrast to Means' account, narrative is a form of communication that draws attention to the situatedness, the specificity, the interpretive dimension of its claims, and the ineradicable difference between experience and representation, even as it gestures to possible generalizations. Certainly, narrative (and a critically receptive engagement with it) has the capacity to "change both the knowledge of the tribunal and what counts as knowledge for the tribunal" (Means 2002: 230), and in so doing enables meaningful engagement with marginalized differences and the transformation of terms and norms in the process. And yet narrative – nor aesthetic-affective modes more generally – cannot "defeat the differend" any more than other modes of communication. It can, however, draw attention to this very limit inherent in speech acts and knowledge-claims – which, we will see, is a profound resource and stark contrast to conventional modes of representing difference discussed in chapter two. Means, however, provides a significant contribution to an understanding of aesthetic-affective modes such as narrative by demonstrating the "reason-giving" and critical engagement possible within them.

It is interesting that both Young and Means remain centred on the literal dimensions of aesthetic-affective modes when they entertain the possibility of such critical capacity. This is certainly no accident: it reflects, in fact, the western privileging of rational speech that it seeks to disrupt. Narrative, for example, is the artistic mode most closely related to declarative language used in conventional political spheres; it seeks to verbally represent an external reality in detail and with accuracy. However, we have seen in chapter two that it is precisely this literal quality that runs certain risks when engaging difference, and I will argue that it is actually narrative that runs the risk more than other artistic modes of generating the dangerous form of empathy that Means critiques.

Where rhetorical dimensions accompany speech, they are recognized as having a contributing role in meaning-making and reasoning (Young 1987: 72; 2000: 64-5). However, forms of rhetoric that do not use speech, according to Young, might be used from the margins to gain much-needed attention, such as with "visual media, signs and banners, street demonstration, guerrilla theatre, and the use of symbols in all these contexts" (Young 2000: 64), but they are not presented as possessing the capacity to function as sites of sustained democratic engagement in themselves. Indeed, due perhaps to the "overemphasis on the verbal" in the West, the most critical of deliberative democratic theorists still envision public dialogue as limited to speech (Hanna 1979: 147; Kohn 2000: 410; Benhabib 2002: 107) This is understandable; these aesthetic-affective modes are definitively 'unruly,' and given their acknowledged efficacy in stirring emotion, rhetorically framing reality, and employing those modes of representation and relation for which we have the least developed means of evaluation, they present a very

real challenge to those who wish to maintain, however reflexive and provisional, manageable bounds and norms for democratic engagement.

However, and as these hesitations acknowledge, there is more going on in these artistic forms of engagement than merely 'bringing difference to the table.' They are not justified merely in terms of the knowledge-claims they represent, nor insofar as they support meaning and reason-giving, but because they can perform a distinct kind of work themselves, which both reflects and enables radically democratic engagements with difference. Young's account of rhetoric hints at this possibility, if it stops short of developing it. While she notes that rhetoric helps one 'to be heard in different contexts,' we will see that it also enables the coexistence of simultaneous heterogeneous perspectives and points of contact and coalition. While rhetoric is seen to 'move one to judgment,' we will see that aesthetic modes can also work to dissemble totalizing judgment and foster critical and creative inquiry. And while she describes narrative as that which helps articulate 'before language' or established identity, we will see how the arts can negotiate identities *as* complex, multiple, and dynamic, without reifying or limiting such categories. It is this kind of work, the particular forms of encounter that artistic modes can enact, which will be examined in the remainder of this chapter. Moreover, the very possibility of such democratic engagement will be shown to be grounded in art's most 'unruly' characteristics – its polyphony, affective intensity, kinaesthesia, imaginative inquiry, explicit interpretiveness, liminality, and creative agency – the very characteristics that have presented the biggest challenge to theories of democratic engagement.

Dissembling Compositions: Artistic Encounter and Critical Thinking

> *"Art does not represent the visual world, it makes things visible."* – Paul Klee

The *Globe and Mail* published an article in November 2010 entitled, "How to Appreciate Abstract Art" (Nov 15 2010, L3). The premise is familiar to many: art that does not clearly represent determinate meanings can feel intimidating; one feels somehow caught out that they don't 'get it,' that there is some arcane vocabulary they do not speak and secret meanings to which only a privileged few are privy. In interviewing audience members of a contemporary dance performance in 2005, I was struck by the convergence of two patterns in responses: everyone I questioned about the performance was among the 'initiate' by some association with the dance world, and yet without exception they all began by apologizing preemptively for not being an 'expert' (Moore 2006). While seemingly contradictory, I see these two patterns as deeply connected: the expectation that art must communicate like other modes can make encounters with art feel alienating, and can work to further ghettoize such practices from engagement by the general public – or, conversely, reinforce a long tradition of art appreciation as a form of cultural capital reserved for the elite few who have had time and resources to become versed in such tastes and experiences (Bourdieu 1986: 241-58; Adorno and Horkheimer 1986).

Artistic representations communicate – they are definitively a communicative engagement between creator/performer and audience. Moreover, the meanings they generate, while diverse and open-ended, are by no means arbitrary or limitless. But the nature of such communication is notably different from conventional communicative modes; not just in abstract art, but in all artistic forms of representation, meaning-making processes are evocative more than referential; generative rather than argumentative; open-

ended rather than determinate. Indeed, many of the challenges for liberal models of pluralism – lack of consensus, direct reference and transparency of communication, and pre-given and stable identities and meanings – are taken as vital resources within artistic modes of engagement. Meanings are represented as interpreted, and likewise the reception of such meaning is a creatively interpretive act. In the words of Kitty Scott, the director of visual arts at the Banff Centre who was interviewed in this article in the *Globe and Mail*, "The most important thing about art is how you experience it, not whether you can decode the artist's meaning" (15 Nov 2010, L3). Indeed, even in the case of dancers performing a choreographer's work, participation does not require they share the same understandings (Moore 2006). As art scholar Jill Bennett argues in the case of trauma-related art, art is "best understood as *transactive* rather than *communicative*," where 'communication' stands in for faithful translation or representation of "the 'secret' of personal experience" (Bennett 2005: 7).

The question becomes, then, as Gilles Deleuze asks, not 'What does it mean?' but "How does it work?" (Deleuze 1995: 21). It is in precisely this form of rendering meaning that the democratic dimensions of artistic engagements reside, as it is through such processes that artistic representations become 'dissembling compositions,' engagements that can: (i) hold multiple, dynamic, even contradictory meanings and identities together simultaneously; (ii) interrupt and unsettle one's 'partitions of the sensible' to make room for critical thought beyond mere 'recognition'; (iii) generate contexts for imaginative experimentation with the perceived range of possibility for thought and action; (iv) mediate challenging experiences, claims and positions such that they are easier to acknowledge; and (v) foreground the interpretive nature of such

meanings, which in turn may highlight the capacity to intervene in and transform political life, chasten knowledge-claims about the very identities so constituted, and foreground the creative agency of those who communicate in these terms. As such, artistic modes of engagement have the capacity to function as democratic 'speakings' that enact a care for difference – where the complex and dynamic relations of identity and difference may be negotiated in their complexity, contingency, and intersectionality, where connection and coalition are possible *through* rather than in spite of difference, and where democratic engagement emerges within moving ground rather than resting places. The remainder of this chapter will examine how various dimensions of performative modes of communication – polyphony, affect, the body, imagination and explicit interpretation, liminality, and creative agency – might contribute to democratic engagement across difference.

Polyphony and Polysemy: Holding Difference Together, Holding It Lightly

All forms of communication are multi-dimensional: the body gestures, the voice intonates, the spatial dimensions and interrelational dynamics of a given academic presentation or public debate contribute to the shape such engagement takes for its participants. However, artistic practices are unique, perhaps, in the extent to which they embrace and make use of this multidimensionality of meaning-making, and thus have a fluency in *polyphony* and the democratic dimensions entailed therein. "Polyphony" is, as the word implies, "multi-leveledness and semantic multi-voicedness" (Bakhtin 1984a: 20) – the multiple layers of communicative modes circulating within representations. Mikhail Bakhtin most famously used this term to describe the multiple perspectives represented by various characters within Dostoevsky's novels, polyphonous insofar as they presented

a kaleidoscope of "equally authoritative ideological positions" (1984a: 18) that does not tell the reader what to think, nor even clearly what Dostoevsky thinks, but rather provides a heterogeneity in constellation with which the reader must critically engage. Moreover, it is this multi-voicedness and consequent representation of the multifacetedness – even internal contradiction – of meaning that Bakhtin finds responsible for the capacity of Dostoevsky's novels to gesture to the opacity and hence "unfinalizability" of identity and understanding (Bakhtin 1984a: 56, 166).

As we have seen in chapter one, identity is inherently complex, multiple and in process; *polyphony* enables the representation of it as such, holding together in "apparently impossible simultaneity" (Ang 2001: 201) what so often becomes simplified, reified, or conflated in other forms of assertion. While Bakhtin focuses on multiple characters, I take this term to also signify the multiple 'voices' of artistic modes, the visual, kinetic, sonic, spatial, affective, and symbolic among them. By engaging meaning through polyphonic means, artistic modes of representation are able to hold multiple, complex, and dynamic meanings together "in multidimensional and fluid orders," providing space for their expression and reception without demanding their reconciliation and thus domestication or reduction (Papastergiadis 1995: 8).

This "multifaceted polylog" enables art to contend with multiple themes, coexisting positionalities, and intersectional identities in their complexity (Shohat and Stam 1995: 12). As such, it has the capacity to not only engage identity/difference with a care for its complexity, ambiguity, even ambivalence, but by revealing otherwise suppressed interrelationships, polyphony provides the aesthetic with a unique ability to identify and describe the operations of political, social, cultural, and economic power. As

Young and Means argue regarding narrative, aesthetic practices can "disrupt these rationalizing, generalizing modes of analysis with a reminder of human beings and their…textured vitality" (Minow 2008: 258). As we will see in the following cases, this gives aesthetic practices the capacity to expose, disrupt and tease apart monolithic discourses and the relations of power they sustain, whether that of racism and apartheid, traditional gender identities and roles, or othering discourses of homeless and mental health communities. In contrast to Martha Nussbaum's (1999) famous skepticism regarding the political capacity of a fragmentary identity politics, we will see that it is precisely this polyphony that effectively unsettles such monoliths.

Moreover, it does so in such a way that does not lend itself easily to didacticism or fundamentalism. As in the case of Dostoevsky's characters, this polyphony makes difficult any totalizing claims to final 'resting place' for meaning; this is due to the inevitable and explicit 'excess' and 'absence' of meaning such polyphony generates. There is an inevitable 'excess' and 'absence' of meaning in any communication; as democratic theorists have also argued and as the nature of identity as non-exhaustive account makes clear, communication always simultaneously generates more and perceives less than intended. As such, all forms of representation

> always conveys more than it intends; and it is never totalizing. The 'excess' meaning conveyed by representation creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant readings possible. Despite the excess, representation produces ruptures and gaps; it fails to reproduce the real exactly. Precisely because of [its] supplemental excess and its failure to be totalizing, close readings of…representation can produce psychic resistance and, possibly, political change. (Phelan 1996: 2)

The difference lies, perhaps, in art's recognition of the inevitable multiplicity of interpretation, and consequent acknowledgement that different readings do not

necessarily signify mere miscommunication. The polyphony of artistic modes makes use
of and enhances this dimension of communication, generating multiple and open-ended
readings as the work is engaged in varying contexts, by different people, in specific
moments.

The excess of art's meaning is precisely what opens up possibilities for
articulation and exploration of identity beyond the tight scripts of fixed social identities,
making "multiple and resistant readings" possible. But in facilitating rather than explicitly
defining meaning, art's polyphony does more than simply allow the expression and
negotiation of identity's complexity and interrelation. Presenting such multiplicity
without its negation or resolution, in "a perpetual self-preserving instability," it makes
impossible claims that such meaning is fixed, exhaustive or unmediated (Zagala 2002:
25). Moreover, engagements with the inevitable 'excess' and 'absence' of such
representations can help to cultivate a tolerance for ambiguity and complexity, and for the
limits of one's own understanding. While critical deliberative theorists have challenged
the notion of consensus in public dialogue, advocating instead "the open-ended process of
conversation" (Kohn 2000: 420; Benhabib 2002: 109), this form of engagement with
identity extends this ideal of open-endedness to take into account the multiplicity and
ambiguity of meaning itself. While art can be a powerful means to speak 'from the
margins' as Young and others have argued, it thus may also serve as democratic process
in its own right, and this capacity is closely linked to such polyphony.

There is certainly art that conveys a clear political message, and even 'tells'
audiences what to think. But by collapsing the dynamic complexity that sets the practice
apart, didactic art too easily becomes propaganda, or in one artist's words, "one-

dimensional...art-as-instrument-for-something-else" (Escobar 1994: 39). Adorno famously critiqued such didactic or polemic art, epitomized for Adorno in the political theatre of Bertolt Brecht, as "intolerant of the ambiguity in which thought originates: It is authoritarian" (Adorno 1997: 242). The democratic power within artistic practices lies precisely in its ability to open up rather than foreclose meaning, to foster critical inquiry rather than provide determinate answers. Moreover, given the polyphony within artistic modes, multiple and even contrary readings are made possible even in the most restrictive or didactic projects. Where art capitalizes on this capacity to speak simultaneously through multiple modes to represent meaning as complex, heterogeneous and open-ended, it uses as communicative resource what is an inherently democratic dimension to its praxis.

As all art is far from democratic despite this latent capacity, various artists have examined the particular artistic tactics that enhance this "prismatic quality" (Said 2000: 567). Among them are the move away from conventional narrative strategies and other forms of over-determined signification, pastiche, métissage or the creolization of various forms and signs, "double-voicing," parody, syncretism, and other tactics that make seamless readings and over-identifications impossible (Glissant 1981: 462-3; Lionnet 1989: 4; Wah 2000: 51-53). These artists recognize the political significance of ambiguity and complexity, that "opacity and obscurity are necessarily the precious ingredients of all authentic communication" (Lionnet 1989: 4). These tactics work to augment and subversively play with the polyphony of artistic modes, enabling "a whole new story...to be told, with fragments, with disruptions, and with self-conscious and critical reflections," facilitating the articulation of "a plural self, one that thrives on ambiguity and

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multiplicity, on an affirmation of differences, not on polarized and polarizing notions of identity, culture, race, or gender" (Lionnet 1989: 16; Bannerji 1990: 134).

Moreover, this multifaceted, multisensory mode opens up, through heterogeneity, multiple points of contact: thus, one might connect with, be affected by, find resonance or meaning through multiple "modes of inhabitation" however divergent one's own experience may be from that of the creator or other observers (Crenshaw 1995: 33; Bennett 2005: 12). Again, this challenges the notion that a fragmentary identity politics precludes coalition and mobilization; in fact, it is through such polyphony and the evocative nature of its meaning-making that affiliation and coalition in the terms a politics of difference demands are possible. We will see this in chapter four in the case of South African protest theatre, where the multiplicity of communicative modes enabled communication and a sense of solidarity to flourish among diverse and far-flung communities and was powerful in countering *through* multiplicity such a profoundly monolithic form of power as apartheid. Indeed, often movement away from verbal modes of communication to more symbolic, visual, or embodied forms of signification can facilitate both the dynamic play of complex meanings and the spaciousness for affiliations across profound difference, as we will see in the cases of both protest theatre and contemporary dance.

However, as the following cases will make clear, the explicitly interpretive nature of such representations also guards against the tendency to confuse affiliation with identification and so erase difference through such connections. Through the explicit 'excess' and 'absence' of polyphony, art presents multiple "interconnecting axes of affiliation and differentiation" through which individuals may connect across and through

difference without fear of either "reduc[ing] the other as the negative of identity" (Papastergiadis 1995: 8; Felski 1997: 12) or erasing difference through conflation; in short, akin to democratic 'speakings' or 'horizons' described in chapter one, it enables individuals of divergent positions to "converg[e] but…not [be] conflated" (Mohanty and Martin 2003: 100).

Affective Impact: Moved in Spite of Ourselves

This experience of simultaneous heterogeneity and the polysemy, or multiple meanings, it generates is intimately linked with the dimension of affect within artistic engagements. As chapter one has argued, the affective is always-already at work in politics – we are invested in certain truths and norms, attached to certain identities and relations; we experience visceral resonances and dissonances in contact with others and affective associations in light of such experiences, which through repetition shape our orientations towards and away from others. In this way, social configurations – who 'we' and 'they' are, as well as the ranking and movements of these bodies in relation – are shaped by what Sara Ahmed calls "affective economies" (Ahmed 2004: 8). It is precisely through such affective attachments that fascism derives its power, or historical wounds can create enduring identities, or signs become 'sticky' and saturated such that they can only be read through a given affective association (Brown 1995; Beasley-Murray 2001; Ahmed 2004: 194-5). These affective experiences and our interpretations of them create and sustain the very shape of politics.

Similarly, we have seen in chapter one that a pluralist democracy requires affective dispositions towards difference characterized by *receptive generosity* and a shared commitment to living together-in-difference; "They do and should matter to each

other because they are bounded together by the ties of common interest and attachment"
(Coles 1996; Parekh 1999: 4). Where encounters with difference are unsettling,
uncomfortable, even undermining, what *moves* us to engage or to challenge the ground
we take as given? It is, as many scholars have noted, the affective dimensions of
experience that move us in these ways, even in spite of ourselves. If openness and closure
to difference operates at the pre-reflexive level of affect, the task then becomes a matter
not of "finding good or bad feelings" and expressing them, but of finding ways to become
aware of, disrupt, and open up alternatives to entrenched patterns of feeling, thought and
behaviour by engaging such affective and somatic attachments (Diprose 2002: 121;
Ahmed 2004: 201).

Artistic engagements are structured to generate such experiences, and indeed,
these affective encounters can work to dissemble those patterns and perceived (or
unperceived) limits to thought, action and relation that preclude more democratic
configurations. Through the polyphony of its modes, by the "concrete relational density"
of its representations, by the great pressure this creates of "the whole on the particular,"
art creates intensive affective encounters that move beyond, between, and beneath pre-
established codes of interpretation (Adorno 1997: 187; Altieri 2003: 14). When Jill
Bennett states that art is "transactive" rather than "communicative" in the narrow sense, it
is because the arts stimulate certain kinds of *experiences* of a vivid present more than they
transcribe and relay a determinate message or represent an elsewhere – and these
experiences can be deeply political.

On this point Immanuel Kant finds, if unlikely, common ground with Gilles

Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[6] While Kant holds that aesthetic moments might inform and

support moral codes, Deleuze and Guattari desire the proliferation of such unruly acts of

creativity divorced from transcendent law; however, they each describe aesthetic

encounters in terms of the "free play" of the faculties apart from the strictures of rigid

conceptual frameworks or practical justifications, due to the formal dimensions of artistic

modes of representation (Kant 1987: 230). In Kant's terms, aesthetic work is "purposive"

rather than purposeful, as our experiences therein do not depend on transcendental

categories or predetermined concepts. Deleuze describes this process of dissembling in

terms of the "encountered sign" – as opposed to explicit statement, the encountered sign

"is felt, rather than recognized or perceived through cognition" (Deleuze 1972; Bennett

2005: 7, 36). Working this way, art "does not *need* concepts in order to think," and so

engages us at once emotionally, mentally and sensorially (Deleuze and Guattari 1994:

164, 216; Zagala 2002: 21). These affective moments are thus seen to temporarily

suspend recourse to practical vocabularies, dislodge the percept and the affect from

habitual associations, and enable the 'play' or "disinterested interest" of creative

interrelation and the generation of new cognitive assemblages (Kant 1987: 18-20).

One enters the world of the work, becomes absorbed in sensation; "at one and the

same time I become the sensation and something *happens* through the sensation, one

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[6] Several theorists have noted this theoretical convergence regarding the 'dissembling' effects of aesthetic encounter. See, for example, Davide Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2009); Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003); Melissa McMahon, "Kant's Critique of Judgment: The Question of the Mediating Role of Aesthetic Judgments" (unpublished typescript, Dept of General Philosophy, University of Sydney, 1995); Stephen Zagala, "Aesthetics: A Place I've Never Seen," *A Shock of Thought: Expressions After Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

through the other, one in the other" (Deleuze 1992: 31). In such moments of sensation, one cannot merely 'recognize' and thus reinforce pre-established meanings when engaging with art – the excess and intensity of artistic forms do not 'represent' determinate meanings in this way – and due to opening up a 'world' of the work that is experienced rather than mimetically reproduced, one must navigate by different means. The immediacy and excess of sensation and its affects shake one's "recourse to the networks, practices and relays of attachment that sustain representation" and create moments of epistemic crisis that render *doxa* visible and negotiable, and enable the excess of difference to move from 'noise' to 'sound' (Bourdieu 1993: 164-5; Panagia 2009: 10). For this reason, Davide Panagia has identified this "disinterested interest" described by Kant as a "radical democratic moment" (Panagia 2009: 44). This 'unruliness' of affective encounters seems closely linked to Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, defined by the undermining of authority, anarchic unleashing of creative and chaotic energies, and dynamism of flows and fluids (Bakhtin 1984b). In both cases, intensity and dynamic polyphony enable the play of possibility that ruptures and potentially reconfigures otherwise stable circuitries and structures.

This is not to say that thinking does not happen in artistic engagements, but the 'interest' or, we might say, affective attachments to established cognitive frameworks and pre-judgments are interrupted and challenged, and a different form of 'thinking' is possible. These cognitive frames – as they do with affect more generally – still provide the backdrop to perception, and in this way aesthetic moments are not 'unmediated' to the extent that Kant seems to propose. Moreover, these moments of immersion or intensity ebb and flow, and so these cognitive meaning-systems exist in dialectic relationship with

the 'vivid present' affect engenders. Kant distinguishes two moments in aesthetic judgment, the aesthetic experience that dissembles and the pronouncement of aesthetic judgment that reassembles, to highlight this. However, in the affective impact a dissembling excess impresses itself upon us, captures us, and in so doing can work to disarticulate the viewer's "partitions of the sensible" and investments in them, and make it possible "to figure the newly thinkable" (Rancière 2004: 12; Panagia 2009: 16).

Exposure to new information alone is not enough to move us in spite of ourselves. We have seen how affect shapes the very terrain of politics, how it creates investments in certain regimes of perception and the material relations they legitimize, attachments that resist critical unsettling. Prevailing norms and codes are "comfortable for those who can inhabit [them]" (Ahmed 2004: 147), and given affective attachments to what shores up identity in the face of uncertainty, something more than information is required to disrupt these patterns of thought. The aesthetic-affective dimensions of art are productive more than descriptive, evocative rather than assertive, and it is art's lack of determinate meaning that makes possible an immersion in sensation that exceeds and unsettles one's 'partitions of the sensible' – it hook us, captures us, and so often compels critical thinking. Sensation "acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh...[rather than being] addressed to the head" (Deleuze 1992: 31). As such, it is an experience that *affects* us, that engages the "non-linear complexity" and "never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder" of affect beyond, between and beneath cognitive sense-making systems (Massumi 2002: 30; Clough 2007: 2). It can get under one's skin, it can provoke discomfort, excitement, or unease, it can set off "a movement that extends my world beyond the intimate and familiar. A disturbing experience motivates the creation

and transformation of concepts" (Diprose 2002: 133). In short, it can cultivate receptive generosity that makes a care for difference possible.

In this way, Deleuze sees the aesthetic-affective as "what leads to thought" (1972: 161) – from predefined thought (territorialized *nomos*) to the unsettling and creative process of thinking (deterritorialized *nomad*) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 380-82). Levinas, in his own account of engagements with alterity, describes this transformative unsettling as "*think[ing] more than [one] thinks*" (Levinas 1987: 54; original emphasis). For Deleuze, as for Kant, aesthetic experiences can *move* us to think differently, to engage "*in spite of ourselves*" (Deleuze 1972: 161; original emphasis). Such art 'works' politically not so much in how it conveys political ideas, but by how it interrupts the perceptual field that bars engagement with the 'noise' of difference. It works via generating what Brian Massumi calls a "shock to thought," that "cannot simply give us the answer – which would, of course, merely short-circuit critical thought – but needs, in a sense, to relinquish the moral position in order to enable ethical inquiry" (Massumi 2002; Bennet 2005: 90). For this reason, Guattari describes "the work of art...[as] an activity of unframing, of rupturing sense, of baroque proliferation or extreme impoverishment which leads to a recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself" (1995: 131).

To agree with Kant, Deleuze and Guattari about the dissembling capacity of aesthetic-affective encounters is not to argue that all art and the intense experiences they evoke necessarily foster critical thinking, nor that art needs to be 'intense' or 'sensational' in conventional terms to have affective intensity. 'Intensity,' used in this way, refers not to extreme experience per se, but to rare and fleeting moments of being fully present,

unmediated by the cognitive circuitries of perception that encode experience and so "place us at a remove from what we claim to know" (Altieri 2003: 188).[7] Moreover, as Jill Bennett has shown with merely 'shocking' imagery as opposed to thought-provoking traumatic art, "the link between the graphic image and 'education' is far from axiomatic" (2005: 64).

The affective dimension of art, unlike polyphony, is not inherently democratic; as we have seen, affect can work as much to create attachments to undemocratic as well as democratic social norms and orders. It is a strange irony that those who have been responsible for the world's most totalitarian regimes seem to have been among the most keenly aware of the power of art's affective dimensions, demonstrated in both the systematic elimination of artists once in power or the manipulation of this affective force within their own spectacles.[8] On the other hand, even with these totalitarian projects, they are effective precisely because the intensity of the encounter bypasses cognitive frameworks and jolts, dissembles, *moves* observers even in spite of themselves. In fact, the very efforts to suppress or harness aesthetic-affective practices by authoritarian leaders attest to the recognition since Plato that such modes are disruptive to an anti-democratic politics. The affective dimension of artistic encounters, when wrested for artistic projects that represent 'subjugated knowledges' and foster critique, can work via the excess of the encountered sign to dissemble habitual cognitive patterns, decentre

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[7] Again, these moments are 'mediated' in the sense that they are in dialectical relationship with conceptual processes, and both openness to them and interpretation of them is shaped by perceptual dispositions, but when immersed in them, we lose our 'bearings', and so open possibilities for reconfiguration.

[8] The use of pageantry and symbolism during the Nazi regime is the most famous of such cases, though Slobodan Milosevic, Pol Pot, Mao Tse Tung and Joseph Stalin were also known to use aesthetic-affective means to hold popular sway. Similarly, the Khmer Rouge spent three months working to eliminate Cambodia's artistic community, along with the broader intellectual community; Augusto Pinochet imprisoned and 'disappeared' most of Chile's artists in the 1970s; and East Germany's *Stasi* routinized the intimidation of artists. We will also see this kind of targeting of artistic expression in chapter four, by South Africa's apartheid state.

identities, and cultivate what Rosalyn Diprose calls the "nonvolitional generosity"[9] –

what I have been calling *receptive generosity* – that motivates further inquiry (2002: 68).

And due to the "multiple and fluid orders" of aesthetic modes that are able to hold

complex, heterogeneous meanings together without their resolution or negation, such

inquiry is given more 'dynamic play' than assertive modes, and we might very well

surprise ourselves in the process.

This account of affect through art requires one further qualification. Scholars like

Jill Bennett, Davide Panagia and others, taking cues from Kant and Deleuze, locate this

capacity to move from recognition to critical thinking in the abstract or purely formal

aspects of art; in contrast, the figurative is that which is seen to "subordinat[e] the eye to

the model of recognition and los[e] the immediacy of sensation" (Smith 1996: 41;

Bennett 2005: 31-35; Panagia 2009: 39). I see no problem with this conception of the

figurative or nomological, as it certainly works through 'recognizable' signs in order to

function and so might be said to "subordinat[e] sensations to...'making sense'" (Panagia

2009: 38). However, this fact leads Panagia and Bennett, along with Deleuze, to focus on

abstract art forms that avoid narrative or figurative dimensions (Bennett 2005: 35;

Panagia 2009: 38-9).

Thus, while narrative has received the most robust defense by deliberative and

liberal theorists such as Means, Young and Nussbaum – due, arguably, to its proximity to

testimony – it is precisely this artistic mode that is critiqued by these aesthetic theorists as

prone to recapitulating 'authentic' essentialisms and reading culture through a static

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[9] Diprose understands such generosity in terms of openness to alterity, as well as the risks to self-identity
such engagement entails; for her, then, critical thinking requires us to be and is, by definition, generous
(2002: 13). While Diprose focuses her account on intercorporeality rather than the dynamics of aesthetics
as catalysts for such critical generosity, she shares ground with these theorists in defining such generous
interrelation as somatic and affective, using much the same language as these aesthetic theorists.

politics of recognition. If identity is understood as in process and the disruption of 'regimes of perception' is taken as integral to a project of pluralisation, the dangers of 'recognition' cannot be overstated. However, I venture that though figurative significations do interrupt the dissembling process of affect by mediating the experience through meaning-making systems, these points of reference, presented through polyphonous and affective encounters, can and do serve as grappling points rather than stumbling blocks, can move and be moved in dialectic relationship with the dissembling processes of sensation. In fact, these references to the discourses with which we narrate our lives allow aesthetic encounters to directly engage and unsettle these narratives. We will see this dissembling a/effect in the non-narrative medium of contemporary dance in chapter six, as well as in more narrative forms of theatre discussed in chapters four and five, wherein the intensity of the vivid present generated through performance allows unconscious memory, bias and emotion to emerge, unsettles conventional cognitive maps, and enables critical and creative inquiry.

Somatic Sense-Making

Though these accounts of the affective 'dissembling' of sensation tend to focus on sight by examining visual artistic modes, I wish to broaden this definition to acknowledge the political – and hence potentially democratic – role the body plays in such aesthetic processes. Indeed, *sensation* involves the whole body, even while experiencing static visual arts. Deleuze's account of sensation engendered by the visual arts is a world of "contours, resonances, vibrations, attunements, syntonizations, hapticities, and impulses"

(Deleuze 1992: 31-38; Panagia 2009: 10).[10] Artistic encounters are not representations so much as "real-time somatic experience" (Bennett 2005: 23).

As the affective attachments and associations that shape cognitive and material relations are embodied, so too are the limits and possibilities for thinking. As argued in chapter one, the sedimentation of patterns for thought, action and relation occurs in the body as much as the mind; the repetition of acts over time trace pathways and strictures into the very musculature of the body, a "history stored in gestural 'I can's,' that determines in large part how that embodiment will continue to unfold" (Varela 1992: 333; Noland 2009: 4). Moreover, as we have seen in chapter one, the body is politically significant as it also always exceeds particular discursive bounds and so is "always already contesting, at both macro- and micro-political levels, the social texts to which they are otherwise indentured" (Aronowitz 1990: vii; Pollock 1998: 91).

When the body is engaged directly, this holds the capacity to surface and negotiate both one's affective and cognitive blocks to engaging difference, and the excess of difference beyond these bounds within oneself and others. As the following cases will show, embodied practices are effective in exposing latent bias, affect and memory – that which underlies and yet often remains unspoken, even unconscious, within conventional democratic processes – thereby making them available for political address and potential change. Moreover, these cases show that non-verbal and embodied practices repeatedly enable communication, deliberation and coalition for marginalized communities who often find conventional forms of democratic engagement prohibitive. Here, the centrality

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[10] However, Deleuze and Guattari, though they discuss the role of bodily sensation in fostering creative and critical thinking, still depict thinking as an incorporeal phenomenon. See, for example, Rosalyn Diprose's critique of Deleuze and incorporeality in *Corporeal Generosity: Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002). In contrast to such a binary, I will argue that the body is a site of critical agency and inquiry – that it may be used to 'think more than one thinks.'

of the body proves vital to revealing some of the blocks to democratic engagement with marginalized difference, as well as providing the means through which such difference could hold dominant society to account as its own form of expertise and authority.

Further, by publicly performing negotiations of specific bodies as they strain against and experiment with broader political discourses, these practices can foreground both the contingency of dominant narratives for identity and the agency of actors to intervene therein. This can turn performance into "a provocation" that makes use of the abundant excess of living bodies to "foreground the problem of authority in a manner that makes the latter available to contestation," to push against and past the boundaries of naturalized bodily codes (Martin 1998b: 159; Dupuy 2003:15; Franko, 2007: 14). This public staging of embodied negotiation can highlight the intersections between personal and social realities, and the tensions, inconsistencies and disconnections between them; make explicit how identities are performed, and can be performed otherwise; and demonstrate before one's eyes how these are more fragile and dynamic than they first appear (Albright 1997: 4; Martin 1998b: 159; Foster 1998: 14-15; Briginshaw 2001: 15).

We will see in chapters four, five and six how the dissembling and reworking of such constraints is enacted as much through kinaesthetic practices of the artist on stage as the receptive sensations of bodies in the audience, though chapter six will explore this form of critical praxis more in depth given the centrality of the body and lack of narrative form within contemporary dance. Artistic experimentation and exploration of somatic possibilities – 'practicing ourselves differently,' in Foucault's terminology – can engage these embodied dimensions of power and meaning-making, and provide effective sites of democratic engagement.

"Limit-Attitude": The Politics of Imagination in Art

As we have seen in chapter one, perception and imagination are deeply political.

As bell hooks also argues, "[a]cknowledging that we have been and are colonized both in

our minds and in our imaginations, we begin to understand the need for promoting and

celebrating creative expression" (hooks 1995: 4). Artistic creation is, by definition, an

exploration of possibility for thought and action. It is the artful assemblage and reflexive

crafting of aspects of lived experience in creative ways, and the creative process involves

experimentation with the limits, terms and frames of perception. It is, I would venture, a

field of practice framed by the open-ended curious question of 'what else?' – what else is

here, what else might be.

Adorno and Herbert Marcuse both make this point by defining the radical in art as

that which imaginatively reconfigures and so contrasts reality, inciting the movement of

imagination and critical inquiry (Marcuse 1978: 6; Adorno 1997: 242-3).[11] Stuart Hall

also notes this quality of artistic creation in light of the number of self-identified black

artists who choose to define their work in terms of *discovery* rather than the articulation

of a "fully developed political positionality" (Hall 1996b: 211). As such, art highlights

and functions through an "ethic of experimental politics" that characterizes and sustains

democratic pluralism (Zagala 2002: 38). Moreover, it is *reflexive* in doing so, by the

conscious nature of its process of crafting and giving form (Kemp 1996: 156). By

'assembling' life in artful compositions, it serves as both

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[11] Adorno and Marcuse both define this contrast of art to reality in terms of its negation of reality; while Marcuse describes this negation in art as providing "images of another way of life," which form "fictitious worlds" that may become "more real than reality itself" (1964: 59; 1978: 6, 66, 68), Adorno stresses the significance of art is not in the affirmation, certainly not creation, of alternatives, but rather its "agitative effects" through critique (1997: 242). While we share ground regarding the critical dimension of imagination in artistic practice, I see art as generating as well as representing possibilities for thought and action, creating alternatives as well as undermining the authority of present realities.

laboratory and model in the study of culture: laboratory, because art may privilege certain dimensions of experience over others (color, form, emotion, scale, expectation) so that their dynamics and mechanisms can be better understood; model, in the sense that privileging one dimension of experience over another reorders social life within the confines of any work or set of works.

(Martin 1990: 10)

While art is thus not inherently democratic or critical, by artfully bringing to the fore 'subjugated knowledges' otherwise peripheral or unperceived, rendering familiar experience in novel ways, and imagining as-yet unlived possibilities, it generates spaces and conditions for creatively exploring the limits for thought, action and relation as presently conceived. As such, it not only plays with prevailing configurations that are otherwise taken as necessary, natural, and absolute, but also enacts temporary worlds wherein alternatives might be experienced, where a sense of something beyond the 'partition of the sensible' might be *produced* as well as represented (Kershaw 1999: 18-19).

Many scholars characterize this experience in terms of the imaginative capacity catalyzed by and following artistic encounters; others do so in terms of the, possibly temporary, creation of alternative forms of engagement within the work itself. In either case, as art pushes people beyond themselves, presses against prevailing limits and gives shape to possibilities beyond what are conventionally perceived, it "allows the emergence of a new reality" (Minh-ha 1989: 22). Walter Benjamin once wrote that "one of the foremost tasks of art has always been the creation of a demand which could be fully satisfied only later"; I would venture that as well as engender such perceptual and imaginative capacity for the world beyond the artistic encounter, the encounter can itself temporarily generate "speakings" or "possible worlds," the possible rendered, for a moment, actual, enacted as well as signaled (Benjamin 1969: 237).

Scholars such as Edward Said and Trinh Minh-ha speak of writing in this way, as "the constitutive form of unrealized democracies," the continual forging of fleeting 'homes' in the creative act itself (Adorno 1951: 87; Minh-ha 1989: 22; Said 2000: 568; Wah 2000: 55-6). Visual artist Elizam Escobar writes of his painting while a political prisoner in the United States in such terms: through its semiotic ambivalence, Escobar's work not only evaded overt censure while imprisoned, but also created "a space where the imaginary fulfillment of unsatisfied needs and the explosion of contradictions under controlled conditions are allowed to take place...This not only means that art gets away with it; it also means that art becomes a space of liberty" (1994: 47). This opening of alternative, if provisional, worlds is possible for audiences as well as artists. We will see this in the case of Headlines Theatre in chapter five, where theatre was used to consciously generate and experiment with possible social configurations, creating in the process very real moments of meaningful encounter. We will also see it in more indirect ways within chapters four and six, where experimentations with the body, identity, and power relations make actual and visible forms of engagement that are either unavailable or uncommon in broader society.

For this reason, artists and art scholars alike see profound democratic significance in art's ability to not only foster critical reflexivity but remind audiences about the broad range available for thought and action (Minh-ha 1989: 22; Phelan 1998: 13; Kershaw 1999: 84; Diamond 2000: 67). In this way, artistic encounters can work as exercises in what Foucault calls a "limit attitude," a praxis of reflexive critique and subversive play with perceived limits via the imagination of how things could be thought otherwise (Foucault 1984).

Moreover, in publicly experimenting with the possibilities for identity and politics, art can work to expose their contingency and malleability. As we have seen in chapter one, identity is 'artful' – it is a provisional assemblage drawn from and poised against the surfeit of difference, one assemblage among countless possibilities and perpetually in process, a 'performance' that works to disguise its own contingency. As Bertolt Brecht has stated and as Raymond Williams has expanded in his notion of a dramatized society, "we are all actors and…acting is an inescapable dimension of social and everyday life" (Jameson 1998: 25; Williams 2000). However, while more declarative modes of representation tend to mask their own performativity, artistic performance can present identity *as* performance. Artistic modes can reveal and experiment with this performative element and, while no identity is 'performed' in the sense that it is an arbitrary and free choice, experiencing the performativity of identity through either the enactment or observation of art can loosen the hold of such identifications and create breathing space between practice and 'essence.'

This is particularly true in performance, where the performing body is simultaneously both actual and representative, factual and fictive. Performers both act and are representations, and this simultaneity can work to demonstrate both the constructedness of identity and the agency of individual bodies. In the process of making and unmaking identities before the eyes of audiences, or transforming everyday naturalized behaviours into dramatizations via theatrical techniques – for instance, the ritualistic repetition of gestures, exaggeration, the freezing into frames, rhythm, timing, unison or juxtaposition – what is experienced as expressive behaviour and authentic signification can be presented as performed (Briginshaw 1996: 127). "Performance calls

attention to itself," and in so doing can show the body to be "'in process, a set of

quotations, citations of [other bodies]," identity as a "range of staggered be-longings,"

and "above all movements between and across, restless movements rather than secure

arrivals" (Sommer 1998: 175; Phelan 1998: 14, 16; Martin 1998a: 187). In this way,

artistic performance can – rather than represent 'authentic' experience or give the illusion

of fully grasping the identities so represented, as Angelia Means or Victor Turner,

foundational theorist of performance studies, have argued (Turner 1990: 1) – gesture to

the processes of meaning-making themselves, and the power relations and material

effects that work through them. Performance artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña describes this

aspect of his work in such terms:

> Performance has taught me an extremely important lesson that defies all
> essentialisms: I am not straight-jacketed by identity. I have a repertoire of multiple
> identities...My collaborators and I know very well that with the strategic use of
> props, make-up, accessories, and costumes, we can actually reinvent our identity
> in the eyes of others, and we love to experiment with this unique kind of
> knowledge...Our audiences may vicariously experience other possibilities of
> esthetic, political, and sexual freedom they lack in their own lives. (2005: 25)

We will see in chapters four and six in particular, cases where specific strategies

of artistic subversion were used to render identities, relations and mechanisms otherwise

invisible and 'natural' as constructed and open to change. Artistic encounters can – and in

the following cases, do – experiment with the range of the embodied and perceived 'I

can,' and in such publicly staged experimentations work to unsettle and expand, reshape,

the 'picture that holds us captive.' As definitively a creative, reflexive practice that

performs these processes for others, the arts hold the

> possibility of materializing something that exceeds our knowledge, that alters the
> shape of sites and imagines other as yet unsuspected modes of being...it can
> remind us of the unstable improvisations within our deep cultural performances; it

can expose the fissures, ruptures, and revisions that have settled into continuous reenactment.   (Diamond 2000: 67)

Drawing Attention to Oneself: The Political Effects of Interpretive Practices

As we have seen, Iris Young, Angelia Means and Martha Nussbaum among others have pointed to narrative's capacity to allow us to gain insight into the concrete realities of people very different from ourselves. Story-telling, and art more generally, does communicate particular experiences and identities across difference in this way. However, I see the particular democratic dimension of these 'speakings' to be the fact that these representations, unlike testimony or other declarative modes, foreground the *interpretive* and *situated* nature of these accounts. As we have seen in chapter two, "confessional" modes can fall into snares of looking for signals of 'authenticity' and so work to create and police prescriptive bounds for identity. Furthermore, they can encourage a voyeuristic gaze and a possessive form of "comprehension [as] tak[ing] everything into your hands" – the assumption that one 'grasps' or 'captures' another's reality, that one 'feels with' the other so represented, in forms of identification or empathetic assimilation that substitutes "the 'you' with the 'as-if-it-were-me'," losing the specificity of the other and a sense of the limits of understanding by "overwhelming unfamiliar voices to repeat sounds of the self" (Taylor 1998: 10; Sommer 1998:171; Lash 2006: 227).[12] These presumptions not only preclude meaningful engagement with others in their difference, as democratic pluralism demands, but also enable the 'benevolent imperialism' against which Spivak and others warn.

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[12] Many democratic theorists discuss the dangers of a simplistic form of empathy: for instance, Hannah Arendt (1963: 69-90) and Seyla Benhabib caution that empathy does not necessarily entail an 'enlarged mentality' about the 'concrete other', and might very well work to conflate the boundaries between oneself and another such that the concrete other cannot emerge (Benhabib 1992a: 168).

Artistic representations, by definition, work differently. Though all knowledge is situated, all perception is perspectival, all identities are artful interpretations, we have seen in chapter one how these 'performances' have a way of becoming naturalized; however, artistic renderings present them – foreground them – in exactly these terms. As Nietzsche notes, there is a rare honesty in this (1967: 153). Art works are "habitats of singularities," and represent meaning and identity through "exemplary concrete particularity" that do not presume to speak for all of what it might participate in, nor even the entirety of the artist's identity or positionality (Guattari and Negri 1985; Zagala 2002: 39; Altieri 2003: 5). Moreover, as highly situated, interpretive and thus evocative rather than determinate of meaning, even as it opens worlds of experience it alludes to what is left out of the picture rather than "reify absent referents...thus sustaining an illusion of full presence" (Pollock 1998: 80).

This is enhanced for the viewer via the concrete situatedness of one's experience of art. This is particularly true for performance, where it is tangible and visible how the particular angle of one's position in the audience and how one's gaze constructs the piece from the composite elements moving on stage shape and limit one's perspective. In fact, given the particularity of each viewer's constitutive gaze and interpretation of performance, certain performance theorists have argued that each reception might be considered a distinct work (Danto 1981: 120; Rubidge 1996: 221). This is not to claim that interpretations are arbitrary or limitless, shaped and limited as they are by the particularity of the work, but it speaks to the active role the viewer plays in constructing meaning and the interpretive, and thus perspectival and limited, nature of that lens. While

not all performance produces this effect, it can, by the foregrounding of its interpretive

nature, generate a "different scopic economy":

> What becomes immediately visible are the specificities of our position and
> the ensuing limits to our perspective. We can't see everything; we can't occupy
> the visual vantage point of those located somewhat differently in the frame. What
> we see is clearly a function of where we happen to be standing – literally,
> politically, economically, and metaphorically. Though mutuality can be
> profoundly disconcerting and uncomfortable...it stops us short, obliging us to
> rethink and look again. This pause...is not a bad thing if it encourages us to
> question easy notions of free access and rights of passage.   (Taylor 1998: 183)

Moreover, performance is by definition a process in motion rather than an object

one can hold or possess. As performance theorist Peggy Phelan notes, it "cannot be saved,

recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of

representation…Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here,

becomes itself through disappearance" (Phelan 1996: 146; Taylor 2003: 9). Although

Phelan defines performance in terms of disappearance, Diana Taylor makes clear in her

work on the archive and the repertoire that this is not an accurate depiction, and indeed,

can work to reinforce an ethnocentric hierarchy of modes of knowledge (Taylor 2003: 9).

Performance leaves traces in the body and psyche; it is embodied memory and, as Joseph

Roach argues and the significance of micro-practices discussed in chapter one make clear,

it functions as a key site for the exchange and negotiation of knowledge, history, and

meaning (Roach 1996: 26).

However, the forces that bring it into being and the world it generates "dispers[e]

as soon as the event is consummated" (Martin 1998a: 189). It requires 'presence' to

produce and transmit knowledge, and so the performative moment cannot be captured in

static modes of representation. Likewise, the living bodies of the performers constitute

the piece anew in each performance, informed by slight shifts in background experiences,

emotional state, guiding thoughts. As such – though like the archive it is also mediated through meaning-systems and possesses some degree of continuity – its re-enactments are never the same event, and so are "in a constant state of againness" (Taylor 2003: 20-1).

This *transience* or ephemerality of performance proves pivotal in chastening knowledge-claims. Just as polyphony makes difficult attempts to claim the authority of one aspect of a piece over another, transience makes it possible to dwell but not rest within the various moments of the moving image. For both performers and audiences it is clear that the piece is not a complete or finished account, it is not a 'thing' to be known, contained, possessed in any exhaustive sense. We will see this dimension of transience at work within all three cases in the following chapters, as well as its ability to contribute to the foregrounding of meaning-making processes and the contestability of identity, which through such shifts and dispersals 'makes and unmakes' identity before one's eyes.

Whether performance or static art form, the explicit *artfulness* of meanings so rendered thus moves away from discourses of 'authenticity' that mine for truth even as subjugated positions are given voice. The situatedness of one's perspective remains in view even as one negotiates meaning, hence the remainder or 'differend' is not erased even in moments of intense connection; again, this is more likely in non-narrative art forms, though narrative forms – as we will see in chapters four and five – still draw attention to the artful nature of representation and reception, and so can maintain reflexivity regarding the limits of knowledge-claims engendered therein. This can work against tendencies of over-identification and appropriation and foster more critical and complex forms of empathy – what Kaja Silverman calls "heteropathic identification" and Dominick LaCapra in the context of Holocaust art calls "empathic unsettlement," wherein

one feels for another while maintaining a distinction between one's perception and the other's experience (Silverman 1996; LaCapra 2001: 41; Bennet 2005: 8). We have seen how this form of engaging difference in its difference defines the care for difference and receptive generosity that is essential to a politics of democratic pluralism. Representations of and encounters with identity, experience and knowledge within artistic modes, by foregrounding their situatedness, can foster an awareness of the limitations of one's interpretation even as meanings are interpreted and negotiated, a reflexivity within meaning-making regarding the inability to claim one 'knows' the creator of the work any more than one's work objectively or exhaustively captures reality.

This does not necessarily prevent epistemic violence via presumptions of grasping the other's authenticity, whether through negative or overdetermined empathic readings. "Looking entails a responsibility, a risk, and a danger...the responsibility of receiving, decoding, and acting on a scenario" (Taylor 1998: 184), and this is true for the arts as much as other forms of representation. Art has generated as well as challenged stereotypes, has reinforced dogmatic fundamentalisms as well as fostered critical inquiry, and as a system of meaning-making it has a long and fraught history of constructing, objectifying, exploiting, and silencing the 'Other.' The politics of the 'gaze' have long been interrogated within cultural studies and postcolonial theory, and artistic representations have been found to replicate the illusion of the omniscient eye, the unseen seer, and the other as object.[13] The unidirectional nature of the gaze within the arts, like that of traditional forms of knowledge discussed in chapter two, runs this risk of

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[13] John Berger first identified the assumption of the male gaze in Western visual art, while Laura Mulvey developed this gender critique in the context of film (Berger 1972; Mulvey 1975). Perhaps most famously, Edward Said has shown the Eurocentrism within artistic depictions of racial, ethnic and cultural 'others' and their implication in material and political asymmetries they helped legitimize and maintain (1985), though this has also been demonstrated by countless other scholars.

reinforcing a colonizing gaze that appropriates, essentializes and conflates difference so perceived. However, as opposed to more declarative modes of representing difference, artistic forms are explicitly interpretive and so "self-evidently a *version* of what was, what is, and/or what might be" (Pollock 1998: 80). While this does not necessitate more democratic ways of engaging difference – any more than polyphony or affect – performance thus has a particular potential to resist the subject's "greedy thirst for incorporation" of difference into sameness, and so make possible a complex and critical form of empathy and relation that such a politics requires (Adorno 1973: 172). Where works foreground the artfulness of their communicative modes – as we will see in chapters four and six in particular – this encourages the foregrounding of perspectivism in its audiences, and so makes possible more chastened forms of knowledge-claims and attentive forms of relation, both essential to forms of engagement rooted in a care for difference.

Creative Agency: To Perform is to Act

This explicit artfulness of performance's accounts not only fosters a sensitivity to the limits of understanding, but also works to foreground the *creative agency* of those employing such modes. As Beverley notes, in declarative modes such as testimony, "[t]he erasure of authorial presence…together with its nonfictional character, makes possible a different kind of complicity" – the complicity at work in the voyeuristic gaze discussed in chapter two, that can appropriate, essentialize and conflate difference even as it seeks to understand (1992: 97). In performance, however, where communication and representation are overtly creative acts, the agency of those who represent marginalized experience is never lost from view.

When participation is framed through such creative acts, it achieves three things. First, speakers, though representing experiences of marginalization, oppression, and trauma, are not defined solely in terms of these experiences, within an "aesthetic of injury" and victimization that "temporally ensnares" and reduces them to their past (Benton 1995; Salverson 1999; Brown 2005: 92). One's identity and the past that shapes it, mediated through creative agency, is "not…a static fetishized phase to be literally reproduced," but, as Stuart Hall and others argue, belongs to the future as much as the past (Shohat 1992: 109; Hall 1996b: 448). Those so represented are identified through their struggle and creative agency as opposed to their experience or an identity category, and in this sense these accounts provide an opportunity to, as Linda Park-Fuller and others argue, "recreate oneself, through oneself – to 'writ[e] back performatively against hardened discursive forms and practices'" (Strine 1998: 314; Park-Fuller 2000: 24-5).

Secondly, this is articulated in a mode that, as performative, signals that the 'self' so represented is one among many possible selves; it leaves a crucial capacity to remain open to future retellings, the "psychic and moral space necessary for groups and individuals to engage with and recreate their multiple identifications" (Cornell and Murphy 2002: 422; Park-Fuller 2000: 25). This is augmented when characters and scenes are creatively dissembled and reassembled, as we will see within forum theatre in chapter five and contemporary dance in chapter six.

And third, this necessarily draws attention to the observed who looks back. When intense affective experiences can allow observers to "suffer; but…le[t] us off in the end, exhausted with grief and relieved to have finished," where 'speaking truth to power' can actually open up what is disclosed to the scrutinizing and regulatory gaze of dominant

discourse, this capacity to foreground the performative agency of the speaker and thus the reciprocity of the encounter seems particularly significant (Sommer 1996: 125). In this sense, "to perform is to act, in…the sense of…claiming back the autonomy that is stripped from the individual person," and those who employ such modes are construed as active agents rather than docile subjects or objects of knowledge (Alcoff 1991-2: 21; Park-Fuller 2000: 26; Waterson 2010: 522). By foregrounding the creative act, engagement and the potential solidarity it generates is thus "not through pity or a false identity politics but through a recognition that the subject is a producer of culture" (Tierney-Tello 1999: 84).

Liminal Zones vs Resting Places: Mediated Spaces for Revisability

Chapter one gestured to the need for – and incredible challenge of – receptive generosity within engagements with difference. Though the means for a more ethical, honest, and generative politics, encounters with alterity involve the unsettling of the 'resting places' that ground, frame, and strengthen us. Difference introduces ambiguity and complexity, threatening our self-assurance and the security it provides, a challenge that leads so often to "avert[ing] our eyes or effac[ing] that which confounds the assumption that identity and difference are natural and that everything, including ourselves, is in its proper place" (Diprose 2002: 65). To affect and be affected by others in this way is uncomfortable, as it involves moments of ungrounding, of felt implication and shame; while these moments of encounter can open one up to more "complex seeing" (Brecht 1964: 44; Young 2000: 113) and broaden the range of perceived possibility for thought and action, it can thus also incite fear, defensiveness, deepening entrenchments, and foreclosures (Ahmed 2004: 183). These moments can thus either transform or

exacerbate unethical and harmful relations with difference. Democratic politics requires of us the capacity for 'revisability' (Deveaux 2003: 792; Dryzek 2005: 229), and yet this might be the very thing that is most difficult to achieve when one is 'caught out' as the contingency – often implication – of one's account of the world is exposed.

One of the most significant aspects of artistic encounters in this context is the fact that these dissembling, ungrounding moments are highly mediated. They are mediated in a number of ways: first, they exist in 'liminal zones' apart from everyday existence, and their fictional nature distances them from the specific context in which one is invested; second, the publics they instigate are once-removed from one's own community, such that one is not immediately accountable, or even visible, in moments when one is 'caught out' and compelled to revise; and third, the dynamic of engagement does not require immediate response or action in light of such moments, and so there is 'breathing space' in which the process of revisability can occur.

All artistic encounters generate an "in-between temporality," a "stillness of time and a strangeness of framing" that mediates other realities and possibilities in the specific moment, "bridging the home and the world" (Bhabha 1997: 451). However, it is in performance, which so closely resembles other forms of public engagement, that we can see the distinct contributions such mediated dynamics make to public engagement most clearly. Unlike static art forms and similar to conventional public spheres, performance is a physically and temporally demarcated space where artists and audiences meet; in this way, performance works like other forms of democratic engagement to create a degree of "reflective distance" from the context in which one is usually immersed, and so enabling participants to "revise their conceptions of what is valuable or worthy of pursuit [and] to

assess various courses of action with respect to those ends" (Baynes 1994: 318).

However, 'liminality' of performative engagements is far more pronounced than in these

conventional publics, so much so that the widely held definition of performance is in

terms of such liminality – a "spatial, temporal, and symbolic 'in-betweenness' [that]

allows for dominant norms to be suspended, questioned, played with, transformed"

(Turner 1982; Schechner 1985; McKenzie 1998: 218).

Judith Butler notes the difference between theatrical and social performance in

much the same terms, stating that "performances in non-theatrical contexts are governed

by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions" because they lack

performance's theatrical conventions that "delimit the purely imaginary character of the

act" (Butler 1990: 278). Some performances admittedly try to break with such

conventions, as we will see used as a political tactic in chapter four, but they nonetheless

do so within clearly demarcated parameters.[14] Unlike conventional publics, performance

is designed to temporarily suspend the otherwise largely seamless flow of daily

performances of identity, norm, and meaning and the material relations they legitimize,

and engage in the serious play with possibility. It asks for the 'suspension of disbelief,'

and invites the spectator to play with the norms, codes, laws, and customs that govern

one's life beyond the stage (Turner 1982: 11).

Moreover, precisely because it is set apart from everyday life and does not

directly invoke one's particular context, this invitation is more likely to be met with

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[14] Invisible theatre is unique in breaking with this; it is theatre performed in public vicinities, the artifice of which unassuming 'audiences' are unaware. Given this lack of awareness, this particular dimension of performance does not apply to invisible theatre; however, it works politically in a different way. We will see this used in chapter four, where this invisibility enabled the 'rehearsal' of and experience of 'success' in a confrontation with police within a protesting crowd, so inciting a sense of courage and hope prior to actual confrontation.

curiosity and receptivity, and a willingness to experiment. Within performative engagements, my identification with and thus investments in the course of events, the laws of physics and norms of politics are therefore not as great; I do not so easily feel personally attacked when a character with whom I share ground is challenged precisely on that ground. Performance interacts with me obliquely, and through once-removed enactments within a theatrically demarcated terrain, what is normally met with rejection or perceived as noise might very well sneak in through the cracks. Indeed, in these mediated contexts where there is less at stake, so to speak, it becomes just a little more tenable to engage ambiguity and complexity, and it is possible that such encounters might cultivate a 'dissembling' of the association of difference with threat that receptive generosity requires. The liminality of these theatrical spaces opens up what one performance artist calls "demilitarized zone[s] in which meaningful 'radical' behaviour and progressive thought are allowed to take place, even if only for the duration of the performance itself" (Gomez-Peña 2005: 24).

This receptivity is also fostered by the mediated quality of performance's 'publics,' in two ways. Firstly, they are distinguished from one's immediate contexts: the audiences of performance are 'thrown together,' in Iris Young's terms (1996: 126), and as opposed to the communities to which one feels immediately accountable – those in which one would feel most 'caught out' when found to be wrong or implicated – this public at-a-remove provides a certain breathing space for quiet, unsettling, transformative moments, where implication or shame can lead to a turning-towards rather than a turning-away. One has space 'between,' in this liminal zone – often even in the cover of darkness – to admit to oneself what is difficult to acknowledge publicly. Secondly, this 'public'

does not demand an immediate response. At once "*both real and not real*," these experiments have "no *necessary* consequence for the audience. Paradoxically, this is the first condition needed for performance efficacy" (Kershaw 2000: 139; original emphasis).

This is not to say that art is not "consequential" – art that I am interested in here is "meant to make a difference" (Pollock 1998: 95). However, it effects this change through the way that it opens up spaces for reflection and revision, and it does this in part *through* the lack of immediate demand on those so engaged. Rather than immediate response, which so often can encourage knee-jerk reactions that have recourse to familiar habituated patterns, this creates a temporal breathing space for reflection both within and following performance; in this way, engagement with art works does not end with the immediate encounter, but expands into further evaluation, discussion, and integration. Indeed, perhaps due to the processual nature of the understanding it initiates, art presents a means through which such revisibility over time is facilitated in a way that other political forums that demand immediate response have difficulty achieving.

> *[O]nce the performance is over and people walk away, my hope is that a process of reflection gets triggered in their perplexed psyches. If the performance is effective (I didn't say good, but effective), this process can last for several weeks, even months. The questions and dilemmas embodied in the images and rituals I present can continue to haunt the spectator's dreams, memories, and conversations. The objective is not to 'like' or to 'understand' performance art, but to create a sediment in the audience's psyche. (Gomez-Peña 2005: 25)*

Conclusion: Problematics and Proposition of Art as Politics

This chapter examined some of the inherent characteristics of the arts, and of performance in particular, that lend themselves to a radical democratic politics in ways that dominant accounts of democratic engagement have yet to acknowledge and conventional forms of democratic engagement have difficulty achieving. In doing so, the

claim is not that all artistic engagements are necessarily democratic, nor that the mere presence of these traits is sufficient to catalyze meaningful engagement across difference. As meaning-making systems and sites of public engagement, the arts are both disciplinary and liberatory, normalizing and subversive, totalitarian and democratic. As Butler and others have shown, performance "belongs to the strong as well as the weak; it underwrites de Certeau's 'strategies' as well as 'tactics', Bakhtin's 'banquet' as well as 'carnival'" (Taylor 2003: 22). Likewise, there is no way to predetermine whether a performance will be democratic or productively disruptive; Butler's own account of drag has been critiqued for making such decontextualized assumptions. It is therefore crucial to analyze the politics of performance in relation to its particular context, as well as acknowledge and interrogate the various risks, challenges and limits of performance as politics. Thus, the degree to which these performative forms of democratic engagement foster or enact a *care for difference* and *receptive generosity* will be examined through a careful reading of three case studies in the following chapters. Moreover, special attention will be paid to the distinct challenges and limits of such modalities that potentially truncate this capacity to function as democratic processes, the focus of chapter seven.

The fact remains, however, that these qualities of artistic encounter – its polyphony, affective intensity, kinaesthesia, imaginative inquiry, explicit interpretiveness, liminality, and creative agency – are resources that might be harnessed for a radical, pluralist democratic politics. Each of these qualities might lead political theorists to doubt the legitimacy of this form of democratic engagement: its meanings are indeterminate, multiple, and open-ended; its use of affect and sensation makes it 'irrational' or less amenable to rational judgment; its artfulness makes knowledge-claims problematic; its

mediation of experience lessens accountability. However, these qualities of the arts ultimately prove productive for engagements across difference precisely because they are defined by the very characteristics ascribed to identity/difference itself: as complex, multiple, relational, and contingent; as embodied, situated and interpreted; and as continual process rather than essence. While these 'unruly' dimensions of the arts thus present concrete challenges to politics, these challenges resemble those politics already encountered with regards to representing and negotiating identity, and artistic modes that work through these terms can avoid in large part the threats of reification or appropriation often encountered in other forms of political discourse. We will see in the following case studies how these particular dynamics and resources are used to cultivate both radically democratic engagements with difference, and the receptive generosity they require. And it is art's very unruliness – the very qualities that provoke skepticism or oversight regarding the arts by political theorists and political actors alike – that provides the means for such democratic engagement.

Chapter Four
Political Actors: Performance as Democratic Protest in Anti-Apartheid Theatre[15]

"What happens in theatre *happens*. Representation has the effect of action."

(Coplan 1986: 157)

Introduction

We have seen in chapter one that pluralist democracies demand both a *care for difference* – an attentiveness to and agonistic care for the complexity of identity, partiality of prevailing accounts, and the persistent murmur and occasional shout of the difference that exceeds them – and *receptive generosity* towards 'others' within the unsettling terrain of politics. Further, they require forms of affiliation and coalition that work *through* rather than in spite of difference – where intensity of resonance is not premised on the erasure of difference, where difference "converges but is not conflated" (Mohanty and Martin 2003: 100). And yet, as critics of multiculturalism, autobiography, and testimony have shown in various ways, these challenges are difficult to achieve even within those policies and practices designed for these express purposes.

As chapter three has argued, it is in these ways that artistic performance may serve as a pivotal, if still largely overlooked, site of democratic engagement. And, interestingly, it is precisely the most 'unruly' of its characteristics – those which have led political theorists to handle performance gingerly, if at all – that allow it to serve as a site of democratic practice in powerful ways. Indeed, structured to represent meaning as complexly and persuasively as possible, artistic performance has developed communicative techniques that are not necessarily available to or used within other instances of civil society.

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[15] A version of this chapter is published in *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics*, ed. Nancy Love and Mark Mattern (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012, forthcoming).

Here, in contrast to conventional modes of communication that all too easily lapse into static terms of identity politics, meaning is expressly conveyed as multimodal, multivalent, and non-exhaustive. Here, while declarative modes conventionally used in politics tend to deny their own performativity or 'erase their own absences,' the *evocative* nature of artistic performance draws reflexive attention to the interpretive and partial nature of its account. And here, too, are practices that expressly and artfully cultivate receptivity even as they challenge deeply held and often latent beliefs and values. It is this potential that this chapter will explore – the capacity of performance to foreground the performativity of identity and politics, and so challenge the authority of prevailing discourses and political relations as well as signal the agency to intervene therein, and the capacity to resonate and connect across linguistic, cultural, and racial difference and form coalitions in these terms. To do so, I will focus on two aesthetic strategies in particular, *polyphony* and *transience*, and use the case of South African protest theatre – where a form of artistic engagement became a broad-sweeping national phenomenon widely recognized for its political influence against an oppressive state – to do so. In fact, here we find an extreme case where, despite experiences of state and more insidious anti-democratic pressures, artistic performance was able to effectively challenge monolithic discourses and the anti-democratic political systems they sustained, and even flourish as alternative sites of democratic engagement in the face of such repression, paving the way for South Africa's transition to democracy. This particular capacity to function as a site of democratic engagement within – despite – an overtly and aggressively anti-democratic context is also intimately linked to both *polyphony* and *transience*, and the third political effect this chapter will explore.

Protest Theatre in Apartheid South Africa: Historical Background

With segregation laws, mass removals, and profound state violence and suppression of all opposition making democratic practices all but impossible, black South Africans[16] and their allies increasingly turned to artistic performance. Throughout the history of apartheid in South Africa, "cultural struggle has always formed an integral part of efforts of the oppressed in the fight for democracy and national liberation" (Horn 1996: 116). Theatre in particular was considered its most powerful vehicle, to some extent taking the place of open dissent during apartheid's darkest years (Blumberg and Walder 1999: 5).

Although a distinct force, such theatre was by no means a homogenous phenomenon: always emerging from and in response to changing political, ideological and socio-cultural conditions, resistant theatre in this context has manifested along wide spectrums with regard to form, content, audience, and inherent ideology. Ranging from a liberal national discourse to more militant ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement; from the use or radical innovation of European aesthetic codes to the use of traditional or contemporary African aesthetic codes and cultural forms; from narrations of collective

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[16] While this chapter will focus on the experiences and struggles of black communities under the apartheid system, this is by no means a full account of the racial discrimination in policy and practice within South Africa at the time. The division of South Africans into three racial categories – Bantu (black African), white or Coloured (mixed race), with a fourth, Indian, added later - under the Population Registration Act of 1950 enabled the implementation of apartheid policies affecting all aspects of society for non-whites; likewise, political resistance in theatre by also included key leaders such as Ronnie Govender – whose play *Antigone* is discussed in this chapter, and whose plays *The Lahnee's Pleasure*, *Offside* and *At the Edge* both marked the emergence of a distinctive Natal Indian theatre and political engagement of issues of Indian and Coloured marginalization, manipulation and forced and violent eviction, and were often met by "heavy-handed action by security police" (Govender, in Solberg 1999: 150-55); Ismael Mahomed, whose satirical critique of traditional Indian family values in *Purdah* caused community uproar; Ari Sitas and the Natal Worker's Theatre Movement mentioned briefly in this chapter, which emerged out of the social and industrial struggles in Natal and produced *The Long March* and *Bambatha's Children*; and theatre companies such as the Durban Academy of Theatre Artists and the Shah Theatre Academy (Naidoo 1993; Davis and Fuchs 1996). However, this chapter will be limited to a discussion of apartheid's targeting of black communities in particular, though the acts of creative resistance it includes speak to this diversity of experience and struggle under the apartheid system.

history and individual morality to direct challenges to the contemporary political context

– performances varied in relation to political position, intended audience, and the

demands and limits of changing political circumstances. Within this vast range, it was

used to address a wide range of issues related to apartheid, examine their nature and

consequences, and explore political and ideological alternatives: pass arrests, petty

bureaucracy, police violence, prison conditions, racial discrimination, struggles of

migrant workers, the breakdown of moral and cultural values in the townships, and the

need for solidarity within black communities are only a few of the most common themes

from this period (Peterson 1990: 235).[17]

The apartheid state, of course, was not oblivious to this use of theatre for

democratic ends. The few public venues available within black communities were subject

to aggressive censorship and police interference; in fact, until the 1980s the control of

these spaces was the predominant means through which the state limited and contained

artistic expression in the townships and was able to dramatize its own strength (van

Rooyen 1987: 7; Peterson 1990: 232-4; Orkin 1991: 150-2; 1996: 55). Segregation

legislation made interracial interaction and collaboration increasingly difficult, and

producers, playwrights, and actors of contestatory theatre were repeatedly detained,

arrested, exiled, intimidated and harassed.[18] With the introduction of the Publications and

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[17] Appendix A charts the chronology of key state actions, as well as theatrical and conventional acts of resistance during this period.

[18] The author of *Shanti*, one of the most influential resistant plays of the period, was thrown in front of a train before the first night of performance, while cast members were arrested and charged with treason under the Terrorism Act (Wakashe 1986: 41; Orkin 1991: 1-2). Gibson Kente, responsible for the creation of a distinctly black popular theatre, was arrested and detained while trying to film his play *How Long* (Wakashe 1986: 41; Davis and Fuchs 1996a: 7), while Black Consciousness playwright Reverend Julius Maqina, increasingly popular in the townships from 1976 on, was harassed, detained, and put under house arrest (Orkin 1991: 214). In 1975, along with political Black Consciousness Organizations, the People's Experimental Theatre (PET) and the Theatre Council of Natal (TECON) were put on trial for

Entertainment Act of 1963, the creation of the Publications Control Board, and the Cultural Section of the West Rand Bantu Administration Board in 1975, all performances were required to submit their scripts for scrutiny and would be banned if deemed "undesirable" due to content that was "prejudicial to the safety of the state, general welfare, peace and good order" (van Rooyen 1987: 7; Peterson 1990: 232-4; Orkin 1991: 210).

During the state's short-lived "reform" policies of 1978, resistant theatre may have passed safely under this watchful eye, but only if it proved prohibitive to black communities through the use of arcane dramatic codes, high admission costs, or "intimate" urban experimental theatres that predominantly preached to a converted choir and served as safety valve rather than fulcrum for resistant energies (van Rooyen 1987: 118; Peterson 1990: 235).[19] Increased presence of police and, in the 1980s, South African troops in the townships further served to intimidate and control groups with the intent of performing protest theatre (Orkin 1991: 211). The state's keen understanding of the subversive power of art was succinctly expressed by a Security police officer while threatening the founder of Workshop 71 Robert (Kavanagh) McLaren, who in reference to Maoist China described art as an "organizational and agitational weapon" (McLaren 1996: 33).

Beyond such overt state suppression, subtler but no less powerful forces of racism and segregation at play among theatre establishments, critics, academics, publicity

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"inflammatory, provocative, anti-white, racialistic, subversive and/or revolutionary" activities (Solberg 1999: 17).

[19] One illustration of the state's targeted and overt repression of grassroots theatre is the arrest of Gibson Kente for filming *How Long* in 1976 while the more politically radical Workshop 71's *Survival* was touring the United States; when *Survival* began to attract larger audiences in townships, it was banned in 1978. This was also the case for Reverend Maqina's *Give Us This Day* (1974) and Khayalethu Mqhayisa's *Confused Mhlaba* (1975) (Kavanagh 1981: 125-72; Coplan 1986: 169).

agencies, and publishers worked to devalue and marginalize such theatre by either scathing critiques or absenting them from records altogether, so that these acts of opposition were subject to both legal banning and "hegemonically induced absences and erasures" (Orkin 1991: 250). Moreover, the living conditions of oppressed groups meant that capital and time for productions was severely limited; likewise, prohibitive costs for travel and admission to theatres in the cities prevented the development of audiences from the very communities represented by some urban theatre (Orkin 1991: 17).

Certainly, this had significant impact: interracial groups such as the Dorkay House, United Artists, and the Phoenix Players, and Black Consciousness groups such as PET and TECON were forced to fold; numerous artists fled in exile, or were too shaken by state intimidation to continue writing politically, as in the case of Gibson Kente (Kavanagh 1981: xxiii; Coplan 1986: 168, 209, 220; Solberg 1999: 17; Larlham 1991: 201). Many plays even if documented could not be published, while the few published works were, until recently, extremely difficult to obtain (Solberg 1999: 8). Interestingly, segregation laws are held to be partly responsible for the emergence of a distinctly black township theatre, though the state was always most focused and violent in its suppression of such work, and its desegregation of performance companies and audiences from 1977 is commonly seen as a central cause in the near-extinction of township theatre from this time (Peterson 1990: 233).

However, despite these instances of effective state and socio-economic repression, the phenomenon of theatre as democratic resistance persisted and, at times, thrived: (Kavanagh) McLaren has counted no less than 150 separate known productions throughout South Africa between 1953 and 1977, most of them original works (Kavanagh

1981: xvii), not to mention the proliferation of resistant theatre notably after the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Indeed, in some of the strictest years of apartheid during the 1960s and 1970s black theatre actually came into its own as an artistic genre and political forum, while interracial or white liberal-facilitated resistant theatre persisted (Coplan 1985: 210; Solberg 1999: 20). Despite overt, targeted and violent suppression of oppositional expression, despite bannings, arrests, harassment, and socio-economic restraints, such theatre was produced more frequently and became far more aggressively positioned against the apartheid state than ever before, emerging as a force "that the white South African hegemony could no longer afford to ignore" (Dalrympie 1987: 146; Orkin 1991: 209; Solberg 1999: 22).

(En)Acting Protest: Theatre as Democratic Practice

Though the *content* of such acts of cultural resistance certainly played an integral role in such struggles, this ability of theatre to continue to function as a forum for democratic engagement in the very teeth of an anti-democratic and aggressive state can be understood in relation to these performances' capitalization upon the *aesthetic* resources of *polyphony* and *transience*. *Polyphony* is, as chapter three has described, "multi-leveledness and semantic multi-voicedness" (Bakhtin 1984a: 20) – performance's multiple communicative modes, including the visual, kinetic, sonic, spatial, affective, and symbolic. For the purposes of this analysis, I will be examining polyphony of three kinds: linguistic, non-verbal (including visual, aural, dramatic, and physical), and what I will be calling 'creative.' *Transience* of representation refers to the ephemerality of performance's medium; as process rather than object, performance dissolves even as it renders visible, leaving few traces. Though inherent to all performance, this might be

augmented by minimizing dependence on physical sets and props, relying upon orality rather than textuality, or incorporating greater improvisation rather than pre-given scripts. Both polyphony and transience have been used throughout the history of South African resistant theatre, to varying degrees and in different ways, to enable performance to resignify identities, ideas, and values; expose and challenge the prevailing political and ideological system; empower and mobilize subordinated groups; and cultivate new alliances and differently structured publics, all despite profound state efforts of suppression. In the South African context, these aesthetic strategies were consciously and continually employed within political performance, demonstrating in various ways that it is not merely what, but *how* performers communicate that enables performance to function as a site of democratic engagement.

Polyphony and Transience: Performing Identity, Challenging Authority

As so many critical theorists have argued, identity is inherently complex, multiple, contingent, and in process. As chapter three has argued, by communicating through multiple modes, polyphony holds together in apparently impossible simultaneity what so often becomes simplified, reified, or conflated in other forms of representation. As such, it enables the articulation and exploration of identity beyond the tight scripts of fixed social categories or restrictive discourses, through a "multifaceted polylog" that can reveal and contend with multiple themes, connections and contradictions, and intersectional identities in their complexity (Papastergiadis 1995: 8; Shohat and Stam 1995: 12; Mohanty and Martin 2003: 100). In the context of a racist and totalitarian state, this proved especially significant by enabling alternative significations of subordinated groups beyond prevailing racist discourses and the asymmetrical relations they sustained.

But in presenting such multiplicity without its negation or resolution, such polyphony makes impossible claims that such meaning is fixed, exhaustive or unmediated. The polyphony of artistic modalities creates an inevitable and explicit 'absence' and 'excess' of meaning, and so makes difficult any totalizing claims to final 'resting place' for meaning (Bakhtin 1984a). In this way, this explicit artfulness can work to cultivate a tolerance for ambiguity and complexity, and for the limits of one's own understanding. As we will see, this proved particularly significant in the context of an oppressive South African state, where artistic polyphony worked to effectively challenge the authority of monolithic discourses and the political order they legitimized – rather than, as Martha Nussbaum has argued, preventing such resistance (Nussbaum 1999).

Likewise, *transience* draws attention to the process of meaning-making behind ostensibly stable and authoritative meanings; by making overt the making and unmaking of identities on stage, this transience can contribute to agency-building by rendering meanings constructed and contestable. Similarly, it enables the communication of meaning while simultaneously alluding to the limitations of such accounts. Just as polyphony makes difficult attempts to claim the authority of one aspect or reading of a piece over another, such ephemerality makes it possible to dwell but not rest within the various moments of the moving image. As such, performance effectively resists efforts or claims to exhaustively name, contain and possess that which it represents.

In the context of South African protest theatre, the exploration of "the whole gamut of expression" available within aesthetic, dramatic, and physical codes helped crystallize and condense meaning, as well as creatively disrupt and move beyond "constricted apartheid-determined relationships and modes of expressiveness" (Mazibuko

1996: 17; Fleishmann 1996: 181; Alcock 1999: 51). Given the inadequacy of language to capture the complexities and contradictions of both apartheid and the meanings, experiences, and identities suppressed by it, it is no wonder the polyphony of artistic performance became a pivotal site of communication and collective inquiry. In this context, as Mark Fleishmann also observes, "[a] complex subject requires a complex treatment and gives rise to a complex text in which the written word, the spoken word, and the transformative material body amongst others are in a constant state of dynamic dialogue" (Fleishmann 1996: 174).

The creative play of linguistic polyphony facilitated this project in a number of ways. Beyond the use of English, these plays used various indigenous languages, as well as *tsotsitaal* or the urban polyglot slang spoken in the streets at the time, to generate "an immensely rich mine" for playwrights (Hauptfleisch 1989: 78; Balme 1996: 77). This use of language "exactly as…in real life" represented such marginalized experience as not only lived reality but something of value (Kavanagh 1985: 214; Kruger 1993: 122). Moreover, the interjection of indigenous languages served to contest the presumed authority of colonial languages and the primacy of certain modes of discourse. The strategic use of specific languages for intertribal jokes, exclamations, sexual content and songs not only invoked local knowledge, but served purposes of inclusion and exclusion: acting as a 'secret code,' African languages were used to assert the linguistic proficiency of those who tended to understand more languages than white South Africans, as well as enable communication past white audience members directly to African populations to create a sense of shared knowledge and struggle (Balme 1996: 77-8). Even the use of colonial languages in these contexts, particularly when spoken in their localized *tsotsitaal*

form, functioned as "colonial mimicry" that undermined the ostensible authority of the Afrikaans state by turning "the gaze of the discriminated black upon the eye of power" (Bhabha 1994: 85-92; Hutchison 2003: 11). Moreover, the slip between and subversive play of languages in these productions functioned to draw attention to the role of language as an instrument of domination and the linguistic power structures that exist in South African society as a result (Balme 1996: 77-8).

Non-verbal aspects of polyphony served similar purposes, not least the repeated disruption of established dramatic codes. This, in the South African apartheid context, was enacted in two ways: firstly, by the interjection of traditional African modes of performance; and secondly, by innovating new dramatic codes. The use of indigenous aesthetic codes, apart from their particular nature, was in itself an act of defiance of apartheid and its legitimizing narratives on two fronts: such acts not only reclaimed lost heritage and asserted its worth and place, but also reconfigured and expanded available aesthetic vocabularies and in so doing undermined the universality and legitimacy such discourses claim.

More than this, in the South African context the precise nature of these traditional dramatic codes provided further resources for unsettling the authority and stability of prevailing meanings and values. David Coplan's extensive work on the subject finds these codes to be defined by their "interconnection, visibility, imagery, and efficacy" (Coplan 1986: 153). South African traditional aesthetics have routinely used representative forms that are synesthetic, fluidly transitioning from one meaning to another and simultaneously coordinating expression of visual, aural, and tactile media. In so doing, they draw connections between communicative modes – such as the rhythm of

the feet echoing that of the voice – which further reinforces conveyed meaning (Coplan 1986: 154). Here very clearly is the employment of polyphony, made doubly effective as a means of subversion by its invocation of traditional values and concepts. By using aspects of these traditional performative codes, playwrights such as Matsemela Manaka and Maishe Maponya and plays such as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1972) and *The Blood Knot* (1962) were not only able to invoke suppressed history and meaning, but in so doing discover a revitalizing resource for democratic practices (Coplan 1986: 158).

Beyond this invocation of traditional artistic culture, resistant theatre in South Africa has also innovatively transformed established dramatic codes as a means of contesting received knowledge and the dictated parameters of possible thought and action. Breaking with established conventions became a means of rejecting white theatre and with it, white dominance: Mthuli Shezi's *Shanti* (1973), for example, the only play published from the Black Consciousness Movement, is one of the many plays to deliberately break with conventions of naturalism and realism (Orkin 1991: 157). Having each actor move between multiple characters, using stage narration of scenes, dream sequences, flashbacks, and numerous other devices allowed these plays to simultaneously make a political statement concerning the primacy of received aesthetic codes, assert the agency of black artists to create in their own right, and signify to their audiences the mutability of dominant codes and possibilities for intervention. Others, such as *Sizwe*, moved away from the use of the proscenium arch and, with it, the traditional divide between performer and audience that was seen as crucial to bourgeois theatre: this was done by directly addressing the audience and demanding their active participation through

devices such as call-and-response, songs, and improvised dialogue with audience members.

Other techniques pioneered by Workshop 71 and used in plays such as *The Hungry Earth* (1979) broke with conventions by dissolving the boundary separating art and reality, through the use of the day's newspaper headlines, deliberate slippage to actors' real names, or actors introducing themselves directly to the audience before taking on their characters (Coplan 1985: 221-2). In a context of daily oppression and violence, these theatre practitioners often sought to dissolve the suspension of disbelief so integral to Western theatre and instead use performance as a means by which, as Martin Orkin observes, to "link the enacted drama to actors and audience, and situate all, in turn, directly within the processes within which they are lodged in common" (Orkin 1991: 159-60). However, despite these acts of co-implication to provoke reflexivity and critical analysis, these disruptions of traditional codes simultaneously resisted the creation of equally seamless, manageable constructions based on their own complex and multimodal significations. As a result, they challenged the viewer to problematize not only prevailing discourse but the manner in which monolithic discourses of racism and apartheid distort complex meaning. In these ways, disruptions of dramatic form served to transform the representation of event into event, or what Richard Schechner calls "actuals," where something consequential happens to contribute to social and political change (Schechner 1977: 8; Coplan 1986: 157).

The body provided yet another mode of communication within such work. The prolific use of physical language in South African resistant theatre ranged from formal dance choreography to elaborate gestures to complement dialogue, to sculpted physical

imagery, to the body completely replacing verbal communication where words were simply insufficient (Fleishmann 1996: 175). Following traditional indigenous aesthetic codes, often the body was also used to metaphorically render musical and verbal images such that it did not merely accompany, but was itself integral to meaning (Coplan 1986: 155). This proved politically significant given the containment and regulation of the body in the context of domination. More than merely conveying what cannot be adequately captured in words, the performative use of the body experiments with the creative expression of one's identity through the very form most intimate with it and, in the context of domination, alienated from it. In so doing, it actively contests inscriptions on the body and explodes the possibilities for signification: as Mark Fleishman observes in his account of such practices, "the physical image is multivalent, ambiguous, complex. It leads to the proliferation of meaning which demands an imaginative response from the spectator" (Fleishmann 1996: 182).

A poignant example of this is the gradual transition enacted during *Bopha!* from the physical training routines of political academies to traditional Zulu dance, which effectively uses the body to speak to the difficulties of black policemen in South Africa (Balme 1996: 80). In the words of playwright Percy Mtwa, "that body which you have can be anything, can be a piece of sculpture, it can sing, it can be a song, it can be movement, can be sound, can be anything, that body" (Mtwa 1988: 170). Moreover, the body provided poor and subordinated communities with, as the creator of worker theatre Ari Sitas states, "powers and talents that are rich despite our predicaments" (Sitas 1996: 133). Here the 'excess' of the living body strains against and creatively plays with the prevailing terms of the social body, before the eyes of audiences; as Moira Gatens,

Rosalyn Diprose and others argue, the individual body "contains its own logic" which can expose, interrogate, and possibly transform the norms of inclusion, exclusion, and asymmetry within the social body (Fleishmann 1996: 179; Gatens 1996: 120; Diprose 2002: 172).

As may already be apparent, these strategies are effective forms of democratic resistance not only because of their polyphony, but also due to the transience they necessarily entail. Transitions from one mode of communication to another, or within a modality from one meaning to the next, create a slippage that signals the constructedness and mutability of established discourses that have been naturalized and internalized. Whether one actor moves seamlessly from playing one character to another in front of the audience with merely the exchange of a simple prop or piece of clothing – as epitomized in *Woza Albert*, *Asinamali,* and *Bopha!* – or transforms one movement or sound into another – such as the prophet-turned-automaton with merely the repeated use of a shovel in *Prophets in a Black Sky* – or the continual shift from dramatic action to song to dance and back, such transience foregrounds the ever-mutable process of meaning-making, and can challenge the fixed categories and scripted relations of dominant culture and explore new forms of self-identification (Fleishmann 1996: 177-9). Moreover, they serve to shatter the spectator's illusion of "dominant specularity" – psychic distance, assurance of firm understanding – by performing "discontinuity, contradiction, the fact of mobility in process, and the impossibility of a sure and centrally embracing view" (Orkin 1991: 229).

In these ways, such theatre made the most of the subversive potential of such aesthetic dimensions to articulate and develop "counteridentifications" that exposed and interrogated existing conditions, experimented with alternatives, and made explicit the

capacity to do so beyond the performative frame (Orkin 1991: 18). Here, polyphony and

transience provided the means to represent otherwise suppressed realities and positions,

and do so in ways that did not restrict such meanings to fixed or bounded terms; rather,

by engaging meaning and identity through these evocative modalities, such practices

enacted and fostered a *care for difference* that democracy demands. As Schutzman and

Cohen-Cruz state, rather than preclude political representation, mobilization and

coalition,

> the potency of in-between (or open space) and ambiguity (or paradox) [are]
> strategies of resistance…playful, unpredictable, improvisatory, shape-shifting, and
> yet empowering means to challenge fixed, centralized, hierarchical, and often
> oppressive circumstances and/or readings. (2006: 8)

Whether challenging apartheid discourses or overt state control, the 'unruliness' of

performance proved the very means through which such monoliths could be effectively

challenged and transformed. Moreover, as we will see, these aesthetic dimensions are

largely responsible for making theatre in the South African apartheid context "the most

accessible and forceful medium" in which to do so (Tomaselli 1980).

Polyphony: Connecting Across Difference

Democracy, as I have argued, requires not only the engagement of identity as

complex and nonexhaustive – and so realize and foster what I call a care for difference –

but also dispositions towards 'others' defined by *receptive generosity* if such difference is

to unsettle and transform the terms of politics in ever-democratizing ways. Moreover, it

demands forms of affiliation and coalition that are not presumed upon erasure, but rather

work through and across differences so cared for. Performance's polyphony helps to

cultivate receptivity by opening up multiple points of contact: one might connect with, be

affected by, find resonance or meaning through art's multiple "modes of inhabitation" however divergent one's own experience may be from that of the creator or other observers (Bennett 2005: 12). Through its explicit excess and absence – enhanced by the move away from verbal to more symbolic, visual and embodied forms – the aesthetic creates a space through which the "multiple, conflictual axes of identity/difference" that pose such a challenge to conventional forms of political representation can be the very means for communication and coalition (Felski 1997: 12). In fact, due to their aesthetic and affective dimensions, artistic modalities can often provoke responses denied to other ostensibly 'rational' forums of democratic engagement, precisely because they can reach past our usual psychological defenses via these alternative channels. The "concrete relational density" of artistic performance's polyphony and the great pressure this creates of, to borrow Altieri's phrase, "the whole on the particular" can generate intensive affective encounters that move beyond, between, and beneath habitual patterns of interpretation and response; this is, as many theorists have argued, an inherently democratic moment, in which our "partitions of the sensible" are dissembled and we may "figure the newly thinkable" (hooks 1995; Altieri 2003: 14; Adorno 1997: 187; Rancière 2004: 12; Panagia 2009: 16).

However, even as this polyphony allows for the generation of multiple axes of affiliation across seemingly insurmountable differences, its explicit 'excess' and 'absence' also foreground the interpretive nature of the meanings it generates, and so even in moments of intense affective resonance it can foster "a feeling for another that entails an encounter with something irreducible and different, often inaccessible" (Bennett 2005: 10). In so doing, it can guard against a crude empathy that confuses

affiliation with identification by substituting "the 'you' with the 'as-if-it-were-me'" (Sommer 1995: 925; Taylor 1998: 10). This was certainly true in the case of South African protest theatre, where polyphony enabled communication and a sense of solidarity among diverse and far-flung communities in all-too-rare forms of "non-identical kinship" (Brah 2000: 273).

The use of both verbal and non-verbal forms of polyphony enabled protest theatre to broaden its impact, both in terms of drawing and holding audience attention, and generating multiple points of contact. In the first instance, as David Coplan also notes, "[t]he relevance and effectiveness of this theatre depends upon whether it can be popular in the best sense," and the strategic use of both traditional and township performative styles, as well as the central role of dance and song, mime and tableau often gave these potentially heavy-handed performances mass appeal among black audiences unfamiliar with formal theatre as well as outside communities (Coplan 1986: 151, 174; 1985: 210; Peterson 1990: 237). The use of slang and local languages, beginning with the musical plays of Gibson Kente, also gave performances a markedly greater appeal among township communities, whose political education and mobilization the apartheid state was most determined to prevent.

Moreover, performance's multivalence was used consciously and strategically by various playwrights and directors to generate multiple possibilities for connection and resonance across significant cultural and linguistic differences both locally and abroad (Balme 1996: 65). Linguistically, English was the preferred *lingua franca* of resistant theatre, as it was seen to be an essential tool in struggles against cultural isolation and state control of communicative channels. And yet the strategic use of different local

languages, as with the translation of Fatima Dike's *The Sacrifice of Kreli* into multiple regional languages along the tour circuit, also helped performance to reach linguistically isolated communities (Coplan 1985: 208; 1986: 168-9; Balme 1996: 78). Further, the role of visual cues such as images, mime and physical metaphor often spoke "more strongly than the words," while dance and music would often "carry the burden of the performance" (Wakashe 1986: 45). Such aesthetic devices are far from trivializing: they prove vital to the constant challenge to, in the words of Ngeme, "communicate with anyone anywhere in the world, [to] bridge the barriers of language and culture" (Fleishmann 1996: 176). They provide multiple, simultaneous inroads for connecting with and being affected by a given performance, across profound linguistic, cultural, geographical, and racial differences. Due to these affective, aesthetic, and dramatic strategies, theatre was able to become one of South Africa's most visible exports and contributed to the struggle against apartheid by sensitizing diverse audiences abroad to injustices at home (Mda 1996: 216; Blumberg and Walder 1999: 6).

As well as broadening the reach of such work, the use of aesthetic and affective codes also deepened a performance's impact, making audiences, in the words of actor, director and playwright John Kani, "cross the barriers of illusory distance, to feel [another's] plight as [their own]" (Coplan 1985: 215). Dramatic techniques and notably the use of song prompted emotional responses from audiences, who at times spontaneously joined in song from their seats or, on the rare occasion, on stage, but far more often expressed their affective identification with and responses to various performances (Coplan 1986: 174; Solberg 1999: 14). For this reason, Gibson Kente's musical melodramas, despite their often temperate politics on the spectrum of resistant

theatre, were seen by the state to be among the most threatening of such performances, as their music seemed the source of black audiences' deep connection with his work: in Kente's words, "people carry it home, they sing about it because it is in musicals. It's very dangerous" (Kente 1999: 84).

Polyphony also played a role in forging coalitions and enabling alternatives models to do so behind and beyond the veritable curtain. These artistic spaces by definition entail a degree of collaboration, or *creative polyphony*, as each participant interprets the work at hand and contributes their role. Black and alternative companies and collectives created spaces for marginalized voices and all-too-rare sites of democratic engagement not only on stage but also through the creative process, facilitating the practice of critical inquiry, creative agency and democratic citizenship among cast and crew. For instance, the creation, direction and production of pieces of theatre by black artists became a primary means of wresting the modes of production away from dominant forces and enabling self-determination. During the Black Consciousness period groups such as MDALI, the first radical theatre group to work in townships to promote black-run theatre, TECON, who in 1973 banned white audiences, or the People's Experimental Theatre (PET) who resisted creative collaboration with white artists, used theatre as both a symbol and enactment of black capacity, solidarity and perspective (Orkin 1991: 155-8; Solberg 1999: 16) As one practitioner stated, "we are a movement which announces a real democracy on this land – where people like you and me can control for the first time our productive and creative power" (Orkin 1991: 193).

Where projects were multi-racial, the creative process often enabled cross-racial engagement altogether absent in almost all other spheres of civil society. *King Kong*, the

play often earmarked as the beginning of resistant theatre in South Africa, was the most important example of multiracial collaboration and was used as the model of such theatre for years to come (Coplan 1986: 166). This was developed later by companies like the world-renowned Market Theatre, which defied segregation laws at the time and forged a new multiracial direction for South African theatre despite its own fraught dimensions.[20] Within the context of segregation, whether legally or socially enforced, these creative endeavours helped to bridge barriers in experience and understanding in the very ways they sought to represent on the stage (Orkin 1991: 159). Indeed, these collaborations opened up spaces radically different from the surrounding socio-political climate, providing "a glimpse within the space of the theatre itself, intimations of an alternative South Africa" (Orkin 1991: 185).

Recognizing the political potential of the creative process, many theatre practitioners of all races moved towards the "workshop" creative method started by Union Artists in the 1950s that was consciously grounded in the collaboration of all artists involved (von Kotze 1984: 93; Burns 2002: 362; Hutchison 2003: 5). Barney Simon, playwright and co-founder of the Market Theatre, used to ask his performers to research their own environments to make artistic depictions more robust and realistic (Purkey 1996: 228; Hutchison 2003: 13). Other practitioners, such as in the Junction Avenue Theatre Company (JATC) post-1976 and Workshop 71, required active, equal

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[20] The Market Theatre was heavily critiqued by some for its funding by the Johannesburg City Council as well as white businessmen and professionals, looked upon as a site defined by liberal condescension. Further, its continued ability to produce radical work has been scrutinized much as internationally touring theatre at the time: as a tokenist strategy by the government to demonstrate its reasonableness and to create "a false illusion of a democratic environment, with healthy doses of freedom of expression" (Mda 1996: 205; Solberg 1999: 21; Hutchison 2003: 8). While these factors complicate any facile reading of the resistant effects of ostensibly resistant theatre, they do not undermine the Market Theatre's oppositional character, as it remained one of the few spaces defined by an anti-apartheid ethos (Orkin 1991: 185; Kruger 1993: 125-6).

participation of all artists involved, at times even encouraging the audience to "interrupt [the performance] and discuss issues which affected them as well as the performers, as they saw fit" (Orkin 1991: 192-3). It is of significance that some theatre groups consciously became multilingual to facilitate this cross-cultural dialogue (McLaren 1996: 29). The most extreme form of such collaborative creation took place in worker theatre, used by trade unions and performed by and for workers within factory walls during breaks: Ari Sitas, initiator of this form of resistant theatre, describes their use of the workshop method as requiring "each participant…to become a performer, thinker, planner, and storyteller," holding one another's narratives to account and combining their individual perspectives with full creative agency (Sitas 1996: 136). Here were instances of democratic 'speakings' as defined in chapter one – where connection and coalition, even collaboration, were made possible *through* rather than in spite of difference, and continual accountability and responsiveness to this plurality remained central to engagement.

In this way, the workshop method enhanced the polyphony of performance's creative process, enabling subordinated artists to become creative agents in their own right and in so doing bridged gaps in, and offered alternate forms of, cross-racial engagement from those created by apartheid (Burns 2002: 362). In the words of Will Kentridge of the JATC, at least in principle and often in practice "the workshop space in South Africa is a space where South Africans can momentarily leave the monster of apartheid behind them and meet as equals, without prejudice, to work creatively together" (Davis and Fuchs 1996b: 156). When sites for democratic citizenship and engagement across the lines set by racist discourse and the apartheid state were altogether absent in

South African society at the time, theatre offered the means through which such democratic engagement and practices of citizenship were possible, not only modeling on stage but also enacting democratic alternatives to the prevailing system.

There were, however, several occasions when this ideal was not realized and collaborations went sour, due to unequal power relations, artistic exploitation and failure to acknowledge contributions of black practitioners (Solberg 1999: 21; Hutchison 2003: 6). The line between democratic and anti-democratic practices is neither clear nor fixed, and even within these resistant spaces aspects of the apartheid system found their way in. However, on many occasions these spaces created the all-too-rare conditions for greater understanding of perspectives and struggles both "overlooked" and "overdetermined" by racism and apartheid (Bhabha 1994: 236), the transformation of one's own perspectives in light of this exposure, and the creation of contexts in which one could not only discuss or represent but also experience aspects of an alternative political order, preparing the way for "a more democratic South Africa – one freer and more able to tolerate both difference and dialogue" (Orkin 1991: 185, 252; Solberg 1999: 20).

Polyphony and Transience: Slipping Through the Grasp of the State

While these dimensions of performative engagement might play a role in any democratic project, in the context of an anti-democratic state such practices must also possess the basic capacity to continue despite forces of counter-resistance. Here too, performance's polyphony and transience proved vital in bypassing censure and other forms of state control in ways denied most other forms of democratic engagement in oppressive societies. Polyphony assisted with this in several ways: the multiple faces of performance – in straddling both commercial, entertainment spheres and public, political

forums – creates a certain spaciousness in which the former dimension might effectively veil the latter. Further, the transience of performance – dissolving even as it renders visible – means these forums are far more difficult to control. In the context of the South African apartheid state, this proved vital in enabling theatre to function – even flourish – as the primary form of cultural resistance, during even the most aggressive and targeted periods of state censorship.

In the first instance, the multiplicity of possible readings of performance made it possible to mask political content as 'mere' entertainment. Indeed, performances were at times able to function as a crucial organizing and conscientizing sites precisely through their avoidance of overtly political dimensions (Balme 1996: 34).[21] For those performances that could not disguise their political meaning, however, companies in both townships and cities would work through a system of entertainment clubs requiring "membership" and inviting audience members as "guests" with donations at the door to bypass segregation laws and assembly restrictions of state-controlled public spaces (McLaren 1996: 30; Hutchison 2003: 8). In this way, Workshop 71 was able to usher in the reinstatement of mixed race audiences and casts, banned since the early 1960s (Balme 1996: 30). Similarly, these companies were able to rehearse through affiliations with private drama clubs, youth clubs, volunteer organizations, and educational institutions (Coplan 1986: 165; Solberg 1999: 22).

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[21] This, like the temperate political content and radical political effect of Gibson Kente's musicals, gestures to an important, though difficult, dimension of democratic resistance, the counterpart to which is exemplified in the previous discussion of radical theatre on international tour and in experimental urban theatres: what appears non-contentious might prove incredibly resistant, perhaps due to in part to this very temperance, while what appears resistant might in fact be harmless, or even counter-resistant, insofar as it can cathartically relieve productive discomfort among apologist audiences, siphon potentially mobilized energies, and demonstrate both the power and legitimacy of the prevailing powers it resists (Mda 1996: 205).

Moreover, the use of African languages and urban township slang allowed for the communication of subversive messages despite the presence of superintendents, police, and other figures of state control during performances. Meanwhile, contemporary issues could be addressed indirectly through the use of mythical or historical metaphor – such as the use of the Antigone myth in *The Island* (1973) or the harvest as euphemism for the need to reclaim land in *Pula* (1982); under the veil of songs, dance, melodrama, and other aesthetic devices; or the use of cultural codes only understood in full by its intended audience (Wakashe 1986: 43; Orkin 1991: 160). Much as prose writers turned progressively to poetry during the 1960s as a means of continuing to write despite increased government censorship, the aesthetic and symbolic codes of drama were a vocabulary with which to camouflauge anti-apartheid criticism (Solberg 1999: 22). This led to plays once or potentially banned by the Publications Control Board successfully escaping censure, as their meanings could be, as with Zakes Mda's collected volume of scripts, misunderstood or, if understood, perceived to pose no real threat (Orkin 1991: 204, 214).

Furthermore, here transience comes to the fore as a vital resource in resisting containment, regulation, and cooptation by the apartheid system in terms of either the state or the market, through four different means: spatial and temporal transience, or the impermanence of place and event; physical transience, or the limited use of physical aids, whether props, costumes and sets or technical equipment; the employment of orality over text; and the role of improvisation over script. Indeed, the degree to which performance made of such strategies corresponds in this case to the state's inability to suppress its presence.

Control over public space continued to be the most effective form of state regulation of artistic production throughout the apartheid era. Consequently, while certain established theatres like the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and the People's Space Theatre in Cape Town provided much-needed spaces for rehearsal, training, collaboration, and performance, they were also the most easily targeted and greatly affected by the tentacles of the state, and due to high maintenance costs were more vulnerable to manipulation by investors from the business sector and the demands of the market (Kruger 1993: 125). By contrast, those performances that capitalized on their capacity for transience were able to perform within brief windows of opportunity amidst pervasive state control as well as move away from the "economy of display" and demands of the market (Kruger 1993: 127). Kente's companies, for instance, travelled by bus throughout the country for one-night-only performances, their impromptu promotional banners hastily posted during the day. A great deal of such unscripted, minimally rehearsed, and quickly convened and dismantled performance occurred during times of the strictest repression of political resistance (Orkin 1991: 150).

An example at the farthest end of this spectrum was "guerrilla theatre" such as that by Peter Makhari, which took place during political rallies, demonstrations, and mass protests: materializing somewhere amidst a crowd nervously anticipating confrontation, these performances would enact confrontations ending in the retreat of 'police.' At the arrival of the actual police, these "rehearsals" would then dissolve into the crowd, only to appear elsewhere to incite, encourage, and mobilize other sectors of the group (Orkin 1991: 233). As of the mid-1980s, there were literally hundreds of such "hastily assembled

but energetic" performances, attesting to the capacity such transience gives potentially threatened political performance (Coplan 1986: 169).

Certain performances also chose to limit their dependence upon material objects. "Propertyless theatre," such as *The Long March* (1986), *The Reed* (1975) or *The Sacrifice of Kreli* (1976), not only cut down on costs to enable longer performance runs and more affordable tickets for poor black audiences, but also made these performances extremely mobile, able to set up and dissolve quickly in response to cracks and closures in the armour of the state (Coplan 1985: 209; Kruger 1993: 129). This tactic of minimizing material constraints opened up greater opportunities for touring as well as performance in transient spaces such as political rallies, as was increasingly the case during the 1980s; this ability to function within such overtly political sites in turn helped to undermine the ability of censors to "gloss their role with 'tolerant' or 'reformist' qualities" as was the current rhetoric of the time (Peterson 1990: 237).

Third, stemming from the use of traditional African performance codes and consequent emphasis on orality, but also very consciously in response to state restrictions, most resistant theatre refrained from writing their plays down, or, if they did, this was often done after the fact as a testament to a significant performance rather than a prescriptive document. Instead, works such as *Egoli* (1979), *The Hungry Earth* (1978) and JATC's *Sophiatown* (1986) emerged from improvisation within rehearsal workshops (Alcock 1999: 49-50). By relying on oral memory rather than text, these plays were therefore not subject to detailed government scrutiny as demanded by the Publications Control Board (Solberg 1999: 22).

Lastly, the use of improvisation within performances served a similar function as orality: in leaving the performance malleable, it could not only respond to the particular demands of a given performative context, but also function both in the creative process and ultimate production to avoid censure by leaving no paper trail, nor even a fixed oral agenda (Wakashe 1986: 42). In these ways, because such theatre was less of a physical artefact than moving image, it "lent itself readily to devious practices" despite intense and targeted state suppression (Mshengu 1976: 45; Tomaselli 1980: 51; Solberg 1999: 22).

Conclusion

By maximizing performance's polyphony and transience in strategic ways, South African protest theatre found the means to cultivate a *care for difference*, by exposing the contingency and challenging the authority of apartheid discourses and practices; representing, exploring and producing alternative perspectives and democratic publics; and cultivating a sense of agency and possibility for change. Moreover, these artistic resources cultivated both *receptive generosity* and affiliation and connection in the terms democratic pluralism requires, enabling communication and resonance across profound cultural, geographical, and linguistic differences. Finally, particularly significant in this context, they contributed directly to the ability of such counter-publics to continue despite aggressive and targeted attempts by the state to suppress them. It is significant that most political leaders emerging from oppressed communities at this time began as theatre practitioners; similarly, the conscientizing and mobilization of the trade union movement has often been directly linked to preceding worker theatre performances (Orkin 1991: 197; Mazibuko 1996: 221). Resistant theatre provided political education and practices of democratic citizenship to a vast number of people where both were scarce, and both on

and off-stage explored, modelled and enacted more democratic alternatives to the apartheid system. Even where its effects were more subtle and indirect, such theatre proved a crucial catalyst and conduit for broader socio-political change, to such an extent that scholars and artists who have witnessed South Africa's transition to democracy repeatedly claim that "theatre…has long been ahead of political events, has pioneered society" (Schechner 1977:76; Davis and Fuchs 1996a: 2).

These aesthetic resources contributed to this capacity of performance to enact, model and cultivate the conditions for a democratic politics, opening up both alternative democratic forums and alternatives to how such forums might be structured. The very aspects of artistic performance that defy the prevailing discourse of political legitimacy – a discourse that renders the arts irrational, messy, unquantifiable – are, in this case, the very resources that made such democratic practices possible and effective. Indeed, the very 'unruliness' of such aesthetic practices offers the means to engage identity and difference in ways that more conventional political sites find most challenging: with a *care for difference* as complex and non-exhaustive, and with *receptivity* towards the 'unsettling' of meaning, identity and relation this necessarily introduces. In the process, they gesture to the legitimacy of artistic practices as sites of democratic engagement, and offer telling insights for how identity may be communicated, meaning may be contested, and coalitions may by formed beyond static forms of identity politics that persist in the policies, theories and practices of democratic pluralism.

All of this gestures to still broader implications. If we acknowledge the democratic potential and impact of South African theatre, we dissolve the counterproductive and now outmoded divide in the west between art and politics. Artistic

performance is shown here to be an integral if still 'unruly' mode of democratic engagement, instigating fleeting counter-publics in which the rehearsal is its own event, and might yet lay the ground for broader political change. Through creatively subversive strategies so intimately understood and finely honed within the arts, such performance may effectively challenge not only its *political* context but also the theoretical terrain within which it is understood.

In the following chapters, we will see this is the case not only for practices of protest within anti-democratic contexts – nor merely cultural contexts where the arts are already acknowledged and incorporated into political life – but also within western liberal democracies. Despite the historical neglect of the arts within western political theory and policy, artistic performance has been used within such contexts to broaden the range of perceived possibilities for thought, action and relation; to heighten critical inquiry and creative agency; and to chasten knowledge-claims, foster a complex empathy, and reveal connections, interrelations, and innovations. In doing so, these artistic sites enact a radical democratic politics that realizes both the care for difference and receptive generosity that democracy demands and yet finds most elusive.

Chapter Five
Legislative Theatre: The Art of Translation

This work is a circle – it begins in reality, in this case the reality of these people's lives and the lives of the workshop participants. In the creation process we made an image of reality – not an image of fantasy, but an image of reality – and in forum we've transformed that reality – taken it apart and put it together again – and that circle is not complete unless we take what we've learned here back to reality and try to make the world a safer place...
please take what you've learned here and use it.
(Diamond, to Forum audiences)

Introduction

In chapter four we saw a case where a form of artistic engagement became a broad-sweeping national phenomenon widely recognized for its political influence against an oppressive state. In this chapter's examination of Headlines Theatre's 2009 *after homelessness…* forum theatre project in Vancouver, Canada, we move to a case of democratically-engaged performance closer to home, in terms of process design as much as political context. This is a case of artistic performance being deliberately used as a site of public deliberation: like other democratic publics, forum theatre seeks to articulate lived experience rather than mere fiction, incorporates sustained dialogue as well as conventional performance, and brings together a diverse self-selecting community to discuss political issues and deliberate possible solutions. It has such proximity to conventional democratic forums that it is listed in accounts of alternative democratic processes, and has received the most attention from democratic scholars (Smith 2005; peopleandparticipation.net; participedia.net). By closely resembling conventional democratic forums this project sets explicit political goals that test the limits of performance-as-public-sphere. This chapter will trace the arc of translation of lived experience into artistic performance, through which the marginalized experiences,

positions, and demands of a community sought audience. In the process, I will argue that it is not because of forum theatre's *proximity* to conventional democratic forums that it proves effective, but rather where it differs; it is not *in spite* of the absence of 'facts' and 'reasoned arguments,' but rather *because* of this artistic mediation that these differences are more effectively engaged, in terms of a care for difference and receptive generosity such engagement requires. However, this chapter also gestures to some of the issues and challenges that emerge within such a form of engagement, both internal and external to the process that will be discussed in more depth in chapter seven.

The after homelessness… *Project*

For *after homelessness…*, Vancouver-based Headlines Theatre's Artistic Director David Diamond brought together a first self-selecting, then interviewed and selected community who represented a diverse range of experience regarding homelessness and mental health. The intent was to develop a play that would generate a community dialogue to explore the root causes of and innovate solutions to the city's homelessness problem. Informed by Augusto Boal's Theatre for the Oppressed – or, more accurately, Diamond's own Theatre for Living – model, 22 participants spent six days together in October of 2009, six of whom had been chosen as cast members and who spent the following weeks creating and rehearsing a play drawn from the workshop as well as their own experience.

The final play reflects this diversity of voices: the recovered Katie who is determined to move up the wait-list at BC Housing and escape the SRO[22]; the drug-

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[22] Single Resident Occupancy buildings (SROs) are a form of low-income housing where suites may hold no more than one, at most two, tenants in often one-room dwellings. They are a common first – and transitional – home for those coming off the streets, and often a site of substandard conditions.

dealing Cloud and crack addict Shawna living on either side; a manic Bob who has just lost his West End apartment; Otis, taking great pride in his 'home' under a tarp on the street and who cannot bear the thought of being moved on again; and Nico, a young recovered addict recently arrived at the SRO. Following the Theatre of the Oppressed model, the play was designed to culminate in unresolved crisis, to then be performed again, this time with the invitation to audiences to stop the action at any point, take the place of the character whose struggle with whom they identify, and try to change the course of events. This 'forum phase' was facilitated by Diamond as the performance's 'Joker.'

The play was performed in November, in Vancouver's Firehall Theatre at the interstices of fine arts and homeless communities in the city's infamous Downtown Eastside, and then in New Westminster's Holy Trinity Cathedral in December, opening up further audience diversity. It was also webcast and televised for one evening, where interventions came in from across Canada and the United States, Australia, Japan, and India (Diamond 2010: 81). Free vouchers were also provided which allowed at least 500 of the homeless community to attend the performance (Diamond 2010: 7). The performance was also supplemented by three open Community Dialogues during the Vancouver run, bringing together politicians, advocates, service providers, and researchers as well as those living with the issues portrayed, to discuss possible solutions in a more conventional format. In total the 15 performances and three dialogues engaged over 1600 audience members and a conservative estimate of 11,000 via webcast and live television (Diamond 2010: 6-7). By the nightly show of hands regarding how many felt they could relate to the issues of the play – ranging from 20% to 80%, sometimes on

consecutive nights – and the incredible diversity of interventions, it was clear that the

performances brought together a broad range of perspectives to participate in the

conversation.

All of the resulting insights and policy innovations from both performances and

the Community Dialogues were collected by the project's Community Scribe, housing

expert Gail Franklin, who collated them into a Community Action Report and in February

2010 submitted it for consideration to eight government and research organizations who

had agreed to receive it.

An Artistic Fiction that Tells Certain Truths

> *"We have a chance to affect housing policy through theatre...I think what makes that*
> *possibility is not that it's good politics, not that it's well-intentioned,*
> *but that it tells the truth." – David Diamond, to workshop participants*

We saw in chapter two that, when engaging marginalized difference, the use of

declarative modes can introduce certain risks to those who seek to be heard on uneven

discursive terrain. Even when those of the dominant culture seek to understand such

positions, the tendency is all too often to do so through a particular gaze that retains

asymmetries, remains unidirectional, and can therefore appropriate, essentialize or

conflate difference. At the same time, those seeking to represent marginalized difference

are faced with the challenge of finding salient terms to communicate what exceeds the

terms of prevailing discourse (Young 2000). As a result, those engaged in such

encounters "do not take risks equally" (Salverson 1999), and the declarative nature of

conventional discourse – a discourse of 'truth-telling' that can erase its own absences –

can exacerbate these risks. Specifically, it can result in the 'overexposure' of those

seeking audience: both to the immediacy of and thus potential retraumatization from the

"risky stories" (Simon and Armitage-Simon 1995) so represented, and to the scrutinizing gaze of the still-distant onlooker, a non-reciprocal gaze in which marginalized difference is "'overlooked' – in the double sense of social surveillance and psychic disavowal – and, at the same time, overdetermined – psychically projected, made stereotypical and symptomatic," and so remains the 'noise' of the *differend* (Lyotard 1988; Bhabha 1994: 236).

We have also seen how democracy requires something radically different of us: it demands we attend to difference with care, and in so doing, remain open to the possibility of being affected and potentially transformed by the encounter, and aware of the limits of our own understanding even as – as the very means through which – we come to understand difference. These are, as we've seen, the ways we come to listen well, so that those differences that are yet 'noise' may become 'sound.'

The case of *after homelessness…* sought to be "as true a voice as possible, to stimulate as deep a community dialogue as possible, to affect housing policy"; but as opposed to other democratic processes, it did so by "creating the best theatre possible" (Diamond 2010: 14). Here is a very different notion of 'truth,' in contrast to that of conventional political discourse: it is an "artistic fiction that tells certain truths" drawn from lived experience, "but it isn't real life," as Diamond told workshop participants, "it's theatre." And because theatre artists *expressly seek* to create the conditions for reception that will enable participants and audiences to be affected and changed by what they encounter, the means through which theatre represents these truths of marginalized difference can often prove as, if not more, effective than conventional modes of truth-telling, argument, and democratic engagement.

As such, this case is a remarkable example of how this 'noise' of marginalized difference can become salient and influential, even resonate intensely, while avoiding the pitfalls of a simplistic form of empathy that erases difference 'as-if-it-were-me' or an objectifying gaze that fails to recognize the agency of those who look back; of how certain modes of representation and interaction enable 'truth-telling' on uneven terrain with less risk of overexposure; of how collective inquiry and deliberation can occur in the absence of common definitions, general facts, reasoned arguments, or even language, and in fact how their absence – how a more *evocative* than declarative discourse – has the spaciousness to hold and explore the multiplicity of difference, and so enable a greater degree of nuance, complexity, interrelation; latent knowledge, bias, and affect; and even receptive generosity towards opinions, possibilities, and responsibilities we might normally resist. This chapter will examine four distinct aspects of performative modalities that were used in this project to achieve these ends: the specificity of theatrical narrative, engagement of the body, artistic mediation of experience, and the role of creative agency.

Specificity: An Account Through the Concrete Particular

Like other forms of narrative commended by Iris Young, Angelia Means and others to articulate what is yet pre-discursive or 'noise' within dominant discourse, the starting point for theatrical narrative is the concrete particularity of lived experience rather than general claims: what Boal calls in the Theatre of the Oppressed, a compromise between the singular and the universal, "the typical particular" (1979: 172). Diamond constantly pushed workshop participants and cast to get specific within the context of the general issue, whether in identifying particular characters rather than metaphorical archetypes in physical tableaus, or identifying what their character wants "beat by beat"

within each scene, beyond amorphous goals (Diamond 2010: 49). But this *theatrical* mode of narrative takes this dimension of specificity even further than conventional narrative, by seeking to stage in vivid detail the experiences described at a remove within declarative discourse. The sets included an extraordinary level of detail, from rigs in the SRO couch to autumn leaves and the scent of toast under Otis' tarp, so that cast and audiences alike could "enter a real environment" (Diamond, Interview): for the cast, this made the difference between reciting lines and responding from an "internal emotional reality" (Diamond 2010: 49); for audiences members

> who were living in SROs…that [environment] was really recognizable, and for some people who'd never seen SROs, they were going, 'oh my god.' And that had its own value. It's all about the truth in the end. And a theatrical truth – because if you look at the set close enough, you can see it's painted…but we made good art. (Diamond, Interview)

It is perhaps strange to think that fiction can capture this truth of lived experience in this way; however, this artistic rendering of the concrete particularity of everyday experience initiates an – albeit mediated, albeit constructed – account that transforms often abstract realities and general issues into a lived experience of its own, at a level of detail and degree of concreteness that verbal accounts simply cannot capture. As such, it is "telemicroscopic": "like a powerful microscope, the stage brings things closer" (Boal 1995: 27). For many in the audience, this was the first time they had witnessed – and, in intervening, experienced – a reality normally at the distance of fleeting televised images, the rhetoric of stakeholders or journalists, or the bare and surreal numbers of statistics, and this vivid portrayal "transformed them into personal stories…[it] re-personalized 'the other'" (Diamond 2010: 102).

Regularly, this allowed people to connect with, care for, and be impacted by what they saw: the project's Community Scribe Gail Franklin, despite years of experience in the field, felt "unprepared" for how much witnessing scenes unfold "shook" and "gripped" her, both because they depicted problems she had never come across despite working in the field, or because they depicted realities and solutions that, though they "come up in conversation all the time," were "so raw, and…so clearly out of lived experience" that "it's been an intervention for me." Likewise, three organizational recipients of the Community Action Report who had experienced the project directly in some way – either by participating in a Community Dialogue, attending the performance or, in the case of Sue Noga from the BC Regional Steering Committee on Mental Health, actually intervening in the forum – were struck by the force of the experience, getting "that goosebumpy sort of thing" that they "had kind of lost touch with" (Smith; Noga; Jang).

And so this context provided a space, in the words of one audience member, to bring "two worlds which collide on a daily basis, into one large room to interact with each other on a far more human and intimate level" (Audience letter, Diamond 2010: 106). Many, whether in tears following the production or in letters written in the days that followed, shared that the experience had "made me rethink everything I thought about homelessness"; they were "getting it, for the first time, an understanding of the indignity and inhumanity that homeless people face every day and that we, the audience, share our common humanity with the characters on the stage"; that their "relationship to the homeless issue will never be the same...it has become un-ignorable" (Goulet; Stieger; Diamond 2010: 87; Audience letter, Diamond 2010: 102). Moreover, the vivid nature of

this image of reality gave it a lingering presence for many viewers, who repeatedly commented on how they had not been able to shake the memory "when so many other theatrical events have faded," or "stop thinking (or talking)" about the experience (Audience letters, Diamond 2010: 99-106).

As scholars of affect also argue, many of the report's recipients noted that information alone is not enough to motivate action and incite change; with a whole society and the federal and provincial agenda aware of the issues surrounding homelessness in Vancouver, this capacity to, as Dominic Flanagan of BC Housing observed, capture "voice, personal experience, in your face, which you don't hear or…gets lost," to know "in a way that's visceral…being able to engage in an empathic way…move the conversation forward" (Flanagan; Smith). As Diamond said to forum audiences, "if we could all feel it, we'd be able to do something," and this is precisely what artistic practices can do: if it affects action or changes a life, "it is not by handing out a recipe for the applying but rather by disturbing us emotionally, mentally, because it *finds* us" (Craig 1975: 22). The theatrical mode, in its vivid specificity, enabled audiences to understand the concrete reality of these issues and, equally significant, feel the humanity within them across cultural and class differences, often for the first time.

We have seen, however, that as much as affect can challenge, dissemble, and motivate us, a sense of 'immediate' and intense experience of others is itself fraught with risks; that personal narrative can, through this very vividness or specificity, give the illusion of direct access and invite simplistic overidentification, in a form of "effortless friendship" that is ethically suspect in its presumptive erasures (Sommer 1995: 925). This is particularly significant in the context of marginalized communities, where policy is so

often written by those without immediate contact or experience of the actual lives it concerns; where, as two workshop participants shared, "something you read on page 97, that's not me," and those who try to 'help' can often reinforce the line between 'us' and 'them' and "refuse to let another identity emerge." While theatre, like all modes of representation, runs these risks, the case of *after homelessness…* made the most of certain artistic resources that turned the 'noise' of marginalized experience into 'sound' that remained complex, dynamic, and non-exhaustive, even as it brought such difference into salient discourse. The attention to concrete particularity within this process actually contributed to this, by taking such specificity as an invitation to unpack both its *cognitive* and *emotional* complexity, as well as providing the terms within which the expertise of marginalized experience could become salient.

'Each Has His Reasons'

Theatre for Living takes as its starting point the belief that "each has his *reasons*," and so unpacks and investigates the reasons and reasoning behind even the most terrible of 'villains,' the root causes of issues, and the systemic nature of injustice and our shared implication within it (Diamond, Workshop). Diamond's Theatre for Living approach actually goes farther than Boal's model in this regard, by moving beyond a static dichotomy of oppressor/oppressed[23] to represent all characters in their complexity, as well as

Figure 1: David Diamond in forum. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

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[23] This is significant to this study of a care for difference within democratic engagement, for as Julie Salverson argues, this dichotomy of oppressor/oppressed "can become its own orthodoxy in which not only is the 'other' encircled in the material analysis of how the whole operates, but there is only one 'other,' that

inviting audiences to intervene and explore every characters' motivations and possibilities (Diamond 2007: 24). As Diamond told workshop participants, "our job is to get *underneath*" to "the stuff that doesn't get talked about;" to investigate "*why* things are happening, not just *that* they are happening" (Diamond 2007: 40-43). The task of the project, then, was to bring to light, tease apart, and facilitate the collective negotiation of what Rainer Forst (2010) calls the "space of reasons" or motivations for action.

Part of this incredible attention to the complexity of human reasoning is simply a matter of making *good theatre*: to have characters be believable and relatable, they must be more than caricatures. Workshop participants and cast – as we all often do – had the tendency to only want to play and, within others' skits, identify with the 'nice' character, or to see those in antagonistic positions – police, landlords, BC Housing and Welfare workers – as two-dimensional "monsters" (Diamond 2010: 19). In both workshop and forum phases, Diamond would push participants to explore neglected aspects of themselves or others, to perceive others as complex, multifaceted, *believable* characters, each with their own reasons, so making these dimensions visible and negotiable.

This degree of complexity was still largely limited to those perspectives represented in the workshop and cast – a group who, with the exception of one workshop participant who had been a police officer, had been affected by rather than implicated in governing institutions and positions of power. This inevitably impacted the choice of and action within scenes, and the ability of actors playing more powerful characters to improvise within them during the forum phase. Kerry Jang, a City Councilor who attended the performance, perceived just such an unbalanced account in the performance:

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of the working class or whatever oppressed group takes that subsumed position" (1999). Diamond similarly called this 'good guy/bad guy' model "lazy activism."

> Where it failed in a sense was, those stories could've been played out a little bit more in terms of how government or BC Housing or police are seeing…Because right now it's being shown as, you're the bad guys, we're the good guys.

This restriction of the creative process to 'oppressed' perspectives, as much as it strives to explore and represent the complexity of all figures it brings on stage, runs the risk of creating a more non-reciprocal or unbalanced gaze of broader society observing marginalized experience, which in turns risks either focusing on 'the oppressor in the oppressed' – turning the lens towards issues within marginalized communities "while we wait," as Diamond would say to audiences, for action from dominant culture and governing bodies and so minimizing the project's challenge to these powerful players – or inadvertently perpetuating a dominant discourse on the left that makes it near-impossible to discuss the contributive role of marginalized communities within broader social problems, as Jang perceived in the performance. Despite these constraints on the complexity the performance could capture, Diamond drew on external resources to clarify those perspectives left out of the creative process where possible, either through research or by calling out to audiences for their own expertise, and always the emphasis remained on fleshing out this complexity of every character.

Numerous theatrical devices were used during the creative process and forum to allow this complexity to emerge: for instance, participants in tableaus would create running monologues in character, without repeating phrases, which moved them beyond the initial script or first thought, and often surprised even the speaker as they followed their own threads. Workshop participants and audience interventions were also 'animated' within scenes by being asked to make the shape of their strongest emotion, or to state or take a step in the direction of what they wanted in the scene, or to share their

'secret thought' – what they would never state outright but lies at the heart of their character in that moment. This unpacking was most elaborately performed through the use of Boal's 'Cops in the Head' exercise during the workshop, where multiple facets of two characters in a scene – their competing desires, fears, or beliefs – were isolated, externalized and interrogated. While Diamond is extremely clear that these exercises are not therapy, they nonetheless bring to the surface what often remains obscured, and make visible – negotiable – competing and complex aspects of identity.

Likewise, theatrical techniques helped achieve a degree of clarity and precision that is often rare in everyday experience: by capturing the essence of long-winded dialogues with pithy and potent phrases; by staging a brief and precise sequence of a character's actions to convey ambivalence, longing, and confusion without a single word; by replaying a scene wherein characters said what they really felt so that, when played again with original dialogue, a new level of subtlety and conviction was tangible, theatrical strategies added – perhaps ironically – a new degree of believability and clarity, and the exposure of latent meanings and motivations these changes achieved incited many participants' audible sighs of recognition.[24]

The Emotional Underbelly

In contending with issues, encounters and characters in all of their complexity, the process also engaged the emotional dimensions at work in ways that other political and analytic methods often cannot – indeed, that often cannot be expressed or examined safely in the everyday experience of those affected by homelessness and mental health,

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[24] One cast member recalls this process of theatrical translation in the rehearsal phase, as scripts became tightened and verbal, physical and symbolic language was used to succinctly capture complex meaning: "our speech is short and yet the audience gets it without all the reasoning and all the explaining. And he knows how to do that because of his experience, right, whereas we wanted to explain things" (Pink).

for which many workshop participants voiced their gratitude. "The theatre is an emotional, psychological, physical language" (Diamond 2010: 13), and in starting from concrete experiences, the whole person arrives on stage. While acting like they "don't care, [or] are just going through the motions, or are always angry" came naturally, cast members were challenged to investigated and depict more vulnerable sides beyond this "first layer…that is often not very deep" (Diamond 2010: 42, 45, 64-5).

Theatrical portrayals are effective when they manage to crystallize and convey what we not only fail to effectively articulate in real life, but also would rather not share – that anger is rooted in fear, that indifference often masks longing, that under protective armor is a vulnerable underbelly. These are the 'truths' that we often fail to perceive in the actions of others, that we strive to veil even to ourselves, and yet as affect theorists have similarly argued, they are core to our motivations, fears, and actions in the world; in fact,

Figure 2: Nico leaves. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

these vulnerabilities often shape the 'reasons' that motivate or are felt to justify even 'unreasonable' behaviour. They are also often the very ground through which we come to *see* others as more than stereotypes. While engaging these more vulnerable aspects of oneself, even in the mediated context of theatre, involves risks and so calls for certain supports to create safety, theatre conveys and explores these quieter, more precious sides of identity, emotion, and response. With theatrical precision, we see the tenderness and invisible barriers between Cloud and Katie in a brief exchange laden with what remains

unsaid; we see Nico, at the death of her friend, hesitate at the door of the SRO before she shelters herself again in the solitude of the street.

Again, the restriction of cast to those affected by rather than working within more powerful positions limited how much this vulnerability and emotional complexity was developed and articulated in the BC Housing worker, City worker, or police officer, though Diamond would often ask audiences if they could see how the BC Housing worker was also trapped in the system, and interventions would demonstrate how difficult these roles were. This again might work to focus attentions on sensitizing the broader community to marginalized experience rather than establishing a truly reciprocal and balanced encounter, though clearly where this emotional underbelly was developed, it proved vital in fostering a complex understanding of typically 'overlooked' and 'overdetermined' characters.

In this way, audiences encountered realities and perspectives radically different from their own "in a way that is deeper and more meaningful and human than any drive-by looky-loo kind of experience" (Franklin). The piece was able to unpack and examine the emotional dimensions of the problems at hand, so often as subtle and elusive as they are pivotal to effecting change. Audiences could see, tangibly, that 'bricks and mortar do not make a home'; that at times living on the street can be an act of self-care; the "depth of attachment a street person can

Figure 3: Nico and Otis share a piece of toast. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre

have to their shelter"; or the shame involved in going to a food bank (Audience letter,

Diamond 2010: 100). Likewise for solutions: they saw the "need for humane policies for moving the homeless," for community-building within the SRO, or for safe spaces to mourn (Audience letter, Diamond 2010: 100). This format, like art's mode of truth-telling in general, was "not a tool that can pry out recalcitrant truths and put them on display like a tray of impacted teeth. At its best, it can show – not tell – us something about what it is to be human" (Tamas 2009).

In the process, it repeatedly demonstrated a crucial insight often left out of policy: the significance of the *quality* of action to the success or failure of interventions, even for the same proposed solution offered on different nights. For instance, among the countless audience interventions which, as Nico, sought to coax Otis to leave his tarp on the street, those that succeeded – and, ultimately, prevented him from a brutal and deadly encounter with the police – were those where Nico doesn't 'push' Otis but instead speak as his friend. Likewise, small gestures were repeatedly effective because they started from the most human of places, such as an Otis intervener who invited the manic Bob to join him in a slice of toast, "a really human exchange – one that changed Bob's trajectory completely" (Diamond 2010: 82); or a Katie who convinces Nico to stay rather than flee the SRO where so many others could not, because "she doesn't lecture me" (Goulet, Forum). This struck the project's community scribe as the most profound insight to policy development:

> to have it reiterated and to have it so explicitly demonstrated night after night that the tiniest change of – tone of voice, or the look, is what checks the trajectory of a person's life after that…that was big news…Two different interveners could come up with the same idea, and one would have a very positive result, and the other would have a completely stonewall kind of response. And this had to do with something called 'meeting them where they are.'…that kernel of the truth in this [is] one of the hardest things for a policy

worker to see, someone who hasn't lived the issues.

Sue Noga, one of the few organizational recipients of the report to attend the performance, also noted that this was one of the greatest strengths of the piece – that it clearly demonstrated the significance of those "soft" dimensions of solutions to homelessness and mental health that, while vital, cannot be measured or proven by conventional means.

Opening up this emotional terrain also allowed audiences to do the same: on two occasions, audience members took the place of Nico in the final scene and chose to sit down and – not problem-solve, not rail – but rather, simply, mourn. This opened up a powerful space to discuss the need to feel this very underbelly that is often shielded in everyday experience or bracketed in conventional discourse.[25] The space of the theatre, set apart from the everyday and mediated through artistic fiction, provided such a space, and allowed these hidden layers of emotional reality to emerge, signaling the pressing need for such spaces, despite – perhaps due to – their dearth elsewhere.

This was as true for workshop participants and cast as for audiences, and had the effect of generating trust and close bonds incredibly quickly in ways that conventional forums often cannot; indeed, that many participants noted they had not experienced in years. As one cast member notes, the group was "like a little family for a while," particularly significant in a community where trust is often scarce (Goulet). As one participant who transformed from silent onlooker to animated participant during the workshop recalled,

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[25] Diamond notes in his account of this intervention, "Her need to feel about this issue is our collective need to feel – or the flip side of our collective desire not to feel. It is central to our inaction to actually solve the problem. It is something we intellectualize, because if we feel it, what do we do? I asked the audience if they understood what I meant and so many raised their hands. What if the policy we made was not from our heads – but from our hearts?" (2010: 81)

> And for the workshop – wow. I didn't trust anybody. David built that
> trust...between all of us. I think we were all in transition of not trusting
> people...we'd gone through lots. But he gave it back to us…

Many of the workshop and cast commented that it was this intimacy within the group that made them feel safe throughout a particularly intense, exposing process. Moreover, as many democratic scholars have argued, lack of trust, particularly amongst the most marginalized communities, is an enormous barrier to participation, and this process's ability to generate such trust quickly and deeply played a role in facilitating engagement.

And yet, the correlation between distrust and discrimination, inequality, and racism signals "a symptom of a much deeper illness in the body polity rather than the problem itself," and thus distrust is at times an "appropriate – even good – thing" (Arneil 2006: 143, 125). Moreover, trust by definition introduces greater vulnerability to harm (Warren 1999: 1), and as Diamond warned the workshop group at its close, "theatre is dangerous, because it tends to create a certain kind of family very quickly." In engaging this emotional underbelly, the theatrical process which demands actors access and relive rather than 'pretend' such emotion and so become "naked on the stage" (Diamond, Workshop) necessarily introduces certain dangers that conventional political discourse might not. This theatrical demand was particularly difficult for some participants, and will be discussed further in chapter seven.

There is a tension here, between both engaging the affective dimensions normally overlooked in political discourse and depicting characters with emotional authenticity and complexity for audiences, and requiring emotional exposure in order to do so, thus introducing risks we have seen in testimony and autobiography discussed in chapter two. These will be taken up in more detail below. But we will also see that where these

emotions and experiences are *aesthetically mediated*, these risks are guarded against in powerful ways. Moreover, by unpacking both cognitive and emotional complexity within the concrete particular, these engagements with difference brought to the discursive terrain layers of experience and facets of issues often bracketed, sterilized or simplified within conventional discourse. In so doing, they fostered trust, facilitated engagement, and for audiences enabled "unexpected identifications with those once considered other or alien to them," which Jill Dolan and others see as integral to art's democratic efficacy (Dolan 2001: 9).

Articulating the 'Noise' of Unrecognized Expertise

A final way the concrete particularity of theatrical narrative allowed the 'noise' of difference to become 'sound' was in providing terms with which to represent the expertise of marginalized experience. As Kelly Howe, Catherine Graham and Jacqueline Kennelly have noted in their analyses of previous Headlines projects, much of the power of governmental systems, including public forums, entails the exclusion of certain forms of expertise and limited access for many who do not fit the terms (Howe 2009: 248; Kennelly 2006; Graham 2000: 103). Holly Anderson, the project's on-site social worker, notes in her final report that "for some of the participants, it was the first time they had been given an opportunity to talk about these experiences and have them validated, and understood" (2010: 1). Beyond the simple fact of opening up such dialogical space, the particular structure of the forum enhanced this capacity to engage, validate, and learn from the often unrecognized expertise of those living the issues.

The non-verbal and embodied nature of many exercises – whether making physical shapes or sounds, standing beside or moving towards what one identifies with,

and so on – provided a means for expression that was less intimidating for many workshop and perhaps audience participants, as they did not require verbal explanation. As several workshop participants noted, the absence of words – and, at times, sight – made them less self-conscious of "needing to choose the register or language." Even when words were involved, they were in the context of staged action in familiar contexts; as such, participants could act – again, perhaps ironically – more naturally, as they were not required to explain or justify their actions or responses in conventional deliberative means. As one participant noted, "for me it took a couple days in the workshop, I was just out there and natural, put no explanation on my expression and words, lines I made and the theme, it just came natural to me, and it made it more comfortable for me at that time because I wasn't trying to pull it out of a hat."

These modes of representation and inquiry were also generative because of their creative dimensions, which enabled participants to discover and develop their own positions. Anderson notes this was the most striking difference from her own experience in the context of social work – as opposed to "the daily grind" or "a traditional talking circle or group work," the creativity of this process "breeds space for new…and different ideas…allows you to think…in a different way, and begin to see your experiences differently or understand you can express them differently." Because of this creative platform, in the workshop Anderson recalls "it was almost like watching light bulbs go off [with] the rest of the participants: 'oh yeah! I recognize that feeling, I know what that's like, I relate to that, and this is what I would look like next to you...'"

Precisely because these engagements did not use the conventional discourse of political forums – discourse that, as we have seen in chapter two, is itself laden with

cultural specificity and works to legitimate certain forms of expertise over others – it levelled the discursive field, proved less daunting, and created a context for the articulation of normally excluded or undervalued forms of expertise. From these enactments came incredible insights – a simple phrase in a bar scene of "I'm a valued customer" during the workshop catalyzed a rich discussion of feeling 'valued' by pushers on the street while resented elsewhere in the city; another scene of a jubilant if mentally unwell woman being mistreated by a policewoman brought to light the shared experience that the police treat those with mental health issues worse than addicts; and when almost all participants stood beside a tableau character being held up by the police and betraying a contented half-smile, it sparked the realization that over half of the group had deliberately gotten arrested in order to have a place to sleep that night. As these examples also show, the flexibility of the process's narrative structure means that engagement in forum is, as Gianpaolo Baiocchi notes in comparison with Participatory Budgeting, less bounded in terms of what it can discuss, opening itself to whatever might arrive on the stage and leaving room for disruptions and expansions of the very terms of civic engagement (2006: 84).

Moreover, this theatrical format allowed the expertise of cast members to speak honestly and directly to the misconceptions, assumptions and naïveté of interventions that arrived on stage from the audience. Many cast members noted this rare space in which their expertise played a role was among the most rewarding aspects of the process (Stieger; Pink). As Goulet recalls, it was equally significant to witness other cast members do the same:

> it was cool to…be like, 'dude, that's totally not going to work, what planet are you from', and to watch your cast mates go, 'whoa, that's totally not going to

work'. And even when ideas didn't work, it really showed where the general public's at, and how they think that things would be so easy and rosy if you just give somebody a house…and it couldn't be further from the truth...so that was really cool.

Within this context, the authority of lived experience holds theory accountable, honestly and rigorously testing ideas in a way that is normally possible only after policy implementation, and rarely framed as expertise in its own right.

Granted, given the structure of the process, those in the cast and workshop are invoked as experts only regarding the problems and the viability of solutions proposed by others. They are prevented from contributing to problem-solving, though some audience interventions also came from those similarly affected by homelessness and mental health.[26] It is interesting to note, in this context, that many of the most striking and innovative solutions in the final report were initially proposed within the one occasion workshop participants could intervene, in a private screening prior to opening night – though Diamond, in response to Franklin's excitement after this first encounter with the group and its insights for the final report, told her to start recording during the performance phase, as this was "just a whiff of an appetizer." And as opposed to Boal's legislative model, where an assembly of the affected community deliberate policy recommendations following the forum, this role in the Headlines case was delegated to a housing expert as Community Scribe.

In contrast to the longer-term and intensive process of the workshop, the forum briefly gathers communities "from off the street, minding their own business," and so entails the task of, as Jang and Franklin both noted, getting all participants to the same level of knowledge; thus within the forum is a certain tension between "informational and

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[26] On the one occasion when Pink responded to an intervention on stage by suggesting an alternative approach, she recalls that afterwards Diamond "told [her] not to do it again."

solutions-based" agendas.[27] One wonders whether the process's focus on the briefer

forum experience could be overlooking a valuable site of expertise for innovation and

problem-solving, while also limiting the perception of marginalized expertise within the

broader community and even the perceived procedural legitimacy by recipients of the

report, who often construed the project in terms of raising awareness or "soft science"

rather than legitimate deliberation by experts.[28]

Moreover, as Kelly Howe argues, "subtle (and not-so-subtle) discursive

hierarchies" shape the forum, wherein the Joker has a distinct discursive power due to

how much he guides the direction of the process and the extent to which he talks, while

cast members speak after interventions only when invited, and they and audience

interveners are encouraged to engage primarily through action (2009: 247-50; Dwyer

2004).[29] However, despite limitations placed on the expertise of marginalized experience,

Diamond would use his authority as Joker to give every participant – and often the actors

– a chance to speak briefly following each intervention, and facilitate a process wherein

the community could shake off some of the "ideology of expertise"; discover, develop

and validate local knowledge and critical capacity; and, as Gianpaolo Baiocchi states,

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[27] Franklin notes that, in contrast to the Community Dialogues, the "performance didn't yield the same reflective, informed kind of recommendations, because most of the audience, of course, had come off the street, minding their own business, as it were, and they hadn't had a chance to see what the issues were from the point of view of someone who lives with them."

[28] Granted, there are several reasons for this depiction of the process by organizations – among them, the scientific paradigm of 'hard data' or "numbers...quantitative statistics...as my prima facie evidence" (Jang; Burnham); a misunderstanding of the process as conventional representation rather than deliberation through forum; and a failure of organizations to shake off the 'ideology of expertise' and recognize the expertise of the broader community. These will be taken up in more detail in chapter seven, in a discussion of the challenges and limitations of translating artistic practices into conventional policy discourse.

[29] Berenice Fisher (1994) has also noted that the emphasis on action rather than speech from participants might also raise feminist concerns, as "talking, talking, talking" might be precisely what is required to create equal access for women.

work like Participatory Budgeting to change the very meaning of 'expert' (Baiocchi 2006: 83; Sitrin 2006; Picher 2007: 81).

Embodied Engagement: Revealing 'Others' Within the Self

The *after homelessness…* project's mode of engagement worked not only through the concrete particular; it was also highly embodied. Theatrical processes, as Boal notes, "are aesthetic, that is to say, related to the senses…Before all else, we see and we listen, and it is thanks to this that we understand," and the Headlines project made the most of this fact (Boal 1995: 28). The first two days of the workshop were conducted almost wholly without verbal language, sometimes without sight, and participants expressed and explored core experiences, values and facets of social issues all through embodied practices. Although each workshop activity was followed by a brief discussion of what it brought up for participants in the context of "after homelessness," Diamond was quick to curtail extended verbal dialogue, insistent that that energy should be channeled back into further embodied and theatrical explorations. To usher in the forum phase, the 'fourth wall' dividing audiences from the stage was also broken and audiences became physically alert and engaged through a brief movement coordination exercise. And rather than debate or hypothesize possible solutions from one's seat in the audience, people quite literally stepped into the world that was depicted onstage in what Diamond would call a "dialogue of action" or Boal calls "learning by experience" (1995: 19).

In working through the body, the process allowed unconscious knowledge, bias and affect – the 'noise' of difference within the self – to emerge. This proved the case in both workshop and performance phases: by enacting a scene in a BC Housing office, one participant remembered a long-forgotten memory of visiting such an office with her

mother as a small child; at the end of the day, she shared with the group, "It's been a mind-trip so far, and it's because of having to be in my body for the first time in a long time." Diamond stressed to the group that "you don't learn it here [in your head], you learn it through your *body,*" and participants noted over the course of the workshop that these embodied exercises similarly "brought things to the surface in life I haven't thought of," and "I can feel it in my body, in a new way."

This was equally true within performance interventions, where at times the embodied nature of a 'dialogue of action' caused audience members to surprise themselves by revealing latent affect and bias that was otherwise unconscious: in one instance an intervener, despite the initial intention to create community, surprised herself by urging others to physically assault the police, flooded by personal memory and strong emotion normally kept in check; in another intervention taking the place of the police officer during the tarp eviction scene, an elderly woman found herself choosing to taser Otis even though she had begun with the express intention not to. These kinds of interventions brought to the stage what often underlies but remains unspoken – even unconscious – in conventional political forums, and in doing so helped to reveal the "picture [that holds] us captive" (Wittgenstein 1958: §115) as well as explicitly address those contentious perspectives that are often silent factors within conventional discourse. In the case of the tasering intervention, Diamond thanked the intervener for "represent[ing] something tangible in the audience tonight – the 'other side' as it were'" (2010: 87).

A 'Dialogue of Action': Practicing Ourselves Differently

As well as bringing to the surface what often remains subliminal or unspoken, the embodied nature of this project worked to both test theory and rehearse possible action. By testing ideas in real time on the stage, forum theatre is more of, in Kelly Howe's turn of phrase, an "embodied think tank" than focus group, where the enactment of possible solutions does not simply represent or gather public opinion, but evaluates its viability (Howe 2009). In fact, I would venture that through such embodiment, it *surpasses* most think tanks or deliberative forums in its capacity to problem-solve through practice rather than theory, and is perhaps better described as a 'living laboratory,' where each night the gathered community can enter a world in the image of reality, test their hypotheses, observe the effects of their actions, revise their responses based on live interactions as they unfold, and rehearse possible alternatives.

One of the great advantages to this is its ability to expose and challenge presumptions and misconceptions. One cast member recalled a certain night where the act of 'stepping into another's shoes' caused the intervener to exclaim, "whoa – this is really a lot different once you're up here...I thought from my chair that it would be so much easier to just sit here and tell them what to do, but once I actually got up here and got in it, it was completely different" (Goulet). By entering the struggles the characters are engaged in, by being guided by the specificity of the context, interveners repeatedly found themselves trapped and at a loss, or unable to cope with the challenges they thought easy to address, or that the solution they had thought so clear does not work; and the ease with which, as Goulet described, one can "speculate...[when you] just sit there

from the armchair or your couch watching TV and say, what the hell's wrong with these people," suddenly becomes impossible.

In this way, the most naïve or 'unsuccessful' interventions were as crucial as the successes to understanding the issues and generating effective policy. In one instance, when a locally renowned homelessness advocate took the place of the BC Housing worker and offered Katie the email of the Prime Minister, Katie scoffed, "where would I get a computer? I don't need to write the Prime Minister, I need something *now*"; another intervener who took the place of the police officer was sincerely shocked that Otis would not simply agree to come off the street when she said, "I have a place for you." In moments like these, these 'failures' were invaluable for the misconceptions they revealed and made possible to discuss.

This 'dialogue of action' did not merely challenge assumptions and misconceptions, but also revealed the difficulties and obstacles that policy creates for those living with its effects. Concrete reality would thus rub up against, and often demonstrate the failures or absurdities of, policy within these enactments – whether the

Figure 4: Katie in the BC Housing office. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

inflexibility of BC Housing bureaucracy that makes it impossible for a housing worker to help people like Katie, or the need for more outreach workers, whom the homeless trust most and yet have been dramatically cut in recent years. Interveners would also introduce presently lacking and sometimes incredibly simple resources that would prove essential to solving the problem at hand: a list of mental health services contact numbers

provided with every prescription of medications; having service provider employees be formerly homeless, to increase empathy; a contact board on the wall of the SRO; and a 24-hour mental health crisis line were among these creative innovations. Whether by stopping short because of the manifest absence of such resources, or by imagining them into the scene to change the course of events, the concrete demands of each scene allowed these solutions to emerge and demonstrated their significance. Though it was the expertise of the cast that provided the test case for such solutions, the expertise brought to the room by the community each night – from government and service workers and the general public, to those who were or had been homeless themselves – enacted "ideas that made sense, that we [the cast] were like, 'yeah, why *isn't* it like that!'…When you educate people, they're giving you answers you wouldn't have thought of because you're just dealing with it" (Stieger).

This 'dialogue of action' also did something else: it highlighted the capacity of and specific opportunities for individuals to intervene in everyday life, by inviting audiences to become "protagonists of their own lives" (Boal 1995: 28-9; Jackson 2002: xxiv). As such, this mode of engagement had potentially exponential effects on democratic engagement more broadly. This is particularly significant in a liberal cultural context where political involvement is often understood as a sporadic event; this is even more significant when it concerns issues such as homelessness and mental health, which are removed from the everyday of most citizens and, when encountered, can seem so foreign or daunting they're paralyzing, making action at the individual level difficult to conceive. The forum process provided a means to not merely "think ourselves differently…but…practic[e] ourselves into something new" (Heyes 2007: 9). And by

initiating collective inquiry rather than neatly resolving problems for its audiences, it was designed to cultivate a sense of agency and pressing need for action, to incite a certain restlessness in audiences that can only be satisfied beyond the stage.[30]

In these ways, then, the community gathered through the forum was confronted with the 'noise' of latent beliefs, affect and knowledge within themselves, their misconceptions regarding the experiences and perspectives of the marginalized community, the fallacies of policy when it hits the ground of concrete reality, and a sense of implication, agency, and desire to act in response to the encounter – all essential aspects of encountering difference with care and receptive generosity and too easily lost within other discursive modes, and all a result of the embodiment of the encounter.

Artistic Mediation: An 'Artistic Fiction that Tells Certain Truths'

It is not simply the concrete particularity, nor embodied nature, of the theatrical mode that helped *after homelessness…* represent and engage difference in its complexity and foster understanding and engagement within such terms. It is also the mediation of the 'truths' of such marginalized experience through artistic devices and fictional storytelling. As well as the various artistic strategies mentioned above, *after homelessness…* used three particular theatrical strategies that played such a role: *plasticity of time and space*, *metaphor and symbol,* and *fictional mediation*.

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[30] Many audience members shared the effect the experience had in these terms: where "few of us ever considered ourselves policy makers," many were "left with an urge to become more involved in my city's crisis"; realized "that this problem is not just for the homeless population to solve"; were "left with an uneasy feeling that I just could not shake"; felt "sent...out with a mission"; or were moved "from a state of paralysis…to a place where I feel like my voice has a place in the housing crisis debate. And you can be sure I will be loudly adding my voice to the debate" (Audience letters, Diamond 2010: 99-106).

<u>Plasticity of Time and Space</u>

Plasticity of time and space plays a role both in enhancing capacities to observe

and analyse the interrelation of what eludes the gaze of everyday perception, as well as

highlighting the malleability of events and characters. In theatrical space, "everything is

possible in the here and now…time and space can be condensed and stretched at will," in

a "free play of past and future" (Boal 1995: 20, 28). Normally isolated sites and moments

are brought into close proximity: on stage, an SRO stands beside a tarp on the street; a quick shift in stage lights and sound cues transform an SRO into a BC Housing office or the steps of a local bar;

Figure 5: The SRO. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

four separate rooms in an SRO are visible, in "a theatrical sense of seeing

inside them" (Diamond 2010: 44), though they barely claim 15 feet of the stage. Scene

changes also allow experiences, which, as Diamond states, "sometimes [in] real life

trave[l] at a snail's pace" (Diamond 2010: 63), to appear in quick succession. By

condensing time and space in this way, the play was able to not only draw explicit

attention to sharp contrasts and surprising parallels – the tarp as more of a 'home' than

the SRO, for instance – but also enable the depiction of multiple facets of the same

character, who reveal themselves differently according to context – Cloud is shown as

both violent and protective, sensitive and heartless, as he moves from his role as drug

dealer to being Katie's 'street son'; Shawna is both a bullying and thieving addict, and

heartbroken in the dark hours of the night at the recent death of her friend.

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Moreover, condensing time to depict sequences of events allows for the visibility of causal links that often remain obscured: we see and sadly understand the once-determined Katie's slow and

Figure 6: Katie and Cloud. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

reasoned collapse as she returns to drinking; we see how the gentle and amiable Otis can be brought into violent and fatal conflict with the police. Moreover, this visibility of causal connections lends itself to the 'rehearsal for living' that forum is designed to be. Diamond stated repeatedly to audiences that "we don't know what we do when we do the right thing"; by depicting longer-term sequences of events, audiences can observe and predict the potential chain of events in light of an intervention's immediate and often minor actions.

This play with time and space is not only a matter of condensing: the theatrical mode, unlike real life, also opens up possibilities for replaying, pausing, and rewinding, and the forum phase makes the most of these capacities. The very act of running the play twice – first without intervention, then during forum – provides a remarkable degree of insight for observers as they consider possible interventions, which might be brought back into everyday experience. Moreover, where audiences were reluctant to intervene, scenes were at times rewound and replayed to give them another opportunity. This plasticity also enabled the unpacking and analysis of complexity in a single moment: Diamond would often freeze a scene to unpack hidden motivations, emotions and fears using animation techniques from the workshop. This temporal and spatial play thus

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allowed participants to observe, examine, and rehearse what is often too dispersed, immediate or quick in real life. But this plasticity also highlighted the plasticity and openness of scripts, characters, and chains of events that often appear fixed and impenetrable in real life.[31] By opening up the script to continual disruption and its characters to multiple interventions, the authority and stability of the original narrative is undermined, and participants learn through practice that nothing is quite as fixed as it might seem, and that in the most mundane or daunting of moments and micropractices lie countless possibilities for intervention.

The Symbolic

> *"You talk of getting murdered, people are dropping off like flies in here; dirty rigs? You're pulling them out of the couch.* This *place is death." – Nico, final scene*

The symbolic also played a key role in this project's mode of engagement, where the concrete – a tarp, a newspaper, a bug-infested mattress – was taken as evocative of multiple readings. In doing so, the concrete as symbolic functioned as a form of *polyphony*, able to represent and engage multiple perspectives without demanding conflation or consensus. The generative role of the symbolic was incorporated throughout the workshop – because, as Diamond stated in the workshop, "everything is symbolic." Following every activity participants gathered to briefly discuss what meanings it had for them both personally and in the context of 'after homelessness'; likewise, participants were invited to call out the various meanings they saw in others' physical tableaus, and Diamond explicitly prevented performers from explaining their intended meaning, "because it would limit your creativity," and "this ambiguous space is a very rich place."

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[31] "All combinations are possible there, because the aesthetic space *is* but *doesn't exist*...time flows as easily forwards as backwards; the chairs mutate into planes and the cross into a gun...the same flexibility operates with people and objects, which can coalesce or dissolve, divide or multiply" (Boal 1995: 20).

The rich potential of symbolic engagement to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously was also a great strength during the forum phase: Diamond would invite audiences to identify the various symbolic meanings they saw in scenes, and the invitation for intervention itself, to "work toward a way to find a safe and appropriate home," was kept "vague for a reason: what is home for this woman will be different for this person…" (Diamond, Forum).

Beyond the simple fact that this capacity to hold multiple meanings and perspectives is all-too-rare in conventional forums that often conflate difference to achieve clarity, cohesion or consensus, this simultaneity also made visible and negotiable underlying interrelations and contradictions often lost in other discourses. During the workshop this was particularly clear, where a figure could be at once in housing or on the street, prompting one participant to share, "even though I'm in housing, I still see the same

Figure 7: Bob and Cloud meet. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

things"; or a character could be at once mugged or arrested ("there is no difference", replied one participant); or those with their backs to another crouched low could be at once a fraught parental relationship, a crack in the wall, the shield of friends while lighting a crack pipe, the silencing of one's inner child, the power of the status quo, or the indifference of the community at large.

Similarly, the performance sought to capture such tensions and interrelations through the multivalent resources of the theatrical mode: by juxtaposing the 'home' of the

tarp with the dangers of the SRO; by the simple ironic exchange of the question "Is that your place?" between Cloud and the newly homeless Bob on the steps of the SRO; by the automated BC Housing call centre recording's claim that "Your call is very important to us..." as Katie leaves the office empty-handed and defeated; or by the irony of the city worker saying, "I'm just doing my job" and the police officer saying, "It'll be alright, we'll get you some help," as a tasered and unconscious Otis is dragged away. This attention to interrelations also worked to reveal the systemic nature of issues and the need for systemic responses. Diamond would say to audiences repeatedly that, "everything really is connected to everything else," and whether it was the portrayal of causal connections between seemingly distinct events, or of the degree of interrelation between both the micro- and the macro-level and formally distinct institutions, or of the pressing need that continually revealed itself onstage for holistic approaches that combine services and are designed to see individuals as wholes, this project was able to demonstrate that the often siloized, bureaucratic model currently in place is part of the problem.

Like its plasticity of time and space, the evocative nature of artistic representation thus helped to bring to light latent tensions, contradictions, connections and parallels – between one realm of experience or character and another, between the personal and political, between what is said or intended and what actually occurs – that often remain obscured and difficult to engage in their complexity within linear models of analysis or conventional modes of discourse. While these complex interconnections proved a great stumbling block in the task of translation back into policy discourse – a challenge inherent to artistic modalities and discussed in chapter seven – in these ways the project was able to make visible interrelations that are often left out of such accounts.

But the evocative use of symbolism does more than reveal these 'truths': it performs the critical work of foregrounding the act of *interpretation* entailed in understanding even as identities and issues are given shape. The performance – its characters, its dialogue, the materials on stage and what happens there – is multivalent. This is accentuated even more by the breaking apart and reforming of the very script in light of external interventions: identities are presented as multiple, dynamic and open to contestation, while the meanings and implications audiences come away with are likewise "marked in such a way as to be visible and yet, at the same time, not utterly pinned down" (Salverson 1996: 187). As a result, the symbolic's 'absence' and 'excess' of meaning simultaneously signal the limits of one's understanding and the agency of the one so represented; it complicates the basis for a simplistic empathy by presenting complex others who cannot be wholly pinned down, whose identities are "diffuse and ungraspable," and open to resignification (Phelan 1996; Tierney-Tello 1999: 84; Park-Fuller 2000: 32). In sharp contrast to the clarity and directness of theoretical argumentation or declarative testimony, here the evocative provides the "opacity and obscurity [that] are necessarily the precious ingredients of all authentic communications," as they offer a space "for the unmarked, or Other, or dissenter, to remain…[a] space across which the familiar and the strange can gaze upon each other" (Lionnet 1989: 4; Salverson 1996: 186).

Connected to this, the evocative enabled the articulation and engagement of meaning and identity in the absence of certainties: unlike declarative discourse in which such collective inquiry often requires that knowledge be "a fixed, knowable, finite thing," to be evocative in meaning is also, as Julie Salverson and other argue, to generate a

container in which a space or 'gap' exists that can represent "risky stories…in such a way that the subtleties of damage, hope and the 'not nameable' can be performed;" it can, as Boal argues, "tell the truth, without being absolutely sure" (Salverson 1996: 184, 188; Boal 1995: 39). In this way, the symbolic provides a container spacious enough for meanings to be collectively engaged and "work[ed] through" even before they are coherent or clear in the way declarative language requires (Taylor and Kentridge 2001): as Tamas says in the context of traumatic memory, "I might use creative methods, not in order to be clever, but because I myself don't know the story that is sliding around in me, looking for an opening" (2009). Here, the 'noise' of difference can be evoked and engaged even before it meets the demands of declarative discourse.

Moreover, by holding multiple meanings simultaneously, the evocative enabled a model of community as one of "non-identical kinship," or coalition *through* rather than in spite of difference (Brah 2000: 273). During the workshop, this was exemplified in how skit-building groups were formed: after participants reviewed the Polaroid images and evocative titles of previous days' tableaus – 'Broken Peace,' 'Caught Up,' 'Alone Together,' 'Last Call,' 'Smoking Against the Wind' – they then shared and in turn gathered around the gesture or sound in response to the images that most resembled their own. This symbolic language not only made possible participant expression that did not demand explanation or justification, but also enabled the formation of collectives without requiring consensus. *Something* had drawn them to that sound, or that style of movement; gathered through the symbolic, groups began to share and explore what had brought them together, and so the scenes were born. Here, in sharp contrast to literal and declarative modalities, the evocative allows these artistic engagements to "functio[n] as a

sheltering site, one that can nurture our differences without encouraging us to withdraw

into new dead ends, without enclosing us within facile oppositional practices or sterile

denunciations and disavowals" (Lionnet 1989: 5). In so doing, the evocative enables

affiliation, even coalition, through what Boal and Cohen-Cruz call "analogy rather than

identification," which is attentive to the complexity and particularity of the other's

experience even within intense moments of resonance (Boal 1995: 45; Cohen-Cruz 2006:

110).

Likewise, dialogue, affiliation and coalition within both creative and forum phases

were possible – indeed, seen to be more generative – when there was disagreement:

Diamond emphasized repeatedly that "in order to have real conversations, we need to be

in a space where we don't need to agree," and engaging meaning as evocative made space

for such diversity and complexity of interpretation and contribution. This engagement

with multiplicity is by nature open-ended – it is a process of, as Diamond told the

workshop group, "throwing ideas, thoughts, concepts up in the air and leaving them

there." This introduces certain challenges to the translation of such multiplicity into the

restrictive demands of policy discourse and decision-making that will be discussed in

chapter seven; however, it is precisely what enables artistic practices the all-too-rare

capacity to engage difference *in* its difference, complexity *in* its complexity, and in the

process function as what Pratt and Johnston, observing an earlier Headlines forum, call an

"agonistic public sphere" (2007: 107).

The performance phase, conceived as a "mirror of reality," moved away from this

generative place of the evocative and into more literal claims; though audiences were

invited to intervene in evocative terms, these scenes and particularly the actor's expertise

of lived experience that held them in check emphasized a literal reading, which, in turn, introduces all the risks of the "lie of the literal" (Salverson 1996): encouraging literal identification with and replication of 'fixed' historicized roles; misportrayals of one actor's responses and reflections as either "innocent" and objective, or "speaking for" a far broader and diverse range of possibilities – for, inevitably, should a different actor be in the same place, different responses and realities would be brought to the stage; as well as the illusion of fully 'grasping' another's experience by standing in for them on stage when the position is understood literally. For while, as bell hooks states, marginalized experience "affords a privileged critical location from which to speak," this is not because it is 'more true' in terms of ontology, but because it is more likely to see through prevailing truth claims and their "dazzling – and, therefore, blinding – illuminations" (hooks 1990: 29; Haraway 2003: 395). However, where the evocative was used to articulate experience and generate affiliation, the spaciousness it generated provided the means to do so through a care for difference.

The Role of Fiction

The final form of artistic mediation that proved significant was the use of fiction to convey 'certain truths.' Theatre's mode of truth-telling is, as Boal notes, at once *actual* and *fictitious*, "belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image" (Boal 1995: 43). Though drawn from lived experience, this was an act of collective story-telling; in fact, though personal narratives were a part of the workshop phase, Diamond would at times limit these disclosures, emphasizing that they were in the process of crafting "collective truths" that were "owned by the group." Likewise, actors played characters they understood, and

responded honestly from that experience rather than 'pretended' on stage; however, this was always in the context of an explicit, group-generated fiction, which had a number of significant effects. First, it enabled a *critical distance* from the immediate everyday as participants observed themselves in action on the stage, "oblig[ed to] both to *see* and to *see himself"* (Boal 1995: 25). Such aesthetic distancing, as Sue Jennings also observes, "paradoxically allows us to experience reality at a deeper level," as identities and actions are externalized and worked out on the stage (Jennings 1994: 22).

Secondly, the fictional mode allowed participants at all stages to not only observe, but *imagine* themselves differently, in what Boal calls "subjunctive theatre": "a mirror which we can penetrate to modify our image," changing "the vision of the world *as it is* into a world *as it could be*" (Boal 1979: 132; Picher 2007: 82). While, as we have seen in chapter three, all performance is 'subjunctive' by stimulating observation, critique and imagination, by building to an unresolved crisis, inviting audience intervention, and rehearsing possible actions, forum theatre allows participants to "practice (and not simply imagine)" alternative possibilities (Madison 1998: 280; Pratt and Johnston 2007: 108).

This aesthetic distancing also worked to create a *psychic distance* that lowered the stakes, mediating highly personal and often traumatic experiences to provide a degree of safety. This was equally true in forum as much as the workshop, where participants stepped into a specific character in a fictional scene, and thus into a highly mediated context in which they can "process stuff they're going through at a

Figure 8: Conflict in the SRO. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

really deep level in a really safe way" (Diamond, Workshop). Here, even interventions that involved mourning or led to conflict or violence could be experienced safely; as Diamond shared with the workshop group, "it's better to try an idea and get beaten up *theatrically* than in real life."[32] This mediation via artistic fiction is essential in creating this feeling of safety, particularly where sensitive, often vulnerable aspects of identity, emotion and experience are disclosed and explored. This was clear on day five of the workshop when groups moved from 'tilling the soil' of lived experience to generating extended plays; one participant described it as "when you go from the shitbox to the sandbox," where there was a marked shift in the feel of the room to greater emotional distance and a heightened sense of play, experimentation and confidence.

The significance of this psychic distancing cannot be overstated, particularly when the process involved marginalized communities and the "difficult knowledge" of personal trauma (Britzman 1998). We saw this at work in the evocative nature of these accounts, where representations are spacious enough to hold meaning and identity without "too literal [a] representation, or too tight [a] container" (Salverson 1996: 186). As collective fiction – as character, or crafted scene – these accounts work akin to certain ritual objects that Michael Taussig notes are effective insofar as they "display little likeness to the people they are meant to heal or bewitch" (Salverson 1996: 186; Taussig 1993: 51). It is, as many theatre and trauma scholars note, through the *gap* in resemblance that psychic distance and safety are possible (Park-Fuller 2000: 31; Landy 1986: 100).

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[32] This was echoed by one cast member who, in response to apologies of the intervener who had surprised herself with her own violent response on stage, said, "'you know what? That was the perfect place for that to happen, it doesn't matter what your intervention, what you thought it was going to be, what came out was what you needed to come out'…and that's what makes the theatre…so great."

Direct disclosure can be the source of a performance's great affective impact, and so has the capacity to motivate action and effect social change; but this lack of artistic mediation also means such accounts run the risks of overexposure that deeply implicate and problematize more declarative modes. It is for this reason that realism or naturalism in theatre has been critiqued in the same terms as testimony and autobiography: where performances create too accurate a 'mirror' to particular lived experience, it "produces 'reality' by naturalizing the relationship between character and actor, and position[s] spectators to verify universal notions of truth" (Salverson 1999); in so doing, it can invite a discourse of 'authenticity' that entails voyeurism, essentialism of the other in terms of their past experience or an "aesthetic of injury," and overidentification that substitutes "the 'you' with the 'as-if-it-were-me'" (Taylor 1998: 10; Salverson 1996, 1999; Felman and Laub 1992: 69).

The significance of fictional mediation was made most clear by the fact that those rare instances when participants felt overexposed and thus put at risk in these ways were precisely when this fictional mediation was absent and representations came too close to personal experience. In one instance during the workshop where a participant enacted a scene too close to home – and, as a consequence, felt overexposed and shaken – Diamond was adamant that "I asked specifically not to do this...we're making theatre about real life, but it *isn't* real life, it's *theatre*." Likewise, where physical tableaus prompted participants to disclose traumatic memories of abandonment, domestic violence, imprisonment, or attempted suicide to the group, it was these people who were absent the following day.

This was also the case during the rehearsal and performance phases, where the demands of creating a "mirror of reality" and appearing "naked on the stage" meant that, as one cast member recalls, "it wasn't an image of reality, it was real." As Anderson notes, "I don't think it's a coincidence that the individual who was bipolar played a bipolar character, that the cast member that has a history of drug dealing played a drug dealer," and that the actor playing Otis had been tasered and was living in a tarp at the time of production; "I agree that none of them played themselves, but they played areas of their lives that they struggled with." Likewise, the dynamics of the group found their way into the dynamics of characters on stage:

> There's an expression…art imitating life…if you were being vulnerable and talked down to in the rehearsal, that's the character you portrayed on stage… the dynamics in the play about who was ostracized and who wasn't, who was popular and who wasn't, was the same on…and off the stage. (Anderson)

Hence, a particularly aggressive cast member played an aggressive police officer, and a quieter, gentler cast member as Otis was the object of that aggression in the most violent aspect of the play where Otis is tasered, wrestled to the ground, and dragged offstage in handcuffs. Moreover, these dynamics played out in the workshop and rehearsal process, where Diamond regularly invited participants to correct or push back

Figure 9: Eviction. Photo by David Cooper, reproduced with permission by Headlines Theatre.

against his readings or directions – even, as Stieger recalls, "want[ing] people who could push back" – and yet normative hierarchies within the theatrical context and patterns of perception and behaviour made it difficult for some cast members to challenge the director in

this way, either perceiving only their own failures and going "smaller and smaller and deeper within" in relation to Diamond's directorial authority and artistic standard, or "the most vulnerable tr[ying] to please" (Anderson; Pink; Martin[33]).[34]

This "reality of the image" was particularly apparent when these scenes were performed repeatedly within rehearsal and performance phases. As one cast member recalls, "having to actually live the issues the character was living…brought people back to a place…[that] was *a little too familiar.*" Every cast member mentioned greatly struggling with this, though the tasering scene illustrates this most clearly, where Anderson, who stepped into the role on opening night, found it to be

> an extremely traumatic experience...being beat up, pushed around, killed, every night was traumatic...It came in my dreams, it came to me first thing when I woke up, and the physical reactions…I was taking pain pills…I was losing weight because I was so stressed…that character is bullied often in the play, and has to work intimately with a cast member with untreated mental health issues…I have pretty good boundaries and I have a pretty strong voice, and it was physically challenging for me to be bullied, and to be moved by him, and to…play out an act of being hurt on stage by him…it requires a vulnerability from me and requires me to let go of wanting to fight back. How somebody without an intact coping strategy who has vulnerabilities in the area of mental health could play that role could be incredibly dangerous...I don't think this is safe, because I know physically in my body what this means...When I went to hospital to see the cast member...I'd done it for three nights by then…and I was showing him [my bruises]…he pulled up his sleeves, and his arms were covered in bruises – he never voiced that…he didn't have the voice even to say, 'I'm physically hurting.'

Despite numerous supports in place and efforts to create safety – either through the presence of a social worker, running through the logistics of violent scenes to prevent injury, or regularly checking in with cast to see if a scene was too difficult – this proximity to, and creation of, a vivid reality within the production had tragic results. The

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[33] This is a fictitious name, also used in Diamond's final report.

[34] This in itself opens up the central issue that will be discussed in chapter seven of dynamics of power within artistic practices, which are not merely representations but also sites of politics, as well as the demand for – and challenges of – reflexivity within the practice.

night before the performance opened, Martin checked himself into a hospital after trying

to take his own life. Later, Martin shared that doing "the runs, back to back like that" of

the tasering scene, his difficulty with confrontation, the emotional demands of enactment,

and putting "myself on stage with my story" in his efforts "to make it lifelike...were…my

triggers that put me back in the hospital." The performance's proximity to Martin's lived

experience both outside and inside the rehearsal hall meant that the character he played

and the scenes he experienced on stage had no 'gap': they were not "sufficiently new and

different from [Martin]…[and so] gave [him] no design to step into" (Salverson 1996:

187). Whereas artistic mediation can create a psychic distance that makes for safer

engagement with "risky stories" such as these – even enjoyable, as in the case of Pink,

who noted the pleasure of playing a more defiant character that allowed her to "pull stuff

from Janette that Janette wouldn't do, but Katie was allowed to" – when this generative

gap is closed between lived experience and art, it introduces what Luce Irigaray calls "the

danger of unmediated relations becoming a source of pathology" (1991: 77). This

demonstrates some of the risks and challenges within artistic performance that will be

addressed further in chapter seven; but it also demonstrates the crucial role that artistic

mediation plays in mitigating these risks involved in public engagement of marginalized

and, at times, traumatic experience.

A fourth and final effect of fictional portrayal that works to engage marginalized

difference with the care and receptive generosity required is how, like the evocative

nature of symbolism, this fiction portrays its truths as *performative*. We have seen in

chapter two how the erasure of the performative nature of representation leads to

appropriation, objectification and conflation of difference; theatrical accounts, in contrast,

tell "*one's created* truth," and so construe the account as "interpretive labor" rather than "mirror of reality" – as situated, interpreted, and non-exhaustive for both artist and audience (Salverson 1999; Diamond 1997: ix; Park-Fuller 2000: 28). This is made clear not only through its evocative nature or fictional mediation, of course, but also through the embodied nature of the theatrical gaze: in the theatre, "[w]hat becomes immediately visible are the specificities of our position and the ensuing limits to our perspective. We can't see everything; we can't occupy the visual vantage point of those located somewhat differently in the frame" (Taylor 1998: 183). And while the performativity of the *after homelessness…* account was at times lost from view in an emphasis on its literal "mirror," where this fictional mediation was maintained it worked to chasten knowledge-claims about those so represented, by situating the observer and gesturing to the inevitable 'absence and excess' of their particular interpretation.

But this explicit performativity also has another effect: when understanding is explicitly interpretive, the meanings it generates for viewers are by nature open-ended rather than directive; communication and understanding here require active participation, in a dialogic rather than didactic tirade. Boal and Diamond, along with other contemporary theatre directors and scholars, view this "dialectic" mode of communication and the critical agency it gives observers as integral to the forum process: "it is not the place of the theatre to show the correct path, but only to offer the means by which all possible paths may be examined" (Boal 1979: 141; 2002: 241; Barba 1995: 95; Mutnick 2006: 43; Waterson 2010: 514; Diamond 2010: 38). By representing these experiences through the fictional enactment of them – not as an argument, or a lesson, or an exercise in blame, nor even one perspective as in the case of personal narrative – this

account was a story at-a-remove which audiences could watch unfold without being told what to think or how to respond. Without a determinate and heavy-handed message, these encounters thus open up rather than foreclose meaning, do "not so much *reveal* truth as thrust us involuntarily into a mode of critical inquiry" (Bennett 2005: 11). In this way, it is, as Rey Chow argues regarding literature, "quite opposite to the clarity and forthrightness of theoretical argumentation. 'The more the opinions of the [artist] remain hidden, the better for the work of art': a very different kind of power for producing change, in other words, is at play" (2002: 137).

In light of how precarious and difficult receptive generosity is to maintain in encounters with difference – particularly those encounters in which we are implicated, feel exposed, and scramble to shore up our defences – this ability to depict marginalized experiences that implicate and invoke the broader community without provoking these usual responses seems especially valuable. The two organizational recipients of the final report who also attended the performance noted this radically different approach to well-worn issues in the field: while Sue Noga of the BC Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness found the piece refreshing and persuasive precisely because it worked "without any hidden agendas," City Councillor Kerry Jang recalled that he "really enjoyed this format," because

> it allowed people to express their views in a way that we've not seen before. It's always been…A bunch of egghead academics sitting in a room with the mayor talking about what you should do, a bunch of citizens screaming at you at a public hearing – to actually sit back and have an honest-to-gosh chat that's moderated or a play where you can stop the action and ask a question, I think that's pretty cool.

When both the 'screaming' of "the same ten people" (Jang) and the academic research that dominates policy discourse have become, to some extent, 'noise' to those working in

the field, the indirect and evocative nature of this fictional performance enabled such

noise to become sound.

> *"Our job isn't revealing certain solutions, because if we all know what the answer is...let's give the answer. But if we want to truly have a community dialogue, we have to be ready to hear answers we don't really like." – David Diamond, to workshop participants*

Creative Agency: 'To Perform is to Act'

A final dimension of theatrical engagement that allowed this piece to engage

marginalized difference in ways more declarative modes find most challenging is the

foregrounding of *creative agency*. As discussed in chapter three, by representing

experience through explicitly creative acts, the agency of those so represented –

particularly in this case, where characters and scenes were generated by workshop

participants and cast, and actors' expertise held interventions accountable through

improvisations – is never lost from view. And, as chapter three argued, as opposed to

'overexposing' declarative modes that can turn marginalized others into 'objects of

knowledge' defined by their past and interpellated by the observer, such overtly creative

acts thwart such totalizing and voyeuristic gestures. Rather, where creative agency is

communicated within such representations, potential for 'overexposure' is tempered by

actors (the word seems apt) who both surpass the particular account they provide and

'look back' at those who look on, enabling more symmetrical and reciprocal forms of

engagement. This was clear in the transition within the workshop on day four from

personal narrative to skit-building, where the feel of the room shifted dramatically as

participants went 'from the shitbox to the sandbox,' to "create their own images and play

with them consciously and willingly" (Salverson 1999).

Again, the significance of this aesthetic dimension is apparent in the case of Martin, whose last-minute addition to the cast due to unforeseen circumstances ran against the Theatre for Living model: instead of creating his own character, Martin stepped into a role that had been developed by another, more assertive participant – though, interestingly, a part that had been loosely based on the experiences Martin shared during the workshop of living in a tarp. Given pressing time constraints as the dates of performance quickly approached, neither the character nor the plot could be developed anew, and instead of characters determining the action, the demands of the play demanded a certain character, as the plot called for violent conflict Martin himself had never experienced, and had difficulty enacting.[35] And as Anderson, who ultimately took his place, recalls, the enactment of violent victimization "require[d] a vulnerability from me and require[d] me to let go of wanting to fight back" – it required a certain loss of agency repeatedly on stage. The aggression, both in the play and real life, of the cast member who played the police officer also played a role for Martin in undermining a sense of agency in the process.[36] This gestures to a fraught tension between the risks of proximity to lived experience, and the risks of representing someone else's story. The precarious point between these extremes seems defined, however, by the crucial role of both creative agency and aesthetic distance in performative representation, where one cannot be achieved at the expense of the other without introducing certain risks.

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[35] For Martin, "getting into someone's face and getting physical, that was all new to me…That's what made it intense for me, I suppose," and as Diamond recalls, the "much gentler Otis" Martin brought to the play "has its plusses and minuses, to be honest…It is hard for him to get aggressive, and he must if we are going to taser him" (Diamond 2010: 30, 54).

[36] "It was a pissing contest with him. I just ignored it. There were lots of times I had to man up to him, and just say 'okay well, after work, come on'... [In the scene, he] asked, 'give me a real push,' and I was like, 'na na na na na. I'm not giving you a real push, 'cause then I show too much aggression, and that's not me.'"

Martin also noted that he wished this characterization of Otis could have been balanced by scenes that showed, and enabled experience onstage of, other dimensions beyond such victimization, such as entering the stage with a sandwich and a coffee – symbolizing, as it did during the workshop, that one is more than homeless, one is a "valued customer" and regular person – or his romance with Nico, both of which were taken out of the final play. He recalled that "the biggest reward was the audience's acknowledgement" of aspects of his character that are normally written out of the prevailing stereotypes, "that Otis was there to help people…it was like, wow, shellshock." This indicates other ways the process might have limited this sense of agency, when participants are invoked as experts of the problems and issues, but largely prevented from depicting personal strengths and the positive aspects of such experience; likewise, they are required to play characters that cannot offer solutions, mitigate the problems they face, or use coping strategies they normally would (Pink; Anderson).[37] Diamond would stress to the workshop participants that "this isn't *for you*, it's for the public" though personal benefits might emerge through the process, framing the workshop phase as a site to "till the soil" of life-as-material for the production. This emphasis on the forum phase as the site of problem-solving and the broader community as the source of innovation runs the risk of confining workshop participants to, however creatively, "reliv[ing] their past helplessness…[and] 'choiceless choices'," and so prevent

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[37] During the project's interview process, candidates who were only positive about homelessness were not selected; likewise during the workshop phase, participants were asked not to depict positive sides of homelessness. This, as Martin's case suggests, may contribute to limiting the project's 'counter-narrative' to focus on victimization, so restricting the characterization and agency of those so represented. This might also, however, inadvertently overlook the complexity of homelessness's causes – like the notion of being a 'valued customer' on the streets, the positive sides of the issue might themselves play a role in perpetuating the conditions the project sought to examine, and by bracketing this diversity of experience the project might risk invoking old narratives that both limit participants' self-determination and the insights this might yield.

a "working through" of these experiences that is integral to fostering creative agency –

though the authority and action of cast members within forum interventions would help to

counteract this risk during performance (Waterson 2010: 522; Taylor and Kentridge

2001). While the process is "not therapy" and any process cannot predict nor be

responsible for all possible outcomes, this gestures to another key dilemma within artistic

modes of democratic engagement of marginalized difference – the tension between

artistic license and social responsibility – that will be addressed further in chapter seven.

However, where this project engaged marginalized and "difficult knowledge" through

creative practices, it made use of what Stephen Levine calls the "traumatic imagination,"

and so foregrounded creative agency within its account to work against processes of

appropriation, objectification, and conflation that can leave those seeking audience

'overexposed' in more declarative discourses (Levine 2009: 18).

Conclusion

While conventional democratic forums likewise gather affected communities in

sustained political dialogue and deliberation, we have seen in this chapter that forum

theatre offers distinct resources for democratic engagement of difference. By grounding

accounts of political experience in concrete specificity and emotional reality, profoundly

affective encounters that can motivate political change are possible even as the

complexity of such issues and the people living them comes into view. By employing

embodied modes of investigation, often unrecognized expertise and unspoken – even

unconscious – knowledge, beliefs and affect can find their way to public discourse. By

deliberating possible solutions through action rather than verbal dialogue, the viability of

theory is rigorously examined and tested, in the safe container of theatre that provides an

all-too-rare rehearsal for living. And by mediating engagement of the "difficult knowledge" of marginalized experience through theatrical devices and fiction, this discursive mode heightens capacities to observe, reflect, and experiment with aspects of political reality, provides a psychic distance that makes it safer to do so, creates a spaciousness that can hold the multiplicity and complexity of meaning and enable coalition through such terms, and foregrounds both the interpretive and partial nature of understanding as well as the creative agency of those 'looking back' on the stage.

As such, this case demonstrates that such theatrical engagements with difference offer not only a legitimate form of alternative democratic engagement, but one that possesses distinct capacities to engage identity and difference in productive ways that are often most challenging in conventional forums. It is a form of representation and engagement in which people may "hear at least partially, without…devolving into empty confession[;] theatre can disclose new knowledge without voyeurism[;] theatre can be an ethnography, while avoiding the imperialist gesture of the anthropologist's gaze" (Dolan 2001: 85). When it is clear that of pressing importance is not merely the *if* but the *how* of engagement with marginalized difference, this case makes clear that, however fraught with its own risks, artistic modalities provide effective means for doing so in the terms democracy at once demands and finds most challenging.

Chapter Six
'Only They Breathe': Gender, Agency and the Dancing Body Politic[38]

"On 15 March 1666, Louis XIV took his first military review: 18,000 men…On the right, the king, right foot forward, commands the exercise itself with a stick. On the left, several ranks of soldiers are shown full face and aligned in depth; they have raised their right arms to shoulder height and are holding their rifles exactly vertical, their right legs are slightly forward and their left feet turned outwards…The men…are frozen into a uniformly repeated attitude of ranks and lines: a tactical unity…'Very good,' Grand Duke Mikhail once remarked of a regiment, after having kept it for one hour presenting arms, 'only *they breathe.*'" (Kropotkin, qtd in Foucault 1977: 188)

Naked bodies unapologetically enter the stage to a brooding primordial soundscape; hands curled under as knuckles graze the floor; leading with chin, chest, ear, anything but the perceiving eye; shuffling feet, first attempts at discovery, raw senses. Under gleaming skin vertebrae protrude in serpentine curves, jutting ribs slide and bone glides; all beyond the silhouette of coiffed rows of observers' heads, stage lights glinting off the edge of eyeglasses. Each dancer catches the scent of the other, even as the scent of their sweat reaches the dark and mingles with the manicured bouquet of the audience's perfume and starch and soap.
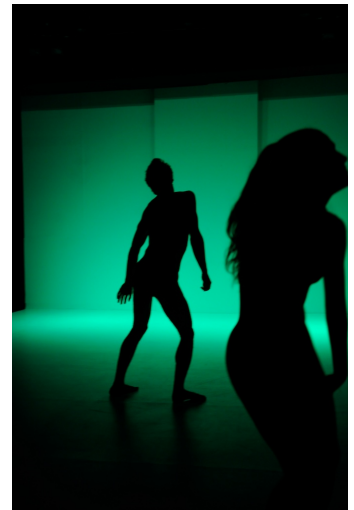
Figure 10 and 11: Garden I and II
Photos: Chris Randle*;* Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino*;* Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

Introduction

Chapters four and five demonstrated the use of theatre as an effective form of democratic engagement, in which key aesthetic dimensions provided the conditions for both a care for difference and receptive generosity that pluralist democracy demands. This chapter takes this argument further, in two directions. First, by examining a case where the 'politics' are somewhat subtler, in a performance identified foremost as fine art rather than political process, and addressing the 'undisciplining' of behaviours and roles rather than direct opposition or overt representation of marginalized communities – in other words, unsettling the partitions of the sensible regarding one's own as well as

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[38] A version of this chapter will be published in *Constellations Journal* (forthcoming).

others' identities. Second, by pushing the boundaries of legitimate political discourse with a case where language, indeed narrative, is absent – where the body not only supports but is the central site of democratic engagement and critical inquiry.

Given the primacy of speech in theories of democratic engagement, even when theatre might appear to slip between the cracks and so find a place within models of legitimate public dialogue, the dancing body offers a significant challenge. If we are to take seriously the fact that it is not art's proximity to conventional democratic practices that justifies their inclusion in the field, but rather its distinctly aesthetic and 'unruly' characteristics, the body – long thought unspeaking, unthinking – requires a fuller account as a site of communication, agency, and critique. And artistic practices that work through it – at the farthest remove from conventional models of democratic engagement – warrant further analysis.

Today we see an increasing practice and diversification of alternative means of democratic engagement, many employing creative movement. Marginalized youth in South Central Los Angeles have developed new forms of dance that have galvanized communities and asserted agency, dignity and creativity where other political channels are unavailable (LaChapelle 2005). In Northern Ireland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and South Africa, dance has been used to bridge entrenched lines of social conflict and make possible new and otherwise unimaginable connections and relations (Lederach 2004; Zelizer 2003; Shank and Schirch 2008). Dance therapy has emerged worldwide as an effective means of healing individual or collective trauma, while dance performance has been used to address issues of human rights, AIDS intervention, and other forms of social

injustice whose complexities cannot be captured in conventional political discourse (Román 1998; Jackson and Shapiro-Phim 2008).

And yet despite the worldwide use of such practices, as well as recent developments in political theory discussed in preceding chapters concerning aesthetics, affect, the body, and alternative modes of political communication, dance has been almost wholly overlooked within democratic theory. This is no accident: despite the prolific use in political theory of metaphors such as mobilization, embodiment, and, when they're feeling sentimental, dance, within the conventional terms of politics the case of dance as a site of agency and critique presents a particular challenge. Unmoored as it is from the familiar terrain of verbal semiotics, dance places at the centre of its processes of meaning-making the physical body – the very body that traditional political theory and Western culture more generally have worked so tirelessly to deny and devalue, despite its embarrassing omnipresence in all aspects of human activity. Sitting at various tables throughout the centuries, spine curved over paper and pen clutched between sculpted fingers, philosophical bodies have laboured for centuries to discount, dismiss, override, and imagine away the very body that is so tactlessly foregrounded in dance.

And so the body is, paradoxically, "at once the most solid, the most elusive, concrete, metaphysical, ever present and ever distant thing" (Turner 1982: 8), and consequently the site of thought, communication and action for which we currently have the least developed means of understanding. How are we to speak of the critical capacity of that which has been construed as the passive and awkward vessel of true identity, knowledge, and freedom? Rather than retreat into the romantic notion of the mysterious 'ineffability' of the dancing body, this chapter will show the theoretical salience as well

as practical contribution of dance as a form of democratic engagement, using the explorations of and experimentations with gender in Co. Erasga's contemporary dance piece *AdamEve/ManWoman* to do so.

Because dance represents a continuation of but also a break from previous case studies of performance as democratic engagement, I introduce in this chapter additional theoretical scholarship on the politics of the body, 'practices of freedom' as articulated within poststructural and feminist scholarship, and the field of dance in order to provide a theoretical framework for analyzing this particular case study. In particular, I hope to show how contemporary dance enacts all four dimensions of 'practices of freedom' and so serves as an effective site of critical inquiry, creative agency, and democratic engagement with regards to naturalized identities and roles. In fact, we will see that it is the absence of language, the physical body's explicit strain against and creative contention with social scripts and practices, and the ephemeral nature of this embodied process that enable such practices to work in these ways.

Experimentations with Identity: AdamEve/ManWoman

AdamEve/ManWoman, a contemporary dance performance choreographed by Co. Erasga's artistic director Alvin Tolentino for dancers Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski, was shaped around the question, "Can dance liberate the body without imposing the meaning of gender?" Its four distinct sections each provide a distinct lens for the investigation of this question. The first, "Garden," was concerned with the body stripped of human history, as simply a sensory animal coming to self-awareness; the second section, known playfully as "Bonnie and Clyde," most explicitly addresses the question of gender, stepping in and out of familiar gender archetypes from both youthful

and adult perspectives. In the third, "Support," the dancers are clothed simply and similarly, and embody with energetic physicality various experimentations with reciprocity and interconnection that echo the daily efforts and challenges of being in relationship. The last section, "Self and Selfless," moves seamlessly into a more esoteric rendering of earlier themes of striving for identity and place through a shifting temporal terrain, in a manner that strips each identity of its particularity and shows, again, the mere body, despite its best efforts, returning to dust, heat, coolness, and breath, and surrendering to its own imperfection, transience, and the physical matter from which it was made.

The hour-long piece as it was performed in Vancouver, BC in November 2010 was the result of a year-long creative process, where Tolentino, Denham and Marchenski collectively explored experiences and issues of gender through improvised movement, journaling, image work, and dialogue. The piece was sourced from lived experience and popular culture, quotidian movement and childhood memory, as well as extensive explorations of the possible range of movement for the human body beyond gendered codes. As such, it presents a case where limits placed on identity that have been naturalized and experienced as authentic are exposed, challenged and critically reworked, through a performative mode where the body is the central site of inquiry, communication and public engagement.

The Body in Theory

Before we examine this case study in more detail, it is necessary to explore the role of the body as conceived in political theory, since the question of embodiment is so critically important to dance in particular. Prior to the material and feminist turns in

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critical theory the body, when considered at all, was interpreted as at best a sensational distraction from reality, at worst a deceiver that distorts it, perhaps the responsibility of but certainly not integral to the self (Descartes 1996: 16-23; McWhorter 1999: 137-8). The pursuit of a universal and impartial "pure reason" demanded one lose the weight of the specific body; since Plato, philosophy came to be understood as the project of dislodging the self from its corporeality (Plato *Pheado* 65c-67a; Bordo 1993; Shusterman 2008: 16; Butler 2006: 17). Though various theorists have since acknowledged the corporeal dimensions of political practices, there is often an oversight within these accounts of either *concrete* bodies in motion, or the *critical agency* such bodies possess.

Traces of the traditional primacy of the linguistic and intellectual over the physical can be seen even by theorists who declare its centrality in experience and thought – often focusing on the role of language and the symbolic rather than the corporeal, or, inversely, textualizing the body (Shusterman 2008: 7; 29; Hall 1997: 33; McNay 2000: 14; Martin 1998b: 9). Even Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who reinvest the body with significance as the locus of all perception – the latter conceived as "the patron saint of the body"– still construe this significance in terms of its opposition to thought (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 78; Husserl 1989: 61; Shusterman 2008: 49).

Likewise, Bourdieu and Foucault, both of whom discuss the body at great length, in fact rarely discuss *actual* bodies: Bourdieu's cultural analysis focuses solely on music and visual art rather than dance despite his extensive work on bodily knowledge, arguably because it was seen to lack "serious intellectual content" (Turner 2008: 216). The same charge has been laid at Foucault, who, as Leo Bersani states, "wrote so brilliantly of the body as an object of the exercise of power, that we may fail to note how

little he spoke of the body as an agent of power" (Sawicki 1994: 294; Bersani 1995: 102). Recent critical writings about the body, as a rule,

> seldom address the body I know; instead, they move quickly past arms, legs, torso, and head on their way to a theoretical agenda that requires something unknowable or unknown as its initial premise. The body remains mysterious and ephemeral, a convenient receptacle for their new theoretical position. Alternatively, these writings scrutinize and analyze the body, but only as a product of the various discourses that measure it. (Foster 1997: 235)

And yet, as chapter one has argued, the body has been increasingly recognized as central to politics, serving as a site in which identities, perceptions and power relations are created, reinforced or unsettled. Modern power is seen to function through the micro-practices of the everyday, "at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body" (Foucault 1977: 137). It is through the regulation of individual behaviour that the "partitions of the sensible" for thought, action and relation are embodied and internalized through habituation, until ultimately they are pre-reflexively experienced as one's very identity (Rancière 2004: 12; Shusterman 2008: 22; Heyes 2007: 31; Bourdieu 1992: 167; Bourdieu 1990: 52; McNay 2000: 25).

Where subjection and subjectivity meet in this way, such norms and values often reside beyond the reach of consciousness or critique: they create a "settled domain of ontology" maintained via what Cressida Heyes, massaging Wittgenstein's famous phrase, calls "aspectival captivity": increasing difficulty in imagining possibilities beyond the frame (Foucault 1982: 212; Butler 2002: 216; Wittgenstein 1958: §115; Heyes 2007: 18). Indeed, as Richard Shusterman has pointed out, when one pushes against inculcated norms and dispositions, one's body – in the form of blushing, trembling, flinching, stuttering, or crying – might very well push back (Shusterman 2008: 22).

She slouches suddenly in an insolent walk, incongruent on golden heels; he skips with a gentle nervousness that fluctuates between carefree and careful movement in growing awareness of the young girl nearby; between furtive glances and when he is caught, frozen, when they are returned, he presses his palm through the air as if to suppress his rising emotion, one finger escaping to insist more emphatically, "tsk tsk, tut tut..."

Figure 12 and 13: Bonnie and Clyde I and II. Photos: Chris Randle*;* Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino*;* Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

The centrality of the body to identity and politics therefore requires an account of how it might serve as a site of critical agency and democratic practice. But if limitations to identity are embodied such that they are deeply bound up in one's sense of self and often lie beyond the reach of conscious critique, freedom from such restrictions enacted on and through the body must be found somewhere other than the language of authenticity, liberation, or autonomy. Indeed, as Heyes has artfully shown, the very language of self-discovery and individuality has been implicated in powerful normalizing discourses (Heyes 2007: 5). If power is precisely the means through which subjectivities are formed, "it is not the case that a subject is formed and then turns around and begins suddenly to form itself" (Butler 2002: 226, 225; Heyes 2007: 5). What, then, in this context of embodied power relations, distinguishes those practices that are, dare one say it, a little more "free"? How might the body be engaged to foster and enact practices that realize the *care for difference* and *receptive generosity* that democracy requires?

Practices of Freedom: Democratic Engagement of the 'Noise' Within

While previous chapters have established the normative and practical terms for democratic engagement with 'others,' this case study presents a different dynamic within the politics of identity/difference, where internalized limits on the perceptions and practices of the *self* are the central focus. In this context, scholarship on 'practices of freedom' within both poststructuralist and feminist/gender theory provides the most thorough account of how one might contend with these internalized limits for identity/difference. Many of these scholars, acknowledging that there is no 'outside' of power when it is understood to shape identity itself, conceive of freedom as an activity – much as Aristotle, in an unlikely moment of intersection, so long ago proposed for happiness. The subject, simultaneously "both crafted and crafting" (Butler 2002: 225), engages in 'practices of freedom,' "reciprocal incitation and struggle...a permanent provocation" (Foucault 1997: 282-3; Foucault 1982: 222; McWhorter 1999; McLaren 2002). Such practices strive to make visible what often remains invisible, to disrupt and reveal the contingency of the technologies and effects of disciplinary power, and in so doing open up the means to discover ways of "not being governed quite so much" (Heyes 2007: 8; Foucault 2002: 193). In short, practices of freedom enact a *care for difference* with regards to the 'noise' of difference that exceeds naturalized limitations for identity.

Although claiming the status of practice rather than state, this "art of not being governed quite so much" sounds very similar to the language of liberation, which sees freedom as autonomy, freed from restriction. Moreover, working on oneself as a means of self-transformation in this way also closely resembles the very disciplinary technologies of the self these practices of freedom are meant to challenge. What, then, are

the differences that distinguish it? "How," as Foucault asks, "can one practice freedom?" (Foucault 1997: 284)

There are four crucial dimensions to such 'practices of freedom' that set it apart from modernist accounts of freedom, and will prove particularly significant in this analysis: first, such freedom is found in *mobility between and within* multiple disciplines. As chapter one has argued, subjectivities are formed within and are never autonomous from disciplinary and discursive practices; however, one's identity is never wholly contained or determined by a single discipline, and so agency – and the capacity to think and practice otherwise – is located in the ability to navigate multiple competing disciplines, and the contingency this reveals through the play of contrasts between them (Foucault 1977: 26; Hall 1993: 102; Butler 2002: 215; Heyes 2007: 16-18). Second, one practices freedom not by discovering an essential, 'authentic' identity or truth but by the *artful crafting* of oneself and one's vision of the world; here, practices that make explicit the performativity of knowledge-claims and identity formation temper what William Connolly has called "ontological narcissism" (Connolly 1991: 30) and work to cultivate a sensibility that doesn't quake at uncertainty, ambiguity, or the limits of knowing, and is reflexive enough to remain open to future discovery and revision (Foucault 1983: 261; Foucault 1997a: 228; Heyes 2007: 118).

Third, such practices are conceived as an open-ended and *non-teleological praxis*; they enact or foster a care for difference by broadening the range of possibilities both imagined and enacted, a range as yet undefined, rather than working according to a fixed and pre-determined program. As all differences cannot be identified in advance, the project becomes one of setting up the terms and dynamics that enable the productive,

unexpected, open-ended disruption of and response to this 'noise' of the perpetual

remainder (Foucault 1988: 11; Deleuze 1990; Hall 1996a: 448; McWhorter 1999: 193;

O'Leary 2002: 159; Heyes 2007: 118). As opposed to traditional models of pluralism that

take identities and the terms with which to engage them as pre-given, static, and cohesive,

so inviting their 'management' rather than self-determination, these practices are seen to

offer, as Cornell and Murphy have argued, "the psychic and moral space necessary for

groups and individuals to engage with and recreate their multiple identifications" (2002:

422), and expose and contest those processes of meaning-making and relations of power

that inhibit this capacity.

And fourth, they are enacted in and through the *concrete daily practices of actual

bodies*, bodies that cannot be wholly contained within and regulated by a specific

discipline or discourse precisely because "*they breathe,*" and might yet breathe more

freely via specific corporeal strategies (Foucault 1977: 188). While Foucault and others in

this literature do not usually frame such practices as democratic, this critical engagement

of personal identity is thus, like democratic engagement defined here, a project of

exposing, challenging, and attentively reworking present bounds for identity and politics,

and so can be seen to enact a care for difference that contributes to the project of

democratic pluralisation.

Interestingly, many feminist/gender scholars have described agency with regards

to gender identity in similar terms, locating it in the excess of the complex living body

and its dialectical relationship with the equally complex and unstable multiplicity of

disciplinary discourses, which condition but never wholly contain that living body

(McNay 2000: 18; Butler 2006: 44; Heyes 2007: 57). Gender and identity formation,

given their dependence on repetition of bodily acts, are thus open to destabilization through 'resignification' (Butler 1993: 10). "Novelty" or divergent practices are not inherently liberatory – indeed, disciplinary norms are maintained precisely through the failing of every specific body to live up to such ideals – and the same resignification can function to reinforce in one context what it destabilizes in another. However, the mobility *within and between multiple disciplines* by the actual body opens up the possibility for critical consciousness or "distantiation," such that what has been embodied as essential may be seen and engaged as open to change (Lloyd 1999: 208; McNay 2000: 61, 68).

Similarly, many of these feminist scholars define practices of freedom as *non-teleological* and open-ended, insofar as they do not adhere to a predetermined norm or agenda, but rather the rhizomatic movement of what Judith Butler calls "an open future of cultural possibilities," opening the self "to new and unpredictable becoming" (Butler 2006: 127; Heyes 2007: 37). And finally, these scholars note that these are actual practices by concrete bodies in local contexts. As Rosalyn Diprose, Ladelle McWhorter and others argue, in contrast to Moira Gatens' emphasis on the *civil* body, it is in fact this critical engagement by and transformation of concrete, particular bodies that ultimately transforms the "social imaginary" (McWhorter 1999; Diprose 2002).

The connections between these characteristics and performative practices may already be clear, a connection Foucault also identifies when he defines such practices as a form of art: "in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or life...art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art?" (Foucault 1983: 261).

As I will discuss in detail shortly, all four of these dimensions come into play within the political negotiations of dancing bodies, and indeed this chapter will argue that the nature of dance creation and performance, due to its intimate knowledge and use of these very qualities, exhibits a distinct capacity to function as 'practices of freedom' – critical and creative engagement with identity/difference that enacts a democratic ethos of attentiveness and receptivity. However, this chapter pays special attention to this final dimension of the living, moving body within these engagements, as historical neglect and devaluation of concrete practices has proven the largest obstacle to recognition of the body – and by extension, dance – as a site of democratic engagement. Thus, we will turn from the question of the body and the practices of freedom to an analysis of dance itself both in theory and practice.

> *To the comic sound of fat horns caught mid-note, the dancers discover the first concrete trappings of gender: sticking nose into high heel, experimenting with its purpose; playing with the sensation of having muscles worth displaying. These are tried on; taken off, never given.*

Figure 14: Bonnie and Clyde III. Photo: Chris Randle*;* Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino*;* Dancer: Alison Denham.

The Body Politic: The Discipline and 'Undisciplining' of the Dancing Body

Dance in theory and practice has been almost wholly overlooked as a potential site of democratic politics; where it has been taken up by social and cultural analysts, dancing bodies are often reduced to cultural texts or convenient metaphors (Turner 2008: 215; Thomas 2003: 63; Desmond 1998; Foster 1998: 18). Janet Wolff and Susan Foster note, with particular attention to Derrida's use of dance imagery, the ease with which the metaphors of dance and choreography are used by critical theorists for destabilization and limitless possibility,

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without attention to the specifics of dance or what kind of dance this may be, belying the assumptions "first, that dance as a non-verbal mode of communication is either pre-linguistic or lies outside of language's signifying process...second...it provides access to what is repressed in culture" (Wolff 1995: 79). Dance here is construed as a practice of freedom precisely because of its "madness," a singular leap rather than conscious, sustained and strategic critical struggle (Derrida and McDonald 1995: 79; Foster 1998: 145).

Linked no doubt to the gendering and devaluing of the body more generally, dance has been traditionally feminized, and the dancing body construed in the selfsame terms – "natural, authentic, spontaneous, fervent, chaotic, evanescent. Whether primordial or decorous, it is always insubstantial" (Foster 1998: 17-18). While feeling and expressive, the dancing body is largely understood as "unthought and unthinking" and, as such, incapable of contributing meaningfully to politics except as a convenient metaphor for "spontaneity, frivolity, and the inexpressible" (Dempster 1988: 15; Foster 1998: 20). Consequently, dance has long been treated as a derivative, secondary and minor art, "an art which is not generative of its own meanings...dance may be the mother of all manner of things but she cannot know or speak of herself" (Dempster 1988: 15).

Surprisingly, gender and sexuality scholars, too, have often overlooked the "palpable presence of dancing, sweating, moving bodies" despite their work on embodiment, performativity and power (Foster 1998: 19-20; Desmond 2001: 13). As a result, Helen Thomas and others observe that the intellectual "traffic has been largely one-way from feminism to dance studies," and the potential and practice of the dancing body as a site and agent in politics has been largely overlooked (Foster 1998: 19-20;

Thomas 2003: 146). In a theoretical terrain that devalues the living, breathing, moving body over the 'disembodied' intellect and, by extension, the text, dance's distinctiveness, the rich and provocative ways in which it evades textual representation have in fact been a source of what Randy Martin calls its "conceptual ghettoization" within academic scholarship (Martin 1998b: 182).

Though long overlooked in political theory, dance theory and practice has been a site where the particular dynamics of disciplinary practices on the body, as well as the capacity and mechanisms for corporeal democratic responses, have been examined and explored with incredible rigor. It is no surprise that this is so, as dance is a site where the body, subjectivity and politics are intimately interconnected. With its great intimacy with the human body and its meanings in motion, dance has within its repertoire an understanding of power in process and some of the tactics available for exploring and contending with them creatively. As a practice that cultivates at once highly disciplined and creative bodies, dance is quite literally (physically), a site that, as Mark Franko argues, "make[s] and unmake[s] identities. Because dance moulds the body and its ways of moving, it cannot but propose models of subjectivity in either an affirmative or negative sense" (Franko 2007: 16; Albright 1997: 4; Foster et al. 1996: xiii). In placing these processes of meaning-making centre stage for public engagement, dance is in fact a highly visible, codified, and privileged site in which these relations of power and identity may be studied (Desmond 2001: 4).

Traces of ape and human, bird and amoeba emerge through their bare moving skin.

But abruptly – these bodies stand erect, look out, return their audience's gaze – they walk,

perfunctorily, to retrieve offstage the costume of their next role, as if once more the dancer; as if the creature once so tangible never existed.

Figure 15 and 16: Garden III; Bonnie and Clyde IV. Photos: Chris Randle*; Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino*; Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

Dance, as perhaps the "most highly complex and codified of kinaesthetic practices" (Desmond 2001: 7), is not the easy metaphor of limitless possibilities Derrida wished it to be. As a site of disciplinary power, dance has a long and fraught history in both sculpting bodies and subjectivities according to disciplinary discourses and performing those embodiments for public reinforcement. Akin to the work by feminist scholars on the regulation of the gendered body discussed in chapter one, dance theorists have examined in detail the impact of these selfsame gender discourses on the world of dance, and how dance in turn has sustained these discourses about 'male' and 'female,' 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual,' 'masculine' and 'feminine,' as well as other markers of identity such as race and ethnicity.[39] "How one moves,"

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[39] While this article focuses on the maintenance and disruption of gender dynamics in dance, other scholarship has studied the equally fraught history of dance in the context of race and ethnicity. While this history is complex and vast, for further reading on the intersections of ballet and modern dance with race in North America in particular, see for example: Zita Allen, "Blacks and Ballet," *Dance Magazine* (1976): 65-70; Thomas DeFrantz, "Ballet," *Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History* (New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1995); Ramsay Burt, *Alien Bodies: Representations of Modernity, "Race," and Nation in Early Modern Dance* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Susan Manning, "Black Voices, White Bodies: The Performance of Race and Gender in How Long Brethren," *American Quarterly* 50.1 (March 1998): 24-46; Gerald E. Meyers, ed., *The Black Tradition in American Modern Dance* (Durham, N.C.: American Dance Festival, 1988); Thomas DeFrantz, *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002).

writes Jane Desmond, "and how one moves in relation to others, constitutes a public enactment of sexuality and gender" (Desmond 2001: 6). The history of western theatrical dance, then, carries through-lines of broader discourses of patriarchy and heteronormativity in its traditions, tropes and semiotics (Burt 1995: 2-8; Desmond 2001: 4).

Ballet has been most scrutinized for this, with its sharp bifurcation of male and female gestures, movements, energies. Prior to the eighteenth century, men and women performed the same steps with small stylistic differences; however, from the early nineteenth century and particularly from the mid-nineteenth century with the introduction of pointe shoes, female dancers came to embody fragility, delicacy, ethereality, and mystery, playing the role of fairy, queen, and swan, to be displayed, supported, and guided by male dancers who performed their desire for and conquest over them (Wolff 1997: 95; Foster 1998: 11-12; Turner 2008: 223). Male dancing in ballet, in comparison, came to be defined by grand leaps, multiple pirouettes, and expansive, powerful movements, able to look actively at his (ever female) partner, whom he "controls, displays, and [in whom he] forces changes" (Burt 1995: 56-7). Traditionally only playing a supporting role in the display of the female body, the male dancer all but disappeared from ballet from the 1830s until as recently as the 1980s, due, Ramsay Burt argues, to those very gender norms which take as given the dominant male heterosexual gaze, making the male dancing body a source of discomfort even among (ever male) dance critics (Burt 1995: 6). In sum, as in the arts of the time more generally, in ballet too often "men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at" (Berger 1972: 47).

The emergence of modern and contemporary dance was in fact a direct response to the restrictive gendered norms of ballet, and both forms have been the site and stage for ongoing debate about and experimentation with the limits of bodily expression and the politics entailed therein (Turner 2008: 220).[40] The emergence of modern and contemporary dance made space for strong female representations in terms of both narrative and kinetic vocabularies, as well as for a broader range of acceptable bodies; these practitioners sought to expand the range of creative expression and, as Janet Wolff observes, "liberate individual creative impulses from the stranglehold of societal norms and aesthetic values" (Wolff 1997: 95; Foster 1998: 5). While some classical modern dance repertoires borne of the 1960s bear the mark of second wave feminism by interpreting this project as a search for a "natural" body and style of movement, much contemporary dance since then has sought a body politics that, as Hannah Thomas also observes, is not grounded in an apolitical, essentialist notion of identity or physicality (Thomas 2003: 166).

He takes the opportunity of her distraction to step from the margins and fill the stage; he mimics her own sequence of gendered trappings – the hip jutted under hand, the flick of hair, a broad, hyperbolic photo-ready smile; the audience laughs in recognition.

Despite these developments, disciplinary mechanisms are apparent, unsurprisingly, throughout dance training, be it the traditional rigors of ballet – infamous for causing a disproportionate degree of body-image problems, eating disorders, and drug use – or the relatively 'freer' movement of contemporary dance. Dance ironically requires

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[40] Modern dance developed first in Germany and the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, spearheaded mostly by (white bourgeois) female choreographers and visionaries, whose styles and theories of movement still today largely define the terrain: Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Ruth St Denis, Doris Humphrey, Rudolph Laban, and Mary Wigman, and, later, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor and Alvin Ailey (Burt 1995: 3). Contemporary dance is a term used to describe the developments of the 1960s and 70s in Europe, although both terms are now often used interchangeably to describe particularly expressive, interpretive dance.

a grueling training regimen in order to achieve its seeming effortlessness (Turner 2008: 226). Each style of theatrical dance has its own highly precise vocabulary and quality of movement, and requires the dancer to train for hours a day to master their own body's tendencies until such techniques are as close as instinct, radically reshaping those bodies in the process. Within contemporary dance styles alone, for example, Duncan's technique produces "graceful, grounded litheness" while Graham's engenders a "sinewy, tensile, dynamic body" and Cunningham's produces "a lanky, intelligent, alert body" (Wolff 1995: 252).

Moreover, as Ann Cooper Albright observes, "physical practice has psychic consequences." Every movement repertoire also carries with it a particular philosophy, communicated by dance instructors and choreographers through distinctive and often metaphorical language, and transmitted through such rigors of physical training to "dramatically affect a dancer's own subjectivity" (Dempster 1988: 50; Thomas 1996: 82; Albright 1997: 32). Often working with an ideal model, set in a learning environment of mirrors and contending bodies, using the repetition of drilling, and paying attention to the slightest angle of the heel, level of the hip, or line of the eye, dance training works to at once shape bodies and subjectivities (Foster 1997: 238-40). And how bodies are trained to move in space, and to move in relation to one another – "who has access to touching whose body where, who supports the weight of another body, who accommodates" (Goldberg 1997: 305) – as well as how that forges understandings of one's limits, capacities, and desires, makes the dancing body simultaneously "both crafted and crafting", "produc[ing] and produced by their own dancing" (Albright 1997: 3; Butler 2002: 225).

And yet, dance is as much a creative as a disciplined practice. As we have seen with somaesthetic practices described in chapter one, discipline is not coterminous with agency, but is in fact the source of and prerequisite for it. So too with dance training, which is also a crafting of the self for creative purposes. Capacity, however, is not synonymous with agency, as Foucault and others have made clear: one may become the more efficient worker, the more socially successful citizen, or the more flexible or agile dancer, without experiencing profound agency as such. However, as with other disciplines, dance training increases certain capacities that might be used critically for more democratic practices. To this end, theatrical dance is by no means destined, but does possess distinctively powerful means; and, one might argue, as a public site of the conscious negotiation of embodied meanings, it is a site well-suited to such practices. Indeed, several characteristics inherent to dance creation and performance bear a striking resemblance to those that distinguish democratic 'practices of freedom.'

Within this analysis of dance, I hope to have shown that dance is certainly a site of politics, where meaning, identity and relation are continually shaped and creatively reworked. With this theoretical frame in place, I now turn to Co. Erasga's 2009 production of *AdamEve/ManWoman* to illustrate how each of the four characteristics of practices of freedom become embodied in motion, and, in turn, how they foster creative and critical forms of democratic engagement with identity/difference.

> *[Dance] sits so closely to who you are... and that comes, if you allow it, to be in the process... whether in rehearsal or performance you are affected internally...When you're in performance ...you have that recognition that you are a human form, and that human form has fragility and sensitivity...And vice versa – that you can allow yourself to get lost in the aspect of performance ...that you can be somebody else beyond your human experience. (Tolentino)*

The Dancers' Experience: Negotiating Multiple Disciplines

As we have seen, dance is an activity concerned with the *negotiation of multiple disciplines*. Even where dancers remain within a single style of dance, they experience in a conscious way the training and un-training of the body as pedestrian and artistic disciplines collide and intersect. Dancers discover the hidden tendencies and small oversights of the body through these negotiations: a propensity to hold tension in one's neck or shoulders; unconscious rhythms of breathing and their effects on strength and grace; whether one is centred or balanced from one day to the next. Moreover, in consciously working on the body within multiple aesthetic contexts of different choreographers or genres, dancers navigate,

> the diversity of influences that reign in their bodies...each of which, at any given moment, claims the status of a singularizing universal...Among the resources that dancers develop in the course of their study is the deftness to negotiate this contradiction.   (Martin 1998b: 171)

By moving within and between various dance disciplines, dancers develop a form of agency in practice that poststructuralists discuss in theory: a fluency with multiple discourses that loosens the hold of any one, and the ability to develop the means to mediate competing demands on the body, "*a technique for regulating techniques*" (Martin 1998b: 175, emphasis added). It is this fluency with various disciplines, moreover, that enables a dancer to dance full out; they learn these techniques, no one claiming full mastery, in order to forget them; to move with full range and possibility in the direction of their aim. This would be identical, perhaps, to learning normalizing practices of gender in order to experience them as authentic expression – except for the fact that dancers do this intentionally and continually within multiple contexts as an explicitly artful endeavour.

AdamEve was explicitly engaged in creatively negotiating multiple disciplines of the body, among them the everyday discourses of gender and Tolentino's specific choreographic vocabulary, method, and intellectual frame, as well as those other restless multitudes within each of the dancers' bodies. Indeed, the piece has been called "behavioural," incorporating everyday gestures in an intentional manner and sourced largely from the movements that surfaced from a year-long inquiry into the dancers' specific physicalities. We will see that, like practices of freedom more generally, it is through the play of contrasts between contending disciplines that critical and creative agency was achieved for both dancers and audiences alike.

The dancers described the creative process as one of 'undisciplining,' precisely due to such contrast, contention, and rupture entailed in colliding embodied disciplines. The most dramatic example of unlearning conditioned patterns and experimenting with the range of possible movement was the project's extended explorations with 20-30' long strips of plastic for "Garden," which Tolentino recalls involved "untraining" highly skilled professional dancers and "trying to move in a more...simple, grotesque, natural way...we're talking about discipline and technique, and reversing that." Denham, having worked with Tolentino before, finds this manner of "unlearning" a distinct challenge in his work, which requires dancers shed their assumptions that they already "know" it. Here we see the collision of previous and present disciplines, as well as the capacity to learn this new and altogether foreign movement vocabulary via that very fluency with technique, training and discipline. Both dancers commented on the surprise and enjoyment of witnessing the other move in unfamiliar ways through this process, despite their intimacy of a years-long relationship.

More generally, this embodied negotiation of gender and dance vocabularies allowed each dancer to discover new aspects of memory and self-understanding that had otherwise remained latent: for example, both dancers commented that while delving into teenage recollections they unearthed physical movements and experiences of their bodies that they had forgotten, "the subconscious mind now come to life," and pulsing in the present; and inversely, forgotten childhood memories resurfaced while moving. Such heightened awareness and 'undisciplining' through the play of contrasts was gradually written into their bodies: Denham recounts that "being allowed to just be completely animal or beastlike, really ugly and with no inhibitions, [was] something that over time has been built into our bodies so it comes really naturally." Marchenski, too, found that this once-foreign style has "really been integrated into the quality of [their] movement."

Moreover, such discoveries also spilled back into the everyday in the form of a critical awareness of the contingency of menial practices, no doubt already highly refined from extensive dance experience but heightened due to this project's extensive questioning of quotidian movement: Marchenski, for example, shared the revelation from recent dance convergences that,

> improvisation can be anything...like our conversation right now, the way that we're moving our hands or heads, or the way that we're sitting...why aren't we standing...or why aren't we lying down?...You're making decisions but you're not consciously making [them]…Because of that kind of awareness you're then able to maybe guide them or alter them.

This heightened fluency with multiple contending disciplines within the body certainly lies at the heart of the capacity for critique, discovery, and expansion of the range of perceived possibilities for thought and action, both in the creative process and off the stage. But it is also what enables dance to serve as a 'practice of freedom' within

the performance itself. As we saw with somaesthetic practices, the dancers' fluency with various disciplines, their ability to trust their rigorous training and internalization of the movement, provided the means through which moments of the performance could be experienced as surrender. Moreover, discipline is required to keep these moments, which feel, as Marchenski stated, "*delicious*," from overwhelming the momentum of the piece: "there is a constant tension between...the *plan* and what you're feeling in the *moment*"; "the fun of performance is riding those two things, being as precise as possible and out of control as possible." Both dancers shared that it was this discipline of the mind in performance that was perhaps the most challenging, whether it be from the distraction of outside thoughts, the risk of thinking merely technically rather than of the worlds one is creating, the tendency to move automatically in an overly familiar movement, or this risk of succumbing to the moment. The threat of experiencing performance as so much technique is particularly relevant to this investigation of agency and its relationship to novelty; unlike the fervent and at times uncritical search for the novel demonstrated by certain poststructuralist theorists, both dancers spoke of needing to rediscover the known, to approach each performance "like it's a new thing every time," a source of continual curiosity, rather than "discipline yourself out of creativity." In these ways, then, a performer's mobility between disciplines is at once the source and nature of agency – their ability to think and move beyond either the merely technical or the hold of any one discipline.

Performance as Critical Engagement

This reflexive engagement with multiple contending disciplines of the body revealed contrasts, critical distance, and spaces for intervention not only for the dancers,

but for audiences as well. In fact, it is here that we see all four dimensions of 'practices of freedom' within this piece, enacted through specific aesthetic and embodied strategies. This work, as with Tolentino's understanding of his work more generally, was created to provide "little glimpses into our culture,"

> to reveal this little pocket of freedom and possibility...to present a sense of person and place that we're so obsessed about as human beings and not even aware of it... to question those things, to depict those things.

With this goal in mind, this project used the capacity of dance to open up spaces for critical engagement and intervention via, first, creating *perspicuous contrasts*, whether between bodies, common expectations or norms, or within the same body over time and context; second, highly connected with the first, by the act of *explicitly making and unmaking identities*; and lastly, by dramatically rendering the *limits of both the body and knowledge* within the very act of representation itself.

The Play of Contrasts

In the first instance, *the play of contrasts* and the awareness of contingency and possibility it facilitates can be seen in the piece's conscious juxtaposition of the two dancing bodies, and the polyphony this generates. Tolentino designed the piece this way to provoke questions regarding gender: "I have two bodies, two same movements, two same qualities...Could they question the essence of gender?...can you separate gender through movement?" These specific bodies have different histories written within them, and Tolentino's choreographic choices, such as the use of identical movements or costume, draw attention to these differences in the range of flexibility of hips, the density of a back versus the narrowness of a waist, differences in musculature and movement that bear the marks of diet, labour and habit, and self-perception, even the influence of social

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norms and values, in these at once specific and archetypal bodies. Moreover, each brings

to the movement different rhythms and qualities; Denham's motions tend to be more

driven and direct in contrast to Marchenski's languorous, gently tentative ones. Such

comparisons might reinforce prevailing understandings of gender difference, and this

piece's choice to use bodies that remain archetypal of a binaric, heteronormative

conception of gender certainly runs this risk. Moreover, the viewer's reading of these

differences within identical movements, as with the baring of both dancers' chests in

"Bonnie and Clyde," are themselves steeped in asymmetrical gender codes, compounding

this risk of reinforcing what it seeks to disrupt. However, the very specificity of these two

bodies and styles of movement guards against sweeping generalizations, especially as

their styles of movement do not adhere so easily to gender norms, and thus might provide productive critical contrasts to those very discourses.

Figure 17: Bonnie and Clyde V. Photo: Chris Randle*;* Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino*;* Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

This critical dimension of contrast between these specific bodies is most clearly

seen where different sequences are enacted simultaneously. The contrast of the dancers'

simultaneous enactment of gender codes in "Bonnie and Clyde" in fact effectively draws

attention to their artifice; two bodies, perhaps believable if in context and in isolation, act

at once to undermine these codes precisely due to their decontextualized coexistence on

stage. This strategy is repeated in "Self and Selfless," where each dancer, side by side but

utterly separate and out of synch with the other, shifts frenetically between physical

sequences representative of different ages; like "Bonnie and Clyde," these sequences

appear, when performed simultaneously, to be stripped of context and narrative, and share in common a quality of desperate striving more than any particular identity. Belief in the authenticity of any one phrase, hence of any one representation of phases of gendered identity, proves more and more difficult for the viewer as each character unravels side by side.

As well as through the relation of specific bodies, this play of contrasts is achieved through the disruption of social norms and expectations through their clash with choreographic choices; in "Garden," for instance, the dancers unapologetically expose the most intimate parts of the naked body – an exposure somewhat familiar within contemporary dance, if not society more broadly – in ways that conflict (at times shockingly) with codes of propriety within dance or everyday tradition, and make visible through such contrast those very codes and the viewer's familiarity with them. Likewise, the piece's movement vocabulary defies prevailing codes of the palatable naked form, with its loud slap of bellies and the smell of skin, birdlike shuffling feet and fumbling intimacies akin to apes picking nits. There is, certainly, a history of gender written on these bodies, even before they are 'gendered' in the dance narrative; but their animal-like movements that defy dominant gendered codes of displaying the naked body make them harder to digest in such terms, somehow – beg the transformation of such terms to make sense of the specific moving bodies one observes.

Figure 18: The Garden IV. Photo: Chris Randle. Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino. Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

By contrast, "Bonnie and Clyde" consistently

seems to provide a sense of relief to its audiences, with its clear interpretive grappling points of identifiable gender tropes: Denham's pink dress and gold high heels, Marchenski's blue chequered shirt and BB-gun; a whole assemblage of verbal and physical signs for distinct gender identities. But the very way it presents these tropes – with exaggeration, with stutters and breakdowns in repetition, with explicit 'trying on' and taking off – those tropes and the identities moving within and among them are treated as "not as precious somehow" (Denham). Here, as Briginshaw also observes in dance more broadly, the transformation of the quotidian works to reveal how everything is, in fact, performance (Briginshaw 1996: 127).

For example, the dancers both 'discover' their gendered props: Denham puts on, then takes off her shoe, sniffing it as she explores what it might mean, while Marchenski flexes and feels his newly discovered muscles with the eager and self-conscious zeal of a young boy; Denham removes her dress, only to quickly put it back on again. Similarly, these tropes slide off: during one of Denham's poses on the podium, she leans back so far that she 'snaps' back up; elsewhere, she knocks herself off balance by the flick of her own hair, in both moments as if running the experiment to its illogical conclusion. The

repetition of these gestures, even without these extreme moments of 'break,' defamiliarizes these familiar, and so naturalized, everyday practices: sequences of gendered behaviour speed up until they are disengaged from self-expression altogether and are repeated as if due to the body's habituation – mere technique – alone.

Figure 19: Bonnie and Clyde VI. Photo: Chris Randle; Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino; Dancer: Alison Denham.

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Likewise, these sequences of gendered behaviours are repeated by the dancers as they transform into childlike versions of themselves, creating a sharp contrast between gender tropes per se and their interpretation and embodiment by fervently striving teenagers; the adult body, once "neutral," now runs up against its younger version in the same body to reveal both as highly constructed. This is the section that ushers the most laughter from audiences, a laughter of recognition and surprise, of "fulfilling or going against their expectations" about gender that the audience reads onto the piece (Marchenski).

Explicit Artfulness: Making and Unmaking Identities

This touches upon the second strategy of *explicitly 'making and unmaking'* identities and meanings on stage. Like 'practices of freedom,' dance performance is a *reflexive practice of artful crafting* with a degree of attention and analysis rarely found in quotidian practices; it is an art form where "reflection and embodiment meet" (Martin 1998b: 1), a practice defined by "distantiation," the very quality Lois McNay finds synonymous with agency (McNay 2000: 61); a holding up at different angles of what exists, an exploration of what might possibly be. Moreover, dance performance places such reflections – as, in the words of choreographer Alvin Tolentino, "magnified thoughts" – in front of its audiences for their own contemplation in the public sphere. As such, it can

> provide a liminal space, a space in-between where the immediate material consequences of non-normative sexuality…are held in abeyance. In these safe spaces varieties of sexuality and desire can be symbolically rendered through the play of the imagination combined with the articulation of the body.
> (Desmond 2001: 21)

It is a space where the excess of the breathing, moving body is rendered visible, indeed displayed, as it negotiates with processes of meaning-making. Moreover, *unfolding live performances of making and unmaking* in which the living body, by repetition that is never wholly identical to either itself or others, inevitably present a wrestling and ongoing interpretation. This strain between the specific and discursive body is made apparent in all forms of dance, as much as it works tirelessly to create the illusion of seamless rendering. However, when this capacity is used critically, it provides rich ground for turning dance into "a provocation" that can make use of the abundant excess of living bodies to "foreground the problem of authority in a manner that makes the latter available to contestation," to push against and past the boundaries of naturalized bodily codes (Martin 1998b: 159; Dupuy 2003:15; Franko, 2007: 14). This public staging of embodied negotiation can highlight the intersections between personal and social realities, and the tensions, inconsistencies and disconnections between them; make explicit how identities are performed, and can be performed otherwise; and demonstrate before one's eyes how these are more fragile and dynamic than they first appear (Albright 1997: 4; Foster 1998: 14-15; Martin 1998b: 159; Briginshaw 2001: 15).

This artfulness was made explicit within *AdamEve* by overtly staging the process of making and unmaking of identities. The transitions between sections are particularly revealing in this way; bodies that moments before were creature-like, alien, more species-body than human, at the end of "Garden" suddenly walk perfunctorily, purposefully, oh so humanly, off-stage, re-entering half-dressed and still dressing, the music from "Garden" spilling over as they find their places just in time for the sudden broadway stage lights. Similarly, as "Bonnie and Clyde" ends, the dancers begin the gentle process

of helping the other undress, before retrieving new shirts and settling into their next role. There is a critical power in watching these selfsame bodies change, not only explicitly in this way during transitions, but more generally from state to state in each chapter of the piece, embodying such a range of behaviour and quality of movement that inevitably ruptures the authority of any one.

Within each section, too, there is a clear resignification of bodily meaning through change and contrast over time. "Support" is almost wholly structured around the premise of the routine within relationship, a different quality brought to the same choreographic phrase in its three iterations as if, Tolentino describes, a "different day, different attitudes, but the same person." Here we see the clear making and unmaking and change over time of the selfsame gestures and sequences; that nothing is the same twice, and that everything is open to influence and reconstruction. Likewise in "Self and Selfless," which highlights a conscious, sustained interplay between phases of youth, maturity, old age, and death. This weaving and darting

Figure 20 and 21: Support I and II. Photos: Chris Randle; Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino; Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

between phrases of each 'age' until a state of surrender is reached is performed without clear chronology and consequently teleology, making visible the through-line of striving that threads through human life, as well as the way identities are layered and moving.

The making and unmaking of identities was also made explicit through shifts between different styles of movement even within the same 'age' the dancers embody.

"Bonnie and Clyde" shifts abruptly, separated only by fleeting blackout, between the obvious 'performance' of hyperbolic gender extremes and serene, intimate tableaus filled

Figure 22: Bonnie and Clyde VII (Litany). Photo: Chris Randle; Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino; Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

with the trickling sound of the dancers' private conversation at the back of the stage. This, in turn, switches suddenly to what is known as "Litany," where the dancers pick up their props without narrative context and begin to directly address the audience with a list of words

and gestures associated with both the material trappings and characteristics of their respective genders. Moreover, these words are then repeated with playful accompanying gestures, progressively sped up and enlarged as if they are only part of a game, the gendered words rendered ultimately insignificant. All of these abrupt shifts make impossible a suspension of disbelief, and a critical awareness of the contingency of each frame.

These shifts and changes over time, moreover, are not merely linear; the four sections contain elements of the others, creating a prismatic effect of weaving and dynamic echo: this interweaving occurs repeatedly, but two striking examples can help illustrate this: first, the experience between the dancers of the scent of the other appears in both "Garden" and "Support," a parallel encounter given different meaning in different contexts; likewise, there is a

Figure 23: Self and Selfless I. Photo: Chris Randle; Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino; Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

moment as "Support" transitions to "Self and Selfless" when the dancers are caught

beneath the taut screen of their shirts, faceless for a moment, that is an echo of the

genderless quality of "Garden", again as if Tolentino "wanted to get back there, but not in

the exact same way...having gone through all this stuff and shed all this stuff" (Tolentino

2010). These internal references show both the continuity of identity created through

memory as well as the layered, complex and always changing nature of that identity in

process: any one contains multitudes, enfolds the complexity of many others, so that the

result is a sense of rhizomatic multiplicity rather than progressive narrative.

Representing the Limits of Representation

       This second example touches upon a further artistic strategy within the piece that

contributes to its explicit artfulness: the explicit gesture to

the *limits of representation* even as it represents. This is

captured in the moment in "Self and Selfless" where the

dancers' shirts are suspended over their faces as they try to

remove them, rendering them without identity, without

specificity, both unseeing and unseen. This theme of limits

also appears later in this section, as the increasingly

desperate striving of each dancer's body gives way to its

Figure 24: Self and Selfless I. Photo:
Chris Randle; Choreographer: Alvin
Tolentino; Dancers: Alison Denham
and Billy Marchenski.

unraveling, and convulses with a hysterical laughter that

these bodies – shuddering, jarred, shaking – seem unable to contain or express fully. This

is juxtaposed with the quiet discovery of the body that follows, ending with a clear echo

of the end of "Garden" as they 'discover' the audience by walking downstage, here

examining, gently, as they walk backwards, this leg, this hip, this knee, this eye, until, in

faded light from the back of the stage, they suddenly run to take their places on their

podiums, facing their audience, strong and still, to blackout. In the context of what has

come before, this declaration is as much about what is left out as what stands accounted

for; the limits as well as the possibilities for understanding and expression are etched out
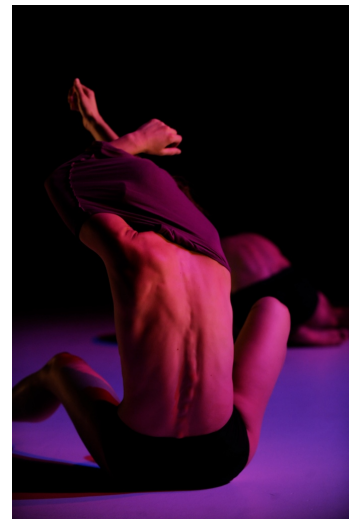
in the dark they leave behind.

Figure 25 and 26: Self and Selfless III and IV. Photos: Chris Randle; Choreographer: Alvin Tolentino; Dancers: Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski.

Dance as Non-Teleological Inquiry

Finally, as these strategies make clear, like 'practices of freedom' dance as an

artistic enterprise makes *no claims of the universality or necessity of its discoveries*; it

does not, in fact, ever claim to have reached an 'end.' Granted, there are ideals which

dancers and choreographers seek to embody, which harbour the potential for the

restrictive effects of other normalizing practices. But within dance performance, through

its non-verbal explorations of meaning, dance is often more of an exploration than

declaration, meditations on a theme rather than any claim of a definitive answer. Its

dynamics are conducive – almost require – this kind of representation, especially when

stripped of Ariadne's threads of narrative plot: communicating through the kinetic, visual,

acoustic and aesthetic, and in the absence of definitive semiotic codes, dance

choreography moves in and out of meaning for audiences in such a way that the

interpretive nature of its reception by differently situated observers is explicit. Moreover, these signifiers move, shift, change shape; meanings change in a moment, mean many things at once, in other moments seem to mean nothing specific at all.

Dance's ephemerality contributes to the sense of it being non-teleological process rather than product: what is wholly tangible immediately dissolves, appearance and disappearance a hair's breadth from one another, such that nothing can be fixed. Its meanings are, without exception, in motion. It cajoles the viewer to not dwell on any one thought too long; to not take any one position as the final resting place; it leads the viewer along prismatic, rhizomatic trajectories, jutting back and forth, transforming one into another. Contemporary dance in particular, which strays far from the established ground of aesthetic and narrative discourses, is largely defined in these terms: the open-ended exploration of physical and conceptual possibilities, finding ways to defamiliarize the body and expand the perceived and manifest range of its possibilities in space. It seeks to find new pathways for movement, new points of focus and impetus, in an open-ended inquiry (Martin 1998b: 56).

Moreover, performance defies methods of documentation that might give it the illusion of stasis. Yet even when captured on film, merely one image of one enactment, the movement in and out of appearance and disappearance, excess and absence, represents meaning even as it elides any one grasp. This ephemerality, as well as the absence of the verbal generally and the lack of concrete narrative in contemporary dance specifically, make performance at once excess and absence: it renders visible even as it signifies what is left out; it communicates meaning that cannot be contained or possessed (Phelan 1996). This ephemerality works to chasten the need for final resting places; it

trains its viewers and creators to value what cannot be fixed: as Tolentino observed as a

result of a life's work in the field, "I've learned to accept [it] over the years...dance is so

there and then it's gone" (Tolentino).

This movement carries beyond a particular performance, as what is performed is

generally a pause in the ongoing process of creation and investigation. Many

choreographers, when asked, will tell you that the piece does not stop moving once it is

put on stage, the moment it reaches an audience often due to a decision rather than self-

evident conclusion. While many pieces become 'static' in the sense of being notated at

one stage to be replicated later, still the eye of different directors when materializing the

same piece – even the same director with different bodies, at a different time, or in a

different space – will recreate the piece anew. Dance defies transcription just as

movement defies exact repetition, and so dance is always in process.

The creative process of *AdamEve* was understood by the artists in such terms – as

an open inquiry into the range of physical and experiential possibilities. In the words of

the musical composer Jeff Corness to audiences during the Artist's Talk, it was more of

"a question and not an answer. When you have a question you can go crazy and have an

exploration. When you have an answer, you have one thing. They were *discovering* a lot

of things in the process of making the dance." Indeed, creating the piece was described as

a "consuming" process of continual risk, where claiming to have reached a final goal

would defeat its very purpose (Tolentino). Marchenski and Tolentino both compared such

artistic inquiry to science:

> It's dangerous to try to do anything too much; it's right to let go of what you
> thought at one point...to...have part of yourself that's exploring or questioning
> or some kind of curiosity, or something playful at least, so you might not know
> what it means but you're always exploring the question of what it could mean...

> Because [theatre] uses language so much I feel there's often this assumption that there is an answer, or it's all very tidy and neat...[But] a certain kind of answer... renders creativity lifeless ... If you can keep that [questioning] alive, but also have a sense you're following some idea or inclination...it's like science. (Marchenski)

The performance, too, was designed to be both a representation and provocation of such reflections, to move audiences to ask questions – "the more questions the better" (Tolentino, Artist's Talk 2009). Indeed, the themes of grasping at fixed ground through identity and habit, and the crisis and failure entailed therein, as well as the explicit demonstration of the body and identity as in continual process circulate throughout the piece. These ultimately enact a form of representation that is not one of clear progression, but rather meditative, multiple, and never ending; they create a piece which is evocative rather than decidedly referential. And, as Marchenski's comparison of dance and theatre makes clear, it is in fact the *absence of language* – the centrality of the body in this form of engagement – that chastens the drive for fixed or final answers and facilitates nuanced and creative inquiry. Here, perhaps even more than in theatre and certainly more than conventional democratic processes, the risks of declarative language to fix, name, possess, or claim exhaustive account, are tempered by the absence of language altogether.

Moreover, the ephemerality of performance meant the piece was experienced as processural rather than final, changing from night to night: "It's a constant conversation. And every time you deliver it, you deliver it at that time and it's vanishing at that time. It will never ever be repeated again" (Tolentino 2010). As we saw in the dancers' complex, moving balance between discipline and surrender, they, too, had to experience the piece each night as state rather than represent it as surface, as a project of continual curiosity, discovery, and ongoing creative act; to rediscover the 'known' as perpetually new. This processural dimension extends, for Tolentino, even beyond this particular piece: the 2009

performance "is the *beginning* of something," the "little collected materials that I feel are...[w]hat we can use at this time...those may change over time, and have already done so" (Tolentino, Artist's Talk). These changes are not interpreted in terms of teleology, but as a responsiveness borne of delving deeper and wider into the questions and productive blockages that both inspired and emerge from the work.

These artistic strategies generate for audiences a form of open-ended, highly interpretive and equally processural form of public engagement. To view the recorded version of the performance, one has to construct the dance with one's searching, composing gaze much as in performance, generating specific, situated and multiple perspectives even within engagement with a static artefact; however, this quality is exponentially true in live performance. The "aliveness" of performance contains a synergy between performers and audience – a meeting that the dancers can tangibly feel and to which they respond (Denham and Marchenski). The audience creates and completes the dance with their collective gaze within multiple frames of interpretation. I can tell you about what the choreographer, the dancers, and I see in the work, traces of meaning within one phrase or another, but these are by no means definitive; that said, they are also not merely arbitrary, but borne out of the specificity of the performance and one's own particular lens, that lens itself changing over the course of a single performance. In the artist's talk back, where people gathered and lingered as if hungry for the opportunity to continue to explore what the piece set in motion, audience responses both reflected many of the specific themes intended in the piece and yet varied in what they identified as most significant or the questions it provoked. Within all of these accounts, however, two notable patterns emerged: without exception, they all entailed a

sense of an unfolding, excited exploration rather than a final answer, and were framed in a way that acknowledged the specificity of their own interpretation, never claiming their insights would hold for others present. This open-endedness in dance is not experienced as undermining, as it is in certain conventional forms of democratic engagement; rather, these unpredictable directions for reflection and meaning are looked upon as the productive effects of a successful creation. Created with, and representing, an open question and its contingent and ever-transforming resting places, the piece is designed to provoke that same open curiosity for what else might be within the viewer. The spaciousness of such embodied and aesthetic engagement, a plurality of different, even contrasting perspectives may meet, intersect, and be simultaneously held; here differences, as Mohanty and Martin argue for democratic engagement more broadly, "converg[e] but are not conflated" (2003: 100).

All of these dimensions of dance, so expertly exercised within this piece, make it impossible to claim an authoritative interpretation; this processural quality in creative process, performance and reception stave off the temptation for "transcendental narcissism" (Connolly 1995: 103) or the urge to claim one's position is universal and must be imposed on others. It tempers the need to fix, name, and codify, and in its place offers a quality of perpetual questioning, experienced as productive pleasure rather than source of anxiety; it cultivates a greater fluency in the navigation of moving ground of identity and politics. The capacity to not only communicate but also engener a sense of contingency among its gathered publics – when both are often scarce in conventional political sites – seems a particularly significant effect it the context of democratic practices.

Conclusion

Even as this case appears at farthest remove from conventional democratic processes, these dimensions of dance creation and performance are strikingly similar to those that define democratic engagement of identity. Though dance, as a site where perceptions, relations and subjectivities are publicly formed and contested, is not inherently salutary, and may work towards anti-democratic as well as democratic ends, in instances such as *AdamEve* it is a practice defined by the *navigation of multiple disciplines* by *actual bodies,* in a process of *non-teleological* and *explicit artistic creation*. It is not merely that dance quite literally embodies these characteristics of 'practices of freedom,' but that dance's intimate knowledge and use of these dimensions makes it particularly suited to serve as a site of democratic engagement. Here, publicly performed embodied practices work to expose, disrupt and investigate prevailing norms and relations, and creatively explore alternatives. In the process, they highlight for dancers and audiences alike the inability of any one discipline to fully capture the concrete body, and the agency therein to intervene in and transform the social body at the level of micro-practices. Moreover, they do so in ways that encourage knowledge-claims that acknowledge their own contingency, as well as open-ended critique that enables rather than forecloses the capacity of others to do so in their own terms. As a result, these publicly-staged negotiations of identity and relation may be seen to contribute to the democratic project of pluralisation, by exposing and politicizing present forms of exclusion, cultivating a sense of both one's capacity to act and limits of understanding, and broadening the perceived range for thought, action and relation.

This chapter has pushed the bounds of democratic engagement by investigating the critical agency and communicative capacity of the performing arts, in the absence of both language and narrative – the two characteristics that held previous cases in proximity to conventional democratic forums. In moving engagement further away from speech and linear discourse and into the body, the evocative nature of artistic representation was in effect the very means through which such modes of engagement could enact and foster a care for the contingency, partiality, processural and complex nature of identity/difference. What the *AdamEve* case makes clear in various ways was that even in the absence of language or narrative – and, indeed, because of it – artistic practices such as contemporary dance can facilitate observation, reflection, critique and experimentation with the prevailing terms of the 'possible'; it can open us to the 'unsettling' of the pictures that hold us captive, and provide the critical and creative means to engage the noise of difference this brings into view; and in the process, such non-verbal and embodied practices can work as alternative sites of democratic engagement.

This piece then, and dance more generally, is a political enactment as well as a representation: from the critical and creative exploration of gender identities by choreographer and dancers, to the dancer's experience onstage of an unfolding state rather than representation of surface, to the catalyzation of reflection and transformation in its audiences, this piece exercises in the concrete terms of living, breathing bodies the nature of agency so often discussed only in theory. In doing so, it demonstrates particular resources for democratic practices that strive to enact a care for difference, and provides a richer understanding of the interrelation of structure and agency, discipline and freedom,

and the role of the body and imagination in democratic projects. A study of democratic engagement cannot, as dance theorist Randy Martin says, "be confined to speech about speech" (Martin 1998b: 218); it cannot shy away from the fraught challenge of discovering and evaluating substantive tactics of actual bodies in space. As a site of nuanced understanding of the body and what it can do, as a context defined by the reflexive and open-ended exploration of possibilities for thought, action and relation, dance in practice and theory has a meaningful contribution to make to political theories of power, agency, and democratic politics. While theorists across disciplines of poststructuralism, feminist studies, and democratic theory are raising a joint call for embodied approaches to democratic engagement, dance artists are well into the project; and they are so precisely because they engage the body as more than supporting role or illustrative metaphor – as a site and source of creative, critical inquiry and communication in its own right – as truly central to politics.

Thus far we have largely focused on the generative role artistic modalities can play in democratic engagement with difference. And yet, while possessing certain critical and largely overlooked capacities that enable such engagement, artistic modes also have risks and limits in their representation of difference, like any discourse. Certainly, if we acknowledge the arts are powerful, we are also acknowledging that they may be dangerous. The next chapter will draw from specific aspects of some of these cases as well as the broader scholarship to examine some of the core issues that emerge when 'art' meets 'politics.'

> *"If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."*
> *– Emma Goldman*

Chapter Seven
Challenges, Risks and Limits of Politically-Engaged Performative Practices

Introduction

We have seen in preceding chapters that aesthetic modalities provide the conditions for radically democratic engagement with identity/difference – that the very 'unruliness' of performative modes that lies behind a traditional academic and political reticence in the west to take up artistic practices as politics has been the very means through which these practices could effectively engage difference with both a *care for difference* and the *receptive generosity* such attentiveness requires. However, within each of these cases are gestures to a more problematic terrain – for artistic performance, as any mode of discourse and civic engagement, is not inherently or necessarily salutary and can be used, as Marcia Eaton also observes, to "oppress as well as liberate…destroy as well as build…broaden perspectives but…also narrow them" (Briscoe 1997: 5; Eaton 2002: 259). Such practices must therefore be interrogated for how and when they effectively enact a democratic politics, and the challenges, risks and limits they present when they are taken up for such projects.

Some of these issues are *internal* or concern what takes place within artistic modes and practices. Here we see both the working of power dynamics that pervade society more generally, as well as further risks and challenges that the distinctive mode of aesthetic engagement introduces – where its very strengths as democratic praxis are also, in certain conditions, its weaknesses. Some of these issues are *external* to arts practices; that is to say, they emerge at the interstices of art and politics, where art engages and is taken up within the broader cultural and political landscape. Tellingly, these issues are often due to persistence of more declarative or positivist discourses in contemporary

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politics and culture, as they collide with the 'unruly' modes of identity/difference politics

present in artistic forms of engagement. This chapter will contend with some of the key

dilemmas within politically-engaged arts praxis, and indicate possible directions for their

practical and theoretical negotiation.

Internal Challenges: The Problematics of Artistic Engagement

      The risks and dangers that are possible within artistic performance at times mirror

those in society more broadly, particularly the replication and reinforcement of hierarchies,

exclusions and restrictive identities and roles. But by the nature of art's 'unruliness,' it also

opens itself up to further issues – the open-endedness of its meanings and thus greater

possibilities for misinterpretation and difficulties in mobilization and decision-making; its

affective dimensions which can lead to overexposure and potential (re)traumatisation; and

the tension between aesthetic and political agendas, which while intersecting are never

wholly identical or compatible. The next sections will explore these distinct political and

ethical challenges within artistic modes of democratic engagement, and though full address

of these issues is beyond the scope of this dissertation, in each case I will examine the

normative and practical dimensions of such challenges, and provide recommendations for

future research and practice.

<u>Representation, Decision-Making, and Institutionalization</u>

      First, while ephemerality and polyphony are the source of art's capacity to engage

identity/difference in ways that a politics of difference demands, this also makes decision-

making and representation beyond the event particularly challenging. This thesis has

attempted to show that this very 'unruliness' actually provides the means to create

affiliation and coalition *through* rather than in spite of difference, in the terms that identity/difference require and that prove most challenging to conventional political forums. In this light, Nussbaum's famous critique of poststructuralist and postmodern theory – that its notion of identity as fragmentary makes a cohesive position and thus political action and mobilization impossible – stands on somewhat shaky ground. In fact, we have seen in the case of South African protest theatre and experimentations with gender identity within contemporary dance that it is precisely *because* it is multiple and moving that such aesthetic practices can undermine the authority of unitary discourses and the political relations they maintain. And we have seen, in both South Africa and the Headlines project in Vancouver, that it is due to art's evocative nature that one can identify with a given project despite profound diversity of experience and position. Here is offered a radically different form of coalition and community – one that meets the terms of Mohanty and Martin's 'speakings' or Laclau and Mouffe's 'horizons,' one whose multiple points affiliation and differentiation make it flexible enough to both allow people to "converg[e] but…not [be] conflated," as well as respond to changing circumstances and demands (Felski 1997: 12; Mohanty and Martin 2003: 100).

Nonetheless, it is still a challenge within such "non-identical kinship[s]" to develop and sustain a position and public that does not limit political efficacy to the mere assertion of its capacity to gather or, as artist Sharon Fernandez observes in arts practices, diffuse focused dialogue through its very plurality (Martin 1998a: 47; Brah 2000: 273; Fernandez, in Gagnon and Fung 2002: 74). This is, of course, a challenge for coalitions formed within the terms of a politics of difference more generally, and it is beyond the capacity of this dissertation to resolve the issue. However, it *is* apparent within these cases that such

coalitions and positions are possible; moreover, as difficult as they are to achieve, it is also clear that such non-identical forms of solidarity are what democracy requires of us.

And yet, in light of its ambiguity, ephemerality and ineffability in conventional terms of representation and action, the ability to represent *what happens* within such performative forms of engagement remains particularly challenging. The very nature of performance is such that any representation – be it video, verbal or written account – is no longer performance, but a distinct artefact. Moreover, what it seeks to represent lacks the clear language of declarative discourses that, while simplifying the complexity and movement of identity, enable more decisive communication and representation through direct signifiers. This was made clear in the case of *after homelessness…*, where recommendations offered by experts during Community Dialogues were more easily incorporated into the final report due to the ease with which they could be transcribed. In contrast, the synesthesic and evocative nature of the aesthetic is far more difficult to communicate.

This issue is beyond the bounds of this thesis to resolve; despite our best efforts, performance will always surpass and defy efforts of representation beyond the event. And yet, this very quandary may shed light on the limits of representation within activities writ more broadly that are defined by what Randy Martin calls "the passage through the present" (1998a: 36). Performance presents us with an extreme case where the complexity of meaning and the evocative and multivalent nature of communication are most apparent – dimensions of meaning-making that, however restrictive a discourse, are always present in public engagement. While yet a young field, the study of the politics of performative practices may illuminate how identity/difference is pre-emptively simplified within more

declarative modes, and how these modes might be modified to better capture the complexity and inexhaustibility of identity/difference. Such projects would form the beginnings of an answer to this shared issue of representation for both performance and identity/difference politics.

And yet, given this multivalence, art's capacity for decision-making and institutionalization still remain in question. We have seen performance function as a site of deliberation in the case of *after homelessness…*, where theories were rigorously tested and specific political action and policy generated. And yet, even within this process the plurality of recommendations overwhelmed the Community Scribe; though these recommendations were their own instance of solutions or decisions facilitated by the process, the process opened up far more than it could pin down. Perhaps there are ways of adapting aesthetic processes such as these to this particular task of decision-making; the profound depth with which the workshop phase was able to explore particular issues gestures to such possibility, for proposed solutions might be brought back into prolonged embodied and creative exploration to be weighed against one another for resonance, potential impact, and relative significance. But more likely or perhaps more easily, conventional political practices might be of use here, such as Boal's own deliberative assembly where various proposals are debated by the affected community following the performance phase. I would caution, however, that these should involve those who have experienced first-hand the embodied engagement of the performance or forum, so as not to lose the crucial contribution such theatrical processes give in experiential understanding of what is often verbally and abstractly debated.

Certainly, not all aesthetic practices – akin to the range of conventional democratic processes – are intended for decision-making, and there is significant political work within more open-ended praxis that is not undermined by its failure to resolve its own internal tensions. However, if aesthetic practices are to move, as Randy Martin urges, "beyond merely asserting a capacity as a public to mobilize productive energies" (Martin 1998a: 47) – to function as "strong" rather than "weak" publics, in Habermasian terms (Habermas 1996) – various strategies, both aesthetic and conventional, might be harnessed to find creative and appropriate ways to reach – however, fleeting, contingent, and ever-renewed – moments of position and consensus that politics requires.

<u>Affect, Reasoning and Accountability</u>

We have seen in chapter two that rhetoric plays a central role in meaning-making – that it is, in some ways, inseparable from communication altogether, such that the distinction between thought and feeling, as Richard Rorty argues, "begins to fade away" (Rorty 1997: 18). Moreover, we have seen that declarative discourse that claims a certain revered distance from rhetoric and the affective can in fact be the very source of misrepresentation and exclusion due to this erasure of its own performativity. And we have seen that aesthetic practices contain their own logic and are thus legitimate, if particular, forms of reason-giving: from embodied arguments regarding the performativity of gender and racialized identities, to theatrical demonstrations of the significance of 'soft outcomes,' to an accountability and reciprocity generated through affective means, so enabling more reasoned and receptive critical engagement.

However, though rhetoric may be impossible to disentangle from meaning, given the dissembling nature of affect which can circumvent cognitive thought, there still

remains the concern that this unruliness may be – has been – used for anti-democratic as well as democratic ends. This is certainly the concern of numerous deliberative theorists – many of whom, granted, still see rhetoric in a supplementary rather than constitutive role when they do acknowledge it has one to play, and so still maintain a distinction between reason and affect, and more or less stable and a priori norms of legitimacy and autonomy (Cohen 1997; Dahlberg 2005; Chambers 2009; Dryzek 2010). In the absence of such distinctions, Benhabib famously cautions that the

> attempt to transform the language of the rule of law into a more partial, affective, and situated mode of communication would have the consequence of inducing arbitrariness, for who can tell how far the power of a greeting can reach? It would further create capriciousness—what about those who simply cannot understand my story? It would limit rather than enhance social justice because rhetoric moves people and achieves results without having to render an account of the bases upon which it induces people to engage in certain courses of action rather than others.
>
> <div align="right">(1996: 83)</div>

While rhetoric may not be separable from reason and power cannot be bracketed from communication, and while the 'autonomy' of judgment may be a false distinction when we understand that we are persuaded to *feel* an argument's legitimacy just as an affective response *has its reasons*, this does raise a valid concern regarding the capacity for discernment within the dissembling, unruly conditions with which rhetoric and affect persuade us, even move us *in spite of ourselves*. Though we have seen it is precisely this dimension of 'dissembling' that allows habitual patterns of thought and action that prevent meaningful engagement with difference to be unsettled, the democratic or ethical nature of such dissembling is somewhat at the mercy of the intention of the speaker and the perceptual terrain that is so unsettled, the 'force' of such persuasion undermining the hallowed liberal value of free judgment. Again, when we acknowledge the extent to which our "space of reasons" (Forst 2010) is always-already affectively constituted, shaping, as

Ahmed's work on affective economies keenly demonstrates, our "orientations towards and away from others" in ways of which we are not always consciously aware (Ahmed 2004: 4), this concern appears on somewhat shaky ground – though the anxiety regarding correct judgment is no less valid. This anxiety regarding aesthetic-affective dimensions strikes me as part of a far broader debate regarding liberal demands for self-determination, the radical critique of its presumption of self-aware subjects, and the liberal rejoinder of who, then, decides what is best if not the individual – a theoretical tennis match for which there may be no resolution, and certainly beyond the capacity of this dissertation to resolve. But even with all of these caveats that undermine the distinction between rhetoric and reason, thought and feeling, manipulation and persuasion, the unruliness of aesthetic-affective modes contrasts starkly to the – all be they intersubjective and affectively and culturally informed – terms and norms of deliberative reasoning and decision-making.

Perhaps the only clear direction in light of this entanglement and irreconcilable tension between the "force of argument" and "rhetorical persuasion" is the demand to contextually interrogate specific democratic practices – as this thesis has sought to do – to determine the extent to which they enact the conditions of democratic engagement, rather than set terms and limits for rhetoric or affect a priori. Certainly, the politics of difference gesture to the inability to achieve the latter without also involving culturally specific and exclusionary practices (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Young 2000; Mohanty and Martin 2003). Here, the 'arbitrariness' of meaning that vexes Benhabib regarding aesthetic-affective practices is not arbitrary so much as contextually determined, thus extending the very notion of 'intersubjective reasoning' within deliberative models to take seriously the intersubjectivity of a site's 'concrete others' (Benhabib 1992b), and in the process even

enabling greater self-determination regarding terms and norms as liberal theorists seek to do. Here, the flexible and yet foundational norms of democratic engagement set out in chapter one – a care for the complexity of identity/difference, the limits of prevailing terms, and receptive generosity towards the persistent murmur and occasional shout of the difference that exceeds them – provide a normative framework in which accountability does not preclude contextual specificity, and the affective and rhetorical may be held to account rather than dismissed outright.

And yet, perhaps also with the recent and still-burgeoning surge of critical engagement with rhetoric, more nuanced, culturally sensitive and rigorous frameworks for evaluating the legitimacy and democratic efficacy of aesthetic-affective modes is also possible. Indeed, by taking seriously the interrelation of reason and rhetoric, meaning and processes of meaning-making, the very terms for 'reasonableness' might be refined and developed in generative ways even within more conventional deliberative processes and liberal paradigms.

Polyphony and Managing Meaning-Making

But Benhabib's cautionary tale also gestures to a further dimension of art's 'unruly' practices that must be considered; when artistic processes are polyphonous and their meanings open-ended, what is the obligation of the artist to, as Benhabib demands, "render an account" of intended meaning and the reasoning behind it? And by extension, do they have a responsibility in managing the effects of their performance? Benhabib may be misplaced in deeming that aesthetic practices give 'no account' – we have seen in this entire dissertation that art is by definition a mode of communication, and so gives an account, albeit by very different strategies – but performance may more accurately be

understood to generate rather than represent meaning. It is *transactive* rather than *communicative* in a declarative sense and, as Carol Becker observes, "however intently artists try to imagine and control the nature of that response [from various publics], they often cannot" (Becker 2002: 18). Though this is true for all modes of communication, this is certainly more of a concern within aesthetic modalities that work through evocative rather than declarative means.

Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *The Couple in the Cage* in the 1990s provides a telling illustration of such dilemmas. Placing themselves in a gold-gilded cage as cultural artefacts on display within museums and galleries of countries deeply implicated in the history of colonization and the display of indigenous peoples, the piece sought to parody and critique processes of producing, framing and fetishizing colonial otherness. And yet, while the parody was clear in numerous ways,[41] the majority of audiences perceived the spectacle as *authentic* rather than a critique of the very colonial discourses within which such notions of 'authenticity' have been constructed.[42] Rather than serve, as intended, as a "surprise or 'uncanny' encounter, one in which audiences had to undergo their own processes of reflection," the piece was met by audiences whom Fusco recalls "invariably revealed their familiarity with the scenario to which [the artists]

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[41] Beyond the absurdity of the act itself, performers were led on leashes into and out of the cage and overseen by "zoo guards" and an "expert" identified by an 'Ask Me' badge; their 'traditional' dress and rituals included lifting weights and performing a 'tribal dance' to rap music in sunglasses and Converse sneakers; and all the while within the cage scenes of black minstrelsy played on television, books about Columbus were 'read' upside down, and a list of key moments in the history of exhibiting indigenous peoples was on display beside the cage. For a dollar, audience members could have their picture taken with the natives, still safely behind bars. For five dollars, they could see the male's genitalia, always tucked between his legs in an emasculate triangle.

[42] More shocking perhaps is the nature of their responses: observers inquired as to the sexual habits of the "specimens," asked to stroke the male's body (with rubber gloves), complained that they were "too white" or the dance not "authentic" enough to be "really" primitive, tormented them with pop cans full of urine or by throwing acid, or paid extra to feed the 'savages' bananas through the bars. Those who expressed moral outrage usually did so paternistically, upset that the natives did not understand what was happening to them, or in one case calling an animal rights organization; however, it was noted that this outrage seemed to last no more than five minutes, while the majority did not show such discomfort at all (Fusco 2002).

alluded" (Fusco 2002: 268, 274). And when it became clear after the fact that, as one news reporter stated, "*they* have been studying *us*," public reaction was not one of receptivity, accountability and an upsurge of critical commentary regarding what the piece had revealed, but rather an attack of the performers as dissemblers immorally "duping" audiences, fraudulent imitators of a still-unshaken sense of an authentic "somewhere else" (Gunew 1994a: 5; Kelly 1999: 129-30; Fusco 2002: 267, 270).

Though the work exposed the extent to which, as Fusco states, "colonialist roles have been internalized" despite prevailing notions of enlightened multiculturalism, it ultimately reinforced the very discourses it sought to contest (Fusco 2002: 273). The very fact that this encounter worked through aesthetic-affective modes that caught observers off-guard and so allowed these latent beliefs often unspoken – even unconscious – within conventional democratic forums to surface also provided the conditions for perpetuating these beliefs despite it being a central intention to challenge them. Those who were aware of the performance's nature experienced the most transformation, be it the zoo guards who repeatedly broke down and had to be replaced due to the trauma of "cognitive dissonance" (Fusco 2002: 276) or the museums and galleries, where the piece served as a pretext for debate concerning the extent of possible self-criticism in exhibiting practices (Fusco 2002: 277). This gestures to the vast potential for receptive generosity, critique and transformation inherent in the piece, and the loss of such potential for its audiences.

What, then, is the responsibility of the artists in managing art's reception? A tension – I would venture irreconcilable, though negotiable – exists between the social responsibility of politically-engaged artists and the necessary 'irresponsibility' of artistic license as the precondition for self-determination and art's productive disruption of the

very terms of identity, politics and responsibility. In this case, the artists, despite outraged attacks from critics, artists, and "cultural bureaucrats" (Fusco 2002: 276) and the performance's overtly political message, are not required to didactically enlighten audiences as to a 'correct' reading. This performance already entailed countless cues as to its critique, and worked to effectively expose, subvert, and critique prevailing discourses and practices – if not for most of its immediate audiences, then certainly more broadly – to such an extent that we should ask nothing more of it. Indeed, Fusco asked whether white performers would be similarly deemed dissemblers in such a situation, given the tradition of native informant and, one could suppose, the shame and indignation their piece provoked by its exposure of the rampant, tacit colonialism and racism in ostensibly enlightened publics (Fusco 2002: 276). And yet as critic Mary Kate Kelly argues, "they nonetheless bear the weight of knowing that they risk perpetuating that which they seek to criticize" (1999: 130).

My suspicion is that part of the answer to this tension in such cases involves fostering the means for "revisability" (Deveaux 2003: 792; Dryzek 2005: 229) through reciprocal engagement that remains sensitive to the artist's prerogative. Perhaps the responsibility lies, in cases like these, largely with surrounding institutions and sites to provide supportive spaces and practices that can augment a piece's impact while also remaining at arm's length. Complementary practices such as speaker series, film screenings, deliberative forums, or simply the physical space for spontaneous publics to reflect and dialogue before leaving the site might provide such supports. However, there must also be in place the commitment to and means for such reflexivity and revisability among artists; this is far more tenuous ground, as it begins to encroach on the

'irresponsibility' of artists that is required for self-determination, but this normative condition – like those of democratic engagement more generally – remains sensitive to context by leaving open where such revisability might lead even as it demands greater accountability.

The Politics of Community-Engaged Aesthetics

A different set of issues emerges when artistic practices directly engage and even use as material the lived experience of marginalized communities. For affect's dissembling effects and common failure to "render an account" do not merely introduce issues with regard to reasoning and judgment, but also those to do with safety. These issues were most clear in the case of *after homelessness…*, where exploring vulnerable and volatile emotions and experiences, and requiring actors to appear "naked on the stage" was particularly demanding for participants. The simultaneously positive and negative effects of such affective experiences are captured in the ambivalence of Holly Anderson, the project's on-site social worker, as she recalled the workshop:

> In Social Work we often talk about 'safety' and 'safe places,' and I've never been part of a group that took as many emotional risks, and it didn't have boundaries around emotional risks…I think if I were a true workshop participant I would've used tools of self-protection, and I didn't see any of that…there were participants who didn't come back in following days, there were participants who chose to use, and I think because of this emotional rawness…Some of those that completed the workshop…found it an incredibly meaningful experience, and in some ways life-changing…Headlines often puts out 'this isn't therapy' but my question to that is, how can it not be, when you give people permission to delve the deepest that they've ever delved before. For some of them that was true, they had touched on things they hadn't talked about in years…In saying that, I think people had personal choices too, but it almost felt like floodgate because, with an oppressed population they don't have opportunities to express themselves, certainly using creativity, and there's such an eagerness to engage in this, in an almost idyllic eagerness…I don't know they understood the risks they were taking either, and what the outcome of that would be, or how raw that would leave them.

What artistic practices bring to the surface they are not always prepared to receive – theatre practitioner Julie Salverson, reflecting on her work with refugee communities in Canada, recalls one experience when a participant, provoked by the 'safe container' of aesthetic practices, disclosed personal experience of torture which, when dealt with inadequately, left him with a sense of being "used and discarded":

> We were ready to hear stories about torture. We were not ready to hear what it would mean for Tom to remember and speak them. The container, in other words, was suggested but not fully built….we…were not aware of the extent of the bargain being made…The cause was not our reluctance, but our actual inability to 'stand to hear' him…to hold ground and accompany him through a process we had initiated but did not ourselves fully understand or recognize. (Salverson 1996: 185, 187)

Like the experience of Martin during the *after homelessness…* project, this was an example of what Walter Benjamin refers to as a "moment of danger" (1969: 255), all the more possible within aesthetic-affective encounters that can, by allowing latent or guarded emotion and memory to enter the dialogue, actually risk 'overexposure' and even reinscription of trauma and oppression. As in Martin's case, Tom's disclosure moved from the realm of artistic mediation to personal account, closing the gap of the aesthetic 'container' by its proximity to lived experience and so introducing those risks of exposure and exploitation we have seen in more declarative 'confessional' modes. But while aesthetic modalities mediate such vulnerable and volatile realities – alchemically forging collective rather than autobiographical narratives, foregrounding creative agency that signals identity that exceeds representation, and fictionally or symbolically rendering lived experience such that the container is spacious enough to hold experience without fixing, naming or reliving it – by engaging affect they nonetheless create conditions which can seem to invite such personal disclosure. Again, this was the case in *after homelessness…*, where in response to enacting fictional scenes workshop participants repeatedly launched

into the most harrowing and intimate of memories regarding suicide attempts, childhood violence, and the isolation and despair of past and present experience. Without sufficient supports to receive such disclosures – the means to, as Salverson states, "stand to hear" them – such affective engagement is deeply implicated in creating "moments of danger" even within ostensibly empowering or democratic processes.

This is not to say that such processes must function as a form of 'therapy' – for, as Heather Lash argues, the notion of "the healing power of art" is fraught with ethnocentrism, paternalism and naïveté, and art itself might carry encoded paradigms that might be "in large part responsible for the brutal situations these people might heal from" (2006: 222). However, it is to argue that by engaging these deeper affective dimensions, artistic practitioners are implicitly making a "bargain" for which they are necessarily answerable; put differently, this bargain entails an encounter that, to be ethical, requires the conditions of democratic engagement set out in chapter one – the conditions of testimony rather than spectacle, that make possible a community of what Salverson calls "significant listening others" that can 'stand to hear' what it elicits (Salverson 1996: 187).

Whether tacit or explicit, artistic modalities' invitation to disclose and explore the vulnerable and volatile touches upon the issue of power dynamics as they manifest within artistic modes of engagement. Here I am most concerned with those between arts practitioners and the communities they engage, where the norms of performance can introduce their own anti-democratic tendencies. The directorial or choreographic role carries its own authority as a conventional position of control as well as a particular form of expertise. As the director of a 2002 theatrical performance by the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture noted, this control over the process might even make for smooth and

'successful' projects, as "people like to be directed, people like to feel safe and secure, like to have that sense of containment, and it goes back to a huge background and variety of reasons" (qtd. in Lash 2006: 225).

This play of expertise within the process might also be a matter of artistic conventions rather than artistic role: the pressures to 'get it right,' the rehearsal schedule and format, the sense that to interrupt or challenge conventions of audience or cast behaviour is inappropriate – all of this can create conditions wherein rather than foster the terms of democratic engagement, they might in fact *work,* in terms of the creative process running smoothly and a performance being created, *through* the very replication of hierarchies and roles with which participants are all-too-familiar. In fact, as Lash notes, the typically short rehearsal phase and the stress of an impending deadline might particularly lend itself to such habitual patterns: "When you combine oppressive cultural conditioning with a process as nervous-making as mounting a show, it becomes far easier for everyone to play the same roles as they have historically; experts and their followers" (Lash 2006: 225). In these ways, artistic processes – like any site of engagement – are not 'outside' of power relations and discourses that pervade society as a whole; the "containers" they offer are, as Salverson notes,

> also potentially totalizing structures that readjust the 'containeds' to meet social norms. Certainly a 'container,' whether popular theatre process or story, can become a straightjacket, a set of norms imposed by a leader, rigorously followed by group members. (1996: 186)

This actually harkens back, in a way, to the tension between the liberal value of self-determination and the limits to the self-awareness or autonomy this requires, for, when power dynamics such as these shape the "partition of the sensible" or "space of reasons" within artistic processes, relying upon self-advocacy and individual coping strategies is

sometimes not enough. Jan Cohen-Cruz and Kelly Howe similarly make this argument when they call into question Boal's belief that the theatrical forum is a space wherein "everyone can participate" and "has the space to say what they want," given the degree of self-assertion this requires and the theatrical and social norms that restrict such expression (Cohen-Cruz 2006: 110; Howe 2009: 241). This is problematized further by the fact that at times we are not even aware that we have crossed the line that defines our safety until well after the fact.

This was certainly the case within the *after homelessness…* project, where, as the project's social worker recalled, "the most vulnerable tried to please," and despite explicit and repeated invitations to challenge the director's choices or speak up when the process became too difficult, cast members relayed that they often felt they could not – or, in fact, did not identify the need, until it was too late. In such cases, participants who have internalized experiences of disempowerment can interpret their own limits or difficulties as their own failure to fulfill directorial expectations, and self-advocacy itself – as in the case of Martin who, in stark contrast to our interview, chose to tell the cast and director that his suicide attempt had had nothing to do with his experience with the project – might seem untenable without somehow 'failing' again. This is captured in one cast member's recollection of the process:

> Even though I come across as independent and secure I'm really very insecure
> within myself... And when it comes to trying new things...I'm always afraid that
> I'm going to fuck it up. I grew up being told that, 'Can't you do anything
> right?'...So...I was constantly looking at [the director]...for some kind of
> acknowledgement that I was doing okay or I was being helpful or.... (*How was the
> rehearsal phase?*) Back to frickin' not being able to do it and not being good
> enough and comparing myself with the other people and really feeling that I wasn't
> going to be able to...follow through and do justice to it. And it always, you know,
> everybody's going to look at me because I was always the one that wasn't as good
> as everybody else. (laugh) I think a lot of that was because he wanted the emotion,

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he wanted the emotion, he wanted the emotion, and I really struggled with not even knowing – before I came into recovery at 46 years old I didn't even know what anxiety was, I had no idea that's what the feeling at the pit of my stomach was, right. And, um, I had a lot, a lot of fear... And *every time he came at me and said, you know, 'We've been over and over and over this,' I went smaller and smaller and deeper within myself,* within that little child…I had to continually stop myself from focusing on that kind of stuff, otherwise it was going to like, overtake me.

(emphasis added)

Processes that assume and depend on participants' equal and sufficient internal coping strategies and the ability to self-advocate, particularly when personal, volatile, and even traumatic experiences are engaged, are called into question when diverse histories of and responses to marginalization and disempowerment are taken into account. It is to neglect the very real traces of such histories in the habituated patterns for thought, action and relations we all carry with us; it is to maintain a naïve notion that what such projects seek to challenge is merely 'out there'; and it is to lay an inordinate degree of responsibility with participants from these communities rather than arts practitioners.

When the authority of artistic convention or directorial/choreographic authority and expertise is brought into the equation, it becomes still more problematic to assume participants will, when pushed beyond one's limits, push back, and risks introducing a form of paternalism wherein participants strive to 'get it right,' undermining the potential for such projects to engage marginalized communities in democratic and reciprocal ways. And yet – akin to the liberal rejoinder discussed above – who decides, who speaks, for people if not themselves? Is this not another form of paternalism? Certainly Diamond was adamant that to treat participants other than as he would theatre professionals would have been paternalistic, and to have investigated Martin's background to the extent that might have prepared them for what ultimately occurred would have "invad[ed] his private life in ways that I still believe are inappropriate" (Diamond 2010: 72). Anderson, too, despite

first-hand experience of the physical abuse and emotional trauma of Martin's role, still felt uncomfortable making the decision that he could not return, which felt "patriarchal" if very clear.

A final piece of this complex puzzle regarding social responsibility of the artist concerns the tension between aesthetic and political agendas. Though they may intersect, these are never wholly identical, and at times the use of aesthetic forms also carries with it certain parameters, expectations and demands that can run counter to democratic aims. We have seen how this is true regarding the rehearsal schedule – usually intensive and demanding days with the performance dates rigid and quickly approaching, leaving little room to adapt to changing circumstances and new information during processes that might very well bring to the surface political and personal dimensions that require immediate address – as one *after homelessness…* cast member stated,

> eight to ten hours a day for two months every single day almost, it's not the time…to deal with those issues, because if you start dealing with those things, you're putting them to a place where that's what you need to be doing, is dealing with your issues, you can't maintain and do the thing. And as David says 'use it,' but he went to acting school and had a very different life… I know it wouldn't be as dynamic for people to be asked, 'are you ok going to this place?' because he wants it to be real, and that's the theatre aspect of these things, but that's the other aspect, we're not professional actors and I know how to draw boundaries but others might not or may not see reason to until too late.

We have also seen this sometimes at work in the directorial rather than facilitator role during the creation process, which can introduce aesthetic demands that can instigate participants to, as one cast member of *after homelessness…* recalled, perceive their own failure to 'get it right' and so go "smaller and smaller"; and we have seen how the theatrical demand to be emotionally "naked on the stage" and the theatrical techniques used to achieve this can bring people "closer to their issue" in a context where believable

enactment, not the emotional repercussions or social implications of such experiences, are the primary target.[43] We have also seen how the use of such lived experience as "material" for productions can mean that the process, as Diamond told the workshop group, "isn't for *you*, it's for the public," and runs the risk of leaving participants feeling, as Heather Lash observes from her own theatrical experience, "disrespected or appropriated; people know when they are being used. Even if they have become accustomed to it, even if it asks them to reproduce roles they are familiar with" (Lash 2006: 227). And we have also seen that performance's short lifespan can "be dangerous, because it tends to create a certain kind of family very quickly," and at its abrupt close can, as Diamond warned workshop participants, open up a hole.

All of these aesthetic dimensions run counter to, and potentially undermine, the democratic work of such projects. And while the aesthetic performs its own political work, I would venture that in the context of processes that engage marginalized communities, when the aesthetic overwhelms or is at the expense of the political considerations of the project, this undermines its capacity to function as a site of democratic praxis. Certainly, artists are not able to predict and cannot be responsible for the inevitably diverse range of responses and effects of the process;[44] it is also impossible – akin to other sites of

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[43] Diamond used conventional theatrical techniques to help participants get "*underneath*", such as having cast vividly recall heartbreaking memories to bring that emotion onto the stage, or using physical triggers, such as placing a blanket over one workshop participant within a scene to have her feel homeless even within a 'job interview,' or suddenly unzipping the neck-to-knees zipper of the sweater of one particularly reserved workshop participant to have her experience "her confidence just g[o] – whish! Until there's nothing."

[44] A story the *after homelessness…* stage manager shared with me also comes to mind concerning the now-famous 1998 Community Play in Enderby, BC, where one participant who seemed to blossom over the process, and on the final night was given an award by the native band for being a role model in light of his work, went home that night and committed suicide; at the same time, another participant who had a history of self-mutilation and was felt to be the most at risk ended the project by removing his sunglasses for the first time, laughing, and asking to step in for a dance. As Diamond says to forum audiences, "we never know what we do", and there is often no way to predict how a project might affect the lives of those involved; indeed, as was true in this account of Enderby and in the Headlines project, it had "good *and*

democratic engagement – to demand that there be room made to address all that emerges, in light of time and financial constraints; it is also naïve and perhaps counterproductive to assume that the expertise and authority of practitioners be stifled altogether, given the crucial contribution this makes to the process and the demands of time constraints and decision-making. However, conflicting agendas must be negotiated in such a way that accountability to the people so engaged is never lost from view even within aesthetic demands. Perhaps this means creating the conditions within which there is more flexibility regarding the performance schedule, to enable address of and support for what emerges within it; perhaps this means establishing sufficient supports, community connections and longer-term relationships both during and following the process, so that it is not a "hit and run" process that many community artists find suspect (Bacon et al. 1999; Zelizer 2007); perhaps this means adapting theatrical techniques to elicit strong emotions in ways that make room for varying coping strategies and experiences of and proximities to trauma, and are consistently mediated through artistic and collective fiction so that there is a clearly an "external image for the participants to step into" (Salverson 1996: 187). Perhaps, most of all, it means establishing continual and multiple means for reflexivity and accountability that do not merely depend on the artist's observation, prior knowledge, or participant self-advocacy, "understanding that there are stakes for those with whom we work – stakes that exist, but are never more than partially knowable" (Salverson 1996: 181). Like the implications of engaging the volatile and vulnerable aspects of experience and identity, the potential risks this tension entails make clear that community-engaged processes are, like other democratic forums, democratic insofar as they enact and foster a care for difference

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bad" effects (Stieger, Interview). The question is, then, how a process might guard against such risks while also avoiding the paternalism that Diamond rightly sees to be part of the problem.

and the receptive generosity this requires; they must be, by definition, encounters defined by a reciprocal, hence mutually accountable, gaze.

> *"Always be passionately aware…that you could be completely wrong."*
> – *dian marino, Community Artist*

External Challenges: The 'Noise' of Artistic Engagement and Dominant Socio-Political Discourses

While this dissertation has argued that artistic modalities are able to contend with the multiplicity, relationality, and dynamism of identity/difference – that they are particularly suited to enable the 'noise' of marginalized difference to become 'sound' – several factors contribute to marginalizing artistic modalities themselves. In fact, as Nikos Papastergiadis observes, when art practices intersect with prevailing discourses in policy, academics, consumer culture, and politics, many of the challenges they face "cut along similar diagonals" as those entailed in identity/difference politics itself (Papastergiadis 1995: 6).

Art is, by definition, always in excess of its political meaning; through its inevitable multivalence, the evocative and open-ended nature of its meanings, even when it engages identity or politics directly its meanings are never exhausted by such terms, nor is any particular political reading itself exhaustive. As Raymond Williams, Pierre Bourdieu, and more recently T.V. Reed have argued, "any aesthetic text can be put to political ends, and all aesthetic texts have political implications, but no aesthetic text is reducible to its political meanings" (Reed 2005: 303). This is, as we have seen, one of its greatest strengths; it is through such polyphony that art can represent and engage identity/difference while never claiming to have defined and fixed identity in essentialist

terms; it is through such polysemy that affective encounter, affiliation, and even coalition are possible without conflating the alterity of those it gathers.

And yet, as artistic practices intersect with dominant culture, the "negativity of theory" or contingency and relationality of identity/difference that art is so effective in capturing is confronted with the "positivity of politics" (de Lauretis 1984) – literal discourses and practices that predominate in policy, academics, bureaucratic institutions, and mainstream consumer culture. Here, the unruliness of aesthetic practices is often challenged to translate and represent itself, and the selfsame risks we saw at work within more declarative modes – the appropriation, objectification, and conflation of difference – can be seen at work at the interstices of art and broader society. The following sections will examine three specific reasons why the translation and thus broader impact of performance-based processes has been especially challenging: the *assimilating* or *marginalizing* effects of both consumer culture and western conceptions of rarefied art; the *scientific* discourse that predominates western research and institutions; and the *objectifying* effects of a static identity politics that persists in multicultural art policy and practice. In each case, I will provide an account of how these have distorted, devalued, and truncated the political capacity of artistic processes, and offer both theoretical and practical recommendations regarding how they might be addressed.

Dominant Discourses of the Assimilating or Marginalizing Gaze:
Arts vs Politics/Engagement vs Spectacle

The first major obstacle to broadening and deepening the political impact of arts practices is the fraught and precarious position it is conventionally given in relation to both politics and mainstream consumer culture. There are two competing discourses

within this dynamic, each of which ultimately misrepresents the potential position of arts

practices in political context. Firstly, as opposed to the recognition and integration of art

within society and politics elsewhere in the world, western cultures – particularly in

North America, in light of its distinct version of liberalism and postmodernism – have

traditionally considered art as rarefied and distanced from society and politics; indeed,

often locating its value precisely in its distinction and "autonomy" from these spheres.[45]

As Grant Kester and Carol Becker observe, this has led to a particular tradition of

"aesthetic liberalism" where art is 'authentic' only by remaining socially disengaged, its

"moral authority vanish[ing]" once it seeks to directly affect society or politics. Myths

and misnomers of artists as romantic loner and wild figure, as socially irresponsible

bohemian or hedonist, as avant-garde elitist abound within the west, and the place for

such unruly and politically suspect characters within society has been uncertain at best

(Becker 1994b: 115; Kester 1998: 8). Arts organizations and artists have also historically

been complicit in this gesture by leveraging their distance from politics for funding

purposes.

Where 'fine art' is not rarefied and marginalized in this way, it is often subsumed

within the dynamics of consumption and spectacle of mainstream media, as another site

for entertainment rather than critical engagement. Several scholars have noted that in

light of art's polyphony as a mode of communication it is "less a discrete object than a

process of dialogue, exchange, and even collaboration that responds to the changing

conditions and needs of both viewer and maker (Kester 1998: 15). And given

performance's ephemeral and embodied modes of production and absence of

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[45] Adorno is most famous for making this distinction, which holds art's political efficacy to be deeply linked to how indirect and ambiguous its meaning and how "out of action" it places the artist (1997: 243).

transferrable objects, it is placed even further at a remove from the circuitries of commodified exchange, gathering a community in a reciprocal encounter through which the piece is constituted (Phelan 1996: 4; Martin 1998b: 32-33; Pollock 1998: 95; Kershaw 2000: 137).[46] As Heather Lash states, "this interpersonal involvement provides some insurance against voyeurism and other abuses to which theatre tends to lend itself" (Lash 2006: 222). And yet, artistic performance in the west still largely works within the market network of exchange, value and consumption. Though funding is largely still the domain of government – fraught, as we will see, with its own challenges – artistic production still engages its publics within the dynamics of mainstream consumer culture, bought and sold, and required to appeal to even as it challenges the broader community. This is, of course, Adorno and Horkheimer's main argument against much artistic production (1986), and they are joined by Lukács (1971) and Baudrillard (1988) in finding this particular dynamic of artistic commodification most pronounced in highly mediatised societies.

Between these two competing discourses – art as distinct from politics, art as subsumed within the mainstream – artists who seek to engage politics enter a fraught terrain in which they must work against processes of both assimilation and marginalization. These are both forms of what Diana Taylor calls 'percepticide' (1998) – wherein art is either subsumed and domesticated within the mainstream or remains so much 'noise,' its potential for productive disruption lost either within or outside of what it

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[46] "The totally passive audience is a figment of the imagination, a practical impossibility; and, as any actor will tell you, the reactions of audiences influence the nature of a performance. It is not simply that the audience affects emotional tone or stylistic nuance: the spectator is engaged fundamentally in the active construction of meaning as a performance event proceeds. In this sense performance is 'about' the transaction of meaning, a continuous negotiation between stage and auditorium to establish the significance of signs and conventions through which they interact." (Kershaw 2000: 137)

seeks to unsettle. Here, the challenges of artistic engagement run parallel to those of identity/difference politics more generally, and politically engaged art runs the risk of either being appropriated and domesticated within the unproblematized terms of prevailing culture, or being met with indifference or vilification.

First, the saturation of signs and predominance of the spectacle within contemporary consumer culture affects art practices as much as other forms of cultural production. Frederick Jameson, Herbert Marcuse and Guy Debord have been instrumental in revealing the extent to which the spectacle has come to dominate contemporary culture, wherein complexities, contradictions and potentially disruptive realities are often reduced to manageable media bytes and declawed into readily consumed commodities, "turning any and all 'real' occurrences into one more exotic commodity on our screen" (Guehenho 1995: 29; Taylor 1998: 181). This is no less true within artistic production, where a social logic conflates value with economic value (Eagleton 2000: 25). And though performance in some ways circumvents this impetus to turn art into spectacle, performance theorists remain in debate regarding the extent to which this is possible (Hebdige 1979; Frith 1983; Fiske 1989; Auslander 1992; Read 1993; Phelan 1996). The more cynical among them hold that conventional performance often functions as a particularly disciplinary space echoing and reinforcing conservative norms of mass culture. With its often coherent narratives and characters, its restrictive spatial and behavioural codes, and its association as 'high art' with a certain cultural capital, theatre is found suspect by such theorists in its subtle training of audiences according to implicit values and reinforcement of social hierarchies and norms (Althusser 1971; Gramsci 1971; Bourdieu 1984: 234; Schechner 1988; Lefebvre 1991: 49-52; Nield

1996: 208; Kershaw 1999: 31-51). Brecht calls this "culinary theatre," where the potentially reflexive and reciprocal site of theatre instead seduces its audiences "into a glazed ecstasy of sensory indulgence that is deeply conservative" (1964: 89).

Certainly, we have seen this in the tradition of ballet in chapter six, which has played a role in sustaining gendered and heteronormative values, as well as in the commodified reception of 'ethnic' art discussed later in this chapter. This was also certainly a concern within South African protest theatre, where performances allowed by the apartheid state were those within urban avant-garde theatres – where ostensibly radical performances were seen to siphon off potentially subversive energies in a cathartic release for liberal apologist audiences (Mda 1996: 205; Solberg 1999: 21; Hutchison 2003: 8). And while, as many have argued and the previous cases have shown, the creative and critical dimensions of artistic practices have also exposed, disrupted and critically re-imagined such codes, the pressures of the mainstream, the market, and a culture of commodified spectacle often mean that work that thrives is predominantly that in which potentially disruptive energies have been sufficiently declawed. Though, as T.V. Reed notes, artistic performance has the broadest impact when it has been *diffused* within and so systemically transforms society, at the same time they must guard against such pressures of *defusion* – cooptation and appropriation – within that very movement (2005: 313).

When art is not assimilated within the prevailing terms of mainstream culture, it runs the risk of never entering the conversation at all. We have seen, particularly with the use of music and dance in South African protest theatre and the indirect rather than didactic approach of narrative and symbol within *after homelessness…,* that aesthetic

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resources can foster greater receptive generosity and affective impact that 'dissembles' those very safeguards that shore up the terms of identity and politics. While overtly challenging current politics can alienate audiences, playwright Ann Jellicoe, Rey Chow, Françoise Lionnet, Theodor Adorno and others note that such aesthetic strategies provide the means to reach even resistant audiences by doing so obliquely (Jellicoe 1987: 122).

However, like any representation of marginalized difference, "it appears less and less familiar to those untrained to read the complexity they in fact live" (Becker 1994a: xiii). As inherently complex, multivalent and designed to challenge and transform the prevailing 'terrain of the sensible,' critically engaged art does not lend itself readily to mass appeal, nor is it easily accessible or palatable (Becker 1994b: 125). In a climate of mass media and spectacle, it has become increasingly difficult for such work to be heard at all (Adorno 1997: 243; Becker 2002: 6). In such a political climate, artists – whose role is one of creative regeneration and 'critical independence' – are often met with indifference, if not moral outrage, when they fulfill this social function. When it is not isolated from public discourse through formalist critique and dissemination as "a small, insignificant…commercial, and mystified" practice, politically engaged work is often either no longer considered art – as in the case of *after homelessness…*, which received no mainstream reviews – or attacked by a public decrying moral outrage (Becker 2002: 18-19; Kester 1998: 8).

In the latter case, a certain anti-intellectualism that equates dissent with lack of patriotism or sophisticated cultural practices with elitism encourages either a literal reading of artistic meaning or a notion of art 'for the common good' as that which affirms rather than critiques society. Here, the complexity and social conscience of artistic

practices become too easily reduced to their 'pornographic' use of the body, the presence

of oversaturated religious or political iconography, or the sheer offensiveness of its

critique of traditional values (Marcuse 1978: 66; Becker 2002; Brown 2005). Like Ron

Athey's work on the ubiquity and proximity of HIV in the U.S. being reduced within

public outcry to its use of blood and body piercing; or the denunciation and vandalization

of Mideo Cruz's recent exhibit in the Philippines whose use of Catholic symbolism to

speak to new idols of a neo-liberal economy could not be heard over shouts of religious

scandal; or Sun News' recent interview of Governor General Lifetime Achievement

award recipient Margie Gillis, whose life's work in modern dance was summed up in a

limp-wristed flourish – here, the issues concerned with a 'politics of listening' are also at

stake in the reception and engagement of art.[47] In this cultural climate, its particular value

as a crucial site of publicly-engaged creative and critical inquiry is lost from view, and it

becomes, in Lukács' words, "problematic precisely because reality has become non-

problematic" (1990: 17).

     While art may have a strange and vexed relationship to politics, and while it

moves through the circuitries of the market and mainstream, it is also neither apolitical

nor mere commodity. Certainly, the role of artists – exercised to varying degrees – has

always been to stand somewhat apart from society in a stance of "critical independence"

(Papastergiadis 1995: 6). While art works are rooted in social reality, and, in Oscar

Wilde's turn of phrase, are in "symbolic relationship to their time" (qtd. in Said 1994:

55), they do not reflect this reality so much as "tur[n] it into a problem" (Vernant and

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[47] http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/asia-pacific/catholic-church-denounces-philippine-art-exhibit/article2122676/; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPIuDql8vo0&NR=1. Erickson's interview with Gillis provides a vivid example of an economic logic of value, literal interpretation, the offense taken and invocation of the war in response to social critique, and absence of receptive generosity that make a 'politics of listening' impossible. A partial transcript is provided in Appendix B to capture this.

Vidal-Naquet 1990: 33; Becker 1994a: xiii). This is, as we have seen, not to stand apart

from society, but rather the very stance within which the democratic moment is possible –

where the "picture [that holds] us captive" is brought into view, seen in new light and

from different angles, and creatively reworked; where imaginative and critical public acts

productively unsettle its terms with the 'noise' of what exceeds it. This is the quality of

art that Marcuse and Adorno both valorize as the source of its great political strength: its

critical capacity to see beyond prevailing terms for society and politics, to hold politics

accountable to what is currently repressed and what else it might be, and to sustain and

protect this contradiction as the very means for generative transformation (Marcuse 1964;

Adorno 1997). Not all artists are politically engaged, nor is their work inherently

democratic; but the critical distance that defines the field is not the antithesis, but the very

ground of a democratic praxis – counter to what Liz Lerman calls the "impoverished

thinking" that perceives a false dichotomy between art and society and thus a set of

antagonistic alternatives between art as assimilated market good or marginalized private

practice, artists inhabit a "third position" (Papastergiadis 1995: 6-7; Lerman 2011[48]).

If art is to hold this third position – if it is, in other words, to fulfill its potential as

a site of democratic engagement – such practices must be fostered and supported akin to

other democratic sites, so as not to leave them at the mercy of these competing pressures

to either appease or remain abstracted from society. Such practices are not valuable

insofar as they are palatable, or affirm prevailing terms for identity and politics, but are

necessary and beneficial precisely because they challenge us. To misconstrue art as

entertainment or to undervalue its political import is to actually limit this political work;

to take seriously the political significance of artistic engagement is also to acknowledge

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[48] Art Matters podcast, http://blogs.soartists.com/ArtMatters/2011/06/30/art-works-podcast-liz-lerman/)

that it requires the institutional and financial support given to comparable civic practices.

And yet, this is very different from prescribing or demanding specific political effects of

such practices through funding parameters; in fact, to do so is to limit the very capacity of

such projects to serve as radical democratic sites that challenge and rework the very terms

for identity and politics. This tenuous balance between institutional support and artistic

self-determination will be taken up in more detail below.

"Let's start whispering into the ear of the public: The art that's best for you – now and in the future – is not a commodity but an inspiration. A curious communication between me, the creator, and you, the recreator of hidden patterns and secret suggestions, art is a coded love letter and a private plea: to retrieve from the river of blood and time what's irresponsible and mutual." (Kuryluk 1994: 19)

Dominant Discourse of the Scientific Gaze: The Question of 'Hard Data' vs 'Soft Science'

Related to this is the second major obstacle to engagement with democratically-

engaged aesthetic practices: the influence of a linear, scientific discourse that dominates

both academics and policy. Here, the unruliness of artistic engagement meets a discourse

that demands 'hard data' and often deems qualitative and diffuse practices to be 'soft

science.' Such discourse construes culture as either *decorative,* or effective only insofar

as it is *instrumental* – as T.V. Reed argues, "counting as significant only when producing

directly measurable effects on traditionally defined political terrains" (2005: 290). And

yet, aesthetic practices, even when politically engaged, are defined by an 'excess' and

'absence' such that their meaning is never exhausted by such terms. Though we have

seen that their evocative nature give aesthetic engagements the capacity to hold

difference, even contradiction, together, so enabling both engagement and coalition in

such terms, this very dimension defies forms of measurement and evaluation that define a

scientific paradigm. This means not only that artistic practices are often overlooked or

undervalued within institutional and academic discourses that work within such a frame, but also that efforts to translate such practices beyond the specific act often fail.

Granted, this issue is broader than the influence of a scientific paradigm. As discussed above, performance by definition defies documentation: by nature ephemeral such that some scholars consider each performance a distinct work of art, and by nature open-ended and multivalent, it makes efforts to amalgamate and pin down what it opens up particularly difficult. However, this is exacerbated when such efforts at translation beyond the event seek salience within a positivist or scientific paradigm. This was certainly true in the *after homelessness…* project, where the nuance, force and consequent authority of the project's insights – strengths and achievements in those very arenas that conventional modes of public engagement and policy find most challenging – were largely lost both in the project's final report and its reception by research and government organizations. Indeed, this project provides one of the few opportunities to see this act of translation at its extreme, where theatrical innovations and insights find their way into policy, arguably one of the most restrictive and linear of discourses.

In contrast to the ease with which Franklin transcribed recommendations by 'experts' during the project's Community Dialogues,[49] the particular contributions of forum, while intensely vivid for Franklin and having "the same quality of information," remained far more resistant to translation, even in the act of initial transcription during forum, where *what was happening* far surpassed the simple action or specific phrasing of interventions. Here, the polyphony of the performative event – the very source of its capacity to communicate across difference, provoke affective 'dissembling' and creative

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[49] Franklin recalled, "I made very good notes" of these 'expert' recommendations, and this is not surprising given the declarative, deliberative manner in which they were articulated.

thinking, and incorporate both marginalized expertise and latent or 'soft' factors of the

homelessness issue within deliberations – complicated this process of transcription.

In light of the difficulties faced by *Practicing Democracy*, Headlines' earlier

attempt at legislative theatre – where an effort to remain accountable to the forum's

plurality of voices generated a final report of 193 undifferentiated and unranked

recommendations, and immersed City Hall in a year-long task of 'scientific'

classification (Pratt and Johnston 2007) – this project's Community Action Report was

designed for brevity and simplicity, with a maximum of six recommendations isolated for

each affiliated organization. These restrictions, though necessary for effective receptive

within already swamped and potentially indifferent organizations, presented a Herculean

task: as the report's author, Gail Franklin, noted prior to writing,

> [There's the] challenge of how to convey these in policy...[They're] speaking
> exactly to what's missing in policy, and yet in writing policy to existing
> institutions, it's difficult to see how to use existing language to speak so
> differently... It's all very well to make a one-sentence recommendation based on
> what you've seen and the emotion you're feeling at the time – 'ban tasers!' – but
> there's something behind that that has to be interpreted.

Franklin identified, rejected, and radically redesigned "half a dozen ways" to

organize the project's findings; with post-its of intervention phrases and ideas covering

her 24' wall, she developed an elaborate system that identified themes and commonalities

– though these categories also grew to an unruly number, and became a further source of

"intense frustration [as it became clear that they] were insufficient for the job." These

were ultimately condensed into "very tightly focused statements" within the final report.

Franklin also chose to focus the report on logistical, concrete and pragmatic

recommendations that would be more salient and conceivable within prevailing discourse

and institutional practice where services are isolated, rather than systemic or interpersonal

insights. The comparative ease with which 'experts' framed their recommendations also played a role in their perceived salience and ultimate weight within the final document. To capture something of the forum experience, the report included a brief description of the process, particularly illustrative scenes, and the frequency of or audience consensus regarding recommendations, as well as at most one comment from the forum or Dialogues to accompany each recommendation (Franklin 2010).

However dry it might inevitably be compared to the vivid, visceral, and emotional experience of theatrical engagement, its final 14 pages were shaped by the need to be easily accessible, efficient, and salient within policy discourse. However, this process ultimately left Franklin with the feeling that what was seeking audience was already being lost. This process of distillation felt, Franklin recalled, like dilution:

> It's a pity that I couldn't somehow make it stronger…when you have to boil a dozen quite wonderful comments down to one recommendation and make it three lines long, you lose a lot of emotional impact...This kind of thing doesn't – you don't get the tingles. It's a pretty dry kind of process when you have to compact it like that. And you have to do that for a particular group of people...The focus has to be so pointed so as to lose all of the texture.

In the absence of direct experience of the forum process in most cases, recipients of the final report were guided by their particular understandings of the project and paradigms of 'expertise,' the perceived legitimacy and 'work' of arts-based research methodologies, and their impressions of the final report. And, tellingly, the range in its reception clearly hinged on whether this was filtered through a scientific discourse and whether recipients had had direct – untranslated – experience of arts engagement that might unsettle such a paradigm.

The report stood out to recipients due to its clarity, brevity,[50] and audience

quotations, which Mark Smith of RainCity Housing said gave it a "nuanced quality, kind

of a gritty truth that seeps out of the document, compared to other policy documents, rife

with acronyms and buzz phrases"[51]; this was crucial in a context where, as BC Housing

representative Dominic Flanagan along with others noted, "you can imagine how many

reports BC Housing might get." However, this very brevity and "plain" language also

worked against it, as a far longer and more detailed report was often expected and desired

in order to give it the "feel of an academic research study" or "much more comprehensive

policy" documents. Moreover, the targeted and practical focus of recommendations were

deemed particularly helpful – "concrete" and "down-to-earth suggestions" made them

easier to address "relatively quickly" – though this is also perhaps a reason why the

report, as all recipients stated, offered nothing new, as it meant largely an absence of – or,

at best, sparse reference to – those nuanced systemic and interpersonal insights that were

most striking from the forum. The authority of policy language and existing institutional

infrastructure appeared to play a role here in shaping perceptions of the report, and

restrained the communication of, albeit 'unruly,' innovation and potential challenge to

these bodies.[52] Despite the project's address of those very aspects most lacking in current

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[50] The length, as Michael Pietrus of the Mental Health Commission of Canada noted, was comparable to an executive summary.

[51] Mark Smith noted, however, that including quotations by stakeholders from the Community Dialogues – though, as Franklin noted, easier to use in this format as they used declarative language – was less persuasive, as the opinions of these known stakeholders in the field are well-known to others and, in their own way, have become a kind of 'noise'.

[52] What is interesting, however, is despite the influence of bureaucratic and scientific paradigms that limited the scope of the report's "space of reasons" (Forst 2010) to isolated and pragmatic recommendations, even within the most bureaucratic of institutions, these representatives often mentioned the pressing need for the very changes that the forum phase made most vivid: there was continual reference to the need for a systems rather than bureaucratic approach; for service providers' "respect and dignity…and actually caring about" the people they serve; to create community and leadership within SROs; or to transform perspectives through personal contact rather than "straight education." They recognized, in these recommendations, something difficult to pin down, and even more challenging to

policy and practice, the report failed to unsettle the "ideology of expertise" within these institutions, who, akin to the reception of Headlines' previous legislative project, never questioned their authority as experts, such that even the most significant of insights were flattened into the terms of what was already known (Pratt and Johnston 2007: 96).

Likewise, the perception of procedural legitimacy was influenced – and limited – by the conventional paradigms within which it was perceived: with the exception of Smith, who spoke of the "value to that methodology" of artistic media "hitting different intake mechanisms" and Noga, the one representative who witnessed the forum and expressed the most conviction in the process and report's legitimacy, preconceptions of the political capacity of performance and an entrenched sense of the primacy of quantitative measures led recipients to largely misunderstand or undervalue the process. Many misconstrued the process to be a "focus group," "presentation" or chance to "ge[t] feedback" from the community, and the final report as consequently "transcriptions of conversations…a bunch of opinions….To me, that's the softness of it." Where seen as consultation, this was both understood as akin to verbal opinion aggregation – which, as chapter five has shown, is an inaccurate reading of embodied engagement – and missed the crucial component of the forum's 'laboratory,' where ideas are not merely proposed, but tested through concrete practice. Understood in this way, these recipients saw the project often as "soft science" compared to other processes, and the report as "all you could expect for these performance-based processes – you have a little dialogue, you get

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operationalize within existing bureaucratic systems, but nonetheless essential to effectively addressing homelessness and mental health issues. In fact, they often noted their personal difficulty in translating these elements within their own work, and it is equally significant that the Headlines project drew attention to these pivotal, if elusive, dimensions.

a quote here, or something that comes up, and again it may be thought-provoking and moving things forward, it's not intended to be a scientific process."[53]

A scientific logic was clearly at work in the language of several recipients of the *after homelessness…* report: Jang, as a researcher himself, admitted that "that's my training, the entire world as a big regression equation," and while he acknowledged his own reliance on "numbers...quantitative statistics...as [his] prima facie evidence" doesn't "always translate well," even the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of the project were considered salient only when quantifiable: "how can I quantify that, I want a number for that, *so I can know what you're feeling*…on a scale from one to ten" (emphasis added). Darrell Burnham from Coastal Mental Health similarly made reference to the comparative excellence of the famous SFU study that demonstrated the economic value of ending homelessness, and "took a lot of time to get that number." This emphasis on 'hard data' and misperception of the process as consultation rather than "embodied think tank" (Howe 2009) led these recipients to perceive the project as primarily a means of awareness-raising rather than rigorous deliberation, and often recommended that the performance target elites or the broader community – rather than themselves – for this purpose. Despite its radical critique of current policy and practice, its rigorous testing through concrete enactment, and its nuanced and innovative insights that speak to the very obstacles and gaps within the current system, the project's translation within both the report and institutional reception meant the loss of this very nuance and the force of its argument so apparent on the stage. As a result, though Michael Pietrus said it was "on

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[53] Moreover, when understood as consultation, it was seen by recipients as lacking data required as such: participant demographics regarding audiences – whether the 'genuine community' or interest groups, whether those with lived experience or a general public sensitizing to the issues; details of the diversity of workshop and cast experience; and ranking in terms of priority, frequency or consensus – the "betas", as City Councillor Kerry Jang described them.

top of the pile," several recipients admitted that the report could only be used as a supportive or 'illustrative' document; could not, as "soft science," be cited at all; or would likely "get blown off, by BC Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Mental Health Commission – they're so busy, and we're a part of that" – though Burnham also noted this is typical of research in general.

In stark contrast, Noga – who not only observed but intervened within the forum phase – was struck by the accuracy of the performance, the forum's ability to capture "soft outcomes" by testing bad theories, and the radical difference between observing from a distance and stepping onto the stage, despite years of experience as an advocate: "[w]hat you never really get when you're dealing with numbers and sex and age and how long they've been on the street and all those other kinds of demographic info."

These trends can be seen more broadly within arts evaluations and advocacy. Indeed, as a recent literature review regarding evaluation of arts-based conflict processes reveals, there is a great deal of anxiety among arts practitioners "that something very precious may be lost, that the complexity of an experience which includes relationship, enjoyment, learning, exploration, expression will be destroyed, diluted or reduced" (Matarasso 1996; Moriarty 1997; Beausoleil 2011). Conventional measures and evaluative frameworks tend to emphasize quantifiable impacts and indicators, as well as linear or correlative causal relations. In these contexts, the often complex, diffuse and long-term impacts of arts-based processes may indeed be invisible (Kershaw 2000: 139; Annabel Jackson Associates 2000). As community artist and scholar Laurie McGauley and others also observe, aesthetics and politics "appeal to different logics that do not come together easily, and that many argue should not come together at all" (Williams

1997; Jermyn 2001: 6; McGauley 2006: 6). As we have seen in chapter two, declarative modes that privilege clarity, reason and the literal do not easily lend themselves to capturing the complexity, interrelation, affect, and perpetual excess of difference; within these discursive norms of what trauma scholar Sophie Tamas calls "the scholarly authorial voice," aesthetic modalities and the complex and nuanced experiences they entail and engage can often appear 'messy' and 'irrational' (Tamas 2009). This appears all the more true when the declarative takes the form of a quantitative or scientific logic, making it difficult to either represent or hear such competing discourses well.

Perhaps the methodological rigour and political efficacy of performance is something you have to see to believe; particularly in a cultural and political context where 'rigour' is equated with a scientific approach, this might indeed be the primary way to unsettle such paradigms. There is certainly something elusive, if not ineffable, within policy and academic discourse – I note the irony of this thesis in such light – which performance can so effectively capture and publically engage, and yet precisely because it speaks to such fissures, its translation into such discourses may "never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1979/1984).

Perhaps there are ways, however, that this art of translation can yet be developed to enhance the receptive generosity of established 'experts': within the *after homelessness…* project, for instance, Burnham suggested involving professionals early in the process to enhance understanding of and a sense of investment in the process as well as clarifying a 'base line' of existing policy, research and concerns; Jang suggested involving those with lived experience of the 'other side' of the issues – police officers, BC Housing workers, City workers and officials – to enhance the project's complexity and, one might add,

facilitate greater receptive generosity through a more balanced account; moreover, bringing these recommendations back to the affected community to deliberate prior to the final report akin to Boal's legislative model might address the concerns voiced by recipients of both "small numbers" and naïve audiences, and give it greater procedural legitimacy. And certainly, greater rigour in terms of conventional strategies – including demographics and ranking, detailed explanation of recommendations and their justification – as well as *trusting* and using the power of aesthetic strategies within such accounts to convey the vividness and force of the process beyond exemplary quotations or brief scenes, might help to shift perceptions of projects like these from awareness-raising 'presentation' or aggregative 'focus group' to 'embodied think tank.' It is also significant that, though the report's more practical focus made its recommendations seem more viable, it is those very recommendations that challenged prevailing paradigms and institutional structures that remain the most innovative and insightful. This is perhaps the distinct contribution of such processes, and though necessarily, as Michael Smith keenly observed, "crow-barred" in the shift to policy discourse, focus on these interpersonal and systemic insights might ultimately have the greatest impact and demonstrate most clearly the contribution of arts practices.

This case demonstrates that the unruliness of artistic engagement makes practices of representation beyond the event hard-pressed to capture what in fact makes these practices an effective and all-too-rare means of engaging identity/difference in the terms democracy requires. A certain "positivity of politics" defines the prevailing terms of policy discourse and social *scientific* scholarship, so restricting the representation, and thus broader impact, of the "negativity of theory" captured so effectively in artistic

performance. Certainly, this is not inevitable: there is room for the development of more appropriate measures with which to capture what is typically lost, and room for the legitimation of those measures and evaluative terms that already do so, beyond a quantitative approach. And yet, even when this efficacy is acknowledged, we must be careful not to instrumentalize these practices or overstate the utility of the arts at the expense of those effects more difficult to measure, as these broader discourses tend to do (HDA 2000; Jermyn 2001: 9). Whatever political effects they have, they cannot be reduced to them; art is always something more than the sum of its political meaning or measurable effects – and they are, in a strange turn of logic, more effective as political sites because of this. To leave room for the movement and flow of this excess is to also leave room for greater effect beyond a single evaluative paradigm or particular agenda; it is to allow for the possibility that it might productively transform the very values and agendas with which aesthetic practices are judged.

Dominant Discourse of the Objectifying Gaze:
The Bounded Terms of Identity Politics in Arts Policy and Practice

We saw in chapter two that multicultural policy can, even while attending to difference, do so through a static form of identity politics that ultimately leads to its appropriation, essentialization, or conflation. This has been equally the case within multicultural arts policy and institutional practice which, while opening spaces of representation to marginalized identities, have taken place within "the slippery and fragile relationship between artists who contest the terms in which they are received as unequal participants in the arts institutions of this country, and those art institutions that continue to hold tight reigns on national culture" (Meera 2002: 85). In this context, such practices

traditionally follow the pattern of multicultural politics more broadly: through the 'management' of diverse cultural practices within a dynamic of toleration by a stable, dominant norm. As such, they have been interpreted in ways that concede to difference without challenging the status and terms of a still-dominant centre, by extension reproducing and legitimating social inequalities through the very cultural practices that ostensibly use a multicultural legislative framework (Tator et al. 1998: 214).

This is largely due to the fact that the privileged white spectator more often than not retains a central position in both artistic institutions and implicitly within arts discourse. Artistic practice, as a site of both public engagement and professional vocation, requires "a patronage, legitimation, and screening" (Chandler 1997: 42), which in turn places the power of censorship and sanction in the hands of funding agencies and artistic institutions, who are one of its primary audiences. While there has been a significant increase in the representation of artists of marginalized groups, a traditional division of labour still persists within these institutions wherein, as several artists and art scholars have observed, "the resources and power to control them whether at the level of funder or small organization, rest primarily with white people," and often real power remains "unavailable and unreachable" for others (Briscoe 1997: 7; Fusco 1998: 68; Moore 1998: 53). Recognizing this issue, the Canada Council introduced a Peer Assessment policy in 1997 and as of 2004 has actively worked to increase diversity in staff, Boards of Directors, advisory committees, peer assessment committees, and others bodies (Canada Council 2004a: 5, 7; Canada Council 2004b: 8; Canada Council "Peer Assessment"). However, artists and institutions alike recognize there remains much work to be done in this regard.

These prevailing power imbalances have significant effects upon the freedom of artistic expression. Firstly, due to a long tradition running parallel to other political sites, there has been what Peter Li calls a "schizophrenic approach to Occidental arts and visible minority cultures" (Li 1994: 383) within decision-making concerning funding, review, and production. Artistic excellence – the ostensibly 'neutral' or 'universal' standard – has long been equated with western aesthetics, while alternative practices have been often deemed too "local," too "political," and critiqued by those guarding the parameters of acceptable aesthetics as a compromise in quality, overlooking how the very notion of quality "is frequently an alibi for a whole set of exclusions and inclusions that maintain the primacy of the white expert and ethnocentric notions of artistic production" (Gagnon, in Fung and Gagnon 2002: 45).[54] Against this naturalized standard, a whole host of categories has proliferated across disciplines – "new," "hyphenated," immigrant," and "ethnic," even "other" – creating a two-tiered system of 'ethnic' versus 'real' art that reflects colonial binarisms and marginalizes such work even as it is granted representation (Kalantzis and Cope 1994: 13, 25; Papastergiadis 1995: 6; Tator et al. 1998: 224).

This is apparent within Canadian federal arts funding which, when it began in the 1970s to incorporate multicultural policy, divided its funding between 'fine art' and 'culturally diverse' art. This binary was exacerbated by the shift of responsibility for the latter from the arm's length Canada Council for the Arts – whose mandate is 'art for art's sake' – to the direct control of the Ministry of Multiculturalism, whose mandate is to "encourage cultural retention and…social development" (Canada Council 1985; Off

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[54] This observation is often made in critiques of Canadian arts policy. See, for example, Peter Li (1994: 376); Carol Tator, Frances Henry and Winston Mattis (1998: 231, 224), Arlene Dávila (1999: 182), and Sethi Meera (2002: 85).

1988: 7; Fleras and Elliot 1992: 73; Li 1994: 377-80). As Carol Off notes, this distinction demonstrated and institutionalized a belief that "sitar playing is ethnic, and hence the responsibility of the Secretary of State, and violin music is fine art, so violinists can turn to the art councils" (Off 1988: 8). Such policy, emerging out of access and equity rather than notions of excellence and artistic merit, has thus also conceived such work primarily as political or 'cultural' rather than artistic; and, exemplified in the Ministry's refusal to fund the Writing Thru Race conference for solely writers of colour in 1994 despite peer recommendations, this value is often assessed in terms of its interaction with, and contribution to, the dominant culture (Young 2001: 20).

This bifurcation has since been addressed by the return to Canada Council jurisdiction of all arts funding decisions in 2000 (Moss 2011). Moreover, in response to increasing pressure from artistic constituencies, in recent years the Council has actively taken on equity as a principle mandate, and various policies, programs and positions were created to address Eurocentric biases and systems of exclusion within the Council (Canadian Heritage 2001; Canada Council "Cultural Diversity"; Canada Council 2004a: 2; Canada Council 2004b; Canada Council 2006: 12). Most notably, these programs and policies to address systemic exclusions in evaluation and funding practices, now firmly within the Canada Council, did not employ different standards: the Council maintains "culturally diverse and Aboriginal arts as strategic priorities across all programs, *recognizing excellence* in these arts practices" (Canada Council 2004a: 8; emphasis added). And yet, even these programs are isolated from the rest of the Council, within the categories of 'Aboriginal Art' and 'Equity,' in contrast to categories according to conventionally recognized artistic genres.

Likewise, this binary is apparent within artistic critique, curation, and market circulation: these works often still carry different market and aesthetic value, where they are judged and exhibited according to their cultural difference – only recently moved from the long tradition of displaying the ethnic within ethnological exhibitions rather than galleries, now 'ethnic' art is often exhibited in a form of "anthropological curating," grouped together in museums, literary texts, festivals, performances or galleries despite radical differences in genre, theme, politics or aesthetics – these artists are, as Daryl Chin and many others argue, "considered as everything, in fact, except artists" (Richmond 1990: ix; Chin 1992: 14; Li 1994: 382; Bertheux 1998: 47-8; Dávila 1999: 185; Davis, in Fung and Gagnon 2002: 53). Despite efforts of inclusion, when these gestures presume such a binary they fail to change the fundamentals of representation and production – be they funding, production, training, exhibition, or dissemination – which, with the authority to define cultural identities, still remain the domain of the dominant culture. Consequently, art institutions have offered artists of cultural difference the choice between ethnic marginalization or mainstream assimilation – between artistic innovation or cultural preservation of, as Sneja Gunew observes, a "(however valorized) Other" – rather than facilitating a 'third position' within which the very core of dominant culture may be challenged and reconfigured (Gunew 1994a: 6; 1994b: 17; Papastergiadis 1995: 6).

This binary also does something more: even when the desire is to recognize and support the artistic expression of marginalized identities, the infrastructure of artistic and government institutions has often done so by fixing and naming identity in "neatly packaged categories": as Daryl Chin observes, "the ultimate irony is that the emphasis on

denomination is as limiting as the racial discrimination such naming is supposed to combat" (Chin 1992: 10-11). While they have been responsible for opening doors in terms of funding, exhibitions, and dissemination, the cultural distinctions of identity politics have also created rigid and reified definitions that become prescriptions, obscuring the actual complexity of identity/difference. This has led artists and critics alike argue that such policies and practices "homogenize and domesticate rather than enhance cultural diversity," to make artists "a prisoner of [their] own reified difference" despite art's capacity to defy and surpass such terms (Chin 1992: 10; Shohat and Stam 1995: 10; R. Handler, qtd in Jagodzinski 1997: 98; Gagnon and Fung 2002: 43, 47, 52).

This is apparent in market, curation, and review practices, where works are often valued in relation to their 'representativeness,' often code for how closely they fulfill public expectations. This begs the question, as Sneja Gunew asks, "as to why such art should somehow be inherently more representative than mainstream art" (Gunew 1994a: 8). Creative innovation, contemporary styles and themes, and challenges to conventional artistic forms are often overlooked for more 'exotic,' 'authentic' representations of cultural difference (Schensul 1990: 381; Kalantzis and Cope 1994: 23). Despite art's capacity to foster a care for difference, receptive generosity, and productive disruption of prevailing terms for identity/difference, this organization, segregation and expectation of "ethnic absolutism" refuses to both move beyond stereotypical symbols and acknowledge cultural identities as complex lived realities (Schensul 1990: 381). These practices within arts institutions, despite the impetus to support artistic representation by marginalized artists, have encouraged a mechanical genre of ethnic difference, perceived as dying and

in need of preservation rather than a living, open-ended practice (Li 1994: 370, 382; Fung and Gagnon 2002: 43).

Within these conditions artists, as Rustom Bharucha and others observe, "find the routes of cultural exchange…already mapped out for us," prevailing codes and forms that replicate the very discourses of identity politics such artists often aim to contest (Bharucha 1997: 33; Fusco 1998: 68-9). Not only has this led to various artists falling through the cracks of funding, production, and exhibition due to their failure to reflect these established cultural distinctions; this has also led at times to a stagnation of artistic practice and political critique into 'artistic minstrelsy' among those who feel pressured to define themselves in these reductive 'palatable' ways (Chin 1992: 14; Li 1994: 366, 384; Chandler 1997: 42; Tator et al. 1998: 250; Dávila 1999: 183; Davis, in Fung and Gagnon 2002: 53). The ultimate irony, as Peter Li observes, is that these petrified versions of cultural difference are perceived by the public as the successful preservation of cultures, while in fact they are merely fragments that artists have learned to "display, and sometimes distort" to "fit with stereotypes of what the cultural hegemony defines minority art to be" (Li 1994: 369-70). The distinction between 'ethnic' and 'real' art, and its justification in terms of preservation rather than creativity, has led certain artists to believe that "being labeled ethnic is 'a kiss of death'," and since the 1980s instigated a backlash among Canadian artists against an identity-driven approach to art (Off 1988: 6; Caterina Edwards, in Padolsky 1990: 26; Fernandez, in Fung and Gagnon 2002: 74).

One of the main causes of this reification is the confusion of artistic representation with reproduction; that, like dominant literal discourses, it can in fact exhaustively represent "'real truths' and [be] guarded or championed accordingly" (Phelan 1996: 2).

While it has been shown that the strength of art as a site of democratic engagement resides in its 'absence' and 'excess' – the ability to signify both multiple, unfixed identities and that which cannot be signified – its reception within dominant discourses of identity has led to literal readings of artistic works as representative of cultural identity. This, in turn, has led to artworks' evaluation and sanction by virtue of their 'authenticity,' inscribing a causal relationship between certain artistic practices or themes and what Carl Briscoe calls "specific social pathologies," in turn producing essentialist identities and reinforcing enduring cultural stereotypes (Briscoe 1997: 3, 9).

Related to this cause of reification is another: the challenge of arts practices to escape objectification by their viewers. While performance may mitigate this risk within art more generally through its ephemerality, artworks are largely always already perceived and engaged as objects ready for consumption and possession. As Peggy Phelan has shown, representation "summons surveillance and the laws; it provokes voyeurism, fetishism, the colonial/imperial appetite for possession," and art that engages identity/difference potentially lends itself to processes of commodification of the Other and alienation of the artist from the artwork (Phelan 1996: 6). Rather than provoke reciprocal encounters with identity/difference, artistic consumption can comfortably take place in a manner that facilitates and satisfies what Sara Ahmed calls "stranger fetishism," or the desire to 'have' another's difference (2000: 168). Whether out of well-intentioned agendas of inclusion and representation or due to the common notion of art as mere object, identities publicly articulated through artistic media have often been reified despite art's capacity to challenge this very process of reification. This dynamic transforms artistic engagement with difference into spectacle of Otherness that confirms

an unshaken centre's privileged position as consumers of exotic cultures, reproducing colonial legacies of appropriation, objectification and conflation. As Gómez-Peña observes, despite the nuanced discussion of identity/difference politics among a "few hundred" academics, within the international art world, pop culture, and the media "the new fetish is mild difference, tamed difference, stylized difference, low-cal Otherness, stripped of all political implications" (2005: 251).

Even when they directly engage the politics of identity or speak to lived experience of marginalized difference, artists are, first and foremost, artists, "unhyphenated" (Gagnon and Fung 2002: 47). By seeking to make space for marginalized artistic production without systemic redress of institutional power imbalances, entrenched norms and values, or prescriptive identity categories, arts institutions and policy restrict the definitive capacity of artistic production to create itself anew, and with it, its capacity to disrupt and creatively transform the very terms of identity/difference politics. Identity – like artistic practice – is, as Stuart Hall observes, "a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Hall 1996b: 448). By 'managing' difference within artistic practices, these policies and practices fail to offer, as Cornell and Murphy have argued, "the psychic and moral space necessary for groups and individuals to engage with and recreate their multiple identifications" (2002: 422), and to expose and contest those very processes of meaning-making and relations of power that inhibit this capacity. Though artistic practices are able to represent and engage the "negativity of theory" – identity and meaning as multiple, complex, relational, and ever in process – the impact of such work is limited by a

"positivity of politics" which still functions within linear paradigms that constrain and regulate identity/difference into such stable, bounded, and prescriptive terms.

Conclusion

Whether due to its contrast to scientific, economic or literal discourses, the very ways in which artistic engagement offers a radically different paradigm for identity/difference politics often prevent meaningful engagement with the society in which it occurs. Above all, these fraught negotiations of aesthetic and conventional discourses make clear that a positivist approach to meaning and identity that pervades consumer culture, policy discourse, and even multicultural policy distorts and limits the complexity and dynamism of both identity/difference and aesthetic practices that effectively engage it. And so it is precisely those aspects of aesthetic practices that make the greatest contribution to democratic theory and practice that are also the greatest obstacle to such impact; it because they share this ground with identity/difference more generally that they are easily misunderstood, undervalued, or missed altogether. Here, prevailing expectations in the west of art's political capacity as well as prevailing terms of 'identity politics' ultimately hinder the rich contribution aesthetic modes have to offer. If the 'noise' of aesthetic engagement is to be effectively integrated and its contribution to democratic politics felt, this demands a transformation of both the theoretical and institutional terrain in which it is received. It demands policies and practices that support such projects without reducing them to familiar terms: this may be through the strategic positioning and framing of art processes to more effectively translate the work of such projects; this may also entail integration or collaboration with more conventional democratic processes and institutions, that is not wholly defined by the latter's terms; this

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also entails transforming the terms of arts policy so that art's particular contribution is construed not in terms of adherence to prescribed terms for identity and politics, but its ability to productively unsettle these very terms. Above all, I would venture, this is a matter of more rigorously and sensitively taking up the challenge identity/difference politics presents us: of finding the terms and practices that enact and foster a care for difference as complex, multiple, ever-in-process, and of supporting those rare sites that, in defiance of prevailing terms, in fact already do.

Introduction

When democratic engagement is defined by an ethos and practice of *care for difference* and *receptive generosity*, the role that artistic performance might play in democratic projects becomes increasingly clear. Each of the qualities that distinguish performative modalities might lead political theorists to doubt the legitimacy of this form of democratic engagement: its meanings are indeterminate, multiple, and open-ended; its use of affect and sensation makes it 'irrational' or less amenable to rational judgment; its artfulness makes knowledge-claims problematic; its mediation of experience lessens accountability. However, these qualities of the arts ultimately prove productive for engagement across difference precisely because they are defined by the very characteristics ascribed to identity/difference itself: as complex, multiple, relational, and contingent; as embodied, situated and interpreted; and as continual and ever-incomplete process rather than essence. Rather than *essentialize* identities so rendered as declarative modes have tended to do, performance's *polyphony* can communicate identity and meaning *as* complex, multiple, and dynamic, and foreground the perpetual excess and absence of meaning within its evocative accounts. Rather than *appropriate* difference by turning the speaker into an object of knowledge interpellated – and validated as 'authentic' – by the listener, performance foregrounds the *creative agency* of the actor who is never wholly defined by the experience or meanings they convey. Rather than *conflate* difference in problematic forms of empathy through the illusion of direct access, in performance the space between speaker and listener is never wholly closed through its *explicit artfulness* and the chastening of knowledge-claims

this enables. In these ways, performative modalities offer radically different means for communicating across difference, that enact a *care for difference* that a democratic ethos demands.

And whereas the affective dimensions of politics clearly show that information and argument are often insufficient to unsettle and transform 'partitions of the sensible' that are "comfortable for those who can inhabit [them]" (Ahmed 2004: 147), performance makes use of the dissembling effects of both *affect* and *the body*. Here, affective encounters can move us in spite of ourselves, and through movement we may unearth latent bias, affect, and memory, discover the insufficiencies of ideas in practice and experiment with possible alternatives, as well as be held to account by expertise of often overlooked communities. Moreover, these unsettling encounters take place within a highly mediated context – not only through the use of fiction and symbol, but in the context of liminal spaces set apart from the everyday. As such, performative practices are designed to and effectively cultivate *receptive generosity* even when they communicate marginalized positions, experiences and values that can prove the most difficult to hear.

While these 'unruly' dimensions of the arts thus present concrete challenges to politics, these challenges resemble those politics already encountered with regards to representing and negotiating identity, and artistic modes that work through these terms can avoid in large part the threats of reification, appropriation or conflation often encountered in other forms of political discourse. As these case studies have shown and as this dissertation has argued, these particular dynamics and resources can be used to cultivate both radically democratic engagements with difference, and some of the

dispositions and conditions they require. And it is art's very unruliness – the very

qualities that provoke skepticism or oversight regarding the arts by political theorists

and political actors alike – that provides the means for such democratic engagement.

Implications for Democratic Theory

What does this mean for democratic theory? Foremost, this dissertation contributes

to a growing scholarship that argues for greater attunement to and theorization of

alternative modes of communication beyond the standard deliberative speech model. If

democracy demands that we make opportunities for 'voice' within democratic engagement

of presently marginalized social difference, it becomes vital to interrogate the exclusions

and asymmetries inherent in prevailing forms of political discourse, and explore alternative

"speech cultures" that not only offer means for greater inclusion, but are presently used by

and validated within other cultural and political contexts. This is precisely what this project

has sought to do, by unpacking and tracing the particular ways performative modes

communicate and negotiate identity/difference. In the process, this research sheds light on

presently undertheorized forms of democratic engagement used worldwide to

communicate marginalized difference, and so signals not only the presence of these

practices already at work in democratic politics, but the rich contribution they make to

such projects.

But as we enlarge the present terrain of what counts as political communication,

this project has also sought to establish the terms within which such practices might be

held accountable. Rather than, as Benhabib famously warned, opening up democratic

engagement to arbitrariness and capriciousness, I have argued that the inclusion of such

aesthetic-affective modalities does not preclude rigorous evaluation and accountability. By

defining democratic engagement in terms of a care for difference and receptive generosity, I have attempted to delineate the ethos against which such practices may be judged, without demanding recourse to culturally specific or predetermined norms regarding form, site, or agenda. In doing so, I have sought to establish a middle ground in which the particular contribution of aesthetic-affective modes is not brushed aside outright, but rather interrogated with care and detail, in ways that do not proscribe such practices within further restrictive and, ultimately, undemocratic enclosures.

In parsing out the particular dimensions of aesthetic modalities as they intersect – or conflict – with democratic projects, this research has also identified key dimensions of communication that are not only characteristic of aesthetic-affective modes, but are at times already at work in conventional democratic processes and might be applied more broadly and strategically within such sites. As a result, this careful reading of narrative, rhetoric, affect, embodiment, and polyphony develops current understandings of how these facets of communication affect, structure, and occasionally limit communication across difference. Whereas narrative is often lauded in critical democratic theory as a means to 'get difference to the table' and foster empathy, this account has shown that narrative, as a performative genre most closely resembling declarative speech, in fact runs the greatest risks with regards to giving the illusion of direct access to 'others' and overexposing those seeking audience to both the policing of authenticity and immediate experience of past trauma. Though the aesthetic genre that has been most warmly taken up in democratic theory, narrative is thus shown to be not only one among a vast range of aesthetic resources, but in fact might very well be far from the most generative and effective among performance modalities in communicating marginalized difference.

Likewise, though current accounts in democratic theory of rhetoric, affect, embodiment, and multiple modes such as the visual and acoustic often posit these as secondary, supplementary, and ever-suspicious dimensions of political discourse, this dissertation has shown that these in fact enable distinct dynamics for understanding and engagement, central in the task of cultivating both receptivity towards 'others' and the dissembling of exclusionary terms for identity and politics. Study of these dimensions has shown that speech far from defines democratic engagement – the visual, the sonic, the physical, the experiential are vital and powerful means for 'voice' in politics; moreover, these are not merely alternative 'voices,' but actually enable radically democratic modes of engagement and inquiry – they establish the terms for *particular forms of public* wherein the 'noise' of difference can be heard as 'sound,' sound that remains complex, dynamic, and in process; and understanding, interaction, and coalition are possible *through* rather than in spite of difference. Indeed, this research has shown why, in great part, conventional processes that rely upon reasoned argument and direct address are often insufficient in capturing the complexity, nuance, and interrelation of identity/difference, of cultivating relations and forms of coalition in these terms, and of fostering the receptivity such a politics of difference requires. While we continue to depend on, and prioritize, forms of communication that lend themselves to a static identity politics, we will continue to overlook sites where a distinctly democratic praxis beyond these outmoded and fundamentally unethical models of identity politics is already being enacted, as well as the rich resources available for such engagement.

Where these dimensions occur in conventional democratic processes, this project indicates that they might have a greater role to play than currently envisioned. I am

reminded of the role that images played in the 1978 *Camp David Accords*: on day 13 when negotiations had broken down and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat were ready to return without an agreement, U.S. President Jimmy Carter placed photographs of Begin, Sadat and Carter to be signed and given to Begin's grandchildren into Begin's hands; Carter recalls that Begin read the name of his grandchildren at the top of each image, vocalizing each out loud; "[h]is lips trembled, and tears welled up in his eyes," and Begin began to share a little about each grandchild with Carter as he held the photographs inscribed with his grandchildren's names. Merely five minutes following this encounter, Begin emerged from his cabin to ask to look at the peace proposal again (Carter 1995).

What might visual, affective, and physical aspects of communication do to cultivate the very conditions of receptivity, reflection, and revisability that democracy requires? How might spatial arrangements or periodic movement, the strategic use of imagery and sound, affect the dynamics and outcomes of democratic processes? How might approaching political issues *indirectly* through fiction, symbol, or liminal spaces, or *evocatively* through multimodal means, actually enable the 'unsettling' of "partitions of the sensible" that direct address and reasoned argument often cannot? Indeed, this research has shown that sometimes the most effective way to challenge and transform understandings is to approach them *obliquely*. How might these strategies be more effectively identified, harnessed and applied within conventional democratic processes? This thesis has illustrated how powerful these devices can be within performative engagements; however, these are by no means limited to such sites, and there is much work to be done regarding

how these might be integrated and their capacity realized more fully within conventional democratic processes.

If the body is always-already present in democratic processes; if affect and rhetoric are inseparable from and integral to meaning-making; if knowledge-claims are always performative, partial, and situated, traditional reticence to seriously investigate the aesthetic-affective within accounts of democratic engagement does not merely overlook rich and readily available resources for political processes – it fails to attend to how these dimensions are already at work in such processes, and how these structure relative access for some over others, inform perceptions and responses, and shape relations across difference. Such oversight of these subtler yet pervasive dimensions of power inadvertently allows prevailing issues of 'voice' and 'gaze' to persist in ostensibly democratic projects, and perpetuates patterns of exclusion, silencing and devaluation that run counter to a democratic ethos. To take the aesthetic seriously in democratic theory is to open up a crucial if yet largely neglected terrain regarding its role in politics; and it is to enable greater inclusion in, and indeed, radically democratic forms of democratic engagement.

Ethics vs Aesthetics; Aesthetics as Ethics

Certainly, it has not been a part of this work to argue that aesthetics are inherently democratic; the countless uses of aesthetics for authoritarian or oppressive purposes make this very clear. However, it *is* part of this work to argue that aesthetics provides a terrain with particular resources for democratic engagement, already in use in multiple ways around the world, and currently undertheorized in political theory. But, as Jane Bennett also argues, there is no assurance that an aesthetic ethos "will produce or even incline towards goodness, generosity, or social justice. Affect can join narcissism, beauty can

serve violence, and enchantment can lead to frivolity, violence or cruelty" (2001: 148).

Many critics of Foucauldian ethics, epitomized in his later articulation of 'care of the self,'

have argued that an aesthetic disposition actually inclines one *away* from political

engagement, into relativism, quietism, hedonism and narcissistic self-absorption.

McWhorter, Heyes, Connolly, Bennett and others, however, are careful to differentiate a

'care of the self' from what Foucault calls a "California cult of the self" – the latter, the

self-absorption that Foucault's critics describe, the former that which understands the self

as never fully captured by normalizing systems and so is defined by creative exploration

and experimentation that turns the self *outward* (McWhorter 1999: 195-8; Connolly 1993;

Heyes 2007; Bennett 2001).

In this sense, an aesthetic ethos actually entails an attentiveness and curiosity

towards the abundant particularity of existence, what exceeds present terms, and what else

might be; it is a way of being in the world that remains conscious of and open to the

porousness, performativity and movement of identity even as it is crafted, open to the

excess of difference within and without, to the reality that it is a project that is never

complete. Rather than a form of static self-preservation that shores itself up through

exclusionary fundamentalisms or command moralities, it is defined by a constant *risking* of

the self, "to explore, to attempt, to suffer, to expand, to grow" (McWhorter 1999: 224;

Nietzsche 1966: 125). In short, this aesthetic approach to identity and politics is defined by

the very ethos that I have argued distinguishes democratic engagement, characterized by a

care for difference and receptive generosity, emblematized in the images of the 'speaking'

and 'horizon.' As Jane Bennett also argues, it might even, in its sensitivity to the

performative or artful dimensions of meaning, identity and politics, and to the politics at

work in the embodied and discursive micropractices of the everyday, "mak[e] for a more resilient and careful approach to ethics" than transcendent or totalizing models (Bennett 2001: 150). We have seen this already in critical democratic theorists who attend to the aesthetic-affective dimensions of deliberation, and so identify previously masked forms of exclusion and asymmetry. We have also seen this in aesthetic practices that foreground the performativity of their claims and the limits of both representation and understanding, even as they enable communication, mobilization and coalition. Here, an aesthetic approach works to attune us to the politics of identity/difference in everyday practices as well as the subtleties of conventional political sites, and provides the means to enact a politics of difference with equal nuance and sensitivity.

This is what this dissertation has argued: that the aesthetic dimensions of artistic performance indeed lend themselves readily to a democratic ethos defined by a *care for difference* and the *receptive generosity* this entails. When democracy is defined by an attention and responsiveness to difference, practices that not only have the capacity to hold complex and interrelated meanings, but *signal* the very contingency of such claims and so foster a sense of the limits of understanding within encounters across difference are absolutely vital; when democracy is characterized by the continual unsettling and transformation of prevailing terms for identity and politics in response to difference, practices that are designed to cultivate receptivity even as they challenge and rework current codes and meanings are integral to the democratic project.

And yet, this aesthetic ethos is a possible but by no means necessary ethical response and normative frame, one of many that might emerge in response to the artfulness of identity, meaning and politics. As we have seen, confrontation with the contingency of

one's position can provoke profoundly un-aesthetic responses: it can spur fervent efforts to unify, vilify, conflate, or exclude what exceeds and challenges present terms; it can prompt deeper entrenchments, denials, revenge. Aesthetic encounters do not inherently predispose one to hear such a call; one must be vigilant and perpetually self-reflexive, embrace the responsibility as well as freedom entailed in acknowledging one's life and understanding as contingent, partial and ever in process, if the acknowledgment of the artfulness of existence and understanding is to be, as Georg Kateb envisions, "a more deliberate aestheticism…[that] may cooperate with morality or may be its good friend" (Kateb 2000). Like positivism, like fundamentalism, like scientific or declarative paradigms, aesthetics can be a source of violence, exclusion and social injustice; and yet, it also holds the capacity – if handled with care – to produce the conditions for a radical democratic politics. Indeed, over time, such encounters may gently and persistently cultivate a tolerance for ambiguity, uncertainty, and contingency, even pleasure in the sense of inhabiting moving and complex ground, as we attend to others in their concrete particularity and creative agency, as we experience with all senses our indebtedness to difference as a means of self-transformation and source of connection. My hope is that this thesis has illuminated how this aesthetic approach to identity/difference politics might manifest in practice, as well as the normative and practical conditions that may guide and structure such projects.

At Arm's Length: The Relationship of Art to Politics

This account of both the democratic potential of artistic practices and the risks and challenges this also involves begs the question as to how the relationship of art to conventional politics might be configured to at once facilitate and augment its potential

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democratic impact and remain sensitive to the arm's length relationship to politics artistic

practices require to work effectively in this very way. For, as community artist and scholar

Laurie McGauley writes, "Art as politics becomes propaganda; politics as art becomes

spectacle" (2006: 6). Though artists may be politically engaged, and though much more

may be done to enhance, refine and support this work, the relationship between art to

politics is therefore fraught, making even such a political critique a delicate matter so that

art, when acknowledged as political, is not degraded into mere propaganda or political

instrument; in artist Elizam Escobar's terms, "one-dimensional...art-as-instrument-for-

something-else" (Escobar 1994: 39). Like the regulation of 'ethnic' artistic production by

the Canadian Ministry according to political agendas; like the tightly-wound entanglement

of theatre and politics in South Africa which artists and scholars sought actively to pick

apart in the post-apartheid era to reclaim art on its own terms; like the instrumentalization

of artistic practices from above and below by Soviet Russia or 1960s guerrilla theatre

groups in the United States: when art is understood as a solely a means to an external end

this – ironically, perhaps – degrades, distorts and restricts art's political as well as creative

potential (de Kok and Press 1990; Escobar 1994; Kuryluk 1994). For though it might

participate in politics, though it might even work within or be aligned with certain

ideologies,

> one crucial dimension of the role of art (as opposed to more purely instrumental cultural forms)…is to critique and transcend ideology, and their role in and around [political] movements can be to remind activists, who are often tempted by the pressures of political struggle into ideologically restrictive positions, that the full lived complexity of cultural life cannot be reduced to any ideological system.
> (Reed 2005: 303)

Moreover, though there may be political effects of artistic practices, as artistic

reactions to Canadian multicultural policy show, to be identified, justified and organized in

this way can stifle the very creativity and critique it might seek to foster. Artists should not

be forced to engage, or forced to engage only in certain terms. This is captured beautifully

by writer Myrna Kostash's declaration that "we may not wish to belong to the club. We

may wish to live with tension and distress" (1990: 19). This very estrangement, as Fred

Wah observes, is the very source of productive disruption and reimagining – such artists

"seek a heat through friction. This is a poetics of paradox. We know ourselves by our

resistances" (2000: 60-1).

If this thesis has done anything, my hope is that it has shown through various cases

that the particular democratic potential of art lies in its capacity to exceed, defy, and

productively transform the prevailing terms for thought, action and relation; as such,

though aesthetic practices entail their own ethical demands and can enact a democratic

politics more or less effectively in relation to their fulfillment of them, it is misplaced, even

counter-productive, to democratic praxis to demand that art be 'responsible' – insofar as

responsibility is code for meeting what Escobar calls "the common denominator of

politics" (Escobar 1994: 17). While art, as a site of civic engagement, is accountable in the

sense engagement with identity/difference requires, it is a fraught and potentially

destructive move to attempt to subsume and harness artistic practices within the prevailing

terms and institutional systems of politics.

And yet, what then is the role of politics when this vast and creative potential for

democratic praxis is taken seriously? My suspicion is that rather than undermine the

traditional arm's length relationship that has enabled art to flourish and, ultimately, most

productively contribute to politics, the task becomes one largely of developing those

communicative channels, overlapping or adjacent sites, and shared discourses that connect

these fields. The task becomes one of fostering the terms – as this thesis has sought to do – within which the political contribution of artistic practices becomes ever-salient, ever 'sound' within society more broadly, and in the same gesture to develop and refine – necessarily entailing an openness to further reconfiguration – the terms within which such work may be rigorously evaluated and held accountable, even as the terms for accountability and value are themselves transformed.

Part of this project also entails systemic integration of aesthetic approaches and perspectives within conventional politics – whether, as in the UK, employing artists on Council boards for municipal decision-making; or fostering dialogues and collaborations across sectors to contribute to creative problem-solving, as Canada is beginning to do; or making the most of the mini-publics performance gathers by interrelated forums, research and policy design. While these are humble and preliminary possibilities, they provide an alternative to a heavy-handed approach to art-as-politics, protecting the crucial self-determination of artistic practices even as they foster cross-pollination and mutual accountability.

The elusive but critical point that all of these issues with translation, legitimation, and regulation show is that – like a politics of difference more generally – engagement between art and conventional politics must be grounded in terms that are themselves reflexively open to unsettling and reimagination; it must provide the means to self-determine even as it critically engages such identifications; it must provide "the psychic and moral space necessary for groups and individuals to engage with and recreate their multiple identifications" if it is indeed to enact a democratic politics that engages identity, difference and such processes of meaning-making in generative and ethical ways (Cornell

and Murphy 2002: 422). A democratic ethos of attentiveness and responsiveness difference means that demands of *self-determination* are vital and central to any policy and practice in which identity/difference are engaged, artistic practices among them. If we are to take seriously that difference is not an obstacle to be overcome, but the very lifeblood of democratic politics, we must find ways of supporting practices of communication and engagement that do not merely restrict such practices in the very act of naming, codifying, and administering such support. It becomes essential to develop and institutionalize, not attention to given identities as conceived by dominant culture, but the means for cultivating both individual and institutional acknowledgment of contingency, for *continual responsiveness* to what is yet 'noise,' and for *systemic transformation* of dominant meanings and values in light of such broadening and deepening of these 'unsettling' encounters that define the radically democratic moment.

This research has shown that aesthetic practices offer not only alternative and effective sites for democratic engagement in the terms that identity/difference politics demands, but also how such engagement might enrich both theoretical understanding and practical application of identity/difference politics more broadly. Here, the fact that identity is multiple, in process, and ever in tension with the difference that exceeds it does not inhibit communication and coalition, but are the very terms in which these political engagement is achieved. By extension, we see concretely in these sites that identity/difference need not be limited to static and bounded terms to translate into representation and action, as is so often the case in policy and practice; we see that communication, action and coalition can be effected *through* rather than in spite of difference, and achieved in ways that yet enable future and creative reworking. And

perhaps most surprising, we have seen that the most 'unruly' of art's dimensions prove the most vital in realizing this model of democratic engagement.

This project, then, whispers in the ear of democratic theory and practice not only that these practices are rich, readily available and as-yet largely overlooked strategies to enact the very politics they seek, but also that perhaps this oversight is rooted in a basic misunderstanding that communication and engagement in politics require 'manageable' – positivist – meanings, identities and positions; and, intimately related, a misunderstanding of democracy as a matter of governance rather than the pluralisation of politics – in other words, a project of making ever-more room for the 'unsettling' of prevailing terms for identity and politics. Here, the 'unruly' dimensions of aesthetic practices are finely and intimately attuned to engaging the 'unruliness' of identity/difference. And while this will always present issues regarding how such practices and the identities they engage might be translated into conventional discourses and institutions, above all this signals that these present limitations are not as fixed or narrow as they first appear – that identity/difference may yet be more effectively captured in forms of democratic engagement, and aesthetic practices might yet provide crucial insight for how to do so.

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APPENDICES
Appendix A: Table 1: Notable Events During the Apartheid Era, South Africa

STATE ACTION	RESISTANT THEATRE	CONVENTIONAL RESISTANCE
	1940s Bantu Drama Society Dhlomo's Dramatic & Operatic	
1948 National Party; Apartheid legislation		
1950 Mass removals		
1953 Bantu Education System; Reservation of Separate Amenities Act	**1950s** Height of black/white collaboration in musical theatre	
	1959 King Kong; beginning of African formal theatre	**1959** Pan African Congress
1960 Sharpeville Massacre; Sophiatown; State of Emergency	**Early 1960s** Gibson Kente musicals; beginning of autonomous community-based black show business	**1960** Sharpeville Massacre
1963 Pub. and Ent. Act; Publication Control Board		
1964 Group Areas Act		**Late 1960s** Black Consciousness Movement
	1971 Workshop71; new techniques	
	1972+ BCM theatre (PET, MDALI)	
1973 Beg. suppression of BC activists	*Sizwe, uNosimela*	
1974 Publications Act	Imitha Players, Ikwezi Players; **1974-76** Kente: *How Long; I Believe*	
1975 PET, TECON on trial; beg. Cultural Section of WRAB; Kente jailed re: *How Long*	**1976** Market Theatre; Space Theatre; *Sacrifice of Kreli*	**1976** Soweto Uprising
Late 1970s Minimal "reform" (end of ban on multiracial theatre)	**Late 1970s** JATC; People's Space	
1978 *Survival* banned	*Egoli; Hungry Earth*	
1980 Application of Pub. Act; Trial of Dunlop strikers; necklacing; increasing police/crowd violence	**1981** *Woza Albert* **1982** Worker Theatre	**1982** workers strikes
1984 Some reforms (eg media restrictions)		
1985 State of Emergency (until 1990s)		
1989 de Klerk; ban lifted on ANC	**1989** *Sophiatown*	
1990 Mandela released from Robben Island		**1994** ANC government

Appendix B: Margie Gillis, interviewed by Krista Erickson[55]

'Tell me something – 'this' [*limp-wristed gesture*] is not my cup of tea…this whole thing…about the way tax dollars are being spent.'
    'These are people who care deeply, deeply about the arts and about society – '
 'Miss Gillis, If I may…we've got to go at this one at a time…I need to ask the questions – '
    'Then I'm your guest, perhaps you might let me speak – artists feel deeply about society and sacrifice entirely and give themselves to the arts so I would think you'd show them a little respect and understand the sacrifice that many artists make – '
'What kind of sacrifices?'
    ' – the amount of money that the arts community makes is very, very little – if you look at my salary…in comparison, as…one of the top dancers in Canada, if you look at the salary of anybody who is at the top of their field, the numbers don't exactly… - '
'What endeavours do you think are comparable?...Well,…those salaries aren't being subsidized by the tax payers…'
    'Do you want to know what is done with that money?....Tours and performances over the world -'
'Oh, yes, we've heard all about the creative economy…'
    'Well I've done my – …Oh my gosh, I find this astonishing –'
'Not nearly as astonishing as we do, I can assure you –'
    ' – that you would belittle a sector of our community that sacrifices for the good of the collective… - '
'Well, I'm happy to talk about sacrifices, actually, because I think it ties with a comment you made that some of us here find particularly objectionable…'

[Video clip of Gillis: 'We were, I thought, a compassionate society. I don't think that way anymore. No, we're good at masking things, we're good at not taking responsibility now. This is deeply sad to me.']

    'Would you like to know why – '
' – Were we not compassionate…when we gave you…the Walter Carson Prize, and were we not compassionate when…tax payers gave you and your foundation a grant for $105,000… – '
    'I'm not speaking selfishly here – '
' – so what is it about Canadians that they're lacking compassion exactly – 1.4 million dollars isn't enough compassion for you?'
    'No, it's not about me, it's about our society as a whole, and what we give our attention to, and indeed you're belittling my community…a community that sacrifice a great deal…for the common good. And I think that is an example of how our society has become less compassionate. We need people in a lot of different areas reflecting and looking at the possibilities for the human spirit, what

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[55] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPIuDql8vo0&NR=1.

we can do…creative thought, ways of reducing conflict…basically more in the humanitarian activities, how we view ourselves –'

'Let's talk about some of those humanitarian activities….I personally take exception, and I know some of my colleagues do as well, to hear the assertion we're lacking in compassion when we've lost more than 150 soldiers who have served in Afghanistan, who have put their lives on the line and which is, frankly, quite a serious business – '

'But I'm not – that is part of the compassion I'm – '

'- compared with people [*hand gesture*] dancing on the stage, I just don't know where you get off suggesting we don't have compassion…'

'I am not belittling the sacrifice of other people but nor should I think you should belittle my community….Someone gives their life for a cause…'

'If you think we're belittling your community, tell me this. Why can't you do this [*gesture*] without a leg up from tax payers?'

'Because the arts are just not profitable – '

'Then why should taxpayers be in the business of something that's not profitable?'

'Precisely. It's because it has – '

'Shouldn't market values be at play?'

' – value for the soul. And it has long-term ramifications. My community takes a small amount of money and makes it…work…If you look at how we've…dealt with the reductions we have, you'll see it's a community that really cares deeply, that gives itself and sacrifices a lot to uphold ideas of creation, possibility, health, we research endeavours of all different types…that you could compare us to soldiers – '

'You're the one that raised sacrifices… given that those people have made those sacrifices, I don't think you can say that we are lacking in compassion.'

'I didn't say that they are lacking in compassion – I think that our society has changed and ceases to put forward as much of a moral, caring, functioning concern about the well-being of its weak…of the spirit…of the intellect…we talk a lot about our economy and how much money we are making rather than how much we are giving…'

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Headlines Theatre's after homelessness…

8 December 2010	Janette Pink (*cast)*
9 December 2009	Gail Franklin (*Community Scribe*)
14 December 2009	Justine Goulet (*cast)*
16 December 2009	Holly Anderson (*social worker*)
17 December 2009	Sundown Stieger (*cast*)
14 December 2009	Martin (*cast*)
22 December 2009	Sandra Pronteau (*cast*)
12 February 2010	David Diamond (*director*)
12 March 2010	Gail Franklin (*Community Scribe*)
24 March 2010	Kerry Jang (*City Hall*)
25 March 2010	Dominic Flanagan (*BC Housing*)
12 April 2010	Michael Pietrus (*Mental Health Commission of Canada*)
13 April 2010	Mark Smith (*RainCity Housing*)
15 April 2010	Mark Townsend (*Portland Hotel Society*)
19 April 2010	Darrell Burnham (*Coastal Mental Health*)
21 April 2010	Sue Noga (*BC Regional Steering Committee on Mental Health*)

Co. Erasga's *AdamEve/ManWoman*

5 December 2009	Alison Denham (*dancer*)
5 December 2009	Billy Marchenski (*dancer*)
12 December 2009	Alvin Erasga Tolentino (*choreographer*)
26 March 2010	Alison Denham and Billy Marchenski (*dancers*)
8 April 2010	Alvin Erasga Tolentino (*choreographer*)